

Monday, August 28, 1989

One-room school keeps operating despite dearth of modern comforts

SAUL, Ky. (AP) — Nearly hidden in the shadows of the rugged mountains where three counties converge, children still attend Lower Leatherwood Elementary School — the last one-room public school in Kentucky.

The school, a red concrete building, is perched near a stand of sycamores beside Lower Leatherwood Creek, just downstream from a swinging bridge.

About five years ago, two outdoor toilets were replaced by indoor restrooms. The privies now stand deserted in a far corner of the school ground.

Out front, the playground is divided by a dirt and gravel road that runs up Mud Lick between the school and its newly paved basketball court. One area resident, George Woods, said the court is a far cry from the days when he attended Lower Leatherwood.

"We played basketball on the ground," said Woods, 48. "We used to play Bowlington Elementary, five or six miles away. That's the only

school we played, just Bowlington, six or seven times a year, and most of the time they'd beat us."

No one seems to know how long there has been a school at Lower Leatherwood. But Mannon Couch, 70, can shed some light on its history. The retired storekeeper is an alumnus. His wife, Juanita, is a former teacher there.

Couch said that when he was a boy, he heard old people say there once had been a school on the creek with split-log benches and a dirt floor.

At least three other school buildings preceded this one, which serves about 20 students in grades one through eight.

"Eight of them (the students) are named Couch, and about that many more are Bangers," said Glenna Hudson, teacher there since 1973.

Hudson, 42, who has a master's degree in education, said she attended a one-room school in Clay County.

"It takes some getting used to, and

you've got to stay right with your schedule," she said. "Sometimes I start with the little grades and go up, and sometimes I'll start with the big ones and come down. But we're all doing reading and spelling at the same time."

When Hudson started teaching at the school there were three teachers and 93 pupils. A trailer was brought in for added space.

"I guess we've got as many families up here as we had years ago, but they're not raising the children," Couch said.

"When I went to school there, you took your lunch in a 4-pound lard bucket. If there was a big bunch of children from one home, you'd put it in an 8-pound bucket," she added.

Now there's a cafeteria where breakfast and lunch are prepared by Helen Rice, whose husband, L.C., is the custodian. Both graduated from the school.

There's still no school telephone, but the pot-bellied stove was re-

placed by electric heaters several years ago. Water is piped from a nearby well.

Instead of changing classrooms from one year to the next, pupils change desks. Those in the lower grades sit at little desks against the left wall. Desks get progressively larger in each of the other rows.

Lockers are plastic milk cases, stacked two high and turned sideways against the front wall. An Orange Crush clock and a CSX Railroad calendar help track the time.

The state Department of Education has recommended closing Lower Leatherwood, but its isolation — 13 miles of bad road to Buckhorn School, where the Leatherwood children might go — has saved it thus far.

Five students graduated in the spring, Hudson said there may be no one in eighth grade this fall but, on a brighter note, there will be two, maybe three, first graders.

'The People Next Door' marks entry into television for veteran actor Jeffrey Jones

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jeffrey Jones calls his first television series, "The People Next Door," a "light, romantic comedy with a subversive twist."

In the CBS show, Jones plays a successful cartoonist named Walter Kellogg who has a new wife, two kids

and a powerful imagination. The latter figures heavily in the stories because everything he imagines springs to life.

"I became a cartoonist because things in my imagination suggest cartoons to me," Jones says. "But it's not cartoons coming to life. It's live,

not animated. I have an answering machine and inside is a little man who answers the calls. And he's as irascible as answering machines usually are.

"When I hug my future wife, a lascivious thought pops into my head. Steve Allen suddenly shows up in the living room playing the piano."

It sounds reminiscent of "My World and Welcome To It," a comedy based on the work of James Thurber that went on to win an Emmy in 1970 after it was axed by NBC. The cartoonist in that show frequently entered a private world of the imagination that was animated.

Unlike "My World," however, Jones' fantasies are shared by everyone around him. His wife, Abigail, a psychologist played by Mary Gross, has to cope with it. His sister-in-law, played by Christine Pickles, was not thrilled with her sister marrying Walter even before she knew about his fantasies. His 11-year-old daughter is fascinated by the characters that jump to life and interacts with the family.

The show frequently relies on special effects and "blue screen" photography.

In the show, Walter marries Abigail after a whirlwind courtship and moves her to his new home in Covington, Ohio.

It's the first series for Jones, although he was involved in two pilots several years ago. "One wasn't picked up by the network," he says. "On the other, I didn't like what they wanted to do with the show and the character and we parted amiably."

"Another time Hugh Wilson came up with an idea for a comedy about the Revolutionary War. He couldn't quite make it work. It would have been fun to see an entertaining look at our history."

Wilson is the creator of "WKRP in Cincinnati," "Frank's Place" and the upcoming "The Famous Teddy Z."

Jones is best known for roles in such movies as "Amadeus," "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," "Beetlejuice" and "Without a Clue." He recently completed a role in the movie "Hunt

for Red October." He was Thomas Jefferson in the miniseries "George Washington," Buffalo Bill in "The Gambler III" and had roles in two other miniseries, "Fresno" and "If Tomorrow Comes." He has also appeared in more than 125 stage productions.

"I've always wanted to do good work, whether it's for films or for television," he says. "I hope this is one of those things you try and it turns out good. It's a growing thing. You start out with an idea, and my experience in plays and movies is that they take on a life of their own. We'll see what develops."

"The title of the show refers to a lot of things. 'The People Next Door' is the name of the comic strip my character draws. It also refers to the fact that everyone has his daydreams. People don't always express them the way Walter does. This is a non-linear comedy. It doesn't go from one end to another. It'll start in one direction and suddenly go in another. I hope it isn't hard to follow."

Jones was born in Buffalo, N.Y., and attended a boarding school in Vermont, where he first became interested in acting. He entered Lawrence University as a pre-med student but soon switched to drama. He spent his sophomore year at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis in a work-study program. He also studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts.

After that, he always worked as an actor. "I was determined that if I couldn't make it as an actor I'd get into something else," he says. "I didn't want to support my acting career working as a waiter."

He appeared with Meryl Streep, early in her career, in New York in "Trelawny of the Wells."

His first film work was a small role in an episode of "Kojak" while he was working in regional theater. Besides "Hunt for Red October," Jones has also completed work on two other upcoming movies, "Valmont," which is director Milos Forman's version of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," and "Enid Is Sleeping," a black comedy set in the American Southwest.

Australian musician says there is more to jazz than just blowing your horn

(AP) — Australian jazz instrumentalist James Morrison takes music seriously — and he has fun with it.

He recounts that at his big band's first concert, in 1983, the band started playing and two ropes suddenly appeared, hanging from above the stage.

"My brother, John, came sliding down a rope onto his drum kit," says Morrison. "I had my trumpet with me. Halfway down I started playing. I cued the band by dropping onto the stage."

"You want an audience hearing jazz to wonder what will happen next, to have an air of expectation. If that's what the music is supposed to do, why should the players be like accountants?"

Ideas like that one first came, Morrison says, "from watching movies with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. All sorts of things were going on. A phrase comes into my mind: Jazz need not be just a sound. It's an atmosphere."

Morrison, 26, is now a star in Australia and often appears on talk shows. This year, in America, Atlantic released "Postcards From Down Under" and distributed "Swiss Encounter," a live quartet set with pianist Adam Makowicz at last year's Montreux Jazz Festival.

Morrison's band plays a variety of jazz styles. He plays trumpet, trombone, tuba, euphonium and saxophone. "This is the kind of guy I

am," he says. "Being 'sensible' would not be being me. Faking a front is the one thing a jazz musician can't do."

Morrison was born in Boorowa, where his father was a Methodist minister. After his grandfather died, they moved in with his grandmother in Sydney for six months, but stayed. Morrison's father took a job in television because the nearest church had a minister.

Morrison started performing in nightclubs at 13. "At 17," he says, "I met Don Burrows, Australia's best-known jazz musician. He asked me to join his quintet. I was introduced to an enormous audience. I toured with him six years, then got my own band."

This summer, Morrison played in Japan and Hong Kong and at Montreux again, with Dizzy Gillespie's All Stars in a tribute to the late Nesuhi Ertegun, who recorded "Swiss Encounter" for his East-West label.

Morrison will join an 18-piece band, put together by Philip Morris, for a three-month tour.

He'll play a number of instruments on his next album, Morrison says. He might do one big band number where he overdubs, playing everything but bass and drums.

"I would give people an idea of what I do," he says. "I don't like to make a circus out of the fact I play a number of instruments. The fact remains I do."

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