

WALDORF CLEARING HOUSE NEWSLETTER

Waldorf School
Cambridge Avenue
Garden City, N.Y., 11530

SPRING, 1974

GENERAL NEWS

West Coast Waldorf Teachers' Conference

Sacramento, February 8 - 11, 1974

It is always so difficult to recapture what has happened between people that reports of conferences are usually somewhat flat. Nevertheless, the coming together of some 54 teachers, including six teachers from Marin Children's School, one from Mohala Pua in Hawaii, and over twenty from Highland Hall was a very encouraging sign of the life and vitality of the endeavors on the West Coast.

The various study sessions, for which most people seemed very well prepared, arose out of a prior study of four of Rudolf Steiner's educational lectures of September 15, 16, 21, 22, 1920.

There were sessions dealing with plastic/musical forces; inbreathing/outbreathing; seeing/hearing (perception and memory); past/future (thinking and willing.) These four sessions constituted our main study, although there was one more session on Freedom and Discipline for the public.

We began each of the three days with eurythmy. Everyone took active part in the music and painting offered, and one afternoon was spent helping to build a curving stone wall. This meant mixing mortar, and carefully placing rounded river rock into flowing designs. There was also an afternoon devoted to a nature walk, lead by one of the parents of the Sacramento school. This gave the visitors a chance to experience the abundance of bird life and vegetation around the school. That day the sightings were highlighted by a horned owl, golden hawks, a great blue heron, and over 20 other varieties of birds.

We concluded that much had been gained from the conference, both through the various studies and in the social and informal times

where class teachers and special teachers could exchange ideas and information. It was decided that this should become an annual event. It will be held in Sacramento next February, during a four-day weekend.

- Franklin Kane
Sacramento Waldorf School

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N.A.I.S. Conference, San Francisco, March 20-23

For the first time the National Association of Independent Schools held its annual meeting on the West Coast. Sacramento sent several people to this impressive gathering, and were pleased to see Harry Blanchard from Kimberton.

The organizers had expected between 1,000 and 1,500 participants, and were somewhat overwhelmed by 2,400 people from all parts of the country. Many of the sessions were stimulating and useful, especially those dealing with management and finance.

We were struck by the great difference between our attempts within Waldorf schools to have a cooperative faculty-run school and the usual pattern of the Headmaster who runs the school and reports to the trustees, who either are pleased with the headmaster's performance or go shopping for another.

Such a conference gave an instructive and powerful impression of the independent school in all its diversity across this nation of ours, and it was interesting to see which problems and challenges are held in common and which are unique to any one school.

- Franklin Kane

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Toronto Waldorf School:

A water-color painting of one of our grade 7 pupils, Mark Cryns, has been chosen to appear on the U.N.I.C.E.F. calendar for 1975. Mark's

painting was chosen from thousands of entries from all over the world.

- Helen Coleman

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Parents, friends, and faculty have continued to volunteer their labor to help complete our new school. Crews have painted, put up walls, hung doors, and most lately, finished covering the roof beams with decking. All of this, of course, leads to a wonderful community spirit within the school family.

All our work so far has been directed to the building itself. This May, however, the work will take a new turn. With the warm weather, we will move outdoors and begin landscaping. To begin the outdoor work in the best of pioneer spirits, we are planning a potluck supper and square dance to finish off the work day. We had such a work day in the fall, and well over a hundred people busied themselves to help open the lower section of the school. We hope that this May day will give us lawns, shrubs, and garden paths.

- Ray Haller

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The Toronto teachers set aside two March evenings to meet with the parents to help deepen their understanding of Waldorf education. These meetings were followed by a seminar in April on "Wonder and Devotion - the First Steps to Knowledge." Werner Glas opened the seminar with a lecture; workshops and a final discussion at the close of the day concluded the program. We have had two such seminars within the last year, with students, teachers (both public and private), and parents participating. Attendance has been impressive: 150 people last spring, 90 last fall.

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A group of teachers have begun regular meetings to explore the viability of a Toronto Waldorf High School in 1975. So far, many of the discussions have centered around the curriculum, in particular whether or not the Waldorf curriculum can be made to fit the present existing

requirements of the Department of Education. A meeting with parents of grades 6 and 7 is scheduled for April 26, to present plans and get "feedback" on this new venture.

- Dorothy Haller

Sacramento Waldorf School:

Conservation and fund-raising have gone hand in hand. The school is collecting newspapers and classroom scrap paper for monthly salvage. This yields approximately \$50 a month, which goes to the playground fund and is earmarked for paving the basketball court. Tires rolled onto our land were gathered up by the second grade and sold for re-caps at \$2.50 each. The eighth grade collects aluminum cans.

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Eighth grade plans: The class is writing a book describing the daily life of the school as its gift to the school. The book will have an introduction to Waldorf education and a general introduction to each class in the school. Included in it are many photographs, as well as writings and drawings from the whole school. Copies will sell for about \$3.00, and all proceeds will go to the school.

As a year-end trip, the eighth grade will go to Vancouver, British Columbia, where the Vancouver Waldorf School will host us. We will perform our play, "The King of Ireland's Son," for their student body, then go by ferry to Vancouver Island to camp.

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In an attempt to work together as neighbors, Sacramento and the Marin Children's School faculties are meeting monthly in Sacramento. The Marin faculty drives up (a two-hour trip), supper is waiting, we eat together, and then discuss pedagogical and practical issues. Also each Marin faculty member is spending one day a month at the Sacramento School. A growing closeness and strength is developing from this working together.

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Spring has come to Sacramento and all around the school are green lawns. Gone is the mud and gone are the dust storms. We can barely believe it. Little garden and landscaping projects are in evidence everywhere, and two baby goats have just joined us.

The building project of the year, a geodesic dome plus a wing, is moving ahead well. Flowing patterns of shingles top its crown. Handmade doors and windows have been installed. The interior is being completed - a loft, stairways, walls. The offices and two bathrooms will occupy the front section, and the interior of the dome plus loft will house three classrooms, the functions of which keep changing. Two afternoons a week the men teachers build, and the rest of the faculty takes on extra teaching to cover their classes. There is one paid worker, a very capable young man who had previously worked with the architect who designed the dome. A few dedicated parents and teachers work on weekends trying to finish. Students help where they can. It is slow but rewarding.

The overhangs are up all around the school, done by faculty and students. These are made up of telephone poles and old shake shingling recycled from a demolished shopping center. They give a rustic flair to our classroom complex.

Work is now underway to move a residence onto the grounds. One of our very active parents is assuming the role of land manager. He has already handled many of the legal technicalities facing our expansion. He and his wife, who teaches modelling at the school, will expand the animal program, once they move, concentrating on horses and chickens as a start.

Our class teacher situation is very stable, with all positions filled with the exception of the gardener. We are losing our present very capable

gardener to a B-D farm in Vancouver.

- Betty Kane

BIBLIOGRAPHIES (continued)

Here is an addition to the bibliographies published in the January 1974 Supplement. I have found the following books excellent for reading to the children, and would very much appreciate hearing of other books useful in first grade. If you have any suggestions, please contact me.

- Gail Klar
Rudolf Steiner School,
New York

First Grade Reading Aloud Books

Charlotte's Web, E.B. White, Harper & Row.

Stuart Little, E.B. White

Beatrix Potter books, Warne & Co. publishers

Old Mother West Wind, Thornton Burgess, Little Brown.

Burgess Bird Book for Children, Thornton Burgess

plus many other books by Burgess. The children love these stories.

Mr. Popper's Penguins, Richard & Florence Atwater, Little, Brown.

Little Brown Bear, Elizabeth Upham, Platt & Munk.

Seven-Year-Old Wonder Book, Isabel Wyatt. Out of print, but available from some school libraries

Good books of songs and singing games:

Jim Along, Josie: A collection of folk songs and singing games for younger children, compiled by Nancy and Jim Langstaff, Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich (sold by the Country Dance & Song Society of America, N.Y., N.Y.)

Sing Through the Day) compiled by the Society of Brothers,
Sing Through the Seasons) Plough Publishing House, Rifton, N.Y.
Available from St. George Book Service,
Spring Valley, N.Y. 10977

Pentatonic Songs, Elizabeth Lebral (available from Anthroposophic Press, Spring Valley, N.Y.)

FROM THE CLASSROOM

Eighth Grade Math:

In the last lecture of Study of Man there is a description of how one might approach the theorem of Pythagoras in a way to engage the imagination (blowing dust on the several squares). Sheen, in his Geometry and the Imagination, gives examples of variations on this theme.

In this year's eighth grade we did the following: Children evenly covered with rice the three squares of a cut-out model (for further emphasis, we used purple for the square on the hypotenuse, red and blue for the other two squares, respectively). They then poured the rice from the largest square into one paper cup, the rice from the other two into a second cup. Both cups were filled to virtually the same level, and, when weighed on a letter scale, both weighed practically the same.

While this experiment lacked the main ingredient, namely that of having to imagine "blowing the dust into square shapes, a thing impossible in reality, of course, but calling forth the exertion of phantasy," it was eminently satisfying to the children in its own way.

- Susl Berlin
Waldorf School, Garden City

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Third Grade English:

In our grammar and spelling lessons, we began to work with punctuation, and these little rhymes I made up were helpful:

I am the period
Round as a ball.
When I show up
That is all.

I am the comma
Sharp like cats' claws.
When you see me
Take s short pause.

I am the colon
On this I insist.
Hear my explanation
Read my list.

Do you have a question?
Are you in the dark?
I will be right with you
For I'm the question mark.

Surprise! Wonder! Fear!
I'll not disappoint.
When you have strong feeling
Use the exclamation point.

I, semicolon, stand
 'Tween sentences amid.
 More than a comma
 Not quite a period.

Let us tell you, by the way
 Listen if you please.
 We have something more to say
 We are parentheses.

When someone is speaking,
 Or something's so-called.
 "Goosefeet" quotation marks
 Should be installed.

I, apostrophe, show what is whose
 And who is what's as well.
 And when two words together join
 Be sure I'll help you tell.

I am the hyphen
 A word I'll divide
 Sometimes I'll link sev-
 eral, side-by-side.

- Mel Belenson,
 Marin Children School

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Second Grade Reading:

Regarding the second grade curriculum, I found Rosemary Sutcliff's The High Deeds of Finn MacCool especially helpful in working with choleric boys. Moreover, the Finn stories mentioned in Colum's The King of Ireland's Son then take on a light-filled content. And finally, bringing St. Patrick to their attention prior to concluding the Finn stories then gives Ossian's Return and the meeting with St. Patrick a special flavor and sense of unity to the stories.

- Keith McCrary,
 Marin Children's School

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Parsifal in the Eleventh Grade:

"All the legends connected with King Arthur and the Round Table represent the repetition of the experiences of earlier ages in the Sentient Soul; all the legends and narratives which are directly connected with the Holy

Grail, apart from Parsifal, represent what the Intellectual Soul had to go through; and all that finds expression in the figure of Parsifal, this ideal of the later Initiation in so far as this later Initiation is dependent on the Consciousness Soul, represents the forces which must especially be made our own through the Consciousness Soul."

- Rudolf Steiner: Mysteries of the East and of Christianity

The teacher of the Parsifal course asks himself many questions, and asks them year after year. Why does it belong in the 11th grade? Should an English-speaking class concern itself with the Wolfram von Eschenbach version? What are the main experiences that the class should have in the Parsifal course? After teaching the course for five years I have come to some conclusions, but there are still many questions.

The course in some way seems to answer the developments which arise in the students mid-way through the third seven-year period. The confident citizens of the modern world (as the students are in 9th and 10th grade) suddenly become unsure, seem to lose their inner bearings in 11th grade, and yet are over the outer turmoils of adolescence for the most part. The classroom is quieter, but the inner life is full of questions, full of a seeking for direction. The world, both inner and outer, is seen as very imperfect, yet there is a confidence that there are solutions, and that they can be found. But how? The curriculum in this year seems to be building a bridge between earth and heaven, and bringing with it a new kind of reality, less tangible yet no less real: electricity, radioactivity, the plant cell, the stars, the Grail. Where is the reality?

Some schools in England, as far as I can gather, spend most of their time on the Mallory cycle, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and things of a less Germanic nature. I am convinced that whatever one does by way of including the English cycles for English-speaking students, the Wolfram version must still be the central theme. The French version of Chrestien de Troyes tells the story, but it is a narrative of events without the depth of the Wolfram version. Compare Book 9 of Wolfram with the French equivalent: in the French, Parsifal remains with the hermit only two days instead of fourteen, the episode takes a couple of pages whereas it takes us two mainlessons to cover the Wolfram version. The French story lacks the beginning and ending of the Wolfram version, which recognizes a mysterious unknown source in Kyot, the Provencal, who found the story in Arabic characters in Toledo, and who traces the Grail back to Persian/Hebrew