

The Mountain Fund
Linda Neville Manager,
722 West Main Street
Lexington, Kentucky

July 16th 1942

Dr. Kathryn Maxfield
New York City

Dear Miss Maxfield ;

I wish I had news from you and your precious mother. There are a few persons still living who, now one, now another, have been with me sympathetically in moments of great stress. The superintendent of a Catholic hospital once years ago came along the corridor to find me - I was alone - and to tell me that the surgeon still in the operating room had found my sister's condition hopeless. I recall the spirit she showed and her efforts to console me. And that day in Dr. Berens' office when I was in the agony of awaiting his pronouncement about David's eyes, your mother was there with me. I shall always love her for going into New York with me that day.

My failure to write to you in recent months may have seemed strange to you. For a good many months I had been aware of something wrong with my health but I had gone my work day by day with utter persistence. On February twenty-first I underwent an emergency appendectomy and though the appendix was "red hot" I recovered from the operation easily and quickly and I was again at my work after fifteen days. And now vitamin capsules seem to be supplying me with fresh strength.

All the time every day the prevention of blindness uses up a good deal of my strength. It goes along successfully. Read on pages 140 and 141 of the June Sight-Saving Review what the State Department of Health has written about the work.

But all along the care of David is my avocation. And although the care of him uses up my strength and although the distress I feel about his blindness brings me at times to a state of pending inactivity I yet rebound and I say to myself that but for David my life personally would be sadly empty.

The fact is that David is an unfailing source of joy to me. The personality that before me you discovered is one of unfailing charm. David is a child of charming personality. He has a great zest for living, is never apathetic and with encouragement from me he finds new experiences right along to enjoy.

The piano teacher, a charming young lady who was a student in the music department of the University of Kentucky enabled David to make progress.

The thirteen year-old blind girl who lives with me in the summers between sessions at the Blind School offers real comradeship to David. She helps him along with the Braille.

And now I am about to begin to teach both to use the Braille typewriters I bought the the American Foundation in this past winter. But I must first teach myself, and for my own guidance I have made out the Braille alphabet with pencilled dots about an eighth of an inch in diameter. With that chart by the typewriter I am getting control of my fingers in the typing.

From Linda Neville

To Dr. Kathryn Maxfield

David has association at play with several children, a boy of about six a girl of eight and a boy of ten, all with good sight all healthy and active. This minute David and the two boys are enjoying the two tricycles, which are passing back and forth in my lower halls. Now David is guiding one - and he guides it well - and again he stands on the step with his arms around a boy's neck. All goes merrily. David has no sense of being unequal to any part in the play. At this moment the little girl turns on David's electric phonograph to play "Remember Pearl Harbor", which came in new yesterday. Try though I do to keep jazz and swing and Hill Billy music from David I now and then yield in the matter of a popular record.

David and I owe so much to you. I wish I could know that all is going well with your mother.

And I wish I knew about the Research Council about blind children. Have you issued any publications? If so can they be procured through the American Foundation? I am anxious to buy from whatever source all the enlightenment possible for me and David.

A Lexington young man Mr. Garret McClung who was a teacher in the New York Institute For The Blind this past winter has shown an active interest in David. A professor in the Psychology Department of the University of Kentucky paid David a visit one day last winter and cheered me by saying that he thought I was doing a "magnificent job".

I am planning not to send David to the State School for the Blind this coming fall. I realize that familiarity with Braille must be acquired by David this coming fall. I think I can procure that for him through a private instructor. I am thinking that I may be able to transcribe the primer lesson of the Lexington public Schools and go and then perhaps regularly take David to the primer class near my home and to let him get the advantage of competition. What I do not want for him this fall is to entrust him to the State School, there to be housed with boys and there to be brought up segregated as to sex and segregated as to sight. I believe I can do more for him in Lexington and that I can give him here an ever-widening perspective. I believe you would be delighted at the scope of David's interests and that you would agree with me that if I can procure the technical instruction in Braille I had best not wrench him from a home in which he is so truly wanted, in which he is conscious of his own part.

Newspaper reports do not always please me throughout, especially when words are ascribed to me that I never used. I have no money with which to pay for annual reports and I accept the offers of free publicity.

With love

Yours

Linda Neville

Dear Francis Ingram: This Miss Maxfield was the head of the nursery school (now closed) to which I took David when he was a baby. I send the copy to you to let you have another glimpse of the little David - L. Neville

Mr, West Main St., Lexington Ky., July 29, 1942

Dear, dear Francis Ingram: I am almost at the weeping point, so much do I long to be with you, friend of many years. I do not recall just the date of your latest letter to me. It was probably Christmas time. I do so much want present-day news of you and yours. Please write. And please tell me if there is any hope of your being able to come to Kentucky. I do want a good long visit - of weeks - from you here in my home - Is there any hope?

February 21 I submitted to an emergency appendectomy - the appendix was "red hot" - Even though I already had a bad cold I avoided pneumonia and I got through fast and easily - and in all I lost only about fifteen days from my work - I am weak - but Vitamin

Capoules work wonders - giving me strength and I am about up but not off yet out. I am busy here in the house ~~books~~ I have little strength to spend in running about.

The W.P.A. pays a secretary to assist me -

Mrs Aug 9, 1942

Dorothy Linda Hull

Amplified

The Mountain Fund
Linda Neville Manager
722 West Main Street
Lexington, Kentucky

October, 30, 1941.

A Public Health Nurse's Prompt ^{Efficient} and Unselfish Service.

From time to time through these thirty-three years of my work for the prevention of blindness in Kentucky I have had the privilege of seeing some public health nurse or other rendering to needy eye-sufferers service prompt efficient and unselfish service.

I have just had such a privilege; and now at ten o'clock in the morning of this day, October 30th, physically tired and emotionally depressed though I am ^{I am} finding comfort in thinking about Mrs. Anna Jane Halbert, the public health nurse of the Menifee Co. Health Department in Kentucky. From a sense of gratitude for such service I want to record it now.

At half-past one yesterday afternoon at my home in Lexington I received a long distance telephone call from Frenchburg, Menifee County. A woman there was trying to tell me something, because of faulty connections for some time after each sentence of hers I would say, "I don't hear" and again I would say "I don't hear, ^{the} let doctor speak." Finally this was what I understood: A nurse or a clerk in the Health Department office wanted me to accept as a patient under the Mountain Fund an eight-year old boy who had through injury lost the sight of one eye last year and was now threatened with ^{permanent} blindness in the other eye. There was an emergency. The child's parents were indigent. And in a few sentences the speaker at the telephone made me understand that an effort would be made to comply with my request that the child reach my home in Lexington in ample time for me if I should see fit, to start with him on a four-fifty-five train to Louisville.

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I sought and secured from the Bus Company a pass for "Linda Neville and child to Louisville and return", for it might be that the child should arrive in Lexington too late for me to catch the train (on which I had a pass myself) and if the case were one of real emergency I should need to take the first bus to Louisville.

At about four-thirty or a little later there arrived at my door the child, called "Junior", his parents and ^{the} a woman who had been speaking over the telephone, none other than a lady with whom I had enjoyed working on another occasion, Mrs. Anna Jane Halbert, Public health nurse.

By the time I had heard the history of the child's suffer-ings it seemed to me unwise to try to catch the train, there were so few minutes. To start at seven-thirty on a bus might do, and I might reach St. Joseph Infirmary in Louisville by ten-thirty and have the child ready to be examined by the oculist or his assistant during the early morning visitation to the Infirmary. But after a full account by the parents and Mrs. Halbert of the details of the case I was afraid to ^{let be} postpone ^d until morning the initial examination by the Louisville oculist. Thereupon Mrs. Halbert who seemed equally afraid offered to drive us all to Louisville. With her we might start an hour before the first bus should start and we might hope to reach the Infirmary in time for us to let the oculist visit the child at once upon arrival without our seeming to be too selfish towards the oculist. So, I had a second talk by long distance with him and he offered to make a special trip to the Infirmary to examine the child there at ten oclock that night.

Such confusion at my home for the next few minutes. Mrs. Halbert by telephone was trying to get from our Easter ⁿ State Hospital

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for the Insane a report about the condition of a Menifee County woman to carry back to her husband and was failing- the doctor was at his supper and she was arranging with the young girl in my home to seek the report after our departure and to have it ready for Mrs. Halbert on her return from Louisville. I was trying to impress upon this same young girl what she should do if in my absence on the trip my cousin should take a turn for the worse at the hospital where she is in a critical condition. And while this young girl in my home was listening to the report Mrs. Halbert was saying about getting the report from the insane woman and to what I was saying about proceeding with arrangements in behalf of my cousin critically ill this young girl in my home was trying to understand what I was advising her do in preparation for the two parents and Mrs. Halbert as part-of- the- night guests at my house upon the return from Louisville. And the fifteen-year-old boy who lives in my home to help me with David was getting down my hand bag from the high-up place in which I keep it and doing one little errand after another for me. And my little David was trying to learn about the little boy and asking to be allowed to touch him. And the father was riding the little boy back and fourth in my front hall holding the little boy on David's tricycle. The mother was there the only one of us not making a commotion, she was quiet in control of her agony of soul. And I, ^{even though} not knowing that Mrs. Halbert and the parents had not eaten anything since breakfast was between my bits of advice to the young girl in my home busying myself over some sort of hasty lunch. I recall now that after putting the water on to boil for making dripped coffee I forgot about the water and even forgot to get out coffee from the press. But the young girl in my home who usually keeps her wits when mine get scattered must have made the

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coffee. I recall that Mrs. Halbert was in my kitchen drinking coffee.

As for me there seemed no time for me to beautify my costume by sewing the neck band and the sleeve bands in or even to look for a pretty pin, a great big safety pin which was at hand would hold the gaping waist together and the oculist in Louisville would not see the safety pin for in his presence I would keep my coat fastened in front. My personal appearance seemed to be so unimportant to me while the little boy was in the plight in which he was.

On the three hour trip to Louisville while the boy was asleep I listened to the parents as they told me what had happened to him since that day November thirtieth 1940, when his right eye had been literally crushed by a stick during play with his brother.

The morning after the accident the parents poor as they were had taken this child to a town about twenty miles from their home to an oculist. The oculist had given treatment but so far as the parents understood had not advised enucleation. The on September twenty-third of this year ^{there was} the/pain in the other eye and the parents took him soon to the same oculist, and they took him back several times. On last Saturday October 25th. during a visit to that oculist he entrusted them with certain drops to be applied at home ^{he} and advised that the child be brought back to him on Wednesday October twenty-ninth and intimated if he did not positively say that if on Wednesday there were no improvement in the vision which was almost gone he would be able to do nothing more. The oculist had talked about iritis and had told the parents that the drops were used by him in his effort to dilate the pupil.

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Wednesday morning, the day before yesterday Mrs. Halbert drove the parents and the boy to West Liberty in Morgan County twenty or more miles the other side of Frenchburg from Lexington. Dr. Sory of the Trachoma Hospital was to be at West Liberty, holding an examining clinic for people with trachoma. He might have some good advice to give the parents.

His advice was that they should seek me as soon as possible that I might find professional treatment for the boy before it was too late. Accordingly Mrs. Halbert brought the parents and the boy back to Frenchburg and with the approval of the medical director of the Public Health Department she communicated with me by long distance telephone as I have said above.

Mrs. Halbert was advised by some one to let the parents in their own car bring the child to me at Lexington. But this big-hearted nurse did not want to let them start out in their car which had, I believe she said, had no tires on the wheels: And besides she did not want to let them alone in their distress make the trip to a place like Lexington strange to them. Without stopping for lunch she brought them to Lexington in her own car. At the time ^{that night when} we reached St. Joseph Infirmary in Louisville I had such a realization of the tragedy in its many phases that I was quite desolate in heart.

The great hearted oculist ^{came to us there, the} of great skill, the oculist who through the years has done as a labor of love for the needy eye-sufferers whom I have sent to him work that has brought many, oh so many, out of darkness and many, oh so many, out of pain. but I had little hope that even he could do much more for the boy than hold him to keep the least little bit of sight that was still left, possible I believe that the boy would have to get used to stumbling his way

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along. and that he would go stumbling through life.

And the doctor held out hope for very little help for the boy. What help there might be for him must be offered quickly. Medical treatment began at once. The right eye, the offending eye would be taken out this morning.

And when I found how important haste seemed to the oculist I appreciated Mrs. Halbert more than ever. I like to think how unselfishness she had offered to make the long trip to Louisville at night in order to get the boy to the oculist that night, instead of the next morning.

And when I think what that night trip actually meant to her tired as she already was, when I think of the ^{return} drive that began at Louisville ~~that~~ began at about eleven o'clock and would not end at Frenchburg until about five o'clock with her at the steering wheel steadily for six weary hours at first thought I am inclined towards her because of her fatigue, but upon second thought not sympathy I have for her but a heartfelt congratulation to her for the satisfaction she must feel in having worked promptly and efficiently and unselfishly in behalf of a little child ^{so} afraid because not seeing.

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Mrs. Halbert is a Reserve Nurse of the American Red Cross pledged, I believe, to answer a call to service for our Government.

Whether committed to our Government for the duration or committed to the service of Menifee county people she gives earnest of ^a continued sensibility. a sensibility like that which actuated her yesterday in behalf of the little boy in his blindness.

Linda Nevill

Linda Nevill

Executive worker for the

Prevention of Blindness in Kentucky

55226

PIONEERING AGAINST BLINDNESS IN THE KENTUCKY MOUNTAINS
--- THE STORY OF LINDA NEVILLE

Submitted by Isabelle M. Lyman, Anchorage, Kentucky

(Written in 1937 or 1938)

There is a pall that hangs over the Kentucky Mountains, a dark cloud that casts its shadow across the landscape in the noonday sun, and obscures the glory of sunsets among the hills. Sometimes whole families huddle together in darkness after it has laid its blight upon them: little children stretch out helpless hands to ward off the pain, and strong men hide their eyes from the light of the sun. It is the shadow of the "blindness", - treachery, the scourge of the mountains.

A stately gray-haired Kentucky woman has done more, perhaps, than any other person to lift the pall from them that sit in darkness. She is Miss Linda Neville, and the record of her work is a story of endless human endeavor. As she sat in the parlor of her ancestral home in Lexington, Kentucky, holding little blind David on her lap, she told me the story of her adventures through the years.

Linda Neville is a daughter of an old Kentucky family. Born and reared in the Bluegrass, she graduated from Bryn Mawr in 1895, and returned home to devote herself to what was then called "charity work." She was interested in prison reform, family service and hospitals, but it was not until one August day in 1907 that she came accidentally upon what was to be her life work.

She attended a luncheon at the country home of a friend, and here she heard the story of Lulu, a nineteen-year old girl from Oneida, in the Kentucky mountains, whom a Lexington woman had brought to the Bluegrass in the hope that oculists might restore her sight. Three specialists in turn had examined Lulu's eyes, and each pronounced her hopelessly blind. Linda thought of her father's long fight against

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blindness. It had been a winning fight, because he was able to secure the services of a skilled oculist from the time his eyes were affected; but Lulu's condition had been going on for at least a year before any thing was done, and now it was too late.

Linda Neville visited Lulu, hoping that she might say something that would help the girl, but she was so overcome by this, her first contact with blindness, that she said very little, and came away believing that the visit had been a failure.

Linda kept up her acquaintance with Lulu all the following year. Then she heard that the girl's father was losing his sight, evidently from the ravages of trachoma, the painful, highly communicable eye disease which accounts for a large percentage of all blindness.

Linda Neville immediately wrote to a settlement worker in the mountains, asking for information about the man's condition. The word came back that there was not a single doctor in that part of Eastern Kentucky that could make a tentative diagnosis to assist a Lexington oculist to determine if it would be worth while to bring the sufferer to Lexington for treatment.

A whole year went by. In the summer of 1908, Linda went to Hindman, Kentucky, to visit the W.C.T.U. Settlement School. (This famous school was organized in 1803, headed by Katherine Pettit, and later starred by Lucy Furman in her book, "Square Women") It was her first trip to the mountains- a long, tiresome, "jolsome" journey on the slow-moving local, then a forty-five mile wagon jaunt over over unmade roads and greek beds from the railway station to the school. In Hindman, Linda talked freely with the mountain people as they came

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to the Settlement for advise and help. Among them were a great company of the blind and the near-blind, men, women and children with eye disease, pitifully groping their way with eyes heavily shaded, fearful of the light. Some of them were fathers, gaunt, bearded men with the look of beaten animals about them, led along by the hands of little children to whom they might always be a burden. Some of these sufferers were children of school age who could not take "book learning" because they could not see the printed page, nor read the "figgers" on the wall. Many of this great company were women, sun bonnets pulled low to shade their eyes; women full of resignation at the "visitation of the Lord." Often the tears of these infected mothers fell down into the eyes of the half-blind babies they held in their arms.

When Linda Neville returned home she brought with her her first patient. As soon as this little girl was well, another one came. The second child returned to Hindman, her sight restored, able for the first time to see the world in which she lived, and to look into the faces of her family and friends. Light for darkness! Sight to the blind! Thus Linda Neville's work for the prevention of blindness began.

Miss Neville had no idea that she was starting a "movement" when she welcomed into her home these first small visitors from the hills. She talked to her friends, however, about the people who were going blind. They caught her enthusiasm, and money began coming in to help bring patients down to Lexington. Out of these voluntary contributions and more to come, Linda Neville created the Mountain Fund for Needy Eye Sufferers. This Fund has never amounted to more than a thousand dollars in any one year, but it has not had to stand alone. Physicians

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oculists, dentists and surgeons of Lexington and other parts of the State, have co-operated to the limit in performing services free of charge for Mountain Fund patients, and hospitals take care of them for reduced fees, or no fee at all. Linda Neville told her story to the railroads, and they gave free transportation, even in this day of railroad depression.

These first patients were leaders of a procession that stretches through the years into the present- a long line of sufferers, courageous, hopeful, inspired by confidence in the "charitable lady" who said, "Everybody with sore eyes, come." The "charitable lady" has received in the past thirty years hundreds of letters from way up in the hills, letters on all kinds of paper, in all kinds of writing and spelling, but all carrying the same message, a deep human cry for the light. Among the first was a typical letter from a thirteen-year old ^{boy}, which read "To the lady who looks after Blind Children, Lexintan, Kintucky, Dere lady, Me and Lu Arky is Blind, Kan you let we uns come to the skule fer Blind Children .

Many of these people had never been beyond their own hollows, and some of them were terrified at their first sight of a train. One woman rode thrity miles on horseback to the nearest station but when the train swept in, belching fire and thunder from its giant belly, she took one look, wheeld her horse and rode home ! Her fourteen year neighbor, however, endowed with the courage of youth, 'lowed he wasn't " in no ways afeard", it was "jist like settin' at home".

Linda Neville's special agents in the mountains were the small denominational schools, run by "furriners" from "down below". She authorized them to send emergency cases to Lexington even

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without notifying her, and the big house at 722 West Main Street was always ready to receive them. One day the hostess returned home to find a neighbor seated on the front steps with a five day old baby in her arms. The child had ophthalmia neonatorum, a blinding gonorrhoeal infection, which attacks children at birth. The mother and a deputy sheriff had brought the baby down and left it for treatment.

Some times the Neville home was full of patients waiting their turns at the hospitals. The house and its surroundings were a source of perpetual wonder to these simple people, who were accustomed to living, eight or ten in family, in one or two room mountain cabins, with a feather bed in each corner, a dim oil lamp to see with after dark, and a great open fireplace to keep the temperature at 80° in winter, within the "chunked" newspaper-covered walls.

At the Neville "hospital" there were days of heart-ache when kindly interest and scientific care failed, and patients had to be sent home again, in darkness, as they had come. Linda Neville and her loyal helpers suffered with these people as they took unto themselves the destiny of the blind:

"O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrevocable dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day."

There were minor discouragements too. Homesick patients sometimes left in the midst of treatment. One lad was determined to hit the trail home, whether or no. Linda tried all the tricks she knew to change his mind. Finally she sat down by his side and told him the story of Helen Keller. The homesick one listened courteously for a while, then he said with conviction, "I see you're a-layin' me a parable, but I'm

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aimin' to go home tomorrow anyways'

In spite of failures and discouragements, the rewards of this deeply personal case work have always been great. Miss Neville sees many of her patients return to their homes with sight restored and pain removed. Some of them walk, for the first time, head erect, looking at the light. Children who do not remember that they have ever been able to see, know at last the joy and freedom of play. She tells the story of a little girl who took her first walk down a Lexington street, after an operation had given her sight. They came to some common English sparrows hopping about on the sidewalk, and the child cried in ecstasy, "see thim birds! Thim gentle city birds! They don't throw at em here like they do at home."

Following the death of their father in 1909, Linda Neville and her sister went to Europe for an indefinite stay. All during the trip, Linda's thought turned to the hundreds of needy mountain people who, without treatment, faced almost inevitable blindness. She was cheered to learn that the first mountain eye clinic was to be held that summer, by Dr. William Offutt, in the new hospital at Buckhorn.

Soon after her return from abroad, she received letters from two eminent persons in the field of prevention of blindness, urging that she initiate a permanent organization in Kentucky. The suggestion came from Dr. Park Lewis, Chairman of the Committee on Ophthalmis of the American Medical Association, and Miss Louisa Lee Schuyler, Chairman of the Committee on Prevention of Blindness of the Russell Sage Foundation.

In June 1910, Dr. Lewis and two representatives of the Foundation visited Lexington, and assisted in the formation of the Kentucky Society for the Prevention of Blindness. A number of promi-

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ment medical and lay persons became members of the Board. The actual work of the organization was carried on by the Executive Secretary, Linda Neville, and a leading Lexington oculist, Dr. J.A. Stucky.

The purpose of the society was to "investigate the causes of preventable blindness, and, in co-operation with the medical profession, to take all possible steps to eliminate such causes." The co-operation of the medical profession was offered immediately. The State Board of Health, under the leadership of Dr. J.N. McCormack, cordially endorsed the the Society's program, and from then on much of the credit for blindness prevention belongs to members of the Board, who gave freely of their time and skill in formulating legislative bills, helping to conduct clinics, and giving professional advice and assistance along various lines. Many letters from Dr. J.N. McCormack are in Linda Neville's files of these early years. In every important step, both he and Dr. Stucky were at her side. (L.N.'s addition) "Often she would say ahead of her, leading her."

Facts regarding the prevalence of trachoma and and possibilities of cure were little known in Kentucky outside of medical circles; thus education appeared to be the first logical step. Linda Neville sought to inform herself; then she talked, wrote, pled with the people of the State for recognition of her cause. She appealed to the Kentucky Medical Association, the Kentucky Education Association, the State Federation of Women's Clubs, and similar groups, and these organizations pledged their support. She spent long hours at her typewriter, composing for publication articles throbbing with human interest and the imperative of her own conviction. Of this phase of the work she once wrote "This is Kentucky's problem". I am doing everything I can to make

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prevention of blindness an intergal part of every social movement in the State. I am getting myself invited to clubs, missionary societies, meetings, and banquets, and am insisting on telling what is going on in unknown parts of Kentucky. Sometimes I have been quite disagreeable about it, and once at a large meeting it was found that I had no right to be speaking at all. So I had to stop, though I had ever so much more to say."

Dr. Stucky decided in 1911 to make a trip through the vicinity of Hazard, in "Bloody Breathitt", the wildest and "killin' at" part of the Kentucky mountains, to investigate the causes of trachoma. In two days he examined one hundred cases, of which twenty-five had trachoma or some other infectious disease of the eyes. He followed up the investigation with a clinic at Hindman. Here he examined four hundred persons, and again twenty-five percent were infected. In forty of these cases vision was hopelessly impaired, and many were totally blind.

An important event occurred in 1912. The United States Public Health Service detailed Dr. John McMullen to make a study of trachoma in the Kentucky mountains. Out of thirty-five counties investigated Dr. McMullen estimated that there were thirty-three thousand cases of trachoma. In Breathitt County alone, twelve hundred cases were discovered. The investigation was followed by the establishment of three Federal hospitals in Kentucky for trachoma patients of which one, later at Richmond and now run by the State Board of Health, is still in operation.

The years 1912 to 1919 were busy ones for Linda Neville and her helpers. Important Kentucky legislation was passed regarding the discovery and treatment of ophthalmia neonatorum, and the sale of wood alcohol products, which cause blindness. The Board of Health

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offered to send free of charge silver nitrate solution to any of the State's twenty-three hundred midwives who would use it in the eyes of the new-born babies, as protection against the disease, and a number of midwives responded. (A typed letter from one co-operative soul read "Dear Miss, I am a midwife and a widow so please send me some drops",) During these years clinics were conducted throughout the mountains, and conservation of vision classes begun in Louisville for children with poor eyesight. By this time Miss Neville was at home on the legislative floors. She had learned the tricks of the trade, such as getting around recalcitrant committee chairman by changing one line of a bill, and having it submitted to a new committee. Once she had inveigled leaders of three Kentucky parties, Democratic, Republican and Progressive, to incorporate into their platforms promises of support for the prevention of blindness work; and the Republican delegate had even gone to Chicago "instructed" to try for a national plank. Meanwhile pamphlets, speeches, exhibits and stereoptican slides told the story of "the blindness".

Linda Neville worked on the staff of the American Red Cross from 1919 to 1935. In this capacity she was a sort of a medical John the Baptist, going ahead and preparing the people for the clinics to follow. In these clinics the Red Cross, the United States Public Health Service and the State Board of Health co-operated. It was Miss Neville's responsibility in this, her one and only "paying job" to arrange all details of the business. Many times she arrived in the county-seat on mule back, wagon loads of cots, bedclothing and bandages trailing in her wake. She would marshal the townspeople, sweep out the court house, set up her cots, and have water hauled from the river for boiling. Then she would send messengers to proclaim throughout the country that there was going to be a clinic, and everybody with eye ailments should come.

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These were days of humor, pathos, and hard work, in the midst of the bustle, Linda often took time out to do all kinds of jobs, such as sitting on a high stool in the office of a local editor, helping him sort out type for the printing of clinic posters! She discovered many eye patients who needed ^{extensive} more treatment than the clinic could give, and as manager of the Mountain Fund, she brought a number of them back to Lexington with her.

The Kentucky Legislature in 1920 passed a bill creating a Bureau of Trachoma in the State Department of Health, and appropriating \$ 13,000 annually for the prevention of blindness work.

Miss Neville retired from the Red Cross in 1924, after five years of service and was appointed to the Kentucky Board of Charities and Corrections. This work brought her in close touch with the prisons, reform schools and mental hospitals of the State, and she became very much interested in the problem of venereal disease, an important cause of blindness. Disregarding the opprobrium that was sure to fall, (for "social diseases" were then only spoken of in private), she made opportunities for herself to talk to men's meetings and women's clubs about venereal disease. She believed that the ministers of the country were partly responsible for its spread, because of the general practice of marrying persons indiscriminately, without requiring clean bills of health. She turned to the Episcopal Diocese of Lexington and then to the Kentucky Diocese of the Episcopal Church (her own denomination), and secured their support in anticipation of a marriage bill soon to be submitted to the Legislature. The Disciples of Christ, a large and influential denomination, also offered their support. The State Legislature in 1936 passed the bill requiring all persons applying for marriage license to undergo examinations for syphilis and gonorrhoea.

Pioneering Against Blindness in the Kentucky Mountains

Isabell M. Lyman

After thirty years of effort, Linda Neville knows the problem of blindness in the Kentucky Mountains is by no means solved. Her pioneering has helped bring the situation to light, and gradually modern health and social agencies are taking hold. Public Health nurses are now stationed in the mountain areas, working along lines similar to those of the district nurses in the cities. But for every patient who receives treatment, at least a hundred ought to have it. Some are kept from their opportunity because they do not know that free hospital care for mountain sufferers exists. Others stay home because of lethargy or fear; and a few probably still believe that the blindness is a visitation from God, against which one must not rebel. Still others are waiting at home while the light grows dim, (because in spite of an additional appropriation of twenty-five hundred dollars by the State Board of Health) there isn't enough money to go around.

As a member of the Advisory Committee of the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Miss Neville in April, 1938 appeared before the Congressional Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce in Washington, in behalf of the venereal disease control bill. She told the congressmen, among other things, about David, the little twenty-six months old orphan boy, blinded by an early infection.

David is now a healthy, attractive highly intelligent (wonderful child" adds Miss Neville) child with real promise for the future; She told them that she had often imagined how parents must feel when their children lost their sight, but now that she had become a mother" at sixty-three, she realized for the first time their anguish. " It comes over me," she said that my baby is in blind blackness and the blindness ought not to have been".

Pioneering Against Blindness in the Kentucky Mountains

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Miss Neville visions for the future a home and nursery school for little sightless children like David, where they can be taught early to take care of themselves and to know the world around them, through their sense of touch. (And of hearing adds Miss Neville)

A judge in one of the mountain counties stood on the court house steps one day and told the people in a very loud voice, of Linda Neville; "She's genuine". She appreciates this tribute, I believe, as she does the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Memorial, established by the New York Southern Society, and presented to her by the University of Kentucky, for outstanding service to the State. The inscription reads: " And never yet was anything so artistic as a beautiful life ,"

The Filson Historical Society

Courier Journal, Magazine Section, Sunday, July 5, 1942

She's Kentucky's Angel of the Blind

Living with "Miss Linda" now is a boy who doesn't realize that he can't see

By MALCOLM PATTERSON
Wide World Writer

MISS LINDA NEVILLE of Lexington, often called "Kentucky's angel of the blind," is rounding out thirty-three years of work for the prevention and cure of blindness among the state's indigents by centering her attention upon what she fondly calls a by-product of that labor.

Miss Neville explained her new interest as the "branching out of an old maid—I'm 69, you know—from the work I've followed for years."

The by-product is sturdy, red-headed 6-year-old David Neville DeVary, Eastern Kentucky boy who doesn't know his eyes are sightless. He was taken to her home in Lexington by Miss Neville after his indigent mother died.

"I call him a by-product because the principal work of our 'mountain fund' deals with the preventing or curing of trachoma, that dreaded eye disease, rather than the care of the blind," she said.

David is the first child she has taken to rear in the three-story red brick house, although hundreds of others have been given care there for short periods. Little Johanna Pennington, 12-year-old blind girl who attends the Kentucky School for the Blind in Louisville, just arrived at "Miss Linda's" for her vacation.

Miss Neville says she "just fell into the work for the blind after being shocked by the need for it while on a pleasure trip through the Kentucky mountains in 1908." Returning home, she discussed with friends the plight of poverty-stricken blind people in the mountains, and shortly afterward, with a \$25 donation of a friend, she started the "mountain fund."

Miss Neville said she never had to worry about personal finances since her father, the late John H. Neville, University of Kentucky professor (a U. of K. building bears his name), "was a good provider, so we always had enough to live on."

"The mountain fund's only requirement was and is that the person needing treatment be indigent, which we annually determine with the aid of county officials," explained Miss Neville. She asserted she started "from scratch," having had no training in welfare work.

"I was taught by private tutors until I entered what was then Kentucky University, which I left to go to Bryn Mawr, where I was graduated in 1895."

SHE then became engaged in welfare work but had no special interests until she started to work with and for the blind. For five years she was also a Red Cross field representative, specializing in trachoma clinics. She remained free, however, to carry on her mountain fund independently. The fund then was supported by contributions from private citizens.

"Much of my work then consisted of propagandizing for the blind cause and lobbying for it," Miss Neville said. In 1914, she and friends drafted a bill to require reports to the State Board of Health on babies with diseased eyes. She heard that a legislator intended to intro-



David, the 6-year-old blind boy whom Miss Linda Neville has taken into her home, sits upon her lap to hear a story. Two playmates also listen.

duce a bill for the protection of hogs.

"I went to him before the bill was to come up and asked him to mention the cause of the blind while speaking for his bill. He did, and both bills were passed."

For years, as treasurer and manager of the fund, Miss Neville said, she never had more than \$1,000 at one time for operating expenses. "However," she added, "hospitals gave us reduced prices for beds, doctors gave free medical services; railroads, and later bus lines, gave us passes for indigent patients."

Since 1934, the state legislature has appropriated money to supplement her private fund, starting with \$1,000 and increasing the annual amount to \$2,500 in 1935 and thereafter. This additional money is used to pay hospital and medical bills and to buy eyeglasses and artificial eyes.

Several years ago Miss Neville quit traveling and today carries on her work

by telephone, telegraph and mail from the office in her home.

Today David has the run of the house and spacious grounds, site of the home where Miss Neville was born in 1873.

Since David is 6, he has started to "school" with Miss Neville teaching him braille and occasionally taking him to kindergarten. She bought two braille typewriters for him and Johanna the week before sales were frozen. He also is receiving music lessons. His piano teacher says he'll have perfect pitch.

Miss Neville was talking when the chubby youngster, clad in a bathing suit, ran into the room and exclaimed:

"Mama Linda, I smell smoke!"

"You have a visitor, David," she explained. "It's his cigarette." Then in an aside she added, "I know I'll have to tell him he's blind, but I hope to put that off as long as possible, and teach him all I can, so he will better understand."

Mussolini Decrees Its Sovereignty Over Ethiopia Proclaims A Reborn

*Fatherless, Motherless, Homeless And Blind,
This Baby Is In Need Of Friends And Funds*



MISS LINDA NEVILLE AND BLIND BOY

Four^{teen} weeks old, homeless, fatherless, fatherless and blind—a baby is holding out his arms appealingly to the citizens of Lexington, asking not for a fair chance—just for half a chance to live and enjoy life.

The infant is being cared for at the home of Miss Linda Neville, 722 west Main street who has given 28 years of her life to succoring those threatened by blindness. She is asking the people of Fayette county and central Kentucky to donate small sums to establish a trust fund for this blind child, the first Miss Neville has ever had that could not be taken care of in other ways.

Impressed by the pathetic position which the child holds, Charles N. Manning, president of the Security Trust Company, has agreed to handle a trust fund for it. So, more fortunate citizens of Lexington—and all who have their sight are more fortunate—are asked to contribute whatever they can afford to provide some of the comforts of life for the sightless child. Contributions may be sent to The Lexington Leader. Checks should be made payable to the Security Trust Company.

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In her 28 years of work to prevent blindness among the children and adults of Kentucky, this is the first child Miss Neville has had to ask the people of the state to support. Occasionally, she has had children whose sight could not be saved, but in every previous instance there were loving mothers and fathers to take care of the children and give them loving attention if not the most scientific care.

Not so in this instance. The mother of the baby Miss Neville is now caring for died when he was only two days old. When he was four days old, his father abandoned all claim to him and three other children. He has not inquired about the child since, according to Miss Neville. At that time, the child had not developed any symptoms of

als Under Way In Kentucky Assembly

Blind David Celebrates Fourth Birthday By Going To See The "Wizard Of Oz"



Miss Linda Neville and David

By Frederick Jackson

David, Miss Linda Neville's blind baby, was four years old Wednesday. He celebrated his birthday by going to "see" the "Wizard of Oz," and since has been singing lustily (and tunefully) several of its songs.

At two days old, he had no mother, no home, no money and no sight. Today, at four, David has his foster mother who can't imagine living without him; home, friends, much happiness—but still no sight. However, it's astounding the things that blind baby knows and does.

With the manners of a Chesterfield, he ushered into the "parlor" of Miss Linda's home the two newspapermen. "Mr. Fred Jackson, sit here," he invited as he set a chair. "Mr. Alex Bower, please have this

chair," he suggested to the news photographer who was to take his picture—a business David knew nothing about, although his life has been chronicled pictorially for national release in connection with aid for the blind.

From then on, it was David's party. He danced, he sang, he romped, he talked, he rode his dump truck, he invited his guests to see his books and interested himself in his guests' comfort. When one of us left the room, he instantly sensed it and asked, "Where is that other man? What is he doing?"

At the conclusion of the call, David not only showed us to the door with grace and courtesy, but insisted that we come back whenever we could and expressed interest in the type automobile we had come in.

Miss Linda said she was astounded at times at David's knowledge—his vocabulary, his proper use of words and his general interest. Red-headed, sturdy and handsome, the boy, despite his blindness, has come a long way from that day four years ago when his mother died.

David undoubtedly has "an ear for music," Miss Linda has been advised by Lexington musicians who have interested themselves in his musical future. He loves his phonograph records, knows many

songs and enjoys band, orchestra and instrumental music.

Because she feared he might disturb others at a University of Kentucky concert last Sunday afternoon, Miss Linda left the violin recital when David fretted and became restless. Their departure immediately brought up the question, "Should the blind boy be deprived of whatever enjoyment he might have got out of the concert?"

Artist Unruffled

The artist, Joseph Knitzer, brilliant young violinist, said he was not disturbed by the occurrence. "There is no room for temperament in a musician except in his music. I was not distracted by the child. Now, learning from you that he was blind, I emphatically insist that he should have been allowed to remain in the audience, gaining what pleasure he could from the music."

Miss Linda said she did not want David to disturb other music-lovers and frequently sat at the rear of a concert or theater in order that they might make a quiet departure if he became restless.

"David will surely know that not to see is to be different from other children; that not to see is often, oh, so often, to stay still while other children run and skip and jump; that not to see is to learn about the immediate surroundings by a slow fingering of every object; that not to see means to stumble,

to fall and to get hurt," Miss Linda said in discussing the future of the baby. "I want David to live on. Is that unselfishness in me? Will the burden of life prove too heavy for him? I think not.

"David's beautiful body is strong, his health is almost perfect, his mind is fine, he has a keen sense of humor, a loving heart and his very soul is filled with music. He has in him many of the elements that make for true happiness, the happiness of the spirit. I believe he has been set apart for a mission more beautiful than I can envisage. His mission, as I faintly see it, will be with happy tread to follow God's leading through the long, dark way, giving courage to others if they are blind. And, too, his mission will be to stimulate those of us who can see in order that we may do our best to prevent everywhere the great affliction of blindness.

"At the age of 66, I cannot hope to be here with David so very many years. Therefore, I appreciate deeply whatever help is given for David and other blind in Kentucky. After 30 years of work, I am chagrined at the paucity of opportunities for the prevention of blindness in Kentucky."