49 SNOWBOUND GUESTS

It could happen to you, if you live in the country. A sudden, heavy snowstorm strands cars or school buses on the highway passing your door. Their occupants make their way through the blizzard to your house and seek shelter for the night, food, warmth. What do you do? How do you handle this kind of an emergency? Country Living found out how one area family took care of 49 overnight guests from a snowbound school bus one night last month. Read their story below, because it could happen to you this month.

By Mary Davis
Country Living Staff Writer

The early November 1966 snow will be long remembered by all who live in western Ohio. Fifty-two boys and girls who attend Russia school and ride on the school bus driven by W. O. Livisay will never forget it.

The ground was nicely covered with the first snow of the season when folks got up on Wednesday morning, November 3. Snow kept lightly floating to the ground all forenoon. In the afternoon it snowed harder. The wind was blowing, too, and piling the snow into drifts.

When school was dismissed for the day some of the children wished they had worn boots. Girls wearing slippers carefully stepped in the tracks of others to try to keep their feet dry. It was getting colder, too. Someone thought, "If only I had worn gloves."

The bus plowed through the deep snow that covered the road and began to leave students off at their homes as usual. It was still snowing and getting colder. The drifts were becoming more solid. Four children had been delivered to their homes before the bus stopped at the Paul Voisard home to let out their four children. When Livisay started to pull away he found he was stuck. The older boys and driver worked an hour or more trying to get the bus out of the drifted snow. But the bus slid into the deep side ditch, lodging against the fence.

The Voisard home is only about a mile east of Russia on the Versailles-Russia road. Because of the heavy snow it was 5:30 when Ronald, 17, Gene, 16, Karen, 11, and Ricky, 8 got home. The older boys and their father worked with Livisay and other boys trying to get the bus on its way to take the students home.

About 6:30 Paul invited all 48 boys and girls left on the bus, and Mr. Livisay to come into the house.

It was supper time. Many of the children were used to having a snack after school to tide them over until supper. By this time they were nearly starved! Ernie Voisard keeps extra bread, rolls, cookies in the freezer, as well as their home-raised beef. She was glad she was prepared to feed unexpected guests. She got four packages of hamburger, about eight pounds, from the freezer and made barbecues.

Dale Voisard, an older son who recently returned home from training in the Air Force Reserve, had gone in to town at noon and bought 2 gallons of milk. There was another half gallon in the refrigerator. Some of the older girls helped Mrs. Voisard prepare and serve the supper of barbecue sandwiches, milk and cookies to all 52 boys and girls. First graders were fed first, then second graders, third graders, all the way up through high school students. Then Livisay, Mr. and Mrs. Voisard ate. There was enough for all.

Because of the heavy snow parents didn't expect their children to get home from school right on time. But when it grew dark and they still weren't home, people became worried. They called the school and other parents. No one knew where the school bus driven by W. O. Livisay, one of the Russia school teachers, was stranded.

A group of six men got a tractor and followed the route the bus took out of town. At 7 o'clock they found the bus stuck in the ditch near the Paul Voisard home. When they went into the house they saw the houseful of youngsters enjoying the evening together.

They went back to report to worried parents that all the children were safe, had a good supper and would have a warm place to sleep through the night.


Most of the snowbound students seemed to enjoy the unplanned party. One little one did get sick and wanted his

(continued on page 15)
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Volsard, pictured in their basement, where many of the boys and girls slept. Scene below shows some of the students boarding the bus on another snowy day under the supervision of E. O. Livisay, who teaches at Russia High School and who drives this bus.

(continued from page 14)

mother and daddy, though.

The biggest problem seemed to be getting in to the only bathroom. "The line never stopped," Paul remarked. "There were eight to ten at a time waiting their turn."

Ene and Paul Volsard were glad their walk-in cedar closet held several extra blankets. They put electric blankets on three of the beds so beds could be made on the floor with blankets and comforters.

There were 30 youngsters under 10 years of age. They were put in the three downstairs bedrooms, 10 to a room. Beds were scooted over against the wall to give more floor space. Blankets were spread on the floor to make another bed. Pillows were given to those who slept on the floor.

By lying cross-wise five small children could sleep in one bed or in the floor bed.

Having no night clothes most of the children wore their school clothes all night. The boys didn't mind, but the little girls didn't want to mess their dresses. So one roomful of little girls slept in their slips.

Ene Volsard told a reporter this story of the ten little boys who slept in one of the bedrooms. She had just got them all tucked in for the night—five in the bed and five on the floor, when one little fellow said, "We forgot to pray." All ten got up and said their prayers.

Then the tucking-in process was repeated.

The 15 high school girls and boys had to share the living room for sleeping. After the TV was turned off the boys took one end of the room and the girls the other. In the middle of the room were two rows of kids with their heads toward each other—one row was boys, the other girls. Others bunked in groups together, the girls in their half of the room, the boys in theirs.

Those girls and boys who fell in between the younger (continued on page 16)
49 Snowbound Guests

(continued from page 15) than ten or high school age groups slept in the Voisard basement. The floor was tiled and the large room furnished as a family room. Beds were made with comforters, blankets and sleeping bags. Mr. Livisay spent the night with the group down here.

Late Wednesday night, the townspeople did get a call through to the Voisards telling them they would try to get food out for breakfast. Paul and Erna doubted that anyone would be able to get through the miles of snow that lay between Russia and their farm that early in the morning.

Erna had just bought five dozen eggs the day before the snow, so when the children awoke she served them fried eggs, the last of the bread, and grapefruit juice. Some had wieners rolls with their eggs when the bread supply became exhausted. There was no milk for breakfast. If she had thought ahead Erna would have tried to save some so she could have had pancakes for breakfast instead of just the children have it all to drink for supper the night before. When breakfast was over there were six eggs left.

Some of the older girls helped with cleaning up the kitchen after breakfast. Others supervised the play of the younger ones in the basement. They played group games like Ring-Around-the-Rosy.

At 11 a.m. Thursday food arrived from town. Five men rode out on a tractor holding on to boxes of food and shovels. Five others, including Father Wilferd, walked following the tractor. At times the shovels had to be used even to make it through with the tractor.

By this time the Voisard food supply was getting low. The cold meat, wieners, bread, doughnuts and cookies made a good dinner for the snowbound children. There were coloring books, crayons and bubble gum for the little ones, too.

After bringing the food to the Voisard home and checking on the stranded schoolbus the group of men went back to town to get more equipment and men. Forty men came with two tractors. They hitched the tractors to the front of the bus, one behind the other to pull on the front of the bus. The men all pushed and they got the bus back on the road.

The children were all loaded into the bus at about 1 p.m. Thursday, and with the two tractors pulling and the large group of men pushing when necessary they made it back to Russia. An open house.

By Thursday night the children were all delivered to their homes. Grateful parents took a collection among themselves and purchased a gift certificate from Uhlman’s department store in Sidney which they gave to Paul and Erna Voisard in appreciation for the care they gave their children.