

...e school's enrollment, were awarded perfect attendance certificates at a program held last Friday night, probably the schools in the county, forty children from first to eighth grade are instructed by two teachers. (Herald Photo by Gallery).

# Friendly Atmosphere, Home-Style Cooking Are Fixtures At Duette

By JIM GALLERY  
(Herald Staff Writer)

The Navy used to say "a happy ship's an efficient ship", or maybe it was the other way around.

In either event, we found the same to be true at the Duette school, one of the few remaining 'country' schools in the county.

Located eighteen miles east of Parrish on Highway 62, a winding, bumpy road that connects with U.S. 17, the school site is a welcome relief from the monotony of Florida range land, broken occasionally by citrus groves and improved pastures.

Forty pupils get their 'book larnin' at Duette, and only two teachers guide them from the first through eighth grades.

It's no easy task, to be sure. But through the combined efforts of school personnel, a strong PTA organization, and the children themselves, the program advances smoothly, effectively, and happily.

The staff itself, of course, is the mainspring; and the current trio fits the situation like a glove.

Mrs. Agnes Wilkins is principal-teacher, instructing grades five through eight. Mrs. Ada Bilbrey teaches the first four grades, and Mrs. Doris Albritton manages the school cafeteria.

Other than the school and an adjacent filling station-garage, the community of Duette isn't visible from the highway. And the passing motorist is prone to wonder, why a school in the middle of nowhere?

Duette is a community, nonetheless, with common interests, traditions and a spirit that might well be the envy of larger areas. A sizeable farming area surrounds the school, and from the ranches and groves come the children who attend the school.

We were surprised to learn that, in the late '20's, three one-room schools were in operation in the area; one at Bunker Hill, another called the Albritton School, with the third at Duette. At that time Duette had a post office and a country store some four miles south of the present highway.

In 1930, however, the present school was built on a 14-acre site and a consolidation program effected. E. T. Roux, with considerable land holding in Manatee and Polk Counties, donated the lumber for the building.

That original structure still stands, with an occasional re-roofing job, plus minor repairs.

Built in an I shape running east-west, the school auditorium separates the two classrooms from the library-TV room and cafeteria.

The washrooms are located in

a younger one and do a good job of 'playing teacher' in getting over troublesome spots.

"Actually," says Mrs. Wilkins, "we're able to give more individual attention than might be found in larger schools, through the use of study groups based on the child's capacity to learn."

There is no sharp demarcation between grades as might be found elsewhere. A fifth grader with eighth grade ability is pushed right along in accordance with his needs, though he remains, nominally, a fifth grader.

By proper placement of pupils within the framework of school activities, the slower-to-learn child is helped both by his classmates and his teachers.

There is, of course, a much wider degree of difference between the first and fourth grad-



LITTLE MAN, BIG BITE as Doyle Chancey, Jr., prepares to do battle with a 'sloppy Joe' sandwich in school cafeteria at lunch time. Despite comparative smallness of school, hot lunches are served daily with a high percentage of 'clean plates' paying tribute to the efforts of Mrs. Doris Albritton, cafeteria manager. (Photo by Gallery).

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Built in an I shape running east-west, the school auditorium separates the two classrooms from the library-TV room and cafeteria.

The washrooms are located in a separate building just behind the school and pose a bit of a problem in rainy weather inasmuch as there is no connecting canopy at present. Mrs. Wilkins hopes a combined school-community effort in the near future will correct this situation.

A well-equipped playground in the midst of full-grown oaks, round out the school plant.

But what of the children, and the real problems posed in trying to teach four grades at once?

Well, the children are no different from any other group of comparable age. They have the same enthusiasm, characteristics, and abilities found in any grade school. There are quite a few brother-sister combinations that Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Bilbrey have turned to their advantage.

They have found that a fourth grade brother will sit down with

a younger one and do a good job of 'playing teacher' in getting over troublesome spots.

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By proper placement of pupils within the framework of school activities, the slower-to-learn child is helped both by his classmates and his teachers.

There is, of course, a much wider degree of difference between the first and fourth graders. Much of the emphasis here is placed on reading, comprehension and spelling. The greatest difficulty comes at the very beginning of the school term, when new, unknowing first graders get acquainted with the rudiments of formal learning. Mrs. Bilbrey then puts her higher grades to work on group projects and work books while she copes with the novices.

#### FRIENDLY SCHOOL

Because of strong family and community ties—everybody knows everybody else—Duette is a friendly, homey school. And, should someone get out of line occasionally—as is bound to happen anywhere—he is probably more chagrined over loss of face among classmates as he is what-ever punishment is meted out.

There are few attempts at bullying. (See GROWTH, Page 1-C)



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**BRADENTON HERALD**

**Matchless  
Manatee**

**Sunday Feature Section**

Sunday, June 7, 1959

1-C

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**GUITAR VIRTUOSOS** at Duette program included David Wilkins, Ronnie Houghtaling, Jerry Pierce, Eddie Parrish, M. E. Wilkins, and Sammie Thornton. (Herald Photo by Gallery).

**DUETTE BATON**  
Rose Albritton, Non Parrish, Betty Lou K from first through

# Growth Foreseen At Duette

(Continued from 1-C)

ing younger children because nearly everyone has a 'bigger brother' readily available, generally no further than the next room.

The lunch room, presided over by Mrs. Albritton, is a model of efficiency, excellence and cleanliness. Mrs. Albritton has been cooking, she says, "ever since I had to stand on a stool to reach the stove." Outside of keeping house, there's nothing she'd rather do than cook for 'her youngsters,' as she calls them. What the children think of her and her meals is obvious in the high percentage of 'clean plates' turned in by her admirers.

'Miss Doris' is also an 'old-fashioned' cook. Believes in doing her own baking from the flour on up, and she prepares her meals and vegetables in the same manner.

The day we happened to eat lunch at the school, she was absolutely mortified at having to use 'store bought' bread, rather than her own rolls. Seems she'd run out of yeast temporarily and was forced to substitute bakery bread. We got the impression that this was, to her, a mortal sin.

## MUSIC

Music during the lunch hour is a privilege allowed by Mrs. Wilkins to the upper four grades. A portable record player spins records of the children's choice. They are permitted and encouraged to bring their own records from home and, naturally, the contrast is something to hear. From classic to rock and roll in the space of three minutes is almost too much, even for the most hardened ear drum.

Choice for the day we happened to visit was a current favorite by George Hamilton IV, which sounds like dinner music for a pack of hungry cannibals.

Friday, May 29, was the big day in the school year. More or less an achievement report, every child in the school participated in some manner.

An afternoon tractor-driving contest preceded dinner-on-the-grounds for over 200 parents and friends at six o'clock.

Groups appearing on the program included the 4-H Girls, the Guitar Band, and Girls Baton Corps. Featured also was a double may-pole dance involving virtually every child in the school.

Highlight of the evening was the presentation of perfect at-

tendance certificates to 20 pupils, exactly 50 per cent of the school's enrollment. In all probability this is the highest percentage attained throughout the school system.

Manatee County's furthestmost educational outpost—it's 15 miles from the administration building in Bradenton—the school, and community for that matter, has but one complaint.

## TELEPHONES

They sure wish they had telephones in the area. If the teachers need to communicate with the superintendent's office, or any spot in the county for that matter, it's closer to drive the additional ten miles east to Fort Green in DeSoto County and place a long distance call than it is to travel eighteen miles back to Parrish for the same purpose.

But this is a matter they've lived with for a goodly number of years, and they are encouraged each year to see new families move in and more land improved.

The gradual eastward movement of groves and developments will eventually solve the telephone and other utility problems.

In the meantime, the little red school house that's white, continues to do an outstanding job in preparing freckle-faced, bare-footed youngsters for high school and college work.

And in an age of specialization, consolidation and conformation, of both personnel and materials, it's refreshing to observe any institution so wholeheartedly devoted to developing the skills and varied abilities of the individual.

## Lamp Making Contest To Be Feature Of 4-H Short Course

GAINESVILLE?SA feature of the 40th annual boys' 4-H Club Short Course at the University of Florida June 8-12 will be the annual state lamp making contest.

A. M. Pettis, associate agricultural engineer with the Florida Agricultural Extension Service, says the state lamp program is again sponsored by Florida Power Corporation, Florida Power & Light Company, and Gulf Power Corporation. These sponsors provide \$225 for district and state awards for lamp program winners.

The program encourages 4-H

members to conduct good reading lamps.

Ten district winners will compete at short course. State winners will be awarded radios, fans, and clocks.

For the first time, a state Negro 4-H lamp contest will be held at Florida A&M University. Electric appliances will be awarded to state winners.

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