# School Days Memories

## They Made It All Work

EIGHT OR NINE children of the Lee family completed the first through eighth grades at Mt. Pleasant School near Scales Mound, Illinois.

The school had an indoor outhouse of sorts. Aunt Ruth said it wasn't a flusher, but it was wonderful to have an indoor facility. My Uncle Joe said it was his job to hand-pump water.

The teacher for all eight grades, June Rogers, had two benches in front of her desk. She directed a particular grade to the benches while the rest of the students studied at their desks.

Mrs. Rogers and her husband also farmed near the Lee farm. She would correct papers at recess because she had chores to do when she got home.

Uncle Joe said it wasn't unusual for students to miss 2 or 3 weeks of school because they had to help get crops planted or harvested and handle other farm duties; one year, he had 28 days of these excused absences. Arrangements were made for getting schoolwork done at home.

—Michelle F., Mosinee, Wisconsin

## Dad, Old "Bess" and Me

I BEGAN riding my horse, "Bess" (below), to Plainview School near Sherman, Texas in 1938, when I was 5 years old. During school hours, Bess would stay in an old shed that my dad had built a stall in.

One day, a thunderstorm caused creeks and streams to overflow their banks, something new for me. I was doing all right until I was a third of a mile from home. Water from a flooded creek was 2 feet deep across the road, and I was concerned that the bridge may

have been washed away.

I began calling for my dad. Did he hear me or did he somehow just know that his son needed him? Either way, I was relieved to see him coming down the hill on his horse.

I watched him carefully cross the bridge, which I was especially happy to see was still there. When Dad got to me, he said, “Son, are you ready to go home?” I answered, “Yes, sir!”

Calling on my dad was somewhat routine until he passed away in 1985, and you know, he was always there for me.

—Reuben B., Austin, Texas

## Bucket of Mischief

IN THE 1940s, my brother and I attended a two-room rural school where duties were required of us. We looked upon them not as chores, but as an award or privilege bestowed on us for exemplary behavior.

Boys brought buckets of coal in to warm the morning stove and drew drinking water from the well. Girls washed the blackboards and chalk trays and dusted the erasers. Everyone picked up trash in the school yard.

My brother’s favorite task was drawing water from the glazed-tile well, which was in a lattice-enclosed structure attached to the school and equipped with a windlass.

The boys were warned to lower the 2-gallon bucket slowly with the iron crank because the free-falling bucket unwinding the rope made the heavy crank a vicious weapon. Plus, plunging the bucket stirred up sand in the water.

My brother seemed to enjoy the whirring sound of the freewheeling windlass and the sharp plunk when the bucket hit bottom. From the

classroom, the teacher would ask, “Buddy! Did you drop that bucket again?”

The punishment for that offense was that he could not draw water for a few weeks, but he says that given the opportunity, he’d still drop that bucket.

—Barbara H., Bartlett, Tennessee