

Medical Care Comes to the COAL COUNTRY

by Jerry Klein



Where modern medical care never existed, Mine Workers' hospitals like this one at Man, W. Va., now serve many families.



Their mining years total 115, yet hospital keeps them healthy.

Modern laboratories are an integral part of complete medical services.

Mine Workers' infant mortality program offers hundreds of babies a better chance to live.

TO WREST COAL from the depths of the earth, men always have gambled their health and safety. Many have lost the gamble and perished. But all too often, even those who escaped sudden death have had to live out their lives in hopelessness and pain because proper medical care was not available in many small-town mining areas.

A decade ago the United Mine Workers Welfare and Retirement Fund—financed entirely by the mine operators—began to bring men with broken bodies down out of the mountains to metropolitan hospitals. Recently, the UMW opened its own chain of modern hospitals in the mining country, an achievement which won an Albert Lasker Award from the American Public Health Association.

Located in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia, these 10 hospitals were dedicated to the service of 400,000 miners and their families. Costing more than \$25 million, the hospitals have about 1,000 beds. The largest is Beckley (W.Va.) Memorial, with facilities for 200 patients.

One of the first miners to receive help was a Kentuckian whose spine was broken 15 years ago. Lacking money for professional care or drugs, he hadn't seen a doctor in more than three years. There was no road to his home, so he was carried down the mountain to the hospital on a blanket slung between two poles.

As the hospitals were dedicated, the Rev. Frederick Brown Harris, Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, said in his invocation: "We thank Thee for patriots who dream of an America which in social betterment shall go from glory to glory. . . . We thank Thee today for the growing determination that private greed must give way to social gains."

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