

Self-Help Housing at Metlakatla

By JUNE ALLEN

Fifteen happy families in the Tsimshian town of Metlakatla were presented Friday night with keys to their new homes, homes built with their own labor under a pilot program of the Mutual Help Program of public housing and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Metlakatla, a federal reserve on the southern end of Annette Island, was first to qualify for the self-help program and because of its success, similar projects are being planned for Hydaburg, Hoonah and Kake.

The program for the new homes started in May, 1964 when the Metlakatla Housing Authority was organized and application was made for the program. By November, 1964 the sites had been chosen, surveyed and approved by the BIA which acted throughout the program as advisors and inspectors.

In January, 1965 the house plans were approved and in February the material was ordered. It arrived by barge in April when work began.

By June, when the fishing season opened, the houses were enclosed and the remainder of the material stored inside. Work began again last September when the fishing season was over and the new homes were completed last week.

All families agreed that no family would move in until every house was completed.

The homes were formally dedicated in ceremonies held in the community hall. Keys were presented by Neal Jensen, area development officer of the BIA.

Among the 15 who signed

up for the self-help program was one woman, Mrs. Emily Atkinson, whose three grown sons provided her share of the labor. The men formed working teams which went from house to house completing various parts of the project.

"We got to be pretty good by the time we got to the end of the line," beamed one happy owner, Robert Wilbur.

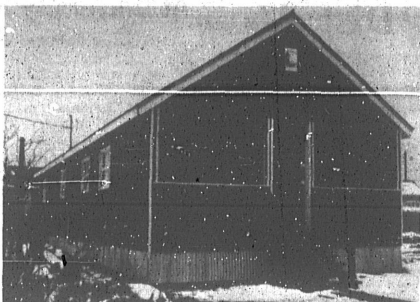
"Some did the plumbing, some put up the plaster board and others did the spackling and other jobs. A home really means something to you when you build it all yourself."

All of the new homes have the same general floor plan and exteriors but the houses are scattered throughout the town and no two really look alike after the women put up curtains and arrange the furniture.

Metlakatlans are so enthusiastic about the results that they plan to reapply for more homes as soon as they can.

Other villages, qualifying first with water, sanitation and sewer facilities, are being considered for the same projects under the Public Housing Administration and the Alaska State Housing Authority.

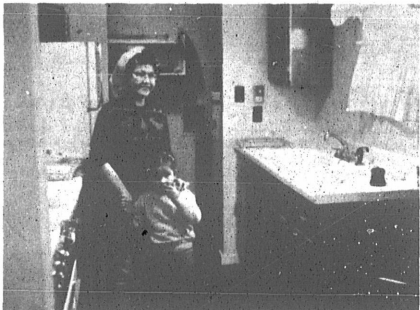
Those who shared in this first pilot self-help program were Mrs. Atkinson, Roland Booth, Thomas Brendible Sr., James Dundas Sr., Floyd Dundas, Lewis Fawcett, George Haldane, Frank Hayward Jr., Harold Hudson, Marvin Hudson, David Nelson, Pat Neucklavok, Victor Starrish, Robert Wilbur and Albert Wellington Sr.



THIS IS THE HOME of the Robert Wilbur of Metlakatla, one of 15 new homes completed last week under a pilot program of self-help and the Mutual Aid program of the Public Housing Administration and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The attractive, roomy homes were built with owner labor. All are equipped with the most modern fixtures.



ACCEPTING KEYS—Roland Booth, right, accepted the keys for his new home from BIA area development officer, Neal Jensen. Booth expressed the sentiments of the other 14 participants in the self-help program when he said that he could hardly believe the new homes were true. "It was a lot of hard work—but somehow all the big obstacles look like little problems now that they are over with," Booth said.



THIS CHEERFUL KITCHEN was used for the first time when Mrs. Robert Wilbur and her little daughter Rene fixed coffee and cookies for the visitors who toured the house last week during open house. The pleasant homes include three bedrooms, a utility room and ample storage space. Mrs. Wilbur was so excited on moving day that she said she was sure she wouldn't sleep at all the first night in their new home.