



Mrs. Lois Williams, bookmobile librarian, Stanly County Public Library, Albemarle, is shown as she makes a stop at one of the county schools.

BOOKMOBILE SERVICES IN STANLY COUNTY

The advent of the bookmobile acted as the most important stimulus in making the people of Stanly County library minded. This library consciousness was made possible by the happy combination of service and publicity which the bookmobile provides. Wherever the bright yellow truck, identified by the words "Free Library Service" appears, children point it out, county commissioners—considering their investment—keep a watchful eye, newspapers carry plans, record accomplishments, write of expansion. Best of all, new friends each week join the ever widening library circle.

Not once since the inauguration of bookmobile service have the county commissioners failed to meet the library appropriation request. Library Board members feel that this favorable attitude is due to the increased circulation, the broader coverage in service and in publicity, and to the improved public relations brought about by the bookmobile.

The Stanly County bookmobile is only four and a half years old. However, county folk had a preview of the service in 1939 when the North Carolina Library Commission bookmobile was loaned to Stanly for two months. Under the leadership of Evelyn Parks the drive for a bookmobile was successfully concluded in three short months, and an order for a truck was placed. Thanks to wartime shortages it was not until June, 1947, that a $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton truck was converted and placed in operation under the direction of Mrs. Elmina Hearne Surratt.

The truck maintains a rigorous daily schedule to private homes, rural schools, library branches, churches, stores, and other community centers. The same stop is visited once every four weeks in winter and every two weeks in summer. People often ask, "Do you keep going all winter?" Of course we do. People need books more in the winter time than in summer, and most places can be safely reached most of the time. Postponed trips are made up whenever possible. It has been estimated that the bookmobile travels a total of 525 miles a month in the process of making 78 stops, during which the bookmobile librarian gives direct service to individual readers.

Already the circulation of books from the bookmobile exceeds that of the main library in Albemarle. Last year the Albemarle library loaned 58,872 books, while the bookmobile circulated 67,165 books. In 1947 book stock amounted to 22,872 books. The Library Board did not deem this number adequate to meet the needs and demands of extension service. Feeling that the distribution of books is the first function of the public library the Board spent every available penny for books. Today the library owns 36,280 books. This is almost one volume per capita, and the Board is now considering the purchase of audio-visual materials. Although the library has not inaugurated a film program as yet, every effort is made to fill requests for films through the Bureau of Visual Education at the University and other film services.

The close relationship between the schools of Stanly County and the public library has always been emphasized. Every county school is included on the bookmobile schedule, with the majority of mornings being given over to school visits. Every effort is made to serve both teachers and students by supplying them with books correlated with their school work, by filling requests for materials on assembly programs, games for the playground, May Day and commencement exercises, and other extra-curricular activities. Teachers say that the children in isolated districts show much more eagerness for reading now than before the bookmobile brought them a good variety of books. It is comments like this that indicate that one of the greatest opportunities is to provide well-chosen books for the children in the rural schools where library facilities are, all too often, limited.

It is true that school programs have demanded and absorbed more and more time, leaving less to develop an adult program. However, through the Home Demonstration club reading project the library reaches many of the rural women, and an effort has

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been made to develop this project to its fullest extent. Each Home Demonstration club has a library leader; every January a leaders' training course is conducted at the main library. These women return to their communities to encourage and promote better reading for their neighbors. While the library deals largely with the women, relayed requests come from the men. "My husband wants a book on fence building," "Leave us some books on television for a neighbor," "Jim is in the field but he wants to renew that poultry book," is heard by the bookmobile librarian at every stop. The library staff is proud of the fact that at least one man has learned to read since the bookmobile started making its rounds, and now he is a regular patron.

In spite of this interest of rural adults it is felt that many others are not sufficiently aware that library service includes them. The idea that library work is primarily with schools and school children is being expanded to include an active bookmobile program for adults.

In the Ten Year Plan now being considered by the Library Board provision is being made for a professional bookmobile librarian who is qualified to develop bookmobile service for both children and adults to its fullest extent. Also in the plan is a larger and more fully equipped bookmobile. The Trustees are aware that good bookmobile service means personal contact with hundreds of people who would never otherwise be aware of their public library or what it has to offer; it is bringing the library to the people instead of hoping that they will come to the library; and, most important of all, it is putting service into action.

—Mrs. Marion M. Johnson, Librarian,
Stanly County Public Library, Albemarle