



# Growing Without Schooling

A magazine founded by

*John Holt*

VOLUME

2

Edited by  
Patrick Farenga  
and Carlo Ricci

**Growing Without Schooling:  
The Complete Collection  
Vol. 2, 1981 To 1982**

John C. Holt, editor and founder  
Series Edited by Patrick Farenga and Carlo Ricci

**Growing Without Schooling:  
The Complete Collection**  
Volume 2, 1981 to 1982

John C. Holt, editor (1977 to 1985) and founder  
Series edited by Patrick Farenga and Carlo Ricci

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# Acknowledgments

This collection—just like the original issues of *GWS*—would not be possible without the volunteer efforts of many people. The following people helped scan, retype, edit, and layout each of the 141 issues of *GWS*; we are very grateful for your help and diligence to see this massive project (over 6,000 pages!) to completion.

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# Introduction

By Patrick Farenga

When I first arrived at *Growing Without Schooling* (GWS) magazine in 1981 I thought it would be a steppingstone for me to another job in the magazine industry; instead, it became a focus of my life's work. Being around people who not only criticized school methods but actually took action to help their children learn and grow in ways that schools will not or cannot proved exciting to me. From kindergarten to college, every educational precept I knew was challenged and alternatives presented and I eventually realized that John Holt was creating something new and different in the world of education that I wanted to be part of. Unlike most schools and corporations, John did not want or encourage slavish devotion to an institutional mission as the primary purpose of one's life. John encouraged everyone, including me, to focus on our interests and concerns that engaged us, no matter how big or small, rather than to always put our own development aside in favor of proving to school officials that we can focus on their interests and concerns.

In formatting and editing these issues for digital readers I realized what an incredible individual and group effort GWS was and still is. John Holt almost single-handedly wrote many of the first ten issues and much of his thinking generated some incredibly thoughtful and brave responses. I say "brave" because simply saying you were homeschooling in those days often led to severe personal and public criticism or a court appearance, as you can readily read in this volume. You can see a grassroots movement developing its reach, finding allies and resources, defending its right to exist in the face of bigger, more organized, and well-funded opposition, and celebrating the unique power to learn and grow that is in each of us

I had a lot of misgivings about doing this project at first. Accurately collecting, editing, and formatting the more than six thousand pages of the original, single-spaced *GWS* articles is an enormous undertaking that I long avoided due to the amount of time and effort it required not just by me, but by anyone who joined. I am grateful that Carlo is persistent and over the



course of several conversations he showed me that volunteers, good will, and using some of the graduate students at the school where he teaches, Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario, were good, low-tech ways to tame the thousands of pages printed during *GWS*' 24 years. The manual labor involved was enormous—every issue was retyped—and I am grateful to every typist, proofreader, and copyeditor who helped us create this collection.

This is the first of many volumes of *Growing Without Schooling*; I look forward to sharing them all and hearing back about what you think about parents and children directing their own learning without conventional schooling. Homeschooling has grown tremendously since Holt published *GWS* #1 in August, 1977; Holt estimated there may have been perhaps 25,000 children being homeschooled in the late 1970s; there are now over 2 million children being taught outside of school and in their local communities by their parents. How did this wild growth happen? The answer is right in your hands.

## By Carlo Ricci

First, I need to thank all of the volunteers, which includes technical experts who created solutions for us, since they all helped make this enormous project possible. Although, republishing all of the issues of *Growing Without Schooling* seems simple enough, the task required thousands and thousands of human hours and some ingenious technical mastery. I will spare you the details, but suffice it to say that a lot of the work was tedious, time consuming, and took a whole team of us (including over 100 volunteers) over 5 years, so far, to get to where we are today.

For many of us *GWS* remains one of the most inspirational and important windows into unschooling, self-determination, and willed learning. The insights gleaned by reading *GWS* are seminal. Years after it was last published, the legend of *GWS* remains ubiquitous. I believe that *GWS* is still the turning point for many. For this reason, I hoped that reprinting the issues in volumes to make it accessible would be a great service. So in 2011, I emailed Pat Farenga to ask if he is interested in republishing *GWS*. Of course, he was. However, he warned me that they tried to do this before, and after putting out one volume containing 12 of the 141 issues, they realized that the task was enormous and required too many people hours to complete.

With the good fortune and hope in newer technology to assist us, we decided to move forward. Initially, Pat, Stephen Tedesco (without his technical expertise, I am not sure if we could have pulled this off. Early into the project Stephen had to leave and we were sad to see him go), and I thought we would tackle this project. It quickly became clear that if it was left to the three of us, this project could not be completed. The hours required to do what needed to be done were far too many for three people, no matter how committed, to complete. In short, the first step required that we either retype every single issue, or that we follow Stephen's technical solution which converted a hard copy of the document into a digital document so that we could manipulate the text. We decided to follow Stephen's solution. Regardless, because of the format of the original issues, converting the issues into a digital document was still very time-consuming, and required heavy proofreading and editing, since the conversion resulted in an error-filled

document.

It became clear very quickly that if we were going to do this we required help, and lots of it. In life, I believe that meeting and having great people in your life that you know personally is a great fortune. Another great fortune is to be a part of a larger community of people that you might not know personally, but that are nonetheless a part of your world. And if you are really lucky, you will have both personal friends and belong to a strong community. Fortunately, I am really, really lucky. So when I suggested to Pat and Stephen that we try and tap into our networks to see if we can get a few volunteers to help, we were hopeful that we might get a few people.

In fact, seconds after we put out the call asking for volunteers, offers came flooding in, for which we remain thankful and humbled. I like to think that they agreed to volunteer because, of course they are special people, and also because they believe in the value of sharing *GWS* with the world as much as we do. I also believe that Holt remains such a beacon of hope and inspiration that people want to be a part of what his legend and work continues to offer. Holt still brings people and communities together, as this project attests.

*GWS* is interesting as a historical document, but much more than that. It is as relevant for people today as it was when it was first published. I believe Holt felt the same. When people would subscribe to *GWS* they would start with receiving issue 1 regardless of when they subscribed. This indicates to me that it was not written for a particular time, but it was meant to be a record for future readers where all of the information in all of the issues is timeless. In fact in issue 5, Holt writes, “Some people, now or in the future, who read *GWS*....” This quote makes clear to me that *GWS* was meant to be timeless. It was written with present and future readers in mind.

*GWS*, in part, is about how we learn best. It offers clear examples and narratives from people who are learning through unschooling. There are lots and lots of examples of how people successfully learn naturally. *GWS* shares tips about what people are doing to learn and how and what they are learning. It also offers powerful insights into how to get credentialed by going to school less.

*GWS* is the best way to learn about “learning.” It’s great because it’s not just theory, but it is what people are actually doing. Again, the tips and insights are just as helpful and relevant today, maybe even more so.

In part, *GWS* connects people with each other; informs people about

friendly post-secondary options, which is helpful for both unschoolers and mainstream schoolers, and it connects and informs people about alternative possibilities and even friendly schools.

*GWS* is useful for everyone to read since all of us learn. There are also narratives of people in mainstream schools who see understanding “learning” as a high priority, who report in *GWS* that what is written in *GWS* is helpful to them as mainstream schoolers. They report finding it worthwhile, and clearly provocative.

It is clear that *GWS* helped and continues to help many. It contributed to normalizing homeschooling and to bringing and organizing the homeschooling community. *GWS* connected people with each other, gave people the information they needed to navigate and challenge the laws, and gave people the confidence and ideas about what it means to learn as an unschooler. Of course, it continues to do this for everyone who takes the time to read the issues of this seminal magazine.

In *GWS* 19 Tom Wesley writes: “When I first wrote *GWS* I was too insecure to use my name. Now I feel safe enough after four years of tolerant, helpful teachers and school board members to come out of the unschooling closet.” The security felt by Tom Wesley was made possible, in part, by the pages of *GWS*. Like Tom, many more of us can now feel safe and confident.

I am extremely proud and happy to have such a great social circle and to be a part of such a wonderful project and community, and I sincerely hope that *GWS* will live on and be a source of peace, love, and inspiration well into the future.

## Editorial Note

We want to preserve the original tone and context of the original issues as much as possible in this collection, but we have discovered that some conventions from the printed issues do not carry over well to the digital realm, particularly *Growing Without Schooling's* use of ellipses.

John Holt and Donna Richoux, the editors for these issues, made meticulous deletions to the original letters in order to squeeze the text into a few printed pages. In editing these volumes, we have edited out many of the ellipses in readers' letters and found doing so does not change the meaning of the letter and removes a lot of visual clutter from the page, making it easier to read. We have not removed ellipses from quoted materials or where they are needed for comprehension.

A note about *GWS* issue dates and style: John Holt didn't want to date the issues of *GWS* because he felt they contained much timeless material about children and learning, so he decided that a simple number system—*GWS* #1, *GWS* #2, etc.—was more useful. When we reached a certain number of subscribers the postal service required us to print the date of publication in each issue, so starting with *GWS* #31 there are accurate publication dates. But we can only guess at the dates of some of the early issues based on the references we see and the fact that Holt only published when he had enough material, not because it was a certain date. It wasn't until editor Donna Richoux joined *GWS* (see *GWS* #11) that it maintained a steady bimonthly publishing schedule.

Starting with *GWS* #27, one can see the expansion of the *GWS* Resource Lists to include the following categories that were updated in all future issues: Certified Teachers (willing to help homeschoolers); Homeschooling Groups (by state); other organizations that support self-reliance, child-raising, and educational issues as homeschooling allies or help; Friendly Lawyers, Professors and others allies willing to help homeschooler develop curriculum, evaluate progress, or in other ways; Correspondence Schools and Books;

Helpful Private Schools that enrol or help home study students; Friendly School Districts; the Directory of Families willing to network with others and be contacted by people interested in learning more about homeschooling. From this issue forward, the Resource Lists took up the last pages of each issue of *GWS*. We chose not to reproduce those lists as this information is quite dated, but they were a vital tool used by many homeschoolers, whether subscribers and nonsubscribers, until the advent of the internet.

While we wanted to make this as easy to read as possible by using standard spelling conventions, the abbreviations and other shorthand John used to write and comment in the issues is preserved. We feel it helps give you a sense of all the excitement about the ideas Holt and others were sharing in those days.

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# Growing Without Schooling 20

April 1981

In *GWS* #17 we said that *Mother Earth News* had accepted Ishmael Wallace's article about how he and his father built a raft. The other day we got our March/April Issue of *Mother Earth News* (#68). Not only is the story in there, with a very nice photo of Ishmael and his sister Vita sailing on the raft, but an artist's rendition of the two children on the raft is on the magazine cover—and also on a big promotional poster for *TMEN* that will probably be posted on the wall in many stores and other public places. We're delighted.

Official publication date for *Teach Your Own* is August 3. The cover price of the book will be \$13.95; we will sell it here for \$12.50 + postage (75¢ for 1, 2, or 3 copies). You may order the book from us in advance, and we'll send out copies as soon as they become available in August. Also, since sales people work hardest to sell what they think will sell best, the more advance orders of *Teach Your Own* the Delacorte people get, the more effort they will make for this book.

I was a guest on a TV show in Toronto called "Speaking Out" the other night—one of the best shows that I have ever been on. The host, Harry Brown, had read and understood our materials and asked many friendly but thoughtful and probing questions. The people who called in by phone (including two homeschooled children) also asked good questions. As is their usual custom, the show ran a poll of its audience, asking them to vote by phone on the question, "Do you think that our public schools are doing a good job?" When I left the studio that night, the No's were leading by about four-to-one. And more than a thousand people had called wanting to ask a question on the air. Since we were competing with the Ontario election returns, my hosts were very pleased about this.

The "Calendar" TV show (WCVB-TV Channel 5, Boston) will have a story on homeschooling May 29 at 8 PM; they taped a short interview with me, as well as with three Massachusetts families: the Kimballs, the Mahoneys, and the Mulcahys of Yarmouth.

There was a good homeschooling story in the Home section of the February 26 *New York Times*, and a shorter story in the February *Next*



magazine. Also, a syndicated story on homeschooling by Ken Franklin has been appearing in newspapers around the country—a number of people have sent us clippings of it.

Paula Allmaras in North Dakota writes that a bill saying that anyone can teach their children or send them to non-certified schools has passed the N.D. Senate and is in the House.

Robin Smith, a senior at Smith College who is doing a research paper on homeschooling (and who, by the way, is engaged to Dean Schneider, another *GWS* reader) came by the office and we had a nice visit. She asked us to pass along her thanks to the many families in the Directory who have given her such friendly cooperation.

—John Holt

## Coming Schedule

April 24, 1981: Music Educators National Conference, Arena, Minneapolis MN. 11 AM mtg., Minneapolis Convention Hall. Contact Gene Morlan, 1902 Assoc. Dr., Reston VA 22091.

May 2: New England Philosophy of Education Society, Framingham State College, 11 AM. Contact Richard Lyons, 617-452-5000 ext. 2450.

May 9: Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation Conference, Airport Holiday Inn, Toronto, Ontario. Contact Bob Morrow, 416-627-3685.

June 11–14: 6th International Congress, Yoga and Holistic Living, Himalayan Institute. New York Statler Hotel, New York City. Contact Ms. Dale Colton, RD 1 Box 88, Homesdale PA 18431, 717-253-5551.

August 30–Sept 2: Australian Reading Conference, Darwin, Australia. Contact Bob Counahan, PO Box 38221, Winnellie NT 5789; Ph 84 4277 ext. 40.

(We hope to arrange other engagements for John from August 16–30 in California, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia.)

## 11-Year-Old Helper

*From Paula King (CA):*

This month our family is taking a vacation. We've brought Shannon, our 11-year-old friend with us. She's taking a month out of school to come on our

trip. She is responsible for Lindy, our one-year-old. For this she gets room and board, \$10/day plus ski equipment and lift tickets paid for when she skis. She is learning to ski on this trip (and doing great). She brought schoolwork with her and I assist her if necessary. It takes very little time. We play games, mainly *Pente*, a game requiring logic, patience, the ability to look ahead, and the ability to see many situations developing at one time.

I've introduced her to *The Chronicles Of Narnia* and Madeline L'Engle's book *A Wrinkle In Time*, which she read in two days. She, in turn, is teaching me to play the flute. I'm excited to finally get my hands on an instrument. We are good teachers for each other because we have a close, loving relationship.

One of the main things I think Shannon is gaining from this experience is that she is doing useful work in the real world. She's exchanging her ability (she's a good "mother" for Lindy) for money—that's part of the real world. She's giving me a break which allows me to be a better mother and improves our total family relationship. We're having fun and I see lots of learning going on.

*From a later letter:*

On our ski trip we treated Shannon as we would have treated any adult. She went to bed when she wanted, got up when she wanted, fixed herself a meal if cooking wasn't going on when she was hungry, and so on. As a result, she responded to us as an adult and was really fun to be with. When I say as an adult, I mean she didn't try to manipulate us or whine or fuss if things weren't going her way. There were times when I know she would rather have gone with us instead of babysitting but she never mentioned it. I feel we were all fair with each other and Shannon responded to that.

Our agreement was that Shannon would take care of the baby any time during the day when we didn't feel like it. We always took care of Lindy at night and got up with her in the morning. Shannon took complete control of feeding Lindy, including food preparation, changing diapers and clothing, keeping her safe as she explored the house, and seeing that she got sleep when she was ready for it. That is a full-time job and physically very tiring. She never lapsed. Lindy was safe the whole time and I could leave knowing that Shannon was totally responsible. Knowing this let me have a good vacation.

## Workers Needed

*From Kathleen Meyers in Utah:*

A couple of years ago we called you when we took our son Brian out of public school. I put him on the line and your comment, “I see you’re not in school today—thank goodness!” was a turning point in his life. I guess it’s difficult for adults to appreciate what it must be like to go about one’s business absorbing steady comments like, “What are you doing here? Aren’t you supposed to be in school?” As if your very existence is a violation requiring stern disapproval.

It’s such a delight to read in *GWS* of family after family discovering the same basic truths in so many different ways. My particular axe is the denial of society to allow children to make meaningful contribution of their labor. Whether for trade or money, the next generation should be eased into this essential part of life naturally as their interest and ability increases. Instead we force them to stand by the sidelines as spectators until 16 years of age, then wonder why we have dropouts from society!

My ideas on how to include children and teenagers in the adult working world were greeted generally with suspicion or yawns. So I am doing something about this situation myself. Our family has a company which designs and assembles a family management system. It’s called Goldentime because I developed it originally to have more of the stuff life is really made of—golden moments with our family. We have eight children and the time crunch is very real. After a year of backbreaking work involving everyone, we are going retail this month, which brings me to my soapbox: I Have Work Available For Children!

I was astounded at the results when I put my own children (ranging from 4 to 17) to work assembling packets of one dozen forms each. The four-year-old spreads hers out on the bed, “One, two, three.” and never makes a mistake! She’s paid 2¢ each, just like big brother. Big brother, who doesn’t play the piano like *His* big brother has found a remarkable talent: he can pick up a form packet and tell you if it is short by one! Of course, he is now Quality Control Manager. and how his self-esteem has grown. He is a very fast counter having developed his own speedy system; he averages \$3.60 per hour and is eleven. Each of our children shows an interest in some area of the

business: accounting, form design, marketing, etc.

When we started this I realized it would be the end of homeschool as we'd previously known it. Most teaching moments would have to be "on the firing line" doing what needed to be done. After one year I thought, "I think I'll give them a written assignment like before, just to see what's been going on." I still can't believe it. With no formal grammar, punctuation, or spelling lessons for one whole year, my former "slow" English student produced a *beautiful* paper! It had correct indentation, proper paragraphing, correct spelling, and even good penmanship. Was it all that reading? Was it the business letters? Was it being left alone finally and not pressured?

Anyone who would like work, please contact me at Goldentime, PO Box 194, Pleasant Grove UT 84062. We pay 2¢ for loading packets and 1¢ for stapling the tops. Your staples, our bags and tops. We ask that you pay postage both ways.

## Success Stories

*From Marti Mikl (AZ):*

Things have worked out great. We wrote a letter to the Deer Valley District School Board requesting a meeting "to make the necessary arrangements to officially remove our son Darris from the public school system and educate him at home." We also sent letters to the school principal and 5th grade teacher informing them that Darris would be absent from school pending a meeting with the Board.

For our meeting with the board, we prepared a written statement as to our reasons for removing Darris from public school. Some of our thoughts were borrowed from the Kendricks' letter (*GWS* #12). After a grueling (though friendly) "inquisition," the Board granted us permission to educate Darris at home. It was difficult not to shout "Hallelujah!"

We had expected the District to "wash their hands of us" regarding curriculum. We were pleasantly surprised and grateful that they were willing, even anxious, to have the Superintendent of Curriculum work with us. I met with him shortly after and, in effect, he simply approved of the way I was handling Darris' studies and told me to keep up the good work. They are allowing us to continue using Darris' books from school and have even supplied us with all of the corresponding teacher's books.

The Board is requiring that Darris take standardized achievement tests. Since ours is almost a landmark case in Arizona, we feel this is a small price to pay in exchange for the approval. We will test him at home. Actually, we feel testing may be helpful in knowing the areas where he needs extra help.

---

*From David and Ellen Dombek (PA):*

Last summer we placed a desperate call to your office trying to find a way to teach our eight-year-old daughter at home again this year as we had been doing in the past. Donna gave us the name of Mr. Boelhouwer in Harrisburg (See *GWS* #16, page 6). He was most encouraging and said to have our superintendent call him and he would recommend that we be granted permission to teach under the Pa. tutoring law. This we did. Within a few days we had tentative permission pending our submission of a curriculum which would assure the authorities that we would include all subjects required by law. We are very grateful for Donna's help and for the letters we received from several others in Pennsylvania who are also teaching their children at home.

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*From California:*

It is interesting to hear that you favor teaching children at home; this is what we have been doing for years with our daughters, ages 10 and 8. They both taught themselves to read and each read at least 7 thick books every week. The teaching here has been bordering on no teaching at all for the past year, but since they are unusually happy, healthy, creative, curious, and self-confident we feel comfortable with what we are doing (or not doing!) Because our house is very isolated, they often spend weeks playing only with each other. When they do see other children they are friendly and generous, behaving as well-adjusted human beings.

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*From Elaine Murchison, Glassville, New Brunswick E0J 1L0:*

I have a seven-year-old son, Jonah, whom I am teaching at home. We sent him to public school for the first month of grade 1 and then decided to keep him home. Our reasons were mainly that we just didn't approve of the way public schools operate. I felt that I could do a much better job and that Jonah

would grow naturally in a natural environment.

We have had our visit with the Director of Elementary School Programs and received a letter from the Minister of Education, stating that he is willing to approve Jonah's exemption from school, for the current school year. If we wish to continue homeschooling next year, which we do, we have to approach the Minister again, before the next year begins. They are being very helpful, giving advice and recommending materials. The School Supervisor of our district, who has also been a teacher for 20 years, has offered his help whenever needed. He is an understanding, kind man, who believes very strongly in the family and its functions. We are satisfied and happy with the outcome.

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*A reader writes:*

When I moved to a rural setting and began to have children of my own in the early seventies, I planned to set up an alternative or "free" school. Instead, and because of the variety of laws set up to restrict the physical plant, I have been teaching my children at home. Michigan laws allow a person to teach their own child if they hold a valid Mich. teaching certificate. A child also does not have to attend a public school if they are enrolled in a regular course of instruction in a private school or under the direct supervision of a person holding a valid Mich. teaching certificate. Since my certificate is still valid until June 1981, our local school board did not argue with our decision (made jointly by parents and child) and has offered us instructional materials and assistance in setting up a regular program.

The greatest difficulty I face in teaching my children (ages 5 and 7) is finding time for instruction on a regular basis. Although we try to use the time between morning chores and my leaving for work at 11:00, other things have a way of cropping up and being given priority. Perhaps other subscribers could suggest ways they set up their programs on a regular basis.

We try to involve our children in every activity we engage in. As a librarian, I often bring my children to work with me. My husband is self-employed as a cabinetmaker and teaches them woodworking and measurement skills. We feel that *life* is an education and no part of it should be ignored when teaching children.

## Bill in WA State

*Julie Titus (Rt 1 Box 386, Eastsound, WA 98245) sent us a clipping from the Seattle Times:*

A bill that would allow private schools to operate without getting state approval “has a good chance of passing the House,” the chairman of the House Education Committee said yesterday.

Representative Renn Taylor, Spokane Republican, made the assessment after private school interests testified Thursday on *House Bill 196*, sponsored by William H. Ellis, Seattle Republican.

The measure, backed by the Washington Federation of Independent Schools (PO Box 1098, Olympia WA 98507) would allow private and church schools to have noncertified teachers. A certified staff is one of the requirements for present state approval by the state Board of Education.

On the other hand, the bill provides for standardized achievement testing of students, Taylor said, and continues to require that all schools meet certain health and safety standards.

Taylor noted that in several states, courts have upheld the right of parents who do not want their children in schools that are subject to state approval. “The fear is that if the state’s approval procedure goes to court, it will be thrown out,” Taylor said. He sees “quite a bit of support” among fellow state representatives for the bill.

The state attorney general’s office says students in nonapproved schools are truant, with parents subject to be fined \$25 a day for each day a child isn’t in an approved school.

Prosecutors in Benton and Franklin Counties have said they would await the legislative outcome before prosecuting cases involving schools in their jurisdiction.

The bill is opposed by the powerful Washington Education Association, the Washington Association of School Administrators, the state School Directors Association, and other public school groups.

Don Johnson, the W.E.A.’s assistant executive director for governmental relations, said the association has many reservations about the bill, but a chief concern is the loss of certified teachers in such schools, because “qualified teachers are an important ingredient in maintaining quality education.”

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Julie adds, “Opinions on this matter can be expressed by calling a toll-free legislative hot line and indicating your opinion and residential area. The toll-free number is: 1-800-562-6000. Even more effective would be contacting your representative directly by phone or letter. I am hoping you will help me reach other deschoolers in the State of Washington. If we can get enough letters and phone calls into our representatives in Olympia perhaps we can help the unschooling movement along in the state.”

## Helping School—NJ

*From Ann Morris, School Of The Arts; PO Box 114, Stillwater, NJ 07875:*

Ed Nagel (*GWS* #8) mentioned the Santa Fe Community School, which gave me an idea about using our incorporated School of the Arts as a vehicle/shelter for easing pressure on home teaching parents. Dick and I incorporated our school in 1953, eight years after we began teaching our children.

We continued teaching our seven children until in 1958 we decided to enlarge our school family on a farm in rural New Jersey to the number of 16-18. We all lived as a big family, rebuilt the old farmhouse, tended the cows, goats, sheep, chickens, horses, raised a huge garden, baked our own bread, cakes, pies, cleaned our home/school. Studies had to do with our immediate life interests, which we enlarged by extensive travels in our small buses, camping, cooking over the fire, visiting industries, unique environments, talking with people. We believed, all of us, teachers/students, should involve our *Selves* with life on this earth.

After 30 years, without good cohorts any more, I’ve had to seek alternatives, which I’m developing in the form of advisory outlines for parents wishing to teach their own children. As you describe time and again, education is around us everywhere, waiting to be discovered.

Any parents who would like to enroll their child/ren in an incorporated school could write to me at the address above. Incidentally, our School of the Arts name refers to liberal arts, which we believe essential to all learning. Our services would be free, except for the paper-work cost.



## List Of Materials

Meg Johnson, who started the Home Education Resource Center (*GWS*#18), now has available a very good list of where to get textbooks and educational materials. It includes addresses (and some description) of several major publishers, the Cuisenaire Company, McGuffey's Readers, Neinhuis Montessori, art prints suppliers, children's magazines, and more. Many people ask us where they can get books and materials to help with their homeschooling; usually we tell them that they'll find a lot of ideas about that in the back issues of *GWS*, and of course we also send them a copy of our own booklist. But for quick general reference, Meg's list looks very useful.

We suggest that if you want this list, send \$1 and a SASE to her at 337 Downs St, Ridgewood NJ 07450. Meg also has a lot of other good information available, and tells us, "I usually figure if people send \$10 they are covering the costs of all the materials I currently send out. But I don't want people to think they can't get the materials for less if they can't afford so much. I am doing okay on donations."—Donna Richoux

## Comfi Carrier Offer

*From Metta Brown in Texas:*

As an eventual homeschooling parent (children presently ages 3 and 6 mo.) and as an interested subscriber, I would like to make an offer that I hope might, in some small way, help you to keep up with your often not-so-small business expenses.

I am a regional sales representative for Comfi Baby Products, Inc. Comfi makes a lightweight, easy-to-use, and comfortable baby carrier. It is a front carrier, designed to permit child and mother to remain together, in close physical contact, throughout the mother's normal daily activities. I would like to know whether you might be interested in offering such a product through your mail-order booklist.

Through your own experience and your familiarity with *The Continuum Concept* you are aware of how important it is for an infant to be in close physical contact with its parents and for children to be included in the work and play activities of adults. I have used the Comfi carrier with both of my children and have found it to be of inestimable value.

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DR: We know about and like the Comfi carrier; John believes it to be a very good product. However, we're not sure how many people who read *GWS* are in the market to buy a baby carrier, so we don't want to get into this in any big way.

So what we've arranged is this: we will offer the Comfi carrier for a limited time at a price of \$20 (this price includes postage; allow six weeks for delivery.) If you would like one of these carriers, send us a check payable to Holt Associates, Inc., by May 31, 1981. You'll be paying \$3 less than you would in a store for the same item, and *GWS* gets \$7 for each carrier sold.

If you'd like more information first, we can send you a brochure. We'd also like to hear from anyone who doesn't want to buy one now but thinks they might later, if we continued to offer them.

## Psychologist

*From Andy Peterson, 25 Rose Hill, Smethport PA 16749:*

In *GWS* #9 you asked that sympathetic professionals might let *GWS* readers know of support services for prospective and current homeschoolers. The professional credentials I have earned are a Pennsylvania license for clinical psychology and a Pennsylvania certificate for school psychology. My primary service would be to help parents negotiate with the educational bureaucracy to gain and maintain approval of a homeschooling plan with as much freedom as possible.

In Pennsylvania, a homeschooling program is approved and supervised at the local school district level by the superintendent. The parent must be seen as a "properly qualified tutor." I think an official psycho-educational evaluation and recommendation from a psychologist would be helpful in convincing the superintendent of the merit of this educational approach for a particular child and family.

The *GWS* network would be a good format for informing parents of the assistance I propose. I would request those interested to send a description of their situation and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Due to space and time limitations, my personal evaluation or consultation with family and school district is probably limited to Pennsylvania and western New York (we are

about four hours by car from Pittsburgh). As I have two little ones and an old house to remodel, I will probably determine a suggested fee for a personal consultation which would be negotiable pending individual family financial circumstances. But, I would respond in writing to anyone about these issues and will be putting together an information packet (legal, administrative, philosophical items) to be made available for a few dollars.

## **Helper in Me**

I have a Master's in Ed. and have had a Maine teacher's certificate. My 5-year-old is home and probably will be staying home. My 10-year-old may be home next year when we move to another part of Maine. We have plans to start a small private school in our own home. I would also like to help other homeschoolers, say, if having a certified teacher check in once a week or so would help satisfy local authorities in those situations where the families are homeschooling by arranging with local school authorities. At this stage of the game, I would appreciate it if you would not print our name and address. You said that people could write us c/o *GWS*.

## **Action in N.J.**

*From Ann Bodine (NJ):*

You ask what we do in our NJ groups? Most of us consider ourselves a very loose association with focal points, rather than an organization with a hierarchy. Of the various focal points, I only know about the several in my vicinity.

Norma Ritter organized a book-buying co-op so that people can buy the English *Ladybird* series of beginning readers at considerably less than the bookstore price. Norma also worked with Sue Pregger in organizing weekly field trips for homeschooled children. The trips continued through fall and early winter until Norma's baby (her 3rd) was born and the snows fell.

Sue Pregger and her 7-year-old daughter Becky also edit and print *Elsewhere News*, a children's newsletter.

One woman calls school boards and school principals, pretends to be someone who is moving into that town, and discusses the law with them, even to reading them sections of court interpretations favorable to

homeschoolers, trying to put them in a receptive frame of mind in case they ever discover the homeschoolers.

Meryl Feinsod and Jenny Nepon have organized a weekly activity day.

It's held in rotation in the homes of the seven member-children. They have hired a teacher to conduct the program and each child pays \$4 per day for the teacher.

You already know about Nancy Plene's newsletter, Meg Johnson's resource center, and my school/activity center. Meg also had a visit from Raymond Moore to which she invited many of the "focal point" people from central and northern NJ.

There have been many support group meetings, public talks, newspaper interviews, and articles. A talk at the YWCA resulted in the most inquiries, but a talk to La Leche League leaders resulted in actual homeschooled kids.

## **Groups: Colo. & Conn.**

*From Helene Van Manen, PO Box 43, Beulah CO 81023:*

On Saturday evening my husband David and I had a meeting in Pueblo for persons interested in homeschooling. It was the first meeting of its kind in the area and we had 13 adults and 13 children (ranging from 6 weeks to 6 years old) attend. Take note that we did no advertising—this was solely on word-of-mouth. Dave and I gave an introduction and before long the place was really buzzing (any room with 13 small children does BUZZ!!) It was very exciting for us all and we've decided to start a monthly support group and expand as needed.

I wish you could have seen all the truly beautiful children there. They all interacted so well and enjoyed each second. It occurred to me on the way home how each child was so unique and at his/her own stage of development. There were five children all around the same age (2), and I reflected on how we would never try to put them all in a situation and try to teach them all the same thing. What then gives us the right to do that at age 6?

We used the booklists and *GWS* handouts you sent to us plus other papers we had run off. Five families are getting together for a group subscription and are excited about receiving *GWS*. I'm sure there will be more families also in the future.

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*From a Connecticut paper:*

A Haddam mother who wrested permission from school officials to school her daughter at home is organizing a statewide organization to help other parents interested in at-home instruction.

Roberta Perkins and her husband John were granted permission by the Regional School District 17 Board of Education to teach their 10-year-old daughter Lisa at home. The couple withdrew Lisa from fifth grade at the Burr District Elementary School because schoolmates harassed her for an unexplained reason and school officials could not resolve the problem. The parents will enroll her in a Maryland-based correspondence school, the Calvert school.

Roberta Perkins said her interest in creating the Connecticut Association of Home Educators began as a result of her personal experience in securing permission to teach her only child at home. Publicity has prompted numerous inquiries from other parents who were already involved in at-home education or interested in pursuing this educational alternative, she said.

The group will enable parents to exchange ideas and information. Guest lecturers who are experts in education will be invited to attend the group meetings, which will start next month.

Another group objective will be to provide legal references, textbooks, and instructional materials suitable for teaching children at home, she said.

The group will work with the State Department of Education to clarify guidelines governing at-home education. (The Perkins' address is PO Box 337, Moodus, CT 06469, phone 203-345-8888.)

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JH: We're always glad to hear about readers starting homeschooling groups in their communities. But after much thought I'd like to ask that in naming such a group you not use the words *Growing Without Schooling*, but instead call it the Jonesville Association of Homeschoolers, or the Home Educators of Jonesville, or whatever else seems best. We want to keep *GWS* out of these local names because we don't want to give the impression that we have given a franchise or some kind of "official" approval to any of them. We don't want to be, or even seem to be, in the business of deciding who is worthy, or best suited, to lead or represent the homeschooling movement in any community. We would rather keep *GWS* just as the name of the

magazine, and let readers and other unschoolers start any kind of local groups they want. If some people in a community for any reason don't like whatever homeschooling groups may be there, they can start another of their own. The more the merrier.

## **Starting a Support Group**

Nancy Plent (2 Smith St, Farmingdale NJ 07727) wrote down some thoughts for people who want to start homeschooling support groups. We quote some of her tips here; you can get a copy of the complete memo by sending her a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Do a lot of reading first. Know the laws. Make lists of addresses and other resources. You'll be asked a lot of questions. Your proposed group will be more helpful if you know at least some of the answers.

Pick a place large enough for meetings. Even the largest living room can get crowded by the time you've reached your second or third meeting. Check out parks or the community rooms in large shopping malls.

It helps to plan a series of three meetings. If people have to miss the first one, they won't just dismiss the idea of seeing what your group is about. They'll catch your second or third meetings. Saves postage on announcements, too.

Advertise by putting flyers on bulletin boards in supermarkets, health food stores, college bookstores, etc. Send press releases to every newspaper within two hours (or more) traveling distance for the first meetings. Send postcards to people or groups you know. People are willing to travel for this information. They can start their own support group closer to home after meeting with your group.

You can ask your librarian for the book which gives addresses of all the newspapers in the state. Check their deadlines. A sample press release can read something like this:

### **Press Release**

The Smithburg Chapter of Homeschoolers will hold a series of three meetings. The first, entitled "Educating Your Child At Home Legally," will be held March 25 in Plattstown. The second will be April 5 in Bloomsdale. It will be concerned with "How Your Child

Learns At Home.” The third, “Community Resources and Your Child’s Curriculum,” will be held April 30, location to be announced.

The Smithburg Homeschoolers is a support group for parents educating their children at home or considering doing so. Meetings are informal and children are welcome. For further information call Jane Doe at 302-555-3758. For written information about homeschooling, send a SASE to Jane Smith, 4 Clark Rd, Sunnyvale NJ 08356.

You can mail the above to all the newspapers you’re interested in without explanation. Most of them will call if they intend to print it.

At least one paper which gets a press release will probably call you for an interview. Newspaper stories help you to find other families. After the first one, you won’t be nervous that you’ll say something dumb or not know how to answer a question. After the third one, you’ll know all of the questions they’re going to ask anyway, and you’ll have sharpened your answers so that they satisfy you. N.J. hasn’t had a single unfriendly homeschooling story. I don’t know of any state that has, come to think of it. You won’t always be quoted accurately, but it doesn’t matter. People will know that homeschooling is possible, and where to reach you.

Have some materials to give out at meetings, but plan on mostly talking. Most potential homeschoolers have felt isolated in their beliefs and want to talk about it. Having the basic legal stuff on paper will save you from answering the same questions for the same people a couple of weeks later.

It works well to go around the room and ask each person to introduce themselves. They can also talk about their reasons for interest in homeschooling. This is a good way to get to know each other. It also helps people with similar interests (starting a school, a playgroup, etc.,) get together.

You might want to switch to social events or some format other than “introductory” meetings. This way you aren’t stuck with spending every meeting discussing the law for newcomers. New people can get their information while they swim, skate, camp, or picnic with your group.

In N.J. we haven’t formed an “organization.” There are no officers, group decisions, etc. We all live too far from each other to continue as one group. A few people started groups close to home. Each group does something

different. A single organization could get very cumbersome, especially in a large state.

Ask for a SASE in any bulletins you send out. The postage adds up quickly, and you may feel you're always out of envelopes and stationery. Try not to get into explaining things on the phone that you can send in printed form. Some of us had the experience of having our child fall asleep by us with bedtime storybook in hand, waiting for us to get off the phone. It only takes once to get your priorities straight!

Stay flexible about what you want to accomplish by having a support group. One group made an amiable decision to split into two when it became apparent that there was a "structured" segment and an "unstructured" segment.

## Curriculum Guide

The Educational Services Department of Worldbook-Childcraft International (Merchandise Mart Plaza, Chicago IL 60654) offers a 15¢ pamphlet *Typical Course of Study, Kindergarten through Grade 12* that *GWS* readers may find helpful. It lists topics for each year in school under such categories as Social Studies, Science, Language Arts, Health and Safety, and Mathematics. Would-be homeschoolers who need to submit a curriculum to school authorities could borrow heavily from this pamphlet, using it as a general outline, or perhaps even copying it word for word.

A note of caution though—don't take this booklet too literally. There are many more topics listed under each category than "typical" classrooms ever have time to cover. And I've never heard of some of the topics being taught in schools at all—who talks about "Chemotherapy" in 7th grade Health class, for example?

But anyway, a number of *GWS* readers have asked for some kind of help in putting together a curriculum on paper, and this booklet looks like it would be useful for that.—DR

## Changing Attitudes

On Jan. 20 I appeared on a Springfield MA talk show called "Night Talk." There was a live audience in the studio, to whom the host now and then asked



questions. A couple of nearby homeschooling families, with whom I had had dinner before the show, were sitting in the front row, where the host could easily talk to them. In spite of the usual kind of loaded questions— “Don’t you miss your friends?” —the kids were very cool and gave sensible and convincing answers.

Early in the show the host asked the audience, which was not stacked in favor of homeschooling and indeed contained a number of teachers, how many of them thought that the idea of people taking their children out of school to teach them at home was a bad idea. Out of the 40 to 50 people there, only about four or five raised their hands. He then asked how many thought it was a good idea, and about half raised their hands. I was surprised and pleased; until quite recently the hands would probably have gone the other way.

The station had only planned to do a half-hour live show, but it went so well and the audience was so lively and interested that, when the first half-hour was over, the host asked them if they would be willing to stay longer and tape another half-hour show for later release. Everyone was willing, and we did so. In the second segment the host—a different one—asked the same question about how many thought that homeschooling was a bad idea, and this time got even fewer hands.

On February 2, I did a similar talk show, *People Are Talking*, in Baltimore.

It was raining hard, which the staff said usually meant a very small studio audience, but more people turned up than they had room for. Again, the show went very well. There were a number of black women in the audience, and I feared that I might hear the usual argument that instead of helping rich white people take their children out of school I should be working to improve the schools where poor black children had to go, etc. But no one said any such thing. Since most of the time I was looking at the hosts or into a camera, I could only take occasional glances at the audience, but a homeschooler and *GWS* reader in the audience later told me that as I talked these black women, and many others as well, were nodding their heads in agreement.

One woman, who did not appear to be rich or college-educated, got up and said that she had taught her little girl at home before the child went to school, and that when she reached school and was given the usual tests, she tested in the 97th percentile. Since I had already said, as I do every chance I get, that

teaching is not a mystery and that anyone who likes children and is interested in them can teach them, was delighted to have this mother's testimony to back me up. Two other mothers spoke about their success in teaching their children. After the show was over I spent at least another hour in the studio lobby talking to members of the studio audience. Since then we have had quite a few requests for information, and some subscriptions, from people in that area.

From these experiences, and from many letters people send us, I get a strong impression that much of the newness and strangeness of the idea of homeschooling is wearing off, and that more and more people are able to hear and talk about it without the anger and fear I used to hear. They may not all or always agree with it, but they can talk about it in a calm, matter-of-fact way. This seems a good sign.—JH

## **Isolated**

*We have received several letters lately like this one:*

I was wondering if you or the readers of *GWS* would have any suggestions for us. We have a son just over one year old, so unschooling is not an immediate problem for us yet. But I am anticipating one thing if we keep Luke out of school; we live rather isolated and so there won't be a lot of chances for social contact with other kids. We have one family for a neighbor, who may also unschool, but no other neighbors for a few miles.

Already Luke seems to need to be around other kids and he enjoys it. So far I've been trying to take him to visit people with children maybe once a week, as well as to church on Sunday. Once he's of school age, I'd like to have a good relationship with the local schools so he can participate in activities there. Transportation will be a problem—taking Luke (as well as our other future children) often to places where other kids are.

How have other people handled this so their kids are happy and “socially well-adjusted?” What advantages and disadvantages have other rural, isolated families found in their children's lack of contact with other kids?

## **Experiment in WA**

*From Jerod Rosman, Monte Cristo, Box 737, Granite Falls, WA 98252:*

We live 36 miles from the nearest school—26 miles from the end of the school bus line. Deep snow isolates us for 4 to 5 months each year, and it is 12 miles to the start of a plowed road.

For two years we tried to commute our three kids to school. During good weather we drove 104 miles a day to and from the bus. In the wintertime we either boarded the kids out, moved into town, or tried to use snowmobiles to commute them. It didn't work! We were always dead tired; we used horrendous quantities of gas; and the kids suffered physically and educationally.

As the price of gas skyrocketed, and our confusion, exhaustion, and concern increased, we realized we had to do something. Either we had to move closer to town and bus line, or we had to figure out a way to teach the kids at home. The District compensated us up to 30 miles a day, maximum, and the cost of gas for the 104 miles we traveled was wiping us out.

Last winter, we arranged to work with the children's teachers and carry out their plans and lesson guides. What a disaster! First, the teachers didn't like the idea, because it took time they were not being paid for. We didn't like the idea because it was chaos trying to juggle 6 or 7 different lesson plans and approaches. The kids made it through, but they were penalized for absences, even though they were "approved" absences.

Then the state offered to pay a boarding allowance if the children could live in town. When we threatened to sue for encouraging family break-ups, they retreated—in a hurry.

Finally, this spring, we took the bull by the horns and wrote the school district to inform them we were taking the children out of school and teaching them via correspondence. We wanted to continue to have the kids enrolled in Granite Falls, so the school would not lose the state aid per diem, but we also wanted the school to pay for the courses. Our main argument was that this plan seemed to be in the best interests of the children—and it was!

Our letter was sent in June. We did not hear from the school district until fall, when the Supt. of Schools and the Elementary Principal visited us with bulging briefcases. After we presented our case, and listened to them recite Washington State law, we were delighted to hear they were in complete sympathy with our situation and would do everything they could to get our proposal approved!

We didn't hear anything for two weeks. We were beginning to think they

were snowing us, when we got the word that they had approved the whole shebang! The School District pays for the courses, and makes their resources available to us. The children are carried on the rolls at Granite Falls, and the Calvert and University of Nebraska credits will be accepted by the District. They will not monitor us, and will accept any progress reports from the correspondence schools as indications of their progress.

Sooo. we're in business. Another family moved into the area this summer with three school kids, and went in with us on the proposal. The four parents take turns directing the kids with the Moms doing the lion's share. We are all learning from the experience.

Our neighbor's fifth grader, Michelle, had been shuffled into a "Specific Learning Disability" class three years ago because of trouble reading. After six tearful and tough weeks, she now is head over heels in love with reading, and gaining by leaps and bounds.

The children's main difficulty is lack of ability to read, understand, and apply directions. We refuse to answer questions that can be answered by reading, thinking, and reasoning. We direct them to answers. In the public classroom, it looks as if they never bothered to understand written directions—they asked the teacher for an explanation.

It is also hard for us not to use pressure techniques used on us when we went to school. Sometimes, it seems to grind against our gears. We also try to eliminate any competition between the youngsters, but sometimes find ourselves using it to encourage perseverance.

The school district considers this a pilot or experimental program, and future funding will depend on progress. So, we are all doing our best to make it work.

## **1880s Farm School**

After doing the *Speaking Out* TV show in Toronto, I had a nice visit with Jane Jacobs (author of *Economy Of Cities*), who told me some things about her father's early schooling that might be very useful to many unschoolers today.

Her father grew up in the 1880s on a small family farm in Virginia. Many of his aunts and uncles lived on other small farms in the same area, within perhaps five or ten miles. Since there were no public schools in that part of

the state, the families had to teach their own children. Neither fathers nor mothers could give much time to it, since running the farms was more than a full-time job for both of them, and the families could not afford to hire a special teacher for their children, as richer families did. So these families hit on a good solution. A family with an older child, a daughter not yet old enough to leave home, would make their farm the school for all the young children in the several families. Since roads were bad and travel slow, these children could not go from their own homes to the school farm and back every day. So the young children would all live at the school farm during the week, doing some work in exchange for their keep, study with whichever cousin was the “teacher,” and go back to their own home farm over the weekends. Since they were staying with loved and loving relatives, and had cousins to study and play with, they did not get homesick.

When the older girl who had been acting as teacher married and left home, one of the older children in the other families would take over the schooling duty and the children would live at that farm during the week. So the children knew that just as older cousins were now taking care of them and teaching them, so when they were older they in turn would take care of and teach younger cousins.

Jane Jacobs told me that at the farm where her father had most of his schooling, they built a little outbuilding to house their family school. It had a bell beside the door, and was still standing last time Jane visited, some years ago.

It sounds like a lovely arrangement. The children must have enjoyed the long (for those days) trip to join their cousins at the beginning of each week, and enjoyed just as much the weekly trip back to their own parents. As far as education goes, the system certainly worked well; though the families had very little money, all of the children who wanted to go to college were able to do so, and some went on to law or medical school.

This could be a very good way to unschool children in (1) families that live far from any other families, and who feel their children may not have enough company; and (2) families in the city (or anywhere) where the parents work away from home and cannot be with their children during the day. Thus we can imagine the Smiths and the Browns taking their young children over to the Jones’s house or apartment, where the oldest Jones child, perhaps 10 or 12, will take care of the younger ones during the day while they all study and

learn together. Such arrangements could make homeschooling possible for many working parents who might otherwise not be able to do it.

## Multicultural High School

*From Carl Hedman (U. of Wisconsin Philosophy Dept, PO Box 413, Milwaukee WI 53201—see GWS #9, “A Useful School”):*

I was happy to see you say a few things about alternative schools in *GWS* #17, for I believe that in the long run “unschooling” must be based on new forms of cooperation between families. What we need, I think, are new forms of cooperation that transcend both the nuclear family and the artificial social forms (e.g., giant public schools). And what better place to begin than a group of families committed to providing, in your words, “some special places for kids.”

The model I favor is four or five families agreeing to have the young people at their house one day or a half-day a week, with each parent responsible for pulling things together on the day that they host the group. This way, every family will carry their own share of responsibility, and the group won’t be burdened with costs of rented space, inspectors, etc. It would also allow single parents and other families that have problems with work schedules to participate—since most people could find a way to get off from work one time a week.

You’re absolutely right to stress that many people who say “I want to work with kids” really want to work on kids, “to do things to or for them, usually without their consent, which they think will do them good.” I saw this at our own alternative elementary school and I saw it in my own life as a parent. Somehow, we don’t trust the viability of our own lives to provide a context where younger people will find things they will freely join.

At our “school” we tried to deal with this by having a daily sign-up sheet where the “students” wrote down things they would like to do on a particular day (adults did this too) hoping that others would join them.

But, we stressed that, in your words, “they should not have to go to special kid places unless they want to.” I remember how hard it was at first when my 10-year-old son signed up for a garbage collecting expedition in the neighborhood, especially when I had signed up for a math class. Turns out, however, that his present interest in anthropology and archaeology came out

of these jaunts.

By the way, I think there is an important difference between young people under 10 or so and older “students.” Most younger people don’t really mind stopping by a place on a fairly regular basis. But the plot thickens considerably with adolescence. Here I would guess that most young people can’t be expected, without coercion, to show up each day at a particular place. In the case of my two sons, this was a time when they preferred to pick their own projects, completely on their own terms. One put all his energies into a paper-route. The other focused on a correspondence art course and Brewer baseball games.

To bring all this up-to-date by relating it to Multicultural Community High School—a ten year old, still developing “alternative school” here in Milwaukee: We are still absolutely committed to voluntary attendance.

Furthermore, the worthwhile activity we are engaged in is working in systematic ways on basic skills. What we try to do at each of our six “storefront learning centers” (actually many are in church basements) is to create an atmosphere where anyone can feel comfortable about working on grammar, etc. A key to this, I’ve come to believe, is that we welcome mothers, and older and younger brothers and sisters, to come to our centers—so long as they are interested in this project. For example, the other day a mother came in with her 15-year-old son to check out the place. Before the day had ended, she was thinking about preparing for the high school equivalency exam herself—and we even had the 10-year-old brother working on our basic subtraction worksheets. As I said to him, “You know, we all work while we’re here—let me know what you’d like to do.” We give no orders; that would get us back into all the public school games. We simply try to convey that for those who want, we’ve got a progression of work sheets that allows anyone to catch up on their basic skills.

Again, one doesn’t have to come to any classes to be enrolled in our school. Historically, hundreds of young people have used their time at Multicultural to pursue a job or some other interest. In many cases the closest we come to a traditional “educational” role is when at the initial meeting we suggest that we will always be around when they decide they want to work on their basics. Many times it takes a year or so before we see them again—sometimes we never see them again. But often they will remember this possibility; perhaps as they begin thinking about a trade that requires the

GED exam.

Since this overriding project is incompatible with our providing young people with a place to hang around and discuss all sorts of things, we aren't able to take on the task of setting up cooperative peer groups. I personally think this is as it should be; that, ultimately (following Paul Goodman) this has to be left up to the young people themselves. This is not to say that we don't encourage young people to work together on the various issues that confront them. For example, we have a program with the local university whereby ex-Multi students come together Friday afternoons to support each other as they deal with the hassles of college. And we encourage, say, single parents to get in touch with other Multi students who have worked through similar challenges.

Where the cooperative solidarity is most evident is with the volunteers who help hold Multicultural together. We learn constantly from our joint project, and the compromises and quarrels we experience seem somehow to make us stronger as a group. But with the "students" themselves, we must rely on the claim that self-respect (strengthened by their proving to themselves they aren't "dumb") is a precondition of genuine social cooperation.

## **Indiana Home-School**

*Penny Nesbit (IN) writes:*

It's been two years since we took Peterson out of the first grade of a local public school. That first year I was required to send a monthly attendance report to the county attendance officer. I did so faithfully, but last year I did not bother to send in monthly records, although I kept one at home. The school authorities have not bothered us at all. Of course, we have kept a pretty low profile.

For two years I used the Home Study Institute curriculum but I switched this year to the Calvert School, which is a little more interesting.

I use it as a guide only and as a security blanket. We have "school" in the morning—but I am finally at a point where I can leave it up to Peterson as to whether or not we will have classes, and not panic if he has something better to do.

About reading—I could kick myself for allowing the public school to



teach him to read in kindergarten. He has developed an aversion to reading, especially textbooks, and I feel that he was too young at 5½ for formal reading instruction. In order to encourage silent reading we told him he could stay up as late as he wanted, reading in bed at night. At first he chose all the easy *Dr. Seuss* type books and he couldn't manage to read silently—and he ran to us constantly when he was stuck on a word. That was two months ago. Now he is reading pretty difficult books, silently. He no longer comes to us when he can't figure out a word. If he can't sound it out he just skips it and usually he can figure out what is was after finishing the sentence.

Peterson continues to see a couple of children who went to kindergarten with him. With more children moving into our neighborhood there are plenty of playmates on weekends and after school. Our local library shows free movies and has arts and crafts activities every Tuesday afternoon and Peterson enjoys this. Also, he is still studying violin and meets with other Suzuki children every other week at least, sometimes more often. For two years he refused to attend Sunday School because they “did baby things.” This year he was invited to join an older group of youngsters studying ethics and other religions. Now he looks forward to that experience each Sunday.

In *GWS* #15 a mother inquired about whether it was possible to take on a child's education without much help from the father. This situation (one parent doing most of the teaching) is probably the more usual situation. In our family my husband travels a good deal and when he is in town he is away from home ten and eleven hours a day, sometimes more. This does not mean, however, that he is not involved in our son's homeschooling. When he is at home he takes on the nightly “read to me” routine. In September he took Peterson for a week long camping and canoeing trip. He has taught him how to play golf, backgammon, and chess. Wherever possible, we accompany him on trips. (We just returned from a week's visit to Montreal and Quebec.)

About practicing (*GWS* #14)—Peterson seldom practiced his violin but seemed to enjoy playing so I didn't bug him about it and adjusted to the fact that other children were progressing much faster than he. In January, I joined a Suzuki parents' violin class. After Peterson heard me play he began to practice a half hour or more a day. Although he never told me why he suddenly began to practice, I think that one of the reasons was he realized how good he was in comparison to my squeaky tones.

*From a later letter:*

We gathered up all the Calvert stuff and took it down into the basement. Since that time, Peterson made a detailed exhibit of rocks, pieces of arrowheads, and shells, found on our various trips. We went to the library for most of the research materials. To add a little zest to the exhibit, Peterson hung up some of Ruben's prints. Every morning he maps out his own work which includes practicing cursive, math, spelling, and science. Right now he's into evolution, brought on by his study of rocks. He's still not reading a lot—except for information about specific things—but on a recent trip to Puerto Rico he discovered *Mad Magazine* and had a ball reading it!

## A Troubled Parent

*A reader wrote:*

I have to get this feeling out—I feel dumb! In your newsletters most of the folks have their kids reading by five, and most everyone has “school” at home. For years now I had given up the idea of keeping my kids at home because I can't teach academics. I hate them now as much as I did in school. Advanced math turns to mush in my head (yet I can cope and reason quite well). I read all the time (I have the hugest library, ever-growing) but phonics will do me in every time.

I've always felt so much guilt because I didn't do a thing with my five kids except to let them play. I've finally coped with that guilt (sort of) and realized (but now I'm wondering again) that it was all okay. If all I want to do, or can do, is provide craft projects, or excursions, or talks about Spirit/God, or health education (I'm heavy into natural healing), then fine, I can still do it. But it's so scary for me and I just don't know if I'm the homeschool type. I'd rather see them play and play and then play some more. Time enough to grow up.

I know you have made it clear that you will judge no one's method, but, look, I have no method or answers, just questions and confusion. I've merely outlined all I can effectively give them. I love my kids and I want them to be magical; I have no desire for the “free time” school would give me.

This school question creates whole areas of guilt for me—do I give them enough, am I fair, and on and on. Sending them to school would seem to absolve me of all this guilt—“There, I've done my duty.”

Is it possible that I am making a wrong decision about our local school? It

is a wonderful one-room schoolhouse. Generally the kids are marvelous. The teachers are too, and are very much a part of the community. The parents are all very involved and even come to school to help. The parties are community events and there is much community caring. It warms my heart to see the close bonds of friendship my children have with their classmates and teachers. I find myself wondering if the community spirit the school represents is a worthwhile reason for them to be there. What I am trying to say is that the school is everything anyone could hope for in a school, the teachers even love the kids, but it still gives grades, and it's still 7-5 (they take a bus), five days a week.

I like being with my kids. I want to be their teacher. They teach me, too, and I want to be taught.

I need an objective outside opinion. The kids love school, and they should, it's a wonderful environment, this school (except for the social garbage, meanness, etc.) I don't know if I would be doing them a favor by keeping them out. It's mostly me, my heart aches when they are gone. I want them to be free and only freedom teaches freedom. There, I've said it.

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*I replied:*

Thanks for your lovely letter, and for saying out clear and strong what so many people feel, but are afraid to say.

My first message to you is, don't worry. Don't worry about "teaching academics." The one idea I keep hammering away at in *GWS*, before all others, is not only that it isn't teaching that makes learning, but that most teaching actually prevents learning. You don't have to worry that if you don't "teach" your kids this or that, they will never learn it. We all know thousands or millions of things that nobody ever "taught" us, but that we figured out by using our eyes and ears, thinking about what we saw, heard, read, or did, and asking questions if we needed to. The human race has been learning this way for about a million years now, and your children will, too.

You say that you read all the time but that phonics does you in. If you can read a lot you already know phonics; you just don't know how to talk about it, and there's no important reason to know. The only point, supposedly, of "teaching" phonics is to help people learn to read. But if you already read well, obviously you don't need to be taught, you already own that knowledge

in the most useful possible way.

Same goes for grammar. Grammar means the structure of a language, the way it is put together and used. If you can speak, read, and write fluently, as you obviously can, then you know the grammar of the language, and the fact that you may not be able to put labels on parts of speech is of no importance at all. The “grammar” that is taught in schools, which is really the grammar of Latin (a very different language) clumsily pasted onto English, was not invented when Shakespeare wrote, so if he took a modern day grammar test, he would flunk. But who in his right mind could say that Shakespeare did not know English grammar?

It’s fine about letting your kids play—they learn more that way than any other way. If you keep reading, and reading to them if and when you, and they, feel like it, one day they are going to get curious about what Mom does with all those books, and are going to decide that they want to do it, and in no time at all they will be reading, no pain, no strain. They may do it next month, they may do it a couple of years from now. It doesn’t make any difference, as long as, whenever they do it, they do it because they want to. When they do it in that spirit, they will cover four or five years of school reading in a matter of months.

Beyond that, the point about a lot of the people who write in to *GWS* about their kids’ reading is that they didn’t teach them, the kids just figured it out, a thing which the human animal is extremely good at doing.

If, as you are doing, you make available and accessible to the kids the things that are most interesting and important to you, they are going to become interested in at least some of those things. If they know other adults who will share their lives, interests, world with them, so much the better. Children are interested in what we grown-ups know, do, care about.

I would say you are the perfect homeschool type. The people who have trouble with homeschooling (at least at first) are the people who feel they have to “teach” their children everything. You say you have no “method.” What I keep trying to say in *GWS* is that you don’t need a method. It’s better that you don’t have a method. It’s all those methods that have killed learning in the schools.

About “magical,” that word makes me nervous if it means drawing some kind of a line and putting children on one side and the rest of us on the other. Existence, life, thought, feeling, imagination, dreams—all are miraculous and

magical, and adults and children share in that magic, it's not something that belongs to the children alone.

Your little school sounds nice, but if it's as nice as it sounds, there's no reason why they couldn't make an agreement with you to let your children come if and when they wanted, and stay as long as they wanted. Let the school be just one more part of the world for them to use and explore, or not use and explore, as they see fit. Then it becomes the children's decision, not yours. If the school won't agree to that, then they're not as great as you think.

But if the children are happy in the school, and have good friends among the children and the teachers, they will go to school for as much as they need and want of that friendship, and will stay away when they need and want something else—solitude, privacy, time to think, play, work on their own projects. Children, especially when young, have a very acute and accurate sense of what their needs are, and if the means to satisfy those needs, for friendship or whatever, are at hand, they will use those means.

But as I say, if the school won't let the kids come when they want, then it's not as great as it seems, and there's no reason to feel guilty about not sending the children. Of course, if the children really want to go, are determined to go, then you have a different problem, and if their feelings are strong enough on the matter, you would probably be wise to yield to them. But let's not worry about that for the time being. See what you can work out with the school about the children coming when they want.

You say you need an "objective" outside opinion. There are no such things as "objective" opinions. An opinion is by definition subjective, and people who say otherwise are kidding themselves or lying. If your heart aches when your children are gone, that's the best reason in the world for having them around you, at least for as much time as they want. So see if you can work out a deal where the children go to school when they want. Let me know how that works out.

## **Crippling One's Children**

*From Nancy Boye, Girls Club of Dallas, 5415 Maple, Ste. 126, Dallas TX 75235:*

Some friends of mine told me this story on returning from an extended stay in India. They had been prepared, by their studies prior to the trip, for the

numbers of beggars they would encounter. But they were not prepared for, and were deeply impacted by, the numbers of beggars who were in some way maimed or crippled. In their travels, they saw so many that they questioned their Indian hosts about the reasons for this situation. They were told (by many people) that the parents of these maimed beggars, having nothing else to give their children, would cut off their children's hand or leg in the hope of making the child a better (i.e. more pitiful) beggar.

While we can easily recognize this as a horror, isn't it much the same thing that we do to our children, spiritually and intellectually, when we say "This is the way it is, so the best I can do is prepare you for the worst!" If we only knew what we were saying! If we could only see that it's the SAME! Maybe we would be able to work our way out of our own despair for the sake of a future that DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THAT WAY!!

A teacher "caught" my 13-year-old son doing something that was against school rules. Her anger, and the fact that she was physically detaining him in the hallway, attracted a sizable group of curious students. They both ended up by screaming at each other, and (obviously!) it was my son who received the punishment. My son told me that he'd done what he was accused of doing, he knew it was against the rules, and he was willing to be lectured by this teacher. His complaint was that he'd asked to talk to her alone and not, as she insisted, in front of the other students.

I agreed with my son about the unfairness of the teacher, but I reminded him that the way the system operates is that the teacher has all the power and that his only hope was to "play the game by their rules." How did I keep myself from storming the school? Or at the very least, from commending my son's refusal to be humiliated—without a fight—in front of the other students? How, indeed!! Could it be that, as a product of that same system, I am *still* intimidated by the authority of the school system?

A friend told me of the problems that her 8-year-old son was having in school. He spent a lot of time in the principal's office for "acting up" in class. She'd had several conferences with the teacher and the principal. They were all concerned about the boy's inability to conform. My friend told me that she was embarrassed to have to go so often to the school for conferences and that she was very angry with her son for his obstinacy in refusing to behave in the prescribed manner.

She and I both, and countless millions of other parents, were doing

nothing better for our children than those parents in India. We were doing everything in our power (supposedly for the good of our children) to make them “better beggars.”

## **J.P.’S Social Life**

*From Kathy Mingl (IL):*

The library had some sort of weekly program for 2-year-olds, a few months back, so a friend and I took J.P. and her little boy, Andy, there for some social exposure. The program was pretty obviously aimed at preparing them for school—sit down and listen to the nice lady, and then do what she tells you, all together—yech. We didn’t come back for that, again.

The next week we came later, after the program part was over, and J.P. and Andy got a lot of social exposure. All the 2-year-olds in the world, boiling all over the room, playing and pushing each other and yelling and fighting and grabbing everything in sight. A very maturing experience, all right—think I aged a year or two in that hour, myself. J.P. loved it, didn’t want to leave, and was very thoughtful all the way home.

What I noticed about all those properly school-prepared little kids is that they all seemed to go around in their own little bubbles, and the parents tried to keep them there—“Leave that little boy alone—go find something else to play with,” etc. I told J.P. to look that kid in the eye and tell him he wasn’t finished with that toy (the boy had taken it away from J.P.). Do you know what happened? After a moment of shock, the kid lit up like a Christmas tree, and was J.P.’s friend for life. Another time we were there, a little girl pushed J.P. off a rocking horse. When he came blubbering back to me, I told him to go back and look that girl in the eye and tell her that wasn’t nice. Again, she was surprised, but she got off and played with J.P., and then didn’t want us to go home. I don’t think anyone talks to these kids as though they were real people. Amazing.

J.P. just asked me what school is, and I’m darned if I could think of what to tell him. I finally said it’s a place where parents send their kids to get them out of the house all day, which he accepted, but I don’t think it will hold him for long. Got any ideas, quick? (JH: it’s a place where they teach you to sit still, be quiet, and do what you’re told.)

# Daycare Daddy

*From Barry Kahn (ME):*

I am presently a daycare daddy. My wife, Jean, began a two-year RN program in September, and rather than pay someone else to care for Heather and Jocelyn, I decided to try and make money by caring for other people's kids. At present I have a two year old boy, a 3½ year old girl, and her older brother who comes after school—he's in the first grade. Quite a crew. I have absolutely no doubt that working for a living at a "regular" job is much easier than what I am doing. On the other hand, I am getting to be an excellent cook (especially Chinese food), and the kids provide all the entertainment I could ever hope for.

In addition to the 9 to 5 childcare I am still making an occasional wedding ring and also teaching English to Indo-Chinese refugees two evenings a week and Saturday mornings. I've had to retire from giving guitar lessons for the moment—there just isn't any way to fit them in.

Out of morbid curiosity I asked Matthew, the first grader, if he gets to talk in school. After a glance which clearly said: "Are you crazy?" he said, "Of course not! If we talk, we have to stay after school!" "What about recess?" I asked. "Yeah, we can talk then." "And at lunch?" "A little bit."

The next day—still morbid, I guess—I asked him why the teacher didn't let them talk in class. "Cause if she let us talk we would scream and yell!" he replied instantly. "I let you talk and you don't scream and yell," I said. He shrugged eloquently and went off to play.

My own kids, I'm happy to say, are thriving and delightful as ever. They do so many funny, perceptive, amazing things every day that it's really hard for me to remember any particular event long enough to write it down. Half the time I forget before Jean even gets back from class! And even when I remember, there's no way to reproduce the style, inflection, intonation, etc. Here's a couple of samples:

Heather, trying to console Jocelyn who was crying about something:

"Joc Baby, Baby Joc, whatever your name is, don't cry."

Heather, sitting in the car seat in the dark behind me as we drive to the mall, sings: "Eat cookies, eat cookies, eat cake, eat cake, eat sugar, eat sugar, eat raisins, eat raisins, eat buckwheat! Eat buckwheat!" (Repeat from



beginning.)

And on the way back from the mall, cries out in desperation, “Daddy, my eyes keep closing and I can’t stop them.”

The greatest thing about doing daycare is that I get to eavesdrop on the kids while I’m cleaning house or getting lunch together or whatever. The sophistication of 3½ year old girls playing Mommy or Doctor is incredible, and the way they have learned to keep Jocelyn happy so she won’t harass them excessively is a marvel of child psychology. My only problem is that I don’t think I’m smart enough to truly grasp just how smart they are! But I try.

I would be curious to know how many *GWS* readers do not own a TV. We don’t. Who has the time? I find I agree with the folks who think television as a medium is basically harmful, regardless of the “quality” of the content.

Radio, books, and of course live performances, make TV look like what it is: \_\_\_\_\_ (Fill in the blank).

After one and a half years of procrastination I finally built the kids a sturdy easel for painting and drawing. I finished it last Saturday afternoon and that same evening Heather wrote her whole name by herself for the first time. Who could ask for a better thanks? Heather’s other great leap of recent weeks is a musical one: she can now carry a tune with pretty fair accuracy. Her favorite song—you’ll never guess is *Paradise* by John Prine, which she has half memorized. The transition from atonal lack of interest to singing along and sounding good, like so many childhood jumps, seemed to take place overnight, although I’m sure some part of her brain has been carrying on a “music analysis project” since birth. Who knows? When they’re ready, they’re ready.

The kids are calling me to begin bedtime rituals, so I’d best be off. First we play, then I read to Heather from an *Oz* book or a *Narnia* book, then Jocelyn crawls in between Heather and me and I tell her a story about a dog, a cat, a tree, and a bird while she makes the appropriate noises, then Joc goes back to Jean, and I tell Heather a story about Deedee, an imaginary person who is usually about ½-inch high but sometimes is the size of a small elf depending on Heather’s mood. The Deedee stories always end with, “And then Deedee went to bed,” to which Heather always replies, “Just like I’m going to do.” And then we go to sleep.

## **Bad Boy**

*A friend writes:*

Most people I encounter talk about an infant's badness, and its desire to be dictator. A young friend told me about his baby boy. During the week before Christmas the parents kept the baby away from the gifts with plenty of hand-slapping. On the great day, they told him now he could open a package. He refused. In fact the child drew back and slapped his own little hand.

## **Accepting New Baby**

*I (JH) wrote to a friend, at the birth of her second child:*

I'm sending along a copy of *Before You Were Three*. I suggest that when the new baby is born—or if the baby arrives before the book, as soon as possible thereafter—you give it to D (age 4) as a present. I think it would be fun to read to him, partly to remind him what he was like, and partly to remind him what the new baby will be going through.

I guess like all older brothers and sisters, D will be thinking now and then that the little one gets more attention than he does, and is allowed to get away with a lot more. One thing that might help him (or any other older children) deal with this is to tell him, "Because you're older, you're going to do everything first. Everything the baby wants to do, you will already know how to do. Everything the baby learns to do, you will already know how to do better. That is very frustrating for the little one, so it's only fair that younger children should get a little more attention. Besides, since they are newer in the world, and confused, and maybe a little bit scared, they need it more." But the point is to remind the bigger kids of the huge advantages of always being bigger and always being first. It may help if they have a few specific privileges which they get just because they are bigger.

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*The friend replied:*

I want to thank you for *Before You Were Three*, which arrived yesterday. It is a lovely book. I read part of it to D today and he acted out sections—where the authors write, "Lie flat and lift your head; this is how the baby views the world," etc.

Many of D's grievances towards school seem to have disappeared or lessened considerably since A's arrival. It's as though a host of anxieties have

been lifted from his shoulders. He no longer protests about going to school. He has stopped clinging to me and his father. And he seldom goes through the difficult bouts of babyishness interspersed with defiant independence that he'd throw in the weeks before the baby came.

I think he's relieved to have the mystery of a baby brother or sister solved at last. I imagine he was deeply uncertain what to expect. Would Mommy disappear for a while? Would Daddy too? Would this creature be bigger than he is, take his toys, make lots of noise?

He never asked these questions outright so I'm surmising with great license, but the confidence and happy peace which have reappeared in his personality and behavior are unmistakable.

## **Children & Death**

*From Art Harvey (NH):*

Some time ago you asked about the reaction of our daughter Emily (then 2) to the death of her baby sister. It was a reasonable question but at the time rather a difficult topic for us to write about. Now over a year has passed.

I would not call Rosemary's death "a dreadful blow" as far as Emily was concerned. She has had some difficulty about it, partly because her mother was so upset. Emily continued to ask questions about Rosemary for several months. At first, where is Rosemary? Is she asleep? Is this Rosie's dress? Every evening Elizabeth remembers Rosemary in her prayers, which Emily often hears. In our living room hangs a portrait of Rosemary drawn by a neighbor the day after she died. One time, when Emily was more than usual saddened by it all, she said, "We didn't make her dead, did we?"

Emily was interested in her sister and had about the same affection toward Rosie as toward others she knows. If Emily had been a year older she would have been permitted to share in the care of Rosemary to a much greater extent, and so become more attached. As it was, she was usually frustrated when she wanted to hold Rosie or do some other thing with her for a long time. This, in my opinion, is a strong reason for having children at least three years apart.

I have heard that young children are not normally terrified at the fact of their own impending death, as in incurable illness, etc. Younger children do not seem to have a strong sense of individuality. I doubt whether a strong

sense of it is a necessary part of human life. So Emily's non-emotional reaction to Rosemary's death, together with her continuing search for Rosemary's proper place in her own world, satisfy my theories about the order of mankind.

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*Arthur, who wrote the above letter some time ago, tells us that in addition to Emily (now 4½), the family also has Max (now 1).*

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*Another reader, Mark McGartland (IL), wrote:*

Sue and I thought it fortunate that we had taken Dawn and Nathan to a funeral home when an elderly neighbor died, for a few months later my mother died. We think that explaining death as it happened to a neighbor better prepared the children to accept the death of a grandparent, someone who meant so much to them.

Some of your readers may be interested in the book *Dying Is Different* by Phillis Rash Hughes (published by Mech Mentor, Box 394,

Mahomet IL 61853). It uses a format of simple text and pictures, explaining death in plants, animals, and humans; it's appropriate for even very young children.

## **Extending Understanding**

*Sasha Kariel (HI) writes:*

From the time my son, Asa, was born I have included him in as many of my own activities as possible. It seemed to me that taking him to movies, restaurants, and parties was certainly more stimulating for him than a babysitter. At first it seemed like a sacrifice for me since I had to spend considerable time interacting with him instead of enjoying the adult entertainment. But now I know how much I've gained in contrast to parents who "can't manage" their child in similar situations. Asa and I have worked out a special relationship where learning and entertainment merge together.

Of course, including him in my life means no less than including myself in his life. When he was an infant not yet able to crawl he often became animated and struggled while looking at a toy far across the room. When I

left him alone to develop “spontaneously” he would easily lose interest in the toy and turn to something else. So I would make the toy slowly weave and hop its way over toward him. He watched the toy until it stopped just out of reach and then he struggled furiously until he grasped it. The smug look on his little face let me know that I had done something right.

Months later when he toddled over to me with a picture book, I directed his attention to the alphabet letters and labeled them as well as the pictures. A few days later at the zoo he pointed to a letter T on a sign and said “Tee, tee!” with the same excitement he had when pointing out a monkey or a turtle.

Now Asa is three and we spend a great deal of time playing with his toy dishes. As we make pancakes I talk about each ingredient as he mixes it in, where it comes from, and how the pancakes would taste if we didn’t add it. One of his favorite jokes is staging an accident and spilling too much pretend salt into the batter. We then cough and sputter eating these “yuckie” pancakes.

I have come to believe that consistently taking what Asa is doing and then deliberately extending it by adding new information—drawing him just barely beyond the edge of his understanding—has dramatically affected his ability to learn.

While I realize that many of the parents who speak in *GWS* about leaving their children alone to learn “by themselves” are actually participating in many ways, I think it is important to appreciate the parents’ role as a more positive one. Parents may well see themselves as facilitators of their child’s learning experiences. I would find it very helpful if more parents could write *GWS* about the strategies they use to facilitate their child’s learning, that is, how they amplify and elaborate on their child’s initial expression of interest without imposing the kind of predefined goals characteristic of formal schooling.

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*In my reply, I wrote:*

You speak of taking what Asa is doing and then deliberately extending it by adding new information. A wonderful idea. And yet there can be a danger in it, beyond a certain point. If everything we say or do around a child has some kind of conscious pedagogical intent, if our response to everything the child does is to think, “How can I use this to teach him something?” we run

the risk of turning our home into a school. There doesn't have to be, and shouldn't be, a lesson in everything.

The line is hard to find, harder yet to describe. I like my friends to tell me things that they are interested in and that I don't know—it is part of any good conversation. Yet I don't like being around people who act and talk as if their mission in life was to educate me, whose relation to me is always that of teacher to pupil. When your children are little enough, almost anything you say is fascinating. But as they get a little older they will become very aware of how you talk to your adult friends, and they will not like it if you have one way of talking for friends and another, different, more teacher-ish way for your children.

## **Her Own Learning Style**

*Pat Heiland (IA) writes:*

We have been so well schooled ourselves that it has been difficult for us to trust our own point of view about schooling. Reading *GWS* and your writings has been greatly helpful to us in making our decision to continue with home learning, something that we realized we had been doing right along. Anna provided us with the motivation to come to this decision, as well as a real education by her example of self-directed learning.

Giving Anna the freedom to learn and grow has often required that we put aside our conclusions about education, however “liberal,” and allow ourselves to become the students. We have learned that the ways Anna chooses to learn are important to her, that the “learning strategies” she chooses work, and that they are strategies that schools would not tolerate.

One of the things that we have learned is that Anna often prefers to do more than one thing at a time. We first paid attention to this when she was around two, because it affected us. Anna would ask us to read, cozy up to listen, then, after just a few minutes, she would get out some toys and get wrapped up in play. At first we found this really annoying. Since she was giving no visible attention to the story, we assumed she wasn't listening. But, if we stopped reading or complained about her apparent lack of interest, Anna would insist that she wanted the reading. So we read. And she played with her toys, sometimes in elaborate, conversational fantasy. She really did hear the stories and often interrupted her play to ask questions or make comments

about them. And she remembered the stories, too. We accepted this arrangement, although at times it seemed ridiculous, e.g., when she would read a comic while we read something else to her at her request.

This liking for doing more than one thing at a time has not been limited to listening to stories or the only way Anna has liked to hear stories. But, whenever she has done things this way, it has seemed important to her as a way of learning.

Another thing that we learned is that “playing with” what she is learning is Anna’s way of taking possession of it, of making it her very own. I began to understand this when Anna and I were working on a seed-growing project. When we planted the seeds, I suggested that we make a chart on which we could record what we saw as the seeds grew. Since Anna wanted to be a biologist, I thought this would give her a taste of scientific observation.

She liked the idea.

When the first sprouts appeared, we eagerly got out our chart. Anna neatly filled in the data and drew a surprisingly accurate representation of a sprouted pea seed in just the right place. Then she began to make the whole business her own and I began to feel twinges of anxiety about our tidy chart. Under the sprouted seed she drew a hand, and then a rabbit person attached to the hand, and then two more rabbits looking at the seed in the hand of the first rabbit. In a stupid muddle of school-thinking I almost told her that she was messing up the chart. I bit my tongue and watched. Anna worked over the chart with further drawings and talked out her fantasy as she went. The first rabbit told the other two all the “ins” and “outs” of seed growing, covering all the things Anna and I had talked about when we planted the seeds and while we waited for them to grow.

Anna has continued to take possession of her learning in drawing, fantasy, games, and “one-woman plays.” After seeing an explanation of selection in the evolution of one crab species on PBS’s *Cosmos* this fall, Anna worked out a fantasy game using pennies and dimes from her counting jar to represent two species of crabs. Then she invited me to fish with her for crabs from a toy boat on our carpet sea. We always threw back the penny crabs to live and reproduce and we always kept the dime crabs to eat. She expanded the game, adding predators and ocean storms which each took their toll on the two populations. This fantasy game clarified the dynamics of selection for Anna and made the knowledge her own in a very real sense.

None of these incidents or the many similar ones that fill Anna's days would have a place in school. We are certain that having Anna's ways of learning reshaped to fit what schools think are the appropriate or right ways of learning would be as crippling and as stupid as having her feet bound to fit some notion of appropriate foot size.

## Memorizing Together

*From Anne Callaway, 1760 Elm St, El Cerrito CA 94530:*

I find it's easier to memorize something if I say it out loud with someone else. My 4-year-old and I have memorized poems and Bible verses almost effortlessly by reciting while looking at each other. When one of us makes a mistake, the other usually says it right and this way we keep going. Keeping going is the main thing. It's like playing music. You don't stop and go back every time you make a mistake—you just pick it up again. The repetition will do the job of making it perfect. No need to struggle with it. (See "Choral Reading," *GWS* #3.)

## Reading on His Own

*LeeAnn Ellis (WA) writes:*

I must admit that I have been intimidated at times when reading *GWS* to read about young children who have taught themselves to read at age 3 or 4. My daughter (9) is now a fine reader and enjoys the world of books as much as I do. But I have to admit that I helped her learn to read with all my sneaky little tricks of word cards, phonics games, etc. She was reading well by age 8, but a lot of my time and effort went into that accomplishment.

Now I know that I could have saved all that time and effort for other pursuits, because my son has shown me the easy way to teach a child to read: just let the child see how much you enjoy reading, share the world of books with him, and let nature take its course. Bobby has been read to on almost a daily basis since he was an infant. This time and effort on my part I view as an integral part of mothering and wouldn't exchange all those warm cuddly hours for anything. When I started sneaking in word cards, the lack of interest and then resentment made itself known, so I backed off. I tested the waters of his interest and readiness many times between the ages of 3 - 6, but he just



wasn't interested. He began to read during that period, but his interest was lukewarm. Now he is 8 and his reading ability astounds me. Not because it is much above grade level (if he were in school), but because his large reading and comprehension vocabulary grows so rapidly with no effort on anyone's part. He recently read through a set of *Dolch* word cards that he had never seen before, and knew everyone, even though those words have never been introduced to him. He has never been given any of those cute little vowel rules that are supposed to help you unlock words.

I just can't get over the miracle of his ability (and my daughter's, too) to learn new words with no one teaching him! My teacher training dies hard, I guess. I thought that I would have to present all new thought, words, and concepts to him and then he would learn them. What a burden has fallen away as I come to understand that he will determine the timing and direction of his education, and my part is to provide him with an environment rich in opportunity, love, and acceptance.

## **Self-Taught Readers**

*From Pennsylvania:*

My husband spent 12 years in school, received a high school diploma, and was not able to read. As an adult and while serving in the navy, he taught himself how to read and spell. He is now quite proficient. My husband and I are in complete agreement with your efforts.

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*Doug Anderson, 495 Ellis St #2568, San Francisco CA 94102, writes:*

When I had just turned four, my sister would read to me; she was seven. Sometimes in the middle of a story she would have to go to bed for school the next day. I was extremely curious to find out how the fairy tale ended, so I asked her if she would teach me to read. She taught me prefixes and suffixes and how to use a child's dictionary. I would try to read to her an hour a day and she would help me with mistakes and show me how words were pronounced. When she read to me I had always asked her the meaning of words. Two weeks after I had asked her to teach me I was reading by myself. I didn't learn the alphabet, but I had a subconscious acquaintance with it from using the dictionary.

When I went to school, I had *Dick and Jane* sitting in front of me. Mr. Holt, if some teacher took you at your present age and experience, sat you in a desk and forced you to read *Dick and Jane* for countless months, what would be your reaction? My ability to read was extinguished.

When I joined the service, I started reading again and now have a library of my own.

## **Huck Finn, Genius Reader**

*Nancy Wallace wrote:*

When our family read *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*, something wonderful struck me. Even though Tom skips school all the time, he has the *Robin Hood* stories memorized and is constantly reading adventure books like *The Arabian Nights* that most kids can't read today! And when Huck Finn is adopted by the widow and sent to school, he learns to read anything fluently in less than three months. These days it's supposed to take at least 8 years to learn all the skills necessary in order to read and even then a good number of the kids don't make it. Oh, well. I don't suppose school teachers have much time to read books like *Tom Sawyer* these days—they're too busy getting their M.A.'s.

## **School Discovers Reading!**

*From a newsletter of a Pennsylvania school district:*

The silence is deafening! Every morning throughout the district teachers, students, principals and office personnel start the day by reading a book or magazine for 10 or 20 minutes. The mandatory reading period is part of SSR (Sustained Silent Reading), a new program designed to encourage students to read for pleasure.

Although SSR is being practiced in several other communities, this is one of the few districts to have the program in effect system-wide, kindergarten through high school.

The reading period is usually scheduled at the beginning of the day during an activity period. Doing homework is forbidden.

Students, teachers and parents are enthusiastic about SSR. “I’m really hooked,” said one student. “I used only to read my homework assignments. I never had time for pleasure reading. Now I really look forward to SSR time. I hate to quit when the time is up.”

Apparently SSR is contagious! One parent commented, “My son’s new habit has rubbed off on me. Now as soon as the kids leave for school in the morning I sit down with a second cup of coffee for a half hour of pleasant reading.”

Try it: you may like it.

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JH: Imagine what might happen if these schools were to try the earth-shaking experiment of telling their students that they could read as much as they wanted. A revolution! But this is exactly what can and does happen in most home schools.

After I appeared with him on a Boston TV show, I wrote the following letter to Dr. Gregory Anrig, the Mass. Commissioner of Education:

Enjoyed our brief meeting at that rather chaotic TV show. Too many people for such a short time.

I believe I can suggest, in only five words, a program that 1) will substantially improve student achievement in both urban and non-urban schools throughout the Commonwealth 2) will not cost any money to put into effect. The five words are Unlimited Undirected Uninterrupted Silent Reading.

In other words, students in schools would be allowed and encouraged to read, for as long as they wanted, materials of their own choosing, without being interrupted by questions and tests and without being compelled to read aloud before their classmates and so run the risk of being humiliated and shamed by their mistakes. Such a program has not often been tried in schools, but where it has been tried by a handful of teachers brave enough to run risks, it has produced quick and impressive results, often not only in the area of reading as such but in other parts of the curriculum as well.

It would be perhaps interesting and useful to find out how much time our schools allocate to this kind of silent reading by choice. I would be surprised if it was even as much as a half hour per week. It ought to be a minimum of six hours per week—in other words, there ought to be at least six hours in every school week during which this kind of reading would be given priority over all other academic activities.

Let me stress once again that such a program would not only not cost the schools more money but might well save them some of the money now wasted on workbooks, basal readers, etc.

One of the many things discovered by people teaching their own children is that when these children are able to read what they want and as much as they want, they routinely read five, ten, or more books a week, and usually more difficult books than their age-mates are reading in school. Surely the schools can profit from this experience.

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I sent a copy of this letter to the chairman of the Boston School Committee and the editors of the two leading local papers. We shall see if anything happens.

## **A Kitchen School**

*A friend wrote:*

From Nov. 1 to Jan. 1 our school system was on strike. Nov. 14 I received a call from a frantic mother remembering my skills as a substitute.

Would I teach her two kids and a few others a couple days a week until the strike ended? At first I said “No.” Finally I took six kids (3 fourth grade boys, 3 fifth grade girls) Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-11:30 AM. I was paid \$10 every morning by every parent—please believe these parents were desperate. They didn’t care what I did as long as I “stimulated their minds.”

The first morning, two boys literally wrestled with one another as they came up the steps to meet me. Fortunately I have learned a lot from you and also some techniques from Sid Simon about making children feel good about themselves so they don’t put down one another. The seven of us sat down on the kitchen floor and I just started talking. I told them this would not be a

typical school set-up and we would do a lot of things differently. The only rule I had while we were together is that we would try to get along with one another and help one another and not hurt one another in the usual ways.

I can't possibly tell you what a wonderful six weeks this turned out to be for me and apparently for the six kids. I got a lot of ideas from them about what they wanted to do here and we used that as our base. I had a lot of ideas for science experiments using their own bodies (breathing, pulse, hand folding, etc., etc., etc.) which we did with a stopwatch and how they loved it! One day we did our finger prints. It was wild. We tried to categorize them to find out what types we had. Then we switched sets and like detectives, tried to find out whose set we had.

We did creative writing. Two kids couldn't put pencil to paper at first. I said, "Line up the alphabet down your paper and think of a word or words for as many letters as you can that tell us things you like to do or to eat or whatever." One boy couldn't think of one thing. I said, "Look over at Brian's paper. If you see something he likes that you like, put it down." He looked at me like I was crazy. He asked me to tell him that again. I did. He said, "Isn't that copying?" I said, "No, it is sharing." He couldn't do it. I said, "Get up and walk around like I'm doing and read off everybody's paper and take a word from anybody." He practically croaked. Then he got up and followed me around the table. Naturally once he got started, he began to think of his own words and came up with a good list. I had scraps of paper all over just to print out the spelling of any word, if anybody asked for it.

Another day we started to play the math game of Buzz on threes (1-2-Buzz- 4- 5- Buzz). When one little boy made the first mistake saying 6 instead of Buzz he practically freaked out, he was so scared and embarrassed. I immediately sensed that this game was not going to be fun for him and said so, and said we would instantly switch to something that makes everybody feel good and happy. The next time they came, the rest of the kids wanted to try it again. I had helped Adam write out some old fashioned times tables on one of my 5 x 7 cards which he seemed to enjoy. You know,

$$1 \times 3 = 3$$

$$2 \times 3 = 6$$

$$3 \times 3 = 9$$

$$4 \times 3 = 12, \text{ etc.}$$

I thought perhaps he could play this time with the answers written down

so he could follow along. Well, first round, he missed! He nearly flipped out. This time I quickly and cheerfully said, “Adam, come cuddle next to me, and every time it is your turn I’ll whisper you the answer.” He looked at me like he was hearing things but he snuggled in next to me. We played for probably half an hour, buzzed on 3’s and 4’s. Others made mistakes. No one drops out when they make a mistake—we just start again. It was very exciting, the kids loved it. Adam never made one mistake, naturally, and he loved it. Later one of the boys asked me, “If you give Adam all the answers, what does he learn?” I said, “If I don’t give Adam the answers, what does he learn?” He thought about that and smiled. “This place sure isn’t like school,” he said.

And yet we were somewhat structured because we usually did everything together. We never had time for everything. The kids wanted to come five days a week. That came from them and so it made me feel good to know it was something they enjoyed and not had to do because their parents made them. Every day when they left, I felt in all good conscience that I had not done any kid any harm. They came to me like battered little children.

More than anything else I spent time making them feel safe, encouraging each, building their confidence.

It turned out the little boy, Adam, hated math, hated school, and hated his teacher. He wrote me a beautiful creative story and that is how I found out. I spoke to his parents after the strike ended. His parents went to school that week (very timid mother) and told the teacher to stop humiliating their son and to be patient and kind, etc. Believe it or not, Adam writes me a letter every week or two which I immediately answer. He told me, “My teacher is beginning to understand me. She is not making me feel bad anymore.” So perhaps this dear child will end up not dreading school so much.

## **Misplaced Anger**

*From Jenny Wright (NH):*

I’ve been thinking about anger lately. I think sometimes anger is constructive, but often it is negative and destructive. One example of a time I’ve felt angry at kids that comes to mind is from 13 years ago when I last had a teacher’s job. I took kids on hikes at a school camp. Sound like fun? It was awful. I had all these rules that it was part of my job to enforce. Don’t run, stay on the path, don’t wade in the stream, don’t climb trees, stay

together, discuss certain subjects to be quizzed on later back in school. I hated these rules. I loved the woods myself partly because they were free of all these awful rules.

So on the job I was angry at the rules. Every time a kid quite naturally wanted to do something against the rules, and I had to stop it, I felt angrier. The anger came out on the kids. Very unfair.

I knew something was wrong and got out of that situation. But I had started to doubt that I enjoyed being with kids after all. I can still remember my surprise hearing myself sound like the worst teacher I could remember.

## **Skeptical Husband**

*A reader wrote:*

I wonder if you know just how close the philosophy of La Leche League (*GWS* #18) is to that of *GWS*. It is a fantastic organization. The only experts' are the people who belong to it, and women are encouraged to make their own choices based on what is best for their own families.

My husband has been very supportive of my beliefs up to this point. He is a wonderful, involved father who is willing to include his children in as much of his life as possible. He supported me with the home birth of our third child, although he had some deep reservations. However, when it comes to school, he does not agree with me at all. As a result, our six-year-old son is in public kindergarten. My husband is a public school teacher.

There must be other people in my situation where one parent is a confirmed unschooler and the other is not. I certainly do not want to destroy our family life over this, but it cannot help but affect us. If you know how others have worked out this problem, I would appreciate hearing about it.

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*I wrote in reply:*

I do indeed know how close the philosophy of La Leche League is to that of *GWS*. I think of LLL as a rich source of very valuable allies, and hope that many of those mothers who bore their children naturally and nursed them will later decide they want them to learn at home. It seems a natural consequence of what they have already been doing. Also, I feel that mothers who are closely bonded to their children will be unwilling, as you are, to

allow the kind of mental and spiritual destruction that goes on in too many schools.

But I don't know what to say about husbands who do not agree. When both parents are together, homeschooling simply doesn't and can't work unless they both agree to it. I don't know how open-minded your husband is on the subject. Would he be willing to read *GWS*, or parts of it, from time to time? Would he be willing, now and then, to see some other families who are teaching their own children, to see what their children are like? If so, it's possible that in time he might change his mind.

By the way, I know some homeschooling families in which one parent is a working public school teacher. That might interest your husband. He may feel that if you taught your children at home, it might threaten his job—and in these times, that would be a real concern.

It's also just barely possible that your children might be among the very few who thrive in school and even benefit from it. You should not rule out that possibility. And as long as your children are going to school, it might be better not to tell them how you feel about it. Let them make up their own minds. As I say, they might like it (for good reasons, not bad) and do well at it. Or they might come to dislike it, and for such good reasons that your husband would in time have to agree with them. After all, I don't think he will put up with the schools actually being cruel to the children, which they too often are. And perhaps in time he will see with his own eyes that school is making your children into less nice, less intelligent, and less capable people.

## **Teacher/Homeschooler**

*From Art Horovitch (Alberta):*

We presently are homeschooling our oldest daughter, Vivian, age 11. The change from an uptight, angry young girl to one who is much more at ease and self-confident has been remarkable in the five months of being out of school. We have had excellent co-operation from the superintendent and local school principal. The school board was not keen on the idea, but generally went along with the superintendent's recommendation that it be tried for one year.

One thing which we did agree to was standardized testing in core subjects (math and communications skills). In the first set of tests last June, when



Vivian had been out of school for three months, she had a score at or higher than grade level. Two things I would like to stress about these tests: (1) Get a statement of objectives outlining what is expected to be known and (2) Accompany the child to the testing situation and STAY WITH THEM during the test. It is too easy for a child to be intimidated by the situation and make mistakes or forget to do something.

One problem that I have had with the whole question of homeschooling is my own role as (a) a high school teacher (mathematics) and (b) parent of a child who is homeschooling. I find that I get the most negative comments from teachers on my own staff. Their chief comment is “How can you work in a system if you don’t believe in it?” I also come under a great deal of criticism when I talk about the futility of counter-productive methods such as punishment and ridicule of students. I find it very hard to tolerate the constant putdowns the students in our school are subjected to, yet when I suggest changes, I’m told they will never work.

The most positive comments about the homeschooling come from some of the students themselves. We have gotten into some extremely interesting discussions and it is obvious that students are aware they are being manipulated by the system right from grade one to do things they don’t want to do.

I wonder if there are any other homeschooling parents who are also teachers in their local school system and how they cope with the stress generated from the problems I mentioned above. I’m really anxious to hear what they have to say about their position in the school system. Perhaps by a mutual exploring of ideas we can relieve some of the stresses which many of us in this position must feel.

## **Why Schools Won’t Change**

I’d like to take a little *GWS* space to answer very briefly a question I am asked all the time: “Why aren’t you working to improve the schools?” or, as it often comes out, “Why have you given up on the schools?” The answer is, in essence, because the schools have given up on themselves.

I was recently invited to be on a Boston TV show with many school people—teachers, officials of teacher’s unions, superintendents, the state Commissioner of Education, a university president, and others. All sang the

same song, the song I hear sung at school meetings all over the country: “There’s nothing wrong with the schools, we’re doing a better job than ever, and any problems that may exist are not our fault.” Since the schools are not responsible for these problems, who is? Society. TV. Politicians. Voters. Above all, uncooperative and uncaring parents.

The schools have a very special definition of “cooperative and caring parent.” To be called that, you must meet these conditions: 1) You must not doubt, question, or challenge anything done by the schools, or make any suggestions for changes or improvements—all these, however small or specific, are lumped under the name of “criticism.” 2) You must believe everything the school says about your children, and even yourselves. 3) You must make your children do everything the school tells them to do, and punish them if they don’t. 4) In any dispute between the school and your children, you must strongly and without reservation take the school’s side—school people talk longingly about the good old days when “a child knew, that if he got in trouble in school, he would get in trouble at home.”

So, say the schools, if all parents would follow these rules, and if the public and the politicians would just shut up, stop criticizing, and give the schools all the money they ask for, everything would be fine. Say those words to a meeting of school people, and you are a friend; say anything else and you are an enemy.

The schools, in short, have shut themselves up in a fortress which cuts them off, not only from any new and useful ideas from outside, but even from their own experience. They do not say to each other, “Let’s forget those ignorant outsiders, but let’s discuss privately, among ourselves, how we can do our work better.” No; since they insist they are doing their work perfectly, and all problems are the fault of someone else, there is no need and no way to talk about how to do their work better. All there is to talk about is how to hold off all those enemies surrounding them.

As long as the schools remain in this present frame of mind, they cannot improve, and except for a few unusual schools and teachers here and there, there is no more constructive way to work with them than to help dissatisfied people to find some alternative—which is what we here are doing.

## **Curing the Incurable**

*From an article by Ellen Frank in the Boston Phoenix, 2/3/81:*

There are seven Salem Children's Villages in the western world: three in West Germany, one each in Switzerland, Israel, Maryland, and New Hampshire. They care for foster children, generally abused and neglected in the extreme.

The Salem concept is simple, highly non-institutional, and threefold: the children are treated as individuals within a family structure; they are fed an all-natural foods diet, with no sugar or additives; they live in a rural environment and they engage in physical activities, such as horseback riding and, later, trade apprenticeships that increase the child's sense of self-control and self-esteem. In each of the Salem villages, children live in households of up to eight children with two "houseparents" or a "housemother," professionals trained in the care of neglected and abused children, many of whom have been labeled as *retarded, hyperactive, emotionally disturbed, or psychotic*. The children relate to the houseparents, and to one another, as family. Older people, filling the role of grandparents, live in the Village in their own "Grandparents' House." In some cases, they are retired tradespeople who take on the children as apprentices.

Behavioral problems at Salem are further reduced by an emphasis on physical touch; children are given back rubs before they go to sleep, and hugs are frequent. Physical contact is a reassurance to the 11 children now at Salem in New Hampshire (there are plans to take in 24 more). Most of them have spent their lives since infancy in institutions, or in a shuffle from one foster home to the next.

Psychiatric facilities and group homes are a common experience, and the children achingly desire familial normality; they make a point of referring to their "brothers" and "sisters," and call their houseparents "Mom" and "Dad."

Karen Price, 27, one of Salem's houseparents, explained the system of discipline this way: "We do something called 'logical consequences.' Say a kid who can't swim goes down to the lake without telling me—then she or he isn't allowed to go there for three days. Three days is the standard. It seems to be exactly the right time and it's a very, very long time to a child. We have a point system leading to the status of

‘mule,’ ‘pony,’ and ‘thoroughbred,’ which signify their ability to deal with the outside world, rather than punishment.

The status indicates whether or how often they can do things like leaving the grounds, or going to the movies, or roller skating. We never hit them, and if they hit another child, or an animal, they have to do an hour of work—the worst work we can find, like shovelling manure or mud.

“You must realize that most of these children are highly disturbed when they come here, and they have a lot of anger. We’ll talk about it in family meetings. I have four children, two boys and two girls, between 11 and 15. Physical activities are the best way to get that anger out. We do a lot of hiking, horseback riding, and canoeing. And what they’re really big on is yelling—outside.”

According to all that I observed, read, or was told, the Salem system has scored remarkable successes with extremely difficult children. The case of 12-year-old Sally. is graphically typical. Sally was removed from her parents at the age of three, because of severe abuse. A younger sibling had recently died of starvation. She was hospitalized and then sent through a long series of foster homes and institutions. She was diagnosed as hyperactive and possibly retarded, and placed on Ritalin to control her behavior. When Sally arrived at Salem, last year, she still had her baby teeth, was unusually small for her age, and couldn’t do normal exercises such as running or swimming.

She was totally illiterate. State authorities informed Salem that she could not be managed without Ritalin or other drugs.

Sally was taken off drugs the day she arrived at Salem and put on the natural-foods diet. The hyperactivity rapidly receded, and within a week she had settled to a level of activity normal for her age. Over the past year she has grown six inches, her adult teeth have come in, and she swims and runs competitively. Sally is in sixth grade at the local Rumney School and tests above her grade level.

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JH: One way to describe Salem is to say that they do for and with children all the things that regular schools and teachers are not allowed or, more often, do not choose to do. They do not keep a “professional distance” between themselves and the children; quite the reverse. They give the children many legitimate ways to express, use, and burn off their anger. They give the children a great deal of physical affection and contact, something that will get teachers, especially men teachers, fired in most schools. They teach the children useful skills and give them real work to do. Above all, they do not hit the children, which seems to me all the argument that is needed against the many adults, teachers and otherwise, who say that they can’t control even “normal” children without hitting them. And, unlike the learning disability “experts” of the schools, the Salem adults do not assume that the children’s troubles, problems, and handicaps are incurable and permanent.

In short, they treat the children as Jean Liedloff urged in *The Continuum Concept* and as George Dennison described in *The Lives Of Children*. Under this kind of treatment the “retarded” and “illiterate” Sally (and presumably many others like her) not only became a “normal,” active, healthy, and affectionate child, but did six years worth of school work in one year.

I think it is reasonable to assume, and this is my main reason for writing about the Salem Villages in *GWS*, that if these gentle and humane methods of dealing with children can, and in such a short time, make sick children well, the absence of these methods—and they are absent in all but a few schools—can in just about an equally short time make healthy children sick. If we want to find the root cause of all the anger and violence in our schools, here is the first place to look. Meanwhile, we all need to know much more about these people and their wonderful work.

## High School Grad at 15

*From southern California:*

Almost four months ago, I took the California High School Proficiency test which is equivalent to being a high school graduate. I am now a 15-year-old high school graduate. I am going to Los Angeles Valley Junior College—I couldn’t afford to go to a university. I go at night and work part-time in the mornings as a tutor for retarded teenagers (they call them exceptional children). In the afternoon, I tutor 1st and 2nd graders at the local elementary

school. Each job pays \$300 a month so I end up with a decent salary when you consider I am only supporting myself.

What I am doing is taking classes that sound interesting. I have no plans to get an A.A. or B.A. or whatever. I'm still living at home and probably will for awhile so I don't have to worry about income.

I'm still doing some writing. The *Santa Monica Evening Outlook* printed a short story I wrote, and another will be in my college's pamphlet on how to write, for which I am being paid \$50.

## **10-Year-Old Worker**

*From Colorado:*

I was commissioned to build a playground for a Head Start program in Colorado. The money was fairly good and I stayed at a friend's house to cut costs. Trell, an old student of mine when I taught at an alternative school (now disbanded for lack of funds) asked if he could come to Colorado with me. He was 10. He has helped build playgrounds in Kansas City, Mo. After I consulted his mother and communicated to Trell the hard work and long hours involved, we set off together.

The flight to Colorado was the beginning of a month of working together. Trell slept in a sleeping bag on the floor of the room in which I slept, ate with me (paid for by his mother) and worked with me all day. Trell called home 2 times a week.

When he became tired of cutting wood, banging in nails, and lifting tires, Trell joined one of the Head Start classes or went into the office to work on an art project, study his math, or work at his reading and writing books. Sometimes he would write home. With the bilingual, bicultural program, he danced Mexican dances, learned some Spanish, helped with painting, reading, and field trips.

Many of the skills I myself use frequently today were learned outside of school. My skills needed to construct the Head Start playground were not learned at school. Neither were the dancing and carpentry skills I use to teach classes, the interpersonal skills needed, my abilities in writing and photography. I acquired most of these through apprenticeship programs of the Society of Brothers. This communal organization requires young people—from about 8 years old—to work for part of the day within the community—

the woodshop, gardening, children's house, publishing, etc.

## **Programmers**

*The Boston Ledger, 2/13/81:*

According to the staffer at the Boston Computer Society booth at the Microcomputer Fair, bright 11-year-old schoolboys are earning \$8,000 or \$9,000 a year in their spare time, freelancing simple programs.

## **Vet Work**

*From Rosalie Megli (IL):*

New opportunities are opening up for Lora, our 13-year-old daughter.

She has made arrangements to begin part-time work at the local veterinary clinic, feeding animals and cleaning cages. She has also been made welcome to accompany the vets on farm runs and with office work. Since Lora loves animals and may be interested in veterinary science as a vocation, we are delighted with her arrangements. Lora got her work permit from the superintendent of schools with no stipulations regarding working hours.

Lora also has a small craft business (she makes herb-filled potholder mitts) and is going to buy a microscope with proceeds from pre-Christmas sales.

## **Young Entrepreneurs**

*Rick Cohen (OR) writes:*

We moved to this small town on the Oregon coast a year and a half ago. We realized that we would probably not be able to keep a low profile and we didn't want to start out here alienating ourselves from the community unnecessarily, so we enrolled in a home study course for our three school-age kids. We chose the Home Study Institute with the idea that its being run by a Christian group might make it easier for the kids' father to accept. Surprisingly the school board was not familiar with HSI, though there are some people using it here. They were more familiar with Calvert. Everything has worked out fine, though. We have to make a formal request each year and

the kids have to take the same yearly evaluation tests that the rest of the kids in the district have to take. Their first exam was a few weeks after beginning to work on their program—they did fine!

Following the program can be pretty demanding, until you figure out what is important and what is not. It's hardly non-schooling but the kids do have most of their time to themselves. When they're not reading or doing household chores they are usually playing together. The boys, especially, have generally preferred playing together over playing with most other kids. Recently the three readers have read *Toilet Training In Less Than A Day* to help with their little brother.

Before we moved here they each became successful entrepreneurs and craftsfolk. It started with Aaron's desire to make some money, about five years ago. Every Saturday he would set up his little display of hotpads next to his mother's craft booth. Somehow he started drawing pictures with felt pens. Initially he was heavily influenced by his mother's designs. Later, she borrowed at least one idea from him! To sell his pictures, he packaged them as cards with envelopes (with some assistance from his mother). He soon found this endeavor much easier and more lucrative than the hotpads so he discontinued that line.

His sister and brother soon joined in and were also doing well. One by one they got tired of producing and they already had more money than they needed—so much more that we could no longer “bribe” them to do odd jobs at low pay. I don't want to leave the mistaken impression that they just turned out pictures. They sometimes did, but Aaron received a couple of commissions from a former art student; and one of the local artists, who is pretty successful, was so intrigued by Aaron's work that he borrowed one of his designs—with credit given.

Their money and number consciousness was raised considerably by their business experience also. I remember Thor's teacher remarking how he seemed to have a mathematical intuition which was far more complex than his formal knowledge would suggest.

They don't seem to be doing much with their art these days, although a recent present of pipe cleaners did spark up a creative effort resulting in a beautiful bird sculpture, equipped with an opening for the eggs to fall out and a small entourage of chicks. Our youngest daughter, Raven (5), has really enjoyed playing with pipecleaners. Initially all the kids were making self-



styled “eyeglasses.” Later, Raven discovered that she could make letters and numbers out of them. She enjoys being “tested,” up to a point.

We also play letter games with the *Speak & Spell* that arrived recently. This game has something for everyone; I enjoy trying to find the mystery word. Oftentimes Raven will ask me to tell her how to write a letter to someone. She writes many letters, but they usually get lost.

All of the kids have a good deal of interest in births and pregnancies, especially since two of their siblings were born at home. They’ve also attended a friend’s birth since Angela has been involved in midwifery.

## Unschooling Valley

*From Harold Dunn (OR):*

Here’s a check for \$168 for an 11 x sub to *GWS* for 6 years.

Actually I haven’t found anyone else with the cash to pay their share yet, though I’m confident I will, in time. My estimate is that there are about 30 families in this rural valley who are keeping or have kept their kids out of school. In just five minutes, Bunny and I thought of 13 such families, and guess we could come up with several more if we had time to think. And we certainly don’t know most of the families around here! Besides that there are three free schools here now, and there were four. And I hope to finally get a “kid center” going next summer, as an alternative to school—just a place kids can be together without adults. I’m donating one of these subs to our local library, and another to the library at our free clinic here in the valley.

## A Brief Trial

*From Pat Tennnant (CA; GWS #17):*

I thought you might like hearing about Ginger’s experience with the local high school. Ginger has always been the one with a need for others to relate to and she began to feel, this summer, that a school was the answer. So, because we have faith that our children know what experiences they need to get where they are headed, we told her we would enroll her. She attended three weeks before deciding that the school had nothing to offer her. We knew it wasn’t working before that but she had gotten the part she wanted in the high school’s production of *Music Man* and we thought she would stick it

out for that. But she didn't feel good about how they approach drama either.

Anyway, she didn't tell us she was quitting—she wanted to handle that herself—so she went to school that day and started telling each teacher as she went to class that she wouldn't be back and asked if they needed anything from her (to turn in books, etc.) But it didn't take long for her to realize that wasn't working. The teachers couldn't accept her decision to quit (that is, transfer to our school). After one teacher took her aside, sat her down and wanted her to list all the pros and cons, and after she was taken from her class to meet with the school psychiatrist, she changed her approach. The rest of the day she told everyone her parents were transferring her to a private school. That they could accept!

That whole thing took a lot of energy on our part—dealing with the school—but as we saw the change it made in her and listened to her tell us about it, we recognized that what she had was a short course in sociology.

For those who need it, she also supplied some proof that she is learning—with learning defined by school standards, you understand. She qualified for Honors English with a 98 and 99 on the tests, and also made the highest grade in the class on the Geography test.

At any rate, things are back to normal and she feels really good about being here. We are spending quite a bit of time at the theater because that still supplies experiences the kids are wanting. Ginger is still performing and this coming year our family is in charge of the props, which means we get to attend every performance and be in on what's happening. Joe and Doug just finished building a special flat (had an arch in it) and the founders of the theater said they couldn't have done it better themselves. They tend to stand in awe of Doug's carpentering ability but when he is building is when he is the happiest. I guess that's why theater is such a good resource for us because you are constantly building, then tearing down and building again.

We just spent a day inventorying the props and Ginger took hold on this. She organized the whole process and did all the paper work so we got to thinking that maybe she would like office work. We asked and the woman in the office is eager to teach her the office procedures in exchange for Ginger's help and Ginger is excited about that. Also coming up this Saturday is a chance for Doug to work in the light-booth at the theater. They are redoing all the wiring and he is excited about that.

## Reasons For School

*From Marlene Bumgarner (CA):*

Upon being told that she was being skipped another grade and being recommended for the “mentally gifted minors” program at our local zoo (large school), my daughter, Dona Ana, 7½, who has been in a two-room country school for the last six months, and homeschooled before that, announced that she’d much rather stay home—there were so many more interesting things to do. So my husband John and I have just worked out a plan for the fall which will have him working with her in the morning on whatever he’s doing—he runs a computer systems business from our home—and me working with her in the afternoon.

Dona Ana told us at Christmas that she wanted to go to public school “to learn how to jump rope, play jacks, and do hopscotch.” Well, she’s learned what she went for, which is, I suppose, why she’s not interested in going next year!

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*Patti Lawrence (OH) wrote:*

Rich and I have been reading *GWS* for over a year now and have been involved with our first child coming up against public school. She insisted that she wanted to go so we allowed her to start. Four days into first grade and she decided home was better! When we asked Rachael why she wanted to go to school, her response was that she wanted to use her new lunch box and she hoped there would be lots of recess.

## At Home in Texas

*From Rose Ann Burkel (TX):*

We enjoy *GWS* very much. It gave us the final incentive to keep our children home from school this year.

We discussed our reasons with our superintendent and he was supportive. He knows us and he believed us when we told him we were doing this for us, our family. We said this was no protest against the school as we think the school was the best one our children have attended. He was satisfied with our correspondence schools and said he considered them to be private schools.

I'm sure he doesn't agree with our decision but does uphold our rights as parents to do what we believe to be in the best interest of our family.

I am still in the PTA because I am still interested in all children. We don't have a television but I still care about the content of TV.

Two teachers at the school said the school couldn't meet our children's needs. We tried to convince them that this was not our reason for keeping them at home. All in all, they thought staying home and learning was a great idea.

One woman said we were making a mistake because our daughter needed to be at school with youngsters her own age. She said she wouldn't and couldn't develop properly and she wouldn't know how to cope and live in this world because she wasn't in school. She also said Susan was a leader and could influence others, and she was right, there. But we had considered all these things. Basically she implied that we were being selfish and hiding from the world. Of course we feel that our family is a number one priority. It made no difference to this friend that we are active in church. Our daughter visits with her friends, does volunteer work and is learning to live and get along in a family. (As you well know, getting along with those you love most is much more difficult than being nice to strangers!) I mention this friend because I got nowhere explaining and I myself was exhausted and never intend to go through that again. Some people can only see one side.

We can enjoy our nights and weekends without the "school thing" hanging over our heads. Our kids used to start feeling grumpy and sad about 6 o'clock on Sunday evenings. Now every day is a good day. We can take trips or visit late in the evenings and never think of school hanging like a black cloud over us.

## **Computer in N.C.**

*Philmore Rial (NC) writes:*

We had been homeschoolers in Texas, South Carolina, and North Carolina. We had obtained approval from the public school officials in Texas and S.C; but we elected to be silent in N. C. since recently many widely publicized legal cases made it seem impossible to get permission. We contacted you when we received first a visit, then a letter suggesting that we enroll our eight-year-old daughter in public school. We called the North

Carolina Office of Nonpublic Schools and asked for a copy of all the laws which would pertain to opening a private school. After examining these laws, we decided to open a private religious school. The N.C. laws purposely limit the state's authority over private religious schools, the only requirements being health, fire safety, teacher health certification, attendance records, and immunization records. (See *GWS* #13.)

Some of our friends who were interested in what we were doing for our girl's education have now enrolled in our school. The "New System School" has three classrooms conveniently located in the three homes of its five students.

Our two daughters, Jennifer and Jessica, are doing very well in the homeschooling environment. They receive daily instruction from my wife, Linda, and Mr. Apple. Mr. Apple is an Apple brand computer.

I purchased my computer to use as an educational tool for myself and then discovered its potential as a tool for educating my two daughters. My oldest daughter, Jennifer, has been using the touch-typing tutor on Mr. Apple. So far, her progress has been astounding to me. The computer can accomplish a function which no human can do and that is formulate practice exercises which are tailored to the keys she has problems with. The computer monitors each key twenty times per second. If the student is a small fraction of a second slower on a given key, then the next practice exercise will contain more words that contain that letter than any other.

Jennifer has been working with the mathematics tutor program for the computer. Her math began as her worst subject and now has become her favorite. The math tutor finds the student's threshold of understanding and then gives exercises at that level. As the student makes progress, the computer advances the level of difficulty.

We also have a spelling tutor. I was disappointed when I first purchased this software package—I felt that it was much too advanced for Jennifer, who is 8. Much to my amazement, she has grasped the impact of the teaching. She is going to begin a course in BASIC computer language soon. She will be instructed by the computer.

I have learned a great deal about computer language. The most important lesson is never to be afraid of the unknown. This fear prevents many intelligent people from tackling new subjects. I have learned three languages which the computer is fluent in. I have found that software experts no longer

confuse me; software is not as mysterious as the software expert would have the layman believe.

When we talked on the phone, I told you that I would be happy to assist any other unschoolers who would like help in getting started with a computer-assisted instruction program. Now that I have full word processing capability, I am able to write letters with ease. My typing does not have to be perfect to produce minimal errors in my text. The computer allows me to correct my errors before printing.

## **Home Computers**

*From Linda Collins, 262 Park Lane, King of Prussia, PA 19406:*

I have started a new project called Educational Software Library, Inc., a nonprofit organization devoted to distributing educational computer software programs. I would be very interested in knowing how many *GWS* readers have home computers, and which ones might consider purchasing one if they knew such a program-lending service was available. I can foresee this becoming an alternative form of correspondence school. Also, if anyone is interested in volunteering their time to write instructional units or in programming, I have lots to keep them busy!

## **A Child Learns French**

*From Helen Fox (Que.):*

When my daughter was two she spent a lot of time with some French children down the road. One was a little boy who took great delight in teaching her all the swear words in his vocabulary. She adored this child and was his attentive pupil.

Naturally he fell over laughing whenever she repeated these forbidden words, and this was so rewarding to her efforts that she said them on every possible occasion. But she was always listening, and as soon as she caught on to a few more important words and phrases she discarded her sacrilegious vocabulary.

One day she made a momentous discovery: there are two words for everything; he says it one way, I say it another. From that moment the language came more rapidly. If she didn't know a French word, she'd try an

English one pronounced with a French accent, just for effect.

She began spending six hours a day with the boy's sister, either at our place or at theirs. The girls were three now, and in between the swings and the sandpile they would argue interminably over the pronunciation of a word. They'd ride in the back seat of the car singing "Petit Papa Noel" on the hottest day of summer, their faces an inch apart, their eyes glued to each other's mouth. In this way my daughter learned to imitate her friend's speech flawlessly.

By age four, she could say anything she wanted to in both languages.

She was completely at home. And this was accomplished without using a cent of the taxpayer's money, without spending hours poring over books, without embarrassment. Magic!

## Language Lessons

*From the catalog of the Publisher's Central Bureau, One Champion Ave., Avenel, NJ 07131 (GWS 2, "Good Books Cheap"):*

Publisher's Central Bureau is always proud to offer the famous Living Language Courses, now available in French, Spanish, Italian, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Russian, Portuguese, and Swahili. Each complete four-record course is all you need to learn to speak a foreign language fluently and quickly. The 40 lessons teach you to speak a foreign language by listening to thousands of words and phrases. The *Comprehension Conversation Manual* repeats in print every lesson so you constantly see and hear the phrases. Now slashed from \$29.95 to \$14.95. French, Spanish, German, Japanese, and Italian are also available on cassette, \$14.95.

## Discovering For Herself

*From Hanni Woolsey (CA):*

Your multiplication math grid in *GWS* #17 was (is!) a great success with Nancy, our 7-year-old unschooled daughter. She wanted to make her own grid and filled it out right away. It took her until 10:00 PM; she couldn't stop! I just sat there, having fun watching. She knew her 5's and 10's. When she did the 6's she would do it like this: 5 times 6 is 30, plus 6 is 36. She likes

numbers and seems to always figure out a way to get the correct answers.

This past summer she also taught herself how to read and can now sit for hours at a time reading in books like *Heidi*. Her interest in reading started exactly at the point when I stopped my “clever” attempts to try to get her to read—when I realized I should leave her alone and just bear the embarrassment of having a 6-year-old daughter who couldn’t read anything besides Stop and Exit and her name. It amazes me how fast her progress happened and still does. It is so simple. The more I learn to stand back and keep my mouth shut, the more Nancy learns and the happier she is. The more I see her grow, the more confident I get.

Like her spelling. She likes to write letters and at first, I could hardly figure out what she had written. Now each time she writes, her spelling gets better. Without tests and drills and spelling exercises. Neat!

Looking back to my own childhood, the most fun times I had were when I was free to do what seemed fun. Experimenting with wood, yarn, cooking, baking, fixing bicycles, etc. And watching my father do various projects, fixing everything in and around the house. I still like to learn from books better than from people. Like playing the guitar when I was 15, or baking, or making baskets, or, recently, typing. Books don’t get impatient and insist that I do it their way!

To give Nancy the freedom to learn and discover things by herself was in our case easy to do. (The technical part of it, I mean. To let go of all our imprinted programs about education and learning mentally, was not so easy at first.) Last fall we filled out the affidavit declaring our home a private school. We’ve never had any problems so far. We keep a low profile.

## **Riches in R.I.**

*Peter Van Daam (RI) writes:*

The variety of constructive activity outside the home seems to be several magnitudes greater than what I had experienced in what I (then) thought was a full youth. Brigitta recently began training as a zoo docent (guide). Julia, 10, will be participating too. And Jessica, 8, and Percival, 4, will obviously be benefiting too, especially since Brigitta hopes to encourage an art (drawing) program for other children and adults during her tours of duty. She has also been helping organize a small Montessori school’s art curriculum in



trade for some weekly one-on-one tutoring of all three children by the school's director.

They all have been using the public libraries rather intensively. Recently they asked for and got a special tour showing them how to utilize the main branch's resources better. They are participating in a variety of free programs such as children's reading hours, creative dramatics, poetry, and the like. Julia and Brigitta also take in a special film series and discussions dealing with the role of women in our society. I have always had a vision of our libraries becoming a multi-faceted learning center and it seems to be happening right before our eyes.

Julia and Jessica have joined a state-supported sculpture class at the Pawtucket Children's Museum. I'm enclosing a photo of Jessica and her work that was published in the Pawtucket Times. The sculptor really likes her work, her originality.

Brigitta and Julia have also been taking public TV's Speed Learning course. They attend plays and other events by ushering downtown at the main theaters. With Jessica, they are part of a stuffed toy sewing class. They play recorder together.

An acquaintance, the chairman of R.I.'s Libertarian Party who happens to be an electrical engineering professor at Brown University, offered late last year to introduce Julia to electronics concepts. So she and Jessica and I have been learning how to put together transistors, capacitors, semi-conductor chips (impulse generators, multiplexers, and the like) to produce digital display outputs, working from commercial specification sheets. Fascinating how fast he is moving us through complex concepts close to the cutting edge of technology.

They could bootleg their whole education at Brown. Julia is learning conversational French in a very small adult class at Brown's International House, and learning modern Greek at their language lab.

She still has her apprenticeship at a nearby health-food restaurant, having full responsibility for preparing some of the dishes, serving, earning money equivalents. There is more, but no space or time to continue. There is an unbelievable richness all around us just waiting for us and anyone else who chooses to do so to absorb it.

## **Family History**

*From Carol Kent (VA):*

An activity never taught in school that would be of great learning value to children is genealogical research. A good researcher does some numerical figuring, uses reading and writing skills constantly, and understands geography and history. He learns what records our society keeps, why and where they are kept, and what they contain. A child working on his genealogy has a reason to correspond with many adults: family members, other researchers, libraries and historical societies, state offices and courthouses. The resulting knowledge of family traits and heritage may recapture much of the depth and richness of life which are lost in the nuclear family.

## **Children's Magazines**

I have just seen a copy of *Odyssey*, a monthly magazine for children about astronomy (\$15/yr., PO Box 92788, Milwaukee, WI 53202). It looks quite nice. The Feb. '81 issue has an interesting article about Stonehenge in England, some beautiful photos, many in color, of Saturn, taken on the Voyager I mission, some very amusing pictures and stories by children about imagined life forms on Mars, a good short piece about measuring the distance to the moon and to stars, and other short features. There is a bit of talk about Space Cadets that I could do without, but all in all, children interested in astronomy (and many are) should enjoy this magazine very much.

Another magazine I've just seen and liked is *3-2-1 Contact*, the science magazine of the Children's Television Workshop (Box 2933, Boulder CO; \$9.95/10 iss.) It would be especially good for families with young children (under 10).

We can also recommend *Cobblestones* (28 Main St, Peterborough NH 03458; \$1.50 ea; \$15/12 iss.) All the articles, activities, games, etc, in one issue relate to a single theme in American history. For example, some issues have dealt with "Willa Cather," "The First Transcontinental Railroad," "America at Play," "The Presidential Elections," and "Genealogy." The magazine has a knack for providing odd facts we've never heard anywhere else—for example, did you know that the Oregon trail was pioneered by someone going from west to east? Some back issues are available for \$2 each.

Finally, the Cousteau Society is now putting out a magazine for children called *Dolphin Log*, which looks very promising. It is only available to those who are “Family Members” of the Cousteau Society (\$25; 930 W 21st St, Norfolk VA 23517). But since membership not only brings you the adult magazine *Calypso Log* (now better than ever with very good photography), the newsletter *Dispatch*, and the publications and posters of the Cousteau Society Book Service, but also supports the good work of the Cousteau researchers, many *GWS* readers may find this membership worthwhile. (Individual membership, without the *Dolphin Log*, is \$15.)—JH & DR

## Remedial Math

*The Winter 1980 issue of Outlook (2929 6th St, Boulder, CO 80302; \$12/yr), a quarterly about open education in schools, contains a very useful article by David Wheeler, Professor of Mathematics at Concordia University in Montreal, saying in part:*

A while ago, for a talk I was due to give, I wrote down a few of the half-truths that get told about children and mathematics. (To be a little more accurate, I should say school mathematics and school children—that is, mathematics and children as they are supposed to be when in school.)

*Mathematics* (1) is difficult to learn because it is abstract; (2) is a linear subject, so if you miss something, you’re lost; (3) trains the mind to think logically; (4) is a deductive system; (5) requires a special cast of mind; (6) is the subject where you always know whether you’re right or wrong.

*Children* (1) have poor memories; (2) have short attention spans; (3) learn by imitation and drill; (4) will not learn correctly if allowed to make mistakes; (5) need continual success; (6) must be given praise to reinforce their learning.

It is tempting to have fun with some of these; I always like to remind people that I have a very poor memory for jokes, and an extremely short attention span for watching baseball. But there are much more serious things to say, like insisting on the sharp distinction between drill and practice, and pointing out that no one learns very much by

imitation since the origins of most behaviors are invisible. The first three items in the Children list are overgenerously described as half-truths: the first two are not specific to children and the third is largely false for everyone. So since the statements are, if anything, rather less than half-truths, I wonder why I hear them occasionally used as if they served some explanatory function?

The fourth and fifth items on the Children list are, in my book, plain wrong. The sixth item is perhaps the only legitimate half-truth in the set; one can find some supporting evidence for it some of the time with some children. But I get very unhappy when I hear it put forward as a principle for teachers to use. It sounds patronizing, in the first place. In the second place, it can have damaging long-term effects. If in the short term success is always associated with praise some children will learn to work for praise rather than success, and I can't see what good that will do them when they leave the school environment.

The clincher, though, the argument that demolishes the Children list, is that each single statement fails if applied to children before they get to school. When they are learning to walk, to talk, and to master a great variety of physical and social skills in their early years they show excellent memories for the things that matter, their attention spans are suited to the tasks, they practice a lot but don't have to be drilled, they persist in learning to correct their mistakes, and they manage to learn a great deal when no one is there to praise them. I can't believe, and I don't know who could, that children suddenly acquire learning disabilities on entering the kindergarten door.

If the statements aren't true, why do they continue to circulate in the underground of educational folklore? I have to infer that many of children's difficulties in school must be due either to the things they are required to learn or to the way they are required to learn them. If something in the content or methods of school mathematics is the cause—or a contributory cause—of their difficulties, we are not likely to be able to offer remediation to students without first standing aside and inspecting critically what it is we are asking them to be good at. Yet most of the advice about remediation that I've seen takes the

content and style of school mathematics as unalterable “givens” and proceeds from there. Of course, if we want to provide remediation in mathematics the endpoint has got to be the mathematics that everyone recognizes, but it doesn’t follow that it has to be arrived at in the usual way.

Unfortunately, many teachers don’t know other ways or don’t believe there could be other ways. I don’t blame them—at least, not much—because their schooling didn’t teach them mathematics; it only taught them rules for doing a few mathematical things. If rules are all you know, it doesn’t occur to you that you can achieve the same results with different rules, or perhaps without any rules at all. And if you believe, as apparently some teachers do, that the point of mathematics in school is that it teaches rule-obedience, then you won’t want to look for alternatives to the traditional rules even if you know they exist.

My list of half-truths about mathematics looks a good deal more plausible than the Children list and I could probably smudge together a few arguments to make the statements look even more plausible. Nevertheless they are by no means as uncontroversial as they may seem, and two or three of them are downright misleading. Take the first, about mathematics being difficult because it is abstract. Mathematics is abstract, for sure, but so are many other human attainments, including language. Thinking is abstract yet no one bothers to say so. Why make a particular point of the abstractness of mathematics? Indeed, mathematics is a particular form of thought.

No one, not even the best of teachers, can put thoughts into students’ minds: but the good teacher knows how to set up situations that elicit, that trigger, even impel mathematical thinking. The criterion for efficacy relates to whether the situation says something to the student, has meaning for the student so that he can enter into a dialogue with it.

The second statement in my Mathematics list is about the supposed linearity of mathematics, about its being built brick by brick, like a tall tower. There is no doubt that a student who misses something in an arithmetic class may get lost in a stronger sense than the student who misses something in a language or history class. The interrelationships

between various mathematical ideas are generally much more crucial than they are in other subject areas, perhaps because they are more detailed and more specific in their interdependence. But there is no reason why the mathematical relationships that can be linearly ordered should be so displayed to students. This is false economy with a vengeance. It would be sounder pedagogical principle to allow for multiple connections and give students the possibility of multiple entries into each mathematical idea. I don't know of any school textbooks which follow this procedure.

But now I'd better get closer to my title (*An Askance Look At Remediation In Mathematics*), and the last item on my Mathematics list takes me there. Like all the other statements this one ("is a subject where you always know whether you're right or wrong") needs to be qualified and put in context before one can say how far it is true; but by turning it around it seems to me I get a working criterion for deciding if a student needs remediation or not. If the student almost never knows whether what he or she is doing in mathematics is right or not then I would regard this as a distress signal calling for emergency measures.

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JH: We will quote more from Prof. Wheeler's good article in a later *GWS*.

## **Spelling in the Air**

*I wrote in The Underachieving School (available here, \$1.15):*

Good spellers know what words look like and even, in their writing muscles, feel like. They have a good set of word images in their minds and are willing to trust these images. The things we do to "teach" spelling to children do little to develop these skills or talents, and much to destroy them or prevent them from developing.

There are some tricks that might help children get sharper word images. One is the trick of air writing; that is, of "writing" a word in the air with a finger and "seeing" the image so formed. I did this quite a bit with fifth graders, using either the air or the top of a desk, on which the fingers left no mark. Many of them were tremendously

excited by this. I can still hear them saying, “There’s nothing there, but I can see it!” It seemed like magic. I remember that when I was little I loved to write in the air. It was effortless, voluptuous, and satisfying, and it was fun to see the word appear in the air. I used to write “Money Money Money,” not so much because I didn’t have any as because I liked the way it felt, particularly that “y” at the end, with its swooping tail.

## More on Handwriting

In *GWS* #19 (“On Handwriting”) I wrote about children who, in my fifth grade class many years ago, could write faster in manuscript print than I could in what I had always thought of as very speedy cursive writing.

The other day I decided to test myself, to see whether I could write faster in cursive or in the modified Italic-manuscript print which I sometimes use to write little notes in the office. And I found to my surprise that though I have been writing cursive writing all my life, and until making this test had been doing much more writing than printing, I could print faster than I could write. The difference was not very great, but it was consistent. No matter how much I warmed up and practiced my cursive, I could never make it as fast as my printing.

Why should this be so? The only reason I can think of is that when we move from the end of one letter to the beginning of another, we can move our pen a little bit faster through the air than across the paper, partly because the paper slows down the pen a tiny bit, and partly because when we move our pen through the air we don’t have to worry about what the joins or connections between the letters look like.

So, at the tender age of 57, I am going to drop cursive (except for my signature) and do all my pen and pencil writing in my modified print. Since it is both faster and more legible, why not?

Why, in general, is print more legible than cursive? Or, to put it a little differently, why are unjoined letters easier to read than joined? Because there is no possibility of confusing the joins (“ligatures,” as one Italics book calls them) with the letters themselves. This is one of the main problems of most illegible handwriting; you often can’t tell whether a particular mark on the paper is part of a letter or only a join between letters.

So now we have two solid and convincing reasons for resisting, if we want to, the demand of the schools that our children learn cursive writing—print is more legible, and is demonstrably faster. Of course, if children want to learn cursive writing, because they like the way it looks, or because they see some grownup doing it, they can. But there is no sensible reason to make them.

A word about my sample printing. Only a few basic shapes and pen strokes are needed to make all the letters, and all these pen strokes are easily and quickly made by the hand and fingers. On the whole, I see no reason to make children waste time practicing these shapes. If they write, as they speak, in order to say things they want to say to people they want to say them to, and if they have good models of printing to look at, they will improve their writing just as they improve their speech. A possible exception—children who have learned to write cramped, awkward, illegible cursive may need a little practice on shapes just to loosen up their hands and give them the feeling that printing can feel as well as look good. But I wouldn't push this if a child resisted, preferring to write real writing, i.e., writing meant for others to read.

## Starting Early

*From an article in the New York Times, 2/8/81, about Kyra Nichols, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet:*

There is little question that today, at 22, Miss Nichols belongs in that realm, a place in dance that she seems, in retrospect, to have aimed at all her life.

Mrs. Nichols recalls the terrifyingly single-minded determination with which her daughter took to ballet from the age of 4, a determination that seems surprising, today, in view of Kyra Nichols's serenity onstage and off. "I hated school because it got in the way of dance," Miss Nichols says today. "I wanted to be in the studio working."

At four, Miss Nichols decided it was not enough to imitate from the sidelines as her mother taught ballet. "She took class holding onto a pool table across the room, then one day I noticed her at the end of the barre," Mrs. Nichols remembers. "And, rather than have a fuss in front of the other children, I let her stay."



At nine, Miss Nichols began to take company classes with her mother at the San Francisco-based Pacific Ballet. “Everyone else in the class was an adult,” Mrs. Nichols recalled. “But no one thought of Kyra as a child. She was tall for her age and she always looked and acted mature.”

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*From the liner notes on an album of music by Harry James:*

When he was ten years old, he was the leader of the number two band in Christy’s Circus, having mastered the trumpet after a couple of years of instruction from his father, who led the number one band.

That wasn’t his first musical experience either. At four he performed on drums (and doubled as the world’s youngest contortionist) in the Mighty Haag Circus, in which he had been born on the road, and from which he derived his middle name.

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*A quote from the great jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams, on a record album jacket, Jazz Women: A Feminist Retrospective:*

I have to give my mother credit here. She used to tell the story that I was a nervous child. To keep me out of mischief, she held me on her lap while she played an old fashioned pump organ that she had at home. One day my hands beat hers to the keyboard and I picked out a melody. She was so surprised she dropped me on the floor and ran to get the neighbors to come and hear me. That was the beginning and from that time on (I was three) I never left the piano. She never let a teacher near me. She had studied and all she could do was read. She couldn’t improvise on her own at all. So instead, she did a very good thing. She had professional playing musicians come to the house and play for me. That’s how Jack Howard came on the scene. Some days I’d stay at the piano twelve hours. I didn’t stop to eat or anything—sometimes I’d drink just a glass of water.

It was my step-father, Fletcher Burley, who really encouraged me. He bought me a Seth player with piano rolls. I learned the classics for him from the rolls and he used to listen to Irish songs, as well. He was very

proud of me, and used to take me everywhere with him. He'd hide me under his coat and bring me to his meeting places and have me play for all his friends. By the time I was six I was professional—playing for parties at \$1 an hour. I played with the Union Band in Pittsburgh, Pa. where we had moved when I was four. And later on when musicians came to the city, they'd come out to the house and ask me to play with them: Earl Hines' guys and McKinney's Cotton Pickers I remember especially.

When I was twelve or so, a revue came through town. It seems their pianist got hung up or something, and one of the stagehands said he knew where they could find a pianist for the show. The producer came out in his big car to East Liberty where we lived and got mad when I was pointed out playing hopscotch on the sidewalk. But he changed quickly when we went inside. They hummed the score to me and I played it through, and played the show that night, and then went out on the road for the first time in my life.

## More From Kathy Mingl

The quote by Pete Seeger in *GWS* #18 really hit me, because I've been thinking about that very thing myself. I've realized lately that I've had a mistaken idea all along about singing—I had this odd notion that there was a “right” way and a “wrong” way to do it. I enjoyed music classes in school, but no one seemed very excited about my performance. By the time I was grown up I more or less assumed that “songs” were notes and words on paper or nice sounds you listen to, and “music” properly belongs to people who do it “right.”

Then I married Tony, and we had J.P. When I sang lullabies to the baby, Tony astonished me by thinking my singing was beautiful (the baby seemed to think it was OK, too). Tony never thought he could sing, but he gets these deep mellow tones that go right through you. I think he sings great. When J.P. sings, I can tell that what he does isn't up to Roger Wagner Chorale standards, but he's happy, and it makes me happy to hear him. In fact, if Roger Wagner could hear the three of us belting out some fine old classic like *I've Been Workin' on the Railroad*, or *It's the Meat, Meat, Meat that Smells Like Dirty Feet* (one of J.P.'s favorites) as we ride in the truck, he'd probably

throw himself in the nearest river, but it makes me feel so happy, I can hardly stand it.

All of this gives me a different idea of what “singing” really is. J.P. sings when he’s happy and moving—dancing, driving, marching, etc. Watching, I think I would define singing as something you do when you feel spiritually lifted and moved along with some motion or emotion. It’s an expression of a feeling, not this note or that one, or any technique at all. Maybe when you feel an especially nice feeling, or you feel greatly moved by things and need to express yourself with music, the discipline of instruction would help you enlarge and refine your technique, but I can tell you from experience that it’s a waste if you have nothing to say.

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We made a lot of Christmas presents this year instead of buying them, and just before Christmas we got the idea of making rocking horses to sell. We didn’t have much time and we only sold two—for \$45 each—but we felt encouraged enough by that that we’re thinking of going further with them. We came up with an especially good baby rocker that I think would sell well for \$10 or \$12, and also made a really cute teddy-bear puzzle for my niece out of 1x8. I used acrylic paints thinned with water to stain the wood, and it worked great. I drew up my own design—I’ve worked out a system for making patterns come out evenly from a sketch made directly on the wood—and the whole thing only took a couple of hours. That sort of thing is a lot more fun to me than fighting my way through a crowded department store, too.

## Skills Pool

*The Spring '81 issue of Unschooled in Maryland (9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045; \$1 for 3 issues) printed a “skills pool” to start a learning network. Here are the skills that 13 people listed:*

1. Solar energy, building, carpentry, vegetarian cooking.
2. Early childhood elementary school teacher; alternative approaches as well; environmental games, activities, projects; ecological studies for adults and kids; centering games and exercises; organic gardening; tofu making; assisting home births.

3. Incorporating businesses; homebirthing & breastfeeding info; sewing for my own shop.
4. Registered nurse; assist homebirth with a nurse midwife; needlecrafts.
5. Sewing, quilting, cross stitch, etc; stained glass.
6. Carpentry; shop woodworking; house and boat building.
7. Oil painting and craft; Japanese language; knitting, sewing; international cooking; Origami.
8. History; social and political philosophy; films as a learning resource.
9. Learning games and activities for young children.
10. Sewing; nutrition & natural foods; herbal medicine.
11. Builder (any structure); organic farming; foraging; beekeeping.
12. Various media related skills; sewing, knitting; vegetarian cooking & natural foods; canning; learning materials, activities, etc.
13. Various musical instruments; gardening; drawing; resource for geology, astronomy, other sciences; meditation.

## **Ontario Private Schools**

*Anna Myers (GWS #19) writes:*

Here's all you do to start a private school in Ontario: phone the Ministry for a form to fill out (which only asks for name, address, phone, etc). It is called a "Notice of Intention to Operate." You must have at least five school-age children enrolled to be called a school. You never have to give names of children, just fill out a "September report" each year, which asks for teacher's names, etc. None of the teachers or principals have to be qualified teachers (we just listed all our parents). The law just states that you must meet at some time during the week during regular school hours. The Ministry has the right to enter the school at any reasonable time (school hours), but a man from the

Ministry told me they are too busy to come unless they receive a complaint.

You must also have your “school building” (we chose our home as the one building) inspected for fire and public health. Here’s the trick—they have a magic number of 5 or under, so to approve it they don’t want more than 5 kids in the home at once. They said they don’t care how many we have in our home if “school” is not in, so the trick here is: find out who is at the door. If it’s Fire or the Public Health dept. and there are more than 5 kids say it’s not school. If it’s the Ministry, say it is!

We can enroll as many as we want to but just can’t have them here all at once. I tell parents to try to make it down here once a week for a short visit if they can, just to make it all legal! But we don’t push it or feel we have to do this.

When we visited Pioneer Village, in every house a lady dressed as a pioneer would ask why the kids weren’t at school! The first time Drew said, “We have the day off.” In the next house he said “We have a Professional Development Day.” (School kids get 12 of these a year—teachers use these days to mark, write reports, have staff luncheons, etc.) I asked Drew why he told those ladies those things and he replied, “It sure ends a lot of talking!”

## **People versus Levisen**

When people in Illinois ask us how they can legally teach their children at home, we usually suggest they look up an Illinois Supreme Court case called *People vs. Levisen*. The legal citation for the case is 90 NE 2d 213, 14 ALR 2d 1364; this just tells you the names of the series, the volume numbers, and the page numbers where you can find the decision. You can usually find a law library open to the public at your county courthouse or city hall, and the staff will help you find what you’re looking for.

In an opinion dated Sept. 27, 1979, the Michigan Attorney General surveyed what the courts in other states had ruled on homeschooling, and summarized *People vs. Levisen* as follows:

The respondent was convicted of violating a comparable (to Michigan) compulsory education statute. The defense was made that the child was receiving private tutoring at home. The facts were that the child, a third grade student, was receiving five hours of instruction at home in comparable courses, the instruction was being given by her

mother, who had two years of college work and some training in educational psychology. Further, the child showed the academic proficiency of the average third grade student. It should be observed that the tutor in this case did not possess a teaching certificate. The Illinois court defined a school as a place where instruction is bestowed upon the young. The number of children being taught does not determine whether the place is a school, so that the respondent was, in fact, providing an education in a private school for her child in her home, in lieu of attendance at the public school. But the court pointed out that the parents have a burden of showing that they have in good faith provided an adequate course of instruction in prescribed branches of learning. Finally, the court held that the compulsory education statute was not enacted to punish those who provided their children with instruction which is equal or superior to that which may be obtained in the public schools.

To the same effect is the decision of the *Indiana Supreme Court in State V. Peterman*, 70 NE 550, and the decision of the Oklahoma supreme court in *Wright v. State*, 209 P 179.

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For more info on these last two cases, see *GWS #3*, page 2. As it happens, we do not yet have copies of these three decisions in our files; if anyone would like to send us a copy, we'd be grateful.—DR

## **B.C. Exemption**

*A reader received a letter from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, saying in part:*

The Public Schools Act requires every child over the age of seven years and under the age of 15 years to attend some public school subject to certain exemptions. One of the exemptions is that the child is being educated by other means thought to be satisfactory to any justice or tribunal to whom the matter might be referred. Another possible exemption is where the child has reached a standard of education equal to or higher than the standard to be attained in the public school within a distance of three miles.

## From Wash. State

*A reader writes:*

My thoughts on getting around the officials here in Washington come down to this: I think it would be quite easy to satisfy the state in setting up a private school, since there is no follow-up after the initial approval. If I were not credentialed, my plan of action would be to find a credentialed teacher, preferably one who is not currently teaching, and put his or her name down on the application as the teacher of the school. The credential is checked up on, but I doubt if any cross-checks are made to see if they are teaching at a public school that same year. No one ever visits the school to see if a teacher is physically present, so I don't think that there is much chance that you'd ever be found out. The key here is getting a credentialed teacher to let you use his or her name. Not everyone would be able to find one, of course, but think it would work for many. Until they tighten up the laws, that is. Some people might be turned off by the dishonesty involved, and it might cause some uncomfortable moments, but I think I would do it if it were the only way I could keep my kids at home.

All the dealings in our case were done with: Carl T. Fynboe, Administrator of Private Education, Division of Instructional and Professional Services, Old Capitol Building, Olympia WA 98504; (206) 753-1137. We were told in no uncertain terms by Mr. Fynboe that licensing the home as a private school was the only legal way to teach one's own children in this state. He was a stickler for having forms signed and filled in properly by the proper persons (fire dept. chiefs and health dept. officials) but generally he seemed very receptive to what we wanted to do. I was told he was a pretty "free thinker" himself, but he definitely took the requirements of his job very seriously.

There is one family nearby teaching their kids at home, without benefit of private school approval, and they have never been bothered. They plan to continue, since this year went by without any problem. They are not credentialed. If I couldn't find a credentialed teacher to lend me her name, I'd do the same thing as this family has done. They just tell people that it is legal, and no one questions it.

One nice by-product of being approved as a private school is that our

address is given out to all sorts of businesses that sell to schools. We get catalogues and letters daily from all sorts of businesses, and it is fun to look through their wares. We have ordered a few things from these sources, especially films. We have access to a projector at the local elementary school and can order films for free from the public library.

## **Hippopotamus Questions**

While talking to a recent and very interested and friendly meeting at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I said something that I make a point of saying in all my talks about homeschooling, and that I think might be useful to others who talk about it, since it saves much pointless and heated argument. What I said went about like this:

One of the things I want to try to do tonight is to stay away from what I call hippopotamus questions. (Bewildered looks.) I mean by that questions like, if hippopotamuses could fly, how would we keep them from breaking all the branches off the trees? I admit that if hippopotamuses could fly, that would be a serious problem. But for this evening, I don't want to take time to discuss it, just as I don't want to take time to talk about what would happen if tomorrow all the public schools disappeared, what would poor people do with their children, etc, etc. Public schools aren't going to disappear tomorrow, or a year from now, or ten years from now. They will be around for some time to come, and for some time to come most people are going to be sending their children to them, no matter what the home schooling movement may or may not do. So we don't need to see tonight's discussion as some kind of battle to save public schools.—JH

## **Winning Them Over**

*From a California reader:*

We were visited in the fall by a representative (his title may be Private School Consultant) from the County School Superintendent's Office. He brought with him the assistant principal from the local high school that our daughter would attend if she attended public school.

We leveled with them totally. His first question was, do we keep an attendance record. This is the one thing the California law requires of private



schools. I told him we didn't because we couldn't see how we could have anything but perfect attendance when the school met in our home, but if he had a need, I would do that. He agreed that any attendance record we kept would be a perfect one, but he also said that he thought we should keep a record anyway. He thought it was the responsibility of the County Superintendent's office to supply a school with a record book and he said he would see that we got one of those. The book has never come, however, so we have not done anything about it.

His next question was what math series did we use and what reading program did we follow, so I explained our no-teaching approach and he loved it. He asked some very intelligent questions about it and the conversation eventually turned into a discussion on how we could make this work for the whole society.

As they were leaving, the man from the County Supt.'s Office asked if he could keep in touch because he thought I would be an asset to the local Student Attendance Review Board and hoped I would feel good about serving on it. This was interesting to us because this is the board (although in a different location) that we had to appear before when we were first approached about being illegal.

Two days later, an English teacher we know told me that while she was standing in the office of the high school, the assistant principal had come up to her and told her about his visit to our home and how excited he was about what we were doing. We talked for a little about it and she is interested in learning more about this approach. Then just last week we were at a group gathering and my daughter had occasion to mention she learned at home; a member of the group we didn't know searched us out to talk about this. She was a friend of the man from the County Supt.'s Office and he had told her about a family he had visited who was using the no-teaching approach. He was really excited about it, she said.

We are constantly approached by people who want to talk about what we are doing and how we can do it and we always send them away with a *GWS*. We feel this is important because the one thing we get consistently from these people is a fear of doing something out of the ordinary all by themselves. *GWS* also shows them that homeschooling can be approached in a million different ways—that they can just decide for themselves what approach meets their own personal needs and go with it.

## Selecting a Jury

The same issue of the *Ocooch Mountain News* that we quoted in *GWS* #19 has a story about Mr. and Mrs. Sawall, who were found guilty by a jury of failing to send their children to school. It was not clear whether they would appeal the verdict.

Mr. and Mrs. Sawall acted as their own defense. At the beginning of the trial, Mrs. Sawall asked, “Is there any person on the jury who does not believe the Bible is the inspired word of God?” The District Attorney objected that religious beliefs could not enter into the selection of jurors, and the objection was upheld by the court.

In a very similar case in Minnesota a couple of years ago Joseph Palmer, who like the Sawalls was defending himself, handled the matter of jury challenges somewhat more wisely. Though he was taking his children out of school primarily for religious reasons, he did not ask prospective jurors about their religion. What he did was to use his challenges to strike off the jury list all persons who worked, or whose relatives worked, for the local schools. Since in many small towns the schools are by far the largest employer, this got rid of a good many people who might have been expected to be prejudiced against him. The jury thus obtained acquitted him and his wife. There is an important lesson here for others facing possible jury trials.—JH

## On Court Costs

Many families would like to take their children out of school, even in defiance of the local schools, and would do so, except that they are worried about the expenses of a possible court battle. Others, who have been teaching their children at home already, may fear that an expensive court action could develop. Any families who feel themselves in one of these positions might do well to write Ed Nagel at NALSAS, PO Box 2823, Santa Fe NM 87501. He has some ideas about what to do about this problem that may be useful.

## People Wanted

*From Michael Harris, RFD #8, Loudon Ridge, NH 03301:*

My mate, two children (soon to be three), and I live on a country homestead where we produce much of our own food through gardening, keeping laying hens and a small goat dairy. We heat our house with wood, have plenty of space for recreation and solitude, and enjoy healthful, joyous, natural living. Last year, we began educating our two children, now 7 and 3, at home. More recently, we built an addition to our home, a private studio apartment of sorts for a person or persons to live in with us, share the benefits and responsibilities of the homestead, the household, possibly child care, etc. We are thinking that perhaps a single parent with a small child might like to consider the living arrangement and tie into our home education program as well.

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*Herb Eldridge, RR 1, Ethel, Ontario NOC ITO:*

Each summer on my organic cattle and grain farm I have need of teenagers to help out. I would be most willing to have one or two *GWS*-type teenagers stay with us this summer. It would be real interesting if teens who have never been to school would like to come but anyone of like mind would be welcome. There would be ample opportunity for learning of farming and nature, much hard work when necessary (haying time, the vegetable garden), and plenty of free time. I would offer room and board and a small wage. (Incidentally, any *GWS* readers in Ontario who would like organic beef or flour could contact me.)

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*The Wilsons, 813 Clara Dr., Palo Alto CA 94303; 415-856-6650:*

We (Carl, Andrea, Laura, age 3, and baby-on-the-way) are looking for like-minded families who are interested in living on the land, engaging in food growing, appropriate technology, and appropriate childraising. We're within about six months of making a joint purchase of land in Northern California. We will probably set up a paper "school," as it is easy to do this in this state, and will free us to include our children in the business of living and learning in an environment that supports the ideals of cooperation with the earth and other people.

## **Researcher Needs People**

*From Robert C. Gorton, 75 Crane Circle, New Providence NJ 07974:*

I am a doctoral student at Rutgers University and am exploring the possibility of doing research in the area of homeschooling. I would like to get in contact with families that have had their children in homeschooling for two or more years and then entered formal schooling, to determine the degree of success that the children have had in the formal set-up.

Parents who are willing to receive a questionnaire should have at least one child who has had homeschooling for two or more years. After this period of homeschooling, the child has entered some type of formal schooling. This would include private and public elementary and secondary schools as well as colleges.

I hope families who have had such experiences will contact me. I anticipate sending these parents a questionnaire during the winter of 1981–82.

You may be interested in knowing that I am an assistant superintendent in a public school system and have had 27 years experience in formal schooling. I became interested in the homeschooling movement when we had to make an equivalency decision for a youngster in our community.

That youngster has been approved for homeschooling.

## **New Books Available Here**

*Walk When The Moon Is Full*, Frances Hamerstrom and Robert Katona (\$3.60 + post). One day a mother promises her two young children that, for an entire year, each time the moon is full she will take them for a walk in the middle of the night. This slender book is the true story of these midnight explorations and adventures and of the many living creatures and interesting things they see on them. All but one of these walks are in the country, but the one city walk is in its way as fascinating and beautiful as the others.

I feel very strongly, as I read, how mysterious and fascinating the night is for small children, and what a wonderful and exciting treat it is to be awake in it—and not just awake, but outdoors! How tactfully this mother helps her eager and curious children to feel some of her own love and reverence for natural and living things, and shows them that in order to see the natural world they must approach it quietly and respectfully.

The book is illustrated by some of the most beautiful pencil drawings I

have ever seen, which in a way I would not have thought possible catch the magical quality of night and moonlight.

*Emil And The Detectives* by Erich Kastner (\$1.50 + post). When I was about nine or ten this was one of my favorite books, and I'm so glad that it is still being printed in England. The story is set in the late 1920s.

Emil is a German boy, perhaps ten or eleven, an only child. He lives in a small country town with his widowed mother, who supports herself and her son by working as a hairdresser. One day she sends Emil off on the train to the great city of Berlin to visit his grandmother and other relatives. Inside his jacket pocket she pins a small amount of money, carefully saved over a long time out of her earnings, a gift for his grandmother. On the train Emil finds himself riding near a man whose looks he does not trust. He tries to keep awake, but can't help falling asleep. When he wakes, both man and money are gone. How this smart and resourceful boy, alone for the first time in a huge city, enlists the help of a group of city kids (the "detectives"), and with their help tracks down and brings to justice the thief, makes up the rest of this exciting book. As a child, I liked it as a good story that I could easily put myself into. I like it now for still another reason—it shows children thinking and working together with imagination and common sense to solve a problem that the adults alone could probably never have solved.

*Anne Frank: The Diary Of A Young Girl* (\$2 + post). The story of this book is very well known—it may well and with good reason be the most famous book that came out of World War II. Being Jews, Anne, her parents, and her older sister Margot, fled from Germany to Amsterdam in 1933, where for a while they lived the lives of a middle-class Dutch family. By the time Anne began her diary, this was over: the Germans had occupied Holland, and her family and all other Jews in Holland were living under a heavy burden of anti-Jewish regulations. But Jews could still move about a little, and Anne could go to school, which she liked, and could generally lead an active and busy life. Like all fourteen-year-old schoolgirls, she thought and worried a lot about friends, boys, teachers, and above all, the adults who persisted in seeing and treating her as a little child instead of the serious human being she felt herself to be.

Suddenly, within a month of the beginning of her diary, Anne and her family, with several other people, had to go into hiding in a few small rooms in the back of a warehouse. There they lived for a little over two years, and

there Anne grew, thought, for a while fell in love, and wrote her diary, until for the equivalent of a couple of dollars someone betrayed them to the Germans, and they were taken away to die (except for Mr. Frank) in concentration camps.

This diary would be a remarkable, revealing, and important book even if Anne's life had remained more or less "normal," since it gives us such a clear picture of an intelligent, lively, perceptive, and loving person going through what is for almost everyone a difficult time of life. But the diary becomes all the more remarkable when we consider how Anne and her family and fellow prisoners (for their rooms were in effect a tiny prison) had to live—without either work or leisure, without purpose, without privacy or dignity, and more and more without food and without hope. Under such conditions most people begin to go to pieces, and the adults around Anne were no exception. But even as they grew weaker, she grew stronger—kinder, more patient, more knowing of herself and other people, more certain about the work she would do if and when she became free.

It is so sad to think that in only a few months more they would have been out of danger. And Anne comes to life so vividly through her diary that it is very hard for me to realize that had she lived she would now be almost as old as I am. We can only wonder, what might she have become, what might she have done, what did humanity lose with her death? All the more important to ask ourselves that question, now that our political "leaders" are once again trying to convince us that a third World War, and this one nuclear, might after all not be such a bad thing.

*Very Far Away From Anywhere Else*, by Ursula LeGuin (\$1.60 + post). This short novel, unlike most of Mrs. LeGuin's works, is not a science-fiction or fantasy novel, but the story of a modern high-school boy and girl who become friends and in time fall in love. What makes it much more than the typical teen-age romance is that these two young people are both outsiders; they have interests and talents that are not understood or supported by their peer group or even in some cases by their own family, and are struggling in spite of many obstacles to find their true work in the world.

The book is told from the point of view of the boy, a sympathetic character, though at times a little sorry for himself (but who isn't?). What makes the book for me is the #2 character, the girl who becomes his friend and girl-friend. She is a talented classical musician, both violist and

composer, knows exactly what she wants to do, and puts all of her thought and energies into doing it. She is not in the least discouraged or deflected by the difficulty of the task she has set herself, or the indifference of her age-mates, or anything else. She has set herself a goal and is heading toward it as directly as an arrow.

At the end of the book, we are not sure whether the boy will reach his goals. About the girl, we have no doubt at all—one way or another, she is going to find a way to do the kind of work in music that she wants to do. A wonderful example to all of us, young or old. And a good and believable story, to boot.

*The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson (\$2 + post). This is a play about Helen Keller, the blind, deaf, and almost mute child, and Anne Sullivan, the gifted, unorthodox, stubborn young woman, fresh out of school herself, who taught Helen to read and speak. The play begins with Anne Sullivan and the Keller family preparing to join forces, and ends with Helen's great discovery of the word "water," which unlocked the doors of language for her. The play is almost unbearably moving. Reading it in our little office full of the sounds of work inside and traffic outside, I could often hardly see the page for tears. How an audience could have actually seen and heard this play performed, especially the final scene, without drowning out the actors with loud sobs, I can't imagine. A most powerful and beautiful piece of work.

*Asimov On Physics* by Isaac Asimov (\$2.25 + post). A fascinating, informative, and altogether delightful book. Asimov has the curiosity and sense of wonder of a child, and feels and helps us feel a child's delight in finding something new, or seeing how one thing connects to another. "Look at this! And look at this!" he says to us, like an excited and happy child seeing for the first time a zoo or some other strange and wonderful place. Asimov writes many articles these days about space colonies that I think are foolish nonsense, but he knows a great deal about physics, and in this book he writes about it vividly, clearly, and sensibly. He puts himself very much into his book, and since he is an interesting and very funny man, this adds to our pleasure.

Even if you think you don't like or can't understand science, try this wonderful book. Chances are you will learn a lot, will be very glad you learned it, and will want to learn a lot more. What could be better than that?

*How To Take The S.A.T.* by Marcia Lawrence (\$5.60 + post). The people

who publish and sell the S.A.T. (Scholastic Aptitude Test) heatedly deny, of course, that preparing for these tests can improve a student's scores, but experience has repeatedly shown that this is not true. There are a number of books on the market about how to prepare for the S.A.T.; of those I have seen, I like this one best. It contains a great many S.A.T.-type questions, answers to these, and in many cases, an explanation of why these particular answers were declared by the test-makers to be "correct." In a few cases, these explanations seem to contradict each other; criteria which give the "right" answer to certain questions may give a "wrong" answer to others. But this is true-to-life; the real S.A.T. also contains such contradictions. The important thing is not to get some foolproof method for getting right answers on the tests, but to understand how test-makers think when they make up these questions.

Those planning to take the S.A.T., or any similar multiple-choice standardized achievement tests, will be much better prepared if they read this book, do all the tests in it, and then figure out why certain answers have been called "right."

*Peterson's Guide: Independent Study Through Correspondence Instruction* (\$4.50 + post). This very useful reference is (1) a list of colleges and universities that offer "extension courses," i.e., courses by mail, at either the high school, college, or graduate level; and (2) for each institution, a list of the courses it offers and the person to write for further information about such things as academic credit, cost, financial aid, etc.

It's worth noting that in many states you do not have to live in the state in order to take extension courses from the state or other university. (Thus, for example, people from a number of states have written us to praise the extension division of the University of Nebraska.) Note too that it may often be possible for homeschoolers to take and get credit for courses that they could never take if they went to a regular school. Obviously, if children are taking and doing well in courses designed for older students, this is good evidence that their home-based education is more than "equivalent." And there might be some cases in which such evidence could help get a child out of regular school. A book well worth having.

## **Reminder**



In the past year, many homeschooling families have told us that the local school authorities have been supportive, helpful, even enthusiastic about their homeschooling—but these families have not asked the school people about being on our “Friendly School Districts” list. Sometimes they’ve told us it’s too soon, they want to wait a while until they feel more secure. Or they’re not sure whether the officials will say “Yes.” Or maybe they simply haven’t seriously thought about asking.

Well, we don’t want to pressure anyone into jeopardizing a good relationship with the schools. But we do want to remind you about this list. As you get this issue, the school year will be drawing to a close and it may be a good time to approach the superintendent or other contact person. You might want to show them an issue of *GWS* and let them read through the description of the list.

Again, don’t feel bad if you don’t think the time is right—but we do hope to hear from a few more of you who have been enjoying a good relationship with the schools.—DR

## **Friendly School Districts**

We are printing a list of school districts that are willingly and happily cooperating with homeschoolers, and who are willing to be listed in *GWS* as doing so. We will run this list in each issue.

One reason for such a list: I want to encourage and reassure school officials who may be hesitant about approving homeschooling, and let them know that there are other districts enjoying good relationships with their homeschooling families. Also, families who are willing to move to escape a difficult situation with school officials would have at least some ideas about where to go.

We will only list these school districts under the following conditions:

1) The family has to be not just satisfied but pleased with the cooperation the schools are giving to their homeschooling efforts. 2) The schools themselves have to be pleased with the relationship with the family. 3) The family has to be happy with the idea of asking the schools whether they want to be included in this list. If they feel that listing the schools, or asking the schools if they want to be listed, may endanger their good present relationship, then they shouldn’t ask. 4) The schools themselves have to be

happy about being included in the list. If they are uneasy about it, or fear that it may get them in trouble with someone, we'd rather not subject them to that risk.

So—if your district is cooperating with your homeschooling, and you would like them to be on this list, ask them, and let us know if they say to go ahead.

By the way, we would also like to hear from schools that would like to help homeschooling families, but have not been able to do so because no families have yet asked them.

CA—San Juan Ridge Union School District, 18847 Tyler Foote Rd, Nevada City 95959; Marilyn DeVore, Administrator.

MA—Barnstable Public Schools, 230 South St, Hyannis MA 02601; Jane Sheckells, Curriculum Director.

Rockland Public Schools, Rockland 02370; Supt. John W. Rogers.

Southern Berkshire Regional School District, Sheffield 01257; Director of Guidance, Paul Shafiroff.

VT—Woodbury School, Woodbury; Marilyn Hill, Principal.

## **Updating Directory**

From time to time people have been kind enough to notify us when names listed in the Directory are no longer reachable. As Ann Bodine points out, if these names aren't deleted, the Directory begins to fill up with deadwood—wrong addresses, people who were interested three years ago but no longer are, etc. So if anyone wants to help us keep the Directory current by writing other names in their state and telling us if the post office returns letters as “Moved—left no forwarding address,” etc., we'd appreciate it.

Also, when you tell us of a change of address in your subscription, please remind us if you are in the Directory, so we'll be sure to correct your address there, too.

## **New Bump Policy**

Under the new system of starting subscriptions with the current issue, it is not easy to “bump,” (that is, change from a single to a group sub, or increase the size of a group) except when you renew. But if you really want to do so,

we have worked out a formula so you can bump for the remaining issues on your sub—basically, 50¢ for each additional copy to be mailed. That is, multiply the number of issues remaining before your sub expires by the number of people you are adding to your group, and multiply that by 50¢. If this is not clear, feel free to write and ask. And please remember, we cannot handle small bumps (under \$6.)

FLASH—Add to John's "Coming Schedule": May 8, 8 PM, Curtis Lecture Hall, York U., Toronto, Ont. Contact Anna Myers, 416-655-3878.

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# Growing Without Schooling 21

June 1981

I've been very busy the last month or two travelling and writing revisions for new editions of my first books, *How Children Fail* and *How Children Learn*, which Delacorte plans to issue in 1982. This has proved a bigger job than I expected; I found that once I started writing and thinking about these books, I had a great deal to say about them.

Next week we'll be moving to a new office! The new owner of 308 Boylston plans to renovate it into "luxury offices," so everyone has to leave. We found space at 729 Boylston that I think will be fine—it has a little more room, a nice bay window, and much better heating and lighting. Moving at any time causes problems, of course, and we wish we didn't have to do it right now, but we'll cope.

Just came back from an unschooling luncheon in Connecticut and I'm about to leave for Philadelphia to do a TV show, "Whitney & Co." on station WCAU. Nancy Plent will also be a guest on the show and several *GWS* readers have said they'll be in the audience.

At the Mar. 18 lecture in Palatine IL, I met Kathy and Tony Mingl—and J.P.! A lively and delightful three-year-old. The lecture—attended by many parents with babies and small children—was in an amphitheater type lecture hall. During my talk J.P. and a friend came down to play on the stage—but they took their shoes off so as to be very quiet. It was nice to see all of them.

Besides the other engagements we told you about in the last *GWS*, I also went down to U. Mass. in Falmouth for a small seminar with teachers, and I was on a radio talk show May 5, WHAM in Rochester NY, that brought us a few inquiries. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers Conference, to which I was supposed to speak on May 9, canceled their meeting. But a group of unschoolers in the area, led by Anna Myers, organized a meeting on the evening of May 8; more than 200 people showed up and it was very lively and interesting. Heidi and Melanie Priesnitz helped to sell and collect tickets, and Drew Myers (7) and a friend passed out paper and pencils for written questions. Then Drew introduced me! After the meeting a number of children, including Drew and sister Beth (5), interviewed me for a local radio

station.

As I am so busy writing and travelling, more and more of the work of putting out *GWS* has fallen to Donna Richoux. For some time now she has been doing most of the editing, correspondence, and layout needed to produce the magazine.

Last month our records showed that for the first time there are over 3000 current *GWS* subscribers (3109 for *GWS* #20). Although we've been getting new subscribers all the time (an average of 30 a week in 1981 so far), many subscriptions have been expiring, too, which has been worrisome. But a recent renewal reminder card has had some success, and I'm considering doing some sort of phone campaign for renewals, which I've heard has worked for *The Progressive* magazine.—John Holt

## Teach Your Own

*John wrote in the introduction of his new book Teach Your Own:*

During the late 60s and early 70s I knew a number of groups of people who were starting their own small, private, alternative schools. Most of them did not try to start their own school until after years of trying to get their local public schools to give them some kind of alternative. When they finally decided to make a school of their own, they had to persuade other parents to join them, reach some agreement on what the school would be like, find a place for it that the law would accept and that they could afford, get the okays of local fire, health, safety, etc., officials, get enough state approval so that their students would not be called truants, and find a teacher or teachers. Above all, they had to raise money.

One day I was talking to a young mother who was just starting down this long road. She and a friend had decided that they couldn't stand what the local schools were doing to children, and that the only thing to do was start their own. For many months they had been looking for parents, for space, for money, and had made almost no progress at all. Perhaps if I came up there and talked to a public meeting.

As we talked about this, I suddenly thought, is all this really necessary? I said to her, "Look, do you really want to run a school? Or do you just want a decent situation for your own kids?" She answered without hesitation, "I want a decent situation for my own kids." "In that case," I said, "Why go

through all this work and trouble—meetings, buildings, inspectors, money? Why not just take your kids out of school and teach them at home? It can't be any harder than what you are doing, and it might turn out to be a lot easier." And so it soon proved to be—a lot easier, a lot more fun.

## Quotes

"Blight never does good to a tree, but if it still bear fruit, let none say that the fruit was in consequence of the blight."

—William Blake

"The fatal pedagogical error is to throw answers, like stones, at the heads of those who have not yet asked the questions."

—Paul Tillich

"Marielle has been quite talkative and playful, but over the past two weeks has shown considerable improvement."

—On a report card

"The days that make us happy, make us wise."

—John Masefield

## Standoff in VA

*Abbey Lawrence (VA) writes:*

Hope you've heard from other VA readers on the outcome of this year's legislative session (*GWS* #16, 18); I'll summarize. Apparently, the subcommittee that was appointed last year to "study" homeschooling has, after a few meetings, reached no conclusions and made no report, but that didn't stop some of its members from introducing legislation on the subject. A senator introduced a bill that would have provided a specific homeschooling option in the law; it died in committee. Three delegates sponsored a bill defining a school in such a way as to make it impossible for parents to teach their own children by calling such an arrangement a school. This bill passed the House. The Senate amended it to require a tutor, which could be a child's parent, to have a college degree, and passed it. The bill died in conference on the last day of the session. So for the time being, things are no worse, or no better, than they were.

I plan to write to all the people in the state I know of—those listed in the

Directory, those I've met with—outlining what has happened so far and urging some action long before next year's session. Speaking to local representatives is definitely important. This is an election year here, and we could use that to our advantage. Also, some recent trends towards pro-family measures and less government might well strengthen homeschooling.

## News From Friends

Nancy Plent enjoyed giving a "Homeschooling" workshop so much at last year's *Homesteader's Festival* that she's doing it again this year. The Festival, run by Sherrie and Norm Lee (RD 2, Box 151, Addison NY 14801) will be July 22–25.

Pat Stone of *Mother Earth News* wrote, "I appreciate your mention in *GWS* #15 of our youth-written, how-to column. We have at this point bought over a half-dozen 'Mother's Children' pieces with another eight at the 'write' or 're-write' stage. all good, a couple truly exceptional."

Wendy Priesnitz of the *Canadian Alliance of Homeschoolers* writes, "We've received over 400 responses from the *Speaking Out* TV show (*GWS* #20) to date! Whew. Heidi and Melanie get paid 1¢ for each envelope stuffed. They want a raise."

In *GWS* #16 we ran an announcement from Deborah Schwaback (Box 136, Gilbertsville NY 13776) saying that she had 2,000–3,000 old textbooks to sell at 75¢ each. She's just told us, "Thanks to the blurb, we've gotten rid of 1000 textbooks and I still get a couple of orders each week!"

## Autistic Child at Home

*The Passaic County (NJ) News, 3/26/81:*

*Lincoln Park*—In what might be a precedent-setting ruling, a municipal court judge yesterday dismissed disorderly persons charges against a local couple, thereby granting them the right to continue educating their autistic daughter at home. In announcing his decision to drop the charges filed against Michael and Eileen Shea, Judge George Imperial said the education the Sheas were personally providing to their 8-year-old daughter, Suzanne, was equivalent to that of a public school.

Criminal charges were brought against the couple for withdrawing their

daughter from the Early Childhood Learning Center in Morristown in October, a violation of state truancy laws. She was removed from the special-education school because they felt its methods and environment were causing the child to regress. Since then, the couple taught their handicapped child at home, using the behavior-modification techniques of Martin Kozloff, a Boston University psychologist who is a pioneer in the treatment of autism.

In his summation, Prosecutor Walter Hoffman contended the Sheas could not adequately teach their daughter because neither had any formal training in special education. “This (home) program for this child is better than the program offered by the Lincoln Park school system,” defense attorney Patrick English told the court in his summation. English, who said the ruling set a precedent, based his defense on the testimony of the Sheas and specialists in the field of special education and autism. “The witnesses have proved that the Sheas have provided an equivalent education beyond a shadow of a doubt,” he said.

Defense witness Dr. Harold Scholl, an expert on learning disabilities and language from Montclair State College, said the type of instruction Suzanne requires at her stage of development “doesn’t have to be by highly paid specialists.” He insisted that Eileen Shea is fully capable of teaching speech, and noted that all parents are a child’s first speech therapist.

That line of thought was reiterated by Dr. David Holmes, founder and director of the Eden Institute, a Princeton-based school for autistic children. *Parents’ intimate knowledge of their child often makes them better equipped to teach than certified teachers, he said.*

Today, after five months of home instruction, Suzanne can speak 90 words and spell 135 words, Eileen Shea testified. Also, the child can write the alphabet and numerals, skills she could not master when in school.

## **Unschoolers Grown Up**

In *GWS* #3, Nancy Plent wrote about a boy she had in her 4th grade class who wouldn’t do busywork assignments, but kept submitting cartoons. He went to school until he was 16, then quit with his mother’s blessing, and went on to become a successful artist. Nancy tells us now that the young man drew the cover of a recent *Time* magazine.

She adds, “His brother is in his second semester at S.F. State University.



No high school at all. He went to 1st grade, then two years at a school his mother started, then 6th grade, and that's it. Studied about six months for the equivalency test and SAT and got into college. He's 19 now."

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*From California:*

My older son taught himself in Mexico, where we lived until he was 16. I just furnished books, and he is 20 now, a living example of the truths of your *Mother Earth* article. In the three years he spent in high school here in California, more than one of his teachers told me they were taught more *by him*, and that having that kind of pupil made their many years of teaching generally worthwhile. He was, as you pointed out, an outside observer of the school, and he just took from it what he wanted, instead of the usual vice-versa.

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*From another California woman who kept her children out of school:*

The oldest boy taught himself how to blow glass (furnace style). He was always fascinated with fire and he just naturally became a glassblower. He doesn't want to teach but the glassblowing classes come to him periodically to be shown what glassblowers can do on their own.

The second son is building his own house and is getting a patent ready to submit on solar heating. Our daughter grows her own' plants and has a plant business besides doing beautiful macramé things. I'm bragging about their "accomplishments"—what I mean to say is that they are unafraid, capable people.

One day I asked my second son how come he always was repairing all the other kids' motorcycles. He said, "They hate to think." That is what school did to them and didn't do to my kids. My kids *love* to think.

## **Good Idea From Idaho**

*Linda Q. Jones (ID) writes:*

Our oldest daughters are now in college after having spent half of the normal 12 years in establishment schools. They had years of no formal schooling, years of being taught in small groups with other children, some

correspondence work. When the principal of our local high school asked one of the girls why she thought they did so well on the National Merit Exam, her response, “Probably because we haven’t wasted so much time in school,” did not please him. Five of our children have not experienced any but the traditional schooling and each time the girls come home from college they tell us to get them out now before it is too late. We agree, and next year will go back to a freer, more growth enhancing system.

Several years ago. the state board of education was trying to gain control of private schools in the state and had a bill before the legislature to obtain that control. We talked to the members of the education committee, all of whom were very concerned at the no-control situation that exists here. When we saw the way the wind was blowing, we agreed that perhaps some type of evaluation of private schools would be good and offered to support a bill that would provide for evaluation as long as it was based on *outcome measures alone* (no counting opaque projectors) and *if the public schools had to meet the same criteria*. The legislators thought that eminently fair, and the state board lost interest in the proposal rather rapidly.

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JH: Homeschoolers in other states where some kind of restrictive legislation seems imminent might try making a similar suggestion to their legislators.

## Unschooling For Credit

*From Bonnie Miesel, 1057 34th St SW, Wyoming MI 49509:*

We are new subscribers to *GWS*. It takes a long time, but we read every word, underlining good ideas and starring things to send for or inquire about further.

*GWS* is actually a textbook for me—I’m presently taking the last “class” to fulfill requirements for my elementary certification. This class is independent study under Dr. Garofalo of Aquinas College. My topic of study is homeschooling—specific materials for teaching my five-year-old daughter beginning this fall. These materials involve (1) collecting resources, ideas, and books, (2) formulating a written educational philosophy, (3) becoming familiar with the state’s minimum requirements in all eight subject areas for

grades 1–3 (they are a *very* minimum!) and (4) keeping a diary of observations on how my five year old and two year old are teaching themselves.

I feel like I'm practicing homeschooling myself because *I've* chosen what to learn, *I* call the teacher about twice a month if I feel the need to get more direction or just to talk about my discoveries, and *I* decided on method of evaluation, time limit, etc. It's great fun—and no tests! I've probably spent three times as many hours working on this class than on any other in my whole college career. And I won't stop when class is over.

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JH: Perhaps other people might make a similar arrangement with a school of education in their area. Let us know if you do.

## **Activity in Conn.**

So far we have not had much homeschooling news from Connecticut or a very large listing in the Directory, so I was pleased to find out that in the eastern part of the state much is going on. Eileen and Spencer Trombly (whose picture was in the Dec. '78 Time magazine story on home education) invited, me to an informal gathering of homeschoolers at the home of Eileen's parents, Flora and Dick Storrs, in Niantic. At least ten homeschooling families were there, plus many of their children large and small, who were right in the middle of the talk and action. One of the guests was the principal of the local school, Mr. Sturgis, who has been very helpful to the Trombly family. It was the kind of friendly, lively, all-ages gathering I've found before among homeschoolers, whose children, not being cut off from adults, mingle freely and easily with them.

Another guest was attorney Frank Cochran (PO Box 1898, 250 Church St, New Haven CT 06508; 787-5821), very active in the Conn. Civil Liberties Union, who has helped a number of homeschooling families to reach agreements with their local school districts. Any Connecticut families who are having difficulty with their local school boards, or who simply want advice about the best ways to approach them, should get in touch with him. In Connecticut as in so many other states, homeschooling is a legal option, but the power to approve or disapprove of homeschooling plans rests with the local schools. The law gives them the right (which most of them don't know)

to say “Yes” to homeschooling families if they want to; but if they want to say “No,” they can do that as well. Mr. Cochran felt that on the whole most school boards could fairly easily be persuaded to say “Yes.” Let’s hope it proves to be so.—JH

## **Newsletter in Santa Cruz**

*From George Levenson (CA):*

Over 75 people left their names and addresses with us after your talk here in Santa Cruz last November. Last month I sent out a letter to each of these people to generate support for a large group sub to *GWS*. I said I could arrange to mail each issue of *GWS* to all members and include a local newsletter which would focus on-resources, events, experiences, etc., within our own community, for just over half the price of a regular subscription. The newsletter would be mailed with *GWS* and would reflect, primarily, information relayed to me between issues. I foresee it including a simple learning exchange with requests for and offers of instruction, dates for relevant lectures/events, listings of local resources, and experiences/ideas emerging from the homeschool movement. It would actually be a mini-*GWS* designed to knit together the energy within, our own community.

So far, 30 people have subscribed. I’m enclosing a check for a group of 35 because I know there are at least five more families out there in our neighborhood who will want to participate. By the way, I’ll send you a copy of the newsletter when we put it together.

## **From Colorado**

*From Dave Van Manen (CO):*

Just a quick note to let you know what’s going on out here in southern Colorado. Our support group is doing well—due to the growing number of families involved, we can no longer meet at our homes. Our next meeting will be held at the library—we’ll see how that works out. We’ve decided on a name: Homeschooling Support Group. It’s simple and to the point.

Our support group is willing to correspond with and help anyone concerning Colorado home-schooling (Box 43, Beulah CO 81023).

## Boston School

Riki Haney (31 Blaine St, Allston MA 02134; 254-80321) has started the Unicorn Independent School for home-schooling families in the greater Boston area. Students from kindergarten through grade 12 can be enrolled; Riki will help parents with the legal requirements and curriculum. Call or write him for more information.—DR

## Relieved

*From Mackie Tirella (IA):*

My husband and I were both very relieved after reading your answer to “A Troubled Parent” in *GWS* #20. We removed our 8-year-old son, Atom, from school in September and have been through many of the same emotions. At first we tried to have a “program” to be “sure he’d learn.” I suppose this was due to constant harassment by some well-meaning friends and relatives. But deep down I knew he was able to do it without our pushing him. So I stopped our program and to my amazement Atom learned on his own. Not every day, no, sometimes weeks would pass before he’d “study.” He would work with an atlas, drawing maps of the U.S. He’d ask one of us to help him learn math, or to make up some math problems for him to work on. Or for an entire week he’d write stories. I was so thrilled it’s so beautiful!

But, alas, then a phone call from a distant relative would reawaken that sense of guilt once again. “Aren’t you taking him to a tutor? What do you teach him? This isn’t good for him. He’s going to hate you for it when he’s older. How will he get into a college?” Gosh, we’d say, we better start teaching him again. But it wouldn’t last more than a day or two. Just never felt right.

As for the other problem in *GWS* #20, isolation—we live far from everyone and everything. Atom doesn’t seem to need that much social life. He’s content with his music (he’s quite a pianist), or his play, or just hanging around with the rest of us (we have 4 kids). But Astra, our 9-year-old, can’t handle it and has chosen to remain in school only because she needs that social contact. As long-as-she wants it that way, she can go. But deep-down I know that if we lived in a community of some sort where there were other homeschoolers, she would never opt for school.

Anyway, thanks for helping us to unload that guilt trip—Atom is doing beautifully!

## Home-Made Social Life

*From Dan Shultis (NM):*

This is in answer to “Isolated,” *GWS* #20, page 5.

We have three children. Our community is very small—100 people in 1600 square miles (20 mile radius). We are the only homeschoolers.

When the children were 1 to 5 years old, we made friends with some other couples on “their level of communication” and offered to babysit for their young children for free!—usually weekends. The word “free” is magic, along with not talking above the neighbors’ heads.

The only drawback to this system is that it can get out of hand and the other adults start taking advantage of you (“Please bring Johnny back to me at 4:00”). One weekend we had nine kids here, six besides our own, and it took us two days to put the house back together again. But overall, the advantages of having the other kids over by far outweigh the few hours of inconvenience.

If you want a particular child to stop dropping by, just catch the ear of one of the parents and start talking about Karl Marx and mention a dreadful word like “socialism”—and pow, just like magic, no more Johnny as a visitor.

Don’t be afraid of any kid under five—they are all great. Some take a half hour to adjust to “freedom,” but they all do so, like ducks to water. We had one that would shout every swear word I ever heard and then some, for about half an hour at the top of her lungs. She did this every time she came over, same routine. After she got all the garbage out of her system, she proceeded to play with the other kids and there never was any trouble.

## A Day Fishing

*From the friend who wrote “Kitchen School” in GWS #20:*

I invited the same six children to go on a picnic and fish in the creek which runs through a woods and park near our house. This was during Easter vacation and five children came. It was the first time we were all together since December although I had seen each of them once or twice. Since I was

inviting all the children, I made no plans for our day together to be an “educational reunion.” They were each to bring their own fishing equipment and I made the lunch. The fishing equipment varied from twenty-foot-long collapsible poles borrowed from fathers to a three-foot stick with a string attached and a paper clip hook. We set off with our one rule: we would try to be kind to one another.

There is a driveway across the street from my house with a little bridge that runs over the creek which we use as the entrance to the woods. Usually we follow the creek into the park and eventually come to a deep part of the creek with big rocks to stand upon and fish from. That day we got only as far as the fifty feet to the little bridge when the poles went down. Someone had spotted a minnow and the children were so eager and impressionable that they had to try the first place they saw water. I just stood watching and listening and laughing inside. Finally they decided not to waste all their bait of bread and bits of hot dog here, so we pressed on.

It took 1½ hours to get into the park because of their stopping to fish in the shallow creek. I thought they would be starved and anxious to eat, but no one mentioned the food I was carrying. We finally made it to the rocks in the park and instead of a formal picnic at a table, they fished and I handed them food. One boy had one fish bite, a 3” sunfish which jumped off as he reeled it in. Lines got caught in trees hanging over the creek. I sat amazed and watched these three fourth-grade boys and two fifth-grade girls help one another. Nobody was discouraged.

After about an hour at this spot, they decided to change to another part of the creek where there is also a cliff of rocks they wanted to climb. I sat watching them, thinking to myself how wonderful this was. They didn’t need me. I didn’t really have to be there except maybe to gather them together and lead them to the park. Once in a while someone came to sit next to me to eat from the big bag of peanuts in their shells. We would just chat naturally. It was such an easy, relaxing time.

Four hours passed and it was time to head home. Retracing our trail along the creek, one of the boys said, “Do you know that skunk cabbage really smells like a skunk?” The kids were curious. He fetched one, split it open, and proudly gave everyone a whiff. That was a great moment.

We stopped at another place along the creek where we hunted for garnets. We just concentrated on finding them and collecting the biggest ones to take

home. Since then, one of the boys has written me about what garnets are, how they are formed, etc. Apparently he was interested and did some research.

We finally got back to the house where they all had to have one last turn on my swing before I packed their fishing paraphernalia and five little bodies into my VW Rabbit for transportation home. What a beautiful day. No one caught any fish, of course, but all had visions of the ones that got away. Everyone wanted to do something again together when school gets out. I am leaving it up to them to decide whether they want to go fishing again or to a museum or what.

By the way, in all the hours we were together I never had to “speak to anyone.” We had no problems of any sort.

## **In the Mail**

*From several readers:*

Almost every day, my three-year-old sees something I’m doing and says, “I can do that.” So thanks to your newsletter, I let her try, and the next thing she’s saying is, “See, I told you I could do it!” And I’m sure that if I hadn’t begun to let her start trying, she would have stopped asking a long time ago. I would have missed out on a great companion. Now I know to start even younger with my one-year-old.

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Ever since *GWS* began to arrive last October, I’ve been delighted, and felt supported by the sensible people who are your readers. I, too, am mentioning the possibility of homeschooling to various people, all of whom react at least semi-negatively and who no doubt think I am crazy since I am a public school teacher. But it is fun, and I thank you.

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I have read the first eighteen newsletters and, after being bowled over with conviction, am now going through the process of trying to establish for myself some kind of reality as to what happens in schools, what kind of issues I’ll have to face if I decide to keep my daughter at home—matching the ideal against other pressures and building the kind of belief that could withstand opposition. It’s comforting to know that we have a few years to do this thinking and exploring before we’ll have to decide. And it’s also



reassuring to realize that “the” decision is not a once-and-for-all one.

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I have devoured all 20 issues. What a wealth of information! I went out and bought this typewriter this morning. Thanks for giving me some justification to spend money on something I have always longed for. I want to have my children home. I always have. This typewriter is my first purchase of schooling materials!

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When we received the books you sent, our family opened the package together. At first our 5-year-old looked in and slumped down on the couch saying she thought it would be something better than that. But as we began to look through the books together, her excitement grew until she finally went to bed with her new Oxford Picture dictionary and I found her later with the light on by her bed, still looking up words and spelling them out to herself.

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## **Learning in the Real World**

*From John A. Boston (CA):*

After much agonizing we decided to remove Sean from school and the situation that made him unhappy. We figured we could stall long enough to get around the law. Well, to our surprise, the school called and said they needed a way to report Sean’s removal. The director of Special Ed. said we could file a Form R-4 from the county. So I sent for the form. It was a Private School Affidavit, and was simple to fill out. The Education Code that allows this was included. An inspection by the County Health and Fire departments were required and the dates inspected (not passed) were required. The private school must keep records of attendance, records of the course of study, and names and addresses of faculty with their educational qualifications. And that’s all there is to it in California! This form must be filled once a year.

Now, after 13 months of unschooling, Sean is happier, doing his “work,” learning about life by living. Together we found a bank that would allow an 11-year-old to co-sign checks and he has his own checking account (math, spelling numbers, filling out forms, etc.) He got an ID card from the

Department of Motor Vehicles which looks like a driver's license and which he needed to cash his checks. You should see the looks of the merchants when he pulls out his check book. More participation in the adult real world. With this and his Social Security Card, Model Aviation Card and bank card, his wallet holds a world for him that he would never have been able to imagine in school.

People who learn of our son's non-school attendance say, doesn't he miss the social part? Well—Sean is in the Boy Scouts, 4-H club, classes at church; he volunteers each week to help at the local Humane Society Pound, helps one of his old teachers with her 2nd grade class in arts and crafts, and has much more time to play with his friends around our area when they get home from school. He has taken a class at the adult night school and, as soon as the summer session starts at the community college, we are going to take piano lessons, both of us. We tried to enroll him last semester but the admissions officer said he had to be a junior and have a letter from his counselor or principal on school stationery giving permission to do so. That's why this letterhead paper, and of course as a non-graded school I can declare him a junior in our program and as his principal, I can write the letter of recommendation. Simple? Well—we're going to try it.

## **More Success Stories**

*From Mary Vacon Maher, 30 Park St, Wakefield MA:*

Last night the school committee voted unanimously to let us teach our son at home. They are also supplying us with all the textbooks and supplements. We have been very pleased with their cooperation.

We removed our son from school because he is exceptionally bright, but he has never done well in school. Something in the school system is seriously wrong when bright children cannot live up to their potential. My husband and I want to provide our son with a relaxed and pressure-free environment where anxiety attacks over school will be a thing of the past. We are somewhat scared of this new venture, but we are excited too!

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*Kendall Dustin, Dustin Rd, Contoocook NH, writes:*

After a long unpleasant series of experiences, we got permission from the

local school board to teach our 8-year-old daughter at home. But with the pressure of having to “keep up with the other third graders” and being tested four times a year, I took her to Maine, enrolled her in a an alternative school there—it was a great experience—came home with her still enrolled, and have been teaching her at home with delight ever since. I’m amazed at the difference it has made to be out from under public school pressure.

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*A letter from Florida:*

After reading in *GWS* #19 that we here in Florida can become private schools merely by filling out a form—I tried it. It worked! We now go by the name of Sunshine & Light (Sunshine for the glow of happiness and contentment on my children’s faces, and Light for the enlightenment of their minds).

There was a minor problem. I had already paid my \$25 fee to take the Florida Teacher Certification Test to gain a regular teaching certificate so I could comply with the law. But I hope if my children must take tests, for some reason, they can take them with the same frame of mind I had. It was fun to see how much I really knew. And it was also very, very funny simply because of our situation. Imagine trying to answer a question about where the globe should be placed in a classroom—and the teacher’s desks, and students’ desks, when you are trying to stifle a huge guffaw at how ridiculous it was. I thank Patricia Ann Mordes and the other Florida reader for writing, and you for printing their letters, so I could become aware and inform others.

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*From Mary F. Murray, PO Box 2464, Northbrook IL 60062:*

I have had a homeschool for my eight children for the last 12 years. Our oldest, now 17, went to kindergarten for a few months, when I realized their method was not for us. None of the others have ever been to a regular school. We use a modified Montessori method. They’re all doing very well, and the oldest two are now using college texts. Mostly, it’s been a matter of keeping them interested and finding new interests. I’m looking forward to knowing about others doing the same or similar thing. Because of the great interest shown in our home-schooling, I will be holding workshops in the Chicago area in Summer and Fall ’81, if anyone is interested.

# Unschooling in England

*From Ann Martin, Berachah, Well House Lane, Qlastonbury, Somerset:*

My son Nicholas, who was 14 this month, has been out of school since September last year. This is very unusual in England and he is the only child in our town and for a long way around who does not attend school. I am lucky to have some wonderful friends here who help me to teach Nicholas in subjects I don't feel qualified in, and he will take his examinations as he would have done at school.

He also gets opportunities to do many things that he could not have done at school. He spends one afternoon in a shoe workshop where he helps out in exchange for tuition and will bring home his own hand-made shoes next week! He has been on a residential sports course, goes on trips with a local theater company, and he helps in a shop owned by a friend of mine, who is teaching him the basic skills of running a business.

He is finding out that an education that is a community-based one is a great improvement on his life in school. He is altogether more relaxed and is growing up fast and learning to take responsibility for himself. Predictably, the local boys give him quite a hard time, reacting to his being different, but he's dealing with this philosophically and cultivating other friendships with more sensitive and mature boys and girls of around his age who are children of friends of mine in the ecology and feminist movements.

## Instead Of Babysitters

*Mark McGartland (IL) writes:*

To expand on an idea of yours, "that children by the age of eight are capable of caring for themselves," I'd like to offer a modification that works with Dawn (7) and Nathan (5). While Sue is gone teaching nursery school two mornings per week and I am at work, we pay the children to take care of themselves, instead of paying a babysitter. The criteria for pay is this: the house must be in reasonably good order and both of them must be happy, which indicates to us that they got along well with each other. The pay is minimal but they both have eagerly accepted the responsibility of caring for themselves and each other.

We are very fortunate in that the local superintendent and principal are working with us in our efforts at home education. Sue prefers using the new Ginn 720 Reading program and the local school is providing the books and teacher's manuals. In addition, we have access to the county Resource Center where we can check out books, texts, films, records, tapes, and projectors. Perhaps other parents would want to check for a similar resource in their areas.

In past issues you have shared math games and ideas. Here is one Nathan and Dawn enjoy: roll the dice and add them up. Whoever reaches 100 first or gets the highest total wins. Dawn now uses five dice and she can find the different combinations of ten, as well as simple multiplication facts, e.g., 3 sixes are 18. I'm still looking for a fun game or drill that uses the subtraction facts. If any readers have one I would sure like to hear about it.

## **Children at Work**

*From Cherrie Brown (MS):*

You wrote that you would like to know more about how I bring my son to work. I am a subcontractor. I clean houses and buildings that are newly built and occasionally hang a little wallpaper. Most of the contractors I work for do not mind my bringing Joshua to work with me, he's not much trouble.

I bring a basket of "goodies"—a book or two, a truck, a toy of his choice, a blanket, a pillow, sandwiches, and juice. Our day goes almost like at home (except no Captain Kangaroo). Joshua follows me around "helping" me clean or just playing but always asking questions. We take a few breaks and at lunch we may read a book or walk around and collect odd lumber; then Josh gets his pillow and blanket and takes his nap. That is the time I do the work that I can't do while he's up and about (like cleaning upstairs windows on a ladder.)

I honestly believe he has gained much from these experiences—he sees more than just his own yard and has learned how to cope with hazards (nails, broken glass, open electrical sockets, stairs) and to avoid them without accidents. He has been on the job since he was 2 months old and I have found if I tell him something will hurt him, he leaves it alone.

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*From Paul Hogan, Playground Clearing House, 26 Buckwalter Rd,  
Phoenixville PA 19460:*

About 50% of my work is building rooftop play facilities for hospitals which prefer to use their open space for parking cars. I have all sorts of evidence that shows that a good play program and facility cuts children's time in hospitals in half. Another 40% of my time is spent working and building community-labored playgrounds. I include children's designs, have jury award design prizes, and then have children and parents construct the playground.

## **From Single Parents**

*Frank Bonasso, Box 526, Saguache CO 81149, writes:*

I'm a single parent with a daughter in the second grade. I'm rebuilding a dilapidated old structure here in town; sometimes I'm an artist; I drive a cab in the city part-time for money. Being in a position where I can drive 2 or 3 weekends a month (and can live comfortably on that as I have no other bills) leaves me all the time I need to teach my daughter at home. Without the 172 days compulsory attendance, we would also be free to travel extensively.

It seems to me she would benefit more from driving with me through the city alleys, scrounging building materials for our hand-made house, than sitting in a classroom rigorously being molded to listen. We are currently preparing a huge chart listing the pros and cons of going to school. I want her to visualize that and then will leave the final decision to her regarding next year.

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*And a letter from Virginia:*

I am 32, have a high school diploma, two years of college (no degree), and a full-time job as office manager. My daughter is 10 and has been in about 13 different public and private schools so far, all unsatisfactory in some important way. While she was littler my husband and I did a lot of travelling, lived in VW campers and aboard sailboats, and just never stayed put anyplace for long. Her father is dead now and local school alternatives (there doesn't seem to be an "alternative school") do not commend themselves to me.

So far, local authorities have not caught up with me. My daughter is still

officially enrolled in private school, though she has not been there for two months. *My boss allows me to bring her to the office and teach her during my working hours* even though the two activities do conflict with each other, and even though he thinks she should be in public school.

I am trying to convince a friend to move in and take over as her home teacher, in return for room and board.

(JH: Perhaps it would be best if the child could always choose whether to go to the office or stay home.)

## **Sprout Business**

*Penny King (NY) writes:*

Joshua has a sprout jar business. At age 9 he is excited about his profits and what he can buy from them. The business is simple. You need 1 case of quart wide-mouth canning jars, and for each jar you need:

2 tablespoons alfalfa seeds, or 4 Tbsp. mung beans or lentils. (Josh puts the seeds in individual plastic bags.)

A 5" by 5" fiberglass screen for the top.

An instruction sheet and information on the nutritional advantages of sprouting seeds.

Our costs come to 92¢ per jar so we wholesale them for \$1.50 to health food stores, co-ops, and restaurants. So far Josh has sold two cases. I did this project with a classroom of students and the jars sold very well. If you think it worthwhile you might like to pass this on to other homeschoolers—it has a small beginning investment and is easy and fun for younger children.

## **Backyard Science**

*Young people (with or without adults) could do some real scientific research at home, by helping with the Backyard Research projects of the Soil And Health Society (33 E Minor St, Emmaus PA 18049), which is connected with the Rodale Press, Organic Gardening, New Shelter, etc. From their May '81 bulletin:*

You can help improve the quality of food on tables across the country with a little research in your own backyard as part of the Backyard Research program. The coated lettuce seed project is perfectly suited

for a late summer activity, since lettuce can be planted in most areas through July or August.

Lettuce seed researchers will receive two packets of “Salad Bowl” loose head lettuce seeds. One packet contains seeds that have been treated with a bacterial-fungal preparation to reduce seed rot and damping off. The other contains untreated seeds. We will ask you to monitor the germination of both the treated and untreated seeds, and report the results to us. The large, medium-green deeply-lobed crispy lettuce is a favorite among gardeners, so you can enjoy the rewards no matter how the experiment turns out.

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DR: If you'd like to help in the lettuce seed project, send your name, address, and phone number to the Society. They also do a number of other research projects each year.

## **Volunteer Farm Work**

*From the brochure of Sativa (PO Box 2410 Sta. A, Champaign IL 61820):*

*Sativa* is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run organization which arranges temporary work on organic farms in the Midwest (primarily Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri) for its members. *Sativa* “Workers” donate their labor for a period of time to one of the “Growers” who, in return, provides the Worker with meals, a place to sleep, and sometimes a lift from a local town.

Descriptions of *Sativa* farms, along with dates when Workers are needed on each farm, are listed in a bi-monthly newsletter. Workers decide on which farms and dates (if any) they would like to work. They fill out a “booking form,” included with each newsletter. This is sent to the Scheduling Secretary, who confirms the arrangement with the Grower and sends details of the farm location to the Worker. The Worker then simply shows up at the arranged place (the farm itself or a nearby town) on the arranged date, sleeping bag in hand and ready to work! Farm stays may range from weekends to weeks or months.



How to join—please send \$4.00 annual membership fee to the Membership Secretary. Please make checks payable to “Sativa,” and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Additional information and the current newsletter will be sent.

Workers should be in reasonable physical condition and willing to pull weeds, shovel manure, churn butter, or whatever else might be asked of them. Many *Sativa* Growers accept vegetarians, the handicapped, and workers with children.

## More Home-Building Schools

*In GWS #9, we listed three schools for people who wanted to learn how to build their own houses. Here are some more that we have learned about:*

Northern Owner Builder, RD 1, Plainfield VT 05667; 802-454-7808.

Owner Builder Center, 1824 4th St, Berkeley CA 94710; 415-848-5950.

The Homebuilding Resource Center, 2 Hancock Pl, Cambridge MA 02139; 617-491-5181.

Yestertommorow, Box 344, Warren VT 05674; 802-496-3437.

## Community Resources

People interested in finding or starting a community can get the *Directory of Intentional Communities, Cooperatives, Collectives, And Communes* for \$3.25 from the editors of *Communities Magazine*, PO Box 426, Louisa VA 23093. The book describes over 100 “intentional living groups” in the U.S., recommends other resources for community living, and includes some articles on the “how-to’s” of community life. Published annually.

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*From Norm Lee, RD 2 Box 151, Addison NY 14801:*

Our *Community of Homesteaders Directory* offers participation in five areas: 1) *mutual aid* in emergencies; 2) *tool sharing*; 3) *produce swap*; 4) *labor co-op*; and 5) *travel co-op*. For this last, mail or telephone contact is made 10 days ahead; you may offer tent or camper space only, or short-term room & board for “bread labor.”

We send the directory only to those listed in it. All are invited. Cost is \$3;

send for info form.

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The Public Interest Media Project (PO Box 14066, Philadelphia PA 19123) has started a newsletter, *Other Networks*, which, as its first issue says, “is devoted to promoting better, more efficient, self-organizing communications among people in communities everywhere, while concentrating on the specific needs of the Philadelphia area.” That issue has articles about such things as learning exchanges, a newsletter on rural life, a Seed Saver’s Exchange, and *Women Outdoors* magazine. Those in the Philadelphia area will like the “Small World” feature, dozens of short announcements people have sent in about skills, services, and interests they want to share. Subscriptions: 4 issues/\$15, or \$5 “for those who are living lightly.”—DR

## Visiting Program

ASPEN(Alternative School Program Exchange Network) has a list of alternative schools that have offered to host young people for short or long term visits. Details on travel, living arrangements, etc., are up to the people and schools involved. For the list and general information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to ASPEN Clearinghouse, Youth Policy Institute, 917 G Place NW, Washington DC 20001.

## Homeschooling Brochure

*Pat Montgomery of Home Based Education Plan (1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104) sent us a copy of the handsome new HBEP flyer, which explains exactly what services HBEP offers, how much it costs, and how to enroll. She tells us there are now 46 students enrolled. The program looks well worth looking into; send Pat a SASE for a copy of the brochure.*

*It begins with this statement of educational philosophy:*

The following beliefs summarize our attitudes toward homeschooling:

1. Parents, primarily, are responsible for the education of their children.

2. Parents are consumers in the school marketplace and have the right, therefore, to control the process of education.
3. Parents, students, and teachers, those closest to the process, are most qualified to determine curriculum.
4. Students have at least an equal say about how they will spend their time and what they will learn. Interests and abilities are the best guides for individualized learning.
5. The practices of grading, testing, and setting students in competition with other learners scarcely contribute to individual growth.
6. A student learns best by doing, by being around adults who love him/her, by having good models to imitate, and by being exposed to all aspects of his/her world.
7. The world is the classroom.

## **Friendly District—Mass.**

*Pat Montgomery also wrote:*

One family in HBEP (Home Based Education Program) is from Carver, Massachusetts. Well, they've been praising home study and they've raved about it to their local school principal. He, in turn, advised a second family to put their third-grader in HBEP also. Now in some way or another, all this became known to a counselor at the Plymouth/Carver High School who had been working with a teenager who was continually sent up before the juvenile authorities for truancy. The assistant superintendent of schools sent a letter to the judge stating that the parent "has expressed a positive interest in following through with her son on HBEP. We have had one fine experience this year with a Grade 5 student who enrolled in this program. It is our request that you allow our Special Education people to study the Home-Based possibility.

If you will trust the judgment of the parents and our willingness to cooperate in developing worthy alternatives, I honestly believe that we can help a young man who very much needs all of us at this time."

The judge responded by telling the family to go ahead with enrolling the boy and the school district is picking up the tab for the program.

## **At Home in the Sierras**

*From Pat Sebald (CA):*

In late February, we began a homeschool arrangement with our youngest of three children, Eric. The older children had attended the local, rural schools, located 14 miles from our small village of 800 people. During the past few years we had noted a marked increase in violence among the students.

Through the help of friends and the interview of John Holt in the *Mother Earth News* magazine, we began to acquire information on a homeschool solution. I called the Dept. of Education office in Sacramento and wrote several letters to individuals in the Private School Information Department. All were very cooperative and helpful to us.

We received information from friends about the “American School” of Chicago, Illinois. Eric began the ninth grade of this fine, accredited high school in March.

Our family had agreed to meet with a county mental health worker before we took Eric out of the high school. The increased violent attacks had deeply troubled Eric and our family and we shared this with the young woman from the Mental Health Dept. We have since become good friends and she has assisted us a great deal by putting us in touch with others in this county who are teaching their children at home. She comes by our home from time to time, to share a cup of tea and hear of our progress. She was much impressed by the change in Eric’s attitude as soon as he was released from the anxiety of the violence at the school. She enjoys seeing his advancement with his home hobby of radio-controlled model gliders and planes. This hobby has brought a lot of pleasant hours to our whole family.

Since we have filed a Private School Affidavit, we are pleased to have made our home our school also. We had no difficulty in meeting the private school requirements. We had to buy two special sized fire extinguishers (2A) for the downstairs level and upstairs floor.

My husband and I are both certified G.L.M. International Ski Instructors. One afternoon during the week, we ski together and have explored other ski

areas near our village. We have a local community park one block away, with basketball courts and other equipment available for our use. The snow has melted from the basketball courts and we shot baskets the other day during a warm morning. Our village is located in the eastern High Sierras, at 7,650 ft. altitude, so we have a six month winter season. Our family enjoys both Alpine (downhill) and Nordic (cross-country) skiing.

The fishing season will begin this month. Fred and Eric really look forward to the fishing and good, relaxing evenings together. Eric wants to hold a part-time job at a local boat rental area this summer.

The school work is coming along nicely. The electives that the American School offers are excellent. Eric has chosen several that are great for his interests. He's taking Diesel Automotive repair (Fred will assist and learn, also), three electronics courses, Woodworking By Hand, Photography, and several others. Everything is working out well and we want to share the enthusiasm with others.

## **Informal School**

*From Linda Walling (FL):*

We've been re-evaluating and restructuring our home/school a lot lately. One of the main ideas was that a parent would accompany each child to school each day and that the parents were primarily responsible for their child's safety, well-being, and education.

Well—after a while, people started sending their kids with other parents so that we had 4 or 5 kids here sometimes without their own mom or dad, and that really changed the feel of things. I felt like I was babysitting, and these kids were now in a prison-type school because they couldn't just go home if they wanted to. The children weren't as happy and this was not the spirit in which we started our school.

So now we have no formal structure or times for school. Bob and I continue teaching our three kids and any day that other people want to join in with us, they just call and say they're coming out. We've had lots of company and we've all been learning so much.

Tani, who is 6, has his own business selling God's eyes that he makes; he's learned to crochet, play the recorder, read music, play chess, etc., etc. He also participates with us in our business of making custom-made shoes.

Shanti, who is 4, is reading many words and loves to do math. Both kids take good care of their baby brother, Kai, and relate socially not at all like so many children who go to school and somehow learn that they have to be yucky to each other most of the time.

We don't follow any particular curriculum or program with the kids, but generally try to set up heuristic learning experiences (leading to discovery) and our general philosophy is summed up by this quote:

When a child is born, his means of expression are limited and his powers undeveloped; but as he grows up and engages in the field of activity, there is no limit to the development of his powers, his strength, intelligence, and creativity, nor to the degrees of happiness which he can experience and radiate.

Most of the time our children play and hang out with us doing whatever we do. There are so many schools available for children whose parents need or want a place where they can send their kids. We sure would like to see more schools like ours available.

An example of a heuristic learning experience:

Tani at age 3: "Mommy, I want you to cut this paper (8½" X 11") into a piece as long as Daddy."

"Well, go get the tape and we'll do it together."

"I don't want to use tape."

"Then I don't see how to do it. Maybe you can figure it out."

Ten minutes later Tani came back with the paper which he had cut in a spiral. We opened it up and it was longer than Bob!

## **In Love With Gears**

*The following is from the book Mindstorms by Seymour Papert, which we plan to add to our booklist. Dr. Papert is Professor of Mathematics and Professor of Education at M.I.T., and because of his credentials; parents might find it helpful to quote him in their educational proposals or curriculum plans, as part of their reasons for preferring home-schooling:*

Before I was two years old I had developed an intense involvement with automobiles. The names of car parts made up a very substantial portion of my vocabulary. I was particularly proud of knowing about the parts of the

transmission system, the gearbox, and most especially the differential. It was, of course, many years later before I understood how gears work; but once I did, playing with gears became a favorite pastime. I loved rotating circular objects against one another in gear like motions and, naturally, my first “erector set” project was a crude gear system.

I became adept at turning wheels in my head and at making chains of cause and effect: “This one turns this way, so that must turn that way, so.” I found particular pleasure in such systems as the differential gear, which does not follow a simple linear chain of causality since the motion in the transmission shaft can be distributed in many different ways to the two wheels depending on what resistance they encounter. I remember quite vividly my excitement at discovering that a system could be lawful and completely comprehensible without being rigidly deterministic.

I believe that working with differentials did more for my mathematical development than anything I was taught in elementary school. Gears, serving as models, carried many otherwise abstract ideas into my head. I clearly remember two examples from school math. I saw multiplication tables as gears, and my first brush with equations in two variables (e.g.,  $3x+4y=10$ ) immediately evoked the differential. By the time I had made a mental gear model of the relation between  $x$  and  $y$ , figuring how many teeth each gear needed, the equation had become a comfortable friend.

One day I was surprised to discover that some adults—even most adults—did not understand or even care about the magic of the gears. I no longer think much about gears, but I have never turned away from the questions that started with that discovery: How could what was so simple for me be incomprehensible to other people? My proud father suggested “being clever” as an explanation. But I was painfully aware that some people who could not understand the differential could easily do things I found much more difficult. Slowly I began to formulate what I still consider the fundamental fact about learning: Anything is easy if you can assimilate it to your collection of models. If you can’t, anything can be painfully difficult. What an individual can learn, and how he learns it, depends on what models he has available. Thus the “laws of learning” must be about how intellectual structures grow out of one another and about how, in the process, they acquire both logical and emotional form.

I find myself frequently reminded of several aspects of my encounter with

the differential gear. First, I remember that no one told me to learn about differential gears. Second, I remember that there was feeling, love, as well as understanding in my-relationship with gears. Third, I remember that my first encounter with them was in my second year. If any “scientific” educational psychologist had tried to “measure” the effects of this encounter, he would probably have failed. It had profound consequences but, I conjecture, only very many years later. A “pre- and post-” test at age two would have missed them.

A modern-day Montessori might propose, if convinced by my story, to create a gear set for children. Thus every child might have the experience I had. But to hope for this would be to miss the essence of the story. I fell in love with the gears. This is something that cannot be reduced to purely “cognitive” terms. Something very personal happened, and one cannot assume that it would be repeated for other children in exactly the same form.

## **“Free Writing” at Home**

*Karen Holguin (NV) writes:*

Reading *The Underachieving School* helped a lot towards understanding my own hatred of school and failure to assimilate. Now I approach my own son’s learning more confident and more relaxed than I thought possible.

I used Holt’s idea of a write-a-thon or whatever the name, free writing without regard for spelling. I have seen amazing results!! My son, Marti, is 11. His imagination seems to bubble out at times.

When he was faced with doing the Assigned Paper for School, he froze. Each assignment resulted in tearful scenes at home. We progressed past this trauma stage to a sort of passive hatred. After removing him from school for the last time I just let it be. I made sure he was reading a lot of books he enjoyed. I read aloud to him and he to me. By experiencing expression this way he became more fluent, but he wasn’t free to write yet.

His first “Free Writing” was a mess to look at but was finally starting to sound like him. His second was even more expressive. Yesterday he wrote a satire on a national network TV news show. After writing and editing on his own, he carefully, without spelling error, typed his script. He recorded his final result on cassette for posterity! All of his actions were his own. That is how important his writing became to him.



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*Here are the sections of The Underachieving School Karen is referring to (page 88-on):*

In my early fifth-grade classes the children usually were of high IQ, came from literate backgrounds, and were generally felt to be succeeding in school. Yet it was astonishingly hard for most of those children to express themselves in speech or in writing. I have known a number of five-year-olds who were considerably more articulate than most of the fifth graders I have known in school. Asked to speak, my fifth graders were overcome with embarrassment; many refused altogether. Asked to write, they would sit for minutes on, end, staring at the paper. It was hard for most of them to get down a half-page of writing, even on what seemed to be interesting topics or topics they chose themselves.

In desperation I hit on a device that I named the Composition Derby. I divided the class into teams, and told them that when I said, “Go,” they were to start writing something. It could be about anything they wanted, but it had to be about something; they couldn’t just write “dog dog dog dog” on the paper. It could be true stories, descriptions of people or places or events, wishes, made-up stories, dreams—anything they liked. Spelling didn’t count, so they didn’t have to worry about it. When I said, “Stop,” they were to stop and count up the words they had written. The team that wrote the most words would win the derby.

It was a success in many ways and for many reasons. The two children who consistently wrote the most words were two of the least successful students in the class. They were bright, but they had always had a very hard time in school. Both were very bad spellers, and worrying about this had slowed down their writing without improving their spelling. When they were free of this worry and could let themselves go, they found hidden and unsuspected talents.

Some years later I learned that Professor S.I. Hayakawa, teaching freshman English, had invented a better technique. Every day in class he asked his students to write without stopping for about half an hour. They could write on whatever topic or topics they chose; the important thing was not to stop. If they ran dry, they were to copy their last sentence over and over again until new ideas came. Usually they came before the sentence had

been copied once.

Once when substituting in a first-grade class I thought that the children, who were just beginning to read and write, might enjoy some of the kind of free, nonstop writing that my fifth graders had. About 50 minutes before lunch, I asked them all to take pencil and paper and start writing about anything they wanted. They seemed to like the idea, but right away one child said anxiously, “Suppose we can’t spell a word?”

“Don’t worry about it,” I said. “Just spell it the best way you can.”

A heavy silence settled on the room. All I could see were still pencils and anxious faces. This was clearly not the right approach. So I said, “All right, I’ll tell you what to do. Any time you want to know how to spell a word, tell me and I’ll write it on the board.”

They breathed a sigh of relief and went to work. Soon requests for words were coming fast; as soon as I wrote one, someone asked me another. By lunchtime, when most of the children were still busily writing, the board was full. What was interesting was that most of the words they had asked for were much longer and more complicated than anything in their reading books or workbooks. Freed from worry about spelling, they were willing to use the most difficult and interesting words that they knew.

## **Books Teach Reading**

*From Norm Lee (NY):*

Did I say in a previous letter how I “taught” reading to a hundred 11th graders? My first public school job (1958). I spent my paycheck again and again on paperback books. With my last \$9 I bought an ad in the local paper asking for book contributions. I buried the kids in books and we all read our way to the door. Easy chairs and reading lamps. I speed-read a book every night before bed in search for more teen interest books.

The administration was livid. I invented a grading system that was additive: no effort could pull down a grade. I taught no “word attack skills,” no grammar, no spelling. We wrote plays and journals and many pages about what we were reading. Dire predictions to the contrary, the kids scored higher on the NY State Regents’ English Exam than any previous class.

## **Looking Up Words**

*To a mother who was worried because her children never wanted to look up words in the dictionary, John wrote:*

One thing most people don't know is how dictionaries are made. People don't make up dictionaries by looking at old dictionaries. Each new dictionary starts from scratch. The company making the dictionary employs thousands of "editors," to each of whom they give a list of words. The job of the editors is to collect as many examples as possible of the way in which these words are actually used. They look for the words in books, magazines, newspapers, etc., and every time they find one, they cut out or copy that particular example, building up a file of clippings where the words had been used. Then, reading these files, they decide from the context what the writer in each case had meant by the words. From these they would make the definitions. A dictionary, in other words, is a collection of people's opinions about what words mean, as other people actually use them.

If I meet a new word, and cannot tell from the context what it means, it isn't true that I have gained nothing. I am like the dictionary editor—I have one example for the word. Next time I meet the word I will have another example, and so on. By the time I have met a word ten or twenty times I will almost certainly have a very good idea of its possible meanings.

For children reading (or adults, for that matter), the most important thing is not that they should understand all of what they read. No one does; what we get out of a piece of reading depends in large part on the experience we bring to it. What is important is that children should enjoy their reading enough to want to read more. The other thing that is important is that they should become better and better at getting meaning from context, for that is the supreme skill of a good reader. The trouble with telling children what words mean, or asking them to ask the dictionary to tell them, is that they don't get a chance to figure out the meaning of the word. Figuring out what you don't know or aren't sure of is the greatest intellectual skill of all.

I think a good dictionary is a fine book to have around, and strongly recommend the Scott Foresman Beginning Dictionary on our booklist. But it is a book to browse in, to look at just for the fun of it, more than a book to look things up in.

You speak of "encouraging" children to use a dictionary rather than forcing them, but to a child an adult's "encouragement" usually looks very

much like force. The child thinks, “She wants me to use the dictionary, so I’d better, or I’ll get into trouble.” One minute you are absorbed in the story, rolling along with the plot, and the next minute you’re thumbing through a dictionary because you know you are supposed to—and the story is forgotten.

## **Homeschoolers’ Art**

*From Anna Myers (Ont.):*

The other morning we sat down to make some “angels” out of a kit. We had some other homeschoolers in too, so we had a good crowd. It was important to read the directions and go step by step and there was only enough material in the kit to finish the three required angels. You should have heard the comments’ “Can’t we work ahead?” “I want to put my sparkle on first” “Do we have to make angels out of it?” “None could keep their hands off the material that we weren’t using at the moment, and the precious sequins were getting lost. I was really getting angry with all of this until I thought it through. This was not creativity. It was school art—step-by-step “DO AS I SAY” stuff. We all hated it! Usually we just throw art materials on the table, everyone dives in and makes whatever they want. We sure learned our lesson over Angels!

At teacher’s college we were told that primary children nearly always draw themselves in any art, and usually they make themselves big in relation to everything else in the picture. Drew has never drawn a picture with himself in it. He just takes it for granted that he is important and draws what he sees in the world. This has made me think that maybe kids draw themselves in school pictures to boost their confidence in uneven odds: BIG ME vs. LITTLE TEACHER, etc. It would be interesting to compare “Homeschooler’s Art” against “School Art.” I think a lot could be said in paintings. Drew also has never separated his skies from his ground. He draws what he sees.

The other day we went shopping through the day and Drew ended up looking in an art shop at some watercolor paintings that other artists had done. He said he was checking for ideas and to see how they had accomplished certain effects. The saleslady and owner came over and asked why he wasn’t in school and I replied that he is an artist and he needed time to do his paintings. The lady looked surprised and asked how old was he? I

replied 7 years, but all this time she was taken aback but serious because we were serious. I guess the way Drew was examining every detail of every painting impressed her too. Anyway, she said she'd like to see his work and he replied, "OK! And I might let you hang some around your store, too!"

The last little item I have is that I've found a good way for homeschoolers to buy paper and supplies. Just phone the local school board purchasing dept. and ask from whom do they buy their supplies? Then phone the companies for price lists. Usually you have to have a minimum order of \$100 but five families together can get a lot of supplies for \$20 each at wholesale prices. Also if you happen to be a "school" you get a discount and usually are exempt from sales tax! In Ontario, "Phoenix" is the paper company, and "Mayers" sells supplies—pens, pencils, oil pastels, tempera paint.

## **Materials: Free Or Cheap**

*From Joann Sherosky (PA):*

For parents looking for creative materials, have them try their local print shop. We have two printers in the family who supply us with paper of all colors and sizes, which would be thrown away if we didn't take it. No doubt, some printers would rather throw it away than be troubled by parents coming in to get it, but it's worth a try. Because of the different colors and shapes, our children do a lot more with the paper than draw. They make paper sculptures with tape, tickets for shows they are putting on, birthday and Christmas cards, games, and more.

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*Linda Walling (FL) wrote:*

Great building blocks—scraps of wood from carpenters who make hardwood furniture.

Local newspapers usually will give you their roll ends of blank newsprint. They have no use for these and we get all we need of painting paper or whatever we want to use it for.

Our local school board allows me to go through their discontinued books and take what I want. They have a whole gymnasium full of cartons of these and some are very useful. They also give me publisher's samples which they get of all kinds of textbooks, workbooks, teacher's editions, etc. In addition,

the school board has a collection of record players, projectors, furniture, and other things they're not using any more.

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*And from the Family Education Assoc. Newsletter (UT Dir.; \$5/yr.):*

DECA is the name of a surplus store for the Granite School District. It is located at 3160 South 340 West in Salt Lake City, right next to the school warehouse, and is open weekdays until 4:00. They have lots of desks, chairs, textbooks, typewriters, and miscellaneous junk. Prices are low right now because they are trying to clear everything out to make room for the new things that will be coming in at the end of the school year. (JH: other districts may have similar surplus stores.)

## **Free Movies**

*From Deborah Martin (IL):*

I just discovered that my local library has a whole catalog of incredible films. A person can check out the catalog and request to borrow any of them. There are films for children, films for entertainment and discussion, films on art, science, health, psychology, religion, travel, history. They say these films can't be shown in elementary school, high schools, or colleges. They can only be used by non-school organizations and the public.

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*And from LeAnn Ellis (WA):*

We are delighted with the variety and quality of the films available from KODAK on a free loan basis (343 State St, Rochester NY 14650). There are many travel films besides educational films on picture taking and movie making. We get most of our movies from the local library. They are listed at the library, and ordered by mail from the state Film Library. Another source of free film loans is Association Films, Inc., 866 Third Av, NY NY 10022. They will send a catalogue of a big variety. Films are sent through the mail very cheaply. I have a large, heavy one here beside me that will cost 47¢ to return to Kodak.

## **Unschoolers Onstage**

Our unschooled friends Heather (almost 9) and Grace (6) Kapplow, who have done some volunteer work for us in the office, had parts in the Emerson College production of “The Music Man,” so Donna got tickets for herself and me for opening night. The girls were wonderful! For those who know the show (Donna knows it practically by heart, I had never seen it), Heather played Amaryllis. She was onstage for much of the first act and had many things to do. In one important scene with the heroine, she sang a short duet with her, had many lines to speak, some wistful, some funny, and perhaps hardest of all, had to mime playing the piano, keeping time with the piano in the pit orchestra. She did all this without a hitch or slip. But she did much more than just not make mistakes. She was just as at home and convincing in the part and on the stage as all the bigger members of the cast. When she was onstage, but with nothing particular to do, she did what many more experienced actors often forget to do, which is instead of standing like a lump waiting for her next cue, to take a lively interest in what is going on elsewhere on stage, thus making us all feel that the stage scene was real and that she was really there. A wonderful performance—especially as it was the first time she ever did anything like this. And Grace, who had no lines but was onstage for many of the big crowd scenes, was also very much a part of the action.

Musical comedy is perhaps the hardest of all forms of theater to bring off; that’s where the gap between the amateurs and the pros shows up most clearly and painfully. So I went preparing to make allowances. None were needed! It was a performance of the highest professional standards; even in big-time theatre I’ve seen few performances as good and none better. The energy, skill, precision, and high spirits of the cast completely carried me away. I loved it so much that after coming back from my Toronto lecture, I went again Saturday night to the final performance—and if there had been more, I would have gone again.

Important to note that the girls could never have had this wonderful experience, of being completely involved in a serious and highly skilled and disciplined adult activity, if they had been going to school. They would not have had the time or energy or concentration required for the many rehearsals. I certainly hope many other unschooled children may have such exciting experiences.—JH

## From Puerto Rico

*Patricia de Fernos writes:*

My husband Gonzalo and I have four children. Beatriz, 12, and Talia, 4, are at home studying with me.

Instead of taking each Calvert lesson and working through it in one day, maybe longer, Beatriz and I are going through several lessons on the same subject in one day, so that in one week's time she will have done 20 lessons of grammar, or history, or whatever. She finds this method much more satisfying, having specific goals every day and yet being able to delve into her subject. We have just been doing it this week, but she has been able to cover incredible amounts of assignments in four days.

Calvert school was good for us to start homeschooling with, because I had no idea when we started how to go about teaching at home, in spite of having read quite a few issues of *GWS*. But next year, I plan to do our own thing. This is the conclusion that I have come to after 18 issues, that people teach best what they like to do or read about best, because then the teaching becomes fun and not drudgery. Since I studied Liberal Arts in college, I feel it would be fun for me to offer that to my children: a compendium of ideas that are available today, plus an idea of where we have come from, all on a level they can understand and I can understand. I'm very excited about getting into what I enjoy studying. Fausto (almost 9) will be home with us next year.

Beatriz and I haven't always gotten along when we study together; sometimes she balks, sometimes I lose patience, she cries a little, I stomp off, but in a little while we are back together again, working things out. This was more common at the very beginning; now we have come to certain agreements and attitudes whereby we get along much better when we study together. But we have both grown to like each other and enjoy being with one-another more than we used to. She is so loving now, understanding of everybody in the family, most of the time. She loses patience with Talia, but most of the time knows how to handle her beautifully.

As we read so often in *GWS*, home-schooling takes so much stress off of the child. Beatriz has been able to focus on her gymnastics and piano, enjoying and spending a good deal of time on both. This year she has had the



energy and time to do what she really likes doing. Like other children mentioned in *GWS*, she has gained weight and grown I don't know how many inches in just six months.

Here in Puerto Rico, I can take her places during the day and nobody ever raises an eyebrow. So she gets to move freely with her father and me whenever any or all of us go out. This too she has enjoyed immensely.

You might want to know that as far as the laws go, homeschooling in P.R. is no problem. I checked with the Department of Education before I started and they explained to me that anyone who wishes to enter a public or private school needs only to take an equivalency exam. The Department also gave me the list of books being used in 7th grade plus an outline of 7th grade reading in Spanish. There is no problem at all if you teach your children at home, you don't have to report to anyone, ever. Aren't we lucky!

Talia, of course, has really enjoyed having Beatriz at home, and since she sees Beatriz working on schoolbooks, she wants to work too. With Talia, I have none of the problems with studying that I do with Beatriz. She loves to do her work, whatever it is, and does it well. She loves arithmetic and is doing nicely. She went through a math book for kindergarten in two months, a second one in one week, but has gotten stuck on the first grade book, because there doing math means being able to write the numbers, and she can't do that well at all yet, so she has become a little frustrated. But we are now working on writing the numbers, which she has enjoyed.

Talia likes to be read to, loves it, rather, but the problem is that many of the books we read to her with are in English, and we speak Spanish at home. Spanish is her vernacular, and we spend lots of time translating books. Beatriz and I have gotten pretty good at translating on the spot. We have cable TV at home, and I know how bad TV is for children, in most instances; however, the cable TV, with all the English-speaking programs, has helped our children learn English. Talia speaks much more English at her age than the other three did, and I attribute it to watching TV. Fausto loves to speak English, and I find myself speaking English at home more than I used to, and now when Talia talks to me in English, I answer her back in English.

The Suzuki piano method is working so beautifully with Beatriz, Fausto, and Talia, The pieces they learn to play are very melodious, in a classical style, as you know. In Suzuki methods, it is very important to play the recordings of the same pieces the children are to learn, very frequently, every

day, perhaps more than once if possible, plus review what they have learned the same day they have their class. The classes are as long as the child is able to concentrate, 15 minutes, 30 or 45. Doing these things, the children really do learn to play well, and to love to play, for themselves and for other people. And the music is so pleasant it's no chore to listen to it so often. This is where it is very clear: make learning fun and people will learn almost anything. I feel like I have learned so much about music and the piano too, a real bonus for the parent involved in this method.

So my three loves now are *GWS*, La Leche League, and Suzuki piano playing. They have so many ideas in common, all of which make to enrich my life and the life of those around me. I am so happy when I see Beatriz pick up *GWS* and read it on her own. I hope she will be able to enjoy these movements as a daughter, and later on as a mother, as much as I have. She says she doesn't want to go back to school, is doing so well playing the piano, and handles her little sister so lovingly—I guess she will be able to see the virtues of these movements as an adult.

## **Algebra Early**

*From New York:*

I wanted to tell you how happy we are now that we've dropped out of school. At the beginning of the year we ordered the American School courses for my 15-year-old. If you assume that high school courses actually have some substance, and have a child who wants to go to college, the American School has a lot to offer. Each course has up to 10 open-book tests which are mailed in, and are returned with many encouraging and positive remarks in red ink. Karen's academic ego has soared under these circumstances and her grade average has also.

I have been teaching algebra to my ex-6th grader, which the school had refused to do, and he is now prepared to take the June Regents' exam. I have also been teaching Algebra to my ex-8th grader who has "failed" math every year for the past five years. My theory was that if we started a new kind of math, we could go back whenever we struck an obstacle of ignorance and learn it. By studying algebra she has in fact learned her multiplication tables and simple division for the first time!

The sixth grader, a math whiz, could hardly read; we started dealing with

the problem by checking his speed—an alarming 50 words per minute. We spent the month of October in Nantucket. My son announced that he would like to read a book. He selected *The Hobbit* which I thought might prove too difficult but I said nothing. Since he started on a library copy and had only read a few chapters by the time we left the island, we rewarded him with his own copy. It took him months to finish the book, but the very next day he started on *Watership Down*. Now, five or six books later, he reads himself to sleep every night. We stopped checking his speed after he passed 125 w.p.m.

## Effects Of Unschooling

*A mother writes:*

Our girls have been out for a year now and I just want to tell you about some things I've noticed regarding the 12-year-old. First, a vaguely resentful attitude (developed during school days) gave way to an inner contentment. Right away she normalized her weight by losing five pounds. She continually has such happy dreams of magic and adventure; in her dreams she is the equal of any challenge she meets, and seems never to feel fear. I interpret this as a growing confidence in her own ability.

Recently she told me that she does not want me to comment on anything she writes; she knows whether it is good or bad, and even if I say something nice, it kills it for her. Of course she is absolutely right about that. I think it has taken her a full year of being out of school to get to the point where she fully wants the responsibility for deciding what she will learn, and for inwardly monitoring whether she is learning or not learning in a specific situation. I am absolutely thrilled with her development.

Some of her spontaneous comments since unschooling:

“Mom, you worried about me not having friends (if unschooled) for nothing. You know, we couldn't any of us have friends in school. We couldn't talk or help each other, or do anything together, like friends do. If a kid is smart and gets good grades, the other kids put him down, and if a kid is not able to do the work, the kids put him down, so everybody just puts everybody else down.” (One of my main concerns is putting the kids in groups where a common interest is shared or a common endeavor worked on, so they can develop cooperative friendships.)

“I feel more in touch with myself now—like I know what I need and what

my body needs and I can take care of myself better.”

## A Brief Trial—2

*Brigid Horbinski (WI) writes:*

Due to pressures from family members and society in general, our daughters decided they would like to attend school. Our 8-year-old lasted a week and our 10-year-old lasted three weeks—gritting her teeth all the while (and this was in the “best” private school in the area!) Thank God it’s over! A lesson I needed to learn.

Now we hope to be headed toward establishing a “children’s gathering place” somewhat like that described by John in *Instead Of Education*.

## Just Enough Teaching

*From George Levenson (CA):*

The biggest dilemma for me in all of parenting is distinguishing the fine line between intrusiveness and responsiveness—I’m so ready to be there to “show how.” And I guess my greatest fear is not hearing what is being asked for. The solution seems to be (1) not judging myself too harshly and (2) trusting the children completely. Maybe I should write this in large letters on the kitchen wall.

Our own homeschool feels more like home than school. A lot of learning—for all of us—seems to be on an emotional rather than a cognitive level. Abra, our “newest” child has added a more patient feeling to the day, and Jacob and Rhys seem freer, lighter. I can’t report any great strides “academically”—my intuition suggests that such concerns are premature and possibly limiting. Vicki laughed when you said that our kids would model us and therefore would—among other things—learn how to read. Her response: who has time to read?

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*John wrote in reply:*

Intrusiveness vs. Responsiveness puts the issue very well. How to tell the difference? Answer: let the children tell you the difference. Since they won’t do it with words, probably, this means being alert to their signals. The other

hard thing is, when they send you a “Daddy, leave me alone, let me do it” signal, not to have hurt feelings. If they send such a signal, don’t apologize or make a big thing of it, just say “Sure,” and go on about your business.

It seems to me, on the whole, that if we don’t punish children for the messages they send us, or make them feel guilty about them, they can be relied on to send as many messages as are needed. If we don’t hear their first message, they will send a second. No need to get too complicated about this; kids are good communicators.

As for reading, you may not spend hours a day on it, but your children are observant enough to see that the written word is important to you and that you use it to get things done. If they see that words make a difference they will want to know what that difference is.

## **Scissors & Pens**

*From Jean Leonard (Germany):*

The first time I had a left-handed student I bought a pair of “lefty” scissors. Then the first time I saw him struggle to cut with his left hand using right handed scissors I said “Those are for the right hand, you need ‘lefty’ scissors,” and I ran to get them. By the time I returned he was cutting beautifully with his right hand and he said, “It’s all right, teacher, I’ll just use this other hand.” So the next time I had a left-handed student and saw him wondering whatever was wrong with the scissors, I just said “They are for the right hand.” He just changed hands and so did every other left-handed student for the past ten years! So we’ve thrown the left-handed scissors away.

As for pens, I had a little student who discovered how to write when he was three and wrote beautifully. His writing was so neat and uniform and he loved to write; he also discovered how to read. He was bright, mature, and well-adjusted but the first time he met a “real” teacher she was upset and told the parents, “He doesn’t hold his pen properly!” She tried to get him to hold his pen properly and he balked. The parents tried and he still resisted, so they asked me to try and they also wondered why I had not taught him properly in the first place. It’s a long story but I finally convinced them that I don’t teach children, I just let them discover, so their little boy still doesn’t hold his pen properly!

This started me off on a private study of people who don’t hold their pens

properly. I interview them in banks, in restaurants, all over Europe and the U.S.A. There are lots of them and they all have one thing in common: they can all write and their “problem” doesn’t seem to have bothered them in the least.

Recently I noticed a man signing his check and he did not hold his pen in the regular way, so I took the opportunity of doing a bit more research. This is by far the saddest case I have ever come across. The man did a lot of writing in his job and he began experiencing severe “writer’s cramp” for which he sought medical help. He tried a number of doctors. Finally, the doctors decided he needed an operation. It was quite a serious and delicate operation and no doubt expensive, but it did not solve the problem at all. So finally, in sheer desperation, he decided to try holding his pen a different way and to his surprise, it worked! When I asked why he didn’t try that in the first place, he said he didn’t know it was possible to hold the pen other than the way we are taught to hold it! It just didn’t dawn on him.

## **Giving Up the Helper Role**

*From Richard Stone, 153 N Yosemite, Fresno CA 93701:*

I work in a day program for chronic patients who are living in the community, most in board-and-care homes. The majority of the clients have spent large parts of their adult lives in mental institutions, have undergone all kinds of therapies including shock (and in a few cases, lobotomy). Their case prognoses rarely have hope for more than slightly increased independence in living arrangement, more social contact, and perhaps work in a sheltered setting of some kind.

When I first started working there, eager to “help,” I had a hard time knowing what to do. Conversations were brief, my questions were often unanswered or, worse, led to bizarre answers about fathers locked in cellars or metal tubing in the stomach. I did manage to interest a few people in reading the newspaper together, but most of the day I felt oppressed and hopeless, especially because I enjoyed the warmth and friendliness of many of the members, yet I seemed unable to do anything for them.

A turning point in my work occurred on a visit to a center in another location. The director knew I was coming, but no one else did, and when I walked in the staff assumed I was a client. They signed me up, greeted me,

hustled me off to an arts and crafts project. I didn't try to act stupid, but no one seemed to realize that I didn't "belong" there; so I decided to act as if I did.

Without the authorization of helper-role I found, in fact, I did belong. I had nothing I was supposed to do, nothing particular to say to anyone without the "How are you this week?" kind of question. I was alone, unconnected, uncomfortable, a not unfamiliar feeling. But everyone was there for that reason, and in the permissive setting I allowed myself to think of what I might do to take care of myself. I wanted to meet people out of a need for contact; so instead of asking "What's your name? Is this your first time here? Do you want to play Bingo?" I had to say things like, "My name is Richard, what's yours? This is my first time here, what happens? I want to play ping pong, will you play with me?" The transactions were similar to those I'd often had at the center I work at, but a previously unadmitted part of me was recognized: my need and vulnerability were evident. And the responses I got from people were slightly different, more personal, more emotive.

I had just resumed taking piano lessons after a twenty year hiatus, couldn't play much, didn't have any music with me. But I needed to take care of myself, and there was a piano, so I improvised on the Koto scale, haltingly. No one took offense, a couple of people waved, and a flute player came over to talk about music. Something's happening, I thought; what is it?

It was self-presentation. Instead of trying to draw people out, trying to spot trouble areas and work around or through them, I was *offering myself, my interests, my feelings, my ideas*; and others were free to accept, reject, or pass neutrally on them without it being a reflection of their "involvement in treatment."

So back at the center I work at, I began to do things for my own enjoyment: dance, sing (although I can't carry a tune, and have been embarrassed to sing in public since Miss Van Buren rudely rejected me for the fourth grade chorus), eat, play piano, even sleep. The one proviso I made was that it all had to be done broadly, publicly. And the responses showed I was on a right track. For instance, while playing a Chopin prelude one day, I was astonished by the approach of a woman, running from the other room to ask if it was Chopin, and to tell me of hearing Paderewski and Rachmaninoff in person. We had never exchanged a word previously; we have since become good friends who have shared music and reflections and

reminiscences. Moreover, several months later, she has become a regular reciter in holiday programs and co-ordinator of our reading program.

My trying to loosen a stiff back, and to keep warm when the heat was off, has led to exercise and movement groups, to exchanged back-rubs and the information that one woman used to do Swedish massage. My singing aloud in the van whatever came to mind led to one usually-silent member doing “Aloha Oe” and a poem in a talent show. Talking about *what was on my mind in my own life*—housing, my family, looking for work—and about events of private importance—finding a friend, drawing a picture, reading a book—has elicited many more responses than my asking questions ever did, and has brought Christmas cards, a present of a Biblical verse I have put on my wall, a standing offer to do some sewing, etc.

In a setting where unusual behavior was common—prolonged staring into space, periodic head-tapping, sporadic bursts of inexplicable laughter—I was able to do a somersault for no obvious reason, or put on a floppy hat and make faces at people, or, more prosaically, ask someone to take a promenade around the room with me as if we were on the boardwalk of a seaside resort. I also felt free to withdraw from people and twist myself into a knot, or curl into little-boy-under-the-covers position. But, all the while, staying public, acknowledging the presence and reactions of others. So, for example, on the two occasions, when I’ve gone to sleep, once three others wound up sleeping with me in the sun, head-on-belly; and the other time, someone came and angrily woke me up, to pay attention to him. As I interpret it, the breaking of the rules gives validity right away to the small impulses of movement and energy that are quashed in habitual postures. People start to use their voices and muscles and bodies in new, surprising ways.

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JH: Jim Herndon wrote eloquently in *How to Survive in Your Native Land* about being in a school classroom *as himself*. But many teachers I meet are still being told, in college or where they work, to keep a “professional distance” away from their students. It is one of the worst mistakes we can make.

## **Children & Old People**

*An article by Dee Kight in the Jan./Feb. '81 issue of Ours (4711 30th Av S,*



*Minneapolis, MN 5406):*

A close friend of mine told me about watching an interview, with a caring, enterprising lady who had helped a home for the elderly in her town become licensed as a day care center! The working mothers found it a great place to leave their children, the children were rocked and read to and listened to to their hearts' content, and the elderly were revitalized and once again able to make a vital contribution to the world around them.

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*And from Modern Maturity, 12/80:*

Says Ann Lewin (director of the Capital Children's Museum in Washington, DC), "In Sweden, old people's homes are placed next door to daycare centers. We need to do things like that in this country because old and young people have a great deal to offer each other."

## **More On Family Bed**

*From LeeAnn Ellis (WA):*

Re. *The Family Bed* (GWS #18), our children have always slept in the same room with us, and often in the same bed, because we like it that way, and also due to the influence of the book *Touching* by Ashley Montague.

We all sleep on the floor on 2-inch foam mats plus bedding. The firmness of the floor makes the adult spines happy and I feel sure will help our children avoid some of the typical back problems later in life. The bedding and mats can be rolled up and put out of the way when the room is needed for something else, and when all spread out together, makes a terrific spot for tumbling, etc. We all like the arrangement, and my latent fears that it might make my children overly dependent on us have not proved true. The kids spend overnights with friends without undue stress of missing us. I foresee the day when they will request beds in their own bedrooms, and that will be fine, too. All I remember from Montague's book is the result of some study that showed that in cultures where families sleep close together, during times, of stress, like war time, these peoples showed great stability emotionally.

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*And from Carol Kent (VA):*

In my mother's house, everyone had "his own room" from infancy. My parents didn't think their finances, business deals, social contacts, or personal correspondence were any of the children's business, and the evidence of these, along with conversations of importance, were closed up in their room. The whole family partook of this "privacy." I never found out a dang thing until I was 30 years old and had made 1000 bad mistakes—to each of which my parents responded with "You should have known better."

David and I have divided up our home by function rather than by territorial rights. We all sleep in the same room in the same (very large) bed. Our children have physical access to us 24 hours a day. They see and hear much that is said and done. We enjoy certain practical advantages; for instance, at bedtime, we all go to bed. No yelling, no trouble. In our home, you can go away and shut the door on everyone else if you want, but you are in no danger of everyone else going away and shutting the door on you. We hope to have respect for each other instead of arbitrary boundaries against each other.

Children who have been physically isolated since infancy are very easy to isolate psychologically in crowds. *The Family Bed* is a very insightful book on all of this.

## Inviting Resistance

In a book and magazine store in Cambridge, several small boys are standing at the magazine stand looking at comics. The father of the smallest one, about three years old, comes up behind him and says, "It's time to go home now, let's go, Tommy, OK?" His voice is full of doubt, worry, pleading. What is, he really asking the boy—perhaps, to play his role of Good Little Boy, in Daddy's home movie, so that Daddy can in turn play his role of Kind Loving Daddy? But no use. The little boy has heard the doubt and pleading in his father's voice, the invitation to resist. He makes some kind of short negative noise in his throat and visibly stiffens himself. The father reaches out, takes him by the arm, begins to pull. The little boy hurls himself to the floor, from which now Furious Daddy picks him up, carries him a few steps, sets him on his feet, says a few angry words, and gives him a medium-hard spank.

What could poor Daddy have done instead? Well, first of all, since Daddy

was no more than his son in the store on pressing business, but had been lounging around looking at books until he had enough, he might have done his son the courtesy of giving him a minute or two to get himself mentally ready to leave. One thing little children furiously resent, since they observe that grown-ups seem to take their good old time about doing things (including replying when children speak to them), is that they are expected to carry out orders instantly. Beyond that, and still in the name of courtesy if not genuine interest, Daddy might have asked his son, “Have you found something interesting here?” Perhaps the boy had something he wanted to show him. In any case, he would have appreciated getting from his father a sign that his own three-year-old life was interesting and important. Then the father might have said, “I’m about ready to go; how about you?” To which the boy might have said, “I’m ready,” or perhaps, “I want to look at one more book.” If the latter, the father could have said, “OK, let’s say we’ll leave in two minutes,”—to which he might have added by showing his watch and saying something about how long two minutes was. It’s at least possible that the boy would have been interesting in watching the second hand of his father’s watch go round twice. Or the boy might really have wanted to look at one more book, in which case, shortly before the time was up, the father might have said, “Half a minute left, say goodbye to your friends, and we’ll go.”

Well, one could probably fill half a book imagining all the possible variations of this scene. My point is not that a mixture of courtesy, interest in children’s affairs, letting them in on the process by which things are done, and gentle firmness will avoid all scenes. But it will probably avoid many of them, and even where it does not, it will avoid what was worst of all in the scene I did observe, which was the father getting furious because his child would not let him play the part of Nice Daddy.—JH

## **Unwanted Help**

Something happened a while ago in the office that showed me once again how strong and how fragile is little children’s sense of pride and dignity, and how careful we must be not to trample on it, most of all when we mean well.

A mother came into the office with her 18 month old daughter. While the mother looked over our books to see what she wanted to buy, the little one

explored the office. Finally the mother had the four books she wanted, which the little girl had asked to carry. But the books were slippery, and one of them kept sliding out from between the others and falling on the ground, which began to frustrate and irritate the child. Seeing that she clearly did not like having the books fall on the floor, I thought I might help by putting a rubber band around them. I got a rubber band, stretched it a couple of times to show the little girl what it was, and put it around the books. She looked at it a second, saw that it was indeed holding the books together, and then burst into furious tears.

Fortunately, from many years of being with little children, I knew enough to intuit what was the matter. She saw my putting the rubber bands around the books as a comment, which indeed it was, on the fact that she could not hold them together, and she was offended. To her, it was as if I had said, “You’re so clumsy that you’ll never be able to carry those books unless I put this rubber band on.” Quite naturally, this made her ashamed and angry.

Since I did understand what the trouble was, I could easily set things right. I said, “I’m sorry, I’ll take the rubber band off,” and did so. Instantly she stopped crying and was as happy as she had been before—not too happy, as a matter of fact, because she was getting hungry and was beginning to fuss a little about getting something to eat.

Thinking this over, I don’t feel that I necessarily made a mistake in trying to help with the rubber band. It didn’t bother me that she kept dropping the books, but I could see that it bothered her. Under other circumstances, perhaps in a place where she felt more at home, or at a time when she was not hungry and a little irritable, or even if she had known me a little better, she might have been willing and happy to accept the rubber band solution to the book problem, might even have become interested in the rubber band, experimented with it, played games with it.

But as it was, hungry, a little ill at ease in a strange place and before a strange (if friendly) man, exasperated by the trouble she had been having with the books, she took the offer of help as an insult. No harm was done; I quickly withdrew and canceled my “help,” and seeing her feelings and wishes understood and respected, she instantly forgave me and went on with life as before. What would have made the situation worse, and might have brought on a real crying fit, a “tantrum” as the detestable word goes, would have been my trying to ignore and override her feelings and her protest,

insisting on solving the problem my way, perhaps even getting a little angry at her for rejecting my well-meant “help.” But luckily, thanks to all the good training I have had at the hands of little children, I was able to avoid turning a little mistake into a great big one.

One other little incident. When the woman had paid for her books, she gave them to her daughter to hold. A moment later the child opened a storage cabinet in Peggy’s office and pulled out another book—as it happens, Illich’s De-Schooling Society. She added this to her pile and began carrying it around with her. As the mother was getting ready to leave, she and I began trying to find a tactful way to extract from the pile of books this one, which the mother had not bought and (for the moment, anyway) did not want. But it was not to be. We could not get that book out of the pile without the little girl noticing and becoming furious. This was her book, the one she had picked out. She already knew it by sight and could not and would not be fooled into thinking it was there when it really wasn’t. Finally, after a few futile attempts, I gave up, and said to the mother, “There’s no way we’re going to get that other book away from her without making her unhappy and angry, which I don’t want to do. Why don’t you take it with you; you can send it back later, or if you read it and want to keep it, you can pay us for it.” She agreed, and the little girl, satisfied, waved bye-bye and went off with her books.—JH

## **To N.J. Superintendents**

*Nancy Plent sent us a letter that Paul Winkler, the Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Education in New Jersey, sent to all the school superintendents in the state:*

NJSA:38-25 deals with compulsory attendance of children between the ages of six and 16, and exceptions which may be considered. The statute states:

“Every parent, guardian or other person having custody and control of a child between the ages of six and 16 years shall cause such child to attend the public schools of the district or a day school in which there is given instruction equivalent to that provided in the public school of similar grade and allowments or to receive equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school.”

An Attorney General's opinion states that an alternative to public school is permissible provided the parent, guardian or person having custody can introduce evidence that the child is receiving an education equivalent to that provided in the public school. The burden of introducing evidence justifying excusal from prosecution under the quasi-criminal compulsory law is on the parent of the child who has not been in regular attendance in the public schools (*State vs. Vaughn*, 44 New Jersey 142, 1965). However, it should be noted that the ultimate burden or persuasion remains on the state with respect to whether the case comes within the exception.

In a 1967 case (*State vs. Massa*, 95 New Jersey Super 382) the court found that the state had not met its burden of providing beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant's parents failed to provide an equivalent education for the child. In *Massa*, the state stipulated that a child may be taught at home and that the teacher need not be certified by the state to teach.

The administrative responsibility for initial approval determination is the local board of education using the court guidelines as established in *Massa*. In the event that the matter cannot be adjudicated on the local level the County Superintendent will attempt to mediate the dispute. The responsibility for the enforcement of the compulsory education laws rests with the local district through the courts, for action.

## Visitor From Japan

We had a very nice visit the other day from Mr. Yasushi Onuma, a journalist from Japan. From our conversation, in which he mostly asked me questions, I gather that after reading *Instead Of Education* (in the Japanese edition) he decided to make a trip to the U.S. and other countries to study alternative education and free schools. While in Denmark he visited the Ny Lille Skole—now Friskolen 70 (after the year in which it was founded), and now at Gartneriveg 3 in Copenhagen. I was pleased and touched to hear him say that the oldest children in the school, who were the youngest when I last visited there six or seven years ago, still remember me.

We spent some time discussing the alternative/free/homeschool movement

in the U.S. I was pleased to hear from him that the Parkway Project in the Philadelphia Public Schools was still alive and well—I hadn't known that. After leaving Boston, Mr. Onuma planned to visit Pat Montgomery at Clonlara in Michigan, and Ed Nagel at Santa Fe Community School, so he should have quite a story to tell when he gets home. Hope we see him again soon—and other Japanese visitors as well.—JH

## **Kit From Ray Moore**

*Dr. Ray Moore of the Hewitt Research Center (553 Tudor Rd, Berrien Springs MI 49103; 616-471-2211) wrote:*

We have been asked by a number of educational superintendents for some kind of a kit that would set down as briefly as possible and in a reasonably scholarly manner, the reasons why parents should be given the prior right to determine the education of their children, and why little children should not be rushed into school as early as is commonly done by either legal or social pressures across our nation. We are not only sending out these little informal kits to these local superintendents, but are sending them to every chief state attendance officer in the fifty states. If anyone else needs these kits, please advise them that the cost is \$5.00 apiece.

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*From the kit's covering letter:*

Our primary concern, of course, is the welfare of the children, their specific developmental needs. These must always take precedence over the letter of the law. And we are happy to find that at least 85-90% of the school administrators with whom we have had contact agree with this. And of the remaining 10-15%, only 1% appear to be hardnosed enough to insist that parents go to court when they are doing a good job at home.

One of the most serious needs today is for the dissemination of information to school officials who are not aware that the First Amendment to the Constitution, as repeatedly interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, guarantees the parent the prior right to determine the education of his children. To date in all of the homeschools with which we have worked, we have found that the parents, regardless of

their own educational levels, have kept well ahead of the public school averages in their communities, in fact startlingly so.

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*Here are a few outstanding quotes from the materials enclosed:*

Some parents refuse to believe that teachers can out-educate their children and prefer to keep them at home well into the elementary grades and in some cases through elementary and high school. In nearly every case we have witnessed, the children have enthusiastically responded to this parental concern and care and have far out-performed the average school child. And rather than being isolated, their homes tend to be the social centers of the neighborhoods. The neighborhood kids seem to know which parents care.

Many parents sense that, no matter how much they protest to the contrary, schools simply cannot account for the individual differences of their children. It is quite clear to these parents, as it seems to be also to many teachers, that the mass production of industry is not a desirable pattern for the education of our children. It is quite clear from many studies that the pattern of genius through the ages has largely followed a closeness during the formative years in the home where parents and others have tutored their offspring on a one-to-one basis.

There has been nothing in the development of public education which has suggested that the school is a better educating force than the home. Before he died, James Bryan Connant, the father of the comprehensive school, rued the day that he ever called for enrichment through consolidation. Seldom if ever has the big school out-performed the one-room rural school, and that little education palace has not often out-performed the home.

There are many studies which suggest strongly that there is no security so great nor any socializing agency so positive and powerful as reasonably consistent parents in the climate of a warm and responsive home.



Child psychologists point out that children do very well when they can operate on a one-to-one basis or work in small groups of two or three or four. But strain often shows when they meet with classroom-size or larger groups -for typical all-class activities.

It has been found that elementary school children in general have difficulty maintaining a positive sense of self-worth, after they enter school (Stanwyck, 1971).

Donald Felker reports that from the time the children enter school they show a steady downward trend of self-concept as they meet the pressures of the early school years. An implication of this is that the very nature of school is detrimental in its effect on children's self-image. At the 5th grade level they begin to improve again in their self-concept. Though school is hard on all, the children who begin with a negative or low self-concept have an especially hard time.

Our children depend much more on their peers today than they did 10 or 20 years ago at every age and grade level. Parents are becoming less important as information and security sources. Perhaps some parents and educators would have it this way. But not those who are really concerned with the welfare of the child. Martin Engel, who headed the National Day Care Demonstration Center (HEW) says:

The motive to rid ourselves of our children, even if it is partial, is transmitted more vividly to the child than all our rationalizations about how good it is for that child to have good interpersonal peer group activities, a good learning experience, a good foundation for school, life, etc., etc. And even the best, most humane and personalized day care environment cannot compensate for the feeling of rejection which the child unconsciously senses.

An increasing number of psychologists and psychiatrists are dreading peer dependency as a "social contagion" and are now questioning unnecessary preschool and day care.

## **The Real "Real World"**

*From the Personal Development Letter of Sinetar & Associates, 999 N*

*Sepulveda, El Segundo CA 90245:*

People who succeed and stay at the “top” of their professions in the 80s and 90s are those who’ll be able to deal with ambiguity, with an unpredictable, changing environment, and live without clear-cut answers for problems. These also happen to be characteristics of a person with high self-esteem.

More than ever in history, the one personal characteristic necessary for success today is the ability to adapt, be flexible, “roll with” a shifting environment. Without high regard for himself/herself a person cannot impose order on chaos. Without high regard for himself/herself, a person cannot distinguish between major trends and minor fluctuations in the environment, cannot trust his own powers of perception, his own value system, his own alternative ways of seeing and doing things. Without high self-esteem we cannot trust ourselves to grow into an unknown set of behaviors required for an unpredictable future.

## **Didn’t Need Diploma**

*The Washington Post, 4/26/81:*

High school senior Tom Brownsword had a dream. The Fairfax County (VA) school system had a rule.

A 2,000-mile walk on the Appalachian Trail for credit, was Brownsword’s proposal. Take a hike and you lose your diploma, was the school system’s reply.

As a result Tom Brownsword, who is among the top 1% of the country’s high school seniors, won’t be in cap and gown when they play “Pomp and Circumstance” at Reston’s South Lakes High in June. On April 13, a few weeks before graduation, he dropped out of school after failing to convince administrators that four months on the trail would be as valuable as 45 more days in a South Lakes classroom. “They’re just rock headed,” Brownsword said the other day.

*When Brown University told Brownsword it didn’t care about the diploma, he packed his backpack, laced his hiking boots, and left*

school. He and a friend hit the trail in Georgia two weeks ago and headed north. They've averaged 15 miles a day and, Brownsword says, had more time to enjoy the outdoors since he doesn't have to do research for a school paper.

Rule-bound school officials took a dim view of Brownsword's plan from the start. Arguing restrictions in state laws and county regulations, top administrators told the Brownswords that there was nothing like being in class.

"In his case," countered Brown University admissions director James H. Rogers, "we could see a talented, academically superior student. What he does for the next month isn't going to make a lot of difference."

Brownsword's father, Alan, a U.S. Department of Education administrator with a doctorate in history, stood firm behind his son's plan and spent hours trying to convince school officials of its merit.

Tom Brownsword, and his hiking companion, Brian Booker, who attended night school to get his diploma, broached the idea with South Lakes Principal George Felton. "He really did take an active interest," Brownsword said. "He went to the rule book and *found a rule that would have authorized us to go*. That was a major, major victory and I guess he wasn't even supposed to do that."

"There are clearly some schools that are more flexible than others," said Brown University administrator Rogers. Brown officials, who included Tom among the 2,300 selections out of 12,000 applicants for openings in the freshman class, thought the trail idea terrific.

"We felt the experience would be a good one because we're accepting students not just to the academic life but to the whole Brown community," Rogers explained. "It's an experience that displays independence, self-confidence, an ability to get along on your own. All of the things we value at Brown and in our candidates."

This week, the Brownswords took their case to Fairfax School Board member Carmin Caputo, who says Tom can apply future college

credits toward his high school degree.

“Maybe this is something that should be considered by the school board,” Caputo said. “Maybe we should come forth with a provision that allows for this kind of thing and not only allows it, but encourages it.”

## **Wasted Classroom Time**

The Baltimore Sun, 9/17/80:

In a report on teacher competency, the American Association of School Administrators cites a study by the Austin, Texas, Independent School District that documents waste of classroom time.

The study found that students were getting only three hours and 45 minutes of classroom instruction out of a school day of six hours and 30 minutes. Instructional time was eaten away by listening to announcements, bathroom trips, taking out or putting away supplies, discipline, or just waiting for the teacher’s next instructions.

## **Equivalent in Mo.**

*From a mother in Missouri:*

We have a daughter in 8th grade. For the past 1½ months she has had to stay off her feet because of a disease in her knees. She was out of school three weeks before a tutor started to come to our house. It took her 3 to 4 days to catch up to her class. The tutor comes one hour each day, and spends a great deal of that time talking to the rest of the family. Our daughter is keeping up with the rest of the class and they are going all day.

We’d like to keep her at home and teach her ourselves. I have a high school education and was a secretary before my family came. My husband is very gifted—has been a factory foreman and maintenance foreman for the school. For years he had his own business—he is able to fix any machine, no matter what. He can build a house from start to finish. He is an expert mechanic as well as a stonemason. If anyone needs a haircut, you couldn’t get a better one at a barber shop. He was raised on a farm and can grow anything and can take care of any animal. He can bake and cook and knit—he

is an “all around” person.

We think we could (and do) give the children all the education they’d need. All the children have worked with us. We built our house—all the boys are mechanics—all love to read—all have worked in or had their own gardens.

We’ve looked into homeschools and they are way out of our reach financially. This is what is holding us back. My husband thinks we could teach the children without any supplies, etc., from a school or institution.

We have been raising rabbits for four years so that my husband could quit his job and be able to stay at home and work. Our rabbits are not in full production yet but we hope it won’t be long. Our 19-year-old son is working and supporting us.

We feel we can be self-sufficient and want the children to be.

## **Tennis Tip**

*Susan Price (FL) wrote:*

I hadn’t played tennis much for a long time, but now I’ve started to, more. I thought of a good way to help the kids with it. We do it against a backboard and they stand a few feet in front of me. Any balls they miss, I get. Doing it this way eliminates most of the chasing of balls that we did before when we faced each other.

They like me to call out whose turn it is to hit the ball. I try to alternate who I hit them to, but don’t always manage to do so.

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JH: I’ve tried playing tennis with little kids who were just starting, and it tends to be frustrating for all—as Susan says, more ball chasing than anything else. This way sounds a lot more fun. If there’s no backboard around, the side of a building might do.

## **Playing With Guns**

*Here are more letters from parents on toy guns (see GWS 10, 12). Mabel Dennison (ME) wrote:*

At two years, our son started a long-lasting interest in plastic guns. He was

also fascinated by the possibility of buying what you want at a store, which was a way of extending Christmas. I felt very foolish, and at a loss to explain to my friends my indulgence, but I continually bought him cheap toys when we were marketing, which were almost always plastic guns. He didn't play fight with them so much. He stuck them in his belt and posed with them with elaborate gestures.

At three, he included swords in his inventory, but since we could never buy cheap swords, except at a circus once, and I never finished the one I started to make for him, he started making them with sticks and nails or tape. When nearly four, he was asking the questions, "Are there any kings in New York or Maine? I don't want to be a swordfighter when I grow up." And a few weeks later, "Do I have to be in the army when I grow up?" I told him that some people go to jail, or leave this country, because they believe it is wrong to be in the army.

By 4½ our son was more interested in bows and arrows and made a lot of them. I bought a roll of silver duct tape, never realizing how useful it would be to him. I recommend it for young children.

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*From Susan Price (FL):*

I was not allowed to point my toy guns at people, either, as a child. I remember thinking that it was a pretty silly rule—as if my parents had told me not to touch my finger to the burner of my cardboard stove.

I have always allowed my children to point their guns at people. I figure it might save them some money when they are old—they won't be spending it on attending seminars on Death and Dying. They'll have worked through all those feelings already by yelling BANG at each other and dropping dead for a couple of minutes.

I don't think that playing with toy guns will make a child likely to use a real one later on. I think the opposite is true. Guns are a fact of life and it is good for children to play with toy ones and pretend what it would be like to have a real one. It is an awesome fact that a person can just take a piece of metal and stand far away from someone and pull a smaller piece of metal and kill that someone. I think that children want to come to grips with this idea.

My children actually very seldom play with guns. My husband tells me that a friend of his whom he visits sometimes is constantly having fights with

her child because he points his fingers at her and says “Bang”“ She is very strongly against his pointing his guns at people. In this case, of course, he’s no doubt shooting her because he’s mad at her over other stuff, too. One time Faith came up to me and “shot” me. I said, “Why’d you shoot me?” She said because I was a dummy mother. Good therapy.

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*And from Joann Sherosky (PA):*

The author of “Cops and Robbers” in *GWS* #12 says she doesn’t think playing with toy guns has anything to do with violence, hostility, or cruelty. I say, playing with guns has everything to do with violence!! Children do not create games in a vacuum. They mimic what they see around them. People accept guns and violence as part of our society, and so children accept them as a matter of course and incorporate them into their play.

The author says “Cops and Robbers” is a game of awareness, the object being to surprise the other person. My children also play wild, noisy games trying to hide from and capture each other, with all the excitement, joy, and spontaneity that this mother says she sees, without all the violent trappings.

What I do with my children is no different than what I do with adults. I share my ideas about the world, the things I feel are good, the things I feel are bad. I have said since they were old enough to understand, “Guns kill people, and when, people are murdered, they leave mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, children, and friends who will miss them terribly. That is what I think about when I see you playing with guns. I don’t think it’s fun or funny, and I won’t watch you pretend you are killing each other in this house.”

I have read my children biographies and stories about Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and of course Jesus (who was against violence, despite what the Moral Majority says). My children know why we have no guns in our house. I feel I must present another side to them; they are so bombarded with violence and gunplay being “okay.”

My older children have used sticks outside when I am not around, and they have occasionally played with toy guns at other people’s homes. So what am I accomplishing? At the very least, they will know that the idea of guns being harmless fun is not accepted everywhere.

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*John wrote to Joann:*

I think yours is a very legitimate point of view. But I've never seen anything to indicate that there was any connection between children playing cops and robbers, or pointing their fingers at someone and saying Bang!, and later violence. I think there is a huge connection between how much violence is done to children by their elders and how much they do later.

Another way of putting it is to say that people who essentially believe in violence as a realistic and indeed desirable way of solving human conflicts are going to pass on a lot of that belief to their children, whether or not they allow their children to play with guns, while people who have the opposite belief, like yourself, will probably pass that along whether or not they allow their children to play with guns. I think it is the belief that is critical, not the gadget.

But I share your convictions about violence and wouldn't for the world try to change them.

## **Spelling Self-Test—2**

In *GWS* #13 I wrote about a way in which children or adults could test themselves in spelling. Put the word to be spelled, say "horse," "house," etc. on one side of a card, and a picture of the horse, house, etc. on the other side. Look at the picture, spell the word, then turn the card over to see if you got it right.

Later I realized that many words don't make pictures, like, say, "necessary," which many people misspell. In that case, on the reverse side of the card, instead of a picture, write something like "That's ne----y; I really need it." That will be enough to tell you what the word is, without giving away how to spell the hard part of the word. For "separate" you might write, "Don't put them together, keep them se-----."

Just as it's better to let children make their own pictures, so it's better to let them make up their own definitions or examples; the ones they make up, they'll remember.

One other thing. The words you study should be the words you actually misspell in use. Learning to spell words from lists is a total waste of time. Use the time to write; then when spelling errors crop up, fix them.—JH



## Remedial Math—2

More from Professor David Wheeler's good article "An Askance Look At Remediation in Mathematics" in *Outlook*, Winter 1980 (see *GWS* #20, page 17). As with much else we put into *GWS*, this article may be very useful to homeschoolers, not only as a guide in their own work with children, but also as something to quote from in their homeschooling proposals.

Are there any principles of remediation? Are there any techniques for implementing them? Remediation will not be achieved by giving the students once again a version of the teaching that failed to be effective the first time—not even, I suspect, if the second version goes at a much slower pace. Something different is required. Let us put the matter of remediation into perspective by distinguishing it from the correction of errors. Mistakes and uncertainties are proper to learning. Anyone learning a new skill—driving a vehicle, playing an instrument, speaking a language—is clumsy and tentative in the early stages. The feedback that the learner gets from his actions in the beginning, his mistakes, gives important information about the components of the skill that are not yet mastered; it tells what he still needs to work on. We should expect students who are learning to read, say, or to master some elementary mathematics (activities with substantial skill elements), to make mistakes, and for these to diminish as the skills are progressively brought under control. More than this, if students are not permitted to make mistakes and correct them by themselves they stand little chance of achieving autonomy in the skill since they are being denied evidence they need to know their progress from the inside.

Mistakes are not, of course, the only source of feedback to the student, but their importance lies in the fact that this feedback emanates from the task itself. The student who knows he has made a mistake, that something is wrong, does not need the verdict of some adult authority—which, because it does not come directly from the task itself, can often appear arbitrary, unrelated to the skill being worked on.

It is easy to see now that a student who has no idea whether what he or she has done is right or wrong is not in a position to receive the

messages that the task is offering; the natural course of learning is blocked. Such a student needs remediation. The problem for the remediator is not primarily to cure the student's mistake—that remains the responsibility of the student—but to endeavor to restore the natural course of learning so that the student can profit from mistakes as other learners do.

### *Some General Rules For the Remediator*

1. Self-discipline. Teachers often use speech too much, too often and in too free a manner. They create noise for their students and for themselves. Remediation requires being alert, attentive, non-distractive; in a word, quiet. Listening and watching are the basis for effective intervention. And when intervention is necessary, it must be supplied in a disciplined way, not a word more said than is needed.
2. Get students active. Don't waste precious time talking, explaining, emoting. Ask a question first off, or tell the student to do something at once. You'll find out if it was a bad question or if the student can't do what you suggest. If so, try another question or instruction, and so on. The remediator needs feedback from the student, just as the student needs feedback from the task. Don't prejudge the student's difficulty; wait until the feedback tells you more about what it is.
3. Focus on task. Take the particular problem that presents itself and get the student to work on that. Don't distract the student by providing further input and information, bringing up other matters, etc. If you ask "Why are you doing that?" (or worse, "Why did you do that?") you are asking the student to stand back from the situation and give a reason for what he is doing. This is both difficult to do (probably much more difficult than the task itself) and disturbs the student's focus. Don't diminish the task by trying to do the student's work, or by deliberately simplifying it so that the challenge is taken out of it.
4. Be businesslike. If the student is having real difficulties and knows it, there is already enough tension in the situation. Cool it. Don't either blame or praise. Don't waste time displaying that you care. Any such behavior makes the student's task more difficult.

5. Elicit awareness. Use any device you can think of, short of telling, to draw the student's attention to important aspects of the task. Sometimes it is enough to point at something, or to ask "What have you forgotten?" "Is this part right?" "How do you know this is right?" Get the student to talk (for example, "Tell me how you did this") since speech can sometimes bring things into consciousness for the speaker.

## Math Ideas

In almost every *GWS* we have had articles on how to make the learning of arithmetic easier. One of the most important things, perhaps the most important thing, that teachers can do, is to help their students get to the point where they no longer need them or depend on them. For years I've been saying to arithmetic teachers, in talks or in writing, "Don't waste your time correcting students' papers. Let them correct their own papers. Give them the answer sheets. Your work only begins when students come to you because they keep doing a problem and getting the wrong answer."

More recently I've suggested giving children calculators and showing them (or letting them find out) how to work them, so that they can check their own answers.

But there are ways of checking your own answers that don't need calculators. For example, here are some little tricks that you or your children can use either to do or to check your arithmetic.

To take the addition first, let's look at a simple sum:  $9+7=16$ . With a little experimenting we can see that if we add a number to the 9 and subtract that same number from the 7, it doesn't change our answer. Thus,  $10+6=16$ ,  $11+5=16$ ; and so on.

It's easy to see why this has to be true. Suppose I have two pieces of wood, one 9 inches long and the other 7 inches long; I put them end to end and want to know how long they are together. If I cut a small piece—say, 1 inch—off of the 7" stick and glue it onto the 9" stick, I would then have a 10" piece and a 6" piece. The overall length remains unchanged. And this would be true no matter what lengths I had started with, or what size piece I had cut and glued.

It's always easier to work with numbers whose last digit is zero, like 10 or 20 or 100, than with numbers. So the trick is, if I have two numbers to add,

let's say  $8+7$ , and don't remember what they add up to, and don't want to count on my fingers, all I have to do is ask myself, "What do I have to add to 8 to make it 10? Answer: 2. OK; add the 2 to the 8 to make 10, then subtract 2 from 7 to make 5, and add that to 10 to get the answer, 15."

$$8+7=$$

$$10+5=15$$

You can use the same trick with bigger numbers, thus:

$$87+56=$$

$$90+53=$$

$$100+43=143$$

You can use this trick to do addition; or to check an addition that you have already done "the regular way."

Here's a trick for subtraction. As an example, take the fact that  $16-7=9$ . If we add the same number to the 16 and the 7, it does not change the answer. Thus,  $17-8=9$ ,  $18-9=9$ ,  $19-10=9$ , and so on.

Again, it's easy to see why this must be true of all numbers. If we have two pieces of wood and lay them side by side, matching the ends, the "difference" (what you get by subtracting one length from the other) can be seen as the length of the part that "sticks out." Adding the same quantity to both numbers can be shown as putting two sticks the same length at the foot—which wouldn't change the "difference" at all.

So let's say I have two numbers to subtract, say  $15-8$ , and again, I don't remember and don't want to count on my fingers, I say to myself, "What do I have to add to that smaller number to make it 10? Answer: 2. So I add 2 to both numbers, which makes my problem  $17-10=?$ , which is easy."

$$15-8=$$

$$16-10=6$$

$$11-4=$$

$$17-10=7$$

With bigger numbers:

$$122-87=$$

$$125-90=$$

$$135-100=35$$

Again, you can use this trick to get your answer, or if you do your subtracting “the regular way,” you can use this to check your answer.

You may find this hard to believe, but years ago I taught in a supposedly “very good” private school where teachers had been arguing passionately for years about whether children should be “allowed” to do subtraction this way!

Finally, a related trick for multiplication. Try breaking either or both numbers down into the product of several numbers—this is called “factoring the number”—and then look for ways to rearrange the factors to make the work easier.

For example, suppose you want to multiply 15 by 24. Well, 15 is the same as  $3 \times 5$ , and 24 is the same as  $2 \times 12$ , so  $15 \times 24$  is the same thing as  $3 \times 5 \times 2 \times 12$ . Now you can multiply those in any order, and the easiest would be the  $5 \times 2$ , which is 10. And the  $3 \times 12$  is 36. So now all you have to do is multiply the  $10 \times 36$ , which is easy—just tack a zero onto the end of the 36, and the answer is 360.

Another example:

$$36 \times 75$$

$$4 \times 9 \times 3 \times 25$$

$$100 \times 27 = 2700$$

Unlike the other tricks here, this procedure won’t work on every problem; it’s best with “nice, round numbers” like 36, while prime numbers like 37 can’t be factored at all. Nobody says you have to do these steps in your head, of course; even if you write them all out, it will probably still be faster than the “regular” multiplication procedure. And it’s more fun, because you have more choices, and you can be more confident that each step is correct.—JH & DR

## Piano Despite Lessons

*DR: A book that many GWS readers will find useful and enjoyable is How To Play The Piano Despite Years Of Lessons by Ward Cannel and Fred Marx. It’s full of sensible, practical advice on how to play songs by ear; it*

*debunks a lot of the myths that have most people convinced they're not smart enough to make music; it provides some sound, understandable explanations of such things as chords; and, it is fun to read. For example, from one of the opening chapters:*

(Myth:) *Harmony is very mathematical.* Yes, that belief is true. In order to understand harmony, you must be able to count to twelve. You can perform this scientific experiment at home to determine whether you have the necessary mathematical ability. Just look at a clock or a wrist watch. Can you tell what time it is? If so, you will be able to understand harmony. If not, then wait for the sequel to this book: *How To Tell Time From A Clock and Wrist Watch.*

Unfortunately, the book is no longer available to the general public, or we would have added it to our booklist. You may still be able to find copies in stock in your local bookstore, since it only recently went out of print.

The book is still being printed in order to be used for courses that are offered around the country. These courses are arranged by the Piano Consortium (6th Floor East, 200 Park Av, NY NY 10017) through a number of colleges and universities. Elaine Apple of the Piano Consortium sent some articles about the courses which we quote below, and she said anyone wanting to find out if the courses are offered in their area should write to the Consortium. But for the time being, at least, they won't sell the book separately. Maybe if enough people write and ask them to, they'll change their minds.

By the way, I think people who never had piano lessons at all could still benefit from this book. As the authors say in the first section, "Who Is Allowed To Read This Book," all you have to know is where middle C is, and "you should know the names of the lines and spaces of the treble clef so that you can pick out a single-note, one finger tune—no matter how badly. If you've forgotten everything you ever knew about that—or if you never knew anything about it at all—take a look at the back of any music paper notebook. It's all said right there."

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*From the New York Times, 10/4/80:*

Phoebe Epstein, one of six women enrolled in a course entitled "How

to Play the Piano Despite Years of Lessons.” said “I love to listen to Alicia de Larrocha play Bach, but I don’t expect to play that way myself.” What she does expect is: “When members of my family get together and sing, I will be able to accompany them on the piano. Knowing how to play Chopin waltzes just doesn’t do that.”

On her registration card, Miss Epstein had written, “I had seven (!) years of lessons between the ages of 7 and 15. I can’t play a thing.”

What might superficially seem to be failure—having tried and given up on the piano—is, in fact, the only prerequisite for the course, providing the candidate can play the treble clef or right-hand melody part. The course, first offered four years ago at five locations in New York and New Jersey, reflects a belief that increasing numbers of adults are taking up the piano. The response to initial advertisements was so great that the course was immediately expanded to 19 sites by the Piano Consortium, a nonprofit educational organization that now sponsors it in about 75 colleges as well as in other settings.

Ward Cannel, a former newspaper man. began to ask questions about how people organize tones to make music. As a result, a group of musicians. conducted experiments on ways to teach the piano based on the premise that understanding and not rote was the key to playing.

”There are 30 million pianos in the United States, and of those, we think that 90% are not being played they just sit around collecting dust,” said Shelby Neely, education administrator of the consortium.

The approach is to make playing the piano pure fun, and that is accomplished by the unorthodox method of dispensing with all but the principles necessary to play popular songs right away.

“They already know the right-hand part, so we show them what to do with the left hand, which has eluded them all their lives,” said Dr. Myron Leshowitz, teacher of the course at the New School. The class encourages improvisation in the chords and rhythms provided by the left hand. Although the New School class takes 10 sessions, most institutions complete it in eight weeks.

# Letters On Music

*Manfred Smith (Md.) writes:*

I have started to play the electric guitar. I had always wanted to play the guitar, but became easily frustrated because of the awkward position my left hand had to be in, and because I could not apply enough pressure on the strings to make decent sounds. A young friend of mine has been playing for some time and sold me his little sound system. I used a simple electric guitar that was given to me by some friends. So I started and played for three solid hours. Within that time I realized that the guitar was very poor and I soon bought a good but inexpensive guitar. I play a lot and get great satisfaction from doing so.

Except for my friend showing me the “E” chord, I have proceeded along on my own. It’s great! I find that I create my own simple chords and songs, but after a while I find that I’m not moving on. I put the instrument down and start next day again. The result is a quantum jump. I discover new sounds and arrangements and am able to proceed further in complexity.

Last year my young friend and I were jamming and he tried to show me some of the chords. The result was confusion and frustration. My experience with the violin, guitar, and harmonica reinforces the idea that teaching, if done at all, should be very minimal.

Jamie (3) plays the old guitar and tries to follow my beat and rhythm. She enjoys herself very much, knows she is making music on a real instrument (she does not use her toy instruments), and loves to talk about music. Our non-method instructional approach works very well for us. Jamie’s ability to rationalize and discuss problems and feelings are as developed as any adult. Perhaps this is so because we take her and her communications seriously.

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*Kate Kerman (MI) writes:*

I am sending along a songbook that I made with Ada and Hannah—in response to your article on composing in *GWS* #19. I’ve gotten interested in composing in the last year and really enjoy it. I’ll send a copy of my most ambitious song, also.

I feel that learning Stewart Piano by going to lessons with my kids has made composing a lot easier for me. I compose tunes at the piano using the



scale pattern and writing down the numbers—much faster and easier than writing notes. When I have the melody figured out, I can transpose it quickly from one key to another with the scale pattern and my numbered melody. After I’ve chosen a key which seems most singable, I can write it on manuscript paper and work on an accompanying bass. I think you might like to try this system rather than going to writing directly on staff paper—if you have access to a piano, anyway.

## Stewart Book Available Here

*Mrs. Stewart’s Piano Lessons—25 Lessons For Beginners.* For some time I have known that *someday* I wanted to learn piano, sight-singing, and some of the fundamentals of theory and harmony. Every so often I would browse in music stores, looking at beginning books on these topics, hoping to find some that would make me think, “Aha! There’s a book I want to use and learn from.” But none of the ones I saw looked very interesting or helpful. Of course, if I plowed through them and did all the things they told me, I was bound to come out at the end knowing *something*. But they all made it look as if it would take a very long time and be dull work most of the way. Like most texts, these seemed to say to me, “Here, put on this blindfold and follow me, one step at a time, and I will lead you to a wonderful place that I (but not you) know about.” None of them seemed to *illuminate* the subject for me so that I could better explore it myself. None of them made music, which I already loved, seem less mysterious or more interesting. All of them made me feel as passive, as helpless, as totally *teacher-dependent* as students in classrooms, given a long string of meaningless tasks to do, with no way of knowing, except asking the teacher, whether they have done them right or not.

In addition, I could see that every piano instruction book made the same serious mistake. They start students off playing in the key of C (on the piano, all white keys), then slowly introduced the keys with sharps and flats, beginning with G (one sharp) and F (one flat), going on to D (two sharps) and B-flat (two flats), and so on. I knew enough adult amateur musicians who had been taught this way to know that this approach produces people who are convinced that there are “easy” keys and “hard” keys, and that they can only play in the easy ones. But I knew enough about music—had figured it out for

myself—to know that on keyboard instruments, at least, that was not true, that no keys are significantly harder than any others.

What I was looking for was a method that would get this point across from the very beginning, and would encourage and enable the student, in this case me, to feel equally at home in all keys and to move freely from one to another. But none of the books I saw did this. This was discouraging, because I could not imagine myself studying or learning much about music from teachers—and books *are* teachers—that I did not like.

Then one day Phyllis Jansma, who had known and worked with Elsie Stewart, and now publishes these *Mrs. Stewart's Piano Lessons* and uses them in her own teaching, sent me a copy of them. I began to look them over. It took only a few pages for me to realize that here were the materials I was looking for. From the very beginning, children—the books are designed for children to use or for adults to use with children—are encouraged to transpose, i.e. to play the same tune in all the keys, and are given a little device, so simple it makes us ask ourselves, “Why didn’t *I* think of it?” which makes it easy for them to do so. And beyond that this method gives me a good running start on the other two things I was looking for, a way to learn sight-reading and basic harmony.

Where the other books I had seen made learning music look mysterious, difficult, and dull, these books made it look sensible, exciting, and easy. Not easy in the sense that I can learn what I want to learn in a few weeks or months. I know it will take much time and effort to do that. But easy in the sense that at every point I know what I am doing and why I am doing it. My curiosity, my question asking and problem-solving abilities are everywhere fully involved. I can hardly wait to get started on these formal studies—though it may be quite a few years before I have enough time for them. Meanwhile, these books have thrown such a clear and helpful light on music that I find myself knowing more and more things without ever having sat down to “learn” them. We plan to sell the “Advanced Lessons” also when they become available.

I am very excited about having discovered the Stewart lessons—or rather, it would be nearer the truth to say, about their having discovered me—and I strongly recommend them not just for children starting the piano but for adult beginners themselves. Indeed, they might be very useful to many adults who have already done quite a bit of piano playing. They might cure some of their

fear of “hard” keys, and in general help them understand better what they are doing.

## Other New Books Here

*A Birthday For Frances*, by Russell Hoban. In this latest story about Frances the little badger, her baby sister Gloria has a birthday party, and Frances’ nose is terribly out of joint. It practically kills her to get Gloria a birthday present, but she finally manages to do it. A funny story with a lot of truth about children in it.

*Captains Courageous* by Rudyard Kipling. A spoiled rich teen-ager is washed off the deck of an ocean liner, and picked up by a small Gloucester schooner fishing off the Grand Banks. There he finds out for the first time in his life how rewarding it can be to join other people in doing hard, skillful, often dangerous, and obviously necessary work, and for the first time in his life to feel useful and needed.

Remembering cute little Freddy Bartholomew and kindly old heart-of-gold Spencer Tracy in the movie, I thought that this might be a sentimentalized story about a bad boy made good by the pure heart of a humble Portuguese fisherman, etc., etc. But not at all. Kipling was interested in work, and fishing at sea in particular, and this is a very straightforward story about that work and the men who did it. We can easily understand why Harvey, the rich boy, so much enjoyed from working with them, and how and why he was so much changed by it.

*Swallows And Amazons*, by Arthur Ransome. This is the first of a long series of books, famous in England, about the four children of a British naval officer, who have lived all their lives near the water and as much as possible of them sailing in boats. As this story begins their parents has allowed them to camp on a small island in a lake at which they are spending their summer vacation. They sail to the island on their boat, the “Swallow,” and there meet two girls of their own age, sailing their boat, the “Amazon.” Both parties think that the island is rightfully theirs. From this beginning they make up and enjoy a number of exciting adventures.

Ransome shows us in this book how extraordinarily imaginative, inventive, and serious children can be in their play. Mixing fantasy and reality as only they can, they turn a small island and a placid lake surrounded

by houses into a world of risk and danger. Into this play they pour all of their knowledge, intelligence, skill, strength, and courage, and from it they learn an enormous amount.

Ransome also shows us how much it means to children to grow up in and feel part of a strong adult culture and tradition—in this case, of the sea—and how willingly they submit to its often demanding disciplines. The younger children, who would ordinarily never take orders from their older brothers and sisters, do so without a murmur when these are acting as captains of their sailboats. Reading this book, I realize how much my own small experience of ships and the sea is a part of me, and the language of the sea a treasured part of my store of words. Friends have told me for years that I ought to read the Ransome books. I'm glad I have, and look forward to adding more of them to our list.

*The Yearling*, by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Since we only add to our list books that we like very much, we soon tend to run out of superlatives. How many times can you use the word “great”? Well, have to use it again. This book, written in 1938, is for me one of the great classics of American children's literature, and one of my special favorites among all the books on our list.

It is about a boy, Jody Baxter, perhaps ten or eleven years old, growing up with his father and mother on a small subsistence farm in the middle of the pine forest wilderness of northern Florida. It is, incidentally, a book about attachment, loss, and grief; Jody, who has long wanted something to love as his own, and to love him, gets a pet fawn, loves it, and must later lose it. But this is only a small part of the book and its meaning. It is a book about how children—in this case, one child—are pulled toward the natural authority, the skills, strengths, and virtues of adults, and are helped not so much by their preaching as by their example to become civilized and good human beings themselves.

In this respect it is much like another favorite, *To Kill A Mockingbird*. The father in that book, Atticus, is a town man, educated, cultured, a lawyer, while Jody's father Penny is an “ignorant,” “uneducated,” backwoods dirt farmer, living in poverty and never more than one bad season away from outright starvation. But like Atticus, he is an outstanding human being, of great skill, patience, kindness, wisdom, endurance, and courage. We feel strongly what it meant to Jody to live and work with such a man—in every

good sense of the word, a great teacher—and we can't help wishing we could have such teachers for our children—and ourselves. A beautiful book, made more so by Mrs. Rawlings' deep knowledge and love for that country and all the people in it.

*Blood And Guts* by Linda Allison. This is a very interesting and informative book about physiology, the study of the human body as a mechanism and the nature and functions of all of its systems—bones, muscles, nerves, heart and blood stream, lungs, digestive system, skin, etc. It told me more than a few things that I had been vague about or had not known at all.

Children will find it very easy to read and understand, but without feeling that they are being talked down to. There are many pen and ink illustrations, which help make the text even clearer and are also often very funny. Though this is a book to read for pleasure, it is also a good “textbook” for any homeschool science program, as it suggests lots of simple activities and experiments to do. And it should help quite a few children get over the idea that everything inside their skin is mysterious and yucky.

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# Growing Without Schooling 22

August 1981

Though the official publication date for *Teach Your Own* was Aug. 3, it began to appear in bookstores in Boston (and apparently elsewhere) early in July. A number of people from different parts of the country have already used the tear-out page at the back of the book to ask for a sample of *GWS*, and so far, three of these have subscribed. The publisher tells us that advance orders from bookstores have been good. By the end of July, we had sold about 70 copies from the office. A good start. You can help the book by telling as many people as possible about it, including local libraries, bookstores, newspapers, radio and TV people, etc. David Brudnoy has already interviewed me about the book for his WRKO radio show here in Boston.

In *GWS* #21, we suggested that readers ask some of their local radio talk shows to interview me by phone about *TYO*. This has already brought us one radio interview, from the *Morning Magazine* show on station WOAI in San Antonio TX. Many thanks to the reader/s who helped bring that about.

We had a recent phone call from a mother who wanted to unschool her children and who heard about us from her librarian. Another good reason for making sure that librarians know about us.

Pat Montgomery, of the Clonlara School and the Home Based Education Program was on the *Donahue* show on June 25. Also on the show were the head of the Los Angeles school board (saying that the schools were great) and the head of a small private school in a low-income black community, also in L.A. It was quite a battle, and Pat got in some good licks. Since some of the stations that carry the *Donahue* show run it one week after the original showing, others two weeks after, others three weeks after, and so on all the way up to an eight or ten week delay, some of you may still be able to catch the show. If a station in your area carries *Donahue*, ask them what their delay is. Or ask the *Donahue* people, at 2501 Bradley Place, Chicago IL 60618, and mention that you are interested in homeschooling.

The lead story in the July '81 issue of *Gifted Children Newsletter* (530 University Av., Palo Alto, CA 94301) is a very favorable report on homeschooling. The story will continue in the August issue.

In *GWS* #21 we told about our visit from Mr. Onuma of Japan. When he returned to his home island of Hokkaido, his local paper printed a story about the trip, complete with a photo of myself, Donna, and Peggy (Tim was out of the office that morning). Another young man from Japan, Hisashi Urashima, read the story and came in to visit us last week during his trip to the U.S. He showed me many pictures of the school to teach English, the “English House Joy,” that he started in Obihiro in Hokkaido at the age of 24 and has run for four years. He also publishes an English language annual magazine, *Northern Lights*. He would like very much to hear from any homeschoolers who are also interested in Japan, and any Americans going to Hokkaido can be sure of a warm welcome. His (and the school's) address: 11-14, S-5, W-17, Obihiro.

Delighted to learn the other day that there is an active unschooling group in Australia, in and around Melbourne. Their address is Alternative Education Resource Group, c/o 84 Andersons Creek Rd., East Doncaster 3109, Australia. They sent us a copy of an excellent folder of materials that they publish for homeschooling parents, with much good advice about how to deal with education authorities (who from their samples seem quite cooperative), model letters, and so on. I plan to meet with them during my trip, and will have more news about them when I return.

—John Holt

## Thanks

We want to thank the many volunteers who have helped *GWS* recently. Half a dozen people have spent time in our office doing some of the unexciting but necessary work needed to keep us going—assembling sets of back issues, rubber-stamping, photocopying, etc. Susan Benedict even taught herself how to use our word processor and helped us store material for *GWS*. Another half-dozen people have picked up work (mostly renewal mailings) at the office to do at home. And 20 people around the country just finished typing up names and addresses for us.

Many more people have offered to volunteer, which we appreciate—all

your names are in our file. Sometimes it's frustrating not to be able to take advantage of your skills and willingness, but we'll do what we can. If John is able to talk about *Teach Your Own* and *GWS* on some major TV shows, we may need lots of help answering mail. And if you get any ideas about specific ways you can help us, we'd love to hear from you.—Donna Richoux

## They Knew

*John recently found this short clipping that he saved from the New York Times 18 or 20 years ago:*

GAFFNEY, S.C. (AP)—Four youths appeared in General Sessions Court in connection with a series of break-ins. Judge Frank Epps, learning that they had quit school, gave them the choice of returning to school or going on the chain gang. Without hesitation, all four chose the chain gang.

## Crank

Leopold Kohr, perhaps the first modern philosopher to write about why small institutions are generally better than big, writes in his interesting book *The Breakdown Of Nations* that E.F. Schumacher, when someone called him a crank, replied, "Some people call me a crank. I don't mind at all. A crank is a low-cost, low-capital tool. It can be used on a moderate small scale. It is non-violent. And it makes revolutions."

## Good News From KY

*From Ruth McCutchen (KY):*

As you can see by the enclosed article—our dream is a reality! We're legal! We may very well have opened a Pandora's box here in Kentucky. *No one* seemed to know about the new state regulations that went into effect back in October when our troubles *began*. Both my lawyers somehow missed them!

I've attached a copy of the regulations to my application, etc. Feel free to use anything that I've enclosed in *GWS*. I began working on approval the first week in May and received approval on May 28th. So you see it was



wonderfully, incredibly easy!

Prospective “homeschoolers” in Kentucky should write or call: Patrick West, Jr., Superintendent of Non-Public Schools, Room 189, Capitol Plaza Tower, Frankfort. KY 40601; phone 564-2116. He will mail them an application form and a copy of the new regulations.

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*From the Louisville Times, 6/2/81:*

For 2½ years, Abigail, Rebekah, and Deborah Alison McCutchen, ranging from 7 to 12 years old, were afraid of being discovered. They stayed cloistered in the home until 2:30 p.m. every weekday. They closed curtains to shut out prying eyes.

They didn’t want anyone to know that when other kids headed to regular schools in the morning, the McCutchen girls remained at home in their self-styled school.

In their house filled with books and lined with maps of the world and pictures they drew, the girls read constantly, made puppets, put on plays, balanced checkbooks, baked muffins, listened to Beethoven.

But their secrecy didn’t work. Paranoia turned into reality. Last October, somebody—they don’t know who—turned them in to the Jefferson County school authorities.

First, school social workers arrived. Later, legal notices came. Eventually, school officials charged them with truancy. At a hearing in Juvenile Court in January, a judge gave them until June to prove they were not breaking a state law requiring children under 16 to attend school.

But now, thanks to a 1979 state Supreme Court ruling (see *GWS* #12, 15), and the new state regulations that followed, they don’t need to worry. Last week, the state agreed that the McCutchen home is a school. And yesterday, Juvenile Court Judge Thomas B. Merrill dismissed the case.

That makes their home the first homeschool in Jefferson County to be approved by the state, local and state school officials say. One other

approved homeschool—with one student—is operating in Pike County, said Patrick West, consultant for non-public schools with the Bureau of Instruction. “This is really no big thing,” he said.

“I’m glad it’s over,” Deborah Allison, 12, said last week. “That used to be our dread—that somebody would ask: Where do you go to school? Now we don’t care. We’ll be glad to tell them.”

The Supreme Court decision that made it possible dramatically changed the authority of the state to approve schools. The court ruled that Kentucky cannot tell private schools what teachers or books or curriculum they must use.

New state regulations, which evolved from the ruling and went into effect last October, require the bare minimum of a school. It must fill out an application blank and promise to offer six hours of instruction for 175 days a year and teach reading, writing, grammar, spelling, math, history, and civics. Further, fire and health officials must inspect and approve the facilities.

The girl’s mother met all those requirements, and the school is now called “Learning Through Living.” Ms. McCutchen, named principal and head teacher, believes her kids get more not less—instruction than kids in regular schools. “I don’t feel I’m lying by saying that,” she said. “I feel that every hour of the day is learning time. The minute their feet hit the floor in the morning, they’re learning things. I feel that is accurate, even though we don’t sit down and have classes.”

Learning best takes place, she says, when kids are attracted to what they want to learn and choose it themselves. That’s why theirs is a freeform school. They study or read when they wish. They learn fractions by cooking, about current events while discussing newspaper articles. They listen to Vivaldi or do ballet when they want to. The whole family consumes books. They troop to the library every week, returning home with piles of books.

Last Friday, around 9:15 a.m., for example, Beethoven’s “Emperor’s Concerto” filled the house. As Rebekah, 9, ate breakfast and created clothes for her paper doll, Abigail, 7, came giggling into the kitchen to

ask her mother to help her find a small gold bug hidden in each page of a big Richard Scarry book.

She was so drawn to reading, her mother says, that she has been teaching herself to read for months. In April, she was finally reading books on her own. Her mother and sisters help her when she needs it. Within a month, she's completed 10 books on her own. She says she's thrilled.

"It's fun. I'm not used to it," she said Friday. "It feels good to know I don't have to go up to them and say, 'Will you read me a book?'"

Ms. McCutchen doesn't believe a flood of parents will follow her example, although she knows about two dozen in the metropolitan Louisville area with small children who are interested.

But many families can't handle it, especially with two parents in a family working. MMcCutchen is divorced but does not work outside the home because her ex-husband supports the family. Other families wouldn't want to have their children around them all day, she says.

But Ms. McCutchen says she's having a ball, learning right along with them. Their work room is filled with plants, books, encyclopedias, a typewriter, a sewing machine. The walls are lined with maps of the West Indies, Newfoundland and the Americas, and crayon pictures of every description. In the bedroom, a globe sits on the hearth. Maps and homemade posters cover the bedroom walls, too.

Ms. McCutchen believes their lifestyle is teaching her daughters to grow up creative, curious, and independent. She's never been worried about what they're missing in school.

She says her children tested out at about grade level in the standard tests used to measure achievement of public-school children. For example, testing placed Deborah, 12, at a sixth-grade, fifth-month level. She was above her grade on fractions in the math test—even though she has never had a sit-down class in fractions. She learned it all in the kitchen, Ms. McCutchen said. "I thought that was hysterical."

And Rebekah's comprehension of reading passages was measured at a seventh-grade, second-month level. She didn't do too well on letter identification, however, says Ms. McCutchen, because she had no idea what a cursive capital "Q" looks like—a style she never uses, Ms. McCutchen says. Overall; tests put Rebekah at a fourth-grade, fifth-month level.

## And Good News From VA

*Attorney Peter W. D. Wright sent us this story from the Richmond, VA, News Leader, 5/19/81. It is the first case we've heard about that uses this particular legal argument, and we hope that it will be a help to other GWS readers. Mr. Wright (2702 Parkham Rd, Suite 210, Richmond VA 23229; 804-270-0250), who acted for the Hawkins family, says he's willing to help other homeschoolers.*

County Parents Win Battle Over Correspondence School—Tammy and Eddie Hawkins. go to school at their home in the Clarendon subdivision (in Chesterfield County, VA).

It took a court hearing late last month to prove to Chesterfield school administrators that what Mr. and Mrs. Hollis Hawkins were doing with their children's education is legal.

Judge John H. Thomas ruled that *the mail correspondence school in which the teenagers are enrolled falls into the accepted description of a "private school"* and, therefore, satisfies compulsory education laws.

The Hawkinses had decided to take their children out of Richmond public schools, where they believed Tammy and Eddie were not getting a proper education and were being physically harassed by other children. After much discussion among Richmond school officials, Tammy and Eddie were allowed to stay home and study that year, but were warned that they would have to return to public school during the 1980-81 school year. Before the school year began (illegible), the Hawkinses (moved to) Chesterfield, a move they said they had been planning for years.

Tammy decided that she would remain at home in the American School accredited by (illegible—probably the National Home Study Council) and alma mater of Donnie and Marie Osmond. The four-year \$519 tuition had been prepaid and besides, Mrs. Hawkins said, “She had gotten used to studying at home.”

Eddie, however, said he wanted to try Chesterfield Schools. Eddie’s problems began when Chesterfield’s preliminary testing showed that he was eligible only for seventh, or possibly eighth grade. “He was supposed to be in ninth grade,” Mrs. Hawkins said, “and there was no way I was going to put him back.”

The Hawkinses decided to keep Eddie at home in the correspondence school. Chesterfield school officials did not agree with that move, and earlier this year, sued the Hawkinses on criminal charges of not providing a proper education for their children.

Mrs. Hawkins said she “was scared” at the thought of having to go to court but added, “I had decided that, no matter what, I wasn’t going to have Eddie go back to public school. We were ready to take it to the Supreme Court if we had to.”

That wasn’t necessary. After more than \$1,400 in attorney’s fees and two days of work without pay for Hawkins, Eddie will be allowed to study at home. Mrs. Hawkins said the children probably never will attend public schools again. She said the family cannot afford to send their children to any of the area’s private schools.

Tammy, who works part-time in a local fast-food restaurant, said she may enroll in a college correspondence course to study English. “I want to be a writer,” she said.

## **Correspondence School Results**

*From an article by T.E. Wade (see “Books on Home Education,” this issue) in the April–May 1979 Journal of Adventist Education (Mr. Wade used to be the Director of Studies of the Home Study Institute).*

Home Study Institute has been successfully teaching young people at home since 1909. Two years ago we reported a study of more than one

thousand standardized reading test scores from our files that showed our students reading better than 81% of students at the same grade levels.

But that information was not enough. We wanted the candid opinions of the parents of our students. So we found as many parents as we could from the 171 North American students promoted to various grades in 1976. Here are (some of) the statements and the percentages of people expressing an opinion who either agreed or strongly agreed:

The parent functioning as both parent and instructor did not interfere with the child's learning—97%.

The home instructor's background plus the information in the HSI program were sufficient for the teaching needed—95%.

The child probably learned as well as (if not better than) he/she would have in a regular classroom—95%.

The social development of the child (getting along with others, et cetera) has not been jeopardized by studying at home—96%.

It is interesting to note that 23 of the 118 questionnaires returned indicated that the person giving the daily instruction—usually the mother—had no more than a high school education. Only 39 had any sort of teacher training.

We wanted to know how well those students who had transferred to standard classroom schools for the following school year were doing. We mailed 57 questionnaires to the current school principals and received 53 responses. "How would you classify the current academic achievement of this student?" we asked. For 80%, the response was "excellent" or "above average." Then we asked, "Compared to other new students at your school, how is this boy or girl developing socially?" 66–80% of the questionnaires were marked "mixes well with other children, relates well to teachers, is well-mannered and courteous, and contributes to the class discussion."

Nine out of ten of the respondents indicated that from their viewpoint, the fact that the child studied through Home Study Institute caused no

particular problems beyond what would have been expected as a result of changing from another school.

Most of the questionnaires from both parents and schools had encouraging comments.

## Problems

*From Ann Bodine (NJ):*

I am beginning to feel that *GWS* is too positive and glowing and doesn't give enough recognition to the problems and hard work of homeschooling. But what can you do if that's what people write you? I'm not saying that I think you distort what people write, but perhaps a more open discussion of problems would encourage more people to write about their problems.

One parent I know had written several paragraphs in *GWS*—all glowing. When he told me about the problems they had had (I don't mean with authorities, I mean within their own family), I asked him whether he had mentioned any of those problems in his letter to you. He said he didn't think readers would have been interested.

I have noticed with our monthly Family Schools Association meetings that if a discussion starts out with a "Isn't homeschooling wonderful" tone, it tends to stay that way for hours, as if people are intimidated and afraid to mention any difficulty they are having. On the other hand, if it starts out with a "Homeschooling sure is exhausting for the parents" tone, it will stay that way for hours. Perhaps hearing others discuss their difficulties causes people to remember every difficulty they have ever had. I've only noticed this recently, after many, many repetitions. Now I consciously try to insert the opposite view after an hour or so. I think when the discussion goes back and forth between pleasures and problems, people get a much more realistic picture of what homeschooling is actually like.

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JH: As I wrote to Ann, she's quite right about it being important to print stories about problems and worries related to homeschooling. But we can't do it if people don't tell us. We certainly don't censor out stories of problems, quite the reverse—we go out of our way to print such stories when we get them. Maybe this letter will stimulate more people to write us about such

problems.

## **Two Colo. Groups**

*From Betsie Weil, 2609 South Blvd, Colorado Springs, CO 80904:*

We have formed a group called the Colorado Springs Homeschoolers and would be interested in having more folks join us. Calls can be made to Sherrie Simmerman at 630-8512 or me at 473-3898.

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*And from Nancy and Fred Dumke, 1902 S Oneida, Denver CO 80222:*

Interested parents/parents-to-be in the Denver area have formed a group called the Colorado Homeschooling Network. We meet once a month to exchange ideas and support. I will be conducting a seminar in August about homeschooling through Denver Free University. We hope to increase our membership through the seminar.

## **PA Newsletter**

*From Janet Williams, RD 2 Box 181, York Springs PA 17372:*

In Pennsylvania we are beginning to reach out to each other. On May 3rd Joe and Lorraine Clark hosted a picnic (primarily for the greater Philadelphia area). On May 31 we had a picnic here (primarily for the greater Harrisburg area.) Both were well attended with children greatly outnumbering adults. Both times I was fascinated by the cooperation and friendliness of the kids. At one point there were seven 2 to 4-year-olds in the sandbox at once. The older children organized themselves into a girls vs. boys ballgame. All this by supposedly “socially deprived” children!

We will print a quarterly newsletter for the PA. Unschoolers Network (PAUN). I am committed to doing this for 4 issues (one year). Beyond that I cannot see. We will charge no subscription fee—but donations would be gratefully accepted. We will gladly include anyone on the mailing list who takes the time to send a request.

PAUN will offer information about PA. laws, new legislation, legal cases and history. Given the size of this state, we cannot have a statewide support group but must depend upon a network of smaller groups working



independently. The initial purpose of the news letter is to reduce the sense of isolation affecting all of us. Once we have formed our grassroots groups, then we can reach out to (1) receive referrals from the Dept. of Education, *GWS*, etc.; (2) provide moral (and financial?) support for families suffering legal hassles; (3) join into alternative “schools” if necessary or desirable; (4) develop an advocacy service.

## **Maryland Group**

*From Manfred Smith (9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia, MD 21045):*

Just had an unschooling meeting last Sunday. A lot of new, committed people. After a period of general discussion, things began to develop rapidly:

1) We are planning to incorporate as a non-profit educational alternative. The aim here is provide as much legal cover *and* tangible support to homeschoolers as possible—I am in the process of lining up as many certified and qualified personnel as I can.

2) Have established a monetary fund (\$10 per family) to help pay for incorporation, buy materials, legal fund (?), etc.

3) Meetings will include a *rotating facilitator*.

4) Decision by consensus. Common interests that are pressing should find easy consensus.

This promises to be an interesting venture.

## **Useful Center in Calif.**

*The Marin Community Resource Center (Camino Alto & Sycamore, Mill Valley CA 94941; 415-383-1233) is offering a place for homeschooling families to meet, learn together, use or borrow material, arrange field trips, etc. The director, Jan Frangione, writes:*

I envision some families using the Center’s field trip program only, others taking part in the language program, others developing a tutoring situation, others having their children at the Center on a consistent 2-3 days a week basis: the combinations of time and use of the Center, its materials and director are numerous. Fees will be kept as low as possible with an aim to making the Resource Center available to as many families as possible in the greater Bay Area. The Resource Center is registered with the State of

California as a private school and participation in any of its activities means your child is a school student.

## **Resource in NY**

*From Anna Marie Fahey of the Christian Homesteading School, RD 2, Oxford NY 13830:*

Enclosed is information about the program we offer to parents interested in teaching their children at home. We invite anyone to write for further information.

The Homesteading School is 70 acres of hilltop woods and meadows in rural New York. We have chickens, ducks, cats, goats, cows, bees, a dog, and a horse. Buildings are small and are made of logs. We are living from the land as much as we are teaching people to do.

A Homesteading Week is an intensive week of instruction on homesteading subjects (7 to 10 hours a day). Basic Homesteading Week is limited to 15 and is required for our other programs except Carving, Homebirth, and Home Education weeks.

One encouraging thing we have noticed is that at our Home Birth Association meetings, almost all the parents who have given birth at home are now teaching their children at home or are planning to do so. In fact, it has proved to be the most talked about subject other than home birth.

## **Alternatives in Ed.**

Every time we get an issue of the *Alternatives in Education* newsletter from West Virginia, we mark all kinds of wonderful stories we'd like to quote in *GWS*. But each time something prevents us—generally, we run out of space, or we run out of time. So this time we are determined at least to remind people of the existence of this great little paper, in hopes that many of our readers will also become their readers.

Like *GWS*, *Alternatives in Education* is largely made up of reader contributions—letters, suggestions, announcements, resource lists, book reviews. Although some of the content would only interest those in West Virginia or neighboring states, there are still many letters about learning, living, and homeschooling that have much more than local appeal.

*Alternatives in Education*, which is about 16–18 mimeographed pages, only costs \$2 for four issues a year. Definitely worth the money.

We asked Deirdre Purdy, one of the people who work on the newsletter, whether back issues were available. She wrote, “We have samples of the *current* issue we’d be glad to send for 50¢. Back issues are all gone. If we run out of current issues, we will send the October issue.”

The paper’s new address is Rt. 3, Box 305, Chloe WV 25235.—DR

## Reactions to Books

We are thinking about putting together some kind of booklet reprinting the book reviews we’ve run in *GWS*. This is still very tentative—we’re not sure how much work it would be, or whether it would be worth the time and effort, or what it would look like. But it’s still a real possibility, and the main point would be to share with as many people as we can our thoughts and feelings about the books on our Mail-Order Booklist. Not everybody gets and reads the back issues of *GWS* (though we’re delighted at how many *do*), and even those who do may forget what’s in them, or lose them, and so on.

The reason we’re telling you about this now is that we thought some of you might like to contribute to such a booklet. We would be very interested in hearing your reactions to any of the books on our Mail-Order Booklist—what you got out of the book, why you think other people would like it, what it was like to read the book for the first time, what it’s like to read it to your kids, what long-lasting effect the book has had on your life, or anything else you’d like to share. The more spontaneous the better, the more specific the better. Any length is OK, from one sentence to several pages. You don’t have to worry about spelling, punctuation, etc.,—we can fix up little things like that.

By the way, since the ultimate purpose of this booklet is to get people to buy the books, and to keep the books alive, in print and in circulation, we will naturally be emphasizing the positive aspects of the books. If you don’t like a book and want to tell us why, well, that’s fine, we’ll be interested in hearing it. But we don’t expect to print many of those kinds of comments. On the other hand, if you like a book but think it has certain limitations, drawbacks, etc., feel free to tell about those things too.

One final note—of course, we welcome your response no matter what age

you are. But because people are often concerned about what age of person can appreciate a particular book, we would welcome hearing your age if you would like to tell us, or how old you were when you first read the book.

Looking forward to hearing from you.—DR

## **Homeschoolers on Radio**

*Dave Van Manen (CO) writes:*

We are very excited about another big step made in finding other people believing in or sympathetic to homeschooling. At the last meeting of the Home Schooling Support Group, we all agreed to make phone calls to a listener-participation radio show this past Monday. It was a great success! For an hour and a half, 99% of all calls dealt with homeschooling. Helene started it off by calling and voicing some of our general philosophies of homeschooling. The host, having a background in teaching, asked some probing and good questions. He was generally very accepting, and even seemed to agree with most of what we said. The rest of the show was carried by a handful of homeschoolers and a significant number of the steady listeners phoning in remarks and questions (which we would conveniently call in and answer).

Almost every caller was supportive of the general concept of homeschooling—we were all very surprised. At one point, during a segment dealing with the legalities, a school administrator from the local district phoned in and stated that Colorado has made provisions within the laws to deal with the homeschooling “problem” by setting up a bunch of rules and regulations for homeschooling. Well, we certainly made a point of his use of the word “problem”—a reflection of how the schools view homeschoolers—as PROBLEMS. I’m sure he heard us loud and clear. Our intention in doing this radio show was not to argue and scream and shout about the schools’ problems; we simply wanted to let the community know that we are here, we know what we are talking about, and we intend to exercise our right to educate our children the way we see fit.

After the show, we called up the host, asking about the possibility of having us on the show as guests.

## **Homeschool Letterheads**

A number of *GWS* readers have told us about the advantages of having official-looking letterhead stationery for their “homeschools.” For example, Barbara Lafferty (NJ) wrote, “When purchasing textbooks, a school letterhead—which isn’t very expensive to have printed and can be very useful in correspondence—from a family’s homeschool affords you the benefit or receiving the school discount, which is anywhere from 10% to 39%. Also, a book of ‘Purchase Orders,’ which can be purchased at any business supply store, is helpful. Some book companies require a purchase order signed by a school ‘official.’”

We remembered Carol Kent’s letter in *GWS* #15 about buying a hand printing press, and asked the Kents if they could print letterhead stationery for other *GWS* readers. Carol wrote back:

It would be pleasure to do so. The paper is 8½ x 11” handsome white pebble-textured bond with matching #10 envelopes. I can provide 25 printed sheets, 15 plain, and 25 printed envelopes for \$6 postpaid. Please print or type the name, address, and telephone number of the institution and the name and title of the director as they should appear on the letterhead. For an additional dollar I will print a slogan at the foot of all forty sheets. Make checks payable to Carol Kent, 115 West Koenig Lane #208, Austin TX 78751 (new address).

## **Family Books & Journals**

*Carol Kent also sent us a long, lovely description about her son Robert’s fascination with trains (both real and model trains), which we intend to run in a future GWS. She told us it was from the “family book,” and when we asked her to tell us more about that, she replied:*

Our family book is basically a story book, written by David and me. These stories are about the important events in the history of our family, written at the time they happened. I have also written some stories about my own childhood as I am reminded of them by what happens to my own children. These are personal, and not written for anyone in particular. There is no regularity about it, so it is not really a journal. Although we have our scrap-books, books of drawings, and photo albums, the family book is something else, a collective autobiography of our family, which the children can add to when they begin to write stories of their own.

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*Also, Norm Lee (NY) wrote:*

Enclosed is an article, “How to Write a Homestead Journal” that we put in *Homesteaders News* a year or so ago. You might suggest it for homeschoolers.

A daily informal journal about things associated with the learning things that occurred during that day. may help homeschooling people glue things together. At a minimum it aids in focusing on what’s important during the day, putting events in perspective, perhaps even learning from them, and—oh, yes—improving writing by the only method known to work: by writing.

TV can’t compete with a journal read three or four years later to the children, either. My own boys would sit enthralled as I read my journal—sometimes about events that didn’t involve them, sometimes about things that did—an occasion that triggered discussion, renewal of forgotten projects, or hysterical laughter. But warning: a journal is great for the health—but terribly habit-forming. I’ve been hooked for many years.

(From Norm’s article:). The journal records feelings, moods, joys, fears, events, views; and reactions to people, books, work, weather, everything. It’s not a secret diary, but an open letter to oneself—an open door for people to know you better. (The bonus is discovering that you know yourself better.)

Use a separate notebook, and a new page for each day—but don’t number the pages ahead. When you really warm up to a subject you won’t want to feel cramped for space. At first keep talking and let her roll. Choose the most outstanding feature or event of the day and talk about it as if writing to a friend. If it helps, write, “Dear\_\_\_\_\_.”

I do my writing during the peace and freshness of early morning. Others like to look back over the day and commune with pen and notebook in the hush of evening. A homestead journal can change your pace, change your views, and change your life.

## **Credential Through TV**

*From Iowa:*

We have not taken the “big step” yet, but are moving closer to it all the time. At present I am taking a course, the first of two I will need in order to

renew my teaching certificate. This is a TV course—two half-hour programs per week for 15 weeks; a study guide and child psychology text; plus three objective tests—a very painless and convenient means to an end for my situation.

Our son is in first grade now, and is going through many of the things other *GWS* letters have mentioned. He taught himself to read before kindergarten (I mean *completely*—we had nothing to do with it directly, and it was real reading with understanding, not just recognizing a few words.) But now he's convinced that he “learned to read” in school! There was no provision made for his needs in kindergarten or first grade until we finally went to the school and pleaded with them to at least *try* something different. He was given a dozen busywork pages each day (which the teacher admitted were only to keep the children busy while she worked with other groups) and getting into trouble because he didn't get his work done. He's the type of person who likes to have everything “just right.” His handwriting is beautiful—and he'd rather spend time making it look nice than rush through to get everything done. I can't bring myself to tell him, “You must do sloppy work to get it all done and make them happy.”

## Offering Shelter

*An interesting offer from Ann Bodine (83 Knollwood Dr, New Providence NJ 07974):*

If you ever hear of any children who are in danger of being forced into school by local authorities, and if the parents would rather send the children away for a few weeks or months while they get the problem ironed out than to have the children go to school while the issue is being settled, I would be happy to take those children. I don't really believe it will ever come to that for anyone, but if it did, or if the authorities were using the threat of taking children away until the plan was approved, it would get the parents out of hot water to be able to say that the children had moved out of state.

The real problem would be for a child too young to leave the parents. I wondered what I would do if they had told me to put Jonathan in school until they approved the plan. He is too little to be away from us, except for one or two nights with *very* good friends. I might have had to enroll him in the least offensive private school I could find and then keep him home as much as

possible as sick.

## **Maverick LD Expert**

*Jennifer Seip (21 New Rd, North Hampton NH 03862) wrote in 1978:*

I have worked in education for the past seven years, since I got out of college. I had a B.A. in Sociology but was very interested in teaching “special” children, particularly emotionally disturbed. I was an educational counselor in a special camp, and a teacher’s assistant in a school for the emotionally disturbed. Then I moved to New Hampshire and worked as an aide in a “Learning Disabilities” classroom. 5½ years ago I was hired as a Title I Director/Learning Disabilities specialist. I became certified in elementary education and learning disabilities.

I have given you this (perhaps boring) background because I want you to know where I’m coming from and what experiences I base my statements on. I am probably the only L.D. specialist who despises the field of learning disabilities.

I am supposed to test, label, and correct children—make them better. My principal considers me a failure at this. I will not test, I will not label, and I will not say there is something wrong with a child. I will not absolve the educational system of its guilt. I will not patch up its ever-increasing leaks.

I know a great deal about perceptual strengths and weaknesses and the falsity of these tests and the programs that are supposed to work. And I know this knowledge is worthless in teaching—except to help you find out that it’s worthless.

I know even more about the teaching of reading—all the skills and latest remedial methods—and I know that all this knowledge too is useless. It’s great for wasting time with kids and making yourself feel like you’re doing something and “the kid must really have a problem if he still can’t learn.” I find that if I don’t garble my tutors’ minds with reading skills and “training” and just tell them to use their own intuition, that they are far better “teachers” than any reading specialist. And once they get over their lack of confidence from not being a trained professional, I think they come to see it’s true!

A 12-year-old girl I worked with last year was many years below grade level, and nobody could teach reading to her. She had gotten stuck in the cycle of failure. After I stopped trying hard to teach her basic reading



“skills,” we read from a book of her choosing that was “too hard” for her. We took turns reading and when she got to words she didn’t know (there were many), I told her to simply ask me if she wanted to be told the word. It was sometimes very hard for me not to slip some teaching in—not to have her sound it out, etc. We went on like that for perhaps a month. One day she came to me, obviously feeling very good about herself. We talked about the good things that had happened to her that day and how powerful she felt. We opened the book and she read the entire page correctly! I could see her lips moving to sound out words, her eyes moving ahead to get context clues—all on her own initiative. She exhibited all the reading skills that tests said she didn’t have. She didn’t need to be taught, she didn’t need to learn skills or how to apply them. She could read! All she needed to do was to do it.

You mention many times in *GWS* your interest in telling the truth about learning disabilities. I can help with this, and also with helping parents see how capable they already are of teaching their own children. I’m interested in being a resource person for such parents.

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*Jennifer’s letter turned up recently in a pile of old papers, and Donna wrote asking how things were going now. Jennifer answered:*

It was wonderful to get your letter. I had wondered what had ever happened to my letter John said he was going to quote from. It pleases me so much to watch the homeschooling movement grow over these years. I can’t think of a better reason to have my letter overlooked!

Yes, you can still put me down as a resource person for learning disabilities, and you no longer need to keep my name confidential. You see, I no longer work in education. I quit my job as Title I Director two years ago. And I will never work in a school again.

Learning is one of the most beautiful parts of living and the schools are destroying it. How can that not be one of the most emotional issues to someone who sees that? Especially when I made it my life’s work, when I spent eight years learning how to do it better, learning how people learn, and learning how I can help people who think they can’t learn see that they can. And then as my own personal values integrated with what I realized was happening in education, I had suddenly “idealized” myself out of a life’s work.

People don't understand why I don't just set up a better school—some friends of mine with money have even asked me to. But I know I would only be compromising—I would not be happy. They don't see that the very premises behind setting up a school are against my values about learning. They believe kids won't learn “enough” unless compelled to learn in a certain place at a certain time from certain people.

I tried private tutoring of kids with learning problems, but it was extremely frustrating. The kids and parents were still locked into the beliefs and value systems of the school. I'm not going to settle for less any more. I believe that when you settle for less (because you don't think you can get what you want), you greatly decrease your opportunities for getting what you want.

So right now I am waitressing. It gives me money to live on, flexible hours, *my days off!*, and exercise—which teaching certainly doesn't. So it isn't too bad. But I want very much to do something with my expertise in learning. I believe there is some way it can be of value without my compromising. I just know I don't want to fight people, to persuade them to my way of thinking. I want to be around people who already feel similar to me about learning or who are open and curious. Teachers are *not* open and curious! They are closed and scared and getting more scared all the time!

When I was a teacher's aide in a Cambridge private pre-school, we were supposed to go home at night and think up “learning activities” for kids. Now, I am a very creative person when it comes to formulating ideas and figuring out how to do things better, but I hated thinking up these activities—it just didn't flow inside me. I loved watching the kids do what *they* thought up, and interacting with them. A part of me knew consciously that I was right but I had no support, and I was just out of college so I couldn't go anywhere with it yet (or didn't think I could).

I am learning a wonderful new skill this year—gardening! It's so incredibly satisfying and enjoyable. Earlier this spring I read books over and over, relishing the way the experts disagreed and seeing how all the answers are tied to fundamental truths about nature and growth. I planted seeds indoors and now I am watching everything grow outside—it's different every day. I have never been a hard-core nature person but sometimes I think that all the important truths, all the important knowledge to be gained is right here

within nature. The school doesn't cost a thing. Neither do the teachers.

I am amazed at how much I have learned about gardening in such a short time. I have had the opportunity before but this was the right time. It was all up to me—there was no one to lean on and that's what has made the satisfaction so deep. This is also the first spring since I started school at age five that I have been free to be outside each and every day. Last year I had a daytime inside job and the 25 years before that I was either a teacher or a student!

I am also learning skills which have been frustrating to me all my life—mechanical (male) skills. I now understand the basics of my car and can do simple maintenance such as oil changes. I am learning to fix things around the house—even a plumbing problem we had this winter! Each time something goes wrong with the house, I am finding that it can be seen as an annoying frustration or an opportunity to learn something new. We had a carpenter-ant problem and I did enough informal research to beat any term paper I ever did in school! I have found that in no time, I can know more than many of the people do who I used to consider “experts”!

What I learned when I was teaching was that the most effective way is the simplest way. And what I always know was that no one is dumb—no one is learning disabled any more than anyone else (except for specific brain damage). We all have our strengths and weaknesses; we have just labeled certain skills as intellectual, as elitist.

For example, I had a first grader who was having a great deal of trouble learning to blend sounds together. Her teacher asked me to find out what was wrong. I gave her sounds to blend and she had a great deal of difficulty. I then told her not to say a word, to just listen—that I would give the answers this time. After about six words she was eagerly piping in with the correct answers! I kidded and played with her and told her that she *couldn't* answer. We had great fun and soon (a 45-minute session) she could blend.

I had a delightful 3rd grader who would make all kinds of mistakes when she read and would just go on and not stop to correct herself. Her teacher and Title I tutor were having a terrible time trying to correct her at every mistake. Well, I enjoy being with this child a whole lot and know how smart she really is—she also loves to play games (mind games) with adults. So I sat down with her and told her to read to me. I didn't look at the book or stop her when she made a mistake—I just listened. She loved it and in no time (one or two

sessions) her mistakes dropped off. Her tutor did the same thing and also really started to enjoy her.

The kids I worked with (bottom of the class) weren't dumb or disabled—they were just scared!

Please let me know how I can help you and/or all the homeschoolers out there. I feel so good about my decision to not work in schools again, but I am frustrated to be completely cut off from using the expertise and values I have to help others. I would like so much to be actively involved in some way. It is definitely a missing piece in my life.

*From a later letter:*

What I want is simply for people to respond who are touched in some way by my letters. Maybe that's it, just encourage people to write to me, to tell me their thoughts as they read it. Their letters will trigger off ideas in me and I'll begin to get a picture of the need out there and if it's a need I can respond to. I think that if I try to be specific too soon I'll shut doors that I don't know exist.

## **Skeptical Husband—2**

DR: When Mary Maher (*GWS* #21, “Success Stories”) came into the office a while ago to pick up some volunteer work, she told us that her husband, Tom, who is a public school teacher, was against the idea of homeschooling at first. Mary had asked him if she did all the research, checking into the legalities, who's doing it, etc., would he at least keep an open mind? He agreed.

Mary got some issues of *GWS* and Tom looked through them. She contacted some of the people in the Directory, and one family came over for an evening. Tom was impressed—they seemed to be nice people, not kooks. The homeschooling family gave the Mahers some advice on how to get approval from the school board, stressing that they shouldn't try to antagonize anyone, that they should be as nice as they possibly could be.

Tom agreed to try homeschooling, saying they could always change their minds. Both he and Mary had begun to feel that it was school that made their son Scott so cranky, fighting all the time—he wasn't like that on vacations. Sundays were the worst; as soon as Scott woke up he began thinking “School tomorrow” and fought all day long. So both parents felt that if taking Scott

out of school would clear up that problem, it was worth the try.

Mary said that now Tom thinks it's *terrific* that Scott is home. She says that in the first few days, when she was discouraged because she couldn't understand what some of the textbooks wanted, *Tom* was the one who said don't give up, it was going to be worth it.

Tom works for a different school district than the one Scott was enrolled in, and he's hardly told anyone at work about the unschooling. But one fellow-teacher he did tell said, "Boy, you must have a lot of guts."

## In the Mail

*From several readers:*

We live in a small community where the kids go to school until they are in the 8th grade. Then they are shipped off to a big school in a nearby town. Everyone seems to do pretty well here, but when they reach the big school, they're labelled as trash, trouble-makers, etc. In the end that's what they become. In the past two years I've seen probably 5 kids out of 200 graduate. The rest drop out before even 10th grade.

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Your newsletter brings pleasure, ideas, and the knowledge that we are not as eccentric as we sometimes imagine—or, at least, that there are lots of others out there who are equally odd. I hold dialogues with you in my head all the time—telling you of our remarkable and wonderful 4½-year-old, explaining the school situation here, arguing a fine point. Too busy (read, lazy) to write, I admire those who do and enjoy reading their letters in *GWS*. I will content myself with this, and maybe someday I'll *write* the epic, and ever-growing, letter in my head.

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A short story about Christopher (4)—The other day I brought home a used bike for him. He's been waiting for us to find one for him for a while and had been given a horn by a friend for the bike. As soon as we got home, he wanted to put on the horn but I had to get supper started. Before I knew it, he announced that the horn was attached—he had gotten the screwdriver, taken apart the band that holds the horn, and put it on the bike. We've always let him use tools (he sews also) and so now he's very comfortable doing tasks on

his own. It's so much fun to watch it happen!

## Living With JP

*From Kathy Mingl (IL):*

I thought I'd better get this letter typed before it turns into a book. Have you ever heard of the Procrastinators Club? I keep meaning to get in touch with them.

J.P. has been blossoming lately (a tiger-lily, I think). I always figured that most of his problems had to do with resisting being a baby, but I assumed that he'd get easier to deal with as he got older. Well, I haven't abandoned hope on that, but it hasn't happened yet. What he *has* gotten is stronger, smarter, louder, and harder to help. The only help he'll accept is to be shown how to do something for himself. He's much more difficult to divert from anything he's decided to do, and talking him out of something you think he's too little to be messing with is practically a lost cause. All I can do is insist that he not hurt himself—I tell him that I'm allergic to emergencies. He really is good about that (as a concession to his mother's nerves —*he* doesn't care), and I admit that I've emphasized that angle a bit, in the name of diplomacy.

Another bit of strategy I've engineered (in the interests of peace, order, and getting the upper hand) is *threatening* to pick up after J.P. I don't know if it would work for anyone else, but I tell my errant offspring that if he's old enough to have something, he's old enough to take care of it, and if he expects *me* to be responsible for his stuff, I'll put it where *I* think it should go, including up in the attic until he's older. I admit that this is fighting dirty, and I wouldn't care to have that sort of tactics used on me, but J.P. seems to find the logic acceptable. I never specify how long I intend to keep it from him. And of course, I do help him, providing he shows good intentions. The help he generally needs is to be told where to start, what to do next, and where to put it. He *loves* to be praised for finishing things (even if I had to fight him tooth and toenail to get him to do it), so I think it's not responsibility that he lacks, so much as organization. Well, I can certainly sympathize with *that*.

You know, you can't imagine how interesting it is to be able to say, "J.P., you come and pick up this puzzle, or Mama will do it for you!" in a tone of dire threat, and have your child come running, bellowing outrage all the way.

Considering I've hardly ever had to follow through on that, I think the thing that *really* makes him mad is the idea of not letting him do something for himself.

Actually, J.P. is shaping up to be a pretty nice person. I may be biased, but on the whole, I rather like him. He gets crazy now and then, and hard to live with, but that's usually when he needs a nap (he's beginning to see that for himself, now, too—some adults should have that much insight). He's quick to catch on to things—even jokes, if they're translated to terms he's familiar with. He doesn't "turn off" on things he doesn't understand, and he doesn't hold it against things if he happens to have hurt himself with them. It's hard to pinpoint, but I find most kids his age sort of wispy and tentative in comparison. As a matter of fact, J.P.'s main trouble with objects is that he uses too much force on them, which makes them unwieldy and makes him mad.

I read *Escape From Childhood* recently, and I had it on my mind that people talk very differently to adults than to children. Just then, J.P. went off somewhere with his daddy, and I called to him; "You be a good boy, now," and J.P. answered very seriously, "I will, and you be a good mommy." I said I'd try. Let me tell you, this twerp keeps me honest (I call him Twerp, and he calls me Mommy-Twerp.) He's very proud of me, and praises me when I do things all by myself. The fact of the matter is, this child doesn't seem to have grasped the essential parent-child relationship—and neither have I.

It embarrasses me to have so much control over someone else who wants so much to be able to do things without my help. Until *GWS*, I just assumed I was a bad mother, and didn't say much about it. For one thing, shameful as it is to admit, I don't *like* babies. I mean, they're cute and all that, but I just don't find the infant personality attractive. (Fortunately, they improve quickly.) I don't think babies like anyone, even themselves—they just want what they want, when they want it. I never expected to be a mother, really, but then, I never expected to get married, so I guess one is just as explainable as the other. I am not patient, and I am not the least bit saintly, and a solid stretch in the company of no one but a butterfly-brained boy can drive me to desperation. I don't believe in violence toward children, but when I read about these terrible parents who throw their poor little babies out of the window and things like that, I think I can at least imagine what drove them to do it.

I have this cartoon, cut from a magazine many years ago. Two serious, worried-looking, middle-class, solid citizens are confronted by a school-principal type character, who is telling them, *very* seriously, “I’m glad to have this opportunity to talk to you, because I wonder if you have any idea of how disruptive it can be when a child comes to school determined to learn *everything*.”

## Instead Of Kindergarten

*A mother wrote two years ago:*

We decided to keep our 5-year-old out of kindergarten this year, after one year of pre-school, which he didn’t like, evidenced by dawdling in the mornings, asking the teacher every day when he could go home, and finally, flat out refusing to go at all. That was the beginning of my new understanding of him. Something clicked in my brain, and I suddenly saw there was no reason to push him out into this artificial experience in order for him to “develop his potential,” and that, in fact, this early schooling was *preventing* him from doing just that by taking up so much of his time and energy. His free time was then spent recovering from the overstimulation he got in school. I was highly criticized for keeping him home this year (most of my friends being in some form of education), but I stubbornly stuck to my convictions that he knew best what he needed.

I have given him lots of “space” this year, allowing him plenty of time to “do nothing.” In this “do nothing” time he’s gone through periods of boredom and loneliness, but usually comes out on the other side of that into discovering new interests or “bents.” It’s really neat to see him find something meaningful to him *all by himself* without anyone guiding, interpreting, or pressuring, him.

One great advantage of staying home has been a maximum amount of contact with his father, who is self-employed, and often takes him with him in the various facets of his work. He is learning a certain poise and confidence around strangers by going out with his dad, and also is developing a clear idea of how the family is supported and what goes on out there “in the real world”—not to mention his deepening relationship with his dad.

I dread first grade. I’ve seen what first grade did to my first son and am very reluctant to see that happen to my second. What I have been doing to



soften the impact of school for #1 son is to send him to the best private school I could find (one that especially appealed to him) and then make a standing policy that he could stay home whenever he wanted, which the school doesn't seem to object to. This is the best I've come up with so far, but it's far from satisfactory. I guess I'm not quite ready to buck the system, and yet I see it not far off on the horizon.

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DR: The mother has just written us that they kept the second son out of school by being out of town a lot, and by keeping a low profile when home. The family is looking for a new home in a state more favorable to unschooling.

## **On a Mountaintop**

*From Vicki Meyer (WV):*

When I wrote to you a couple of years ago, the local school board had denied our homeschooling proposal for Jeremiah on the illicit grounds that it would "set a bad precedent." We took him out of school anyway as we planned to leave the area, but we finally found a farm we could afford to buy and stayed. Jeremiah didn't go to school at all last year. We did not keep a low profile; if it was a school day and we needed to go into town, he went with us. Any neighbor who asked why he wasn't in school was told the truth. We don't believe in teaching children to lie. Most of our neighbors were supportive; it seems they, too, had troubles with the school system. They might not grasp that I didn't see a need for schools at all, but they could share a concern with the things the kids were being taught.

For the first part of the year, Jeremiah read and re-read mysteries and comics, helped around the house, and played with his little brother and sister. He helped Ed take a roof off a house and sometimes cooked dinner. Eventually, though, he began to worry that he was "behind" other kids his age academically, and since he's always been proud of being "smart," he asked me to start having "school" with him. We got out some workbooks and textbooks, which he basically breezed through. In fact, he got through the fourth grade books too last year without much effort on his part. (He spent about an hour and a half a day on "schoolwork.") At first I felt like I should

spend the time at least hovering over him, but the other kids wanted to have “school” too and pretty soon my time got pre-empted by them; they needed the attention and he didn’t really want me to help him. He was doing fine. After the boy across the street came home from school, they played together. We also often had other kids stay overnight and he had friends at church he spent time with. All in all, I’d say that socially he didn’t suffer—in comparison with public school, that is—and we *do* live in the country and didn’t really go out of our way to provide him with playmates.

Last summer, he went to church camp for a week, helped Ed build our house, and joined some other kids in a weekly group adventure which an ex-teacher friend of ours initiated. There were several boys about his age involved; they would go swimming, climb a mountain, or sometimes just mess around the farm where our friend lives, for a day. Then all of them would go to one of the boys’ houses and sleep out, then back to our friend’s farm for another day. They “paid” for this by doing a share of the farm chores. Wish it could have gone on all year!

About two days before public school was due to open, Jeremiah decided he wanted to go back to school. I was kind of surprised, but agreed to enroll him. I think the fact that one of his summer companions would be at the same school influenced him. (They remain close friends.)

When I enrolled Jeremiah in school I said he was in the fourth grade, which corresponded to his age and not necessarily his achievement level. Under “previous school” I wrote, “studied at home.” The principal said nothing at the time. The next week I was sent an ominous little note requesting my presence to discuss Jeremiah’s placement with the superintendent and the principal. With all sorts of angry speeches well rehearsed, I went in. Well, a friend of mine says usually if you expect a fight, you don’t get one. She was right this time. They stated their opposition to homeschooling, I told them I didn’t agree with them, and they said that according to Jeremiah’s teacher, he was performing fine at a fourth grade level. I said I would have been very surprised to hear differently. I’ve had no further trouble with them. What they put on his school records I’ve no idea.

We still plan to teach any of our other kids at home as they wish. Elisha, who is five, wanted to go to kindergarten next year, and we were prepared to (reluctantly) let him go, but he’s decided against it. Instead, a friend and I plan to start some sort of school, for the sake of getting some of these kids

together regularly. Elisha is really excited about that, as he wants to share his bug-catching skills with some other kids. (His younger sister, Fairlight, will *look* for them and call him when she finds something good, but she won't pick them up.) We're pleased, of course, that he's chosen not to go to school. Elisha has a strong interest in nature, knows how to look up plants, insects, etc., in identification books, though he then must bring them to an adult to find out the name given in the book. I suspect that one day he will learn to read in order to read the names for himself. He also helped Ed build the house last year and is a pretty competent layer of small scraps of cement block. Most of his time is spent doing very good artwork, especially primitive masks.

Elisha has learned to write by a rather interesting method, which Fairlight is now beginning to use also. At first, when he was three and a half, he often asked us how to spell things, but when told, of course he did not know what shapes to make the letters. At first we wrote the words for him to copy, but he wasn't satisfied with this, plus he would often have to wait while I finished the dishes or Ed got out from under a car or off a roof. So we invented a kind of "picture description" of each letter, such as "A is a tepee with a line through it," "B is a snowman with a line next to it," "C is a circle with a bit out of one side," etc. Of course, this was accompanied by showing him the letter once or twice, too, and his first attempts were pretty unrecognizable. We usually didn't correct his errors; he did that himself. Now, at five, he can write in upper case well, and occasionally attempts lower case. Until lately his words went backwards and forwards interchangeably, but recently he seems to have acquired some sense of direction. For someone who shows little interest in learning to read (Jeremiah was in the Oz books by this age), he sure is competent in other areas. This is of course part of our reason for not wanting him to go to a conventional school, where his other abilities would be ignored in favor of academic progress.

We are, however, worried that our children's need to be with other kids their age will lead them to seek out public school. This happened, of course, with Jeremiah. With a five year age gap between him and Elisha, he was hungry for baseball, board games, etc., to an extent that we couldn't satisfy. He also is strongly competitive and values the kinds of rewards given in conventional schools—participation in the math fair, playing basketball, etc.

We live far out in the country on top of a mountain. No unschoolers live

near us. The nearest towns are 45 minutes away. We go to church on Sunday, work at the co-op once a month, and have sporadically been involved in a playgroup. Yet our experiences as adults have convinced us that close friendships, so necessary to all of us, are formed with day-to-day contact in which people share their lives and work together. That has led us to seek out some way in which they can be together with other kids more often, at least as they get older. To this end, and to satisfy the legal requirements without a lot of trouble, a friend and I have found a usable building which we plan to fix up for a resource and meeting place for children. Legally, we hope to satisfy on paper the requirements for a private school, so that more parents will feel free to involve their kids in this. We want to have a credentialed teacher (the same friend who sponsored Jeremiah's summer adventures last year) be the "paper teacher" and several adults have volunteered their time as supervising/ resource people to be there when they're needed without actually "teaching." I don't know how many kids will come, and we'll probably have to work out the financial side as we go along. None of us have much money, but we don't feel like we need a lot of what money can buy in order to do this.

## **Success Stories**

*From Oregon:*

I'll enclose the letter I sent to the school district here in Portland. We were approved for homeschooling, but my daughter has to take standardized achievement tests in May along with other 4th graders. I insisted we choose the environs of the test-taking and they were agreeable. It will be one-to-one and not with an intimidating crowd of other kids.

I accept her unschooling as a positive force in our lives. I'm ready for any necessary changes—even career, lifestyle (that, I'm sure of!), etc. How can I nurture and guide and teach my child from birth to 7 and then give her over to strangers, to the state really, until she is 18? I can't. I won't. And I'm not anymore. until and unless I see that it might work, or she desires to return.

I have so many ideas and desires in envisioning this process—but I'm leaving it open-ended to be ready for any course change in midstream. I don't want to be too static. For now I'm going to let her have a healing period and play and relax and adjust to being free.

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*Another letter from Oregon:*

We established a “homeschool” two years ago, and one year ago we incorporated into our own private school. This was our eventual goal and to realize it was a dream come true.

We had a very supportive lawyer in our area of the Willamette Valley who has assisted several homeschoolers. We simply paid incorporation fees (approximately \$350); there was a lot of red tape in the form of letters from the lawyer to the Incorporation Commissioner to us—all very unthreatening, “for the record” stuff—and basically that was it. Then at tax time we were sent a tax declaration form by the state which our lawyer sent back stating we weren’t declaring any exemptions, which the state acknowledged with another form letter. So far, so tidy.

(We know of) several homeschools in Oregon. Though they (ourselves included) do lie low, there seem to be few problems. The National Parents League is very active and supportive here.

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*From Lynne Thunderstorm (BC):*

We have had no trouble here, and have not used the provincial correspondence course at all. We have a letter from the superintendent stating that while he has approved our plan, he hasn’t monitored us. It frees him from responsibility, and leaves us free as well. It could alter Leaf’s grade standing but since we don’t intend to take part in that anyway, we don’t care. Should she decide a campus might be able to teach her more than the whole world of mountains, farm, river, friends, and family, she’ll simply have to take some tests.

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*An Iowa reader writes:*

As we approach our third year of unschooling, all I can really say is that it has, without a doubt, been the most wonderful experience imaginable, which is really saying a great deal, huh? The first year was a struggle, especially for me, as I had to really change my thinking, and get away from traditional thought, busywork, and all that unpleasantness that lingered on from public and private school days. This past year, we got away from correspondence

schools altogether, ordered our own texts (for math only), and really got unschooled. My daughter (13) now studies totally independently, with only occasional help in algebra, or help with a Spanish conversation. Her progress is really astounding, too. She reads more than ever, and does about three times the work that she did in regular school—by choice. I guess that once we eliminated all the busywork, she discovered how much *fun* learning can really be. She is once again eager, sets her own schedule, and still manages to get so much done that it is truly astonishing. The changes in her have also been very beneficial, because, as she controls and uses her own time, it has matured her and made her very responsible and sensible.

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*And from California:*

News of our homeschool is that we have abandoned the curriculum we were using, and are now using the worksheets at whatever time and rate Matthew decides he wants. It looks to me like he's learning just as much on his own initiative as he did before, with far less trouble and effort—just like you said. I guess I was the one who had to learn. I sure am glad to be rid of those regular lessons—what a burden!

I now am the address for a joint subscription which is stimulating new friendships and creating a growing circle of like-minded acquaintances.

## **Sisters at Home**

*A parent writes:*

The first two months at home were horrible. Amy (9) went from being lively and outgoing to a depression, sleeping round the clock. She was used to someone parceling out her time and couldn't seem to find her own way. Though my husband and I are both at home, we seemed to be involved in our own work, neither of us giving her the attention she needed. She was justified in feeling bored and unhappy. I seemed not to understand then how we could be together and still find our individual time to work.

Toward the end of the first two months, Dorothy (6½) dropped out too. She seemed to bring the fun back into the house that we were all looking for. Right from the beginning, Amy refused to have me teach her or to do standard school work. They had always been avid students, beyond other kids

their age. Dorothy, of course, copied her sister's refusal, so I dropped the whole idea of teaching! The first remarkable thing I should mention is that Dorothy had suffered an intestinal problem and colds from Day One of school. On Monday I told her she never had to go to school again. On Tuesday the intestinal problem and colds ended and have never returned.

These kids spent the next few months in endless play. Their fantasy mirrored life around them or from the eight to ten books they read each week. They took off on the most amazing journeys (in the living room of course), sometimes lasting for days. It was exciting to watch them in this play.

Dorothy and I began playing little math games with her fancy colored chalk and board. I'd make the problems and she'd solve them and beg for more. That opened me to think of other games. I showed them how to play "hangman." They never tire of this spelling game. Another word game they love is making small words from large words. We played the picture graph suggested in *GWS* #17, and also did the multiplication grid. Both were big hits.

We've recently bought workbooks and they now enjoy them. They pick the books themselves and are free to work at their own pace. When they finish they can buy another. But what they like best are the pages of math, geometry, and beginning algebra I create myself, much of it done in metrics which I know nothing about. I simply try to reason out problems by saying to myself, "How can I divide this triangle in three equal parts? How would I write an equation for this?" etc. I make these pages artistic and create similar problems but geared to their different ages. The amazing thing is that I try reading math books and don't understand them, yet this seems to work. How? Who knows.

Aside from the ABC's, they've become nice children again, leaving their vicious teasing and cruelty in their old schools. The one thing lacking is peer friendships, and we're working on that.

Amy has become very interested in theater. I was able to get her an audition for a musical at a local college. She got the part and during the early rehearsals Dorothy was also placed in the show. It turned out to be an extremely positive experience for them. They got to work in a professional way, taking something from the beginning to end, seeing it develop from rehearsal jeans into beautiful costumes. They learned discipline, that others depended on them and their work. They gained patience from continuous

stagings and corrections. The college kids were wonderful toward the children. And Dorothy, who only seemed to hear bass sounds and had trouble reproducing pitches, can now sing in the soprano range and on pitch.

Dorothy's reading zoomed way ahead in her desire to learn the entire script. Each day she read it aloud. Now she can read novels with a little larger print. Within the first week Amy memorized all the parts and songs, and Dorothy did the same a few weeks later. We're presently looking for more opportunities in theater arts for them.

## **Pensacola School**

*A mother writes:*

My husband is in the military and we are stationed in Germany. The Army does provide schools for the dependent children but we were displeased with the classroom conditions here and the violent children in the school itself.

We are planning to enroll our oldest son in kindergarten (which is required by the military) but we will be teaching him at home. We will meet our legal obligations because he will be a student at Pensacola Christian Correspondence School (5409 Rawson Ln, Pensacola FL 32503). PCCS offers a complete Christian study program at home. Their regular school has been in operation since 1954 and has an enrollment of over 2500. The correspondence school began in 1975 and has an enrollment of over 900. I think this program was designed for the children of missionaries and people living outside the U.S. but it also offers a legal alternative for stateside people whose choices are limited.

The cost may be hard for some to swing. Kindergarten is \$225 a year, and Grades 1-6 are \$285 a year. Actually, that averages \$25-32 a month for 9 months. The problem is that it must be paid in advance. After 6th grade it goes up considerably.

I just knew that school never did me any favors and that most of what I've remembered was what my parents taught me as I learned myself. I want something better and less frightening for my own kids. Some of my most vivid memories of school are being scared to death of not being able to do the work. I'm not slow, I was a B student and I tested in the top 15% of my statewide exams, but I was still always scared. It's not fair to do that to kids. I had ulcers in high school because of the pressure.



# Unschooling Teenagers

*A parent wrote:*

We live in a rural commune, with five children, ages 9–16. “Children” is hardly the word, however, especially for the older ones. They are simply community members. Two have learned to drive this summer. All the four teenagers participate in our community industry and substantially earn their own way. (The nine-year-old is welcome to do so, but doesn’t work at it much.). We expect our teenagers to take the high school equivalency examinations when and if they are interested in college or other opportunities requiring credentials.

We have had at least one child functioning under this arrangement since 1972. Ours is absolutely freeform education, entirely at the learner’s option. There are no “classes.” At this point the oldest girl (16) comes to me about twice a week for tutoring in Latin. We are studying together from a first-year Latin text for college classes. (I had a couple of years of Latin in junior high school forty years ago—and boned up on it about twenty-five years ago for a PhD exam. So I am relearning as we go with the present text.) But the tutorial is entirely at her initiative and pacing. Similarly, the older people are available for instruction when the younger ones ask for it, but they don’t often do so. Mostly they read, play games, work, rearrange their rooms, watch TV, listen to records, tapes, the radio, go to movies, and, generally, manage their lives as the rest of us do. They live in a building away from their parents, room together or separately as they please (and they keep shifting around!) They do their own laundry, buy their own clothes, etc. (mostly at the Goodwill or Union Mission), get most of their own meals, and often (in teams or individually) cook for the community, which consists of six adults besides themselves.

I go through all manner of guilt trips and fears about their education, thinking, always, they should be doing more, should be more creative, more inquisitive, more involved. But the truth is that I don’t really know much about what they are learning, any more than I know what the other adults here are learning. Everyone always seems very busy. Lots of that is visible, physical busyness—much having to do with our craft industry, but also the garden, the animals, maintenance of house and machinery, care of the land,

and, so forth. But also people will say they are busy when they are reading, playing a musical instrument, having a conversation, or doing other private things. The children are not noticeably different from the adults in these respects, except that they are relatively less involved in the industry and the garden. When I say I think they should be doing more, I have to remind myself that I think the same of the adults and of myself. They no doubt think the same of me. As a group we seem to be remarkably active and productive, our days too full, our time too short. We always fall short of our ideals and always generate enough ideals to keep us dissatisfied with what we actually accomplish. I believe that is called the human condition.

The major thing I notice about our young ones, in contrast to people of their age I see elsewhere or who visit here, is their maturity, independence, their sense of dignity and self-worth. School children generally seem silly to me. Childish. Ours don't. I don't always adore or admire them, as I don't always adore and admire the adults who live here, but we deal with one another as peers, and the children sometimes seem more mature than the adults.

I hate to put it this way, but the kids out there beyond the mailbox aren't good enough for them. Our chief worry is what that means when they begin developing relationships, including mating, with others who come from more conventional backgrounds. Sometimes we take our gang into the small-town roller rink—and cringe as we see them relate (or, more often, fail to relate) to the locals. They do not yet seem much interested in pursuing relationships off the farm. Some go to a Unitarian youth group in a nearby city, but not much has developed in terms of relationships beyond the group meetings.

I don't know of any other communes with teenagers, or any that have children out of school. Where are the counterparts of our children, the other young people with whom they can comfortably relate and contemplate making their lives? I think of starting a network, via correspondence, with other adolescents around the country, if they can be located. Then I recognize this as another of my arrangements, my way of solving their problems. Maybe they don't have problems. They aren't complaining. (They are in general very happy people.) I know they don't go in for expressing themselves much in writing (though a couple of them write poetry: the nine-year-old has had two poems accepted by a new magazine of children's poetry *GWS* readers might want to know about: *Tigers and Lambs*, 2041 E.

Waverly, Tucson AZ &5719.) I guess they'll figure out how to find others when they feel the need. We'll help—as best we can—but will try not to do so before our help is sought.

I have two recurring bad dreams, dreams that leave me sometimes tossing sleepless in the night. One has to do with professional failure. Having left the conventional world, with its set of stresses and rewards, I dream I am missing out. I am always missing planes and meetings or finding myself professionally embarrassed, having to fake it, squirming with fear, anxiety and a sense of failure. The other dream has to do with failing the children, especially about not having done enough about their education. I should take more time with them. I should teach them more.

By day these dreams resolve. I know that I do not want that professional life I left behind. I had good reasons for getting out, and the rewards of my present life are vivid and strong. This life feels like health; the memory of the other seems like sickness. And I believe the other dream is of the same category. When I think, by day, of actually taking one or more of the kids aside and saying, however subtly, “Well, let’s do some math today. Or some science. Or some literature,” I feel suddenly foolish. When they want to do math or science or literature with me, they’ll let me know- and I would be as impertinent suggesting it to them before that as I would be in suggesting it to one of the adults sharing my life. By day I know this is right. I have faith in the need of people to develop themselves, to make full use of their lives, and I know deeply the evils of unwarranted intervention. But the insecurities hang on and the dreams return.

I remember the summer of my adolescence when I read Ben Hur, mostly lying on my mother’s bed, which seemed the coolest place in the house. I girthed my loins with a scarf, my head with another for a turban. Sometimes I was Sabu, the Elephant Boy. I dropped huge purple grapes into my mouth, one-by-one, fantasizing life in ancient Palestine. I used a cardboard box for a stationary chariot, whipping my steeds on desperately, the tail of my turban flying (in the breeze from an electric fan.)

Our kids play Star Trek. They have mock control panels and computers in their rooms. They toss around electronic mumbo-jumbo. They will not be like me—and the hardest part of love is letting that happen.

## **“Bad” Parents**

*Janet Williams (PA) wrote:*

As I get more involved with other unschooling families, I have difficulty in accepting the diverse directions that families are headed in. There has been no difficulty in dealing gracefully with those who are not of like mind. I bite my tongue a lot. It is not my place to make judgments about other people—just as I don't want them judging me.

But I have a memory that keeps resurfacing—acting like a bothersome fly buzzing around. Many years ago I was involved in Sunday School. One girl complained about having to come to church and Sunday School. I said that she could always stay home and have her parents do the work with her instead. She was HORRIFIED and insisted I not say a word to her father. Going one on one with him would be infinitely worse than coming to the class.

I am concerned that I might be making life harder for some kids by telling their parents how to keep them home. Have you seen this? Or am I being overly concerned? Does parental concern always provide the best atmosphere for the child?

Since children do not yet have the right to self-determination, there is the chance for victimization. Do we just go with the odds? Do we put our money on the side of the parents rather than the state? Is that the best we can do at this point in time? Take our chances with the lesser evil?

Oh, that sounds horrid—describing parents as a lesser evil. But hope you know what I mean.

I can learn to live with the risk involved, if I am sure I have to. I always want things in such nice neat little packages so I will try to find some way to gather up the dangling ribbons.

Maybe it's just like having a baby—you never expect any problems but you know they are possible—and decide that the chance is worth it to bring forth new life.

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*John wrote back:*

Thanks for your good letter. People often ask me if there might not be some parents who, by keeping their children at home, would do them even more harm than the schools. I can only reply, sure, it's possible, but it's not very likely. The kind of parents who might do such harm, whether because of

too much ambition and pressure or simply too much harshness and cruelty, are very unlikely to take their children out of school in the first place—they don't like or enjoy or trust them that much. And even if they did take them out, the work of teaching them at home would soon become so unpleasant, for the adults as well as the children, and the results so bad, that they would soon quit.

In other words, I think the activity of homeschooling will tend to be both self-selecting and self-correcting. The people who choose to do it are likely to be the ones best fitted to do it; once doing it, they will tend either to get better at it or to give it up.

Is there any guarantee of this, any way to make sure that only “good” parents teach their children at home? No, none at all. You ask “Do we just go with the odds? Do we put our money on the side of the parents rather than the state?” Yes is my answer, and it would be my answer even if the state was doing a ten or a hundred times better job than it is doing. As in your good example of the baby, we have to run the risk, trust our judgment, take the leap of faith. The schools, like most modern institutions, don't believe in judgment or faith, and it is their pathetic attempts to put in their place some kind of fake “scientific” certainty that has done so much to make most of them the kind of places they are.

## **Praise Junkies**

*To a teacher who wrote that she thought it was important to praise students as encouragement, John wrote:*

I feel strongly on this issue, because my first elementary school teaching was at a school that believed in supporting children with lots of praise, for exactly the reasons you cite—and the result was that all but a few of the children, by the time I came to know them in fifth grade, were so totally dependent on continued adult approval that they were terrified of not getting it, terrified of making mistakes. The practice of the school—and since then I have seen many others like it—had exactly the opposite results from those intended. Every teacher in that school would have agreed with what you said about nurturing, but despite their intentions, they had had an extremely destructive effect on most of the children, who, despite being affluent, high-IQ, and favored in all possible ways, were pathetically lacking in self-

confidence.

I have seen a great many adults working with children, in school and other teacher settings, and I would say that something like 99% of the praise I have observed was more harmful than helpful. I think of countless teen-agers I have known who hated themselves despite having been praised all their lives. They say, "People just praised me to get me to do what they wanted." The ten-year-olds I knew were both cynical about praise and dependent on it, the worst possible mixture.

## **Indian Way Of Learning**

*The Lethbridge (Alberta) Herald, 2/7/80:*

The North American education system conflicts with the Indian style of learning; (according to) Dr. Art Blue, director of native studies at the University of Brandon.

Indians learn in three steps. The first step is the observation phase. Blue said North American natives score higher than any other racial group in the world on tests in visual discrimination. The second step is supervised participation. It involves participating in an active, meaningful process under the watchful eye of "someone who knows." The student is given hints to help, not diminish confidence, said Blue. Skill mastery is the third step. The native way is to perform in private with little testing. Failures are not seen by others.

Modern-day education is highly influenced by the idea that a person learns by making mistakes in front of fellow students, said Blue. Students are given no opportunity to practice skills before performing before others.

Blue said Indian culture differs from the remainder of society's methods of choosing teachers. Indian leaders (teachers) are chosen only after they have proven themselves before their people.

He said everyone is encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. Even children are given their say at tribe meetings "but are judged by what they say." He said Indians who display intelligence when speaking are thought of as leaders no matter what their age. "But if you show that you have not thought your ideas through, others judge you superficial."

In today's education system, professors are chosen by an external group far removed from the classroom, said Blue. "Is it surprising that Indian

people often decide not to follow the direction of the professor?”

Blue said the differences between Indian culture and the education system create a conflict between Indian students and teachers—“a conflict the teachers invariably win because of their power to enforce their will on students.”

The no-win situation faced by students violates the basic tenet of Indian philosophy, that no one should ever impose his beliefs on another person. Indians believe such control forces an individual to see the world through someone else, ending independence.

## Family Office

*From Patti Rowe (IA):*

My husband is a chiropractor with a literal “family practice”—we all have been part of the practice from the beginning. I act as assistant, bookkeeper, janitor, etc., baby in tow and little ones trailing behind. We have a playroom for the children, but they come and go freely through most of the office. It has developed a unique kind of practice, to say the least, and attracts a unique portion of the population—namely, people who are children oriented. To those who complain “That’s no way to run a doctor’s office,” the reply is, “There are plenty of conventional doctors available!”

## People/Places Wanted

I’m an unschooling single parent with a 13-year-old daughter; we need room and board in exchange for doing gardening, teaching, babysitting, etc., for an unschooling family. Our interests include free-lance writing, gymnastics, swimming, martial arts, foreign languages, reading, nature, yoga, holistic health, astronomy, you name it. We are healthy, versatile, and together. Would prefer to be located somewhere within driving distance of Chicago, either city or country. Please write to W.S.M.P. in care of GWS.

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*From Elizabeth Gravelos and Arthur Harvey (address, Weare NH 03281), who organize the apple-picking crews that one GWS reader wrote about in “Growing With Trees,” GWS #8:*

We would like to hear from would-be (and experienced) apple-pickers. We pick apples each fall in Maine with a group of about 15 friends. The season is Sept. 12 - October 20. We set aside 20% of the crew's earnings for charitable and social reform work, and we also collectively pay for our rent, food, transportation, equipment, and medical costs. New members are carefully trained, and all members are subject to the crew's quality-control system. No one is hired as an individual; we function in all ways as a cooperative.

We have definite ways of living and working together. Some of our traditions are: no alcohol, drugs, pets, or non-marital sex; no smoking indoors; each member works at least 45 hours per week. We welcome families with children. If you are interested, come for an interview, and write ahead to arrange it. Incidentally, we also have crews which harvest wild blueberries in July and August, and prune apple trees January–April.

## Home Businesses

In the last few weeks, several *GWS* readers have told us about home-businesses they have started. For example, David Sowd (PO Box 9431, Canton OH 44711) has started a proofreading, copy-editing, and typing service; Wendy Pfaff (751 Cleveland Av, Dubuque IA 52001) is now running a small mail-order stamp dealership; Steve and Bobbie McCay (Rt. 1 Box 488A, Lebanon VA 24266) sent us their catalog of “Olde Timey” wooden toys.

We find this all very exciting, and hope to hear more about the work that *GWS* readers do, especially about those who earn money in ways that they enjoy and that fit in well with their family life and unschooling (see following questionnaire.) Being self-employed, working out of your home or close to it, certainly would make homeschooling easier and better than having one parent away from home all day earning money while the other parent looks after the children, or both parents working while someone else looks after the children.

For the time being we'll be happy to print the addresses of such businesses in *GWS*, as long as they have some kind of widespread (not just local) appeal. Maybe this will get some money circulating among *GWS* readers.—DR



## Questions On Work

Here are some of the questions we have about the work that you and the others in your family do. We hope that many *GWS* readers—and *not* just those who are self-employed—will take the time to share their responses to these questions with us. You can answer these questions briefly if you like, or use them as the starting point to tell us more about yourself and your work.

What kind of work do you do? Do you find it satisfying?

Do you live in the country? Small town? Suburbs? City?

Are you self-employed? Do you work at home—part time or full time?

Who works in this business—one adult? Two adults? Children?

If you have children, what is the relationship between them and your work?

How did you learn to do what you do?

How did you get your job or start your business?

Do you have some kind of mail-order service you would like to let *GWS* readers know about?

Are there any ways that other *GWS* readers (adults or children) could help you? Learn from you? Visit and watch? Work for you in their homes?

## Self-Taught Astronomers

*From Debbie Schiffer in Georgia:*

I'm writing in reference to "Astronomy Without School," *GWS* #19. I am a self-taught amateur astronomer using *Astronomy* magazine, the Astronomy Book Club, and most of all, the library. I'm 22 years old, a high school graduate, and oldest of five children. The three youngest are currently being unschooled. My brothers (ages 6 and 7) are as interested in astronomy as I am. They know all about the night sky and what's "out there." The 7-year-old is just out of first grade and all year he couldn't believe his teacher didn't care about astronomy (or any other branch of science). I'm so relieved he doesn't have to go back next year.

Another good magazine for astronomers is *Sky and Telescope* (49-51 Bay State Rd, Cambridge, MA 02138).

*From a later letter:*

I have terrific news about something absolutely free! There's a man in North Carolina who also is an amateur astronomer and he studies and plots the paths of asteroids. He then draws a chart of the asteroid's path for the month and sends them FREE to anyone who sends a self-addressed stamped envelope. What he does has been called a "Labor of Love."

I read an interview with him in the June issue of *Astronomy*. I immediately wrote and got my first issue, which he personalized with a little note welcoming me to his publication. What can I say? What better gift than free information about something you want to know?

The publication is called *Tonight's Asteroids*. The man's name is Dr. Jay U. Gunter, 1411 N. Mangum St., Durham NC 27701. He does all the plotting of asteroids, bookkeeping, stuffing envelopes, etc., because he just wants others to know the joys of "asteroiding." He has really given me enthusiasm!

Recently he had a great honor bestowed on him—an asteroid was named JUGTA (His initials, and "T.A." for "Tonight's Asteroids.")

Anyone who is interested can send a SASE and he will send a copy. In fact he would love knowing so many people are interested! Enclosed is a sample copy of T.A.

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*DR: The following article, written by Dr. Gunter, appeared in the May-June '81 Tonight's Asteroids that Debbie sent us:*

I celebrate myself and sing myself, And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.—  
Walt Whitman

This is a very personal account, and so you will forgive me for writing about myself. It is the story of my efforts to share with other amateurs my keen enthusiasm for the asteroids. It begins with my first serious exposure to astronomy in the spring of 1968, when my wife Elizabeth and I enrolled in a fun course called "Introduction to Astronomy" at Morehead Planetarium in Chapel Hill. Our text was *The Observer's Handbook - 1968*, published by the Royal Astronomy Society of Canada. In its store of information were finder charts for the Big Four asteroids. CERES was in season, and bright enough for binoculars, and I found it with no trouble at all. Tracking it for several nights, I became fascinated by its motion against the background of the stars.

Another chart showed Uranus in the same constellation, and it too was easy to find.

So I was inspired to prepare a simple chart as a handout for the 30 or so other novices in our class. The chart plotted the path of CERES through a pattern of stars in Virgo, and the brief text explained how to find it. The position of Uranus was also shown. Our instructors thought this was great, and so did my classmates, several of whom reported success in finding these objects.

During subsequent months, *Sky and Telescope* published several charts for bright asteroids, and I enjoyed finding and tracking each of them. About this time there were some bright comets: Honda, Abe, Bennett, and Tago-Sato-Kosaka. I was much impressed by the dynamic nature of these objects—their changing position among the stars and their varying magnitude. But there just weren't enough comets to keep me occupied, so for me the asteroids became the poor man's comets.

In 1969, during a more advanced course at the Planetarium called "Observational Astronomy," came my second attempt to popularize asteroids. I prepared a handout sheet to show the path of 9 MÉTIS through Leo's sickle. It illustrated how the combination of naked-eye, binoculars, and telescope enable one to find an asteroid easily, and track it from night to night. Again several classmates reported success in finding this object, and nearly all of the class saw MÉTIS at one of our star parties.

By 1970, my desire to find more asteroids exceeded the information available to me, so I acquired *Ephemerides of Minor Planets*. This volume, published annually by the Institute of Theoretical Astronomy in Leningrad, has ephemerides for all asteroids at opposition during the year. Most of them are too faint for amateurs, but many are within reach of small telescopes.

In *Tonight's Asteroids* I have attempted to emphasize the benefits and pleasures of observing asteroids: 1. The satisfaction that comes from positive identification of a unit of the solar system only a 100 miles in diameter more or less, and a 100 million or so miles away. 2. A rapid

improvement in one's observing skills. 3. A rapid increase in one's knowledge of the sky. 4. The fascination of the Earth Grazers as they fly past us at a distance of only a few million miles. 5. The thrilling close appulses of asteroids with each other, and with bright stars. 6. The magnitude fluctuations on which rotational periods and orientation are based. 7. The occasional occultation of a star with the potential of contributing valuable data toward accurate determination of size and shape, and the possibility of detecting satellites of asteroids. 8. One final joy in asteroiding is the incentive it affords for getting out each night and having a look at the splendor of the sky. This may reward you, as it did me, with a rare spectacle like Nova Cygni 1975 on all three nights of its maximum brilliance. As I began, so I will close with some lines from Walt Whitman:

I wandered off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night air,  
and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## Writing On Nuclear War

*Mabel Dennison passed along this flyer from the Children's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Box 550 RD 1, Plainfield VT 05667:*

We are children who fear for the future of our world. The United States and the Soviet Union are building more and more human-killing weapons, and every day the threat of nuclear war becomes greater.

The Children's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament asks children to write letters to President Reagan opposing the nuclear arms race. We will take these letters to the White House on October 17 and read them out loud in public, then try to present them personally to President Reagan. We hope to have hundreds, maybe thousands, of letters. Each one is important.

Most kids think they can do nothing about nuclear war. Each letter to President Reagan calling for nuclear disarmament can help make a difference. So write yours now, send it to us soon! Thank you.

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*Also, from Pat Farren, 2161 Mass. Ave, Cambridge, MA 02140:*

What will it take to prevent nuclear war? I am asking thousands of people that question this summer, seeking a mix of responses that may add a new dimension to society's understanding of this complex and central issue of human survival. Responses are solicited through November 1. They will be edited and a representative selection will be published in a book. Responses should not exceed 300 words, or the equivalent of one page. Contributions may be prose, poetry, photograph, line drawing or other form of expression. Contributors should include a one-sentence biographical note. There will be a special section of responses from children.

## **Kids' Consumer Magazine**

We have just received a copy of the magazine Penny Power, "A Consumer Reports Publication for Young People," and John & I think it looks quite good. The writing is clear and lively without being too cute, and the magazine presents lots of useful information. This particular issue has an article on savings accounts, including on how to open one by yourself, and a long look at 10-speed bikes—who should get one, how they work, what features to look for, plus a chart rating the performance of 26 different models. There's a piece on how different families handle allowances and a survey asking readers to tell their opinions on the subject; a rating of frozen pizzas; letters on the "Question of the Month" concerning TV commercials; a comic strip; some puzzles, etc.

The center section, an 8-page "Teaching Guide," has workbook-type activities, suggested discussions, and math problems. Although this is definitely written for the benefit of classroom teachers, and hence is a bit strained and artificial, some kids might like reading, thinking about, and doing these pages if they knew that—unlike in school—they didn't have to.

Subscriptions are \$7.50 for 6 issues per year, \$8.50 in Canada. "Schools" can get a group sub of 10 or more issues at \$4.50 per sub. A single issue costs \$1.50. Write to PO Box 1906, Marion OH 43302.—DR

## **Madison Review Of Books**

*Chris Wagner of Basic Choices sent this reprint from the Capital Times of*

*Madison, Wisc., 5/1/80:*

The long-dead literary critic who called his art “the most highly evolved evidence of culture” would turn over in his grave (or at least turn up his nose) at the operation of the *Madison Review of Books*.

The very idea. Everyone—even those without credentials, even children who are just learning how to read —reviewing new books without so much as a by-your-leave. That was the attack John Ohliger took when he started the *Madison Review of Books* three years ago. The idea of giving everyday people the opportunity to critique books, then keep the books they review, is “just one tiny step” in establishing the kind of society Ohliger believes in: a society in which there are no “stars,” no elite. Each person would contribute to the whole—each person would have a sense of self-worth.

And the only special “qualifications” reviewers need to have is the desire to give their own opinion. And who doesn’t have that?

Reviewing is one way of getting involved; delivering the reviews to a larger audience is another. Some are taped and used in a weekly radio program on listener-sponsored WORT-FM, some videotaped for an hour-long television show on Public Access Cable 4. Engineering those ventures gets even more people involved in supposedly specialized pursuits.

One night a member of the *Review* staff called volunteer April Hoffman and asked if she could come down and work the camera. Hoffman begged off. “Well, can Suzanne (Hoffman’s 10-year-old daughter) come then? She’s tall enough to work the camera.” Suzanne went.

Hoffman’s 8-year-old son Langston even has reviewed two adult books on baseball “because he wanted them so much.”

The books pour in more than a dozen a day from about 400 publishers across the country, large and small. To get the project started, Ohliger wrote several small and alternative presses to ask for review copies. As the group gathered momentum, more publishers were contacted. Now the *Review* is receiving books on virtually every subject: health,

the occult, children's fiction, science, sociology, women's issues, poetry, art.

The *Review* provides a list of questions to serve as a guide to beginning reviewers, but there are no length or style requirements for the reviews. "Short ones work the best, because they can be adapted for so many uses," says Hank Luttrell, a longtime volunteer. "Personal rather than academic review seem to interest the audience more, so no one should be reluctant to react to a book in a subjective way."

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DR: The address of the *Madison Review of Books* is 1121 University Av, Madison WI 53715; phone 608-256-1946. That is also the address of the organization Basic Choices, and its journal *Second Thoughts* (\$10/yr), which, as Chris Wagner says, "attempts to provide a forum for those who oppose mandatory continuing education and the extension of the 'global classroom' to everybody. *Madison Review of Books* is still in existence, but in a period of reorganization at a more modest level. It works best at a local level, but we'd be glad to send anyone who writes a sample issue of the *MRB* newsletter, the reviewer's guidelines, and suggestions about how to start a community book review. A contribution to defray expenses would be helpful but is not necessary."

## More On "Free Writing"

*Jackie Beecher (MI) writes:*

John Holt mentioned in *What Do I Do Monday?* a writing exercise in which the student writes for some period of time without care for spelling or punctuation (See *GWS* #21, "Free Writing At Home.") Almost every day, Jess (8) and Leah (10) write for fifteen minutes or so in a Daily Book which is a real treasure of poems, dreams, drawings, as well as spelling words and other school work.

When I first asked them to "free" write, they, groaned until I told them it didn't matter what they wrote—it could be the same word over and over if that's what they wanted. Jess did just that and wrote the word NO, filling a complete page! Then she began playing with the sound and the rhythm of

words, and continues to develop this idea. Here are some examples:

Look how fat the little pig is.

Look how fat

the little pig

the little pig

the little pig

the little pig is.

yes yes yes

Oh, no

don't make him go

yes yes yes

Oh, no

don't make him go.

cat dog pig

bog hog frog

six one

me oh my

I am hot

I am hot

Like red hot.

doo da doo da

me oh my

I am hot red hot

The Cat

meyou meyou

meyou goes the cat

meyou goes the funny cat

Oh no here comes a baby

Oh no here comes one more.

Oh no here comes one more.

Yeah for Kitty!

me you



me you  
me you  
me you  
me you  
Put it all together and what do you get  
me-you  
meyou  
meyou

She has also experimented with writing words without spaces between and then circling the various words which are created by the crowding together. Her stories get longer and longer, sometimes running to six pages though she has totally abandoned, at times, the lines printed on the page. I asked her if she would prefer unlined paper and she replied that that wouldn't make any difference.

PS—In response to one parent's query about TV. We got rid of ours the same day we decided to homeschool. It's a great freedom, for we've read to each other and also have all become more creative—drawing, making music, and writing in our “free” time.

## Reading & Living

*From Rachel Solem (MA):*

Briana (almost 4) “read” a word on a menu that quite surprised me. It was simply—burgers. She said, “I want one of those.” I said, “What is it?” “Hamburger,” she told me. However did she know that? The only thing I can figure out is that Burger King must have a picture of a hamburger next to its name—somewhere she's picked it up.

She has been learning to read some names of her friends since her father made her a little phone book. He put a friend's name in block letters and the phone number right under it, each one on a separate small card. She dials the phone herself and has learned phone etiquette for both calling and receiving calls. In order to call the friend she wants, she has to know either the name or the number by sight.

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*From Frauke Buelow, who is German and living in Wales:*

My brother, who is ten years older than me, learned to read all by himself when he was three and a half. At that time there were matchboxes with flags and the names of their countries. So by the sound of the words he found out how letters form words.

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*And from Kathy Johnson (NJ):*

My son is just turning five and he is reading and doing a lot more than other children we know that are his age. It may be because whenever he asks a question I take the time to answer him as best I can. I love taking him places and “showing and telling.” And his reading—I’ve been in the habit of reading him a book during meals since he was about one year old. He still loves it! It has given him a love of reading, the urge to read and no mealtime hassles!

## **Recorded Books**

*From Mil Duncan (KY):*

I have been meaning for some time to recommend the Caedmon recordings. They have excellent stories for children on records and tapes, and we find our kids will listen and re-listen to them until they are reciting Wind In The Willows, Wild Things, or Babar by heart. They are expensive (up to \$6), but beautifully done with fine music and sound effects. Grandparents could be sent the catalog, anyway! We are non-TV folks, but big fans of Caedmon. The address is 1995 Broadway, NY NY 10023. The catalog is free.

## **Equipment, Cheap**

*From Deirdre Purdy (WV):*

We finally bought a tape deck for us and the children. Through friends we found a mail-order house which promises to beat any price. They have a toll-free phone number, are willing to give advice and recommend models (and not the most expensive in your price range either). Their price on the one we bought was \$150 less than the identical model in Charleston WV. You can

order their flyer from: Stereo Corp. Of America, 1629 Flatbush Av, Brooklyn NY 11210.

We are using ours for, among other things, taping “Spider’s Web,” a marvelous children’s show on National Public Radio. Right now they’ve been reading Winnie The Pooh and Milne poems all week and we have it all on tape, marvelously well read too. This prompted Jed (6) to read all of Now We Are Six to Hannah (4).

## **Giving Them Chances**

*From Dawn Whitehead, 45 Tefft Av, Elgin IL 60120:*

I have two boys, Michael, 6, and Andy, 2, and I do agree with you that they would be better off learning at home. Unfortunately, my husband doesn’t agree and so my oldest son attends school. He doesn’t like to go (except days when they have parties, puppet shows, etc.) but for now I’m unable to do much about it.

Michael has many interests. He is very excited about animals, especially insects. From the time he was about eighteen months old he was fascinated with them. He would spend practically all his time outside looking under rocks and logs and around the yard for them.

He enjoyed being read stories—six or more at a time. So we have quite a collection of books from stores and garage sales. Well, one day when he was about 2½, he came running in, got out his pocket guide to insects, went back outside, and was looking up the pictures of the bugs he had found! He now has many books on insects and knows quite a bit about them. He really enjoys finding caterpillars and sometimes cocoons, and leaves them in jars to watch them become monarchs or moths.

Both Michael and Andy enjoy painting; they have used watercolors, tempera paints, and home-made soap paint, which they help make. The soap paint is made with two capfulls of liquid dish soap, about a cup of water, three tablespoons of cornstarch, and one egg. They mix it all together with an egg beater, then pour it into cups and add different food coloring to each. They get very pretty colors and enjoy the sudsy pictures. Their art work is hung in their own special places, but only the pictures we like the best are later put in a folder to be kept forever.

Another thing they like to make is their own play dough. To make it you

mix four cups of flour with one cup of salt, then add 1½ cups of water a little at a time, then knead it until doughy. They mix food coloring into it, or they shape it, bake it in a 350-degree oven for about one hour and then paint it. It's a lot of fun for them.

Andy likes music and loves to listen to the radio or records and dance or sing his own version of the song. We have an organ and Michael and Andy like to play with the keys and tabs and see what music they can come up with. I had put tape on the keys with the notes and then made up cards with songs on them like "Yankee Doodle" and "Merrily We Roll Along." Michael seemed to enjoy it for a while and could almost play "Kumbaya" without the cards, but then he lost interest.

Michael has his own tools down in the basement, which he shares with Andy. We found most of his tools at garage sales for cheap. He now has hammers, screwdrivers, saws, wrenches, and a disc sander that he received as a gift for his last birthday. I also let him use my electric drill if he needs it. He has made helicopters, airplanes, boats, and bridges with his tools. Michael shares his tools with Andy and assists him when he needs help nailing or sawing. They have never had any injuries except for hammered thumbs, but I do that myself sometimes.

We live near a large park that has ponds, a creek, ducks, deer, a small museum, and lots of space. Frequently, we go for long walks. As a result, we have learned many things about nature. Aside from the insects, we've also checked out books from the library on wild flowers. Many of these flowers we have picked, dried, or pressed.

I've found that when Michael has trouble understanding something, if I look it up in the dictionary or encyclopedia and then demonstrate the word or concept with clay or blocks he can understand it better. For instance, I wasn't sure Michael knew adding and subtracting, so we demonstrated them several times with clay and blocks and now I'm sure he knows what it's all about.

I guess one of the most important things I've noticed with my sons is not to assume that they can't do something. No matter what it is, if you'll give them the chance to try they will usually succeed at it. Andy loves to help wash dishes, fold laundry, and help put it in the correct drawers! Michael likes to help when I'm working on some project of my own like latch-hooking a rug or sanding an old rocking chair.

They both enjoy cooking and baking. It seems like whenever I'm in the

kitchen, they're right there ready to help. They like to measure, mix, and pour. Michael knew how to make French toast and scrambled eggs when he was about three, just from watching me! They both like making muffins from a mix. Michael measures the milk and cracks the egg into the mix, and Andy uses the egg beater. They then scoop it into paper cupcake cups and bake. I always stay nearby when the stove or oven are on to prevent any possible burns.

## **J.P. & Toys**

*More from Kathy Mingl:*

Other than cars and trucks, J.P. prefers “grown-up toys.” We’ve hit the garage sales for things like kitchen utensils and plastic dishes (good for sand); an aluminum teakettle; an impressive, self-inking, adjustable office stamp (with food-color ink); art paints; a portable artist’s case; brushes; paper; shells; tools; a typewriter; a real telephone; broken cameras, radios, clocks, etc. for taking apart; and any number of other odds and ends that only J.P. knows the use of. Many things at garage sales are within a little boy’s price range, so he can bring along his personal hoard of sticky pennies and scrounged change, and make his own choices. At the “dime” (ha!) store, practically all he can afford is bubble gum. Best of all, even if I buy something for him, at garage-sale prices I don’t much care what he does with the stuff, as long as he picks the pieces up afterwards.

I’ve bought J.P. lots of cute toys—I have a weakness for Fisher-Price things—but it’s the junk that he treasures and plays with. (He also retrieves cancelled bills from the garbage, and “pays” them with voided checks. He collects “records” to keep in his “files,” too—I can’t imagine why he enjoys that! Do you think he could learn how to make out tax forms?) I always preferred raw materials to manufactured toys, myself, and I think that’s more or less true for most kids I’ve known. Finished toys are just that—finished. All the possibilities have been used up already, and about all a kid can do with it now is take it apart, which is hard on grownups.

When you invest a lot of thought and money into a toy for a child it’s actually hard to give it up, and you tend to feel bad if he doesn’t take care of it the way you think he should. The kid knows it doesn’t really belong to him, and he feels bad, too. Whenever J.P. has gotten something like that—

especially if he thought it was the one thing in the world he wanted and threw a big fuss over it, he's gone crazy, had tantrums all over the place, and promptly ruined the thing. He just can't take it, I guess. Now, if I want to get him something like a radio-controlled car, I tell him it's for all of us to play with, and the thing isn't so overwhelming.

Maybe the responsibility is too much for them—like the joke about having to fill out adoption papers before they'll let you buy one of those do-everything dolls.

If I buy a toy because I like it, I have every right to insist that J.P. play nicely with it. I don't quibble—it's mine, and I'm willing to share it with him as long as he treats it right. I don't nag J.P. about taking care of his own stuff—I might mention that toys often break if they're hit with a hammer (just in case he didn't want that to happen), or I might make him pick them up if company is coming, but otherwise, they're his.

Actually, I find that having a little boy is a great cover. You can do all sorts of things that you thought you had lost out on forever when you “grew up”—wading in mud puddles, playing in sand, building things with blocks—and everyone assumes it was the kid's idea. Children and adults really make a perfect team—grownups supply the expertise, and kids the excuse.

Do you know, I have a very realistic frog sitting on the edge of the bathroom sink, right now. Everyone assumes it's J.P.'s, but he doesn't even like it. It's one of those squishy rubber ones, and I bought it long before J.P. was born, but I kept it out of sight. I like frogs.

J.P. and I are presently in the process of making “eleventeen” robots. I would never have thought of it on my own, but it seems that I've been saving robot parts for years—only I thought they were gears, washers, clock and music-box movements, and sewing machine parts. The ones we've made are really neat, and just about everyone who's seen them has gotten interested in the project too. Tony made a good one—it was a double computer switch for a face, and he made up a little flasher circuit for it so that it winks one eye when you push the top of its head. J.P.'s names for them so far are “Habrio,” “Hay-doo,” “Peeto,” “HanobiHan” “Aeno” “Ernio” “Kikku” and “St. Charles.” He thinks 'em up and I spell 'em.

## **His Own Garden**

*From Diane Dondero (CA):*

When Amedeo was 2 and 3, I encouraged him to plant with me in the garden, pull weeds, and share the experience of eating all the fresh food from the vine. He loved it, of course. When he was 4, we staked out his little garden (4' x 4') and I helped him plant the seeds "properly." He did okay but I was doing most of the work. The following couple of years we did the same and he was joined by his growing sister who is now 5. However, he lacked enthusiasm. He'd go days without watering and plants died. Something was not right. I refused to help him because he wasn't doing anything.

We got the book *Willie's Garden* by Myra McGee (Rodale Press) to encourage him. This spring he was all excited about growing his garden. Said he wanted to stake it out himself. So, I let him have complete control over it. He chose the spot, staked it out, and began cultivating the ground. He was anxious to plant so in went radishes and lettuce. I felt good about what he was doing so I helped him weed and water when he couldn't be there. Then one day he moved the stakes and made it bigger. This became a regular occurrence. He planted onions and spinach, carrots and flowers. When we put in the brassicas (cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, etc.) he asked for one of each. Now he is waiting for a tomato plant.

My point here is that I did not tell him how to plant anything. When he wanted to know when and to what vegetable he should apply ashes, he asked. When he was unsure of how much compost he needed for what, he asked. When he wanted to enlarge, we discussed in which direction he could grow.

For him it is his garden and he's very proud of it, loves it and cares for it a great deal. For me, I have learned how to help him without being in control of the situation (keeping it neat and organized). I feel good about sharing in the care of his garden because I know he appreciates my help. And in turn he shares more in the family garden—weeding the flower beds and helping to plant and water.

I know so many mothers who do what I did with their children's gardens and as a result the garden is more their little project than the child's.

## **Acrylics at Two**

*From Marie Baker (WI):*

After reading the letters about acrylics in *GWS*, I got some for Sarah a couple of months ago when she was 26 months old. She really loves them. At first the fascination was with squeezing the tubes, then with adding water (too much), then with using right from the tube, then with using it for finger paint, then with mixing what seemed like yucky colors.

A few times after I got her cleaned up, she'd get smeared up again with what was on the table and her painting: The doll and floor and wall got it a few times, too. After these last episodes, I ended up screaming, and she crying. Acrylics are water base, but if you don't wash them up right away, they do stain. Fortunately, our house is not finished yet. The floor is concrete and the walls are not painted, so eventually all her experiments will be covered. Anyway, I figure, even professional artists usually have studios with paint spatters all over the floor, so why shouldn't a child too?

The paint isn't as expensive as I at first thought it might be since it's so concentrated. With a little water, a little goes a long way. The color and texture is far superior to poster paint which fades after being exposed to the light for a while.

I love the paintings Sarah's been making. I have them covering two whole walls. I agree with Picasso's statement that children should teach adults to paint, rather than the reverse. In my first year at the Art Institute of Chicago, an instructor said we should now try to unlearn all the "art" taught to us since kindergarten, and recapture the spontaneity and freedom we had as children before adults got to us.

The paper I'm writing on is what Sarah paints on. It came in a huge 3-foot wide roll from a suburban newspaper office for \$5.00. It will probably last at least a year, though we use it all the time. It takes the acrylic paints very well.

Sarah sometimes likes finger paints, too. We use the dull side of wet freezer paper for that.

We get paper off the big roll by letting it stand on end, then folding the amount we need. A table knife can then cut along the fold very easily. I then fold the big piece in half and cut it again so I have two large pieces. Sarah paints on a small kids' table while standing. We haven't made her an easel since some of the paint drips on the paper when it's vertical. We may make her a larger table, though.

## **Cray-Pas Art**



*From Penny Nesbit (IN):*

I want to tell you how much Peterson has enjoyed the Cray-pas crayons. He has an entire wall in the family-room covered with his bright and imaginative creations. Someone should make a study of the comparisons between schoolers' and unschoolers' art work. When I remember the drawings in the halls of Peterson's former public school, I shudder. Always the same assigned subject, the same dull colors, the same lack of originality. An artist friend of our oldest son was visiting this past weekend and she asked Peterson if she could pick out a few of his drawings to put up on the walls of her studio. He was delighted!

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(DR: See *GWS* #16 for more about Cray-pas. We've had to raise the price to \$1.75 for a box of 12, because of the hike in U.S. postal rates. By the way, we've sold over 225 boxes in the last ten months!)

## **Letter to School Board**

*Verna Helmke-Scharf in New York (see GWS #19, "No Problems") sent us the letter that she and her husband Bill presented to their school board. As with the Kendrick family's "Letter to Schools" that we printed in GWS #12, we think that other GWS families may find this a useful model when writing their own homeschooling proposals.*

We would like to inform you that we have decided not to send our three school-age children, Judson Scharf (8th grade), Karleen Scharf (5th grade), and Martin Helmke (3rd grade) to public school this fall. After much thought and consideration, we have decided to teach them at home. We have engaged a lawyer, Mr. J. Anthony Gaenslen, Ithaca, N.Y., and have the cooperation of the Susquehanna School, Binghamton, N.Y. We have thus assured that what we are doing is legal and we have also created courses of study which meet the New York State recommendations for school curricula.

We'd like to tell you why we have made this decision and to assure you that we would not have made it if we did not think it a better way for our family. We make this statement as an affirmation of responsibility, that of raising our children well, one which we take seriously. We wish to raise our children according to our own personal Quaker values and concerns, and as

the years have passed we see that the public schools are not the place where those values reside.

Since we wish that our teaching at home be open and legal we have done much reading and research to find out whether this is possible in New York State. We and our lawyer are convinced that it is legal. We have found reassurance in both Federal and State Court rulings that our decision to educate our children at home is a constitutionally protected right and that our actions are within the law.

(Here the Scharfs quoted some of the same legal passages that appear in the Kendricks' letter, followed by:)

New York State, relying on the position of the Federal Supreme Court, reaffirms the rights of parents. In 1950, in *People v. Turner*, a ruling was made in favor of a family who preferred to teach their child at home. It set a precedent by stating:

Provided instruction given is adequate and the sole purpose of nonattendance at school is not to evade this article, instruction given to a child at home by a parent, who is competent to teach, satisfies requirements of the compulsory education law.

Further,

There is no provision in the Education Law which prohibits instruction of children at home nor is there any provision requiring certification of a parent by the Commissioner of Education before she may teach her children at home.

Finally, in *Meyers v. State (of NY)*:

The flexibility of the Education Law of this state permits competent parents to teach their children at home, if the standards required in the interest of the community are met. Thus the freedom of parents is safeguarded so long as they meet their responsibility as parents.

We would like to share with you in more detail just why we are setting off on this home education venture. We are not interested in writing a tirade against the public schools. Rather, we are hoping to take a step towards family education. We simply wish to continue teaching our children as we taught them before they went to public school. We feel that we know our

children best and care about them more than anyone else. We are most willing to take the time to listen to them and guide them in learning. We feel that we can do as good a job teaching them and very possibly a better job of teaching them than a teacher who has 20 to 25 other children to claim his or her attention. We do feel that the public school experience has interfered with rather than enhanced their learning ability. There is simply not time for a teacher, no matter how much he or she may wish it otherwise, to give the sensitive attention that real teaching and learning require at their best.

One of the first questions we have been asked as we have discussed our ideas of homeschool teaching with other people is what about the children's social life—will they not be lonely or put into an environment separate from real life? Our response to that question is this. It is in part because of the social life at the school that we would rather teach our children at home. We are disturbed by the students' attitudes towards each other and towards adults. We see that drugs are used covertly if not overtly and that the attitudes of the students in the junior high school in particular are those of non-cooperation and boredom. This is not right. We wish to provide a social life for our children where we know what is happening.

We feel that social development is important. We have four children and that provides a daily group experience within the family. We believe that family cooperation should be the model and the basis for broader relationships. In addition to family relationships, friends are important. Our children will continue to play and spend time with the children in the neighborhood and they will see other friends on the weekends as they have before. What we are most concerned about is the quality of our children's friendships with other children, not simply the quantity. They will also be part of 4H activities and other social activities such as gymnastics, swimming, music, and other community events. We do not wish to draw away from the community; we still hope to attend plays, parades, concerts, lectures, and films.

What we will surely do is listen to and observe our children, and then provide what we see is necessary for them. We will exercise our natural rights as parents, but we will listen, too. If our children really do wish to go to public school next fall we feel that they should have a say in that choice. What we are doing is creating an alternative to what they have experienced so far in schooling. If they decide to return to public school then they will have

made the choice to do so and that will bring them into a different relationship to the experience. We would support them completely in that decision and would spend much time in the school itself as we did last year, helping in whatever way we might be asked. Please know that we are sincere in this. It is difficult sometimes to walk both sides of the road, but when we consider our children first then it is possible to do it.

What we hope to do here at home is to create a classroom where real life experiences are good experiences. We do not believe in the idea that to be ready to face a real world of bad experience you must first have bad experiences. Rather, we believe the opposite. The best tools that we can give our children for facing the world in their adult lives is an unshakable sense of self-worth, competence, independence, sensitivity and a sense of humor. That is done by their living their lives now in ways which say life is good, as we believe it to be and as we make sure it is. In a classroom where children are expected to compete with each other for attention and grades, good feelings about oneself do not come about as easily as they do in a group where competitions arise naturally and spontaneously from the cooperative life of the group, such as in a family. In a classroom where children are measured against each other or against outside standards and are not given the opportunity to assess themselves against their own standards, they will not really know who they are or what they can do when they are out on their own. It is understandable that standards must be met when trying to educate large numbers of people; that seems a bureaucratic necessity. But that does not make it the best way to educate any given child. In a classroom where children learn by doing, they learn much better than when they learn by being told. We will be able to provide that, there will be time and space for that to happen.

We hope to provide a learning environment where learning is learned not bit by bit so that it takes years to get the whole picture. What we hope to do is to provide more of an immersion experience where learning is not done step by step but in leaps and bounds. We have observed our children learning effortlessly and enthusiastically when they are given these opportunities and they have retained that learning more completely than the learning they did at school. We feel that to meet life in its complexity, children should learn to deal with situations as they are presented in real life, with our attention on the situation. Real learning comes about by doing real things and by having the

results really matter to the person doing them.

With this in mind, we hope to supplement the basic curriculum with additional materials and experiences. We have books and encyclopedias and will make trips to the library and will provide materials for interests as they arise. We will also seek out people who know things that we do not. We hope that the children's interests will lead them into what we really consider a truer learning, a learning where they are self-motivated, where they lose track of time because they are so engrossed in something that interests them. We see them doing this during the summer months and hope that the homeschool environment will foster this in addition to the mastery of the basic educational requirements.

We hope to provide opportunities for our children to become responsible persons and learn self-discipline. What we have observed in the classroom is that there are many children who are not responsible individuals and that the teacher must spend much of his or her time "disciplining" those children who do not have the inner resources to behave responsibly. The social interaction which says to a child you can responsibly solve your own problems is severely limited as order is often maintained by having the children remain quietly in their seats. We feel that our children will thrive better in an environment where they will achieve self-discipline by actively meeting real challenges and by taking on real responsibilities under our guidance.

Of the hundreds of children who have been taught at home, many children of diplomats and missionaries, it has been observed that they are more outgoing, friendlier, more self-confident, better conversationalists and stronger leaders than children who had attended schools. That statement may be difficult to substantiate but it does at least say that children being taught at home do not seem to be harmed by the experience. The very opposite may be true. We have met some of these children and the words above do indeed describe them.

We do not believe that there are many parents in our community who are interested in doing what we are doing at this time. In many families both parents work outside the home. For some this is stark economic necessity. For some it is not. But as the Industrial Revolution Era fades and the Technological Era emerges, it seems we will see more families able to provide this opportunity for their children.

Our Quaker values say that there is that of God in every person and that

the spirit of God is good and full of life. We want to show our children daily that we believe those values and that we try to live by them. We believe in simplicity, honesty, and humor. We'd like to share these values and our lives with our children as fully as possible for these few years that we have the privilege of having them with us.

## **Taking Responsibility**

*JH: Parents preparing to submit to the schools a written home education plan for their children might find it useful to include a few words more or less like this:*

In teaching our own children at home, we intend to take full responsibility for the results of our work. If any of our ways of teaching prove ineffective, we will not blame this on the children, in whatever way. Instead, using the flexibility of curriculum and methods that our small numbers will allow us, we will stop using any materials or methods of instruction that do not work, and instead will try other methods until we find some that work better. We understand that it might be very difficult to do this for large numbers of teachers and children, but it will be easy for us.

## **Logical Answers**

*From Adele Garlick (VT), who is teaching in a public school:*

I usually make up my own word problems, but today I used some from the book. Here's one problem:

In painting the window trim in one house, they used  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cans of paint. How many half cans is that? The answer is supposed to be three half cans. One of the "slow" kids that I was working with insisted that the answer was one half can. "How did you get one for an answer?" I asked. He answered, "There's one half can, and there's one full can." And he was right!

This just proves that there are so many different ways to read contrived word problems. What a senseless activity it is to "solve" problems like the one here.

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*And from Susan Price (FL):*

We just finished working in Faith's workbook. She has never gotten subtraction at all. It has bothered me that she couldn't figure out the change from a nickel when you buy something that costs two cents. I would say, "Okay, you've got 5 pennies and you take away 3. How many do you have now?" And she would always say, "5." I thought I had a real dumb daughter! She wasn't the dumb one. It was me. For she was only saying the truth. That you still did have 5 pennies even if you took some away and put them somewhere else.

Today we were doing it with fingers and putting some down and how many are left up, and she finally got it. It really didn't take long at all, even though she had already built up an idea that she didn't like and couldn't understand "subtract." She was then able to do it with the pictures in the book, covering them up with her fingers, saying once, "You are only pretending that you take them away, they are still really there." After doing some problems for a few pages, she was actually doing them in her head. The only thing that is amazing about all this is that I should be amazed.

## Old Texts Work

*Several readers sent this news clipping:*

When Stan Hartzler started using old math textbooks with his students at Crete-Monee (IL) High School, his students began winning competitions. The older the texts, the more they won.

Hartzler recalled. "I started going to old bookstores and using the texts that I found with my team and my classes. It was quickly apparent that the older books were working.

"A great many of the older books—published around 1900—were written by one-room teachers. The lessons and assignments were artfully constructed and easy to read. Students could learn by themselves and wouldn't have a lot of questions. The teachers didn't have time to lecture because they had to move on and teach other children reading. One of the first things I noticed was that my kids stopped coming in with a lot of questions about last night's homework.

"The old books have a continuing sequence of problem-solving, and they continually challenge the students to use their minds. These days students are taught to rely on the text and the teacher, rather than using their own minds."

So Hartzler teaches, reads, and prowls Salvation Army stores, garage sales, antique shops, used book stores and attics.

## **Driver's Ed Victory**

*From Rosalie Megli (IL):*

Another matter we have taken up with the school authorities concerns Alan, who will turn 16 this summer. In Illinois, driver's licenses are issued only at age 18 or older unless one has had driver's education, offered only through schools. The local high school secretary told me it was offered only to registered students. I then quoted from the driving manual of our state that such courses are available to any young people regardless of their attendance at the school. My quotation was passed off and I was told the class was full already.

I went to the high school and talked with the superintendent there about the driver's education class. He said Alan's only requirement, other than age, was that he live in the district. Apparently the secretary to whom I talked earlier just had never known of a case like ours and was unfamiliar with school policy. I've learned one doesn't seek information from whoever answers the phone, but can expect more informed help at the top levels of administration, at least in our district.

## **College Grad at 15**

*The Tacoma, Wash., News Tribune, 6/13/81:*

Seattle (AP)—As most of her peers complete junior high school, 15-year-old Eva Von Dassow will graduate today from the University of Washington. Receiving a baccalaureate degree in classics, Eva is the first graduating student in the early entrance program of the UW's Child Development Research Group, a program for students 12 to 18 years old.

Eva entered the university at age 12 in the summer of 1978 after completing the eighth grade. Carrying as many as 23 academic credit hours a quarter, she has earned her degree in just little more than three years, graduating with a B+ average.



Although she didn't get to participate in high school proms and other hoopla of the traditional American teen, Eva says she wasn't a bit deprived. When people spoke of her missing out on the dances and athletics that bring lifelong memories for other young people, "I had no conception of what they were talking about," she said. "There was not a thing I regretted."

Eva doesn't think she would fit in too well in high school. "I wanted an academic challenge," she said. She thinks she "adjusted to (the university) pretty well." By the time she was a sophomore and junior at the university, Eva said she more readily made friends with her collegiate classmates and "had coffee with them every day."

While learning Latin, Greek, and other classic subjects, she studied ballet and had a part in "The Nutcracker" with the Pacific Northwest Ballet.

"The performing arts are where my heart is," she said. This summer she will dance in a program of the Northwest Repertory Dance Company at Reed College in Portland. In the fall, she will enroll in graduate studies in classics at the UW.

## **Rescue Operations**

*In the Fall 1973 issue of the magazine Issues in Radical Therapy, Claude Steiner wrote a very interesting article called "The Rescue Triangle," of which we print the following excerpts, which may be very useful to parents (homeschoolers or otherwise) and teachers (working in or out of schools).*

People who are paid for helping others (ministers, probation officers, social workers, psychologists, doctors, psychiatrists, therapists) and other people who are simply devoted to other human beings, often come to experience their "helping" activities in a basically negative way. Rather than feeling satisfaction and joy in helping others, they experience frustration having to work against difficult odds, a sense of bottomless responsibility and heartbreak over failure. (and develop) negative, persecutory attitudes about the people being helped, namely that they are lazy and unmotivated, or even that they are incurably ill.

When a person enters into a helping situation with the attitude that the endless numbers of those being helped are helpless and yet that they all, somehow, must be helped, the burden becomes increasingly large until soon it is overwhelming and likely to crush the helper, who will eventually feel powerless and victimized (JH—and will suffer what is now called “burnout.”)

The attitudes described above are cornerstones of the Rescue Triangle which involves three basic human roles: The Rescuer, The Victim, and The Persecutor.

In a Rescue situation the person helping is the Rescuer, and the person needing help is called the Victim. There are Victims and victims. Some people are “pure” or actual victims and are not contributing to their one-down position. As an example, a person being run over by a truck, or a person being robbed on the street, are actual victims. But most situations in which people are victimized include a certain collusion on the part of the Victim with the victimization.

To distinguish true oppression from oppression which involves some self-perpetuation or which is the result of lack of struggle against it, the word victim can be used with lower case (true victim) or capital letters (Victim).

The same device can be used with regard to the Rescuer role to distinguish it from the true rescuer like a fireman or a lifeguard whose function is to help true victims. The main difference between a rescuer and a Rescuer is that the former expects to succeed and usually does while the latter expects to fail and usually does.

Another difference between Rescuers, Victims, rescuers and victims, is that rescuers are usually thanked by the victims they help while Rescuers usually are persecuted by the Victims they help.

The Persecuting role is the inevitable outcome of the Rescue and Victim roles. Any person who Rescues by helping someone else when that person is not helping himself is inevitably going to become angry with him.

Most of us have worked enthusiastically on behalf of persons who eventually proved to have been not only not interested in our help but actually disdainful of it. Most of us have had the experience of becoming more and more concerned and active with someone who subtly became more and more passive until it seemed that their welfare concerned us more than it did them. Most of us have, at one time or another, been lured into a false sense of accomplishment as therapists only to suddenly fall from our pedestals as our star “patient” got drunk, attempted suicide, or got arrested for shoplifting.

To the extent that children can do things such as love and understand the world and themselves, and to the extent that they are not allowed to do these things, they are forced into a Victim position with the parents either as Persecutors who oppress them in their abilities, or as Rescuers who then do for them what they have actually prevented them from doing for themselves. For instance. a seven year old could, if left alone to learn it, get out of bed, get dressed, cook some breakfast, make some lunch. etc. or do chores such as cleaning the table, sweeping the floor, going to the store to buy things he needed.

All of these things that a seven year old can do are not usually allowed of seven year olds. Most households prevent a seven year old from freely using his powers to that full an extent, so that most seven year olds have to be awakened by their mothers, who then cook breakfast for them, take them to school, pick them up, cook dinner for them, and arrange for their entertainment and social life. In that situation the child is a Victim who is being Persecuted when he is kept powerless and who is being Rescued when things are done for him that he could do for himself.

Children who are trained as Victims grow up with varying degrees of disability or incapacity. As the children grow up and begin to acquire some power independent of the parents, they begin to cash in on their long time resentment for having been Victimized and become the parents’ Persecutors. In a home in which Rescuing and Persecuting is very prevalent, children are prone to set parents up in all manner of bad situations: middle class children often do this by doing badly in school, by refusing to work, by becoming drug addicts, and/or getting

themselves arrested.

How can a person who wishes to help avoid falling into the roles of the Rescue Triangle, so as to be free to be truly helpful? In order for a helping transaction to be a mutually satisfying experience, certain requirements called a contract have to be satisfied: the helper receives a consideration in exchange for helping, the transaction has to be mutually agreed upon by both parties, and they are equally involved in the process. When one person helps another in the absence of the condition stated above we call the situation a Rescue.

A helper is giving of herself. To avoid a Rescue the person helped needs to give something in return. This is called, in legal terms, the consideration.

Mr. Smith is an accomplished pianist. Charlie comes to Mr. Smith asking to be taught to play the piano. Mr. Smith may decide to teach Charlie to play the piano for a fee, or he may teach Charlie the piano in exchange for Charlie taking care of his garden. Mr. Smith was taught how to play the piano by someone who taught him for free and made it clear to Mr. Smith that she expected her teachings to be passed on to other talented people. Therefore, Mr. Smith might teach Charlie in repayment for the teaching he received from his own teacher. Or Mr. Smith may teach Charlie for free in exchange for the benefits that he receives from the community in which he and Charlie live. Finally, it is possible that Mr. Smith would have such pleasure teaching Charlie (that he would be) willing to. teach Charlie in exchange for being in Charlie's company. Charlie may also be able to teach Mr. Smith something.

All of these arrangements are valid. as long as they are understood by both parties, and as long as the consideration truly exists between the helper and the person being helped.

If that consideration does not exist or ceases to exist, then the situation becomes a Rescue.

Mutuality is a very important feature of a helping situation. Mutual consent means that 1) Charlie, who needs help, asks for it, and that

following his request Mr. Smith 2) agrees to help and states his conditions. Following this Charlie 3) accepts the help and the conditions attached to it. All three of these requirements are necessary for a good situation. If Charlie, for instance, did not ask to be taught how to play the piano, but Mr. Smith, after hearing him sing, decided that he was a very talented boy and offered his help, and Charlie was not really interested in it but accepted anyway, then this becomes a Rescue. If Charlie asked to be taught how to play the piano and Mr. Smith proceeded to teach without stating his conditions and without having Charlie accept them, then this too becomes a Rescue. If Charlie asks to be taught to play the piano and Mr. Smith agrees to do so and states his conditions but Charlie does not accept them (JH—or live up to them), then this also becomes a Rescue. In short, request, offer, and acceptance are three important features of a situation in which one person effectively helps another.

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JH: Mr. Steiner's very sensible words do not seem to have been much heeded. The problem of "burnout" has become so widespread and serious in all the "helping" professions, including teaching, that many conferences are devoted to it and books written about it. I skimmed through one of these books the other day, looking without success for traces of Mr. Steiner's insight.

Steiner's point about mutuality is the point I tried to make in the chapter "The True Authority of Teachers" in *Instead Of Education*, and the chapter "Authority," in *Freedom And Beyond*. For schools are an almost perfect example of Steiner's Rescue situation, and the better the intentions and the higher the hopes of the school, the worse the situation.

Many of the worst problems of the schools arise because they mistakenly believe and act as if they really could make students do things which the students don't want to do. If groups of homeschooling parents join to make some kinds of very informal schooling arrangements, they must be careful not to make this same mistake. (More on this in the following story.)

Of course, there are some kinds of helping situations in which there is no mutuality, no conditions asked or agreed on. The help that good parents give to babies and little children is of this kind. The question of where, in our

dealings with children, we can reasonably expect and ask for mutuality, and where we can not and should not, is a difficult one. But once we understand what Rescue operations are and why they are generally bad, with a little thought we should be able to keep that aspect of our lives with children down to a minimum.

## Parent Cooperatives

*JH: Many homeschooling families are thinking about and working out ways in which they can get together with other families to make some kind of cooperative meeting place, and activity space for their children. In earlier issues of GWS I have urged:*

1) Such places should be kept very small, probably not more than half a dozen or so families.

2) The model for such places should be the kind of club to which many adults belong, i.e., a place people go to, if and when they want to, to do things they want to do, including nothing at all.

3) Families using such a club/ center should have a firm understanding that if there is anything that a particular family wants their child to be taught or made to do, it shall be their responsibility to do that themselves, and at home. There must be no coerced learning in the club/ center, for this reason among many others, that the families will get into terrible arguments about what kinds of learning should be coerced.

Just after I edited and wrote the article about the Rescue Triangle, Nancy Plent wrote to say she was writing for her New Jersey newsletter an article about starting cooperative schools, and asking if I had any thoughts about them besides what I had already written in *GWS*. With Steiner's ideas fresh in mind, I wrote more or less as follows:

To what I said before I would now add this. The club/center must be run on another understanding, agreement, and rule, that all the children who go there *go by choice only*. Each child must be able to choose whether or not to go to the center, and, equally important, the center must be able to choose whether they want to have him there. In other words, the center must always have the right to send a child away, for an hour or a day or as long as it wishes, if the child is not obeying whatever rules the center has set up for itself. If the child *has*

to go to the center whether he wants to or not, because his parents have no other place to put him, and if for the same reason the center has to keep the child, no matter what he does, then the center has become, for that child at least, a child dump, and you are right back in the old compulsory school bag, trying to deal with children who don't want to be there and who get their revenge by making trouble for everyone else.

These centers will be sorely tempted to carry out what Steiner calls Rescues. Working parents are going to come around saying, "Oh please take our children, we can't stand the schools around us, but we have to work and we can't keep the child at home." What the center has to say is, "We will take the children, but *only* on this condition, that they not have to come if they don't want to, that there be someplace *else* to which you can send them if they don't want to come here, *or to which we can send them* if they break our rules or cause trouble here. Each child has to be able to say No to us, and we have to be able to say No to him. Otherwise, no deal."

Any centers that aren't tough and realistic enough to make and stick to such conditions are going to fall into the business of Rescuing families who don't like the available schools but (for reasons good or bad) won't take the responsibility for teaching their own children. Such centers will soon find themselves plagued with all the usual troubles of schools. So once again I give this heartfelt warning: *Don't* get into the child dump business, the babysitter business, the day-jail-for-kids business.

Some will ask, how will these working parents solve their babysitter problems. I don't know. Perhaps some of the other parents in the center may be able to help with this. But making these babysitter arrangements must be the parent's responsibility, not the center's.

To return to Steiner, the center would be wise not to try to "help" people who don't do anything to help it. If the center is truly cooperative, as it should be, then everyone involved must one way or another do a share of the work. People who can't do things on weekdays must do things on evenings or weekends. But everyone

contributes, no one is a free rider. Otherwise the center will start down the road to frustration, overwork for the dedicated few, resentment, and eventually. BURNOUT!

Burnout probably ended almost as many free schools as did quarrels about curriculum or lack of money. Let's not fall into that old trap.

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*Nancy responded:*

Over the last ten years I've sorted through many of the things which I believe caused the downfall of the alternative schools I knew and spent time with. Nothing I've read, though, has made the events of those schools fall into place in my head more clearly than the Rescue idea.

Now that I look back, I see that my school was in the Rescue business full time! We "Rescued" one family with 12 children (fortunately only four went to our school). We agreed to let them pay only \$200 tuition for the year because they couldn't afford more. Nobody mentioned the fact that because of them, we needed to buy a van for transportation, rent a bigger place, etc., all stuff we couldn't afford to do. We needed people in our school to impress other people that we had a school. so we Rescued.

The awful part of this is that I know that if I'm not careful, I could get carried away into a bad cooperative situation again. It's tempting when you meet people you like and they want "something more" and you do, too. There's still a yearning around for "something more" for the families and homeschooled kids I meet. I'm beginning to think it's just a civilized disease. Not too many people are really happy with their lifestyles, but most of us can't put our finger on why. We're all in danger of leaping into something that sounds good without thinking it through.

Please! Keep plugging away in *GWS* with your ideas on this theme! I think there's a real danger that many people will plunge into cooperative ventures, experience that burnout you speak of, and conclude, illogically, that "homeschooling doesn't work."

## **KY Homeschoolers**

*From Mil Duncan and Teri Mehler (KY):*



We are two Kentucky families with homeschoolers, and since September we have been combining tutoring from former teachers and Berea College students with parent-initiated activities. Currently the three boys (6½, 6½, and 5) have individual reading lessons three mornings each week, math three mornings, and French three times. In addition, an energetic young woman does “nature” with them on Tuesdays (they tapped a maple tree and made a windmill!) and a Berea College philosophy professor has “Philosophy for Kids” with them and a few other children about twice a month. Our activities for the afternoon are open to other families, and so far have included woodworking (one of our fathers is a woodworker by profession, and the other as a hobby), embroidery, candle-making, baking, hikes, and puppetry.

We happen to live on the same street in town, and most of the formal instruction takes place in one home where a room is set aside for studying. The street itself is full of kids after the regular school lets out at 2 PM, and there is certainly no lack of socializing going on. I forgot to mention that the kids are having swimming lessons with a friend several times each week.

Both families have read *Farmer Boy* by Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Robin Hood*, *Old Yeller*, *The Jungle Book*, and *The Hobbit*, among others, and as you can imagine, each one is a great new world of history and geography and other ways of living.

Although we all had a “no school” attitude before we had kids, the doing of it did seem like a big, and somehow risky, undertaking when it came time to begin. We have all noticed that doing it is much more natural and comfortable than we had anticipated. The kids are relaxed and energetic, and the individualized attention makes for some pretty remarkable progress in the skill areas. They get themselves around town on their bikes, take themselves to the movies on the weekends and handle all the necessary finances, and are forever embarking on ambitious projects of their own design and plan. Today while we planned our school activities for next year (in Kentucky, one can make a new school without too much fanfare, and so we hope to do so for next fall when the older boys must legally be in a school), the kids alternated their lessons with the construction of a big dugout clubhouse in the old garden space out back, bordered in a brick wall, carefully staggered like bricks in fireplaces.

Our biggest difficulty is the time necessary for all this planning and activities. Of the four parents involved, none are home all the time. One

family has a young business in fine-furniture making, and the other couple is involved in local economic development work, the father fulltime, and the mother in full-time graduate study. We do have a fantastic woman who is our childcare person, and who fills in gaps and acts as the hub of it all. Which brings us to the second biggest difficulty, which is money. We are spending a good deal each week on the tutoring and the child care. Oh, for that \$1000 the schools would get if our children attended!

*From a later letter:*

Although the Mehlers will be homeschooling next fall, the Duncans will not, due to a combination of financial reasons and the kids' particular needs right now.

## **Group Sub Lunch**

From Mary Yost (OR):

I used the last issue of our group subscription as an occasion to invite everyone to lunch, squeezing 11 people into our two-room hand-built house. We had a wonderful afternoon! Since it was our first meeting and many of us had never met, we had no set agenda. But before the soup was even served, the conversation went directly to analysis of the local schools, the peer issue, and the problems related to living in rural isolation.

There is an alternative to homeschooling here: Neskowin Valley School, which is a fine, if not perfect place. Most of our "GWS children" are enrolled there. At age 12, they will have to either go on to a very traditional public school or be homeschoolers. Two children are at that point now. One of the families will send their daughter to the public school and set up an afternoon study group with the idea of supplementing or enriching her learning. The other family will keep their son at home. They did that the year before when they first moved to this area; they set up a simple program for the 3 R's, and he spent his free time developing marvelous skills in drawing and woodworking. But, though his older brother was also at home, he was desperately lonely. They hope that now he has made friends at school, he can arrange to be with them.

Next year will be the test for most of us to see whether there may be some way to work with the public school to improve it, whether the Neskowin

school should expand to include older children, or whether we should set up some way for unschoolers to be less isolated, short of an actual co-op. The group seemed to feel we should focus on all these things. The other consensus of the meeting was to renew our group subscription. Enclosed is a check.

## Travel Letter

*Ann Bodine (NJ) sent copies of this letter to a number of other GWS readers:*

Dear Friends: I found your name in the *GWS* Directory. I am Ann Bodine, formerly a professor of anthropology and linguistics at Rutgers Univ., now an enthusiastic home teacher-learner, along with our three children, Jonathan born 7/74, Karina 8/75, and Davie 6/79.

My children and I are planning an educational-pleasure trip down the East Coast during the month of April. I belong to the international host-traveler exchange Servas (*GWS* #18) and have enjoyed staying with families in other countries. I would like to try the same thing in the U.S.

I am looking for a couple of families along our route, preferably who have young homeschooled children. I would hope that if we did find a couple of families willing to host us, at least one might result in a long term relationship including such things as return visits by you to our house, correspondence between our children, possibly our children might make a cassette tape to exchange, or exchange photos, drawings or other written products, etc. Such a relationship could widen our children's horizons.

I am sending this letter to everyone listed in the Directory who lives along our route and who states in the Directory that they have children in the 4-9-year-old range. Our only restriction is that because of allergy we can't stay with a family where there is smoking in the house.

I have no idea whether we will get no invitations or more invitations than we can accept, but in case you are interested in hosting us I would like to discuss some specifics. We will be carrying one sleeping bag and air mattress in which Jonathan and Karina can sleep together. David and I can sleep together in a single bed or on a sofa. We will be carrying our own sheets, towels, blankets, and pillows. Servas suggests that a two day visit is best because one day is not enough to get to know each other and more than two days can become a burden to the host, but we are flexible about length of

stay.

We will contribute in whatever way you request to the running of your household so that you do not have extra work as a result of our visit. We can make any arrangement for meals that suits you—eating all of our meals out, sharing food purchasing and cooking, or whatever. (We practice good nutrition, so don't worry that we might expose your children to junk food.)

During the day we can either join you in your usual daily life and routine, or we can leave you to your business while we go on an outing or sightseeing, or we can take your children with us on our outing while you stay home, or we can all go on sightseeing or on some outing together. (The rest of the letter had information on dates and addresses.)

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*Ann added in a letter to us:*

Our schedule permitted us to accept 5 of the 6 invitations we received. In addition to all the fun the children had playing together, my conversations with the parents and my participation in their lives gave me a great deal of perspective on my children and on myself as a parent-teacher. My children are beginning to correspond with several of the children we visited and we hope to receive return visits from all of them.

We are listed with the homeschoolers travel network organized by Elaine Andres (2120 W Cashman Court, Peoria IL 61604) described in *GWS* #18, but have not yet received a single request for an invitation as a result of that listing. Perhaps many homeschoolers haven't realized the benefits that can result from such visits, or what they're missing in not taking advantage of the travel network.

The only thing I would do differently, if I were doing it again is try to establish before we got there how the host family wanted me to contribute to the household work. With a few families I was able to slip naturally into a helping role, while with other families I was never very clear about what I could do to help.

## **From a Musician**

*A musical conductor writes from Switzerland:*

I spent four years at a well-esteemed public high school. During that time I

found one teacher who truly loved her teaching and who encouraged me in my innate appreciation of literature and my beginning attempts at writing. By my 16th year, I had lost interest in the system and was in fact educating myself even though attending classes. I was something of a maverick—reading what I wanted to read (Dostoevsky) rather than the school assignments, writing poetry rather than doing grammatical exercises, working after school for Helen Gahagan Douglas’s senatorial campaign against Nixon rather than fulfilling “social science” homework requirements.

In 8th grade my class had done an outline of the Constitution—a thorough piece of work which required nearly a whole term. To my surprise, a similar assignment was given to the 12th grade class, the assumption no doubt being that nobody could possibly have remembered anything from the 8th grade. I found this a ridiculous waste of time, exhumed the 8th grade manuscript (which retained its original date), submitted it to the 12th grade teacher and received a B+. After all, he could not maintain that I had not done the work.

We have two children. My daughter went to school in a New York suburb. Every spring I had a 2–3 month European concert tour. We would therefore take her out of school (from grades 1–5) during this period, much to the amazement and chagrin of our friends. My daughter is not an “intellectual” person per se; her talents run more along the line of intuition and feeling. Nonetheless, we found that 45 minutes daily schoolwork with one of us was sufficient to put her near the head of her class each spring when she returned for the final few weeks of school. There was thus no academic loss, and of course an enormous gain in travelling throughout the world.

Our son, now 10, seems to be a budding cellist. I discussed his musical/educational future with my friend Paul Tortelier, whom I consider to be a truly great cellist (JH: My favorite among living cellists). Tortelier told me that his mother took him out of school at the age of 11, not only so that he could practice his cello, but so that he could get a truly rounded education—which, to say the least, he obtained.

## **Stewart And Suzuki**

JH: The fact that I like the Stewart piano lessons so much (*GWS* #21) doesn’t mean I have lost any of my great enthusiasm for Suzuki methods of instruction, or at least large parts of them, as I understand them. (I suspect

that some things being done in the name of Suzuki might surprise Suzuki himself.) When I begin my own work on the piano, I plan to use a mixture of Stewart and Suzuki.

In the first place I agree very strongly with the fundamental insight of Suzuki, the living heart of his method, that just as children learn to speak by trying—at first very clumsily—to make some of the speech they hear others making around them, so children can best learn to make music by trying to play on their instruments tunes they have heard many times and already know.

Some Suzuki teachers may be in danger of losing the point of this fundamental insight. Children learning to speak do not learn to say one short word or phrase perfectly, then another word or phrase, and so on. They say a great many things, as many as they can, all very imperfectly, and slowly and with much use and practice learn to say them better and better. In their learning they advance not on a narrow front but on a very broad one, working on many different things at once. But it looks as if some Suzuki students, at least on stringed instruments, are being taught to spend a long time learning to play one or two very simple tunes “correctly” before moving on to something else. When I hear children doggedly sawing away on their violins at “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” all in the first position and using only the lower half of their bows, I don’t feel much of the spirit of excitement and adventure that I hear when children are learning to speak.

Another great advantage of Suzuki, certainly in piano, is that from the very beginning it gives the students good music to play, small pieces and little fragments from the great composers.

Still another advantage of Suzuki is that they sell records of the music the children will learn to play, so that the children can hear and come to know these tunes before they begin to play them. Then, when they are playing them, they can check their playing against the records. Of course, if you have a tape recorder, you can record yourself (or someone) playing the piano tunes in the Stewart lessons, and thus accomplish the same thing.

So I can easily imagine using Stewart and Suzuki together, spending some time on one and some on the other. One of the great advantages of Stewart is that from the very beginning it gives the students an easy way to write down any tunes they can pick out on the piano. Indeed, beginners might use Stewart to write down some of the music they learn in Suzuki—and what

is even more important, some of the tunes or chords *they made up themselves*.

If I were teaching music, I would emphasize much more than either Stewart or Suzuki these two vital and fundamental parts of music making—improvisation and composition (I already do a great deal of these in my work on the cello.) I would encourage beginners to do two kinds of improvising: 1) A very free kind in which they just try to make the widest possible variety of *sounds* on their instruments 2) A more controlled kind in which they try to use the instrument to create tunes. And I would encourage students, when they had made on their instrument or in their minds a tune they really liked, to write it down, which Stewart makes it easy to do.

(DR: Suzuki materials are published by Summy Birchard Co., Box CN-27, Princeton NJ 08540. If anyone knows of an easy way to find Suzuki instructors (a directory, association, etc.), please let us know.)

## Friends Through Mail

*From Krystal Lytton (VT):*

I really like reading *Growing Without Schooling* when it comes in the mail. Just today I got a letter from a girl who had seen my name in *GWS* (#15, “Vt. Homeschoolers”) who wants to write back and forth, which is neat because I like writing people and I’m now writing about 10 friends. I’m 12 years old, and I have been learning at home for three years now.

## Two Interested Publishers

*Charles Krinsky, of the publishing company Cedar Books (131 E 62nd St, New York NY 10021) called our office last March after seeing the homeschooling article in the New York Times. He said he was interested in publishing a book on homeschooling or a related child-raising issue, and asked us if we knew of any such manuscripts.*

*Also, in June, we got this letter from Craig Caughlan, Unity Press, 235 Hoover Rd, Santa Cruz CA 95065:*

It was with interest that I read your recent interview in *Mothering Magazine*. For some time Unity Press has been desirous of publishing a book on alternatives to public school that allow a better nurturing of a child, either as a complete alternative or as a supplement.

I would welcome reviewing any book proposals or projects you may have in mind. I've enclosed a recent catalog to show you the type of books we publish.

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We know there are lots of *GWS* readers out there who are good at writing, so if you've ever thought of putting your experiences into a book, here's evidence that at least someone might be interested in publishing it. Maybe you've never thought of yourself as "a writer," as a person who could actually get a book published, but that doesn't matter. As far as I can tell, as long as you can put down words on paper, and as long as you have something to say, you can be a writer. Sure, there are such questions as organization, focus, style, and pace—but once you have something written, you can always re-write, cut, rearrange, or polish.

I also want to point out that one reason I think the quality of writing in the letters we get here at *GWS* is so delightful is that people are not self-consciously sitting down to write an article or a book. They are simply telling us what's been going on because they want us to know. I suspect that writing that is done in the form of letters to friends, or as a diary or journal, will almost always be superior to writing done more formally. So if it helps, just think of your book as a collection of letters, or as a journal.

We certainly hope that some *GWS* readers will get in touch with these two publishers. And there's no reason why you can't consider the "big-name" publishers as well. Getting a first book published can be very hard, especially these days, but it can be done.—DR

## **New Illich Book Here**

*Shadow Work*, by Ivan Illich (\$5.35 + postage—See "Book Order Info"). This is Illich's latest book. It's hard to write a short review of it, for though it has only 107 pages of text it has in it more new (and surprising) information and important ideas than I ordinarily find in half a dozen books, even good ones.

Illich begins with the idea of what he calls "externalities" and some other economists sometimes call "externalized costs." When an auto company makes a car, they have to pay for the internal costs—the iron, copper, rubber, etc. that go into it, and the tools and work it takes to make it. But these are



not the only costs of having cars around. Another is smog, which can spoil our pleasure and even damage our health and property. We can imagine a society in which people who make cars would somehow pay for the damage that these cars do to the community, which would mean, in turn, that people who owned cars would have to pay their fair share of this cost. People may differ about whether this would be a good thing or not. The fact is that nowhere in the world does it happen. Neither the people who make cars nor the people who buy and use them have to pay for the many kinds of damage that these cars do to the community—noise, destruction of land to make roads, parking lots, etc., pollution of air and soil. They have “externalized” these costs, created a situation in which other people have to pay them, even if they don’t own or never use a car.

Since nobody ever actually writes out a check for these costs, economists don’t know how to count them, and so act as if they did not exist. If we could put an accurate money value on these externalities, these unwanted side-effects of our industrial system, and if, as we should, we subtracted this figure from our Gross National Product we might well find that the remaining Net National Product, the sum of true goods and benefits, has been declining for many years. Certainly this is the reality that more and more people experience. Never mind what official statistics say; in their own lives there are fewer things they want than there used to be and more things they don’t want.

In his introduction, Illich sums up what he has for some years now been saying about economic development:

Up to now economic development has always meant that people, instead of doing something, are enabled to buy it. Economic development has also meant that after a time people must buy the commodity, because the conditions under which they could get along without it had disappeared. And the environment could no longer be utilized by those who were unable to buy the good or service.

The example Illich cites here are streets, which people used for many purposes until the streets were taken away from them and given to cars. Housing is another good example. Once governments start to build houses for people who until then had been able to build their own, they soon start telling people (through elaborate building codes, etc.) that they may not build their

own, even though there is not the remotest possibility of the government's being able to build houses for everyone. Before long, few people even know any more how to build their own.

In other words, growth in the industrial or commodity sector, on top of whatever else it may do to us or for us, makes us more helpless, more dependent on the industrial economy itself. In a recent article Illich said that the history of the last five hundred years could very well be seen as a war against the subsistence economy. A subsistence economy is one in which most people know how, perhaps with the help of some friends and neighbors, to take care of themselves, and they learned this, not by being taught it in special places, but by growing up among and living with people who were doing the same.

Today this right to be more self-reliant or to refuse institutionalized compulsory help has become a luxury. Illich wisely and ironically remarks:

Defense against the damages inflicted by development, rather than giving access to some new "satisfaction," has become the most sought-after privilege. You have arrived if you can commute outside the rush hour; have probably attended an elite school if you can give birth at home; are privy to rare and special knowledge if you can bypass the physician when you are ill; are rich and lucky if you can breathe fresh air; not really poor if you can build your own shack.

In airports all over the U.S. I see advertisements for expensive and exclusive country housing estates, saying things like "Give your children the benefit of an unspoiled natural environment." As Illich points out, fresh air, pure water, quiet, uncrowded space, the chance to see things not made by people—things that not so long ago everyone had, even the people who didn't have anything else, are now more and more the luxuries of a few. It won't be long before we see ads selling some expensive resort or club by saying that there you can look at blue skies.

Elsewhere Illich has written about "the right to useful unemployment," i.e., the right to do work that is useful, to yourself or others, but that does not bring in any money. Most people in developed countries define work as something that brings in money, whether it involves actually doing anything or not. Not long ago I heard a taxi-driver at a cab rank say to another, "What I'd really like to get is a nice easy job like one of those bank guards—just

stand around all day.” More recently, walking by a building project, I heard a construction worker say to a uniformed security guard, “How, do you get a good job like that, anyway—don’t have to do anything.” By contrast, as Illich points out:

For most toiling unemployed in Mexico, *desempleado* still means the unoccupied loafer on a well-paid job, not the unemployed whom the economist means by the term.

To make clear this vital distinction between pre-industrial work and work as it is now known, Illich, on page 24, introduces the word “vernacular” which lies at the heart of this book: “I propose. the ideas of ‘vernacular work,’ unpaid activities which provide and improve livelihood.” Growing some of your own food is vernacular work; so is making or repairing your own clothes or dwelling; so is walking to someplace you want to go, or making your own entertainment—playing games that don’t require elaborate equipment, or talking with friends, or making music.

Shadow work, on the other hand, which more and more people (more often women than men), have to do more and more of, is quite different. Like vernacular work, it brings in no money. But unlike vernacular work, it doesn’t reduce your need for money, by enabling you to make what otherwise you would have to buy. You don’t enjoy doing it. But still, *you can’t get out of doing it*—not and still stay in the industrial economy, either as worker or consumer. Driving to the job is one kind of shadow work; or taking the car (or TV, etc.) to be repaired; or driving children to a distant school or activity; or driving to the shopping center. When I tell people that I haven’t owned a car for years many say enviously, “Oh, I wish I didn’t have to own one.” For such people, driving is shadow work. Shadow work can be seen, then, as a kind of *tax* on our time and energy which we must pay just in order to avoid being dropped out of the industrial economy. And one measure of the decline in the *true* standard of living of many people is the increasing amounts of time they have to spend doing it. This enormously important distinction between wage labor, vernacular work, and shadow work has until now not been made.

In the chapter “Vernacular Values,” Illich tells us who first tried to plan, standardize, and freeze a language, by writing a dictionary and grammar which from then on would tell everyone how they *must* speak and write. He

was a Spaniard, Nebrija, and he lived at the same time as Columbus. At first Queen Isabella resisted his project—the languages of her subjects belonged to them as much as their homes. The story of the arguments Nebrija used to change her mind is fascinating. The authorities did not want a standardized language to make it easier for them to teach the people to read. They were *already* reading tens of thousands of books printed in their own local, vernacular dialects, languages they learned just by living among people who spoke them. What bothered the authorities, who did not speak all these dialects, was that they could not know and control what people were reading. They wanted a single official language so that they could have a single official culture. (In much the same spirit, we hear plenty of people today saying that Standard English should be the official language of American culture.)

Along the way Illich lays to rest, I hope once and for all, the myth that the word “education” came from a Latin word meaning “to lead out.” It did no such thing; it meant something quite different.

There is much more, but I’ve said enough. At least, I hope I’ve said enough to make people want to know this very important book.—JH

## Other New Books Here

*Garrett-Wade Tool Catalog.* (\$1 + post). Tool catalog? Why is *GWS* adding a tool catalog to its book list? Well, one reason is that some or many of our readers are interested in woodworking and woodworking tools, and this company is famous for having the finest tools in the business. Also, the book has much information about how to use tools, and about woodworking itself.

But the main reason we are adding it to our list is that it is such a beautiful book, just as a book—one of the most beautifully designed, printed, and illustrated books I have ever seen. If it were published solely as a book; by a regular book publisher, it might well cost \$15 or \$20 instead of \$1. Practically every one of its 128 pages has one or more photographs of tools, many of them in color. The tools in these photos are so carefully and artistically arranged and lighted that this book reminds me more than anything else of the kind of (expensive) books that great museums print to illustrate collections of their finest treasures—like the catalogs of the

exhibition of objects from Tutankhamen's tomb that so many millions saw a few years ago. Indeed, looking through this book is like taking a trip through a very exciting museum. On every page we can feel the thought and loving care that have gone into the designing and making of these tools. It's enough to make you want to take up woodworking, just to get a chance to use them. I think many children will find this book—like the Eric Sloane books, which though different in form have much the same reverence for well made things—a fascinating glimpse into the mysterious and exciting adult world.

*Goode's World Atlas*, 15th Edition, Edward Espenshade, editor (\$12.95 + post). A fascinating and beautiful book. 227 pages of maps of every kind—geographic maps (showing the basic shapes of the land—mountains, rivers), economic maps (showing sources of raw materials, kinds of agriculture), maps of vegetation, rainfall, languages, population, maps of the ocean floors, maps of cities. There's an astonishing amount of information here, beautifully presented. The geographic maps are colored to show heights, and so realistically that the maps look three-dimensional—you almost reach out to feel the bumps. Along with the maps, many lists and indexes, of (among other things) populations of cities, heights of mountains, lengths of rivers, and other things that children (if they are not forced to) like to look into.

A great book to look things up in, but even more fun to browse in. Each time I start to work on this review, and look into the atlas to note what is in it, I get caught, and find myself looking for the highest mountains, or other pastimes equally pleasant and useless.

But the book gives much information even to the most idle browser. Maps of cities (whose shape's soon become as familiar as human faces) show that they tend to grow out along roads, railroads, and rivers—they look like plants putting out roots. Population maps show how densely crowded the world is in some places, and how empty in others. Rainfall maps give the reason—too much or too little rain makes places very hard or impossible to live in.

A beautiful book, and a wonderful bargain.

*The Farthest Shore*, by Ursula Le Guin (\$2 + post). This is the last of the three Earthsea stories (others are *A Wizard Of Earthsea* and *The Tombs Of Atuan*). As the story begins Ged the magician, now in his fifties, has for five years been the Archmage, the chief of all the magicians. To him comes Prince Arren, seventeen years old, bringing bad news. All over the island world of Earthsea civilization and culture are falling apart. Magic no longer

works, wizards are losing their spells, ancient crafts and skills are dying out, people do their work badly or not at all. Something has gone terribly wrong, and Ged the Archmage, restless after five years of inaction, and sure that at the heart of this evil lies a man, decides to go himself to the far islands of the Earthsea world to find out what has gone wrong. Young Arren, to his own great surprise, offers and begs to go with him, as servant, companion, helper, guard, or however he may be useful.

He had been an active boy, delighting in games, taking pride and pleasure in the skills of body and mind, apt at his duties of ceremony and governing, which were neither light nor simple. Yet he had never given himself entirely to anything. All had come easily to him, and he had done all easily; it had all been a game, and he had played at loving. But now the depths of him were wakened, not by a game or dream, but by honor, danger, wisdom, by a scarred face and a quiet voice and a dark hand holding, careless of its power, the staff of yew that bore near the grip, in silver set in the black wood, the Lost Rune of the Kings. So the first step out of childhood is made all at once, without looking before or behind, without caution, and nothing held in reserve.

Saying only that, Ursula Le Guin makes us feel how terrible it would be, is, to be young and to see nothing in life worth giving oneself to with a whole heart. Later, at sea, on their way to a town where Ged hopes to pick up the trail of the mystery, he speaks to Arren:

“Nature is not unnatural. This is not a righting of the balance, but an upsetting of it. There is only one creature who can do that.”

“A man?” said Arren, tentative.”

“We men.”

“How?”

“By an unmeasured desire for life.”

“For life? But it isn’t wrong to want to live?”

“No. But when we crave power over life—endless wealth,

unassailable safety, immortality—then desire becomes greed. And if knowledge allies itself to that greed, then comes evil. Then the balance of the world is swayed, and ruin lies heavy in the scale.”

It is a true sign of our times that on newsstands all over the country we can find “science” magazines that in almost every issue tell their readers, as a scientific fact that soon human beings will be able, by taking the right drugs, etc., to make themselves immortal. For modern scientists have more and more turned themselves into magicians, makers of miracles, upsetters and re-writers of the laws of nature. But unlike the magicians of Earthsea, more and more of ours are without responsibility, limits, or morals. Their motto is, “Any tricks we can do, we should do and will do, at whatever risk and cost.”

I have read the whole Earthsea trilogy several times now, each time with more pleasure. These are not just exciting, brilliant, and imaginative works of fantasy, though they are all of that. They are serious works of fiction, written to tell us something true and important. The theme of human beings wanting to have God-like powers and to deny death is an old one in myth and literature, but few people have dealt with it more vividly and convincingly than Mrs. Le Guin in these stories.

*Herland*, by Charlotte Gilman (\$2.65 + post). Written in 1915, this was a book far ahead of its time, and may still be ahead of ours. It is a utopian novel, that is, a story about an “ideal” society. English literature is full of these; this one is unusual in three ways. First, the society it tells about is populated entirely by women. Secondly, this society, unlike those in many utopian novels, which are thinly disguised nightmares, is in fact a very attractive place that many people and I suspect many *GWS* readers would be happy to live in. I found it far more believable, and likeable, than the somewhat similar society described in the recent novel *Ecotopia*. And finally, unlike most books written to sell a set of ideas, this one is very gentle, good-natured, and often very comic. It may have some sermons (and good ones) to preach, but it does not hit us over the head with them.

The story begins when three men, flying in a small airplane over remote South American jungles, discover this country, land in it, and set out to explore and study it. They soon find that the society, for its own survival, is eager to learn all it can about them, and is very good (in a kindly way) at doing so. The men are very different (one is 100% macho), and their very

different reactions to this society, and its reactions to them, make up the plot of this book. A very interesting, amusing, far-seeing, and hopeful tale.

*Out Of The Silent Planet*, by C.S. Lewis (\$1.75 + post). This is the first part of a science-fiction trilogy written (unlike the Narnia books) for adults. Ransom, the narrator, is kidnapped by two ruthless and greedy men, a scientist and a wealthy businessman, who have built a machine that can travel through space. On this machine they have been once to Mars, which they hope to colonize and exploit. They plan to go again, this time taking Ransom with them to offer as a kind of sacrifice to the Martian natives. When they land, Ransom escapes them, and the book is about his travels on Mars, and how he meets, learns to speak with, and gets to know and love the three very different kinds of intelligent beings who live there. The book was written some time ago; I think in the 1930s. Lewis's picture of Mars drew on the best scientific information and ideas about the planet of that time. But science changes, faster than we realize or than scientists (who tend to talk as if they were always a hair's breadth away from final truth) like to admit. What we have since learned about Mars and space travel makes nonsense of the science part of Lewis's book. We used to think that Mars had a thin but breathable atmosphere, oceans, and a network of interesting-looking canals. In their place our landing craft found a desert of red rocks. But no matter. If the Mars that Lewis believed in and wrote about does not exist, at least not in our solar system, we can wish that it did, for as Lewis described it, it is a most interesting and appealing planet, and the memory of it stuck vividly in my mind for many years.

Both before and after this book was written, people have written dozens or hundreds of science-fiction stories about human beings coming into contact with intelligent non-Earth beings. For the most part these have been what in the early days of science-fiction were called B.E.M.'s—Bug Eyed Monsters. One of the things I like most about this book is that his three Martian races are very vividly and believably drawn, all very different from us and from each other, and all very likeable. We feel very strongly the terror Ransom feels when, alone on a strange planet, fleeing for his life from his two Earth companions, he meets his first Martian, and we share his relief and later his excitement and joy as he overcomes his terror of him, becomes friends with him, and slowly learns to speak his language and understand his ideas. And the three Martian races, far more different from each other than any of we



humans are from each other, like each other not just in spite of but because of their differences.

In short, Lewis is trying in this novel to give us a feel for what a world without evil might be like. He certainly makes it real and tempting. A wonderful story, and not just for adults—I would think that most children over twelve, and some younger, would like it very much.—JH

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# Growing Without Schooling 23

September 1981

I've just come back from a ten-day trip to eight U.S. cities, doing many TV, radio, and newspaper interviews about *Teach Your Own* and home education. The trip went well—so far we've gotten about 200 requests for information, and they're still coming in fast. On Sept. 30, I'll be on the *Good Morning America* TV show along with the Tromblys of Connecticut (not Sept. 22 as first scheduled).

I was able to take part in two homeschooler meetings on this trip: a conference north of Seattle, and a potluck supper in Chicago. My publishers say they are willing to put me on the road some more; I'm thinking of going to Eastern cities like Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore, as well as Detroit, Cleveland again, Denver, perhaps to Texas and still other states. Any *GWS* readers who would like to arrange meetings, public events, etc., on this trip, should contact us right away. (For some suggestions on organizing such events, see page 15 of this issue.)

My three-week trip to the West, Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia was a big success and a lot of fun. I plan to write more about it in *GWS* #24.

Peggy has just finished proofreading the galleys for the revised edition of *How Children Fail*, and now it's my turn to go over them. Delacorte will publish the book in the spring of '82.

So far we've seen good reviews of *Teach Your Own* in *Psychology Today* and the *Wall Street Journal*. We're starting to hear from people who've read the book and are becoming *GWS* subscribers—we welcome them to the *GWS* family.

Donna reports that we are getting many more letters than usual from people who have just started teaching their children at home, or who have been doing so for some time and didn't know *GWS* existed. Of course, we're delighted to hear more and more of these success stories, many of which you'll find in this issue.—John Holt

# Learning With Her Son

*From Brenda Cowell, 1814 Giant St, Toledo OH 43613:*

My son, Kale, stayed out of school last fall, not so much because I had proof that home was better for him, but because I did have proof that school had not been good for me. In such a place of increased tension and anxiety, I had felt much loneliness, fear, and uncertainty. Although I learned to play the intellectual game quite well as a “Grade A” student, I never learned to develop or trust my own reasoning capabilities and intuition.

Last fall then, determined to find a better way, I kept Kale home, and slowly my whole conception of learning changed. In working with him in a more natural setting, learning became a way of satisfying a ravenous hunger to know—insects and dragons, electricity and tools, Spanish and English, the Renaissance. They all became real, fascinating tools to grow by.

For myself, I recovered a nearly lost art, the art of asking questions, of wondering and searching for answers. I know things about ol’ Christopher Columbus that they never mentioned in school, and I’ve learned how to keep a daily journal and ledger for my home business. Most important to me, I’ve learned to trust myself.

I write this then for all of you who have suffered from similar school withdrawal symptoms, hoping you too will let your children learn at home, not just for their growth, but to open your own rusty doors and get to know that curious child in your own mind.

## The Reason Why

*Penny Nesbit (IN) wrote:*

When a reporter called to ask if he could write about us, my husband, Pete, was out of town. I called our attorney to get some advice about whether it was safe now to come out in the open and he said that he thought it would be OK as long as we did not specifically condemn the local schools. When Pete returned the day of the interview, he also warned me about the dangers of being too outspoken. So—I was surprised and tickled when he answered the reporter’s question about why we took Peterson out of school by saying, “Because we wanted him educated.”

## In the Adult World

*From Elaine Mahoney (MA)—see “Success Story: Cape Cod,” GWS #11, and “From Barnstable Schools,” #15:*

We are now in our 4th year of home study and it gets better every year. STILL NO TESTING!! Kendra, 13 years old now, is an apprentice in a sewing machine repair shop. A family friend owns a repair shop and has been graciously sharing her knowledge and skill. Kendra enjoys spending time at the shop and is learning by doing. She answers the phone, waits on customers, makes bank deposits, and is learning the general maintenance and repair of sewing machines. She is also following an interest in herbs, and is scheduled to take a Red Cross course in first aid. Kimberlee, now 11 years old, is doing wonderfully well. She participated in the Northeast Seal Census program, went to the Dinosaur State Park in Connecticut, and has been recycling aluminum for both profit and concern for the environment.

## Keeping Learning Records

*Karen Cox (MI) wrote:*

We stopped overnight at the home of another homeschooling family in Ohio. Anna-Lisa had become acquainted with their daughter when they got hooked up as pen pals through *Hostex News* about a year ago. It was a lovely visit, reminding us that there really are good, peaceful, loving folks out there.

While we were in Ohio I was asked, as I often am, how I structure our day. There are still, as you know, lots of homeschooling parents who feel extremely nervous unless they cover a certain amount of the “basics” each day or week. Sometimes this nervousness evaporates after some experience, but for others it does not. Sometimes pressure from a spouse or other relative keeps the nervousness alive even after a couple of years of successful living together with kids—outside schools. And many people, especially if they have NOT had teaching experience, have been so totally schooled that they can’t believe their kids will be prepared for life unless someone insists that they do a certain amount of reading, writing and arithmetic each day.

I’d like to tell you what I do. It answers the need for written records for official purposes. Also, when I’ve recommended it to friends it has had the

effect of allowing the parents to relax.

I buy old-fashioned big blue lesson-plan books, one for each child. Having taught, many years ago, in a very traditional school, I know this kind of book is just the kind of thing school administrators like. On the columns I put headings which, unlike traditional headings, I have found to be very flexible, workable categories. The headings (some of which extend over two or three columns) are:

1) *Reading/Writing/Graphic Thinking*. On a typical day, the entries in a six-year old's book might be *The Lion, The Witch, And The Wardrobe* (the asterisk indicating it had been read to the child), and "Pencil sketches of horse and barn."

2) *Logical Thinking/Math*. Example entries: "Simple addition: oral problems set and answered. Practical application: adding pennies needed to buy stamp."

3) *Knowledge of Physical and Social World*. This one is easy and the possibilities are practically infinite. In this category can be included everything that might fall under the headings of biology, botany, zoology, career education, environmental studies, community studies, geography, geology, dramatic play, etc.

4) *Musical Thinking*. In this category are included everything from "Listening" and the name of the record, to "Group Singing," with or without names of some of the songs we sang together in the car. It can, of course, include notations about piano lessons, dance classes, concerts attended, etc., but it's not just for formal lessons.

The categories are not, of course, what make the activities. They are simply baskets into which we can toss such activities. Lots of people feel better when they can see the full baskets, never mind what's in them.

Let me make it clear that I do not think that keeping such records makes me better at the business of growing with my children. Nor does it make any difference to what the children actually do with their time. These records are kept after the fact, not before. They simply record what we do. The children are not aware of the categories and feel, rightly, that I keep them for my own sake. It makes no difference to them that riding horses with a friend has been included under "Knowledge of Physical and Social World." Nor do they care that cutting the muffin recipe in half has been recorded as "Fractions-Division/Practical Application: Recipe adjustment and preparation of

adjusted recipe.”

It soon becomes obvious that there are far too many wonderful things happening each day to ever write them all down. But getting everything down is not the point either. For many of my friends, these records have had the value of proving to them that their children were, indeed, learning. Even though they weren’t doing a set number of workbook pages each day and keeping a journal, they were learning and growing. In fact, it could be seen (pointed to on paper for faint-hearted relatives) that the children were actually doing a great deal more than would have been possible in a classroom.

How many 4th grade teachers have, as part of their lesson plans, noted that the children: read *A Wrinkle In Time*; heard a chapter of Tolkien’s *Lord Of The Rings*; received a letter from a friend in Japan; discussed Japan, especially Kyoto; listened to Jean-Pierre Rampal’s Japanese music for flute and harp; went to the library to look at a reference book on Japanese costumes; wrote a postcard to Japanese friend; mailed postcard after discussing with postal clerk time it would take to arrive and how Japanese mail carriers could read the address written in English and whether all mail carriers can read lots of languages and why “surface mail” is called that and is so much slower in winter when the Great Lakes are frozen? There was more to that day! And, of course it’s not a “typical” day, since there is no such thing. It might have included working with a potter or helping hang a door or taking a diseased branch to the county extension department.

The point is this: The structure of learning is not in the curriculum guidelines, nor in the teacher’s plan book, nor in the workbook. The structure is in the world. As the children learn about their world, they are understanding its order, in the only way that makes sense to them. And the first time an adult believes that, whether they’ve used a big blue plan book or not, the sun breaks through.

## **Good News From Colorado**

*An Arizona reader sent us a clipping about a Colorado State Board of Education proposal to regulate private schools; we sent a copy to the three homeschooling groups in Colorado. Nancy Dumke in Denver just wrote:*

We were not aware of the impending hearing until you sent the article. Immediately after receiving it, we received phone calls from homeschooling

support groups in Pueblo and Ft. Collins. Sandra Warriner and I attended the hearing on Sept. 10, and were amazed and delighted by the turnout—there were over 400 people there, and I'm sure that the size of the group helped to defeat the regulations. (After three hours of testimony, the board voted 3:2 to kill the proposal.) The religious groups in attendance were extremely well organized, and many were represented by lawyers.

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*From a Denver Post article about the hearing that Nancy sent:*

William Ball, an attorney for the Association of Christian Schools International, which he said consists of 1,300 schools with 235,000 pupils, led off the attack with the assertion that, "The proposed new rules are flatly unconstitutional." They would create "entanglements" between the state and religious schools, which have been forbidden by the U.S. Supreme Court, he said.

Furthermore, he added, "There is no educational or social crisis imposed by the non-public schools. To impose these regulations, the state would have to show that such exists."

## **From Texas**

*From Diane Elder (235 Kayton, San Antonio TX 78210) who arranged the radio interview with John that we mentioned in GWS #22:*

We have gotten only positive responses and are still getting phone calls from interested families. My husband and I have taped another interview, which will probably be on sometime in October. That interview also went well. We are "out of the closet" now and it feels very good.

As far as my research reveals, we have been able to cover all the legal requirements by spending less than \$50 and a little time and energy. I've put together a packet of information on starting a homeschool in Texas. It's about 22 pages and includes: articles of incorporation, by-laws, letters I've written to authorities and responses I've gotten, curriculum, phone numbers, addresses, and step-by-step instructions. I'd like to share it with anyone interested in sending \$2 (for postage and copying) to The Witte Terrace School (address above).

As far as I know, this complies with all Texas law. However, we must all

be aware that the schools can harass us by taking us to court any time they want. The state attorney general says his office would be very reluctant to prosecute because the law is so vague. Very good for us!

Some of us are trying to organize a homeschooling association in order to provide support and give information. I'll keep you informed on how that progresses.

Some folks are interested in lobbying for favorable legislation. My opinion is that that would be a foolish mistake. Right now Texas has no law governing homeschooling. The private school laws are very vague and fairly easy to comply with since accreditation is not mandatory, nor are certified teachers. I have no intention of going before anyone to ask permission or justify what I'm doing. I suspect that the desire for "favorable legislation" comes out of our own insecurity and need for someone to tell us that what we're doing is OK. (JH : I agree.)

## **10-Year-Old Helper**

*From Helene Van Manen (CO):*

One of the main problems at our homeschooling meetings was caring for the children during the meetings. The kids range in age from a few weeks to 6 and most are toddlers. Although they have a great time playing, reading books, coloring, and so on, someone always needed to go potty, have a drink of water, etc.

So last month I found a neighbourhood girl who's 10 years old and loves children. She has come to our last two meetings and cares for the children so we can share ideas, listen to readings from books we've found, etc. The children love her in return and respond well to her. She'll play games and sing songs with them plus if they need to go potty she can handle that also.

I'm amazed at how she can care for the 7-10 month olds who are only crawling. She'll just lug a baby around with her while she comforts a 2-year old who's scraped a knee. True continuum! We have a jar that each parent puts a contribution in to pay for her services and she always goes away with a fair share.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not opposed to having children at meetings—but this arrangement helps all those parents to concentrate and share for at least a few minutes without a million interruptions. I'd love to hear how other



groups handle this situation.

## **New Disease—“School Phobia”**

*From an article titled, “Why Some Children Panic As The School Year Begins,” in the Boston Globe, 8/31/81:*

A common fear, school phobia affects children of all ages. According to mental health workers and school personnel, however, it is most prevalent in the 6 to 9 and 12 to 14-year-old age groups. Ironically, say professionals, it usually has little or nothing to do with school but is a reflection of some conflict within the child or family.

“In cases where a child is going to kindergarten or first grade, leaving home can be a very disturbing step,” says Raymond Levy, Cambridge psychologist and clinical fellow at the Mt. Auburn Hospital: “The issue here is the actual separation from the parents, and sometimes in school-phobic children, there is a sense of parental collusion involved.

“Some parents, usually mothers, “Levy explains, “go through their own separation anxiety. For those whose identity and self-esteem is wrapped up in motherhood, a child’s leaving can present a threat to the mother’s sense of self. She may fear that when her child leaves she will no longer have a purpose in life.” According to Levy, a mother can unwittingly communicate her own anxiety to the child who, in turn, senses that there is something to fear in the world outside.

When a child develops physical symptoms or does not seem to be adjusting to school after two weeks, it’s a clear sign that the child needs to remain close to home in order to have a sense of control over his or her world. If physical symptoms persist, the child should be seen by a physician. If physical causes are ruled out, then it might be time to consult the school psychologist or a mental health professional.

What precipitates school phobia? An unusual event occurring within the past few months; the birth of a sibling or a death in the family; or family and marital problems are possible causes.

When Kirstin Paulsen of Gloucester was in the fourth grade, her parents were in the process of separating, and Kirstin decided, after Christmas vacation, that she didn't want to go back to school. "I used to put up a great big fight every morning," says the girl, now 12, "and my mom used to have to trick me into going."

Kirstin's mother recalls, "My husband and I were having problems, and there was a lot of friction in the house. Then Kirstin began saying she didn't want to go to school. First, she complained that she didn't like her teacher. Then she said the work was too difficult. We'd have these hideous fights in the morning, and I'd literally push her out the door. Sometimes I'd find her, an hour later, hiding in the barn. Then I'd drive her to school. I just didn't know what to do."

Paulsen spoke to the principal at Kirstin's school, "but he wasn't much help," she says. "Then, toward the end of the school year, they started talking about holding her back because she'd had so many absences (37 between December and June). I really didn't think that was the answer because, somehow she had managed to keep up academically. So I convinced them to let her go on."

The following year, things at home improved, but her mother decided to take Kirstin to a therapist.

"We went only a couple of times," she says, "but we talked a lot about her father's leaving. The therapist told Kirstin if it looked as if I couldn't control her and she didn't start going to school more regularly, there was a possibility she'd be taken away from me. She was very angry about that, but it did get her back to school."

After trying to calm a child's fears, parents must make it clear that staying home from school is not an option. "Since the fear is internal and not really school related," says Raymond Levy, "allowing the child to stay at home won't help. It will only prolong the anxiety."

"The schools need to be flexible in these situations," says Rockport teacher-principal Selma Bell. "We try to work with the parents when it appears that a child might be school phobic. Sometimes parents come in ready to blame us for their child's fear but usually they're very

cooperative and seem to welcome our help.”

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DR: So now another label is creeping into the school jargon. Just as kids who don't do well in school are labeled “learning disabled” and “having minimal brain disorders,” and restless kids are labeled. “hyperactive,” (and thereby very handily creating lots of jobs in Special Education during a time of excess teachers), now kids who don't like school will be labeled “school phobic,” and “treated” for this “illness. “ And what is at the root of this illness. Why, the family life, of course.

The story about Kirstin is absolutely incredible. First of all, no credence was given to her complaints about the teachers or the work. Second, all those absences didn't seem to hurt her education one bit. In the third place, the threat of being taken away from her own family—for what good reason?—was finally used to get her to go back to school. And finally, the whole thing was blamed on marital problems between her parents, which seems absurd—millions of kids whose parents have marital problems still go to school. In fact if her home life was so terrible, wouldn't it be just as likely for Kirstin to escape it by going to school.

Any therapist who deals with “school phobic” kids and does not know that homeschooling is a legal option needs to be educated himself.

If you start seeing articles like this in newspapers and magazines, we hope you will write letters of disagreement, loud and strong, and that you'll send us a copy. If you teach your kids at home or are planning to do so, you'd better be prepared to deal with accusations and hints that you are “sick” or suffering from “separation anxiety.”

And if the school people start in on you with full force, you will need all the strength you can find to resist these “experts.” Challenge their statements—what research do they have to back up their statements?

What kind of track record do they have treating “school-phobic” children? Why are the teachers and schools to be held blameless? Stick to your conviction that you are OK, your child is OK, it's the educational system that has problems. And of course, get your child out of there as soon as you possibly can.

The following letter is a moving account of a family's experience with so-called “school-phobia.”

## **“School Phobic” Son**

*From Marcia Farrah, 119 Reservoir, Newington CT 06111:*

Towards the spring of second grade, we had to push our son to school each day. We did not find out until summer that the teacher had embarrassed him several times in front of the class and was keeping him in at recess to finish his work so he was missing that kind of outlet during the day he so badly needed.

During the summer we sought advice from a social worker who said he might have to be placed on medication when he started back in the fall. I couldn't believe this and flatly said “No.”

When the first day of school arrived he was terrified and would not go. Foolishly I phoned the social worker who arrived and told us he had to go or we would lose all control. Against our most heartfelt beliefs we dragged him down. We slapped him. My husband threw him over his shoulder and when the principal met them at the door and took hold of our son's hands he kicked her and ran home. We recall that day with horror. My husband will never forgive himself for doing what he did to our son because someone who should know didn't. We know our son and it was wrong. We'll never again betray him to the “system.”

Of course, we had no alternative at this point but to consult a psychiatrist. Our son, by now, was threatening suicide if he had to go to school. His behavior became erratic and uncontrollable with terrible outbursts of temper and rage and then he would cry and be very depressed.

The psychiatrist suggested Mellaril and/or hospitalization. My husband was adamant that we do neither. Thank God! We are so grateful that we had the presence of mind not to be taken in by this. Unfortunately, we had to keep the doctor in order to get home-bound tutoring. If only I had known about *GWS* at this time, we would have been spared months of anguish.

The home-bound tutoring went on until January. My husband was livid when they were waiting for him one day to inform him of termination of the tutoring, due to a false accusation by the tutor that we had kept our son out of school for several days when he was not sick. My husband most beautifully met their every threat with a better one, as he had looked up the law and by this time had read many of your articles and books. Because of my husband.

we received a very polite call from the head of the tutoring program saying our son could continue as he was until another PPT meeting was scheduled. At this meeting, my husband again insisted that the hour of tutoring per day be kept, and it was granted.

We are ready to move if need be. I will not stay here and be subjected to this again next year! We are hoping to get through this year on our terms.

I have called and met with Jeanine Lupinek (whose name I got through your directory) and others at her home. What a delight to be with these women who laughed when I told them about the “school-phobic” label given my son. They couldn’t believe the horrors we’d been subjected to. Jeanine has been most helpful and is a lovely person.

You can’t imagine what a wonderful feeling it is to know that we have an alternative and the son that we love is not “crazy,” and there is a way out of this awful mess other than medication, hospitalization, etc. God bless you all.

## **Moved By GWS**

*From Carol Lambert (AK):*

Am I the only person who cries while reading *GWS*? I ask myself this every time I get a copy and find myself sitting at the kitchen table, after everyone else is in bed, shedding tears of relief over story after story of how someone bent back the bars and burst out of a cage; and tears because I am touched by the small acts of compassion and understanding I read about here; and tears of sadness, too, I guess, for myself and others who spent a lot of time feeling cowed and lonely, awkward and unvalued, in schools and other places we found ourselves as kids. Reading *GWS* always evokes deep emotions for me: the whole spectrum. I am always refreshed when I put it aside, and itching for the moment when I can leave my full-time work and work my way into the relaxation of homeschooling with our son.

## **Rewards And Concerns**

*From Marti Mikl (AZ):*

Most of the “teaching” has fallen to me. Though I manage two companies from our home, my time is much more flexible than Mike’s. The biggest problem I am faced with is trying to overcome 4½ years of Darris’ boredom

with conventional learning. It's quite a challenge to try and make the necessary subjects interesting.

One of the most rewarding aspects of homeschooling is watching Darris become, once again, happy, secure, sensitive, creative, interested in learning, and other such good things that gradually "got lost" as his dislike for school deepened. He had always been bright enough to bluff his way through school with very good grades, but the overwhelming boredom with the classroom situation had turned him into a sullen, tense, and very grouchy young man. The other very rewarding aspect is knowing that he is really grasping things, really learning. At school, he just tuned everything out to the point that his lack of proficiency in the basic skills was appalling.

One thing that totally baffles me is that so many homeschooling families (from letters I have read in *GWS*) seem to let their children "do their own thing" without any scheduled program of learning. I like this idea in theory, but can't understand how it will result in a well-rounded education. I can't imagine any typical child "choosing" to learn multiplication facts. And yet, in our opinion, they must learn, as well as the proper way to function with the English language and other subjects taught in the public schools. My approach is flexible and non-rigorous but, at the same time, structured.

Another thing I'm curious about is that so many people whose letters have appeared in *GWS* seem to have absolute genius children who have an insatiable appetite for learning everything and everything, have none of the usual childhood shortcomings, have no interest in TV or playing, and are years ahead of their counterparts in every aspect. Are these people for real? Darris is a typical 10-year old and, if left to his own choice, would play or watch TV most of the time. We don't necessarily want or expect our homeschooling situation to turn him into a "super kid." Maybe someone could respond to these questions.

Darris is learning at home from experiences there just weren't time for when he was in school. On a weekly basis, he does his own laundry, including washing and changing the sheets on his bed. Nearly every day, he cooks something; today, he made brownies from scratch, with practically no help from me. He learns about spelling simply by knowing that I frequently look up words in the dictionary "just to be sure." (I involve him by asking if he knows the correct spelling.) Recently, he has become enthralled with sculpting clay and is really quite talented. What a change from the days when

he was gone from home nine hours a day.

At times, I miss the hours of solitude I used to have, but am glad to exchange that luxury for a happy, contented, better-educated child. Besides, Darris is a very interesting person and I enjoy his company.

We would be very happy to help other interested families in the Phoenix area. We are very glad that we decided, in the beginning, to approach this venture honestly and aboveboard. Since we have official approval from the District School Board, we are free to talk about our homeschooling situation with friends and acquaintances. We have been overwhelmed that, even though people are stunned at first, the large majority verbally applaud what we are doing. I sincerely sympathize with homeschooling families who have to hide.

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*In her reply, Donna wrote:*

I had to smile a little, seeing your paragraph about superkids and then immediately following, the paragraph about all the things Darris is doing now that he's free of school. If we printed that one paragraph all by itself in *GWS*, some parents out there in readership-land would, like you, throw up their hands and say "A ten-year old doing his laundry every week, and making brownies from scratch! And talented at sculpting! *My* kid is just ordinary, never like that." I think you are assuming that a kid who can do A, B, and C, must be a genius who can do D, E, F through Z, and never, never has any problems. Even though you *know* (and I know, from what you said in your letter) that a child can do some things that are usually considered amazing for his or her age while *still* doing other things that worry you.

Just because we don't mention in *GWS* what problems a kid has doesn't mean the kid doesn't have any problems!

The reason why we print (and will continue to print) stories about children doing things normally considered impossible for their age, is because we want to challenge those assumptions, to show that they are not necessarily true. Society has a picture of what is proper behaviour for a child—and remember, that picture changes over time, and from culture to culture. Not so long ago, young people were considered much more responsible and capable than they are today.

A woman (Karen Franklin) wrote recently that her son was the official

egg-cracker for the family cooking *long before he was two years old*. Now, I find that fascinating—I can picture a four-year old breaking a raw egg OK, maybe a 3-year old, but somehow my imagination stops at 2. Yet should I say this woman is wrong? No. The only alternative is to cut away another small chink in my mental picture of which a 1½ year old is supposed to be capable.

## **Their Own Pace**

*From Jeanne Finan in Virginia:*

I hope we can all maintain our awareness that the loveliest thing about homeschooling is that children can move at their own pace. If a child learns to read at age 3, bravo. If a child learns to read at age 8, bravo! I think we sometimes tend to want our children to achieve miraculous feats; educational and otherwise, to “prove” that we are doing the right thing.

We love the time with our children (my husband and I are fortunate to work at home so we are together a great deal) and though I do admit I beam with at least inner pride that our two love to learn and “study,” my heart sings when I see that they can stop at any moment. They can run in the woods any time of day, play in the sandbox whenever the mood strikes them, create their own schedules. We lose the children inside ourselves so easily and quickly in this society; I love homeschooling because it allows our children to be just that—children!

## **Gimmicks versus Real Life**

*From Louise Andrieshyn (Man.):*

I think that you should point out that measuring “projects” are still gimmicks, and though kids might be less bored by them than math workbooks, parents shouldn’t expect their kids to actually want to do such projects. There is no better program than real life, and there is no program less than that, that my kids will do joyfully.

My kids love doing math and are adept at it, not because they do workbooks (they don’t), and not because I think up exciting projects (I don’t), but simply because they are constantly dealing with everyday life which is full of math questions and calls for lots of math experimentation.

The idea of kids being interested in their heights. Yeah, well. for a



birthday card Lisey got a “growth chart” and the kids all measured their heights and promptly forgot them.

But, about the same time we found out that for the swimming lessons Heidi and Michael wanted to take, you had to measure 40” at the chin. We discovered this when Michael wasn’t around, so Heidi and I tried to estimate Michael’s acceptability. She figured he was a head shorter than herself, so if we measured her to the chin and subtracted “a head” we’d have Michael’s measurement. It came out to less than 40”—and she was quite worried until Michael came home and she measured him and found the actual measurement was over 40.” (Probably the “head” she subtracted was her own, not adjusting it down to the size of his head.) Heidi learned a valuable lesson in estimation.

Again, the point is not the measuring, but the real life problem that made the measuring important because the latter was necessary to solve the problem. The effectiveness, seriousness, and importance of this “math lesson” would not have been possible if, instead, I had invented some interesting height-measuring project, because such a project would have been meaningless, pointless in terms of real life.

I don’t mean to give the impression that my kids’ real-life learning is all self-directed. A lot of it is compelled, but it is still real. For example, how Michael first learned fractions when he was 7. I was making a large pot of ketchup and his job was to put the tomatoes in the blender. That was by his own choice; he loves blending stuff. But then I asked him to keep track on a piece of paper the number of cups he was making because we needed 16. He did this grudgingly, but nevertheless, he did it because it was essential to the process. And by the time he was done, he could read and write fractions in halves and quarters and, what’s more, could add them. And, of course (and this can’t be learned in a workbook) he now knew how to use the measuring guide on the blender.

A few months ago Heidi complained, “I quit school so I wouldn’t have to sit in a desk all day doing work. So instead I stand all day doing work.” She was washing dishes.

I mean, I’m truly sorry we have so much work to do around here. I do wish the kids (and I!!) had more leisure time. I empathize with their complaints. But the fact still remains that this is how our life is right now and (barring a financial wind fall) will continue for some time more.

So, yes, much of their learning is “compelled”—making meals, planting the garden, painting the garage, helping Daddy do mechanical jobs at home, etc.—but this is a different kind of “compelled” compared to being compelled to do schoolwork X hours a day. At least our kind of “compelled” learning isn’t artificial—and in learning this way, the kids are developing various types and levels of competence which will allow them to function better in the world.

One time when we were in the city, I decided to do the grocery shopping. When we got to the checkout, I figured I’d better get Malcolm (age 1) out of the store (he’s not much interested in buildings. After seeing what’s inside, he usually puts up quite a fuss to get back outside). Seeing as how I had had my check authorized at the store office, with the amount left blank, I explained to Heidi what she should do with it, and left her and Lisey.

By the time she got back to the car, she was beaming with self-satisfaction. Not that she actually did anything much. Just stood in line, unloaded the cart, handed the cashier the check, and wheeled Lisey and the groceries to the car. But I know very well that the essence of the experience for her was the feeling it gave her of being grown-up. It was quite different from going to the store to buy some candy and comics for herself, which she has done innumerable times. Any kid can do that. But only adults stand in line with a load full of groceries and a four-year old in their cart.

She told me: “The cashier took the check, no questions asked.” That was the best part, I bet. An adult, who was a stranger and belonged to that Big Mysterious Adult World, was by her deference acknowledging the fact that Heidi was functioning as a competent adult in the everyday world.

Of course, by now, both pumping gas and doing the shopping have become routine tasks for my kids and they’d just as soon NOT do them anymore.

Further to this idea of math “gimmicks.” Yes, of course they are necessary in a classroom—and the more interesting materials in a classroom, the better for children. But when I was reading through our provincial Curriculum Guide for math, it became painfully obvious to me that all these “wonderful, creative materials” now found in classrooms are simply that—Gimmicks—to con (“motivate”) the child into “learning.” And, as such, almost all unnecessary in a home education where the child has access to the real materials of the real world and the everyday problems of life that demand the

use of those real materials.

This is not to say that, once in a while, kids won't want to play with "gimmicks." Certainly they will enjoy all sorts of concrete math materials, especially measuring tools if they can play with them as they want to—or what should officially be termed "experiment" with them, since that is true experimentation. But to make out a "program" using the concrete materials as "teaching aids," I don't think will effectively overcome the problem of boredom or dislike.

## Math From Living

*Nancy Plent wrote in the New Jersey Unschooleders Network:*

I hate fiddling with little pieces of paper. But like everyone else, I keep coming across refund slips for things that I buy. It seemed too bad to throw away the money they represented. So I offered my 9-year-old half of the money if he would take care of the whole process: get the necessary box tops or whatever together, fill out the slips, address the envelope, stamp and mail it. I supply the envelopes and stamps. Whatever refund slips I find, I put in his mailbox, which he checks now and then. When the checks arrive, they're made out to him, so he has to endorse them, cash them, and figure out his share. He can do this almost instantly now; financial motivation seems to be the best way to teach math!

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*And Nancy Wallace (NH) wrote:*

Vita (6) likes "pretty things"—laces, silks, jewellery, etc. One thing she does is to pore over catalogues we get in the mail, and one, the *Sturbridge Village* catalogue, really seems to have struck her fancy because it is so full of knick-knacks. She has learned to take the letters shown on the pictures, find them on the printed part of the page and then check out the prices of the stuff she likes. What she really loves are the china dolls with price tags like \$325.75, \$295.99, and so on, and Vila has learned how to read those monstrous figures accurately. She's also learned that they represent too much money!

In the morning she runs into an interesting problem—too many nice

Dresses! (Thanks to her grandmother.) So she has devised a logical method for figuring out what to wear. If she has a choice of four dresses, she divides them into two piles—one representing “heads” and one “tails”—and then flips a coin. She takes the winning pile and flips again. With six dresses it becomes more difficult, but she manages that too.

Our checks fascinate Vita. I always give her our old checks to play store with and she often keeps a stack of them on her little desk in the living room. Three or four times now she’s asked me to explain how checks work—how they can represent money. And she wants to know where our money is, and if the bank gives us the same money, we put in, and soon. She arrives to watch me attempt to balance the check book. But mostly she likes the physical sensation of holding a bundle of checks in her hands. It is a very grown-up feeling.

## **Their Own Budgets**

*From Gwendolyn West (TN):*

We’ve started an interesting project I’d like to share. My children receive stock dividends (a gift from grandparents long ago) for which I’m custodian. Instead of my spending it for their clothes, school, etc. as in the past, this year we’re going to give them the money directly to buy everything they need, except food and shelter.

When first told they were elated and had visions of new bikes, new baseball gloves and enormous savings accounts. I got out the encyclopaedia, “B” for budget, and we became informed together about “Budget Basics.” I’d purchased (at K-mart for a couple of dollars) a date stamp, inkpad and columnar tablet the day before. They were very curious about these items and could hardly wait to use the professional-looking stamp. I gave them each a note card to write down all their needs and goals. The encyclopaedia told about a boy named Carl whose income from jobs and allowance was less than his list of needs and goals. It said something to the effect “Carl will be in trouble if he pursues this budget.” It tickled the boys as they quickly saw Carl’s dilemma (and I’d read it with humor, which they enjoyed—and which, I might add, a school budget lesson would not usually include). They eagerly did math in their heads to solve Carl’s problem.

We then went on to read and talk about major budget categories. I asked

them what ones would apply to them. I talked about meanings of words like “income,” “expenditure,” “contribution” and in order to write out their own budgets on the special lined columnar sheets (which they’d never seen before) they had to find out how to spell them as well (they had sort of a sacred sense about all these new materials they were given even to running up to their rooms to find binders to keep their budget sheets in in an official important manner). Since dividends come quarterly, we talked about what “quarterly” means – “what’s a quarter of a dollar?”

“So what’s a quarter of a year?” “So your budget’s for how long?” etc. We talked about how needs will vary from one quarter to the next—how major categories won’t change but items or quantities needed might.

My only stipulation was that they had to buy everything—even their own toothpaste (which is an excellent idea since it saves sibling arguments about who left the cap off or squeezed it in the middle). My only other point to them was they had to be sure they had 5 clothing outfits—one for each weekday (leftovers for Saturday, and Sunday they were to determine what they’d like to wear to church and so plan for it in their individual budget). They were also required to have enough underwear and socks for 5 days. If it had not been 10 P.M. I’d have taken them at this point to the stores to check prices (a learning experience in itself) but since the stores were closed, when they asked the price of a pair of socks I told them a rough guess—they each had to multiply it times the number of pairs they decided they needed. They had to add their clothing totals. They were astounded by the way their glorious funds had disappeared to things like socks! “It’s not fair clothes should cost so much!” (I could probably have introduced another lesson here on how clothes are made, the people involved in the making of a pair of socks, for instance, which have to be paid etc.—but we had enough going on).

Actually it was socks that gave me this whole idea—I was so tired of seeing the boys run outside in socks without shoes when in a hurry or letting the dog put holes in them in friendly play. The thought came to me: if they had to buy them they wouldn’t treat them like that!

One of them asked what contributions were. I offered some examples, but added they probably wouldn’t have any at their age except for church. To my surprise, my animal-loving son budgeted a couple of dollars a quarter to The Humane Society. On their own they put down “college fund,” “savings” and

one had on his budget a Rolls Royce fund! (When I asked about this last entry he said it was because he only wanted to buy a car once and he wanted it to be perfect and last; he said if he started saving a few dollars now he could afford one when he was a man).

I also showed them my family budget. This was helpful when they both found themselves about \$20 over for the quarter. I explained to them why sometimes we ate more peanut butter than at other times and how the pay check that has to do the house payment doesn't have room for much else that two-week period. I showed them how I had to change my ideas to fit the income—or find more income. They hated doing this! “I just can't lower my savings anymore.” “There's no where I can cut!” They were almost hostile!

But like all of us, they found a way. I suggested they could do jobs to earn the extra they needed if they weren't willing to cut back. They compromised—a little job doing (they calculated \$20 for 3 months was not much over \$1 a week worth of work, like baby-sitting their sister for an hour) and a little cutting back.

For days they carried their budget binders everywhere, re-thinking certain parts or just looking at it. Now we are considering checking accounts—that they pay for and handle on their own using their quarterly dividend money. What started at 10 P.M. at our kitchen table one night—our budget lesson—could hardly have had half the excitement, fun, or reality in a classroom, nor been comprehended so quickly.

## **Young Learners**

*From Mary Newcomb (MN):*

Making the decision that we could, in fact, keep our children home with us has not been easy. We vacillated back and forth and finally home won.

Autumn (6) is interested in letters and words. When we shop at our local co-op, he gets the butter or eggs or carrots. It was really a surprise to me when he came back and told me the butter cost \$1.76. Now we explore all the labels we find on things, and he is getting pretty good at figuring them out. He doesn't write yet— isn't interested in that at all, but likes to form words, so we are planning a trip to the local pawn shop to buy a typewriter.

Rain is 4 and very interested in numbers; she will spend all day drawing and coloring, so we have fun figuring out new ways to make 3s and 7s.

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*Paula King (CA) wrote:*

A note about my daughter, Lindy. She is 11 ½ months old. Her favorite things are books. She takes my paperbacks off the shelves and toddles around with them. She thumbs through them almost always gently. She sits back with her books and “reads” them aloud. I mean that she opens them, turns a page, holds the book up and speaks in a reading tone of voice, then she turns a page or two forward or backward and does the same thing again. This activity can go on for quite a while. She seldom lets me read more than a page or two of a book to her before she reaches out and closes it, takes it from me, and reads it aloud to us herself.

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*From Mary Jordan (OH):*

Christopher (4) loves learning. First it was what he calls “arts and crafts:” painting, coloring, cutting, and pasting. Then for a while he concentrated on letters and numbers. Now he’s into nature study, planting a garden with his father (and planting any other seed he can get his hands on) and catching bugs in jars. He also enjoys sewing. I let him use a regular needle and embroidery floss on felt. He’s made a pillow, a glasses case, a purse and a holder for his comb. My biggest problem has been answering his questions and keeping him supplied with the materials he wants.

My two-year old daughter is more social and easy-going and I am more relaxed with her. She carries on elaborate and very intelligent conversations and loves people. She is not the least bit interested in facts and names of things. She doesn’t care what color something is or how many there are. Life is simply for enjoying.

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*From Barry Kahn (ME):*

Jocelyn is learning to count. She particularly likes “three” (pronounced “free”) and she now counts the steps when we come indoors. “Free, free, free, free, free,” she always ends with a flourish.

Heather was coloring a penguin the other day and asked me what color its beak was. “Yellow or white—I think,” I replied doubtfully. She thought for a moment and then started looking through her books. Eventually she found

one with a penguin picture and she consulted it frequently until she had finished. It is amusing (only to me) to see her so concerned with realistic accuracy when the finished drawings are so surrealistic. But there is definitely a logical system underlying her seemingly childish efforts. For example, I now know why she puts such long legs on the letter A. When she first writes it, it is more or less the same height as the other letters in her name. But she then proceeds to lengthen first one leg and then the other “so that it will stand up right.” Making all her letters the same height is not important, but keeping them from falling over is vital. I’m not going to argue with logic like that!

If I could remember 5% of what goes on around here I’d have material for many books.

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*And from Wanda Rezac (MA):*

When the kids were 4 and 2, I read to them from books without pictures—C.S. Lewis *Narnia* series, *The Wind In The Willows*, etc.—and whenever I did so, they both insisted on sitting in such a way that they could see the pages. If I moved the book out of their sight (I deliberately did this a few times as an experiment) they immediately complained and pulled my arm back. They liked to look at the page full of words.

## **Family in the Woods**

*Peggy Carkeet (N.Calif.) writes:*

A year ago I was very distressed wondering what we would do when Brent reached the age of 5 or 6 and had to go to school. One night I was reading *The Mother Earth News* and came across the interview with John Holt. It was as if a bolt of lightning struck me! I woke Ross up and told him of “homeschooling” or “unschooling” and he was as excited as I was. He has been totally supportive of the whole idea all along.

We live 8 miles from the nearest school on a dirt road. We will probably declare ourselves a private school eventually. If that doesn’t work, my father, who has been with public schools for 30 years (English teacher, high school principal, etc.) and mother (who for years “home-taught” children who couldn’t go to school for health reasons) say they’ll be token sponsors and



sign any necessary papers. My mom says that the children she home-taught learned in 2 hours a week what kids in public schools learned in 5 eight-hour days.

Brent (2), will sit with us or by himself for hours and “read” books (pointing out things he recognizes by name or sound, e.g. birds are “kaka” from “quack quack.”) One of my favorites is *Three Little Animals* by Margaret Wise Brown. Brent also loves *Go Dog, Go* by P.D. Eastman, mainly because we all yell out “Go dog GO!!!” throughout the book.

I was pleased to see the excerpt “Language Lessons” in *GWS* #20 and will contact the Publishers Central Bureau. I had two years of high school Spanish —memorizing “Hola, Isabelle,” etc., and remember very little. Since we live in California (so many Spanish names everywhere) and public TV has many Spanish shows, I thought that now is the time, when Brent is just beginning to talk, to learn to speak Spanish with him. I signed up through U. C. Berkeley’s correspondence course catalogue, but the class was cancelled (I am taking an Italic lettering course through them.) So I have been using a Spanish-English dictionary to dig up words for us to learn. Now as I say, “No, no, no” to Brent, he replies, “Si, si, si.” When he’s in the water (we have a kiddie-pool) he splashes and yells “agua!” I’ve written in many of his books the Spanish words and he doesn’t seem to care which ones are read.

Since we live on a wooded ridge top, we do a lot of hiking. Brent will sometimes hike three miles non-stop (well, he stops to check out rocks, flowers, and bugs.) He now requests “Walk?” and needs to get out at least once a day.

Two plant-lady friends of mine visited last month. We were picnicking in the meadows and I let Brent munch manzanita blossoms and miner’s lettuce along with his cheese and apple. One woman was upset with this: “How will he know what to eat and what not to?” I think she felt that if I let him eat anything “wild” he would not discriminate and eat anything and everything. But he does learn. We all managed to learn to identify and eat vegetables from the supermarket and from our vegetable gardens. One does not have to draw this imaginary line between wild and domestic plants. A child can learn to distinguish one plant from another, by example and encouragement. Of course, I also believe the parent (or whoever) should be there to explain, “Amanita, ouchie, not good for Bebe” (which is what Brent calls himself). or, “Manzanita berries, yum, yum.”

We also indulge in the family bed; all three of us love it. Very few people do. For a while we were “closet sleepers,” but now we are becoming more vocal, finally having the faith in our convictions not to hide them.

I guess the disapproval of so many of our values gets us down sometimes. I think that is a big reason why I enjoy reading *GWS* so much: so many positive people who agree with us.

Part of our life-style is a goal of self-sufficiency. We use solar panels and a wind generator for power, a hydraulic ram for water. I garden a lot (with Brent’s help!). I don’t see how a child could help but learn under these circumstances.

## **Kids on a Boat**

*From Rachael Solem (MA):*

Fisher and I have been talking for a long time about living on a boat, considering all the angles, joys, and pitfalls from our armchairs. When a friend told Fisher she’d seen an ad for a cheap sailboat charter on the Maine coast, we decided it was high time to leave our armchairs and see what it was like to live with two small children on a boat for a week.

Countless books from the library and visits to boat shows had over-prepared us, or me anyway, by talking up life on the water as something well out of the norm, something difficult and rewarding but unlike the challenges in daily life. I’d read about netting that would create a fully enclosed playpen for an infant below decks, harnesses which keep children tied to the mast, and lifejackets absolutely guaranteed to keep a baby’s head above water for so many hours (said jackets costing several times the price of the simplest Coast Guard-approved buoyancy vest which does the same thing with less discomfort). Following the advice of friends and grandmothers, I made a harness just in case it might come in handy (it never did).

We packed simple munching food —there was no refrigeration on this boat, nor was there a shower, flush toilet, or hot water—some warm clothes, cool clothes, and toys (never used), and headed for Tenants’ Harbor, Maine. It rained all the way there.

We waited for the Captain to meet us in a fish market/grocery store. John-Elijah, 13-months old, and Briana, almost 4, watched the lobsters scramble around a tank on the floor and witnessed the filleting of haddock and flounder

skilfully done by a mother and daughter. In typical down-east fashion, they spoke hardly at all to each other and not at all to us. We exchanged smiles. One large haddock had swallowed a small perch whole. When its belly was slit open and the fish came out, Briana logically thought it was the haddock's baby. I reminded her that fish lay eggs instead of carrying babies in their bellies.

We boarded the 35' sloop "Aphelion" (meaning "toward the sun") in the rain. We slept aboard, all four of us in the forward cabin, really just a triangular bed. There are drawers under it and a hatch above so we could lie awake and see the stars. The bed is high and the floor slopes down from it so climbing up and down is tricky for a small child. The lockers, drawers, and doors, with their special latches to hold all in place as the boat heels over, were easy for Briana. They were a challenge to John-Eli but that became his entertainment. Briana also learned to use various footholds built into the cabinet work to get up to the high storage spaces, so she could, and did willingly, fetch cups, flashlights, charts, etc. She also understood the rules of the lifejacket, which we laid down as we set sail Monday morning: it must be on every time she left the cockpit. John-Eli was another story as he did not appreciate the safety features of the jacket. He, too, had to wear it outside the cockpit and in the tender (a small, rather unstable boat used to get ashore from a mooring place). By the end of the week he was almost used to it.

I learned to cut out my anxiety when I am watching him and become simply an observer, because he does indeed know what he can and cannot do, and he does really want to live. This was a revelation to our skipper who welcomed children but had not had such young ones before. He began the week with phrases like "When he's a little older and not trying to kill himself. 'and' Children are like little animals and I'll treat them as such until they become human," and ended it with a great deal of respect for my son and his capabilities. He, too, watched John-Eli without touching him or coercing him. On one occasion when I, in a throwback to overanxious mothering, reached out to get John-Eli from a precarious spot (one foot on the dock, one on the boat, boat rocking away from him), Capt. Jory did what any thoughtful person would do for another, pulling the boat back a bit so John-Eli could make his move without falling in the water.

Briana learned to read a new kind of map. We sailed always within sight of land so that buoys, lighthouses, and rocks marked on the map could be

seen as the time passed.

Every port had a new diversion. In Rockport we met a local celebrity) Andre the Seal. He was being kept in a pen in the harbor where, we heard, he did a show with a seagull once a week. In Castine, the roads were lined with a variety of wildflowers which Briana collected to put in her hair. We also saw a huge ship in Castine's harbor, the *State of Maine*, used as a training ship for the Marine Maritime Academy. Several other boats had been donated to the MMA: sleek and classy yachts which Fisher took Briana to visit. The crew, seafaring college boys, welcomed them aboard. These boats were so very different from our own small sloop; Briana took it all in, teak, fiberglass, air-conditioning, high ceilings, then proudly pointed out the "Aphelion" to her hosts saying, "That's where I live."

At home she is fairly shy. but she started up conversations with all sorts of people of all ages, using John-Eli's wandering on shore as an introduction. John-Eli simply looked for dogs. At the beginning of the week it was his only word: "dah." Then he made another connection. He loves lights, and I had to remind him of the heat of the kerosene lamps in the cabin of the boat. I first told him it's a light and then that it's hot. his translation was "tah-tahtah." On shore, he began to look at car headlights and said "tah-tahtah," and street lamps, "tah-tahtah," and candles of course, "tah-tahtah." It took me a bit of time to catch on, but he was so insistent and proud of his discovery that I had to see it eventually.

Following John-Eli lazily around a small town was a visit to a new/old world. The bark of a dog or the jingle of its collar threw him into squeals of delight. Wheels were to make go around; flowers were to kiss, to inhale.

On a boat there is time for all these things. I brought my recorder and laboriously played *Henry Martin* and other nautical songs while the men were gone and the children a patient audience.

We all want to do it again. As for living full-time on a boat, I think we will wait until John-Eli is 3 or 4. But in the meantime we want to take some more short chartered trips.

## **Continuum in China**

*From Beatrice Liu (MN):*

Regarding *The Continuum Concept* (GWS #131, I have been thinking a lot

about how children were brought up in pre-Revolutionary China. From birth they were held, jiggled, nursed whenever they fussed, and catered to. A small child could do no wrong, and was generally given anything he wanted. When they fell down they just lay there waiting to be picked up. No one ever said, “Jump up!” The adults would run and pick him up and coo over him.

When a younger child came, the older child would be suddenly told, “You are a big brother now. You must take care of the little one.” In any case at about six he was expected to be completely responsible and obedient. I have puzzled a lot over how the transition was made from completely “spoiled” to completely subdued. The only explanation I have been able to come up with is that the closeness during the first years created such a sense of security that at six the child was ready to leave the nest. I’m not dogmatic about this. It’s a very superficial interpretation. But the question is interesting.

## La Leche Interest High

*From Ruth McCutchen (KY):*

The La Leche League International Conference in Chicago was a rousing success for the homeschooling movement. I put my daughter Alison into an “I Am Growing Without Schooling” T-shirt so she could act as a walking billboard. I carried a container marked “Homeschooling Information—Free Reprints” and we could scarcely walk 10 feet without someone stopping us to learn more. We talked with people all over the conference areas plus others who came to our room in the evenings to ask questions.

The “Options in Education” session was scheduled in a very small room and *many* people had been denied tickets to the session. On Saturday morning I discovered that there was a larger room available for that session. Alison and I set out to procure it and to open the session to all—we succeeded! At the 11 o’clock session, we delivered announcements to all the sessions so that everyone would find out that they could attend.

At 1:30 people began to trickle in, taking the *GWS* reprints we had placed on a table outside the room. By 2:15, there was standing room only in a room that held 270. Approximately 3/4 of those present were *specifically* interested in home-based education, though other options were to be covered. All of the reprints I’d ordered from you were taken.

The interest in unschooling among LLL folk is at about the same point

homebirth was five years ago. Now, homebirth is covered *separately* as a topic instead of in a “child birth options” session. I wouldn’t be surprised to see the same for us in 1983 at the Kansas City, Mo., 9th International conference!

### **3 N.H. Unschoolers**

*From Pat Savage (NH):*

I am finally writing to you (you won out over laundry), motivated by our good news. Our home education program for 7-year old Jamie has been approved by the Barrington Board of Education. We feel really glad for this decision as we presented our educational philosophy as accurately as we could and will still be able to have a harmonious relationship with the public school system.

Our decision was 6½ years in process with the actual hardcore work taking several months so that when friends say, “Oh, I didn’t know it was so easy” we tend to gasp. It was a good process for Jack and me to go through. It was an effort riddled with highs of communion and lows of conflict. We came up with a statement that is rich in the understanding that only a mother *and* father can give together.

At any rate, we followed the homeschooling guidelines as provided by the State Department of Education (Thank you, Nancy Wallace). We were very fortunate to have the Assistant to the Superintendent, Leon Worthly, help us with technical aspects of the final plan as he is very interested and supportive of our efforts. My observation has been that generally educators are more sympathetic to the idea of homeschooling (perhaps because they are aware of the difficulties in institutionalized education) but that the conservative, lay public is threatened by the idea. I was a bit nervous that the board would reject our proposal. I think presenting our case in a non-threatening, non-judgemental way, drawing a strong picture with lots of positive images of our home life, emphasizing individual variation as far as readiness, all helped to make it seem very acceptable.

The approval is for a one-year period with quarterly evaluations. We feel comfortable with the need to re-evaluate annually as we want to remain open to both Jamie’s and his sister, Katy’s needs.

With the realization of the responsibility we have welcomed to educate

our own, comes the appreciation that children learn through modelling during the early years no matter what we set out to “teach.” If as adults we are growing as we should, waking with a freshness each new day, always learning and enjoying the task of life which is to live it, then our children will learn these things. If we are caught up in impatient and unloving patterns, doing only the “shoulds” and worrying about the “only-if-I-coulds,” then our children may be hard put to grow free of those patterns themselves.

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*Elaine Rapp (NH) wrote:*

As the enclosed articles show, I have successfully applied to teach my son, Keith, at home next year. I offered a well-rounded curriculum but stressed flexibility in all areas so that Keith will pursue that which lies within his capabilities, and that which seems too difficult or to exert pressure on him will be deleted and kept for future use.

New Hampshire seems to be more receptive to homeschoolers since the adoption of the State Board of Education’s “Regulations and Procedures Pertaining to Home Education Programs in New Hampshire” in June of 1980. Anyone can write for this excellent booklet, to Charles Marston, NH Dept. of Ed., Division of Instruction, 64N. Main St., Concord NH 03301.

The school officials were concerned about two questions: (1) Was I providing a stimulating and well-rounded learning experience, and (2) what method would best assure them that this would ensue. Our method for review will be to present a portfolio of Keith’s work quarterly to a first grade teacher in the school he would normally attend. There will be no standardized testing for as long as I can put it off; at least until third grade. I don’t think this will present a problem since my relations so far with school people have been very positive. Although I am willing to cooperate with them, I am adamant about Keith’s education following a flexible approach. Should the school people pressure me in any way, it might be necessary to go a legal route to protect the privacy of my home and my right to educate my children at home.

In preparing my program, I received much help from the Home Education Resource Center run by my sister, Meg Johnson (337 Downs St, Ridge-wood NJ 07450). In fact my Superintendent of Schools indicated he would be writing her so he could have information on file should he receive any other homeschooling requests’ I would also be willing to talk with any N.H.

families who are homeschoolers, or potential homeschoolers, regarding any questions or experiences they may wish to share.

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*And from Viney Loveland (NH):*

We and our two boys, now 12 and 10, decided to try homeschooling in February 1979. After they dropped-out, the principal came to visit us. We talked for a couple of hours and he talked to the regional school board. That's all the hassle we've gotten. We live in a small town (population 500) and everyone is friendly. The education thing is ignored by townsfolk and officials both. It feels strange sometimes, especially when friends of ours a few towns away were getting so many hassles in Jan-Feb. 1979.

We have not followed any special course of instruction but tried to explore as the kids were inspired. They both love to read and we'd go to both the Gilsum library and the Keene library each week and bring home armloads of books. Now that summer's here, the adventure is mostly outdoors (we live in the woods) with butterfly nets, microscopes, and binoculars. We all enjoy being a family and learning as a daily and life-long way of living.

## **Success Stories**

*From Nevada:*

We have been approved by our school board to keep our three boys (12, 10, and 6) at home for schooling. They were hesitant, but our 10-page outline and our appearance at the board meeting convinced them that we are serious and able to educate our children. They will require that the boys be tested each spring, and I am a bit concerned about that, but I'll face it when the time comes. have never been so challenged or so excited about any endeavor.

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*From Alexander Dill in Virginia:*

After many letters to and from our school superintendent we were finally given permission to teach our daughter Al-lita, age 6, at home. The basis for approval was that my wife update her teaching certificate from Pennsylvania to meet Virginia state requirements. This would have entailed my wife going back to school.



My wife was approved by the state for a one— year temporary Virginia teaching certificate. However, prior to her receiving permission from the state of Virginia to teach in Virginia, we hand written the Superintendent, informing him that we had established our own private school to teach our daughter. That move, as you advised in your letter, put the icing on the cake.

Information received from the Ciesys was also very helpful. I would like to add that for many school officials who do not readily give support to parents to teach their children at home, “seeing is believing” may be applied to them. The immediate good results of home instruction reflected in the mannerisms, speaking skills, and happiness of our children were quite impressive to our superintendent.

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*Yvonne Huegel, 2947 Payson St, Houston TX 77021 writes:*

My own children have been in correspondence courses for some eight years now. All four children had one to six years of schooling in bilingual private schools in Mexico, or public schools in the United States, before enrolling in correspondence courses.

I was never satisfied with the amount of information I was able to get concerning what my children were or were not learning in school. When I finally enrolled them in correspondence courses, I was much more satisfied because I felt I could monitor their progress or lack of it. I feel that their Scouting, church, and musical activities have given them the opportunities they needed for social development.

Helping my children with their correspondence courses has been a full-time job for me. I hope computers and television will make the job easier for those parents who may wish to teach their own children in the future.

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*From Illinois:*

We teach our children—11- and 12-years-old—at home. Our children get their books from Christian Liberty Academy, and we like them very much. It is expensive but they are very fine books.

Our family and friends who know about this think we’re just terrible. The strange thing is, the same parents who condemn us are the ones who are always complaining about the terrible things going on in their children’s

classrooms. Or tell me they wouldn't want to be tied down so much. Their biggest thing is, "You're not a teacher—how can you do this to your children?" But I feel I am their teacher and have been since they were born. And one who loves them and really cares that they learn, not just math and spelling, but how to shop, check prices, buy a ticket at the airport, bake bread, raise vegetables, play the piano, make their own bookcases, order books and pick out books at the library.

Now people are saying, "You know, your children are so polite, so friendly, how do you do it?" They have been home now for two years and haven't learned yet that children are supposed to be rude, smart back, or not speak when called. My only regret is I didn't do it sooner with all our children.

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*A Tennessee reader writes:*

Well, at long last we have taken the first step. We have enrolled our 12-year-old son in Clonlara's Home Based Education Program for the rest of this school year and unless unforeseen things happen, plan to enrol him in the 7th grade there also.

We had gotten along fine, teaching him at home all this 1980–1981 year, except for the first two weeks, until just recently. The principal at the school kept pushing for a doctor's certificate and after pinning our doctor down, we couldn't get one. We liked the Clonlara information we had received and had a discussion with Dr. Pat Montgomery in which she told us the procedure on how to withdraw him. The principal wasn't too surprised and said he had heard of Dr. Montgomery. The only thing he did mention was that we might have to appear before the school board and/or submit our curriculum that we planned to use. We will keep you posted on developments, if any.

Our son is a much happier person now and we truly believe it is because of our teaching him at home. We have become a more closely knit family because of it.

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*Rosalyn Banning (TN) wrote:*

This is the second year we have had Lewis home with us. Like many, we have been using the Calvert course. Like many, we have found it both boring

and frustrating at times. The first year we followed their instructions to a “T” and just about gave up on the whole idea. We are still using the course but no longer worry about their day-to-day coverage of material. I’m sure they would not approve of our method but we are much more satisfied.

## **Good News From N.M.**

*From Cassie Tyler, PO Box 908, Holloman AFB NM 88330:*

What we have done is to go with the homeschooling idea but combined four families. We have nine students with about 14 grown-ups donating time to teaching so we have a regular schedule worked out—hours from 1 to 5:15 so people can come after work. It’s working very well and we were able to get some neat books and ideas through your newsletter. Fortunately several of our people are lawyers so we have no problems with the legal aspects.

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*From a later letter:*

Can’t tell you just how excited we are about our school—the kids are thrilled! It’s a child’s dream for a school. We took away the stress and removed the learning barriers put there by other types of schools and what we have, as John Holt has said, left the child’s natural desire to learn everything in sight. One of our small problems has been to get them to stop working long enough for a break and start another class.

If we can be of any help to others to create similar learning situations, by all means print whatever you like. If need be, we could get up a more detailed explanation of our set-up in the form of printed material and for probably \$1 to cover expenses we could mail it to anyone interested.

Incidentally, with nine students, we have Mexican, Negro, Indian, and white—can’t beat that for integration!

## **2nd Family in Wakefield**

*From Barbara Rodriguez (MA):*

During this past summer, my husband and I were looking for alternatives to sending our children to school in September. The distance to the school was the reason at first, but it became much, much more than that after reading

*Teach Your Own*. I used the order form at the back of the book to order *GWS*, as I was interested in the directory.

When I received *GWS*, I found the names of Mary and Tom Maher who also lived in Wakefield. I called them and asked how they went about taking their son out of school, realizing that we would be dealing with the same superintendent. They told me the procedure they had to go through to get the approval of the School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools.

My husband and I typed up a letter and made an appointment to see the Superintendent. When we met, we were expecting to have somewhat of a difficult time. He said he already had experience with this request before because there was another family in Wakefield (Tom and Mary) already teaching at home. He gave us permission and said he would cooperate with us by giving books, papers, access to school, and so forth.

I received a letter in the mail today saying that the principal of the school applauded my desire to educate my children at home and would cooperate with us. I received books today from what would have been my daughter Jennifer's teacher. My son's teacher said she would also be glad to cooperate in any way she can. A very surprising attitude, I believe, has occurred here. I am amazed!

Tom and Mary Maher really broke the ice here in Wakefield. I believe they had the difficult task. I would like to thank them both for their help.

## **Georgia Unschoolers**

*From Connie Shaw, 4818 Joy Ln, Lilburn, GA 30247:*

During 1980–81, I kept my children out of school and taught them at home, and I plan to continue with homeschooling this year.

My husband and I were becoming disenchanted with the local schools when we met several people who had taught their children at home. Their enthusiasm encouraged us to think seriously about the idea. The reading of several books on the subject helped to increase our confidence. During the latter part of the summer, we experimented with some structured homeschooling before making the decision not to enroll our children in the local public school.

We have five children. It has been a challenge keeping them all busy. There have been good days and bad, but many of the problems we faced at

the beginning have disappeared with the passage of time.

We often take trips to places such as the zoo, museums, parks, and local historical sites. We have never had a television set in our home. This gives everyone in the family more time for such pursuits as reading, playing, and working. Work is an important part of our homeschool routine. The children have assigned household chores to do each day. A nearby public school system broadcasts educational programs on public radio, and the children enjoy listening to these.

During the winter we hold school in an extra bedroom, but whenever the weather allows, the garage is our classroom. It is full of desks, chairs, tables, and shelves full of books, educational games, and toys. The children enjoy being only a few steps from the outdoors. They are free to run out and play whenever they feel the urge. Usually, they quickly return to their work with renewed interest after running off some energy.

We buy many of our textbooks, workbooks, and instructional materials at used book sales. Many texts sell for only 40 or 50 cents. Two teacher stores located nearby also serve as sources of materials. My husband collects books and has assembled a respectable library of several thousand. It is most satisfying to see one or more of the children off in a corner or stretched out on a bed absorbed in a book.

Homeschool has helped to strengthen our family and bring us closer together. There seems to be less friction between family members despite the fact that we are together most of the time.

## **Large Family at Home**

*From John Walker, Rt 2, Bruce WI 54819:*

In 1973 in Kansas City, Mo., we started deschooling by letting our children go to school four days a week instead of five. Our school principal thought it was a great idea (not publicly, of course). He wished all children would do the same and save the 5th day for those who needed extra help.

Our children then spent two years in an A.C.E. program in Eau Claire, Wisc. where they learned to study on their own. Also this put them “out of sight—out of mind” as far as the system was concerned.

When we started at home after our move to Racine, Minn., in 1978, we were careful to maintain this principle. People get very upset if they see a

child who should be in school.

We lean heavily to arts and this allows the children to express creatively. One hour each day is spent in singing. We have produced four 20-minute programs on videotape. These have been viewed on Public Access Cable TV. Our more formal program was the Weber and Rice cantata, "Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Coat." They, are now producing their own adaptation of "The Little Princess." They chose the play and are making the costumes. The most challenging part is a wardrobe for the doll, Emily.

We have 10 of our 15 children at home. Our older sons have been willing and effective teachers (no official education credentials). All of the family are working together in a family industry of restoring old pianos.

Up to the present we have maintained a strict schedule and a traditional curriculum. This year we are moving into a "free school" concept. We are travelling extensively to visit other large families who are interested in homeschooling.

## **Support in VA**

*From Dimitri Shelton in Virginia:*

We have six children and last year we took two of the girls out of public schools. When I started teaching them at home, I went through all the pains and anguish I guess most of us contend with. But since learning about you and your literature, I feel a great burden has been lifted from my shoulders.

Several of us who were acquainted previously decided to get together just to be able to talk about our frustrations. And then one of our group visited Theo Giesy (see *GWS*#11, "Ruling in Va.") We had known about her for some time, as we live in the same town, but all of us felt we didn't want to get too involved in each other's educating. How uninformed and naive we were. That was the best thing that ever happened to us. Theo came to a meeting and introduced us to your work. We are ever so grateful. None of us have done much *teaching* since. We have several more people that are interested in homeschooling and will be joining our group.

We've had no trouble with the authorities. I merely requested a transfer slip for a private school. We keep a low profile as much as possible.

Since I've begun reading, I've developed a different thinking about my children. Not viewing them as charges to be taken care of and directed, but as

people.

I'm trying to put some of this into effect with the three younger children. Jessica, 6, doesn't like to be taught and I have left her alone mostly because I was trying to work with Sheri, 12, and Teresa, 9. Now Jessica is reading and wants me to help her. Amy, 4, wants to do everything Jessica does and I'm helping her, too.

I feel very confident now that we did the right thing, and was able to answer that when questioned by a relative. If someone had asked me before if I were sure I was capable, I probably would have answered, I think so. Now thanks to you I say, Yes, I am.

## **Early Grads in Calif.**

*Wes Beach, 149 Casa Linda Ln, Aptos CA 95003, writes:*

I have just read most of *Teach Your Own*. I am a public high school teacher elbowing my way in the Y direction through the X-bound crowd. I am responsible for a class called "Exploring Advanced Education" in which I teach kids how to read school policies, rules, procedures, and law to enable them to discover what options exist and to chart their own routes through the system. Some of my students spend virtually all their time in correspondence study and/or college classes.

Whatever expertise I have I gained in dealing with my own two children. Brian, the older, was bored from Day One of school. He spent the third grade in a free school, and from the fourth grade on (in public school) I sent advanced work for him to do in class. (He still did a lot for the regular classwork.) At the beginning of the fifth grade he was ready for algebra and, with much trepidation, we arranged for him to audit a community college class in that subject. The class met daily, but Brian only attended three sessions per week so as not to interrupt his elementary school work unduly. He easily mastered the algebra. During the following year he audited several more college classes—and performed admirably in them. I attempted to pave the way for him to continue on this course in junior high, but I was stopped in my tracks by the principal, whose exact words, once she saw what I was driving at, were, "I hate kids like that." That remark, along with support from Julian Stanley of the *Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth* at Johns Hopkins, led me to take Brian out of school.

In California, as you probably know, there is a law that allows for home teaching by tutor; however, there are a number of rather restrictive guidelines, one of which is that the tutor must have a California credential. Since I am credentialed for grades 7–14, this major obstacle was easily overcome. One telephone conversation with a school secretary, in which I informed her that Brian would be working with a tutor rather than coming to school, was all that was ever necessary. Neither the principal nor anyone else called me back, no one asked for a curriculum, and no official requested documentation or testing.

He continued to audit college classes in what would have been his seventh grade year, and he also worked for an hour a week with a tutor (not me) who encouraged him to write. He was reaching college level mathematics, and we felt it was foolish for him to continue to audit; we believed that he should be allowed to matriculate in the community college. After a six-month campaign, which covered the ground from here to Sacramento and included some fascinating conversations and letters, and after everyone said, “We’d like to help, but the answer is no,” I found a loophole in the Education Code (which has since been plugged) that would allow Brian to be admitted through GED testing. He was.

From then on it was easy. He met the regular requirements for admission to the University of California, graduated from the Santa Cruz campus with honors in information science *two weeks after turning 17*, and is now working happily in the computer field. He is also very much more a whole human being than he would have been if he had remained in school.

My daughter, Alison needed (or so we thought at the time) the contact with age mates that school provides. I now think that contact may have been harmful in the ways you have pointed out. She mastered algebra and most of geometry in junior high by means of correspondence courses; she worked on them in class instead of doing the regular math. Because she was not finished with geometry when she entered high school, she scheduled a five-period day and kept the sixth period open for her correspondence work. This was against the rules, but a vice-principal was helpful in this and other matters.

Alison arranged a four-period day in her sophomore year and enrolled in an additional four community college classes during the year. A recent California law allows a person to attend community college classes on a part-time basis *at any age*; the permission of the college and of the releasing



district is required. I teach a computer-programming course at the local community college; one of my students last fall was in the fifth grade.

Alison also earned a California Certificate of Proficiency, which obviated the necessity of meeting high school graduation requirements. When school closed at the end of the year she went off for summer session at the Irvine campus of the University of California; her Certificate allowed her to attend even though she was not yet a high school junior. During her junior year at high school, she took only those courses that interested her, attended three community college courses, and came to the class I have mentioned at my high school. She intended to attend summer session again this summer at UCI, but changed her plans when she got a job she wanted very much. She will be fully eligible to enter UCI as a full-time student after three more community college classes, and will have spent 48% of the usual time in high school classes.

There are many short cuts. This is what I teach the kids in my high school class, and I would be most interested in sharing what I know with your readers; what I know has largely to do with kids using school “as a resource for purposes of their own.”

I would also be pleased to help any family with unschooling, but I suspect, at least in fighting legal battles, families in California don't need much help. For a long time there have been two ways for parents to remove their children from school. The first involves the statute that allows for individual tutoring; this law specifies that the tutor be certified, that a specific number of hours of instruction in mandated subjects take place daily, that there be a minimum number of days of instruction each year, and (most ridiculous), that the instruction take place between the hours of 8 AM and 4 PM. As I have already mentioned, it may be that no one will check on any of this, but the fact that these provisions exist may cause some worry for unschoolers.

Second, parents may register their home as a private school. This involves filling out an annual Private School Affidavit and following guidelines, a summary of which runs 10 pages.

In my county (Santa Cruz) at least, it is now impossible for schools to do much of anything about truants; the compulsory education law is unenforced and unenforceable. When parents simply take their children out of school, the school has little legal weaponry to fall back on. It is possible, but unlikely, that an unsympathetic school administrator could stir up some legal

harassment.

## **A Performing Family**

*Amel Zachai, PO Box 543, Camden ME 04843, writes:*

I have two daughters who are now 23 years old and who did not attend schools. They are beautiful, loving, clear-thinking individuals. They are far from uneducated and know more than most adults. though what they do know is quite different since we live a television-less life and always have.

I also have a son of 12 who is growing up totally free of the crippling confinement of classroom and schools. He has never been to school and is an intelligent, versatile, flexible, peaceful, personable, and friendly person who feels comfortable with adults. He was an important member of our performing mime company from age 3 to 6, at which time he and I became clown partners with Ringling Brothers' Circus and toured with one of the road shows. Since then we have travelled together through Switzerland and have lived a short time in Denmark.

We continue to perform sometimes when asked, but our current study is of ships and sails and the sea. This winter we will be sailing the Caribbean. He is a valuable deck-hand and teaches adults about sailing, boats, the sea, navigation and chart-reading.

We all love to study, and this we do through books, which we find it libraries or in book stores, and through finding places and people who are involved in the things we are interested in. Education for us has been, and continues to be, a very natural process. I also notice that we are all very child-like in our happiness and curiosity about things.

## **Homeschooled Blind Child**

*From Janet Seraphin, 322 Bryn Mawr Av, Bala Cynwyd PA 19004:*

You will be pleased to know that the small amount of information on learning disabilities which you sent has been enough to help me finalize my decision to keep Austin at home next year. I feel a great relief as I have been under much pressure about sending him to the local school for blind children.

Presently I have hired several people to work with Austin. He is only four so I have not begun anything too formal. He has been taking piano lessons

once a week for over a year and greatly enjoys it. I have found two other teachers to work with him several hours a week playing at the piano, the guitar, drums, making things with fabrics and other goodies, walking and exploring (Austin is slower than other children as he has not developed his muscles by running and jumping as he would have with normal vision) and so on. I spend a great deal of time reading with him and have found that he enjoys books for older children as they are far more descriptive.

## **In Spite Of “Handicaps”**

*Patricia Ann Mordes (FL) wrote:*

Our youngest, Gabriel, has the Ataxia type of cerebral palsy and cannot walk or talk much (at age 3). He is a beautiful child and is not paralyzed although his muscles are very weak. The doctor has assured us that he will walk eventually and that he will be mentally retarded. I asked him if he would sign a paper stating that. He said, “Of course not!” I wonder why, if he was so sure.

Since Gabriel has no other health defects, his heart is fine and so forth, we have stopped going to doctors, and my husband and I are reading everything in the library and all that we can obtain on cerebral palsy. We have found that many C.P. children are not mentally handicapped as previously thought (although some are).

A friend of mine “turned us in” to United Cerebral Palsy. She was “helping me out.” U. C. P called me and said someone would come to our home and “work” with Gabe, free. Being under a lot of fire from friends, I told her OK. The first visit, the woman told me that Gabe would probably never catch up with “normal” children and I shouldn’t get my hopes up. Whenever I said something positive about Gabe, she would counter it with something negative. She told me that she would bet this was a case of brain damage although she wouldn’t sign anything saying that. I felt so depressed after her visits until my husband and I decided to terminate the situation with her. All this has taught me one thing, that most professionals aren’t very professional or very smart.

Gabe is crawling very well now, can sit alone and bears his own weight on his legs. He walks around the chairs and sofas while holding on. He brings story books to his brother, father, or me to be read to him. Gabe has made a

lot of progress in the last three months and I have confidence in his continued progress and success.

Daniel (8) has learned, as have we all, from this experience with our baby. Everyone in this world is unique, we all learn at different rates, but we all do learn, and because a person is slower in learning than most others is not reason to assume that that person is not a worthwhile individual because he or she is handicapped.

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*From Elaine Bechtold in PA:*

I have a Down's Syndrome daughter who is taking piano lessons and doing very well. She just finished the *Green Book for Beginners III* (John W. Schaum Piano Course).

I have received several copies now of *GWS* and I like it better all the time. I as a parent am getting more and more confident in teaching my girl. I am realizing that there is a missing dimension in education and parents have a lot of teaching to do. But it is rewarding and challenging.

My school district principal will not give me any teaching material especially because my child is a learning disability child. Yet I am a taxpayer. In 1978 she was at 0 reading level and now she is up to third grade level because of my help at home. She was in Special Education of the public school for seven years and now since she is at a Christian Day School and mainstreamed, her whole life is changed. She is happy and learning—even if she is in second grade at the age of 15.

My daughter is also in 4-H. She entered her projects in the county fair, and the judge remarked, "She has improved much from last year."

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*Carol French-Corbett (KY) writes:*

In our second year at The New School in Cincinnati, we became parents of Sebastian, born with Down's Syndrome. He went with us to school from 10 days old, until we left for our forest farm in the Kentucky mountains when he was 8. Here we are homesteading with all the activities that that involves and learning how to be more and more self-sufficient. Sebastian, now 9, walks five miles to school, a rural two—room, eight grade school, which he loves because he misses the other children that he always had at The New School.

We still work with him at home all summer and holidays and he is making good progress. Thank you for encouraging parents to assert themselves and helping them not to be afraid of their natural role as the first and most important un-teachers their children will ever have.

## **Perceptive Teacher/ Learner**

*Letters from Jennifer Seip (NH), the “maverick L.D. expert” in GWS #22:*

June 16: There’s something that makes me resist fighting against learning disabilities per se. L.D. is both a product and a symptom of our educational system. Learning problems are caused by our school system and they are the holes in the balloon. The system is trying madly to justify kids not learning before the whole system falls apart. I know this isn’t too clear, but I always felt like I was patching up a balloon that I soon realized I didn’t want to be patched up.

It’s frustrating to deal with people about the tip of the iceberg. I always want to go right to the heart of the matter, which is in this case is learning, not learning problems. Learning can be a problem; that’s inherent in it. Just like marriage problems are inherent in being married. It doesn’t mean the people in the marriage are sick.

The first “L.D.” child I taught to read taught me how to teach him to read. I just tried everything I could think of and let him show me what worked, what he liked. We had a great time John became a beautiful reader. He would continue to get reading help off and on only because teachers would get so frustrated with him—he hated to do homework, or any dumb written work, actually—so he didn’t care what answers he put to the comprehension questions. So teachers thought he had a reading comprehension problem. He was just bored with the stories and bored with having to write answers to questions every time he read!

You wouldn’t believe how many kids I had referred to me that way. The teachers didn’t care how well they read, if they got the busy work wrong then they must have a reading comprehension problem. I’d talk to the kids and many would admit they wouldn’t even read the story—just look up the answers quickly. Really, I would laugh and have them show me how good they were at it—they only wanted to be good enough to get some answer down to be done with it. (How “smart” you were was shown by how fast you

could get through the readers.) I would explain to the kids what the consequences were, that I knew they could read and understand but their teachers didn't.

I worked with John four years later for written language. His teacher said he could read great but could not write. John was the most beautiful writer I ever worked with. When he was in the mood his writing just flowed, as opposed to many "A" students. He just didn't like to use punctuation or fix up spelling. He could do the part that can't be taught! His strengths were rarely seen in school. A beautifully creative student seen as a "poor student." What a crime!

I just read the Leslie Hart article on learning disabilities you sent me. How I wish I had that when I was teaching! It's the first time I've heard the physical make-up of the brain used to disprove learning disabilities. He gives technical evidence to support what I've always believed caused learning failure that it's due to stress. When I wanted to find out how much a child really knew, I would create some way that would reduce the stress for that child.

Every Specialist Meeting at school was an argument concerning this. In the few cases I could get people to believe the child wasn't L.D., they would then decide he/she was lazy—they couldn't (or didn't want to) see anything between!

July 28: I spent a week in Paris at the end of June with some friends. It was, of course, wonderful! It's been six or seven years since I was last in Europe and the language barrier was really interesting in regards to learning. I kept saying to my friend: "How could anyone be afraid that children won't learn to read in today's society??!" We were exhausted from the visual stimuli that bombarded us with French words. Not knowing what signs, menus, etc., said really made me so much more aware of how much of a disadvantage you are at if you can't read—how kids must feel (as when they're learning to talk) and how naturally motivated they would be just living in the world. I remember vividly one subway ride watching myself look at all the advertisements, trying to figure out what they said, making associations between words and pictures, the words I already knew, and asking my friends who knew far more French than I do. I learned the words that were most important to survival and most emotionally charged for me,

first. I laughed at the idea of going to Paris to sit in a classroom from 9 to 3, five days a week, to learn about Paris and how to speak, read, and write French. I was learning so incredibly fast by simply living!

One part that's interesting is that I experienced a lot of frustration whereas kids don't necessarily. For example, I got very frustrated trying to read the menu. I wanted to be able to glance over it myself and quickly decide what I wanted—I didn't want to miss anything good—I wanted to know exactly what the menu said. As a waitress, however, I don't see kids being frustrated that they can't read the menu. They want what they want—but they seem perfectly content with their parents telling them the choices (and only naming those items they know they like). Maybe they think they aren't capable of figuring out the words on the menu, that their teachers will teach them these words. If this is true then schools are stopping the natural reading processes in many children even before they get to school! Kids aren't doing what I did in Paris because they don't think they are capable of it themselves.

Several parents have told me that their first graders had cried at night at the very beginning of the school year because they hadn't been taught to read yet—they thought they would walk into that classroom and almost by magic their teacher would quickly bestow on them this skill.

I leave tomorrow for New York to spend the week with my niece and nephew who are at my parents for the summer. I'm really excited to have so much time with them—actual day-to-day living rather than quick visiting. I want to do purposeful, “natural,” kinds of things with them—not activities drummed up by adults for the purpose of teaching kids. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure how possible this will be. But I'll consider it a challenge!

PS—Just a note about frustration—I think it has to do with the emphasis you put on the final goal. I'm rebuilding my front porch (a completely new task for me). It would be terribly frustrating if I was only doing it in order to have new steps—there's just too many new skills to learn. Instead I see it as an opportunity to learn basic carpentry and home construction skills through a project I can do all by myself—I'm only asking for consulting help. I'm thoroughly enjoying the process and all it offers me—plus I get a new porch for my house.

Aug 18: My visit with my niece and nephew was wonderful. One day, I took a quilt outside under the trees and asked Karen (7) if she would like to write her mother a letter—she had only seen her once in the last six weeks.

She was tentative—said something about not knowing how to write. I was surprised she hesitated—she was always famous for loving books, even as a baby. I thought she felt really good about herself with school.

I did what always worked when I was teaching—I let Karen know in my actions and words that I would give her all the information she wanted—I set it up so she couldn't fail. I wrote her first sentence down, what she chose to say, and she copied it. She was hesitant at first, not knowing what to say and afraid of all the words she couldn't spell—and in no time she was all excited with a million things to say and only asking for a few words to be spelled—she didn't want to stop!

The damage we do to children in schooling them is so obvious and such a crime! I wanted to sweep Karen up and take her away and never let her in a school again. She learned so much from writing that one letter with no teaching—and she's learned so little in two years of school with all that teaching.

Thoughts on the urge to teach: I, who enjoy so much watching a child teach him/herself and believe in it so strongly, observed myself wanting to “teach” Karen when she was writing her letter. Oh, I wasn't going to teach her as much as most teachers would, but oh, how I wanted to get some teaching in! Really, it was all I could do to hold back the clever words! I watched myself like an outside observer. She spelled “want” for “went” and I knew just the question to ask to get her to realize the correct spelling. How presumptuous of me to get (unsolicited) in the way of her learning! She was having a great time and in a second I could have ruined it. Why?? Why is it so hard to let imperfect things stay imperfect? I knew how to make that letter look great and I wanted to do it. I was excited at how great it was and yet not satisfied—and it was her letter!

Some people would say it's such a little thing, it doesn't matter. In a way it doesn't, but in a way it matters so much—to intrude on people when we are fully aware of what influence they allow us to have on their lives because they admire and love us so!

I think a lot of it is ego. If Karen's letter comes out great and I know it's a lot because of me, then I'm a great teacher and therefore a great person. Teaching is such a superior position to be in.

I was asking my friend who is a carpenter some questions about building my porch. He was great at drawing pictures and helping me find the answers



I needed. I told him to drop by any time and see my progress, and that he'd be guaranteed not to be asked to help out, that I want to do it all myself. First he said in that case he'd come and watch, and then he said no, it might drive him crazy if I was doing something the real slow way. I asked why, knowing that feeling myself. He didn't know just that he hated seeing someone struggle—like watching someone untangle a ball of string.

If we become more at peace with our own struggles and our own mistakes will we then be more comfortable and tolerant of others? I think this may be the gist of it.

My roommate and I, in our adventurous projects around the house, have found that if we hold off on asking for help at our most frustrating moments and go on instead to discover the solution ourselves, that the rewards and satisfactions are tremendous. I am learning to have more and more faith in my own abilities to figure out mechanical problems—and the answers are usually so simple it's amazing!

Sept. 7: I just read the excerpts you sent me from my letters and am once again struck by the contrast between when I talk about schools and when I talk about learning outside of schools. One is full of such negative energy and the other with so much positive energy! I don't like the way I am when I talk about schools—I am criticizing and angry and negative, but I realize that talking about it can help people who are in it, and who will get out as they get support from others who have been there.

## **No Longer “Stupid”**

*Diane Doty, Rt 1 Box 12, Baileys Harbor WI 54202, wrote:*

You and all the other readers/writers of *GWS* have confirmed, finally, the feelings I had during all those years in school. It took me twenty years to learn how to enjoy learning again. All my life I have felt stupid and that's no place to be while raising children. I don't feel stupid now, no thanks to anyone but myself and my family.

## **Learning Photography**

*From Sandy Sapello Madkiff (NJ):*

When Donald was in first grade, I started teaching him at home because I

realized that he thought he was a poor reader. He had learned to read before he entered kindergarten, and the school had convinced him that he couldn't. It took several years and a lot of *Mad Magazines*, but he learned again.

The first year and half that he was home, we had three or four other kids with us: my youngest, then age two, who learned more than anyone, a 6-year old, two 14-year olds, plus several high school students who helped us with puppets, stories, and especially photography. Photography was a focal point for our activities the first year, but I could not master the technicalities of the camera or the developing process, so we asked for help. I knew that my inability to understand the mechanics and mathematics involved was based on a combination of lack of time, interest, concentration, and confidence.

We took an old 35mm camera with black and white film on most of our trips to the park, etc. Donald and Steve (14) developed some pictures in their own darkroom, and then interest waned for a while.

For several reasons, Donald went back to school for three years—it was a “nice,” small, individualized private school that gradually took on all the aspects of school, and at age 12 he decided to learn at home again. John was 6 and very happy to stay at home also.

Donald has maintained an interest in photography, especially movie making, and about a year ago I started to take some pictures of the children at the nursery school where I worked part-time. About the same time a couple that I knew needed someone to develop their B&W shots to accompany their free-lance newspaper articles. Donald volunteered (for a price). As we set up the darkroom this time, I found myself wanting to understand how to develop the pictures so I could enlarge some of my nursery school shots. I found myself enlargements and learning as I went along. I assisted Donald when he did his developing because we found it better to have one person do the “camera” work and another do the chemicals.

Since my work has evolved mainly into writing articles on education and the legislature, I tried to figure out ways to combine the two talents. I have outlined a book on the nursery school that will include my own pictures for illustrations. I put fliers up at the nursery school with some samples of the pictures and offered to take pictures. If they do not like any of the shots, I don't charge anything. So far I have done two birthday parties and one wedding.

The last few days I have read through two years of *Modern Photography*

trying to decide on the best camera (I have been using Donald's) for the type of pictures I want to do. I still haven't found an adequate explanation of the merits or disadvantages of an f/1.2 over an f/1.4, but I have learned about apertures, shutters, depth of field, and lenses. I have learned things that a few years ago I did not have the inclination or desire to learn because I now have adequate reason to tackle the learning involved.

## The Bad Habit Bogey

*JH: The other day I found these notes I made many years ago of the speech of my nephew, then four or five years old:*

raintoats  
I dot it for my birsday  
toopid fool!  
rash (crash) helmet  
(also) shrash helmet  
bring (spring)  
dill (kill)  
tab (stab)  
dis one, dat one  
betuz (because)  
brack (black)  
Fanta Fe (Santa Fe)  
darbage (garbage)  
more people tomin (coming) in  
de in your be (get in your bed)  
feshin ( refreshing)  
tasafy (catastrophe)  
organize tese tars (these cars)  
flas hes (glasses)  
teo (mosquito)  
sree (free)  
Bolkswagen  
fayer (sweater)  
soldiers (shoulders)  
fraffer (tractor)

peash (please)

I loved reading these notes, since they brought that little boy, whom I loved very much, so vividly back to life. As the words show, though his vowels and stresses were always correct, there was no consistent pattern in his shifts of consonants, so it was almost impossible for people who did not know him well enough to understand him; when he spoke to them, which he liked to do, being happy, fearless, and friendly, some older member of the family usually had to translate. But being the adored youngest of six children, he had no trouble communicating. We in the family all knew or were glad to figure out what he was trying to say, and he in turn easily understood our Standard English. He did not mix up our consonants, even if he did his own. Now and then, in affection and courtesy, and just because we liked the sound we used some of his words in our own talk. His family still often speaks of “hangburgers” and “chucksin” (chicken), words invented by earlier small children.

Nobody in the family worried about this boy’s unusual speech. Not for a second would they have considered treating him as if he was sick, and calling in some kind of specialist to cure him. It wasn’t even a matter of seeing his speech as a problem that in time would cure itself; they didn’t see it as a problem. They knew from experience, which they had the sense to trust, that when little children start to talk they talk oddly, and some more oddly than others, but that in time they want to talk like the people around them, and soon learn to do it, just as they learn to do a thousand other difficult things.

And so it was in this case. When I saw the boy in the January of his fifth year, he was still talking much as those notes would suggest. When I phoned the family in March, he answered the phone, and his speech was so normal that at first I thought I was talking to his older sister. Not a trace of those consonant shifts was left. Furthermore, having heard them as “wrong” and purged them from his own speech, he became very indignant if anyone else in the family used them. They had to learn to stop talking about things like “fraffers,” which they did with some regret, as they had become very fond of those words.

My point in telling this story is to attack once again the mistaken and harmful Bad Habit Theory of Teaching, which holds that every time a child makes a mistake, in speaking, reading, learning music, or whatever, some

adult must instantly correct it, or it will turn into a “bad habit,” which will become harder to correct every time the child does it, and soon impossible to correct at all.

The theory is simply not true, does not fit facts we can all see for ourselves. Most of the many things children learn—to walk, talk, read and write, etc., they learn by trying to do them, making mistakes, *and then correcting these mistakes*; in short, they learn by what mathematicians call “successive approximations.” They do something, compare the way they did it with the way the bigger people do it, see some of the differences (their mistakes), and try to reduce these differences (correct their mistakes).

It is like what we all do when we try to draw pictures of people or objects; the first ones are very bad likenesses, the next ones come a little closer, and finally, if we persist, we may be able to draw a fairly good likeness. But this is not at all a matter of finding all the “mistakes” in our first drawing and, one by one, correcting them.

Please don’t misunderstand me as saying that learning has nothing to do with developing *good* habits. A very important part of learning all physical skills, music among them, is consciously, deliberately, and at first awkwardly teaching our nerves and muscles to do certain things, and then doing them so often that in time we can do them without having to think about *how* to do them. All skilled athletes do this. Musicians of all kinds practice many kinds of scales, arpeggios, etc., so that when they meet them in a piece of music they can play them quickly and evenly. As great a player as Heifetz, technically the greatest violinist of our time, played such exercises at least three hours a day, every day of his playing life. No musicians can ever say, “Now I have those good habits, I can forget about them.” They have to keep putting those habits back into their neuro-muscular systems. As Casals said one morning, while doing a simple C major scale on the cello, “Every day, for fifty years, I have to *find* the E.”

No, the point here is not that good habits are unimportant, but that since it takes a long time to develop good habits, so it takes just as long a time to develop bad ones. The idea that we must work hundreds of hours to make a good habit, but can make bad ones in a few seconds, is obviously nonsense. What this means to us as teachers, in turn, is that instead of always being in such a big hurry to correct our students’ mistakes, we can afford to give them time to notice and correct them themselves.

That list I made of the errors in my nephew's speech is only a small part of the total; half the many words he spoke—thousands, for he had a big vocabulary—came out with those same kinds of consonant shifts. Nobody laughed at or corrected or in any way pointed out these errors; when we ourselves used “his” words, we spoke in normal voices, as if these words were just as correct as any others. When he began to hear the differences between his words and other people's, and to feel that these differences *made a difference*, he made the corrections for himself. In his case, the process was sudden and dramatic, but all children do the same thing as they learn to speak. Writing this, I suddenly remembered that one of my sisters for many years said “mazagine” and “I'm such in a hurry.” My other sister and I pointed out these mistakes to her, scornfully, many times. She ignored us. One day she *heard* those ways of saying things as wrong, and gave them up.

## Talk On Unschooling

*Patricia Ann Mordes (FL) wrote:*

I have been invited to speak at our local junior college, in the Child Psychology class, on John Holt and what it's like to school a child at home. I want to make my fifty minutes count. Do you have any suggestions?

*From a later letter:*

I gave my talk at the local junior college, to an audience of 28 persons. I took your advice and told of my personal experience with Daniel, and used excerpts from *GWS*. I gave each person handouts which explained everything and one of which was a subscription form for *GWS*.

It all went pretty well. The people were mostly young and unmarried. No one opposed me (at least openly). They asked polite questions about socialization and “how will he ever be able to get a job without a diploma?”

One of the instructors became furious at my remarks. She told me later that we were on different sides of the track. I told her that was all right, I agree with me. This is America, freedom of speech, and all that. This lady was (and is) frightened, she knows that what we say is true. She has a thirteen-year old son who has had lots of school problems.

## Good News from Utah

*From a series of articles in the Sun Advocate, Price, Utah, 8/19–8/28/81:*

The Utah Home Education Association was formed by Kenneth and Laurie Huffman (641 E Malibu Dr, Salt Lake City UT 84107; 801-261-3521) and is designed to aid families in starting private homeschools.

Private homeschoolers are prevalent in the state and enthusiasm to “teach children at home” is on the increase. This was evident at the First Annual Convention of the UHEA, held in Salt Lake City Saturday.

Two hundred people pre-registered for the convention and about 400 were in attendance. The unexpected overflow of prospective and established homeschoolers created a crowded but enthusiastic group.

Forming a private homeschool is easier than most people at the convention realized. Legally, under Utah law, all which is required of the prospective homeschool is to declare the homeschool or private organization a “private school,” according to Stephen J. Stone. In his paper entitled “*How Do We Form a Legal Private School?*” Stone stressed the point that Utah law does not require the private school be incorporated and that permission is not required from the local school board to form the homeschool.

The Huffmans started their own private homeschool, Zenith Home Academy Inc., in March. “Zenith Home Academy is a balance between structure and non-structure,” Mrs. Huffman said. “We use a quarterly method, being in school all year long—summer quarter being a very light study load.”

The purpose of the convention was to let the homeschoolers know they are not alone; that many families have taken the plunge and started their own private homeschools.

The featured speaker at the convention was John Holt. He cited three basic reasons people take their children out of the public school system. “First, they think that raising their children is their business and not the government’s; second, they enjoy being with their children and helping them learn, and don’t want to give that up to others; and

third, they want to keep them from being hurt, mentally, physically and spiritually.”

Several families present said they have children enrolled in public schools and some in the private homeschool. The reason for the “split families” is that some children are better suited for the classroom situation, whereas other children work better in an unpressured environment such as the home.

According to “*The Journal of a Private School*” by Dick and Joyce Kinmont. “The Singer family began teaching their own children before the provisions of the law were well known. John Singer was *not* shot for keeping his children out of school. He was shot because he resisted arrest when he would not honor the court order to turn over the children of his second, polygamous wife to their father.”

Getting away from this dark cloud the Singer case has brought over the private homeschool system is what the UHEA is trying to do through conventions, meetings, and newsletters.

## Organizing An Event

*Donna asked some of the people who arranged homeschooling meetings where John spoke to tell something about their experiences. From Laurie Huffman:*

About the Home Education Convention held here in Salt Lake City (actually in Murray, a suburb) on August 15th. It was a smashing success. I will try to explain the things that were wrong as well as right, and hope it will benefit someone else.

First of all, give yourself plenty of time to plan. We had only three weeks (it would be tedious to explain why), and we were working night and day to contact all the state’s homeschoolers, arrange classes and teachers, etc., and the last minute we discovered that the building we had arranged wouldn’t begin to hold all the people we had anticipated. So three days before the convention we went building hunting. Because we had already mailed out 300 notices, we had to make over 100 phone calls to let people know about the address change. We are really grateful for the help of people around the



state who called for us. Then we had to make posters to put up at the original building, and start our program half an hour late to allow people time to arrive who hadn't received word of the change.

Our second mistake was to not bring cash to make change. Registration at the door was \$6 (what a stupid amount!) and we finally had to drop it to \$5 in order to make change at all, and our only income of cash was the registrations themselves. At this point I will add that we did one thing right—we had someone recording checks and cash as it came in, with the person's name, so we would have a permanent record of who paid. This also helps with keeping addresses current for future activities.

Another mistake—we didn't have time to plan for nursery activities for the younger children. My youngest daughter volunteered to take charge of the nursery, and luckily the Mount Vernon Academy had a wonderful large nursery room filled with fun things to do. BUT there were sometimes 40 children in that room at once, with nothing to do that was truly entertaining, and the young ladies (mostly 10 and 11-year olds) who were assisting were pretty frazzled after the first three hours. The mothers tended to be very lax about putting their kids in the nursery and then forgetting them, even though we asked them to only use the nursery for brief rest periods. So, if we do it again (and we will be for sure), we will put an adult in charge, probably one who is professional at that kind of thing.

Another mistake was that the building had no air conditioning. That is pretty much self-explanatory. August in Utah is definitely hot and dry. Let me add here though, how grateful we really are for the use of the building we had. The principal of Mount Vernon Academy was very kind and cooperative and even now doesn't mind sending people to us who call him about the homeschool convention.

I have enclosed a copy of the schedule form we handed out to people. It explains the morning schedule, the afternoon classes, and shows the room changes on the back. We also handed out a questionnaire form, which would allow us to make judgements as to future events of this type—what classes most people wanted, and new ones they might suggest. The majority of people didn't fill out the form completely enough for our evaluation, but the 60 or 70 who did were very thorough. Many requested area conventions in which specialists would travel as a group to the outlying areas in Utah and Idaho. Another 20-25 people volunteered to help organize these conferences.

By far our biggest mistake was in not getting more people to help us with the detail work and the arrangement of the classrooms, setting up, etc. It fell on two families, and we were exhausted when it was all over. Next time, I will have a list of willing workers handy and start delegating like mad from the start.

Getting in touch with the press is something I had never done before, and we held off for a long time. As it was, the articles in the paper with Mr. Holt's interviews brought in such a large number of people that we would not have been able to accommodate many more from advertising. All we did was to call the major local papers and tell them all the info on the convention and when Mr. Holt would arrive in town. One paper was very excited because they had written about him before.

We didn't have any funds to begin working toward the convention, and I think this would be a major obstacle for most people in homeschool. We ended up using our own money, and the Kinmonts shared the costs. We worked with the long range hope that the convention would cover the costs at least of mailing and printing. We charged only \$5 per family, and think that is quite low compared to many such conventions. Fortunately, it covered all costs and left us with enough extra to print our letterhead for the association, hire a lawyer to incorporate the association properly, and even enough at this point to send out our first official bulletin. I call that successful.

Of course, most of the people in attendance came to hear Mr. Holt. They were not disappointed. In fact, the question and answer period (one hour) with Mr. Holt, Reed Benson, and Joyce Kinmont was a real success.

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*From Anna Myers (Ont.):*

First we checked with John about dates and got that finalized. Then we checked out places—high school auditoriums, college rooms, and finally settled on York University because it was close to the airport, hotels, etc. The room cost \$75 but we had to pay \$100 extra for parking. If we did it again, we would check the room out more carefully, getting a name and phone number of a caretaker, because we didn't have the air-conditioning turned on and couldn't find anyone around to turn it on. The room got quite "close" toward the middle of the evening.

The only thing remaining was advertising and tickets. Wendy Priesnitz

designed the tickets and posters so that they all fit on one sheet. She had them printed at a quick printer and she cut them. I numbered them all by hand. We printed 500 tickets and 250 posters.

We sent all of the Ontario members of the Canadian Alliance five posters and asked them to place them in libraries, health food stores, alternative schools, etc. We also sent each member five tickets and asked that they either send the tickets or money back by a certain date. We just trusted people and got *most* back but not all.

Then we sent press releases to *all* newspapers, radio stations and TV stations within 100 miles. We got addresses from a book called "*The Canadian Almanac and Directory*, 1981."

Just two of us did all the organizing, mainly by phone, and it worked out really well that way. There were a couple of "pressure" times, but it wasn't too much for two people. However, on the night of the meeting, we needed the volunteers we had—the kids, husbands, etc.—for taking tickets, directing people from the parking lot, etc. Wendy and I were answering a lot of "homeschooling" questions from people (as was John!) and so had a hard time doing the "organizing" on that night.

As far as money goes, we were out about \$60. If the Secondary Schools Federation had paid John's travelling expenses we would have made a profit which we would have shared with John. (DR: The Federation had planned to bring John to Toronto for a conference, paying a fee plus expenses; they cancelled the conference at short notice.) However, we felt the \$60 was well worth all the publicity the Canadian Alliance, John, and homeschooling received. We also felt really good that we could at least pay John's travel expenses, as we felt badly that the big conference was cancelled and that John had to come all the way up here just for us.

I'm not sure if there is money to be made at this unless John is there anyway for some other purpose and his expenses are being paid. I think breaking even might be a good place to start.

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*And from Cathy Levesque, Keys To Learning, 2650 W. Trojan Pl., Anaheim, CA 92804:*

We sent announcements to all the South California names in the back of *GWS* #21, with a few extras to pass around. We had a very good ad in the

*Foundation for Human Understanding* newsletter, the *Iconoclast*. We would have had a much better turn out but the University only made the agreement firm a few weeks before the conference. That made it very difficult to advertise.

The presale was 80 people. We had approximately 175 people attend the conference. If we were able to advertise in time we would have had double the amount.

In the event we had a loss, which we did, we wanted to help cover the costs by having tapes and information to offer for sale over the next few months. We made tapes of all the speakers. Anyone may send for the tapes of the conference. They are \$6 each and approximately 60 minutes long. John Holt has three tapes. Two (# 100 & 101) are on *Teach Your Own, GWS*, court cases and laws, and questions from parents and his answers. The third (#102) is a discussion of why the family does not exist for many, and what to do about it; he answers more questions on homeschooling and other ideas. Tape #103 is Lawrence Williams from the Oak Meadow School; #104 is Greg Bodenhamer on “Who Is In Control: Parent or Child?” and #105 is Gene Takamine, a lawyer—he talked about a couple of very important issues like tuition tax credits and the voucher system.

We had several display tables, which complicated the program but gave versatility. Everyone really enjoyed them. We had home computer demonstrations, Discovery Toys, lots of books and literature. There was a last minute slide presentation—we thought it was worthwhile so we did it.

Make sure that all of the technical devices are in good working order and that speakers have water and table and chairs to sit down on. We had a seminar room where John Holt answered questions for most of the day.

It was so rewarding. I will remember it for a long, long time. The small children were made very welcome. No one needs to have such a complicated conference as we did. Anyone can do it, even alone, if they just put in a lot of time and try to get a place that was free or of little cost. Our expenses were high because we wanted the extra rooms and to have the big open area for the children to be able to be out in the sun.

If anyone would like details of how to go about establishing a homeschool in California, send \$5 to *Keys To Learning*. You can do it without anyone’s help, but some people seem to need the support.

We hope to establish a California network of homeschools through *Keys*

*To Learning.* We can use areas to meet one another and have field trips, picnics and so on.

## **Building Together**

*Pat Gurley (UTJ sent us the following story from Awake magazine, 7/8/8 1. She wrote:*

“I don’t know” if you’ve heard of the instant Kingdom Halls’ going up around the country. We’ve gone to two of these miracles in the past few months. We’ve experienced so much love at these that we’d try very hard not to miss one within a 500 mile radius. Everyone helps, children to grandparents—there’s a job for everyone who desires a job.” From the article:

As he drove by a neighboring field, Bill hardly noticed the cluster of people surrounding a bare wood-and-block foundation. It was early morning.

Four hours later, as Bill neared the same field, his mouth dropped open. There, on top of that foundation, stood a building! Though it was not completely finished, it had in place a shingled roof, siding and windows.

Bill saw the beginning stages of a two-day “miracle.” A Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses was being built by a swarm of eager workers who would almost complete it—inside and out— in just two days.

One of the organizers, Stanley Peck, estimates that over 60 “instant” Kingdom Halls have been built, starting ten years ago at Webb City, Missouri. There in two days a crew of fifty put up the walls and roof of a hall. “It seemed then that if we really organized things properly we might do the whole job in a weekend,” reflected Peck. Each additional hall was brought a little closer to completion within the two days. “During the last twenty or so halls we got it to 90 percent of completion,” stated another organizer, John Langan.

“Ninety percent” usually includes a bricked, fully insulated, air-conditioned building, and occasionally a landscaped lot. Often it is

painted, wall-papered and decorated with a striking hand-painted wall mural, which blends beautifully with the colors of a new carpet. They are not prefabricated. Some have been as large as 60 feet by 70 feet and able to seat 250. Each has its own design with multiple rooms, including rest rooms, a library and an auditorium. They are also fully wired for sound amplification. One in Oklahoma even has a fireplace! Usually they are appraised at three times their original cost or more.

When one watches the operation—and there are plenty of onlookers from the neighborhood—the coordination is amazing. Work starts at seven Saturday morning. After an hour the walls are up. The frames for the roof then follow. Women begin bringing sheeting to cover the outside of the walls and this is nailed into place. The electricians begin running wire. Within three hours the first brick is laid. Those with air conditioning and heating equipment wait to begin installation. Everything just falls into place. “I see it,” said one of the workers, “but I don’t believe it.”

Yet something else makes it an even greater miracle. “Not a dime has been paid for their labor of love,” wrote a Tulsa, Oklahoma, newspaper reporter. People working this hard, yet not receiving a cent in wages, is nothing short of a miracle.

Doubtful about the quality of the work, several people in Guymon, Oklahoma, called the city inspector. “I told them that if they wanted to see something done right, they ought to visit the hall,” said the inspector. “You people are even doing correctly what will be hidden and not seen!”

Yet many of the workers are not professional builders. These are given on-the-job training. Among the non-builders at one project were a pharmacist, a college instructor, a professional photographer, two doctors, and a gardener. However, to ensure the safety of all, a Witness acquainted with building safety patrols the site looking for any potential dangers.

“I don’t know much about this type of work, but I’ll do whatever you want,” explained the owner of a large welding business, who flew to the location in a private plane. He ended up with the messy job of

mixing and carrying mortar. A legally blind worker was busily wiring the sound system, mostly by touch. Several helpers served as his “eyes.” Children kept the floor clean of scrap materials and also passed out refreshments. “There is no way we would have worked today for money—no way” exclaimed one of those at Vinata, Oklahoma, when the temperature and wind made it feel like —14 degrees. Some had icicles on their mustaches as they worked. On the other hand, with the temperature soaring over 115 degrees, the same basic crew built the hall in Purcell, Oklahoma. At times rain will pour down for the whole two-day period, as it did in Monmouth, Illinois. “Not a single brother left the site,” said Harold Cheek. “They just worked right on through.”

Yet why do all of these do it time after time? One observant teenager pinpointed the reason. Though not a Witness, she said to the family with whom she traveled to the site, “Something just dawned on me. We don’t know any of these people. We’re never going to their hall. Yet we’re doing all this hard work. Hey, we’re really sacrificing for somebody else. This is something good.”

Self-sacrifice is reflected in the distances some travel. “We try to keep within five or six hundred miles from our homes in Oklahoma, for this is a day’s drive,” stated Cheek. However, one family traveled over 1600 miles round trip. On one project workers came from ten states. Normally those who come are not reimbursed for travel expenses. To prevent any being overburdened, John Langan keeps a file of the name and addresses of over 800 volunteers and thereby can give consideration to those who live closest to the upcoming project.

## **Starting a School Early**

*From Palti Van Buskirk (KY):*

My husband suggested this. We’re both sort of worriers and planners by nature. Luke is only 2! But it seems if one got through all the red tape and had one’s home as a school, and had it all settled by the time a child was five and expected to be in kindergarten by everyone, then in two years when the child would be legally required in school, you could say, “Hey, look, we’ve

been doing all that for two years!” (JH: sounds like a very good idea.)

## Dealing With School District

*John wrote to a parent who asked about dealing with the local school district:*

In your first communication with the schools, which should probably be by letter, *typed* (and keep copies of all correspondence with school people), you should say, very politely and nicely: (1) People are legally teaching their children at home all over the country, including your state (2) Their right to do so has repeatedly been upheld by the courts (3) Many people are doing this with the friendly cooperation of their own school districts (4) You would like to have the same friendly and cooperative relationship with your district (5) How may you do so?

In other words, you are not asking *if* you may teach your children at home, but *how*.

And you might point out that these people teaching their children at home in cooperation with their local schools have been encouraged by the schools to use school resources whenever they wish. This enables the school to register the children as being enrolled (so that they don't lose state aid), and also takes care of any worries anyone may have about the children's social life, which is something the schools like to talk about (even when they do everything possible to prevent them from having any social life in school).

You will learn a lot about your school district from the way in which they respond to your first letter. If you get a friendly reply everything may go nice and easy.

If they ask to have a meeting with you, OK. But if they take anything other than a friendly and cooperative stance, cut the meeting short, say that you will discuss the matter with your lawyer (which won't all together be a fib, since through *GWS* you will be in contact with lawyers), and that it will probably be better to conduct all further discussions of the matter in writing. (This always scares bureaucrats).

Friendly, informed, and determined—that's the picture you want to give. The schools are full of bullies. If there are some in your town, and you let them think they can push you around, they probably will. If you make it clear that they can't, they may not even try.



Please let us know how things go.

## **Compulsory School Age**

*People often want to know at what age a child is legally required to be in school. Meg Johns on, at the end of her home education “legal packet” (\$3.20 from the Home Education Resource Center, 337 Downs St, Ridgewood NJ 07450), reprints a table of such ages that appeared in Liberty, Nov. /Dec. 1979. In summary:*

*Minimum Compulsory Entrance Age is 8: Ariz., Pa., Wash., Puerto Rico. Also, in Virginia, age is 5 but children up to 8 may be exempted with consent of parent or guardian.*

*All other states require entrance at Age 7, except for the ones below.*

*Age 6: Cal., Del., Hawaii, Ky., Md., Mich., N. J., N.M., N.Y., Ohio, Utah, Wisc. In Mass., age is set by school board.*

## **Excused Absences**

*Sandi Myers (MS) wrote:*

As I read through my wealth of *GWS*, I am surprised that no one mentions a beautiful time-buying device in making up your mind to, or actually putting the pieces together to take a child out of school, and that is an “excused” absence because of “illness.” Julie had only attended school eight days out of five weeks when I finally withdrew her. Unfortunately, it took a genuine case of flu for me to see how severe the problems at school were for her.

Granted, this measure probably wouldn’t work if you had already notified the school of your intentions. But for someone going through a period of time with unpleasant parent teacher conferences where the volatile remarks a parent makes might later harm his or her case, this could be a useful tool—the child is out of the “jail” and the parent has time to calm down and prepare.

We always allowed quite a few “hooky days” each year, and the children understood that it was easier for all if we said, “He felt bad,” or “He had an ingrown toenail,” or whatever.

## **Home Tutoring Study**

*From a long article on homeschooling in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1/18/81:*

A study of home tutoring in the December issue of *Phi Delta Kappa* undercuts some of the arguments against home learning. The report studies the effects of home education on nearly 70 small tutoring groups formed in California in April 1978 by white middle-class parents fleeing public school busing. The groups later were joined by parents not motivated primarily by opposition to busing.

The children were taught by certified teachers within their homes while parents administered the program. As a group, home-tutored students scored higher on standardized achievement tests than did public school children. Fifth graders in the tutorial program scored above the 54th percentile on the California test of Basic Skills, while children in the Los Angeles Unified School District, as a group, placed at the 37th percentile. Home-tutored eighth graders were above the 59th percentile, as opposed to the 40th percentile for the school-district average. Math results were similar.

## **Not Working**

*Nancy Wallace (NH) wrote:*

A friend called me up the other day, upset because it was time to renew her permission to teach her son at home and she figured she'd have a hard time, since last year she really hadn't followed through on all the things she said she was going to do—daily spelling lessons, math for an hour a day, etc. As she talked, it became clear that homeschooling wasn't working out for her — she had other things she wanted to do, her husband wasn't very helpful, her son kind of wanted to be in school, and so on—but somehow, she felt guilty about even thinking of sending her son back. When I mentioned that since she had so many reservations about homeschooling, perhaps it would make sense for her son to just try the public school again, and think of it as an experiment, she seemed so relieved and *amazed*.

## **Offended Neighbors**

*Anita Devine (MI) wrote:*

We have been homesteading for the last five years on our 40 acres. We are building a home little by little and taking care of a fulltime garden right now.

We started Errin, 7, out with homeschooling using the Calvert School course. Now his younger brother, Tully, 5, will be starting also this year. We tried to keep it quiet that our children were homeschooled, but we live in a small community where everyone knows everyone and their business.

This community is extremely concerned that we do not send our children to the school. It has even gone so far as a local resident notifying the Public Schools Attendance Office that our children were not in school. Luckily, we are living in a Forest Recreation zoning. This means we are not considered full-time residents by the township. We are not allowed any public privileges and so the township cannot put pressure on us since they will not compromise on the zoning issue.

But this does not solve our problem with the local school and residents. The pressure is really on from these people: We avoid them easily enough because of the distance. One of the teachers used to be a close friend of mine. Since we have used a home study program she has been very critical. She truly believes that our children will be handicapped academically, mentally, and socially. She is especially worried about their lack of peer exposure and influence.

My husband and I feel that Errin and Tully are very sound and happy and have always handled any situation in the best way that they could. They get plenty of exposure to life in all stages. They know more about life than other young children their ages. They have also had plenty of peer influence, most of which has been bad, especially with our type of lifestyle.

As for the locals, I think they are insulted that we do not think their little school good enough for our children. It's not that I find it unacceptable, it was just one alternative I chose not to use. When school starts this fall we expect trouble from this little school and the concerned residents. We aren't sure what approach would be best. If anyone else has had to live among neighbors such as ours and succeeded, let us know how you handled things. We would love to hear about it.

## **Bad Legal Preparation**

*Bob Sessions (IA) told us about a recent Iowa Supreme Court decision*

*upholding the conviction of a homeschooling family, the Moorheads. The Moorheads apparently claimed that the state was infringing on their religious beliefs by attempting to regulate home study, but they did not present any evidence to that effect.*

*John was very concerned about the way the case was handled, and asked attorney William Ball if he knew who the lawyers were. Ball said the case was handled by the law firm Gibbs and Craze, and sent the following article about that firm. We quote from the article in part, and will send the complete article to anyone who sends a SASE. From Christianity Today, 4/10/81:*

David Gibbs is an able trial lawyer who has won some victories. But Gibbs spends most of his time on the road, preaching at fundamentalist rallies and lecturing in seminars about the need for pastors to stand their ground against the government. He does this under the auspices of the Christian Law Association (not to be confused with the Christian Legal Society), which he and others founded In 1977 to raise money so Gibbs and Craze could defend its pastor clients and educate them about the dangers of government encroachment on churches.

Consequently, Gibbs simply does not spend enough time preparing his cases for trial, say the critics, and they say he has lost more than one case because of shoddy research. Gibbs roundly denies the accusation, but among those deeply concerned are the lawyers who have left Gibbs and Craze during the last two years because they were dissatisfied with Gibbs. In fact, as many full-time lawyers—four—have left the firm in the last two years as currently work there.

The three harmful court decisions that have been handed down in the last year (concerning private schools) involve Christian clients of Gibbs and Craze. It is what other constitutional lawyers see as inadequate defense of the issues at stake that has them so concerned. One of these is John Whitehead, a Washington lawyer, who told a group of Christian educators recently. “If (these three decisions) stand, they may have reversed 50 years of constitutional law.” (Whitehead is one of the lawyers who left Gibbs and Craze and now practices independently.)

A doctor who harms a patient by using a treatment that fails, hurts no one but that patient. But a lawyer who loses a case in a top state or federal court sets a legal precedent. The court's decision is used against other lawyers down the road when they try to defend similar cases. Each harmful precedent makes the battle more difficult.

One lawyer views the Gibbs and Craze situation as so serious that he has done something lawyers rarely do. He has criticized them publicly by writing an unfavorable letter to them and sending copies to other lawyers handling religious freedom matters. That lawyer is no idle critic. He is William Ball of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and he has won more important cases bearing on Christian freedom than any other lawyer in the country. All five of the landmark decisions in the seventies were won by Ball, and he has won others as well. Comments by two attorneys are typical of what one hears about Ball: "He's a lawyer's lawyer," said one. "He's almost a legend," said another.

The court decision that prompted Ball's letter involved two fundamentalist Christians, Paul Shaver and Dennis Steinwand, who sent their children to the Bible Baptist School in Bismarck, North Dakota, being operated by the Bible Baptist Church without state approval. The parents said they were required by God to educate their children by Christian principles, which were not taught in public schools; since Christian education was a religious duty, their school could not be required to submit to any state regulations.

Fair enough, said the state supreme court in its opinion; but if the parents believed state regulation imposed illegally on their religious beliefs, they should have showed how this was so; but they did not. "No attempt was made at the trial to show how compliance with the law would affect the religion of the parents or their children," said the court in its opinion.

(In one of the landmark cases of the seventies, *Whisner v. Ohio*. William Ball, defendant Levi Whisner's lawyer, called witness after witness to show that the "minimum standards" were a hopeless maze. Not all of the standards were even understood by the state's educational bureaucracy. Ball also showed that state certification of

teachers—one of the regulations—was not the safeguard the state claimed it was. The trial was dogged work, but it paid off when,—in 1976, the Ohio Supreme Court found the standards unconstitutional.)

Ball and other constitutional lawyers believe it is imperative that religious education cases be prepared meticulously and defended on as many fronts as possible for one overriding reason. The United States Supreme Court has not yet ruled clearly on just how far the state may go in regulating religious schools, and the Christian legal community wants only the best-prepared case to get to the high court. Everett Sileven, pastor of the Nebtaska church (in another case lost by Gibbs and Craze), is completely satisfied with Gibbs' handling of his case, and has asked him to appeal it to the U.S. Supreme Court. He apparently will, and other Christian lawyers believe it will be devastating if the court decides to hear it, because they believe it has no chance of winning.

Dale Crowley, executive director of the National Foundation for Fairness in Education hired Gibbs to handle their lawsuit against the Smithsonian Institution. The suit was lost, and Crowley lays much of the blame on David Gibbs. "We ran into delays, neglect, and preoccupation with his speaking engagements across the country. It drove us up the wall. We'd write him letters and get no answers, make phone calls and get no return calls. We even had him scheduled for a meeting down here and he didn't show up."

Gibbs said he did not show up for the meeting because his plane was snowed in. Sometimes, he acknowledged, he is hard to reach because he has so many cases and is on the road so much. He denied that his busy schedule prevents him from making the best possible preparation for the cases.

Gibb's law partner, Charles Craze, has become the subject of a legal action brought by an unsatisfied client.

## **Progress Reports**

One Massachusetts family worked out a homeschooling arrangement with

their superintendent of schools that does not require testing or visits from officials. Instead, they visit the superintendent twice a year in his office, bringing samples of the children's work, and they write midyear and end-of-year reports on the children's progress. Other homeschoolers who are concerned about standardized testing might suggest this kind of progress report as an alternative.

The family sent us copies of the progress reports, and we quote from one here because it might help other *GWS* readers who have to write such reports, homeschooling proposals, or curriculums. This is a good example of how to turn day-to-day experiences into language that will show educators that learning is taking place. As the mother said, "I try to state the children's weaknesses honestly yet positively. I do not place them in comparison to other children."

*Reading:* B (age 8) has demonstrated a rapid increase in her reading proficiency. She reads orally to me from assigned readers, she reads many library books weekly to her younger sister, and also reads independently. Since last September the books she has read independently include: *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, *The Doll In The Bakeshop*, seven *Moominland* books by Tove Jansson, and a biography about Lucretia Matt, a Quaker abolitionist. B recognizes most of the words she encounters and reads fluently. She pays attention to punctuation marks and reads with expression. From our discussions of the literature she has read, as well as the exercises in the Calvert course, I see that B reads with a high level of comprehension.

*Language Skills and Spelling*—B has little difficulty with the language skills workbook, which concentrates mainly on vowel sounds, consonant blends, word recognition, and reading comprehension. B's ability to spell words from memory and from figuring out their phonetic sounds is increasing.

*Composition*—In creating sentences or compositions. B demonstrates some reluctance to let her pen be the instrument of her imagination. It has been somewhat difficult at times for her to develop a flow of thoughts and words when writing. However, she is making progress in recent months and is allowing herself to express her thoughts more

readily in writing. B continues to compose and write letters and cards to her friends and relatives; she has no difficulty with this aspect of composition. B also develops her own imaginative stories.

*Penmanship*—B has made great progress in her ability to write cursive script. She has the necessary muscle control to form her letters with care and uniformity.

*Science*—B shows a sustained interest in her Calvert science manual. In addition she has participated in the use of the 600 power microscope her family owns. Some of the projects she was involved in with its use include: raising protests, examining a bee's compound eye and a dragonfly's wing, and observing plant cells and human epithelial cells. She also has shown great interest in the simple chemistry experiments that her father has conducted with her and her sister. These experiments include making a precipitate, observing the action of bleach, testing for starches, and neutralizing an acid base.

*Mathematics*—B has an innate ability to perceive the patterns and logic of mathematics. She makes rapid progress and is at ease with numbers. In addition to the Calvert workbook, B practices math with the aid of two electronic calculators, Dataman and the Little Professor. She also learns math by playing games with her parents which entail the use of computation, particularly Monopoly and Milles Barnes. B also works with numbers when counting her allowance and preparing her bank savings deposit tickets. A large cardboard clock face with metal movable hands has assisted B in her study of telling time.

*Geography*—In reading stories of other countries in the Calvert reader *Going Places, Seeing People*, B. is exposed to other cultures. She shows an interest in world events and in using the globe to locate countries about which she has read. She was also involved in the presidential election and inauguration. Since some of her friends come from other countries (Jamaica and Japan), she learns through them about the customs of other societies and also learns respect for people of other races.

*Mathematics*—L (age 12) continues to demonstrate a degree of confusion regarding math. She still does not completely trust her



ability to comprehend and utilize it. However, recently she has shown some improvement which has increased her level of self-confidence. She shows more ability when dealing with math concepts that are less abstract and more visual, such as comparing inequalities, expanding numerals, geometry, counting change, measuring objects, etc. Her tolerance for math has increased from earlier years, and she enjoys doing supplemental math workbooks, which fuse math and such creative activities as drawing and coloring. She also enjoys learning math through the use of games like Monopoly and multiplication Bingo.

*Science*—L's interest in science remains high, and she continues to read many reference books independently as well as the Calvert science manual. L shows a marked interest in the chemistry experiments and microscope usage, which were described earlier. L particularly likes to study animals, the universe, and the human body and its systems. Her reading was supplemented by several television programs including "Nova," "Cosmos," and "Connections."

*Spelling, Penmanship, and Vocabulary Study*—In her own imaginative books which L writes often, she is less careful with her spelling and penmanship. Her interest in getting down the story precedes other considerations. However, when we do the Calvert spelling lists, L is more attentive to her spelling and does quite well. Her handwriting is somewhat large, but as long as it is legible, we find it acceptable. She has a great interest in expanding her sizable vocabulary, and has decided to keep a record of all the unfamiliar words she comes across, complete with definitions, accent marks, and syllabification.

*Composition, Grammar, Language Usage*—L is interested in the Calvert grammar and language usage book very much. It is written in such a way as to allow for dramatic readings of sentences, which illustrate principles of grammar. L is verbally oriented and has a lot of fun with this book. When I assist her in preparing a paper on a non-fictional theme, the mechanics of writing are stressed: paragraph indentation, topic sentences, note taking and outlining, orderly thought processes, etc. L has undertaken a literary venture, which is a great

learning experience for her. Last year she wrote a children's story for her younger sister. This year she decided to send the story to different publishers to see if they would accept it. So far no one has. If all the publishers reject her manuscript, L wants to investigate publishing the book herself for a limited audience of younger friends and relatives.

*US History*—L is very much interested in the Calvert history text. Again, it is one written in a colorful style which keeps her interest sustained. We supplement the text with discussion of current US history in the making. L reads the newspapers and through family discussions keeps abreast of major events in the United States. She followed the Iranian hostage issue with interest and the US presidential election as well. L has an awareness of politics, and frequently will draw a political cartoon to illustrate some recent national event. The National Geographic book *Our 50 States* has been included in L's study of US history, as well as the Time-Life series, *History Of The United States*.

*Art History (Painting)*—This is L's favorite subject this year. The Calvert text was written from a personal point of view and contains many anecdotes about the painters' lives to which L responds. The Calvert School has provided small art reproductions of some famous paintings, and we have supplied two texts, *The Story Of Painting* and *Animals And Men*, which contain many beautiful color photographs of paintings. L can recognize a number of the many painters she has studied so far. We have been the Museum of Art and plan to visit others.

*Reading*—L continues to read an amazing number and variety of books. In addition to the Calvert texts, L reads independently for hours every day. (There follows a long description of the books L has read.)

*Geography*—L is interested in geography, and adds her own emphasis to the Calvert course. She makes a clay model of the country, a chart explaining the physical features of the country, and researches and writes a paper about the country's geography, economy, government, and history. (There follows a list of books and magazines relating to

these topics.) The daily newspapers are another source of information. L also has the use of a globe, world atlas, and a set of global flash cards through which she is learning to identify major countries, their capitals and main industries and products. Family discussions has included such topics as: the creation of Zimbabwe, the apartheid policy of South Africa, the Iran–Iraq war.

### 3 Oregon Families

*From Karen Berman in Ashland, OR:*

I've been homeschooling my oldest (6½) this year using the Home Study Institute first-grade program. I find the program very acceptable in spite of the fact that it pretty much parallels the standard public approach. It has *more* in terms of materials than I bargained for and we have modified the program to suit ourselves. Our 4-year-old uses the beginning reading books very comfortably. We've mastered the reading, writing, and math skills to keep us abreast—and somewhat ahead—of the local public schools.

Our local school district with whom I have dealt since *before* we began has been receptive and helpful. We have use of audio-visual equipment at our district elementary school and make much use of filmstrips. We are welcome at the school library to check out books and other materials. The district psychologist is keeping track of us as he is “interested, intrigued, and curious.” He spoke to me at some length one day and was extremely supportive and understanding.

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*From Melva Lloyd, Rt 4 Box 259L, Sherwood OR 97140:*

We began homeschooling at the beginning of the '80–81 school year. Our bright thirteen-year-old was sick of school and, in spite of a high IQ, was floundering academically.

We began the year intending that Jennifer spend each morning studying, but, as it ended up, I suppose she spent an average of two hours a day, four days a week in actual study time. The rest of the time, our daughter was free to pursue her own interests—little furry animals, horses, music, and reading. Because she loves children, she was also able to pick up quite a few baby-sitting jobs, which helped pad, her bank account. She helped out around the

house, had good times with her five-year old brother and, before our eyes, developed into a generous, happy, witty young lady.

When it came time for achievement tests (as required by Oregon law), I felt a bit insecure, wondering if we had spent enough time in academics. I needn't have worried, the results were astounding! Jennifer's grade equivalent jumped 4.6 grades! She went from a 71st percentile to a whopping 98th percentile!

Needless to say, we plan to continue homeschooling. "School" is so easy that we are continuing our studies year-round. Besides, Jennifer hopes to complete the next three grades in two years.

We really enjoyed *The I Hate Mathematics!* Book. We are also thoroughly enjoying the Key Curriculum math materials (*GWS* #1, #19). I think my daughter and I (two miserable math morons) are going to make it through algebra and geometry, thanks to very understandable and fun-to-work-with materials.

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*From the Ellenburgs in Gold Hill:*

The decision to take our children out of school was difficult, but with support and encouragement from others who have "been there," it seems to be getting more comfortable all the time. Our children already test at 1½–2 grades higher than they were in, so there has been no opposition from our school board or district whatsoever. We are required however to bring the children in for testing in October. We do hope to contact other families in the Rogue River area and start a support group.

## **Success in Colorado**

*From Frank Bonasso, the cab-driving single father in GWS #21:*

I got approval last night from the school board to enrol Jessica in the Calvert School. I found a few things, which may be of interest, at least in Colorado.

First, I contacted Jane Larsh at the State Board, as Donna recommended. Jane Larsh told me that here, at grade school level, Calvert and Home Study Institute are state-approved. I then checked the laws, which seemed to me to indicate that as long as approval was granted, the circumstances for home

study were irrelevant; that is, if a resident wanted to teach the child at home, there is every right to do so.

The next step was to talk to Mr. King, the superintendent of schools. I told him that I had plans to travel this fall and next spring in connection with some art projects I am working on. I also told him I had talked with Mrs. Larsh and had him call to verify this and request the necessary paperwork. (Chalk one up for going as high as possible on your first attempt.)

Mr. King then scheduled me for the board meeting last night, indicating that he felt there would be no problems. I briefly explained my plans to the board. One member raised the question about whether a resident *who didn't plan travel* could do the same. Mr. King stated that all indications were that, yes that was possible.

I had intended to broach the subject of keeping her on the rolls and paying for the course, but decided to postpone that this year.

What it boils down to this year is playing their ballgame with their rules, which will give me time to further research the laws and other options. At this point, I don't feel Jessica would be hurt by the regularity of taking the Calvert course, but feel she is capable of doing the work in much less time than the state or the school board requires, which is four hours daily for 172 days.

One of the things we would like to do this fall is meet people in other states en route east to find out how they are dealing with education. We plan to stay off the interstates and stop at plenty of small museums along the way. I think that would be a good way to learn history, geography, and a lot of other "academic" courses in one ball of wax.

## **More Single Parents**

*From Bob Post (IN):*

In 1975 Safran was born, and at 18 months her mother moved away. After three bad day-care sitter situations, I asked Safran if she would like to work with me, and she has since age 2. Now 6, she knows a large number of skills and tools and will help me or play on her own.

Safran and I are contacting other nearby *GWS* people to share experiences and growing. We wish to correspond with other single *GWS*-ers.

For eight years I have studied the infinite number of solar construction

possibilities and would be glad to assist anyone planning a passive retrofit or new structure.

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*And from Lynne Norris (NY):*

Having put in a year each in a formal school setting—me as teacher and my son as first grader—we are going back to our “old” way of life with great relief. We found out we’d been right all along. I am a single parent in an extremely low-income group; so homeschooling for us has always taken a good bit of ingenuity. I’d be happy to be in touch with others in a similar situation to swap ideas.

## **At the Kitchen Table**

*From Kendall Dustin (NH):*

When Rosy was 3 or 4, discovering  $2 + 2 = 4$ , she looked at her hand one day and smiled up at me and said, “Mum! 2 and 2 and 1 is 5!” She truly enjoyed numbers. First grade took that away and for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years I heard “I hate math.” I knew it wasn’t really true. Well, finally, the other day, after a good session at multiplication, Rosy looked at me and said, “Mum, I guess I really do like math.” I felt really good about what we’re doing.

We basically spend the morning at the kitchen table doing math, spelling, reading, science (though that takes us other places), social studies (reading Peter Freuchen’s wonderful *Book Of The Eskimos*), history (Laura Ingalls Wilder). Thursday is craft day—clay, sewing, corn husk dolls, papier mâché. They write in their journals almost daily, use sketch pads for quiet evening activity. What fascinates me is what they do with their free time all afternoon. For a couple of weeks they made elaborate houses with cardboard boxes and pocketknives. They draw and cut out a lot, also sew. I’d like a little more contact with other adults, but we’re quite isolated here— which is nice.

## **Adam Exploring**

*From Karen Franklin (AL):*

When I read my letter in *GWS* #18, it was as if it was from someone else. Everything sounded great, but since I know me and my family, I know that

things don't always go as smoothly as it sounded. Every word of the letter is true, but we don't always love every minute of everyday. There are moments when it crosses my mind that if I'd send the kids to school, I'd be rid of them for a few hours! Of course, I'm not serious, but I just want to reassure any readers that think we have a perfect situation.

I keep feeling that Adam (4) will be reading soon. I have to be careful not to pressure him, though. He's so close, but if I irritate him about it, he may just decide that he doesn't want to fool with it. He can tell the initial and final consonant in any spoken word. Really hears the distinction. If you say, "B-A-D spells bad, so what does D-A-D spell?" he knows. This is our new car game—if he wants to play. If he doesn't, you can forget it. He's really big on having you write a word on his chalkboard, erasing a letter, adding a new letter, and then he tells what the new word is. He tells me I have to do things (like take him to the zoo, for example) because "it says right here in the paper, "Take Adam to the zoo, Mommy." He often writes random letters with his plastic alphabet, and asks me what it spells. We've gotten into vowels a little with this. He isn't quite sure what a vowel is, but he knows you usually need one.

He's adding and subtracting a little. Says he's doing his computer (Richard is a programmer).

I've found that when I want to do something for a few minutes, like type a letter, I can buy time by letting him mop the kitchen. And I must say that I love a spotless kitchen—at least in some spots.

Cooking is really big with Adam. For any who haven't tried it, they would be surprised at how much a child can do. Adam was the official egg-cracker in the family long before he was two, and can use a knife almost as well as an adult.

Jessica (1) is doing more and more. She's at the point where she thinks she can do anything Adam does. She's really discovered her voice, and knows that ma-ma-ma-ma will cause me to come running. It's so obvious that she understands so much more than she can say. She's so much fun to be with. Such determination and concentration.

We had an interesting experience with "preschool." We live in an apartment where there really isn't anyone for Adam to play with. He has a couple of friends who go to preschool. He kept asking to go. After much discussion and with many misgivings, Adam and Richard spent a morning at

the YMCA pre-school. I wasn't really in favor of it, yet Adam really didn't have anyone to play with, and I couldn't spend his every waking moment with him. So. Well, Adam lasted one day. He said it wasn't very fun. They made you do stuff. He had to paint a snowman, and he wanted to paint a pumpkin. He already knew the songs and the story, and he didn't WANT to mark the picture the teacher said to mark. He doesn't have any intention of going back. I think he just wanted to know about what happens at school.

*From a later letter:*

Adam wants to go to pre-school again (the neighbors are getting ready for school) so we're going to let him. It may or may not last, but for two hours a day, three times a week, we'll try it. They teach swimming, gymnastics, and soccer, all things Adam is interested in, so it may be OK.

## **Music, Writing, Swimming**

*From Manfred Smith (Md.)*

*March 11:* Have just finished writing the lyrics and notes to my first "real" song on guitar. I did it last night after reading your advice in *GWS* #19 about writing down one's music. The act of writing down notes causes one to think in terms of the sounds these little dots make, and therefore enable one to "read" music. Sitting down and combining a tune with words, elaborating on the music, looking for more complementary sounds was, to say the least, exciting!

When I compare the things I did outside of school (built liquid fuel rockets at 12 and 13, cut and polished my own stones, built a crude laser with some help) to how I spent my time in school, I feel like suing them all for stealing thousands of productive hour's from my life!

About learning astronomy—astronomy was one of the first sciences I was interested in. While in Alaska, a group of us (12, 13 years old) got together to study the stars. We got books, some decent telescopes, star charts, etc., and we were on our own. In fact, the scientific knowledge that I accumulated while in my early teens carried me through all the science classes (albeit introductory ones) that I took in college.

Ben, my 15-year-old friend who will unschool this summer, has been going through lots of changes too. We usually take walks through Takoma



Park every day. We spend our time studying the architecture and talking about whatever comes to our minds. Ben has been telling me how being involved in unschooling has changed his attitude and way of thinking. He is much more motivated, wants to do a lot of writing, learn to read music, spend more time reading, travel to museums, spend more time *learning* (his words).

*March 23:* Here is a copy of the notes to the lyrics that T sent you a few days ago. This is the first time that I have ever written musical notes. I wrote down what I thought were the correct notes (A, D, etc.). Now, the notes were correct, but the beats were way off. I knew that there was something wrong, but wasn't quite sure what it was. I showed my notes to one of my students who, within minutes, taught me how to write notes in time, measure, etc. With little effort I produced the finished (and I hope correct) notes that you see here.

Writing the notes down, even though I really did not know what I was doing, was a good way to learn how to do it, and learn a lot about the way music is structured. I understand now why you and others have suggested that writing comes before reading: it certainly seems like a more natural process. It doesn't matter if one knows what the letters mean at the beginning—in no time a child will place the written letters together to form words. Jamie does this, working with letters, and I expect she will soon “write” words too. Writing and reading must go hand in hand.

*July 4:* Jamie is really doing a lot with words now. She writes numerous ones down. Many of her words are “nonsense,” but she is experimenting with letters and getting to know the alphabet. We play words games and number games, and it is wonderful to see the interest and excitement these activities bring to Jamie, and to us too.

*August 3:* Last year, we decided that Jamie ought to have swimming lessons. At first, it seemed like a good idea. By the second lesson, it was becoming obvious that Jamie hated it. We dropped out after the fourth. Yes, we were quitters. For the rest of the summer, Jamie was constantly worried that she had to have lessons and did not like to go into the big pool. This year, Jamie never entered the big pool but instead spent lots of time “swimming” in the baby pool. The baby pool we have here is nice in that it gets deeper at one end. Jamie would spend hours with her head under the water, swimming sideways, backward, etc.

About three weeks ago, she walked up to me and informed me that she

was ready to go into the big pool by herself now. She then proceeded to walk toward the pool. Had I not gotten up, I have no doubt that she would have jumped into the pool. Well, we walked on over to the big pool, I picked her up and lowered her into four feet of water—and she swam. We spent over an hour in the pool that day. She would jump head first into the pool and swim toward me. All in all, she could swim at least 15 feet. Now we spend lots of time in the big pool.

We just returned from the beach where Jamie had great fun with the ocean. She not only would swim in the ocean, she body-surfed waves! Jamie is three years old. When kids are ready, they will do what they want to do.

I am collecting some of Jamie's "words" that she writes. I will send you some when I have collected enough to give you a fair example of this period in her development.

## **Tired Of Nonsense**

A six-year old friend came into the office the other day with her brother and mother. While her mother talked to me and her brother looked over the books on our shelves, the six-year old made a beeline for the electric office typewriter she had been using the day before. I gave her some paper and soon she was "typing," seeing how fast she could make the machine go, probably enjoying some fantasy of competence and power (she has seen and heard good typists at work). For a while her mother and I could hear this busy clatter of keys. Then it began to slow down, and soon became very deliberate, a letter or two, a silence, then another letter or two. I said to her mother, "She's looking at what she's doing, writing something real."

After a few minutes the child came into our office and said to both of us, "At first I was only doing nonsense, then I got tired of nonsense." Then she gravely handed me a "form." At the top she had typed her name, her own zip code, and her telephone number. Further down the page, each one on its own line, were the words "naem," "adress," "zip," and "number." After each word she had made a long underline (she had figured out how) on which I was to fill in the needed information.

As I began filling in the forms, I asked her whether under "Number" she wanted my Social Security Number. No she wanted my phone number. When the form was filled out, she went back to make some more forms, each a little

more official looking, and with a little more information on it, than the one before. The last few she decorated with a rectangle colored in with green crayon—her mother said later they represented checks.

When she had made as many forms as she wanted, she brought in all her nonsense sheets for us to look at. As I looked at the long chains of letters, I could see that here and there was embedded a real word. I said, “There are some real words hiding in here,” and began to circle them with my orange felt-tipped pen. Even though there were few such words, she found this very interesting and exciting.

One word was “pax” I told her that I had found a Latin word in there, that it meant “peace,” and that British children use it (or once did) to stop a quarrel or struggle or fight, at least long enough to talk things over. She was very pleased to hear all this, and later told her parents about it.

This incident showed me once again how children explore and make sense of the world around them. They are constantly trying to make a mental model of that world. They almost always begin with play and fantasy, as this particular exploration began with the fantasy of being a hotshot adult typist. But, *if we will just let the children have all they want of this fantasy, and not try to push them out of it into supposedly “serious” learning before they are ready*, they will soon tire of what they really know is nonsense, and will move toward things more real and serious. We can afford to be patient and wait for this, for when working for their own reasons they move much faster toward reality than we could ever push them, and they remember the things that, along the way, they invent and find out.—JH

## Printing And Cursive

*Linda Weikel (PA) writes:*

Some thoughts on handwriting (*GWS* #19): Cursive has always been a bugaboo of mine. I never liked my own handwriting as a young student and never felt comfortable using it. So in 8th grade I switched back to printing, and contrary to my expectations, no teacher ever told me I couldn’t print instead of write. Maybe because legible printing is so much easier to read and grade than sloppy cursive!

When I print fast (taking notes, doing rough drafts, etc.) my printed letters just sort of naturally glide together, forming a unique style of cursive, so

speed has never been a problem.

The subject of handwriting once came up in a discussion I was having with an elementary school principal. He believed it was a waste of time and energy to teach it (and the reading specialist agreed) because the only thing one really ever *must* write in cursive is one's signature and children could learn *very* quickly how to form the letters needed for their own names. His reason for continuing the handwriting program at the school: he said the parents would fight tooth and nail if it wasn't taught to their children.

Are you familiar with the D'Nealian style of handwriting? If cursive must be taught, this is a sane way of doing it. The transition between D'Nealian manuscript and cursive is logical and easy to make. Scott-Foresman publishes the set of workbooks designed for a K-8 program—they are colorful, interesting, and practical. Pricelist and more info from Scott-Foresman, 99 Bauer Dr., Oakland NJ 07436.

## **Magnetic Letters**

*From Judy Cornell in Florida:*

After my children grew bored with their magnetic letters that came with their "Play-skol" schoolhouse, we put the letters on the refrigerator and played all sorts of games. Kids love to see and spell their own names and the names of friends. We would scramble a word and try to figure it out; we put up favorite sentences or phrases ("I love you"); we played "Word of the Week" and studied new words for a while. Now that the kids are teenagers, we use the letters to write notes and telephone messages.—where do teenagers head first?

Friends and neighbors have always loved playing with them and the games continue when a stranger visits. When I suggested putting them away, I got a resounding "No."

## **Rental Library**

*From the leaflet of Earthbooks Lending Library:*

*Earthbooks* is a nationwide mail-order rental library system specializing in self-sufficiency do-it-yourself titles—mostly quality paperbacks. For a \$5 *lifetime membership* fee and \$1 per title,

*Earthbooks* members can rent any book or magazine in our collection, keep it a full month, then either return it or *keep* it just by paying the balance! With our rental arrangement, we also get many used books back, which are then offered to the next member at used-book discounts. Since we drop books that are repeatedly returned and criticized, our collection constantly evolves toward the very best titles available in each subject area. All books are available for direct sale (to non-members) also.

We currently offer books on building and repairing your own low-cost home, producing your own food, maintaining your health, creating your own income, exploring consciousness, developing new community travel and recreation, women, where-to-get-it information, crafts, shop skills and construction projects, nutrition, children, wild foods foraging, alternative energy, survival techniques. Our complete catalogue with detailed book reviews will be sent free with your \$5 lifetime membership.

DR: You can send \$5 to join, or \$2 to get the main catalogue without joining, or a self-addressed stamped envelope for more info and sample titles, to the closer branch of *Earthbooks*: Allegheny Branch, Box 556, Harmony PA 16037, or Central/Western Branch, Mountainburg, AR 72946.

## **Science Materials**

*From Carol Kent (TX):*

Steck-Vaughn Company, 807 Brazos, PO-Box 2028, Austin TX 78768, offers a series of inexpensive but well done paperback science texts, intended to provide 7th-12th grade science for slow readers with 2nd-3rd grade reading comprehension. It's called "Wonders of Science" (page 23 of their catalogue.) When Robert (5½) reached second grade reading level, he began reading from this series. It has been a rich source of vocabulary and information about the world.

We've been meaning to mention the Things of Science kits, which a number of *GWS* families have told us they've enjoyed. Their address is RD 1, Box 130A, Newtown PA 18940. From their flyer:

Membership brings a monthly surprise package containing materials for

exciting experiments and demonstrations that offer the thrill of “discovery” and open the door to the fascinating world of science. Included is a booklet with detailed background information and easy to follow instructions for performing many absorbing experiments.

Recent kits enabled young people to learn about solving some environmental problems through recycling use the laws of probability—construct simple machines and find out how and why they work—explore the fields of magnetism and electrostatics—make chemical analyses using chromatography—learn the principles of aerodynamics—make a pinhole camera—discover how plants grow without soil—make a sextant—enjoy the mysteries of optical illusions.

Designed for boys and girls 10-16, a one-year membership, \$16, brings a different kit each month.

## Cuisenaire Rods

*To a parent who asked, “Can you recommend a book that discusses Cuisenaire rods? I know very little about them. I tried the public library—but their idea of the subject ‘Arithmetic: Learning Aids’ is audio-visual stuff,” Donna wrote:*

Last year I looked around for a good book on Cuisenaire rods, and I was appalled by most of what I found. There are a great many dumb, trivial, classroom-oriented busy-work books relating to Cuisenaire rods—*Do A Little-Dance With The Rods, Sing A Little Song With The Rods, Make An Alphabet With The Rods*. None of those things are bad in themselves, but they are *not* what the originators of the rods had in mind. In college I wrote a paper on the theory behind the Cuisenaire rods and so read the books written 20 or 30 years ago by those who designed and developed them. Unfortunately, of course, those books are long out of print.

I finally found *one* set of Activity Cards that use the basic ideas the rods were intended for—looking at lengths, order, matching, etc. For \$9.95, you can get a set of these cards and also an “Instruction Manual” that explains some of the mathematical theory behind the rods, from the Cuisenaire Company Of America, 12 Church St, New Rochelle NY 10805 (Order number #30020). For \$18.95, you can get their “Mathematics Made Meaningful” kit (#20011) with those two items plus a set of 155 plastic rods.

For \$4.50, you can get a set of 74 rods alone (#10291).

The very first instruction to teachers, parents, etc., is to let the kids *play* with the rods, and I truly believe this is essential. Some parents have told me that they never did any teacher-type activities with the rods at all, they only let the kids play and discover things, and I agree whole-heartedly that this is a good procedure. But if you do feel that you have to sit down and teach, I think it's a real help to understand what the rods were meant for and what can be done with them.

If you get the catalogue, you may see what I mean about all those teaching guides—"Picture Puzzles with Cuisenaire Rods," etc. I don't see anything wrong with doing puzzles with Cuisenaire rods. But all those gimcrack activities weren't designed for real teaching, they were designed as ways classroom teachers could fill up time. And doesn't anybody remember how awful it can be to do a "fun" activity under duress?

## Comics

*From Vicki Meyer (WV):*

I want to put in a plug for the lowly comic book. Both my older boys enjoy them, have large collections, and go through several every day. Jeremiah now collects old comics, scrounging them at our local flea market, resells what he no longer wants at a small profit, and reads the history of this and that series avidly. They've been the basis for many discussions on morality, development of fiction plots, mythology, and the role of the media in influencing/responding to the times in which it exists. Elisha-the-artist, on the other hand, has learned a lot of drawing techniques from comics. Since he can't read yet, he studies the artistic devices and makes up his own plots. For both of them, comics have been a creative experience, rather than passive entertainment.

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*And from Tieirdre Purdy (WV):*

One of the best "reading aids" in our house recently has been the daily comics in our newspaper. Both children leap upon them, have their favorites, discuss them, and the following day, cut out their special strips and save them for rereading and (Hannah) for coloring. They do all the "exercises" that

school reading programs try to get children to do in workbooks like looking closely at a series of pictures, seeing if they are in order, guessing what comes next, but of course their questions come out of a real desire and wonder. (“Why did the professor say his killer was ‘not of this world’? What could that mean?” I said it was from another planet and was proven to be wrong when it was a robot. Tune in tomorrow.)

They are both very critical when they don’t think a strip is funny. This has also affected Jed’s drawing so his characters have balloons for words and thoughts. He cartoons his fantasies, like going camping with a good friend, in 6 or 8 drawings with words and actions (people shaking with fright—both of them are learning to “read” such conventions). Also both of them ask every day about the political cartoon on the editorial page and understand some of them.

## Teaching Themselves Piano

*From Karen Franklin (AL):*

We’ve gotten a used piano. Richard plays quite well, took lessons for years, though that was long ago. I struggled along for a couple of years (quit just after “Spinning Song” (doesn’t everyone?) but never really learned. I dug out Richard’s old beginning books and am now teaching myself. Richard is great about helping me when I want it (he plays the piece so I’ll know how it should sound), but otherwise, he leaves me alone. Some weeks, I practice constantly; sometimes, not much. I know that practicing often would get me down the road faster, but I have other things to do too, and I don’t want to feel like I HAVE to do it. Adam has had fun singing his favorite songs while his dad plays them, and often sits down and more or less bangs and sings. (Our only piano rule is to have clean hands). Jessica has gotten into the act too. She sits in my lap at the piano, bangs away, and says EEEEEIIIII, EEEEEIIIII! A family of musicians.

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*And from Suzanne Alejandre, formerly in Calif., now in West Germany:*

I am teaching myself how to play piano. I intend to look up the books you mentioned in *GWS*. My method began by renting a piano (not as expensive as I expected—\$70 for pickup and delivery, \$21.20 per month rental fee and a



five-month minimum rental period). I have two instruction books that I've not found too helpful—they are too slow and un-aesthetic. My great inspiration has been the song “Star Dust” by Hoagy Carmichael. Rich had the music because he takes voice lessons (another story in itself). I love the song and decided it would be my five-month goal to be able to play the melody with my right hand. It's been

3½ months and I can do that, so now I'm attempting to make up chords to go along with it - all by ear. I know very little about music theory so most of what I've been doing is by ear. It's been great—one of my few real learning experiences.

## Letters On Art

*More from Suzanne Alejandre:*

I've been trying different things with art supplies since Niko was less than a year old. It wasn't until I was sorting out things, deciding what to pack, discard, or give away, that I discovered Rich's and my old art supplies from college. Rich had worked with acrylics and I preferred oils and we had a huge supply of each along with brushes, palette knives, etc. Also in the box were two plastic palettes—just enough indentation for paint for a child, or anybody for that matter. I'm sure they still sell them at art supply stores.

If anyone were going to start from scratch, I would suggest just buying five tubes of paint—blue, red, yellow, black, and white, and then mix colors for all the rest.

Niko (now 4) loves to squeeze the pigment out of the tubes and the palette dents are a perfect size—one of his squeezes fills half the dent and he stops. He also enjoys manipulating the caps to the tubes. I usually have to loosen them but after that he can do everything on his own.

I enjoyed your section on clean water for painting (*GWS* #16). The next time we paint I'll try it out and maybe Niko will try it too. Dirty paint water has never seemed to bother him but it bothers me while painting.

I've experimented with paper and feel that art store quality watercolor paper is far superior to anything. I've tried every type of paper around the house. If you buy the large size (12" by 18" or thereabouts) one piece will satisfy the artist for quite a while. The result is beautiful because the paper handles the paint so well no matter how runny it is (young artists often use a

lot paint and water). Also, I love painting washes so maybe that's part of my prejudice!

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*From Bonnie Speir in Calif.:*

I like the Cray-Pas pastels a lot; Sarah used to eat them, but at least they kept working—unlike pens. They clean off walls and furniture also, unlike some pens. I like their small size, compared with Pentel oil pastels, which are very similar but a little bigger around in circumference.

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Editor—John Holt

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# Growing Without Schooling 24

December 1981

Many exciting things have happened since the last issue. As many of you know, on Oct. 28 Brigitta and Peter Van Daam (RI) and their three children, and Joyce and Dick Kinmont (UT) and their seven children appeared with me on the *Donahue* show. Also on the show were a number of Chicago area home-schooling families who had managed to get in the studio audience. All the families spoke eloquently and convincingly about home schooling, and the older children, Andrea Kinmont and Julia Van Damm, were the strongest argument of all; they certainly disposed of the notion that home schooled children would somehow be out of place in the “Real World.” What with the show itself, and spending a night in a big hotel, riding up and down the glass-sided elevators, eating meals in the room, and seeing Chicago after the show, it was an exciting and happy occasion for the families. After the show, I taped a one-hour radio show on WFMT with my old friend Studs Terkel, whose program is heard all over the country.

On Sept. 30, Eileen and Spencer Trombly (CT), their daughter Sarah, and I appeared on the nation-wide TV show *Good Morning, America*. The format of the show only gave us about seven or eight minutes to speak our piece. Nevertheless, I heard later from my publishers that our segment created the largest response (phone and mail) that *Good Morning, America* has ever received.

Then on Nov. 3, 12-year-old Holly Hillestad (MN) and I taped the CBS-TV news show, *Up To The Minute*, with two other guests taking the opposing side and Harry Reasoner as host. One of our “opponents,” former U S. Commissioner of Education Ernst Boyer, said that he thought that families who wanted to teach their own children should be allowed to do so—an important concession.

Later that same week a writer and a photographer from *People* magazine came to the office to do an interview with me and, the next day, with the Maher family in Wakefield. The writer, who was very sympathetic and well-informed, taped at least eight hours of talk, and for the magazine’s editors to

boil all this down to a *People*-length story will take some time.

Meanwhile, the Dec. '81 issue of *Yankee* magazine has a very good article about me by my friend Mel Allen. One of the nicest things in it is a wonderful photo, taken by another friend, Ed Braverman (who took the cover photo for *Never Too Late*), of six-year-old Vita Wallace and me playing violin and cello.

Along with all this I have done live telephone radio interviews with stations in Oklahoma City, Washington, Toronto, Grand Rapids, Boston, San Francisco, and Detroit. Most of these shows were excellent. These shows give other home school organizations a chance to make themselves known—for example, Pat Montgomery called in to the Detroit show to tell about her Home Based Education Program. There are thousands of these radio shows around the country; let's use them as much as we can.

And we had a third visitor to the office from Japan—Miss Kaoru Chikamochi, a kindergarten teacher. While in the U.S., she visited many kindergarten classes around the country; she was surprised and disappointed to find that so few children looked happy. She said that pressure in Japanese schools did not begin until later, around junior high school. Most Japanese feel strongly that it is very important that little children, whether out of school or in, be happy. I said that I feared that many Americans did not put a very high value on the happiness of children. All in all, we had a most pleasant visit. Busy times!

—John Holt

## Coming Schedule

Jan 27, 1982: Kennesaw Junior College, Marietta GA. 9 AM. Contact Kathleen Gildea, 404-422-8770 x 268.

Jan 28 (tent.): "Future of Public Education," Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future, America 2000 series. 9–11 AM panel. Rep. Albert Gore, Chair, Washington DC 20515; 202-225-3153.

Feb 12: Waterloo County Teachers Professional Development, Kitchener Valhalla Inn, Cambridge, Ontario. Contact Pamela Constable, Glenview Park Secondary School.

Mar 13: Indianapolis Council of Preschool Cooperatives, Indianapolis IN. Keynote address & workshops. Contact Sally Zweig, Conf. Chair., 317-257-

8275. To register, send SASE: 5163 N Illinois, Indianapolis 46208.

Mar 17–26: Stockholm and six other Swedish cities. Arranged by Ake Bystrom, Linkoping, Sweden. (We also hope to arrange engagements in Denmark, England, Iceland, and possibly other countries).

## Office Help

I'd like to thank the volunteers who, by being willing to tackle more and more different jobs, have made it possible for John to travel and write, Peggy to do the accounts and travel arrangements, Tim to handle the increasing number of subs and book orders, and me to get this issue of the magazine out on time. In particular: Rachael Solem for being willing to handle the hundreds of info requests that have come in since the Donahue show in October; Wanda Rezac and Mary Maher for typing; Scott Layson, Dawn Reger, and Lynn Kapplow for word processing; Connie Bernhardt and Reba Karban for sorting mail; and all the others who have helped in the office or at home. As the workload in the office continues to grow, we have to depend more and more on volunteers, and I am amazed and deeply grateful to find so many people willing to help.

I want to apologize for one job that has fallen through the cracks as the work piles up—answering mail. We've been able to handle business letters promptly, but those of you who send beautiful, personal, newsy letters, or who have sent us articles, or who have asked us questions, may be wondering whether we ever got them. Things have been so busy lately that there simply hasn't been time to acknowledge each letter, though I wish we could. We'll keep looking for better ways to do the mail; meanwhile, can I wipe the slate clean by one big THANK YOU to everyone who has written us? We love hearing from you.

Thanks also to all of you who enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes when you expect a reply—that does indeed save us time and money. Another way you can save us time is to tell us when you write whether it's OK to print any part of your letter in *GWS*, and whether or not we should include your name with the story.

Finally, if anyone could consider coming to Boston for a period of time—say, 2–3 weeks—to volunteer in the office, please let us know. You could stay with a staff member or *GWS* reader in the area, and we would be more

than happy to show you how to do the various office procedures. This offer is open to anyone old enough to be responsible for travelling and taking care of him/herself. (Good typists especially welcome.)

—Donna Richoux

## Enjoying Publicity

*Those of you who saw the recent Donahue show may remember the energetic woman near the front of the audience who shared her enthusiasm about home-schooling—that was Sue McGartland (IL), who was there with her husband Mark (GWS #21) and children Dawn and Nathan. After the show, Mark wrote us:*

Before going to Chicago I phoned the local superintendent to let him know about the program, as our policy has always been to avoid surprises. I inquired if he had received any negative feedback from anyone in the one and a half years we have been home educating. He responded that we have been so low-key that probably very few people knew about us.

However, the situation is changing rapidly since the show, as many saw us on TV, two newspapers have asked to do stories, and the show will be broadcast again in our town Nov. 18 on a different channel. Of all the people who have told us they saw us on TV, none has been negative, contrary to audience response during the show.

What I like best so far is the attitude of the principal and superintendent, which is "Local family makes the big time." Far from being threatened, they are enjoying our exercise in cooperation between the school and our family.

## “Victory” Victory

*A reader sent this letter from the Catholic correspondence school Our Lady of Victory, PO Box 1181 Mission Hills CA 91145 ):*

The state of Ohio has been a tough state in which to establish a private school, much less a correspondence program. We are pleased to announce that two families in the Home Study Program of Our Lady of Victory School have insisted on their God-given rights to educate their children at home, AND THEY WON!

In April, two of our parents in Northfield, Ohio, went to court and proved

to the judge that they were right in keeping their son at home. In addition, they convinced the judge that their son was getting a better education through our Home Study Program than he could get in the local public school.

Within a couple of weeks of that great court victory, one of our families in Warren, Ohio, was told by the local superintendent that their son and daughter had to attend the local public school. Just prior to going to court, that official reviewed our lesson plans and he now accepts our program in his area.

## **Ally in Louisiana**

*Woody Jenkins, the member of the Louisiana House of Representatives who sponsored the legislation making it easier to call one's home a private school (GWS #18), wrote to homeschoolers in the state:*

Since the passage of Act 828, nearly 200 new private schools have been established in Louisiana. The largest of these schools has an enrollment approaching 1,000. But some have an enrollment of only one pupil!

Some parents who wanted to participate in a home study program realized that the regulations on home study adopted by the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) were *far, far more restrictive* than permitted by Act 828. BESE has absolutely *no legal authority* to do what it *has* done through its rulemaking powers—control teaching materials, restrict who may provide instruction, and require periodic testing of pupils engaged in home study programs. As a result, those parents who desired to be free of regulation by BESE and were aware of their options under Act 828 simply started private schools in their own homes.

At the urging of a parent, I requested an Attorney General's opinion on the question of whether it is, in fact, legal under Act 828 to establish a private school with only one student and with the school located in the student's home. As expected, on Sept. 22, 1981, the Attorney General ruled that such a school *is* legally a "school"—for purposes of compliance with the compulsory attendance law.

During the 1981 session of the Louisiana legislature, a bill was introduced to *repeal* most of Act 828, restore regulation of private schools in Louisiana, and abolish the authorization of home study. This bill had the endorsement of all 64 parish superintendents of schools in Louisiana.

Why? It's really not difficult to understand. The reason some public educators would like to regulate and even destroy private schools and home education programs is, quite simply, *money!* Parish school boards receive more than \$1,000 *per year* from the State of Louisiana for each child actually enrolled in their public schools. Here in East Baton Rouge Parish, where more than 4,000 students left the public schools this year, the local school board should lose \$4 million in state funds. I was able to kill the legislation to repeal Act 828 during the 1981 session. However, I expect the public education establishment to make a very strong effort to repeal Act 828 during the 1982 session.

There is really only one way to preserve the legal rights which you have acquired with the passage of Act 828. Quite simply, you must seek out your natural allies—other parents who educate their children at home—and work to develop an effective organization capable of lobbying in the legislature. At present, there are 66 families in the state who have been approved for home study by BESE. In addition, there are many others who have established private schools in their homes. This letter is being sent to everyone I can locate in those two groups.

I am especially interested in knowing whether you would be willing to join a new organization which I am hoping we can put together for the purpose of promoting home study and home schools in Louisiana). The name of this organization would be PARENTS FOR HOME EDUCATION. (Woody Jenkins' address is 1 American Pl., Baton Rouge, LA; phone 504-383-6226 or 357-9674)

## **Teacher Protection Bill**

*Ellen Loegering (MN) wrote:*

Here is a copy of House File 1459 presently before the Education Committee in the Minn. House of Representatives. This bill was written in the Dept. of Education. The House will convene Jan. 12, 1982, and we need opposition to this bill.

*We asked Ellen if she could tell GWS readers in the Directory about the legislation. John also wrote the following:*

The intent of the act is clear—to make it illegal for anyone to teach



children except certified teachers, and so to wipe out virtually all home schools and private religious schools within the state. This is, in short, a Job Protection Act. Readers should write to the Chairman and as many members as possible of the House Committee on Education, urging them not to report out the bill. It would probably be a good idea to point out that a similar law was struck down by the courts in Kentucky (see *GWS* #12, 15), on the grounds that the state could produce no evidence that certified teachers could teach better than uncertified, and therefore could not show a need for teacher certification compelling enough to justify their restricting in this way the right of parents to have their children taught as they wished.

It might also be useful to send to members of the Education Committee and others a copy of the statement on the Constitutional position on home schooling that I prepared for a recent meeting at the Massachusetts legislature. (See this issue; copies of full statement available here for \$2). Also, try to bring these matters to the attention of as many newspaper editors and TV and radio commentators as possible. Point out that this bill not only infringes on the Constitutional rights of parents, but will also burden the already overloaded courts of the state with a flood of cases, many or most of which the state will lose.

Be sure, too, to write the Governor about this. One reader told us earlier, when this bill was first being discussed, that the Governor had indicated that if it were passed he would veto it. To whatever extent this may be true, he should know about popular opposition to this bill.

Please let us know what responses you get from legislators, media people, and so on. Home and private schoolers have blocked similar bills in a number of other states, and with plenty of work and a little luck should be able to do so in Minnesota, which in matters of personal liberty has always been one of our more enlightened states (another point worth making).

## **Kansas Group**

*From Darlene J. Vermeulen, 3201 Berry Rd, Kansas City KS 66106; 913-722-2386:*

We have a Kansas/Missouri chapter of Home Educators National Association, which is alive and well, and we need more new people to come and participate in activities, plus bring new ideas and resources to our group.

Our H.E.N. is sponsoring a National Workshop in Home Education, March 26-27 1982, and we will be having Dr. Raymond Moore of the Hewitt Research Center for a speaker on March 26, and Sister Monica Foltzer of S.U.A. Phonics Program fame as our Saturday, March 27th speaker. The lady to contact regarding registration is Deloris Fitzpatrick, Rt 1 Box 278, Independence MO 64050; 816-796-6229.

We would like to make a call for all Kansas people interested in doing something about helping to change the laws in Kansas to a more favorable position, to please contact me. We are presently working with the Eagle Forum and have found several state legislators who are willing to introduce home-schooling bills. We are hoping to get hearings on the subject set up for next March. Presently the laws are such that the home has to be inspected by both the county health department and fire department, and you must become a "school" and take in at least one other student besides your own children.

Our other co-chairman who is "spearheading" Missouri is Saralee Rhoads; Rt 1 Box 75, Sibley MO 64088; 816-249-9235.

## **News From All Over**

Laurie Huffman of the Utah Home Education Association phoned to let us know of a mistake in *GWS* #23. We reprinted a newspaper article from Price, Utah, that quoted Stephen Stone as saying Utah law does not require permission from local school boards to form home schools. Laurie said that is not true; "Utah districts are reasonable and cooperative," she says, "but they do have jurisdiction over home schools. Stephen Stone wrote that statement four or five years ago, and didn't fully know the law at that time."

While we're doing corrections—Ed Wilhelm (VA) just told us that contrary to the chart we reprinted in *GWS* #23, the compulsory schooling age in Virginia is 6.

The October issue of the *H.O.U.S.E. Door* newsletter says, "Good news for Chicago residents—the reporter Rosalind Rossi, who did the *Chicago Sun-Times* article on homeschooling, talked to Superintendent Dr. Ruth Love about home schooling. Dr. Love said parents have the choice to teach their children at home. She thinks it is a mistake to do so, but they have the choice!"

Mary Bergman of the National Association Of Home Educators (Rt 3 Box

324-B, Gallatin MO 64640) sent us info on the material she now offers: a cassette "Introduction to Home Education," \$7.95; cassette "Sensitivity/Literature," \$7.95; "Life Curriculum Guide," \$8.95; and "Legal Papers and Tapes" on how to legally establish a school in your home, \$35. She says if you mention *GWS* with your order, you can receive a 20% discount.

A reader sent us the New York Public Library's "Early Childhood Resource and Information Center" bulletin, which included in its list of programs, "Home Schooling: A Growing Issue for Parents and Teachers," with Elin McCoy, "Author and Educator." We hope someone will let us know more about this.—DR

## **Pat's Busy**

*Pat Montgomery (MI) writes:*

I gave the October address to the HOUSE group in Chicago last week on my swing back from Los Angeles where I did the *Alive and Well* show on USA Network (no broadcast dates yet.) The interviewer did a series of ten shows, ten minutes long each, to be shown each day for two weeks. It promises to be a much more enlightening series than any other I've been involved in.

As of October '81, we have 60 families enrolled in Home Based Education Program—136 children altogether—in 35 states. HBEP is becoming the true lifesaver, financially, for Clonlara School.

The NCACS (National Coalition for Alternative Community Schools) Board of Directors met October 17 and planned their spring conference for the middle of April 1982 in Chicago. I am always conscious of your warnings about devoting too much administrative time to organizations and I use this as my guiding light in dealing with both NCACS and HBEP.

The NCACS 1981–82 directory of alternative schools, "There Ought to Be Free Choice," is now available (Clonlara Publications, 1289 Jewett St, Ann Arbor MI 48104; \$5).

## **Success Before Judge**

*More from Brenda Cowell in Ohio ("Learning With Her Son," GWS #23):*

We have had a very trying year as my ex-husband filed for a change in the custody of our son based primarily on the fact that Kale had not attended school last year. My ex-husband had originally agreed to Kale's non-schooling but later changed his mind.

At the hearing, he attempted to prove that I am an incompetent teacher and mother. Plus he testified that Kale was not growing emotionally because he had little interaction with his peers as children do in school.

During the hearing, two psychological reports were presented. Both pointed out how bright and competent our son is and neither found signs of Kale having any abnormal psychological disturbances or of being emotionally immature for his age. My ex-husband's testimony also pointed out how well-liked Kale is by his neighborhood friends and that they frequently play together during Kale's visits with his dad.

The judge himself was impressed with Kale as he asked Kale to read to him out of one of his law books. He did. And quite well, too' (Kale is 8.) The judge's comment was that he didn't see why there was all this fuss about Kale not being in school. No custody change was made, no recommendation was given concerning Kale's future education, and I feel exuberant.

## **A Utah Family**

*From Donna Brock (UT):*

*Aug 16:* We took our children out of public schools in March of this year. We have four boys, ages 13, 10, 7, and 5. We have felt very much alone and isolated until yesterday when we attended a convention of home-schoolers in Salt Lake City where Mr. Holt was the guest speaker. We now feel so much more sure of ourselves and encouraged.

Our three oldest sons were in public schools in Florida before we moved out here, and we were very happy with the education they were receiving. It was the kind of school where all the third graders weren't lumped in a room together—they might have sixth grade readers and second grade math. Our kids went skipping out the door to school every morning, came home in the afternoon excited and anxious to share their day at school with us.

Then we moved to an area where school is somewhere you go to play ball until you're old enough to go to work in the coal mines. Our boys went through one entire school year and almost through a second before we heard

about home schools. It was the most awful time in their young lives.

Our five year old would have started kindergarten this coming term and has talked about it and looked forward to it for a whole year. So, even after all the problems his brothers had in school, I took him to register for kindergarten. He met the teachers, visited the rooms, saw the books they were using, and whispered in my ear, "If it's all right with you, I'll just keep going to our home school." Smart kid!

Of course, the principal told me that my son didn't want to go to kindergarten because he was just like other kids that age. "He'll cry and hang on to your skirts the first few days you leave him at school, but after that he'll be just fine." My son who loves for Mom to go out of town with Dad for a couple of days so he can go stay with friends, and is so busy playing when we leave him that he can't take time out to tell us goodbye, and when we pick him up wonders why we're back so soon, is going to hang onto my skirts and cry? I guess I have a maladjusted five year-old. He's very comfortable with other people and other surroundings.

For our family, teaching our own children feels right. I don't want to push it on someone else because for them it might not fit. I don't work outside of the home, and with my husband's work we can spend a lot of time together as a family. I know that for a lot of families this would be impossible. But for us it is possible and it feels good.

*Aug. 29:* When a reporter interviewed my husband about a security job he was going to be doing for the city, we just had to get a plug in about home school. She was interested and made an appointment to come back and talk to us about it. We sent her in several different directions and the enclosed newspaper series is the result.

I called Reed Benson at Brigham Young University about coming down here and talking about his dissertation *The Development of a Home School*. We have sent special invitations to attend the meeting to school principals, school board members, mayors, council people, etc. I'll let you know how it goes.

Please feel free to use anything from me in *GWS*. We feel very strongly about home school, and will do anything we can to be of help to others who feel as we do. We are in constant touch with Ken and Laurie Huffman in Salt Lake City who are organizing the Utah Home Education Association (*GWS* #23), and we will be heading the group in our area of the state.

*Sept. 6:* I had a very interesting comment made to me this morning about Daniel, my five-year-old. His Sunday School teacher said she was concerned about him. She was afraid that he wasn't getting the socialization he needed with us keeping him at home rather than having him go to school with other children his age. Her reason for concern was that Daniel is very quiet in class and she doesn't have the discipline problems with him that she has with the rest of the class! In fact, she said she usually has him sit between the two worst ones to keep them separated! She doesn't feel it's normal for a 3 boy his age to act that way. I guess she would feel better about him socially if he were loud and ill-mannered.

And then in the same breath she tells me that Daniel is the only child in the class she can call on to give an opening or closing prayer that she doesn't have to help and tell what to say. I can't understand a teacher that worries about a child who is well-mannered and behaves as he's been taught to in church. Why doesn't she go to the other parents and tell them she's concerned about their children?

*Sept. 21:* This past week I receive all my back issues of *GWS*. I could hardly wait to dig in. Well, the next day I started having some problems with a kidney infection, so I've spent most of the past week, in bed. I've had lots of time to read and ponder.

We have a king-sized water bed, and it's a wonderful place for family discussions. All four boys pile in with me (and usually Dad), and we talk and laugh and have a wonderful learning time. The two youngest, Jared (7) and Daniel (5), have helped to "keep Mommy happy and make her feel better" by lying in bed with me and reading me stories. Lynn (13), who loves to cook, has been at the height of his glory. He made an apple pie from scratch, crust and all, for Sunday dinner, and he made three loaves of banana nut bread that have about made me decide that won't be my specialty any more. Richard (10), along with Daniel, has taken it upon himself to be sure I consume enough liquids. It seems like every five minutes he or Daniel is walking through the bedroom door with a glass of some thing for me to drink. And if I don't drink every drop, boy, do I get told about it!

All the boys have taken on extra responsibilities to help my husband keep the house in order, and they've had a ball doing the grocery shopping without Mom along. It's really been a pretty good week.

Since the articles in our local paper about us teaching our children at

home, a lot of people recognize us when we're out somewhere during "school" hours. People approach us in the grocery store, restaurants, etc., and they're very anxious to talk to us and find out about what we're doing. Most of their comments are of a very positive nature. We're very matter-of-fact about what we're doing; if someone doesn't agree with us that's fine, but we don't back down.

We have a very un-school-like school. We go up in the mountains and ride our motorcycle. My husband (who got his expert pin for marksmanship when he was a policeman) takes the boys out to shoot guns—this also includes safety rules for handling them, cleaning them properly, etc. We go camping (my favorite because the guys do all the work while Mom relaxes). We go to the circus. We go to barbershop quartet festivals. We go and listen to the symphony orchestra.

In "Sensible Phonics," *GWS* #7, you talk about vowels and consonants and perhaps making the vowels one color and the consonants another. Some time back I cut 100 3x5" cards in half and began to write the letters of the alphabet on them, the consonants one color, the-vowels another. With the most frequently used letters I made several of each. I did one set that was all capitals. They're useful for all kinds of wonderful games. Daniel likes to spread them out all over the table, get the dictionary out (his own), pick a word at random, and then find the letters to spell it. A fun one for the whole family is for everyone to pick a letter at random, then we try to put them together to form a word. The most fun is trying to pronounce some of the words. And yes, they know that the red ones are vowels and the blue ones are consonants, but none of us know why, so we don't worry about it. We just have fun playing our games.

Another of our favorite activities is to play Triominoes. On the box it says for ages 8 to adult, but we've always tended to ignore ages on game boxes. We've been playing Triominoes with our children since our seven-year-old was three. Everyone is responsible for keeping their own score. The younger boys love it because it's a game they can play without an adult helping them. Uno is another favorite for the same reason.

We learn history by reading biographies out loud. We usually sprawl out all over the living room floor and take turns reading.

In reading *GWS* #10 I became very interested in what a mother had written about balking at the idea of her son having a toy gun to play with (see

also *GWS* #12, 21). I know there are a lot of people who feel this way. In our family it's never been a problem, but I can see how this would be very controversial. None of our boys have ever expressed much interest in toy guns. maybe it's because they've always been exposed to the real thing. Having a father who was a policeman in Florida and who will shortly be doing the same here, they have no false illusions about guns and what they are capable of doing. They're all pretty good shots, but they seem to have no desire whatever to shoot at anything other than cans. They love animals of all kinds and the thought of hunting is repulsive to them. Yet if the time ever came that they needed to use a gun for purposes of defense, they would know how to use it wisely. I guess I just feel that toy guns are intriguing because children don't know what guns are really all about. They see the TV heroes and try to emulate all the neat things they do.

*Sept. 30:* Our boys had a very nice experience today. They accompanied my husband and me to the judge's chambers to see their father sworn in as a police officer (during "school hours"). The judge was very cordial to them—shook hands with each of them, asked names, ages, interests, etc. He also extended a special invitation to them to attend court whenever they liked. He said the courtroom would always be open to them. They met several city officials today and I feel they made a very favorable impression on everyone.

## **Re- Learning Independence**

*Cathi Edward (LA) writes:*

The first day of school for our family as well as the public school was just four days ago. School is a big deal in terms of media hype, school supplies—the whole buildup. Because Daniel has had two years in public school, I think he may have gotten caught up in the hype and he began to feel he might be missing something. He was the kind of student teachers like. He was cooperative and obedient. He was motivated to stay out of trouble. Consequently, he was "rewarded" for his good behavior. I've wondered how he will react not receiving those strokes for conformity.

The first day of school right after breakfast, Daniel said, "OK, Mom, start teaching me." I knew then that our expectations were not jibing. He has very specific ideas of what school is or what he thinks it should be. On weekends and during summer Daniel does things freely and on his own. But his notion



of what school involves is being told what to do. He is not convinced that his weekends and his summertime are full of learning. I don't think he feels he's learning at home now. A couple of times during the first week he kept saying that he just didn't feel like he was in school. I told him that was because he wasn't in school. I'm trying to be patient with him and share with him some ways people learn things different from school's way. At the same time I felt like he needed, at least in the beginning, more guidance than I had anticipated.

So for a couple of days I gave him things to do—work in workbooks, review of arithmetic and various assigned tasks. We also did other things including garden work, yoga, playing records, and games. Jason, who has no previous school influence, had no problem going on about his business as usual. But Daniel kept coming to me to be told what to do. To be honest, this was beginning to undermine my confidence a bit. I was afraid he'd decide to go back to school.

After about a week, however, I gave Daniel some pages in an arithmetic workbook to do. He clearly was not interested in doing it. It was a short time later, after he completed one page, that he went to the playroom and went to work on his own. He could have gone in there and done a headstand and I wouldn't have cared. I was just relieved that he went and did something on his own. As time goes by he is doing more on his own. But he says he feels like he is on a big holiday. He does not feel like he is doing anything worthwhile in terms of "school."

Another thing he asks is "how long before the kids will be home from school?" Our boys and our neighbors' boys play together almost daily. What Daniel doesn't realize is that he wouldn't get to play with them while at school. But I think he is adjusting to not being around kids all day long.

This adjustment process that we are going through has lowered my self-confidence some. This morning I got all the back issues of *GWS* and started reading them again. It really helped. I firmly believe that home schooling is right for us but I'm finding that I need more support than I thought. Something that uplifted me was a section in *GWS* #1 in which you talk about social change. We too feel that in just about all areas of our life, we are in a minority. But to put into practice what we believe, to teach our sons at home, is to challenge not only a big and powerful institution, but the beliefs and feelings of our family and friends.

*From a later letter:*

Although we are all still adjusting, I feel less anxious, much better and more confident than I did at the beginning of the school year. Reasons: (1) Daniel is more involved, settled in, and active. He is becoming accustomed to *not* being constantly told what to do; and (2) Jason is really enjoying the situation and has blossomed, attempting things and initiating things he never did before.

NBC News interviewed us and filmed our activities. They turned the film over to the *Today* show. They have no idea when or if it will be aired. We came away feeling good afterwards. The crew was friendly and open.

## **Bike Store**

*From Illinois:*

It's been almost three years since the kids quit school. The first year we crashed. We bought the Calvert home study course, but really didn't use it much.

Into the second year, we started the family business. We sell and repair bicycles. We also sell all accessories associated with bicycling. The kids and I manage the store while Dad works his full-time job as a carpenter. (Unless you are very rich, outside income is necessary the first years in business.) He has an active role in the store evenings and weekends. Our 15-year-old son, who has the bike knowledge (from books and other places) manages the repair department, doing all repairs (training dad), keeping stock of parts and working with customers. Our 16-year-old daughter is the family organizer, keeps us clean and orderly, manages the store, selling and keeping up with the accessory inventory. Mom's (that's me!) main job is to keep the office going, books, etc. Sounds simple? It's not. But somehow it all works!

We built this business together and we work it together. No one is left in the dark about anything. We all can do each other's job, including the kids being able to pay bills and run the office. And me, finally knowing bicycles! (Boy, is there a lot to know!) We are professional and proud of what we have achieved. Our store is the best school our children could have. Considering all that comes with running a successful business, they have lost nothing and gained a great deal, as we all have.

## On Work

*Here are some of the responses to “Questions on Work,” GWS #22. Thanks to everyone who has answered, and if you haven’t yet, we’re interested in hearing from you at any time.*

*From Marie Baker (WI):*

Dave has been a self-employed carpenter for about three years. He finds it far more satisfying than working for other people, though if he had his choice, he’d rather be designing and making unusual furniture.

He left a job as exhibit designer in the city six years ago when we moved to the country. The job choices here are very limited, which make self-employment even more desirable. For the past three years we’ve been house-sitting for my parents for six months every winter in a Chicago suburb while they go south. There are plenty of carpentry jobs there so he works pretty steadily during this period; then during the six months in the country when the jobs are usually more scarce he can have more time to be with Sarah, cut firewood, garden, work the fields, fix the vehicles and equipment, and continue building our house. He has also done painting, electrical work, mechanical work, plumbing, concrete work, etc.

He often takes Sarah (2½) with him when he goes to see and estimate a job. Within a year he hopes to take her along while he’s doing the actual labor, letting her help in many small ways. She’s always been fascinated with all his tools and activities and loves to help in any way allowed. She occasionally hauls out her own tool box of small real tools and has Dave show her how each is used.

When people ask Dave how he learned carpentry, he just says his father was a carpenter, which seems to satisfy them. Actually, he’s learned most of it by reading everything he gets his hands on plus a good degree of common sense

It would be possible for other *GWS* readers to learn from Dave through visiting and watching or helping, as long as his work wasn’t slowed down too much by this.

*Kathy Johnson (NJ) writes:*

About a year ago I was looking through the help wanted ads of my local

paper. I noticed an ad stating “Adults Wanted for Newspaper Delivery.” Well, to make a long story short, I am enjoying it. The best part is, I can take Billy (age five) with me! He has come to enjoy the job, too. He helps deliver the newspapers and he shares in the profits. He keeps all the tip money (about \$8.00–\$10.00 a week.) He spends half and saves the other half. He is really serious about his job and is not afraid of work. While I’m at the newspaper dock he often hops onto one of the delivery vans and helps the drivers load up. When the vending machine man comes once a week, he goes along with him to fill up the machines in the lunch room of the newspaper. The education he is getting and the people he is meeting are just one of the benefits of *our* job.

On rainy, cold days he doesn’t get out of the car to make deliveries. Instead, we bring along his “library books of the week” and he reads to me! It is such a pleasure to be able to have Billy with me on my job. And another interesting point is that driving my car is not *Shadow Work* (Ivan Illich) any more. With each mile I drive we are earning more money and Billy is getting an education every day. Another added benefit is that very often people we meet will say to Billy, “What, no school today?” He is proud to say “I am a home schooler!” Some people just smile and don’t say anything. But, at least one out of every ten are interested and ask for our phone number! All newspapers usually need adult delivery people to cover areas that paper girls and boys can’t cover. A simple call to the circulation department of a newspaper will put you in touch with a possible job you will enjoy.

*From Peggy Buchanan (UT):*

I am training to be a lay midwife attending home births. I decided I wanted to be a midwife during our pregnancy with our second daughter, Rohanna, who was born at home 2½ years ago. I am enjoying learning about prenatal care, the birth process, and holistic medicine.

Shep is an economist with the Forest Service. He enjoys being a part of the planning process for the forests and likes his work. It is nice for all of us that he has somewhat flexible scheduling so that we can share the child-care and schooling responsibilities for Rohanna and Melissa, 6.

We live on the outskirts of a town of 50,000, about an hour south of Salt Lake City. We have been able to combine having some land with living in an urban area. As we will soon be moving, we hope to settle in a more rural

area.

Although neither of us is self-employed at the time, it is our goal, but in separate occupations. Shep would like to do consulting work. When I start practicing on my own next year I will be holding the pre-natal clinics and childbirth classes in our home. Although I would like to work in conjunction with other midwives so we could cover for each other when we take vacations, I would be self-employed.

Shep cannot include Melissa and Rohanna directly in his work. But he does some travelling as he works for three forests and has meetings out of town, and as we are having school at home, we often all go and explore the different areas. In addition to doing a lot of hiking, we've had the opportunity to see museums, national parks and a planetarium. And we just made arrangements for Melissa to attend the John Holt Learning Center a couple of times a month when Shep works in Salt Lake City. In comparison, school-based learning seems very limiting. Not only would the girls miss out on these experiences, they also wouldn't see their dad nearly as much.

Melissa and Rohanna are more directly involved in my work and I hope to include them more in the future. We all look at my birthing books together and they seem very interested. Soon I will begin putting together a film and slideshow presentation to share with the people who will attend births, including children. I want them to help me figure out what people need to know and what questions they have about birth. Melissa has had some experience in this as she attended the birth of her sister when she was 3½. I'm sure that as we get more involved, more opportunities will present themselves for the girls to participate.

The way I am learning to be a midwife is helping to further my understanding of what "education" really is. After studying to be a teacher I dropped out of college in my senior year, extremely frustrated. I had never wanted to teach in the public schools but my goal of starting a private school seemed unrealistic and the classes I was taking had no relevance to what I thought I would eventually do. Now I have very few classes and most of what I do is "hands on" learning. I am anxious to learn what is taught in the classes because I know that I will use it directly. But most of what I learn would be impossible to teach in a classroom.

## **Creating a Job**

### *A letter from California:*

Early in school, my husband was identified as “hyperactive.” His mother, with good sense, refused to allow him to be medicated. He was not hyperactive, merely bored. His high school career was almost nonexistent, as he spent most days at home, reading.

He is presently employed as an apprentice landscape architect. He found the position by offering to work part-time for little money. In a period of only three months he has managed to make it a full-time position which pays enough to allow me to stay at home with our son and to concentrate on my writing ambitions.

## **Helping the Hungry**

### *From Karen Holguin (NV):*

In the winter of 1979 Arturo and I took jobs as community organizers with an agency that had received funds to set up a food bank network modeled after Second Harvest in Phoenix, Arizona. Arturo and I were prepared to set up a network in rural northwest Washington State. The area is economically depressed. Most employment is seasonal leaving a lot of hungry people in the winter.

I received a phone call from a woman with three children who were hungry. They had had no income for 2½ months. The local Salvation Army and St. Vincent DePaul had already been contacted and since they limited their aid to three days, they had long ago been exhausted (though what they offered was little better than nothing). Anyway, Kathy had three children who were hungry for protein and MILK!!

I began calling around. I located a box of canned goods through the Senior Citizens there, then began calling small markets that sold fresh meat. I pointed out to one owner that because he was such a small business he probably had to take a loss on his spoiled meat. Washington State has a Good Samaritan Law which provides retailers with protection from lawsuit involving donated food (spoilage, etc.) It also provides a tax break—a retailer can take his cost plus 50% of his shelf cost off his taxes. So he makes more on an item donated than sold! That afternoon I picked up 25 lbs. of meat and 3 gallons of milk for Kathy’s family. That was the beginning of the Granite

Falls Food Bank.

I enlisted Kathy in my cause and we got one other worker and went to work. We contacted every market, distributor, fisherman, and person we could think of asking for donations to our Christmas program. The local schools held a food drive, with children bringing in cans for ten days. At the end of ten days the room with the most cans won an ice cream. (This is the same school mentioned in *GWS* #20 as being helpful to home schoolers. A really fine man heads those schools!) We placed jars around the town at the local businesses asking for donations. At the end of those five hectic weeks we had managed to accumulate close to 5,000 pounds of food. We took all of our children to the Granite Falls Community Center and spent two days sorting and preparing those foods for distribution. Two days before Christmas we provided 75 families with a turkey, trimmings, two boxes of canned goods, and four toys for each child. The looks on those people's faces told the story. It was fantastic. We were even able to find a used stove which we provided to a family who had had theirs repossessed!

What we learned from this experience was just how much food goes to waste each day in this country. It's sad. But if people organize and get out there and get the food, it isn't wasted. The Granite Falls effort was shadowed by hassles with the local agencies and their desire to take the credit and the food operation over. But the community didn't let that happen.

Food banking creates work for children and adults as well. Most is volunteer but the rewards are great. Gleaning (going out and cleaning the fields after the pickers are through) is great—a lot of fruit is left in the fields. If it is picked up, distributed, and canned, then it is not lost.

The programs dealing with hunger in this country are just too few. The truth is that this winter many more people than last will be forced to choose between food and fuel. Many on fixed income or welfare will have little of either. For every hungry person I saw in Washington there was still another just down the street.

Food bank operations always need donations of food and most of all, volunteers. Volunteers to locate resources, pick up food, deliver food, and to work in their distribution centers sorting food, disposing of damaged cans, and packing nutritious boxes for delivery. In Washington our children worked right beside us. Because these endeavors are meaningful work I found that the children are deeply motivated by being able to help someone.

I am including a list of resources. Other resources include the churches, who have done a lot of work in this area, and the Yellow Pages—look under Social Services. The Salvation Army, Red Cross, and United Way can all offer some information.

*GWS* is made up of a lot of good, caring people—if even one is inspired to join the battle on hunger this letter has served a purpose. It is real and it is terrible.

For more information: Second Harvest, 1001 N Central #303, Phoenix AZ 85004. Campaign For Human Development, 1312 Mass. Av. NW, Wash. DC 20005. Working Group On Domestic Hunger & Poverty, 475 Riverside Dr. Rm 572, NY NY 10015 (pamphlet “Hunger Action Agenda,” \$1). World Hunger Education Service, 2000 P St NW, Wash. DC 20036 (guide “Who’s Involved with Hunger,” \$3.) World Hunger Year (magazine) 350 Broadway St. 209, NY NY 10013.

DR: To which list I would add The Hunger Project, 2015 Steiner St., San Francisco CA 94115. Karen also sent an excellent article on how to start a food bank—or a copy, send us a self-addressed stamped envelope.

## **Responsible at 6**

*Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote:*

A few days ago, we were expecting rather formidable company, and I was bustling about cooking and cleaning. When I was washing windows, Vita wanted to wash windows too, but she spilt the Windex all over the dining room table. When I was making a dessert, she wanted to beat the egg whites, but instead spilt them on the kitchen floor. And when I was sweeping one of the bedrooms, she got out her broom and swept too, but she ended up dumping all the dust from the dustpan onto the floor again.

My first impulse in each of these cases was to rant and rave, but I held myself back. After all, Vita is only 6 and her little mishaps were accidents. My next impulse was to growl and clean up the messes myself, but I knew that that would make Vita feel more guilty than ever and begin to cry, in which case I’d have a mess and an unhappy child to deal with. Pragmatically, then, I told Vita to clean up the messes herself, and she did so with relief, expunging all the guilt and frustration she felt. A couple of times I told her to redo her cleaning job until it was perfect, but that didn’t faze her a bit. After



all, I was treating her like a responsible person and she was glad to be doing real work.

## **Avon Representative**

*From Eileen Trombly (CT):*

Amy was interviewed and accepted and jumped into the Avon world with both feet. She has done a good deal of babysitting and house cleaning at the rate of \$1.00 and \$1.50 in recent months. She has been in great demand due to her reliability and dependable qualities. Her duties as sitter expanded over the years and she was called upon by parents of newborns as well as older children. During the summer months she even went on family sailboat cruises to Block Island, Newport, etc. Alas, burnout as age 15 set in and wages became insufficient for an ambitious ballerina who went through toe shoes faster than she could pay for them.

Her first five days as an Avon representative were highly successful and she grossed a personal income of \$100 within that time. Additional calculating indicates that she is working approximately two hours daily (at her convenience) and earning \$7.50 an hour. Not bad for a 15-year-old. If she chooses to work more hours, she'll make more—it's her choice. We're excited for her, and she is feeling very good about it. Most of her customers are older people and are impressed by her confidence. In figuring out her finances even further she finds she is able to take additional ballet lessons, as well as save.

## **Recycling Aluminum**

*George Levenson wrote in the Santa Cruz Home-school Experience Exchange (see North Calif. Directory):*

My children are fascinated by money (a fact which no longer dismays me). Actually, their handling of it has been a natural avenue for developing skills in (worldly) mathematics. I've been looking for ways to find work for them without creating too much routine—finding a balance between supporting their participation in the world and maintaining the feeling of play. Recycling seems to be a very promising possibility for children and adults working together. It's

ecologically sound and even profitable, though at times a bit messy. The aluminum can is worth around 1½ ¢. Jacob (7) and I view it as the inflated penny. There are several recycling centers in Santa Cruz (see yellow pages) which pay between 27 and 31 cents a pound. A good resource book is *Kids and Cash* by Ken Davis, Bantam, \$2.95 (or 200 aluminum cans).

## Motivated Students

*A reader writes:*

I am an art instructor at a community college. I recently allowed some friends' children to attend my classes. I had one 8-year-old in design, a 10-year-old in photography, two 12-year-olds in painting, and an 8- and 6-year-old in ceramics. All of them behaved well, took care of the equipment, obtained their own materials, and paid attention in class. They were all there because they wanted to learn what I was teaching and were thus self-motivated. Unfortunately, the dean of instruction discovered that there were kids on campus and immediately sent out a bulletin announcing the school policy that no one under 18 is allowed in classrooms during instructional periods. Thus, all my self-motivated students could no longer come, only those who "had" to get an "education."

## Joining in Racquetball

*From Susan Price (FL):*

Today I played tennis with Matt against the backboard ("Tennis Tip," *GWS* #21). Beside us were four guys playing racquetball. One of them had a little boy there with him who looked about 3-years-old. The father would halfheartedly tell him to go play in the park, but he liked hanging around them instead. One time I looked over and to my surprise and delight noticed that he had found a twig on the ground and was pretending it was his racquet and he had "joined" the game. He was staying about two feet behind the men, moving with them, and doing exactly what they were doing—crouching sometimes, running and hopping at other times. He even made grunts when he swung his "racquet." When they moved up, he moved up, too, right behind them, and when they moved back, he did likewise. I was even more delighted

when they noticed what he was doing, but didn't tell him to go away. I tried not to watch too much and only when they were playing—I didn't want to think I was criticizing the father for letting his son be there. Perhaps, though, it would have been better to have commented on it to him and said how neat I thought it was.

## Kids in the News

From *Today's Child*, 4/81:

Forty pound, 6-year-old Michael Cogswell is the youngest hiker to tramp the length of the Appalachian Trail, a 2,106 mile trek that would faze the most dedicated walker. With a backpack of schoolwork and his parents as companions, the Miami first-grader covered as much as 26 miles a day.

An article from *Popular Computing*, reprinted in Infoworld, 9/8/81:

What were you doing when you were 11 years old? Steve Grimm and Nikolai Weaver of Los Gatos, California, started their own software company, Plum Software.

Steve wrote Plum's first software offering, Filewriter, on his mother's Apple II computer. Filewriter went on sale this month for \$19.95. It allows Apple II users to enter and change records, read files, and obtain printouts of their files.

Nikolai's mother introduced her son to microcomputing, but the new software company is run entirely by the two boys.

Nikolai's first computer terminal was hooked into the computer at Tymshare in Cupertino where his mother works. "One of the benefits of Tymshare is that you get a free terminal at home," Nikolai said. "When my mother brought it home, she got me a book on how to program in BASIC." After that, he learned FORTRAN, Pascal, and LISP, a high-level math-programming language.

Steve's mother, a teacher, brought home an Apple when he was seven, but took it away after a few days. "I really didn't know what to do

with it the first time,” Steve said. After he read a BASIC manual from cover to cover, Steve was ready to try programming again.

Steve got his own Apple at age 7½, and he’s been adding on to it ever since. Today he has a disk drive, a real-time clock, a printer, and Applesoft at his disposal.

Like most kids, Steve likes to play games on his computer. “But when I’m by myself, I write a lot of programs,” he said. In addition to Filewriter, Steve wrote a series of games he calls the Square 9 Trilogy, which includes a tic-tac-toe game and two games based on repeating musical tones. Plum Software may also sell the Square 9 Trilogy.

Nikolai wrote an educational game in which players identify countries on a global map. His seven-year-old sister acts as unofficial test player for this future Plum product. The address of Plum Software is 23492 Belaire Ct., Los Gatos CA 95030.

*From the Boston Globe, 3/10/81:*

Concerts by the Civic Symphony Orchestra of Boston take place in Jordan Hall in Boston, but the musical scores come out of the Needham basement bedroom of Bruce Roberts, 14. All the 90 members of the orchestra depend on Roberts to have their folders of music marked with the correct dynamics, fingering, and bowing. Roberts also has to see that scores are in good repair and in the right order each week for rehearsals and performances.

Roberts literally grew up with music. His mother, Janet, who plays piano and viola, and is general manager of the orchestra, used to take him to rehearsals when he was a youngster instead of leaving him with a sitter.

Max Hobart, music director and conductor of the Civic Symphony, says: “Bruce has taken on an adult’s job, a very big job, and he does it very well. He is well liked by everyone in the orchestra and he stands on his own feet.”

The 9th grader. spends three or four days marking new music for 90 players or making copies of lost scores before Monday night

rehearsals, arranging rides for musicians without transportation, and keeping the peace among gifted players who are known to be somewhat temperamental.

“Everybody can be yelling at once, but Bruce doesn’t turn a hair,” says Cynthia (his sister and first desk violinist ). “They don’t treat him like a kid, either. He seems to have a way of getting along with older people and with younger ones, too. When little kids want to find out how his computer works, he treats them like colleagues.”

“When the neighbors need mechanical repairs they often call Bruce,” says Janet Roberts. “He likes to fix things, like taking apart his collection of clocks. He put up a post trail fence at our small cottage in Marshfield and he’s a fanatic about fixing up the place.”

## **Hiding From School**

*From a mother in New England:*

*January 20:* The kids aren’t going to school, and it seems so nice! So relaxed and free. We told the people at their old schools we were moving out of state, so the kids didn’t go back after Christmas. We moved in here with my parents, and we have just kept “low key.” The kids don’t go out during school hours; which would attract attention. They tell their friends here “We are only visiting, and have schoolwork to do,” letting others assume it comes from their old school.

Now that we have a large library to go to, we’ve been making use of this. On the forms the kids had to fill out for a card, it asks age, grade, school. Everyone is so school-minded! I put on “John Holt Learning Center”—maybe, if anyone notices, they will just think it’s a new hippie school!

We’ve been having such a good time not going to school. The kids get interested in something, even at 11:00 at night, and get going on it, like giving each other spelling tests. They each have books from my collection and a notebook, and are doing “basics” every day, just to have something in case we’re questioned. They do this at their own rate, though. We discovered a book *How To Study For The High School Equivalency Test* at the library and it is very interesting and almost fun to do.

Even with us living here, with my elderly parents, we are having a good

time with learning. At night we often play games like “I’m thinking of something that starts with” (letter ). I swear, our 6-year-old learned how to sound out words and read because of this game! She plays it with us, and is just as good. Our 12-year-old liked school when he first started going. After that, you could see him “die” and not try anymore. Now, he is getting back to wanting to *do* things such as read, figure out a grocery list, etc. He’s *happy*.

A lot of people ask me how I can stand having all my kids around all day (we have seven in all, the baby is nine months.) They *love* having their kids gone at school all day. But, our kids help around the house, get interested in doing things, and manage their own time fairly well. It does take a great deal of time, just answering questions and making suggestions (I have them do things themselves as much as I can, such as looking things up in the phone book or dictionary), but it all seems to fit in during the day.

*September 15:* In *GWS #22*, the question of “problems with home schooling” was brought up, and I thought I’d write in about this. I think most of us are so involved with what we’re doing, we just take “problems” in stride and don’t actually stop to pinpoint them. At least in day-to-day life.

The 18-month-old toddler is *into everything*. I find it impossible to do anything with the three others, such as crafts, or even sit and read to them. The toddler climbs up and tries to take the book—or, if I make flour “dough” and we have it all over the table, he insists on climbing up and sitting right in the middle of it. He isn’t content to sit by himself, in a play-pen or high chair, and have his “own” dough. He wants to be included—or lets everyone know about it in no uncertain terms! Of course, the others can do such crafts, painting, etc., alone without me, but we find it fun to all do it together. (I don’t tell them *HOW* to do it, we all do our own!) I have to either try including myself holding a crying baby (who wants to get into it, too!) or else take him into another room, and leave them on their own. (The children then tease me to come back with them.) The toddler is also always getting into their things, pulling their notebooks apart, and walking off with their markers at any chance. (Of course, I can understand his side of it—he wants to “learn” too, and do what the big kids do!)

On top of this is the paperwork. I’m supposed to keep a chart of monthly work—a space for every day, every subject, and how many minutes were spent on each. This is for Clonlara to have on file in case someone checks—they can show we did the same amount of work as public schools do. I find

this very difficult. It takes up almost all my time, keeping track of how many minutes each of four children do for each subject! Sometimes they draw all morning, and then later on in the evening, get onto another “art” subject. And, how do you add in things like “3 minutes to write the grocery list”—“writing,” “spelling,” or maybe just “language arts”? Our whole idea is based on “learning through living and doing all the time.” I gave the two older kids their own charts to keep, but that still leaves me with two for the little kids. I’m tempted just to fake it, and every night write down “40 minutes” for each subject, which the school calls each “period.” If we did 40 minutes of each subject, we’d cover the whole school year in a few months!

I’m also in the process of writing a “curriculum,” which is hard for me, because I’m not into such things as “set subjects” and it goes against all I believe in for unschooling. As an honest person, I feel I must write what we plan to do (at least somewhat) and then do (somewhat) what I wrote we planned. We’re getting bogged down in curriculum, and paperwork, and leaving no time at all for just “living”! I find myself telling the kids, “You can’t go outside (after 2:30) until you do one chapter in each of your books, and write something down from it in your notebooks.”

Another problem—they are like prisoners in our home. These warm days of fall, they sit inside and keep asking, “Can we go out now?” Last year, we said “We’re only visiting from another state.” But everyone knows they’ve been living here eight months now.

Of course, if we had applied to the state to have permission to keep them out of school, we’d solve this problem. But, I’m very wary of asking permission—because this gives them the chance to say no. And even if they say yes, they’d be looking over our shoulders all the time.

Another problem is keeping up with materials. Our four can go through a set of water colors in one sitting. We try to use home-made things like flour-salt-and-water clay. But just keeping up with the amount of paper they use is a problem. I like to have enough things on hand to use without limits. When they’re in the mood to draw or paint, they can keep at it for hours.

Our oldest son, 17, is boarding in another state due to his girlfriend being there. We’re kind of concerned about him. He left school at 16 with our blessings. He’s been at loose ends, hasn’t been able to get a job. He started studying the G.E.D. book, got bogged down, and found out in that state he had to apply for the G.E.D. through the high school up to age 18. The

guidance counselor was always after him to come back to school, and didn't give him any help applying for the G.E.D. test. In fact, all he has gotten from everyone is how stupid he was to quit school. (He's still glad he did). When he applies for jobs, they tell him he's not a high school graduate. He went to school for 10 grades. I don't think it prepared him to do anything in later life, and I can't believe that going to school two more years would have magically added anything to this! I can't blame unschooling for his life now, because he only left school at age 16, and is a product of it for the ten years he went. We're hoping that in time, he'll get interested in something.

Yesterday on a talk show, a school psychologist advised a mother whose child was physically sick mornings and cried not to go to school, to push her out, not to let her stay home for anything, because it only postpones and avoids the real problem, something she didn't want to face at junior high. He said he had had the same problem with his own son, and solved it the same way! Maybe it's just because my thinking has been turned around, but it was just plain cruel advice. I've gotten myself into a state of thinking "them against me": the sane, real world of us loving our children and keeping them safe against them, who are only out to harm them. All we want is to be left alone, to love and nurture our family, and raise them in freedom.

*Sept. 24:* Dear John and *GWS*—I wanted to let you know, all of a sudden we find ourselves "legal" with the school department! (And the state, I guess!)

I'd been dreading confronting them for so long, and we'd been here since January with the kids not in school. Every time the phone would ring, I'd wonder, "Is this IT?" This year, we have the kids enrolled in Clonlara, and I kept their name and number right by the phone to refer any threatening calls to Pat Montgomery to handle! (As she told me to.)

Monday morning at 8:45, the "Attendance Officer" called. He talked to my mother first (he had been told her name, our name, and the fact that we have four school age children not in school. We have six children with us, so someone was familiar with who was "school age.") My mother passed the phone on to me. I said "They're enrolled in a private school." He acted the whole time as if he was sorry to bother me with this matter, but it was his job. He said he had to check, because every child in the city was in the computer, and they knew which ones went to the public schools, and then had to account for all the rest.



He asked the name of the private school. I told him, “Clonlara.” (I thought maybe we could avoid the “at home” sound of “Home Based Education Program.” He said, “Where is that?” I said, “Ann Arbor, Michigan—they’re enrolled as home-study students in their correspondence course.” He said oh, all right, or something, and “Sorry to trouble you.”

About 15 minutes later, he called back, said he had called a higher office “for a ruling,” and I was all right, except. I had neglected to register the children with the school. And, at our convenience, we were to come to his office and give their names and birthdates. (At first he said bring birth certificates, but then said, “Oh, you probably know their birthdates!”) He said, “I’m sorry to trouble you.” I said, “I don’t want any trouble.” He said, “Well, it’s my office that would be giving you trouble, and I don’t anticipate any problems.” He asked me, “Don’t you want them going to our schools?” I said, “We have moved here from out of state and are planning to move again. Due to my husband being a painter, we move around a lot to find work.” (I just said this, I didn’t realize it was the whole key to the solution of our school problem!)

Yesterday morning we went to the high school and I found his office and gave him the kids’ names and birthdates, and Clonlara’s address, etc. (He didn’t ask for that—I guess I was a little “over prepared!”) He was very nice and informal. Half of me kept thinking “Just give the names and get the heck out of there,” and the other half wanted to find out all I could while I was there (as to giving the school district name to *GWS* as a “friendly district” or such.)

I had been wondering if I should try asking him, “We’re curious to know who called you. Do we have an enemy who might try to do other things, or was it just someone really concerned, or what?” Anyway, he said, “Someone turned you in, you know.” He didn’t know who, but seemed quite disgusted with it—plus the fact she wouldn’t give her name. He said normally he hangs up on anonymous callers, but this time, when she said “Four children,” he thought maybe they were sick, like measles, and he could offer to send a home teacher out. He said, “Probably some old busy-body on your street.” Well, it backfired, and she really did us a favor. Now, anyone who wants to can call and report us! (We’re still not going to let our kids out playing during school hours.)

He asked me how I got interested in home schooling, and I told him about

you and *GWS*. I told him I thought our children did more concentrated work at home, and he said, “Oh, do you think so? I don’t.” I asked him if he felt this district could be called “favorable to home schooling,” and he said “No school district is favorable to home schooling.” He said he wasn’t for it, but the Supreme Court had given us, the parents, the right to choose this, and the school *had* to accept it “in mitigating circumstances” (if our kids had some reason they couldn’t attend school). And our kids did, due to the nature of my husband’s work. So, we didn’t even go under “applying for permission for home education” at all!

He asked me several questions (just curious, himself) like “Are the kids happy with this?” I said, “Yes—you ought to know how much kids like school,” and he laughed and agreed with me. He seemed kind of amazed at the whole thing. He said, “Most parents try to get their kids out of their hair as much as possible!”

I feel so much better, like we can be free to live at our own pace.

## **Fire Inspection**

*A North Carolina reader writes:*

We anticipated problems in getting a residence approved as a school by the local Zoning Commission, since the construction materials are not in conformance with the National Fire Protection Association Code for schools—these codes specify fire-resistant wall construction, sprinkler systems, and other requirements.

The day the first Zoning inspector made his visit, he told my wife that he could not approve the school, since we did not meet the building codes. My wife (as previously agreed) asked the inspector if he would be willing to discuss this matter with me, to which he agreed. My wife called me at work, then put the inspector on the phone.

After the inspector explained to me that our classroom could not meet the codes, I agreed with him that I knew that it could not. I explained that I was familiar with the fire codes and I felt that our school should be granted an exception to the code. He then asked on what basis, to which I responded “Low occupancy.” I asked him very tactfully, “Are you trying to say that the house is safe enough for the children to live in, eat in, play in, but not safe enough to go into the classroom a few hours a day for classes?” He replied,

“This is not what I say but what the state says. I would like to help, but I don’t know how.” Reading my cue, I suggested that he write a letter to go in his file, stating that he had granted our school an exception to the fire codes, since our total student occupancy was so low. The inspector promised to help by studying the rules to find out how we could get approval from Zoning for our school.

This kind man later called me and suggested that instead of asking Zoning for approval of a school building, to ask another way. He said Zoning could approve a change-of-use permit from “residence” to “residence/home occupation (school).”

After obtaining zoning approval for our house in this way, we then pursued the same course for our “satellite classrooms” (the other families in our school). The other inspections followed without incident and were all favorable. The letter to the state from Zoning secured our approval as a school.

## Turned in to "Welfare"

*From Miriam Halliday (MO):*

I am still a little numb and nauseous—but will explain what happened. We received a summons on the 5th of September which reads as follows: “We have received a hotline referral regarding your plans for the education of Ian. Please call this office to schedule an appointment so that a determination can be made regarding this referral. Your cooperation is needed in this matter. Thank you.” I replied immediately to the Director of Welfare. Seven days later we received in the mail another letter saying that I hadn’t cooperated in any way (not true, I had replied immediately; however, the director of welfare showed no one the letter, I guess) and they would turn it over to the juvenile court if I didn’t *call* them immediately.

The children’s father insisted I go down and talk to them and he went with me even though he disagrees with everything about deschooling. I felt really sick sitting down in the humiliating welfare waiting room, watching women kowtow to the officious paper-carrying careerists. I had a tape recorder in my purse and turned it on as soon as they yelled “Halliday.”

When I talked to the social worker assigned to us, we told her we came because we had been told that the children could be taken away from us

because of “substandard housing,” and it was horrible living with such an arbitrary cultural contingency. She explained that different workers do different things, that she would not do such a thing unless the children were unattended, malnourished, and in danger from freezing or fire or starvation or sickness. She said she would have to see Ian because an “emergency hotline referral” was called in on the manner of his education. She said the nature of my offence, the cause of accusation, and the witness against me were all unknown, but the call had been made and they MUST follow through. I told her it was unconstitutional and denied due process. She was astonished at the obvious truth of this and then said that anything was permissible that would lessen child abuse. She said the legislation has existed since the early 1970s. “No society in the world allows child abuse,” she said. She was fine as long as you didn’t snag her with the wrong sentence, very modern in opinion but elitist and a little “Big Sister-y.” She said it would be best to interview Ian and me about our methods of education at our home since we would be more comfortable there.

I said, “What do you look for in the home?” She said, no holes in the floors and no electrical wires exposed, no fecal matter on the floors, plenty of food, no garbage on the floors, healthy children, heat, no rats, insects, lice, etc., etc. Oh boy—I said we live in an old cabin—we are building sleeping lofts and a masonry chimney now—we just ripped out the stovepipe because it’s so dangerous—we have a hydrant outside. She said she lives not far from us in the country too and would not be prejudiced against non-refinement. I could tell looking into her eyes that she was open to people doing things in their own way and that I could get this whole business off of us if I could get a proper report written by her that would impress the folks at the court that I was going to stand my ground and that we were serious and that they could not prove that Ian was not being educated.

So the children’s father cleaned the lot and continued work on the lofts. Home-schooling friends helped me haul away yucky drywall ripped out and bags of grey attic insulation no longer needed. I *cleaned* the damn cabin so it looked real Amish-y, and luckily the studying is always done.

We received this lady at 9 AM on Monday and she could see Ian’s desk, all his books with their evidence of passionate use. She asked how we worked what he had accomplished. She talked to us two hours. I gave her Marilyn Ferguson’s review of *Teach Your Own* (*Leading Edge Bulletin*) and

the last two *GWS*'s, with which she was much impressed and many of the Nagel newsletters (*Tidbits*) with the wonderfully inclusive sources he has. She said as far as she was concerned, she was going to write a report that stated that she felt the state had no right interfering in our lives, that she had no right to interpret whether Ian was being educated or not (she would not test him, and he offered to read to her but she refused). She said for six months she would call down any hot lines against us as unfounded. However, after six months the state removes her from the case and we could be harassed again. I sent the enclosed letters to Ian's former school as I believe these are the people who phoned us in.

## Indiana Private Schools

*An Indiana parent writes:*

The State Attendance Officer, Dr. Kenneth Reber, sent us a booklet entitled, "Guidelines for Attendance Work with Nonpublic Schools in Indiana," when we called to the State Department of Public Instruction for information on what was required to establish a school. Incidentally, as best we could determine, NOTHING is required—no incorporation, no affidavit, no forms, no certified teacher, no "required courses," only instruction in the English language. There is a form to be filled out noting the creation of a new nonpublic school, but it is to be completed by the local attendance officer "when the attendance worker is made aware of (the) existence of newly established schools and parents or others educating at home." The quotation is from the booklet, as is the following:

Meeting Legal Requirements: The attendance officer and the superintendent of each school corporation in Indiana have the statutory responsibility to enforce the compulsory attendance law by obtaining information from nonpublic schools and parents educating their children at home. The statutory responsibilities are as follows:

1. To insure that nonpublic schools are in session for the number of days public schools are in session.
2. To insure that an accurate daily attendance record is kept by each nonpublic school teacher and to inspect this record.
3. To request a list of names, addresses, and ages of all minors attending a nonpublic school.

4. To insure immediate notification when a pupil withdraws from a nonpublic school.

5. To insure reports (referrals) on students who are absent from school without a lawful excuse.

These legal requirements are what our local school corporation superintendent referred to in his letter to us when he said that “The State of Indiana expects the local public school officials to work with parents in home instruction settings to ensure that certain basic requirements of time and term of instruction are met.”

## **Constitutional Basis**

JH: I was invited to be on a panel before a meeting of legislators and educators at the Massachusetts State House October 29 to discuss alternatives in education. For the meeting I prepared a statement about the Constitutional basis for home schooling, which I gave to many there and have since sent to many others around the country who are interested in the issue. If you would like a photocopy of the complete statement, send us \$2. Here is the covering summary of the report:

1. The U.S. Constitution, under the First, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments, protects the rights of parents to get for their children the kind of education they want.

2. The Supreme Court, in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) and *Farrington v. Tokushige* (1927), in upholding this right, said that the states could not, either through laws or regulations, impose a uniform system of education on all children.

3. Where the Supreme Court has upheld the right of the states to regulate the education of children, it has done so on this ground alone, that the states have a right to protect themselves against the danger that uneducated children might grow up so ignorant as to be unemployable and a burden to the state;

4. Where state regulations conflict with parents' right to educate their children as they wish, the state must show a compelling need for these regulations, i.e., must show that without them there is a clear danger

that children may grow up a burden to the state.

5. The states have no *Constitutional* mandate to spread good ideas or stamp out bad ones, or to provide children with some kind of social life, or to carry out any other purposes except the very limited one stated in #3 above.

6. The Constitutional right of parents, and the right of the states, to control the education of children are not equal. The rights of parents are much broader than those of the state.

7. The states have a right to assure themselves that home schooling parents are indeed doing something to educate their children, and that what they are doing is not manifestly harmful. They will in fact be far more able to do this if they cooperate with and support home schooling families, rather than oppose them.

8. Since any laws making home schooling difficult or impossible will be un-Constitutional and will be struck down by the courts, the legislature would do well not to pass such laws. It might even be helpful to make clear, by resolution or by amendment to the existing education statutes, that the intent of the Massachusetts Compulsory Education laws is not to empower the state or the several school districts to impose a uniform system of education on all parents.

## **Donahue Sampler**

*Some of the first responses to John's recent appearance on Donahue:*

How I wish I had heard what you had to say on that show 25 years ago when my son (then 4 and reading well) could have benefitted from it instead of suffering from twelve years of what was, at best, total boredom and, during the worst times, sheer misery. My other two kids turned off early in school and had no more interest in anything associated with learning. I have some friends who are young parent and interested in alternatives to public schools. Please send me your literature and information, particularly on how to subscribe to your newsletter.

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My husband and I have discussed teaching our 12-year-old daughter for some time but we didn't think we were educated enough to do this. But now we are pretty sure we would like to give it a try. We are from a small town in Oklahoma but my daughter has been jumped at school by other kids and the school principal and police won't do anything about it. My daughter has gotten to the point that she doesn't even want to go to school. When she gets out of school she has to wait until all the kids have left, then she has to walk up through town to get home safely

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Our youngest child is brain injured. She attended a special education school for two years, from age 6 to 8. It was one problem after another—long bus rides, seizures, medication, I could go on and on. She was unhappy and so was I.

I took her out of school when she was almost 8 and she is now 14. Many wonderful volunteers have helped in our home program. She is very relaxed, no seizures, on very little medication, and most of all, happy.

The school district is now phoning, after six years. They want her tested and back in a special education program. They say it is a law. I am not sure of our rights in regards to this. I cannot put Lindy, or my family, through this again.

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My son has been hurt badly by other children who like to hit and kick and shove others down. He has been called sissy because he is gentle and kind. He has had his pride hurt many times by teachers talking in front of others about the way he doesn't do as well as the others. His grades get worse instead of better. He said the teachers won't help (explain or go over things he didn't understand.) I spend a lot of time trying to help him at home and he seems to understand things better when I go over them with him.

I'm listening to educators now saying they are working on more discipline in the schools. They have drug and alcohol problems. Could it be from unhappy children in school??? I really don't want my child exposed to the children who are on drugs and alcohol. I'm very worried.

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My daughter has 50% hearing—she is deaf in one ear. I have taken her to her doctor and to audiologists who said that until she gets older the teachers



should position her where her good ear is facing the teacher. Both my husband and I have fought to get the majority of teachers to do this. I am not a high school graduate, but I have taught my children things, explained things to them that could have been done in the school. My oldest son is in 8th grade and has an algebra teacher who would rather give an F than to help. Thanks to me and my husband sitting down with him, he does really well in algebra.

## Resource Names

DR: We would like to be able to put people who have experience with certain issues in touch with others who have questions about those issues. For example, one month we'll get a letter from a family that has travelled around the country in a van, and the next month someone will ask, "We're thinking of selling everything and travelling around the country in a van—do you know anyone who has done this?" It's frustrating because by then we can't lay our hands on the name and address of the person who had that experience.

Another question that has come up lately is adoption. Some readers have told us they have adopted children. Others have said they are considering adopting kids, but they'd like to know how it works, whether the fact that the family is home-schooling affects the adoption, and so on.

What I suggest is that if you have experience on either of these topics, and are willing to correspond with others who have questions, send us your name and address and we will publish it in *GWS*. Every now and then we would reprint and update the lists. We might start other categories as need arises.

So if you'd like to be on the "Travel Resource List" or "Adoption Resource List," drop us a note. (We'd also like to keep these lists accurate, so if you move please remind us you're on one of these lists.)

## Self-Taught Reader

*From a Michigan reader:*

My husband was pushed through school without ever learning to read or write. Since we gave up television three years ago, he has been reading a lot, mostly books put out by Rodale Press (the editors of *Organic Gardening*.) He said story books were dull until I started reading *The Hobbit* to him. He read the whole trilogy of *The Lord Of The Rings*. He really enjoyed it. My

husband told me that in his grade school years, they would put him through these tests to see what was wrong. They gave up and just kept pushing him through since he didn't cause any trouble.

## Teaching Reading By Reading

*More from Susan Price (FL):*

After I read *GWS #13* I finally understood how the kids who teach themselves to read do it and why my kids hadn't been able to do so. The articles "A Reader's Memories" and "Learning to Read" did it. I realized that I hadn't read stories over and over enough times to my kids. I had decided a year before that since I didn't like reading their "boring" little kids' stories over and over, to them that I would stop doing it much and would instead read books like *Charlotte's Web* and the *Little House* books. I thought that we would both enjoy them more. They did enjoy them, of course, but I hadn't realized that they also wanted me to read their other little storybooks a lot, too, not because they like the stories better than other books, but because they wanted to learn to read. They wanted me to read them so that they could learn them by heart.

I was very excited about my discovery and since it was Matt's birthday, I decided to get them some new books for my new way of helping them learn to read. I got four Golden Books: *Hansel and Gretel* because I knew they loved that story, *The Three Bears*, *The Three Little Pigs*, and *The Little Red Hen*, because they knew those stories fairly well already and because they repeat themselves a lot. We already had those stories in an anthology, but I thought it would be helpful to get the Golden Books, not only because they had so many more pictures, which the kids like, but also because there were many fewer words per page. The kids could read awhile and then say, "Wow, I've just read five pages!" instead of one or two out of the anthology.

When I got the books home, the kids, of course, asked me to read them. They especially liked *Hansel and Gretel*. Right after I was done reading it, I asked them if they would want me to read it again. If I hadn't asked, they might have assumed that I wouldn't, since before I rarely had. During the next two or three days, I must have read that book 20 times. I didn't find it boring at all—now that I understood why they liked me to.

Some time after I had read it a lot of times to them, I explained to Faith

how she could learn to read it. I told her she could go along, “reading” it by remembering it and if she got mixed up I would help her. She decided to try it and the first time was slow going. After one page, I suggested that she stop and I read it instead, from the beginning, which she agreed to. But she kept trying it herself other times and each time did better on it.

I began to think, however, that it would have been better if I had read it more times to her before I suggested that she try to read it. So, for a while, whenever she asked me to listen to her read it, I asked her if she would like me to read it to her instead. She often took me up on it. For several days, I only read to her (not just *Hansel and Gretel*). Then she started wanting to try again.

One time I was reading it to her and had just finished a page when she excitedly told me to stop reading, that she could read the next page, she thought (the first few words of the page had obviously jumped out at her as words that she knew). And she started reading from there and got almost all the words right on the page and the next day read the whole book.

She was a real stickler for reading it perfectly. She would get upset with me if she found out that she had said a word wrong and I hadn’t told her that she had. I didn’t like to correct her, but since she told me to, I tried to do it. I would try to do it as unobtrusively as possible. I decided that perhaps if I simply told her that I thought it would be better not to correct her, that she would agree. I told her that I hated to stop her when she was reading, that I thought it mixed her up, and that you had said that kids don’t need to be corrected, that they can often figure things out themselves later. She was interested in my opinion and said, OK, don’t stop me then. She still often wanted to know, though, at the end of a page, if she had said anything wrong on the page or not. One day she read one page six times until she had said it perfectly.

One time, soon after she had started trying to read, she told me that she wasn’t really reading, that she was just remembering. I told her that, yes, at first that’s what she was doing, but after she had done it a lot of times, she would know the words for real. One time later I was starting to play Christmas carols and she came over to the piano to sing them with me. She looked at the page I was on and happened to notice the word “poor” and said that she thought it was “poor.” I told her it was and that she had learned it from reading *Hansel and Gretel*.

After I started reading so much to them, Matt became much happier and talkative. I think that he was very relieved to feel he would be learning to read soon. Also, of course, he was helped by the increased physical closeness to me.

I did not expect my new method of teaching to have nearly as fast results with Matt as it had. I expected it to be quite a while before he would read out loud again. I couldn't believe it when he actually read out loud—in the living room while I was in the kitchen, but so loud that I could hear him—a whole book we had just gotten out of the library. Matt was not trying to read word by word and often didn't say it exactly right. But the enjoyment he was having in reading it, remembering how I had said it, was obvious. He took the book over to his father to show him it and tell him as well as he could what the pages said. He wasn't doing it to be able to read, but to share with David what a marvelous book it was.

## Arithmetic in 1825

JH: Alison Stallibrass, the author of *The Self-Respecting Child* (see our booklist), sent us this lovely quote from the British essayist William Cobbett. He was one of the true characters of English literature, first of all a countryman and farmer, but also a journalist and pamphleteer, and a fearless opponent of corruption and a defender of political liberty in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when liberty was a risky thing to defend. At one point he was jailed for his writings, and while he was in jail, his children, none of them older than sixteen or so, ran his large farm very competently, keeping him fully informed about its doings in the letters they sent him along with baskets of food.

Cobbett was a wonderfully opinionated and outspoken man. Two things above all others could rouse him to passion. One was potatoes, which were then coming very much into fashion and which he felt were a terrible crop. The other was Shakespeare. People who had an overdose of Shakespeare in their schooling will get much pleasure out of what Cobbett had to say about him.

So here is some of what Cobbett wrote about education in his book *Rural Rides* (1825). A nice reminder that home and parent education is not a new idea:

Richard and I have done something else besides ride, and hunt, and course, and stare about us, during this month. He was eleven years old last March, and it was now time for him to begin to know something about letters and figures. He has learned to work in the garden, and having been a good deal in the country, knows a great deal about farming affairs. When he and I went from home, I had business at Reigate. It was a very wet morning, and we went off long before daylight in a postchaise, intending to have our horses brought after us.

He had learned from mere play to read, being first set to work of his own accord to find out what was said about Thurtell, when all the world was talking and reading about Thurtell. That had induced us to give him *Robinson Crusoe*; and that had made him a passable reader. Then he had scrawled down letters and words upon paper, and had written letters to me in the strangest way imaginable. His knowledge of figures he had acquired from the necessity of knowing the several numbers upon the barrels of seeds brought from America, and the numbers upon the doors of houses.

I began with a pretty long lecture on the utility of arithmetic; the absolute necessity of it, in order for us to make out our accounts of the trees and seeds that we should have to sell in the winter, and the utter impossibility of our getting paid for our pains unless we were able to make out our accounts. Having thus made him understand the utility of the thing, and given him a very strong instance in the case of our nursery affairs, I proceeded to explain to him the meaning of the word arithmetic, the power of figures, according to the place they occupied. I then, for it was still dark, taught him to add a few figures together, I naming the figures one after another, while he, at the mention of each new figures aid the amount, and if incorrectly, he was corrected by me. When we had got a sum of about 24, I said now there is another line of figures on the left of this, and therefore you are to put down the 4 and carry 2. "What is carrying?" said he. I then explained to him the why and the wherefore of this, and he perfectly understood me at once. We then did several other little sums; and by the time we got to Sutton, it becoming daylight, I took a pencil and set him a little sum upon paper, which, after making a mistake or two, he did very well.

By the time we got to Reigate he had done several more, and at last a pretty long one, with very few errors. We had business all day, and thought no more of our scholarship until we went to bed, and then we did, in our post-chaise fashion, a great many lines in arithmetic before we went to sleep. Thus we went on mixing our riding and hunting with our arithmetic, until we quitted Godalming, when he did a sum very nicely in multiplication of money, falling a little short of what I had laid out, which was to make him learn the four rules in whole numbers first, and then in money, before I got home.

Now when there is so much talk about education, let me ask how many pounds it generally costs parents to have a boy taught this much of arithmetic; how much time it costs also; and, which is a far more serious consideration, how much mortification, and very often how much loss of health, it costs the poor scolded broken-hearted child, who becomes dunder-headed and dull for all this life-time, merely because that has been imposed upon him as a task which he ought to regard as an object of pleasant pursuit. I never even once desired him to stay a moment from any other thing that he had a mind to go at. I just wrote the sums down upon paper, laid them upon the table, and left him to tackle them when he pleased.

In the case of the multiplication table, the learning of which is something of a job, and which it is absolutely necessary to learn perfectly, I advised him to go up into his bedroom and read it twenty times over out loud every morning before he went a hunting, and ten times over every night after he came back, till it all came as pat upon his lips as the names of persons that he knew. He did this, and at the end of about a week he was ready to set on upon multiplication. It is the irksomeness of the thing which is the great bar to learning of every sort. I took care not to suffer irksomeness to seize his mind for a moment, and the consequence was that which I have described.

I look upon my boy as being like other boys in general. Their fathers can teach arithmetic as well as I; and if they have not a mind to pursue my method, they must pursue their own. Let them apply to the outside of the head and to the back, if they like; let them bargain for thumps and the birch rod; it is their affair, and not mine. I never yet saw in my

house a child that was *afraid*; that was in any fear whatever; that was ever for a moment under any sort of apprehension, on account of the learning of anything; and I never in my life gave a command, an order, a request, or even advice, to look into any book; and I am quite satisfied that the way to make children dunces, to make them detest books, and justify the detestation, is to tease them and bother them upon the subject.

As to the age at which children ought to begin to be taught it is very curious that, while I was at a friend's house during my ride, I looked into, by mere accident, a little child's abridgment of the *History of England*. The historian had introduced the circumstance of Alfred's father, who, "through a *mistaken notion* of kindness to his son, had suffered him to live to the age of twelve years without any attempt being made to give him education." How came this writer to know that it was a *mistaken notion*? Ought he not rather, when he looked at the result, when he considered the astonishing knowledge and great deeds of Alfred—ought he not to have hesitated before he thus criticized the notions of the father? I am satisfied that if they had begun to thump the head of Alfred when he was a child, we should not at this day heard talk of Alfred the Great.

## Multiplying Large Numbers

Our ways of multiplying multiplace numbers, i.e.,  $24 \times 57$ , or  $132 \times 853$ ; etc., all depend on a simple fact about numbers. We could say it like this: if two numbers, let's say 3 and 5, add up to another number, in this case 8, then 2 times 8 is equal to 2 times 3 added to 2 times 5.

We can write this:

$$2 \times 8 = (2 \times 3) + (2 \times 5).$$

But some people are puzzled about why this should be so. Or maybe they can see that it is so for small numbers.

$$2 \times 8 \quad (2 \times 3) + (2 \times 5)$$

$$= 6 + 10$$

$$= 16$$

$$3 \times 14 \quad (3 \times 10) + (3 \times 4)$$

$$= 30 + 12$$

= 42

but they aren't convinced that it is so for all numbers.

Some math books answer the question, "Why are the above statements true?" by saying that multiplication is distributive over addition. To most people, this won't be very helpful. In any case, it is not an explanation, just the same fact said in other words.

Perhaps if we see clearly enough that what I have been writing about is just a fact of nature, we may not need an "explanation." As I said in *GWS* #4,  $3 + 4 = 7$  is just a way of writing down a fact about the number 7, which is that it can be split up into a group of 3 and a group of 4. You can see for yourself that's so:

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The question "Why is it so?" does not make any sense here. Why can we split a group of 7 objects into a group of 3 objects and a group of 4 objects? Because that's what happens. There isn't some other deeper truth hiding behind that truth.

Well, to return to our fact about multiplying, one way of seeing that it is true, and is always true, and must be true, is by realizing that when we double a recipe we have to double everything in the recipe. If a recipe calls for two eggs, and we want to double it, we have to use four eggs. If it calls for a cup of flour, and we want to double it, we have to have two cups of flour. Even people who are afraid of numbers and arithmetic will see and feel sure that this is true.

And we can see that it is true that if one group of 7 objects can be made into a group of 3 objects and another group of 4 objects, then two groups of 7 objects can be made into two groups of 3 and two groups of 4,

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and that three 7's can be made into three 3's and three 4's,

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and so on

Again, we can see that this is so. There isn't any answer to the question, "Why is it so?" It just is. If one group of 7 will make one group of 3 and one group of 4, then 78 groups of 7 will make 78 groups of 3 and 78 groups of 4.



This is handy for multiplication, because if we didn't know this was so, and wanted to multiply 67 times 8, we would have to write down eight 67's and add them up. But instead of that we say that  $67 = 60 + 7$ ,—so all we have to do is multiply  $60 \times 8$  (which is 480), and  $7 \times 8$  (which is 56), then add  $480 + 56$ , which equals 536. We could write this:

$$\begin{aligned} 67 \times 8 &= (60 \times 8) + (7 \times 8) \\ &= 480 + 56 \\ &= 536 \end{aligned}$$

From this it is only an easy step or two to the “rule” or trick or procedure or (as mathematicians call it) the “algorithm” for multiplying multi-place numbers by multi-place numbers—the multiplication we learned in school. I won't go through it here; it is in *Arithmetic Made Simple* (see our list) and would be in any other arithmetic text.

About this procedure or algorithm I would only say that I wouldn't be in too big a hurry to move children from the longer way of doing multiplication, in which they understand all the steps, to the shorter way approved in school. After all, it isn't that much shorter—all it saves us is writing a few extra zeroes. This is not worth the confusion we get when we push children too quickly into it.

Thus, if we had  $562 \times 74$ , we might just as well write  $562 \times 70$  and then  $562 \times 4$ , then figure out those products and add them together to get our final answer. There certainly is no point in drilling children for weeks or months, as in school, to learn a slightly shorter but to many confusing way to do a calculation that in real life they will rarely if ever have to do.—JH

## Lessons Early?

*From Linda Olson Peebles (VA):*

When I asked my 4-year-old if she wanted piano lessons, she said, “I already play the piano.” And I realized she does make beautiful music, with a style and technique that is steadily developing and evolving. And she has the natural self-confidence of the creator, totally self-directed and pleasing only herself.

And yet, all around me are people who agree with many of our unschooling ideas, but subscribe to programs to teach their children violin, French, math, etc., before age 5. Am I, as they would say, depriving my kids

of adequate stimulation? I know they are bright enough for anything I would want to teach them. But I really want them to make the decisions, do the learning.

I feel the need of your ideas on this, and maybe those of other *GWS* readers.

*John wrote back:*

If your daughter is having fun with the piano I wouldn't worry about lessons. Sooner or later she is going to discover that there is a body of music, some of it perhaps more interesting and beautiful than any she can make up by herself, and she may want to learn how to play it. Or, she may not, and may move further in the direction of free improvising. Either way seems OK to me. And as I have written, improvising seems to me a very important part of "classical" training anyway.

I also know children who are taking music lessons and having a wonderful time with them. Perhaps the best thing you can do is make it possible for your daughter to hear—and see—a lot of different kinds of music, including piano. The more she knows about what is possible and available in the, world of music, the better she will be able to decide what kind of music she wants for herself.

## **Suzuki Directory**

In *GWS* #22, we asked if people knew of a directory of Suzuki music teachers. Several readers told us about the Suzuki Association Of The Americas, PO Box 354, Muscatine IA 52761-0354. The director, Robert Reinsager, says that they have about 100 copies of their directory available for \$2.50 plus 75¢ postage. The directory lists about 1900 teachers by state, and indicates whether they teach piano, violin, viola, cello, bass, or flute.—  
DR

## **Esperanto**

*From Maire Mullarney, The Mill House, Whitechurch Rd, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14, Ireland:*

When my eldest grandson was on holiday here a few months ago I started him on Esperanto, in just the way I had offered Latin (eagerly grabbed) to his

eldest uncle. The grandson was seven; he loved Esperanto. We cut out words and (the very few) endings for plurals and accusative, wrote nouns one color, verbs another, etc. I warmly recommend Esperanto, the international language, to home learners. No need for a teacher. It is completely regular, makes students aware of language, so that they know better what they are doing in English, gives a proven perfect foundation for other languages, and is used worldwide to an extent you'd never believe until you get into it. Learners of any age can begin to correspond with "samideanoj" in any country in the world (including Outer Mongolia) within months or they may be content just to keep in touch with a different world through reading.

By coincidence, my post this morning brought, along with *GWS*, a copy of *Science for the People*, and the first thing I saw when I opened it was a notice saying "Many progressive people have heard about Esperanto, the international language, but not so many people are aware of the fact that several science oriented periodicals are being published in that language." It lists reviews of medicine, health, astronomy, etc. The note says that all are available from Esperanto Language Services (452 Aldine, Apt. 501, Chicago IL 60657) and also gives the address of the Esperanto League Of North America (PO Box 1129, El Cerrito CA 94530). The British Esperanto Association has a set of 10 lessons for a free postal course; these were the basis for my own lessons with Ivan.

DR: Michael Jones (TX) sent us the free pamphlet, "Esperanto—Lesson One," available from the California address Maire mentions, or from the Canadian Esperanto Association, PO Box 2159, Sidney BC V8L 3S3 (they ask for a SASE).

## **School Supply Catalog**

A reader recommended the *Abc School Supply Catalog*; (6500 Peachtree Industrial Blvd, Norcross GA 30071.) This free, 500-page, colorful catalog offers many of the items you would expect to find in a pre-school or elementary school classroom—play equipment, furniture, visual aids, worksheets, games, craft supplies, audio-visual materials, and so on. Home-schooling parents and children browsing through this catalog might get ideas for school-type activities that they would enjoy, and they would probably have a lot of fun (and save money) creating the materials themselves. A few

good purchases that caught John's eye: iron filings for \$1.90, 275 plastic Cuisenaire rods for \$14.95, a Soma puzzle for \$5.95 (though we wonder if this is truly available—we've been told that no one manufactures the Soma puzzle now.) ABC accepts orders from individuals when payment is with the order; there's an extra \$2 charge for orders less than \$15.—DR

## **At Home in Michigan**

*From Judith Clark (MI):*

We have three daughters—Kelly, 12, Jennifer, 10, and Stacy, 9—who have been homeschoolers for about seven months now. I can't begin to tell you how rewarding this has been for everyone. We follow no particular curriculum and the children are free to explore any subject that interests them.

Stacy, our youngest, disliked having homeschooling at first because of her lack of concentration. She had no study habits and she thought the words school and recess were synonymous. Now she is ahead of her class in school and even gets up early to finish something like math or spelling. She is really becoming a concerned person because we are able to teach ecology, gardening, animal husbandry, and many other subjects that public schools have no time for.

As for my other girls, their adjustment was much easier. Kelly and Jennifer are very easy to teach and they also work well together. Kelly will help Jenny with math or Jenny will spell with Stacy. Because of home schooling together, they seem to have become very close friends and their arguments almost non-existent.

They have corresponded with many other home-schoolers and in doing this they have found many new and interesting friends, not to mention learning about letter writing, sentence structure, and spelling.

Neither my husband nor I have teaching credentials. We have enrolled our daughters in the Home Based Education Program at Clonlara School (MI). We have found Dr. Pat Montgomery to be one of the few fine teachers left in teaching. For a nominal tuition, around \$200 per school year for all my children, Pat becomes our certified teacher. She is terrific—and always ready to give us advice on materials and teaching situations.

We have found the current poor economical climate here in Michigan to

be a blessing for us homeschooling parents. Even though “they” know what we are doing, they are unable to fight us in court because of the cost.

## **J. P.’S Growing**

*From Kathy Mingl (IL):*

I do try to remember that other people feel a certain delicacy about discussing some subjects, but I’m afraid I forget once in a while, and do violence to their social sensibilities. I noticed that just the other day, when I stopped in next door, to talk to J.P.’s 2-year-old friend Matty’s mommy. Matty was showing me a doll, and we were chatting amiably away, about the fact that the baby had no diaper on, and you have to watch out for babies, because of the things they tend to get all over you if you’re not careful, Matty thought it was all very hilarious, because of course that sort of thing hits right in the area of a 2-year-old’s main interests in life, but I looked up to catch a very odd expression on his mother’s face.

I really wasn’t aware of how much I’ve taken for granted since I’ve been an adult until my son started asking me all these tricky questions. Being a parent makes you think of things like, “What kind of a world is this that my child is growing up in; and how can I teach him to cope with it?” Scientology data has been valuable to me with that, because of the practical applications it has to daily life. One thing I can think of that I’ve been able to help J.P. with lately is handling a confusion, like picking up all his Tinker Toys—by picking out one piece as the one that needs to be dealt with first, and putting that away, and proceeding from there. I got that bit from *The Problems Of Work* by L. Ron Hubbard.

Another thing that’s been useful to J.P. is a colored chart I bought and taped to the refrigerator, with the emotional tone scale all laid out in order on it, represented by a funny little guy for each one. When J.P. runs into trouble with somebody, I have him show me where he was and where he thinks the other person was and what would have been a better thing to have done to handle the situation, all by the pictures on the chart. A good book about the Tone Scale and how to use it is *How To Choose Your People* by Ruth Munshull—she’s funny.

I have to tell you—J. P. has taught himself how to ride a two-wheeled bike! His daddy brought a small one home for him from an auction a couple

of months back, and the first thing J. P. did was to get a crescent wrench and take off the training wheels. I showed him how to keep from falling down, by putting his foot down whenever he tipped, and he's been practicing nearly every day. The other day he called me out to see how he was doing, and he just zipped off down the sidewalk—I couldn't believe it! He's only 3 ½ years old too.

## Christianity & Children

In the Fall '81 issue of *The Last? Resort* (977 Keeler Av, Berkeley CA 94807; \$10/yr.), a quarterly about corporal punishment in schools, Helen Fox, some of whose letters we have printed in *GWS*, reviews a book called *What The Bible Says About Child Training*, by J. R. Fugate. According to Helen, Mr. Fugate thinks the Bible tells us that “the child is naturally sinful and totally self-centered. His inherent nature is to lie and steal, to be lazy and gluttonous, to willfully set himself up as master of himself, his parents and society. Because of his wicked nature, he must be controlled by his parents, absolutely and unconditionally. At six months (!). his mother applies a small switch to his legs as he tries to wriggle away while being diapered. At two, the small switch is exchanged for a ‘willow or peach branch.’”

Helen Fox strongly disagrees with these harsh and cruel ideas, as we do here at *GWS*. Mr. Fugate and the many who agree with him are of course free to believe what they like. But they are on shaky ground when they call their beliefs “Christian.” What Christ said about children is clear and plain. “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” By “suffer” he did not mean make them suffer; he meant endure them, put up with them; be patient with them. By “of such is the Kingdom of Heaven” Christ meant not that little children were perfect angels but that they saw the world as if it were newly made, a beautiful and miraculous place, and lived in it with the kind of intensity and joy that we might all hope to feel in Heaven. At any rate, it certainly is clear that Christ did *not* say that children were naturally evil and should have the evil beaten out of them.

Some will no doubt point to this or that quote from the Old Testament as support for their beliefs. But the Old Testament is not Christianity. It is the history of what *led up* to Christianity, the history of the society in which

Christ grew up, *and which in the most profound and radical ways he was trying to change*. It is easy to forget the awkward act that what he was crucified for was challenging the authorities, being a troublemaker—and the society he was troubling was precisely the society that had produced the Old Testament.

In any case, when it comes to raising children, what we expect turns out to be, sooner or later, and more often sooner than later, what we get. If we assume that children are naturally bad, stupid, cruel, rebellious, and treat them that way, we are soon very likely to have on our hands just that kind of children. But if, as Helen Fox pointed out in her article, we treat children as if, inexperienced and passionate though they are, they basically want and mean to do right, we will soon find that we have that kind of children, helpful to us, kind and generous to younger brothers and sisters. The Chinese do not treat their little children as if they were basically bad, and the happy result is that the kinds of bad behavior which are common among American children of five or six are virtually unknown there. From a purely “practical” point of view, leaving out the ethical (which is in fact rarely a practical thing to do), the trouble with the child haters and child-beaters is that they produce more and more of exactly what they are trying to prevent. Countless studies have shown that our most violent criminals were almost without exception the victims of violence in their own childhood, and it is an unhappy fact that those parts of our society that are most violent are also the most violent with their children. I don’t know how to break these vicious cycles; perhaps for the time being there is no way. But at least let’s not call this way of treating children “Christian”—JH

## **Trip to Pacific**

This is my first chance to tell about my Pacific trip, since I had no time to write about it for *GWS* #23. I left Boston on Aug. 13 and took part in the home-schooling conferences in Salt Lake City and Fullerton, California (*GWS* 23). From there I flew to Hawaii, landing on the very beautiful big island, which I had not seen before. In a little over a day I was driven over most of the island, went swimming at the loveliest beach (public, too) I have ever seen, and spoke to three different home schooling meetings attended by more than two hundred families, most of whom had young children and

seemed very interested in the idea of teaching them at home.

From Hawaii I flew to Honolulu on Oahu, where I talked about school reform (and incidentally home schooling) to a number of forums and university meetings. At one of these I met State Senator Neil Abercrombie, who seemed very interested in and sympathetic to home schooling. There is a good chance that Hawaiian home schoolers may find in him a helpful ally.

From Honolulu I flew to Auckland, New Zealand, where I spent a busy two days, talking at a conference at an alternative school, being interviewed by newspaper, radio, and TV people, and winding up with a big meeting at the university there.

Then on to Melbourne, Australia, for more of the same—a talk at a local teacher's college, a meeting of several hundred people at the University, and radio, TV, and newspaper interviews. The local home schooling group had arranged that when I came back to Melbourne in a week, after my travels around the country, I would talk to a meeting of area home schoolers in a meeting room at the Zoo. Geoff Maslen, who interviewed me for the Melbourne paper, *The Age*, put in his interview the phone number of the local home schooling group. About two days after the article appeared, one of the members called me in Darwin saying that they had been so swamped with phone calls about the Zoo meeting that they could not possibly take care of all the people who wanted to go, and asking if I would speak to another home schooling meeting the evening I returned. I said I would; more on this later.

From Melbourne I flew with Helen Modra, who had been our first Australian contact and had got me all the meetings in the Southeast, to Wagga Wagga (pronounced “wogga”), just west of the mountains. Spent a very pleasant day there, talking to several meetings at Riverina College. From Wagga Wagga I flew to Brisbane and another meeting of families interested in home schooling. Though the meeting had been called on quite short notice, there were thirty to forty people there, many of whom expressed strong interest.

Next day to Darwin in the far north, for the big Australian reading conference that had first invited me to their country. Darwin is closer to the equator than any part of the U.S., so that even in the Australian winter it was very warm. I spent a delightful three days with the conference. These Australian teachers seemed somewhat more open to unconventional ways of teaching than is usually the case here. At any rate, everywhere I went I was



treated with the greatest kindness, friendliness, and hospitality.

From Darwin I flew to Perth at the Southwestern corner of the country, for another reading conference at Claremont College. Again, I had a most delightful visit there.

Then back to Melbourne for the special home schooling meeting. We met in a room at the YWCA, and despite a \$4.50 admission fee, more than four hundred people attended. A very exciting occasion. Many home schoolers the local group had never heard of turned up. Next day, a successful conference at the Zoo (very handy location, for while the adults talk, the children can look at the animals). During lunchtime, while being guided through the Zoo by one of the curators, I picked up and held a number of animals, including a big boa constrictor and a wombat.

Early next morning flew to Sydney for a rather small but very productive all day and evening homeschooling discussion group. There seemed potential for much activity there. Next morning I flew back to Los Angeles—a nineteen hour flight—and thence to Boston.

All in all, a most pleasant, interesting, and productive trip. Everywhere I went people urged me to come back, which I hope to do. Hawaii, New Zealand, and Australia all seem fertile soil for home schooling. In Australia the laws of at least a number of states are more favorable to alternative schools than ours; subject to what some feel are rather crippling restrictions, they can even get government funding. So there's every reason to hope that within a few years there will be many homeschoolers there.—JH

## Mindstorms

*Mindstorms: Children, Computers, And Powerful Ideas*, by Seymour Papert (\$11.65 + 75¢ post). This is a most important book, for two reasons. One is the reason the author intended: it is a book about the way in which we *could* and perhaps soon may use computers, in schools or at home, to make the culture and language of computers, mathematics, technology, and science—all a closed book to many people—more accessible, understandable, meaningful, and above all enjoyable for children.

The other reason the book is important is one that Papert did not intend (but might not object to): it is a very powerful argument for homeschoolers *against* the ways in which almost all schools teach mathematics (and indeed

everything else). What he says about the errors of current education is not very different from what I have been saying for years, in books and in *GWS*. But since he is a Professor of both Education *and* Mathematics at M.I.T., probably the leading scientific university in the U.S. if not the world, his words will give our arguments much greater weight.

A number of homeschooling families have prepared very good statements of educational plans and purposes for their school authorities. Some of these, which have won the approval of the schools or the courts, we have printed in *GWS* and/or *Teach Your Own*. But in all such statements, above all where families are dealing with hostile school authorities, it might be helpful to make an even stronger objection to the educational philosophies and methods of the schools than most families have made. These should of course be made as statements of educational philosophy, as a considered difference of opinion, rather than a furious attack. *Mindstorms* gives us a great deal of material for such statements.

In *GWS* #21 we quoted some of what Papert wrote about his childhood love affair with gears. It is a very powerful argument against the idea that how we think about things can be separated from how we feel about them, or that we can decide in advance along what paths children will explore the world.

Here is more useful ammunition from *Mindstorms*:

(p. 7). Children seem to be innately gifted learners, acquiring long before they go to school a vast quantity of knowledge by a process. I call “Piagetian learning,” or “learning without being taught.”

(p. 30). We consider an activity which may not occur to most people when they think of computers and children: the use of the computer as a writing instrument. For most children rewriting a text is so laborious that the first draft is the final copy, and the skill of rereading with a critical eye is never acquired. The image of children using the computer as a writing instrument is a particularly good example of my general thesis that *what is good for professionals is good for children*. But (in schools) the computer is seen as a teaching instrument. It gives children practice in distinguishing between verbs and nouns, in spelling, and in answering multiple choice questions.

(p. 31). I believe that the computer as writing instrument offers children an opportunity to become more like adults, indeed like advanced professionals, in their relationship to their intellectual products and to themselves. In doing

so, it comes into headlong collision with the many aspects of schools whose effect, if not whose intention, is to “infantilize” the child.

(p. 40) Children begin their lives as eager and competent learners. They have to *learn* to have trouble with learning in general and mathematics in particular.

*I was amused by a remark on p. 41:*

People have lived with children for a long time. The fact that we had to wait for Piaget to tell us how children think is so remarkable.

Who waited? Most of what I wrote in *How Children Learn* about young children’s thinking, I wrote before I had read a word of Piaget. And much of what Piaget, Papert, and I have had to say about children as eager and skillful learners was said very eloquently in 1900 by Millicent Shinn in her wonderful book *The Biography Of A Baby*, which I hope someday to be able to reprint here.

*More from Seymour Papert:*

(p. 41). Already in the preschool years every child first constructs one or more preadult theorizations of the world and then moves toward more adultlike views. (JH—we can observe this process most clearly in children learning to talk.) And all this is done through a learning process the schools should envy: It is effective (all the children get there), it is inexpensive (it seems to require neither teacher nor curriculum development), and it is humane (the children seem to do it in a carefree spirit without explicit external rewards and punishments).

An unknown but certainly significant proportion of the population has almost completely given up on learning. These people seldom, if ever, engage in deliberate learning and see themselves as neither competent at it nor likely to enjoy it. The social and personal costs are enormous.

(p. 47). Our educational culture gives mathematics learners scarce resources for making sense of what they are learning. As a result our children are forced to follow the very worst model for learning mathematics. This is the model of rote learning, where material is treated as meaningless; it is a *dissociated* model.

*That was very true in 1958 when I first taught fifth grade and started writing*

How Children Fail, *and is much more true now.*

(p. 48). One day Jenny (a thirteen year old average student who had been sent by her school to work with Papert and computers) came in very excited. She had made a discovery. “Now I know why we have nouns and verbs,” she said. For many years in school Jenny had been drilled in grammatical categories. She had never understood the difference between nouns and verbs and adverbs. But now it was apparent that her difficulty with grammar was not due to an inability to work with logical categories. It was something else. She had simply seen no purpose in the enterprise. She had not been able to make any sense of what grammar was about in the sense of what it might be *for*. And when she had asked what it was for, the explanations that her teachers gave seemed manifestly dishonest. Therefore she learned to approach grammar with resentment. And, as is the case for most of us, resentment guaranteed failure.

*(When Jenny went back to school after her work with computers) her previously low and average grades became “straight A’s” for her remaining years of school. She learned that she could be “a brain” after all.)*

(p. 50). It is easy to understand why math and grammar fail to make sense to children when they fail to make sense to everyone around them and why helping children to make sense of them requires more than a teacher making the right speech or putting the right diagram on the board. I have asked many teachers and parents what they thought mathematics to be and why it was important to learn it. Few held a view of mathematics that was sufficiently coherent to justify devoting several thousand hours of a child’s life to learning it, and children sense this. When a teacher tells a student that the reason for those many hours of arithmetic is to be able to check the change at the supermarket, the teacher is simply not believed. Children see such “reasons” as one more example of adult double talk. (They) can see perfectly well that the teacher does not like math any more than they do and that the reason for doing it is simply that it has been inscribed into the curriculum. All of this erodes children’s confidence in the adult world and the process of education. *And I think it introduces a deep element of dishonesty into the educational relationship.* The child’s perception is fundamentally correct. The *kind of mathematics*

foisted on children in school is not meaningful, fun, or even very useful.

(p. 52). A living language is learned by speaking and does not need a teacher to verify and grade each sentence. A dead language requires constant “feedback” from a teacher. The activity known as “sums” performs this feedback function in school math. These absurd little repetitive exercises have only one merit: They are easy to grade.

*And as I have said for years, teachers or parents would be wiser to give children answer sheets and let them correct their own papers.*

(p. 63) Turtle geometry. was designed to help children develop the learning strategy: *In order to learn something, first make sense of it.*

(p. 65). Turtle geometry. gives the child a model of learning very different from the dissociated one a fifth-grade boy, Bill, described as the way to learn multiplication tables in school: “You learn stuff like that by making your mind a blank and saying it over and over until you know it.”

For most children, that doesn’t work. For a more non-dissociated, i.e., meaningful way to look at multiplication tables, see *GWS* #17, 18.

(p. 115). The instructor and a child were on the floor watching. As they puzzled together the child had a revelation: “Do you mean,” he said, “that you really don’t know how to fix it?” The incident is poignant. It speaks of all the times this child entered into teachers’ games of “let’s do this together” all the while knowing that the collaboration was a fiction. *Discovery cannot be a setup; invention—cannot be scheduled.*

(p. 132). As children, we learned how to build and use theories only because we were allowed to hold “deviant” views about (the world) for many years. Children do not follow a learning path that goes from one “true position” to another, more advanced “true position.” Their natural learning paths include “false theories” that teach as much about theory building as true ones. But in school false theories are no longer tolerated. Our educational system rejects the “false theories” of children, thereby rejecting the way children really learn.

With these quotes I have only scratched the surface. There are many more powerful insights into children's learning, and learning of mathematics in particular, than I have room to quote here. And I have said nothing about Turtle or Logo geometry, the particular way of using computers that this book is all about. Please don't assume that because of all of these quotes you don't need to read the rest of the book; without Papert's specific examples, you can only catch a part of the force and truth of what he is saying.

I should add that since Papert wrote this book, and as of the time write this, two of the major companies making home computers, Texas Instruments and Apple, have designed and produced programs that will enable you to do Turtle geometry on their machines. Whether any other companies have done so, I don't know. Whether these programs will enable you to do all the things Papert writes about in his book, or how satisfied he is with them, I don't know either.

Meanwhile, let me urge you once again very strongly to get this book and to make use of it not just in home teaching but in any dealings you may have with uncooperative schools. It is very powerful ammunition, not just for home schoolers, but also for all people working for change within schools.—  
JH

## **GNYS AT WRK**

*GNYS AT WRK*, by Glenda Bissex (\$17.50 + post.) This delightful and revealing book is the detailed and loving account of how the author's son Paul did what Seymour Papert talked about in *Mindstorms*, that is, learned without being taught. He built for himself his own at first crude models of written English, and constantly refined them until they finally matched the written English of the world around him. It is also a splendid account and example of the ways in which a sympathetic and trusting teacher can be of use to a learner, not by deciding what he is to learn but by encouraging and helping him to learn what he is already busy learning. The book is expensive, but it's well worth the money. Like *Mindstorms*, it gives powerful ammunition both to parents who are trying to deal with the school systems and/or to teachers and others who are trying to change them. And I have to add that since the book is published by Harvard University Press, there is little chance that it will come out in an inexpensive paperback.

Paul Bissex began his writing at age 5 with an indignant note to his mother, who, busy talking with friends, had not noticed that the child was trying to ask her something. After trying a few times to get her attention he went away, and returned soon with this message printed on a piece of paper: RUDF. Luckily for him, his mother (with whom I had a pleasant visit not long ago here in the office) was perceptive enough to decode the note (“Are you deaf?”), understand its importance, and quickly give the boy the attention he had been asking for.

As the boy began to explore written English, his mother paid steady attention to the ways in which he was doing it. In her preface, Mrs. Bissex writes:

When I began taking notes about my infant son’s development, I did not know I was gathering “data” for research; I was a mother with a propensity for writing things down. When Paul started spelling, I was amazed and fascinated. Only somewhat later did I learn of Charles Read’s research on children’s invented spelling. Excited by his work, I started seeing my notes as “data.”

What I hope this study offers, rather than generalizations to be “applied” to other children, is encouragement to look at individuals in the act of learning. And I do mean *act*, with all that implies of drama and action.

A case study this detailed and extended over time would have been unmanageable were I not a parent.

This was one of the points I made in the last chapter of *Teach Your Own*, in which I list a number of reasons why schools would be wise, in terms of their own interests, to cooperate with homeschooling families. For such families, keeping notes of their own work, sending them to *GWS*, or in some cases putting them into articles or books of their own, of which we have already had some and will surely have many more, are doing a kind of long-term educational research which neither the schools nor the schools of education could possibly do themselves. This extremely valuable information about children’s ways and styles of learning, which the schools could never afford to pay for, they can have for nothing from the home schoolers and their many communication networks, including *GWS*.

In the preface, Mrs. Bissex describes how Paul felt about her research:

At the beginning, Paul was an unconscious subject, unaware of the significance of my tape recorder and notebook. When he first became aware, at about age six, he was pleased by my interest and attention. By seven, he had become an observer of his own progress. When I had Paul's early writings spread out on my desk, he loved to look at them with me and try to read them. Paul observed me writing down a question he had asked about spelling, and I inquired how he felt about writing it down. "Then I know that when I'm older can see the stuff I asked when I was little," he commented.

At eight he was self-conscious enough to object to obvious observation and note-taking, which I then stopped. He still brought his writings to me, sharing my sense of their importance. At nine he became a participant in the research, interested in thinking about why he had written or read things as he once had.

The study has become a special bond between us, an interest we share in each other's work, a mutual enjoyment of Paul's early childhood and of his growing up. I have come to appreciate certain qualities in my son that I might not have seen except through the eyes of this study.

When I was teaching fifth grade with Bill Hull, and beginning to watch and listen carefully to what children said and did in the class, used to write down notes, in handwriting so tiny they couldn't easily read it. They knew I was writing about them, and at first said, a little suspiciously, "What are you writing?" But as time went on and they began to understand that I did not see them as strange laboratory animals, but liked and respected them and was trying to see how the world of school looked through their eyes, they felt better about my note taking—though it would probably have been better if I had told them more specifically what I was trying to learn from their works. In other words, I could have made them more conscious partners in my research.

Many *GWS* readers will remember Ann Kauble's letter in *GWS* #12 about her little daughter's angry dinnertime note, saying that she would not eat her "FICH" but would instead eat all the "CUCEZ." Many children—I have no



idea how many—seem to go more from writing to reading than the other way around. *GNYS AT WRK* is by no means the first work I have read about children's invented spellings. Many years ago I read, I forget where, a most interesting article on the same subject by Carole Chomsky, who has done much good work in this area. One thing about her article I remember very vividly. She reported that many children spelled words beginning in TR—tree, train, etc.—either with a CH or an H at the beginning. For a second this baffled me. But by this time I had learned to look for reason in children's "mistakes." I began to say "tree, train, etc." listening carefully to what sounds I was making, and found to my astonishment that what I was actually saying sounded very much like "chree" and "chrain."

Worth noting that neither Glenda Bissex nor Ann Kauble nor the parents of many other children who learned to write English in their own invented spelling, had taught them "phonics," or taught them to write, or even much encouraged them to write (except perhaps by their own example). They had been told and helped to learn the names of letters. From these they had figured out for themselves which consonants made which sounds. Like Paul Bissex, they began by leaving vowels out of their words altogether, producing a writing much like the Speedwriting that many adults later struggle and pay to learn.

As Mrs. Bissex makes clear in example after example, Paul did not "learn to write," learn what schools would call the skills of writing, so that later he could use them to write something. From the beginning he wrote because he had something he wanted to say, often to himself, sometimes to others.

I plan to say much more about this wonderful book in the next *GWS*. Meanwhile, let me give Mrs. Bissex the final word:

Paul, like his parents, wrote (and read and talked) because what he was writing (or reading and saying) had meaning to him as an individual and as a cultural being. We humans are meaning-making creatures, and language—spoken and written—is an important means for making and sharing meanings.

## Other New Books Here

*The Silver Chair* and *The Horse And His Boy* by C. S. Lewis (\$1.75 each + post.) Two more books in the wonderful Narnia series. In *The Silver Chair*,

two children (whom we have not met before in the Narnia books) find themselves suddenly in Narnia, and there, at Aslan's bidding, and in the company of a strange but brave and stubborn creature, go on a long and dangerous journey to a sinister underground world to rescue a Narnia prince kept captive by witchcraft. In *The Horse And His Boy*, a poor boy, to escape being sold into slavery to a cruel nobleman who visits his master, flees with the nobleman's horse. It turns out to be a Narnia horse, and therefore, able to talk, but, obliged until now, in this strange and hostile land, to keep its power of speech a secret. After many adventures they make their way to Narnia and there help to save a good king and his kingdom from a treacherous attack.—  
JH

*How To Play The Piano Despite Years Of Lessons*, by Ward Cannel & Fred Marx (\$11.65 + post.) We are delighted to be able to offer this book now. You may remember I wrote about it in *GWS* #21, but at that time it was only available to people who signed up for a special course. Out of the blue, last month the publishers sent us a dozen copies—no word on why they changed their minds.

I won't repeat everything I said in #21. I will only say that this book has been the biggest encouragement to my playing songs, creating music, and getting satisfaction out of music-making of anything I can think of. Finding this book plus *Never Too Late* several years ago inspired me to get my own piano, and I've been having a great time ever since, letting go of the old fears and patterns instilled by childhood lessons, learning to trust my own ability and judgement. \$11.65 is a small price to pay for a lifetime of enjoyment (and I hope you'll get the book fast, before the publishers change their minds again)

—DR

*Oh, Boy! Babies* by Alison Herzig and Jane Mali (\$5.35 + post.) This very amusing and touching book is the record of an important educational experiment. A private school for boys decided to offer a six week elective course in infant care. Only in this course the boys would not just read about babies; they would have real babies, to look at, play with, comfort, dress and undress, feed, diaper, and clean. In a text which is almost entirely the words of the boys themselves, and with delightful black and white pictures on almost every page, this book shows what happened. It is a very good companion to *Before You Were Three*, and a wonderful book for children

(perhaps especially boys) of any age.

Two things about the book struck me very strongly. The first was how strange the babies were to the boys. They might have come from Mars. The ten-year-olds had completely forgotten that part of their lives. The other was how quickly the boys came to understand the babies and to enjoy them and love them. They were very sad when the course ended. Many boys wanted to take the course—next to Computers it was the most popular elective in the school—and as there was a limited supply of babies, no one could take it twice.

It wouldn't be stretching the truth at all to say that these boys *needed* these babies, as indeed I think we all do. Seeing babies and little children puts us in touch with a very important part of ourselves, which we may otherwise very easily lose. As I have said many times, from being with babies and infants I have learned an immense amount about human learning, including my own. And it occurs to me that many people, especially upper middle-class ones like these boys, must grow to adulthood and even to the point of having babies of their own without the slightest idea of what babies are like.

It reminds me once again what a bad arrangement for growing up the single-age peer group is. In such groups children are cut off from their own past, in the person of younger children, and from their own future, in the person of older children and adults.

This experiment, of putting ten year-olds into close contact with babies, is one that many other schools could and should repeat. It might solve a number of important problems at once; children could get the contact with babies that they need, and some mothers, at least, would be able to get much needed help in caring for their children. Of course, people would have to have great confidence in a school, and know it for a gentle and kindly place, to entrust their babies to it. Children who have had this kind of training and experience with babies would be welcome in many families as baby-sitters, and would themselves probably be glad of a chance to do such work. And when we think of all the babies and very young children who suffer terribly from the want of human contact and loving care, we can't but feel that in most places we should be able to find ways to bring children and babies together. Certainly the home schooling movement, as it grows, should find it easier to do this.

After the last class session in the book, one boy says, "I'm going to beg

and beg them to let me take the class again. I'm going to sign up again even if I have to get down on my knees. I just love babies. I mean, I'm going to get down on my knees and beg them." A lovely book.—JH

*Equal Rights For Children*, by Howard Cohen (\$4.50 + post.) This is a very carefully thought out, tightly organized, and clearly written argument in favor of (as I proposed in *Escape From Childhood*) making available to children the legal rights and responsibilities of adults. Cohen deals in a masterful way with all the conventional arguments against this. His book will not convince haters and fearers of children, but it will greatly strengthen those who believe as a matter of justice that children should be treated as human beings, not as pets and slaves, and it may convince some whose hearts yearn in that direction but whose uncertain and troubled minds hold them back.

Since the idea of giving children legal and political rights is not a live issue and, given the present public temper, is not likely to become one for a long time, one might ask what's the point of this book, why is it worth reading, what difference could it possibly make. Well, in the overall society it may not make any difference, but it could make a great difference in the homes of unschoolers, and in the small but growing communities that homeschoolers are making. In this miniature society, this country within a country, this ancestor (I hope) of a very different larger society some of us may someday see, the question of how children should be treated and what rights they should have is a very live one. There are those in the home schooling movement who say that, except for the right to food, clothing, shelter, and health care, children have only duties and obligations, and no *rights* at all. This book is a powerful argument in favor of going as far as we can in the direction of treating children, despite their youth and inexperience, like sensible, well-meaning, and responsible people, and why doing so will make stronger and better families as it will someday make a stronger and better society.—JH

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# Growing Without Schooling 25

January 1982

Two TV shows have taped interviews with me recently, *Portrait of America*, on Ted Turner's network, and *Evening Magazine*; plus, I've done one show live, *People Are Talking* in Baltimore. I've talked on radio shows in Toronto, Columbia SC, Woonsocket RI, Boston (two shows), St. Louis, and am about to do one in Reno. As we go to press (end of January), *People* magazine says their story about homeschooling may come out soon.

There was a wide variety of people in the audience at last week's homeschooling information meeting in Cambridge, which was organized by Litty Medalia. Besides myself, four homeschooling families were on the panel, and I was most impressed at their eloquence in answering questions. I was also delighted to learn there are now four homeschooling families in nearby Rockland, which is on our "Friendly School Districts" list.

I have nearly finished the revisions of *How Children Learn*. Over the holidays I was able to visit with a number of friends, which I love to do and rarely have enough time for.—John Holt

## Death Of a Friend

We were appalled to learn of the death of a leading homeschooling figure, Mary Bergman. On Jan. 5, a former neighbor, crazed by overwhelming financial problems, arrived at the Bergman home, with a shotgun and began firing. Mary and an electrician who was working there at the time were killed, and two of the Bergman boys were wounded (both now in good condition). The neighbor left and committed suicide a few minutes later.

Mary had taught her nine children at home for many years in Utah and Missouri, and started the National Association of Home Educators and Home Educators Newsletter. Many *GWS* readers will remember her article that we reprinted in *GWS* #14, about her children's skills in carpentry, mechanics, plumbing, and wiring. We reprint more from *H.E.N.* in this issue. We hope the organization she founded will be able to continue her excellent work, and we know that *GWS* readers join us in sending our deepest sympathy to her

family.—Donna Richoux

## 20 Years Of Unschooling

*From Washington State:*

I consider myself a pioneer homeschooler, having resolved back in 1962 that our infant first-born would be educated at home. I taught him from scratch until he was twelve years old at which time we tried sending him to a church school. After three months we took him out as he was too bored. Later we tried two different correspondence schools, but each time we found that doing our own thing was better.

He took a G.E.D. test last summer and surprised us all with a score in the top ten percent. All the years of self-doubt, of worry about the outcome, of concern for the children's welfare, of turning deaf ears to recriminations of friends and relatives concerning our little "experiment"—it was all worth it. Now he is attending the Technical Institute, and is at the head of his class, making straight As.

I asked him the other day how he could get an A in Calculus, when math had been my weakest area and we'd barely made it past fractions. He said, "You taught me how to learn, didn't you?" In his spare time he runs a TV repair business. He already passed his Electronics Technician test (scored 100% while only two others in his class even passed, on the first try.)

I have enthusiastically recommended homeschooling to anyone who will listen. Among our friends are at least ten families who are now teaching their children at home. Back in 1962 I didn't know of a soul who had even thought of such a thing. But a few years ago I did meet a family whose children, slightly older than ours, had always been taught at home. I was surprised, to say the least!

By the way, we do have other children—five altogether—ages 19, 16, 14, 7, and 3, all at home. But we don't worry about them—we're more relaxed now. And the older ones help teach the younger. We feel fortunate that the State has never bothered us. They've been curious, and asked questions a time or two, but we live "out in the sticks" and have always tried to be discreet. So far they've just looked the other way. Now the climate is changing and people are beginning to take a real interest, what with the public school system on the skids and state funds drying up rapidly.

My husband (and I) only had one year of college, but he was recently offered a teaching post at our son's technical school, largely because of our son's being held in such high esteem by the faculty, both in character and scholarship. He accepted the job and is enjoying it immensely.

Our 16-year old daughter has also completed her secondary home education, but is deemed too young to take her G.E.D. test. She is getting a head-start on college by poring over her brother's advanced math books, etc., in between music lessons and getting some firsthand experience at running the home while I teach the younger children.

Our 14-year-old is doing 8th grade reading and math, along with many "extra-curricular" interests; and the seven-year old is just learning to read (I concur with Raymond Moore's *Better Late Than Early*, Reader's Digest Press).

I consider my most important responsibility at the moment the foundation work being laid for our three-year-old. To inspire children with curiosity and a love of learning when they are little is, I believe, the best assurance for the success of any homeschool.

Show me a young adult who was shipped off to nursery school at three and kindergarten at five, spent nearly every waking moment under pressure to conform to the immature standards of his peers, squandered precious years of his life seeking entertainment rather than knowledge, expecting all his needs to be supplied by the mostly absent and practically unknown parents—and I'll show you an irresponsible, grown-up child who still needs 4-6 years of college just to learn what life is about, who has no opinion of his own but is victimized by whatever the "upper hand" dishes out on the tube, and expects his livelihood to be guaranteed by the State. Maybe our children are "misfits"—but so was every great person in history.

## **Be Your Own Expert**

*Janet Williams (PA) writes:*

I've been seeing people go off half-cocked—and then calling me after damage has been done. I am struck over and over by the way people rely on other people for information. Not just homeschoolers, either! Our local superintendent does not know state law, regulations, or directives—even though they are all there somewhere in his office. When he has a question he

does not find the answer himself, he calls someone who should know. Dependence on dubious experts means much incorrect information and understanding. How schooled we have been to turn to the “expert!” But at what cost?

I feel it incumbent to repeat certain steps which are essential before making contact with local school people.

1) Read State School Code. The county library should have a copy. You can also get one from your Congressman/woman.

2) Contact State Dept. of Ed. for any pertinent regulations. There are volumes. Some pertinent ones in PA are “Chapter 11 of State Board Regulations” in the “Administrator Handbook for Nonpublic Nonlicensed Schools.”

3) You must become your own expert. You will not be able to learn everything before you take action, but lack of knowledge is an unschooler’s suicide. You must be able to rebut when a superintendent says, “Oh, that’s not my decision,” or when the Board Solicitor says, “You do not qualify for homebound instruction.”

4) Whenever necessary to consult officials, do it in writing. Questions are answered more thoroughly on paper (and can’t be denied later).

When families know what they are talking about, they are infinitely more successful. Each family that goes off in blithe ignorance makes it that much harder for the next.

## **News From All Over**

We don’t know how many of the radio interviews John has been doing lately have resulted from the suggestion of *GWS* readers, but at least some have. For example, Jacque Williamson of West Virginia wrote, “By the way, thank John for doing the WOUB-FM Athens, Ohio, radio interview. I had requested that one! Fred, my husband, and his mom were on the next day, talking about homeschooling in the 1950s, and the next day was current homeschoolers—three hours total.”

Another reader, Janet Sarkett of Tuba City, Arizona, suggested John as a guest to KAFF/KFLG in Flagstaff. At the station’s request, the publicity department of Delacorte Press sent them a review copy of *Teach Your Own*, and the producer became very interested in homeschooling as a subject.



However, they only take *studio* guests—so we suggested they ask the Sarketts to be on the show! Which they did, and the entire Sarkett family wound up in the studio. Janet said that within two days she had received 30 requests for information about homeschooling.

Another kind of free publicity *GWS* readers are taking advantage of: Letters to the Editor. We might later reprint some of the excellent, eloquent letters on homeschooling that some of you have submitted to your local papers. Some of the letters mention *GWS*, including our address, which we do appreciate.

Two Washington state readers, Lorena Ellenberger and Debra Stewart, asked us to remind *GWS* readers in that state to write and call their legislators in support of House Bill 196, which would establish new, less restrictive standards for private schools. For example, private school teachers would no longer be required to have a state certificate. The Washington Education Association, the Association of School Administrators, the State Board of Education, and the School Director's Association all oppose the bill; those groups represent a lot of money and influence, so every possible supporter is needed.

Also, we just heard about *another* bill in Wash. State, this one proposed by Rep. Wayne Ehlers of Pierce County. It would allow parents to remove their children from school after the parents sign an affidavit stating that they are responsible for the children's education.

Debra Stewart (26611 SR 530 NE, Arlington WA 98223), who organized the unschooler's conference north of Seattle that John spoke at last year, is starting the *Northwest Unschooler's Newsletter*, and plans another conference for next August. She writes, "Two groups have contacted me lately, of about 20 families each, who have been homeschooling and don't know of you or your books. Isn't it amazing?" The Stewarts have also formed their own private school, the "Stillaguamish Learning Exchange."

Debbie Jones ("News from Idaho," *GWS* #19) writes, "Things are going great guns up here. Homeschooling is growing like you can't believe. There are 11 families in our small district with their kids out. There are about 10 to 20 more families in the upper Snake River Valley (eastern Idaho) with kids out or just about to take them out. We are incorporating private homeschools and it seems to be working well. The school authorities don't like it but they don't know what to do about it. It is all according to Idaho law."

An article about homeschooling in the *Arlington VA Journal*, which, like many such articles, has interviews with *GWS* families, also says, “The Virginia School Code now requires that 5 to 17-year-old children attend public or private schools or be taught by a tutor. A ‘private school’ is not defined in current law, and the state does not have specific qualifications for tutors. A bill scheduled to be introduced by Del. Thomas Forehand of Norfolk will seek to regulate both. Under Forehand’s bill, a school would be a place outside the home where students are taught by people other than their parents. Parents could still call themselves ‘tutors’ and teach their children at home, but only if they held baccalaureate degrees or had special permission from the school superintendent.”—DR

## **PA School Case**

*Cheryl Veith in Pennsylvania, who is involved with the Bedford County Collective Education Center, sent us clippings about a recent court case involving that parent cooperative school, and a copy of the judge’s opinion. We quote from the ruling below:*

In The Court Of Common Pleas of Bedford County. *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Eleanor Howsare*. Criminal Action No. 37 for the year 1981. Appeal from Summary Conviction.

Defendant, Eleanor Howsare, has appealed to this Court from her conviction of violating the compulsory attendance requirements of the “Public School Code of 1949.”

From the evidence presented to us at a *trial de novo*, we find that:

- 1) Throughout the period during which they are alleged to have been unlawfully absent from the public schools, defendant’s two school-age daughters were regularly in attendance at a private school.
- 2) The private school had been established as one owned and operated by or under the authority of a religious institution.
- 3) The existence of the private school had been certified to the Department of Education.

4) The sponsoring religious institution had no by-laws or similar regulations which prescribed qualifications for membership therein and fixed responsibility for operating the private school in question.

5) Defendant was a member of the group of individuals who had organized and were operating the private school, and she made a good faith effort to satisfy the requirements of the Code.

In such circumstances it is our opinion that defendant is entitled to the benefit of a reasonable doubt, inasmuch as the provisions of the Code with respect to legally acceptable alternatives to public school education are obscure and do not appear to have been construed definitively. Therefore, we have concluded that defendant must be found not guilty.

We find no provision in the Code, nor in any Regulation promulgated by the Dept. of Education, which requires or authorizes supervision of private religious schools. Thus, it appears to us that it is not within the province of local school authorities to determine whether or not such “schools” are in compliance with the law, or whether or not the “religious institutions” sponsoring them are bona fide. In the event a false or fraudulent certificate has been filed with respect to such a school, the responsibility to initiate remedial or punitive action rests with the Department of Education.

*If a private school operated by or under the authority of a purported religious institution has filed the certificate required by the Department’s Regulations proof that a child of compulsory school age is enrolled therein will serve to excuse the child from attendance at the public schools.*

## **District Uses Calvert**

*The Chicago Sun-Times, 9/9/81:*

In the remote Blue Mountain reaches of Grant County (Oregon), students will get their learning from correspondence courses because the taxpayers won’t pay for bus service.

25 pupils living in the Granite and Bates areas will take courses by

mail from the Calvert Correspondence School of Baltimore. “We don’t have all the details worked out yet,” (the superintendent) said. “But the district will pay the students’ tuition.”

Bus service was cut when school district voters failed to pass an operating levy in June. Athletic programs and four teaching positions also were cut.

## Nebraska Group

*From Judy Duerr, 4142 Adams St, Lincoln NE 68504 (GWS #19):*

We have started a group in Nebraska called the Nebraska Homeschool Association (name isn’t final). So far we meet about every two months and call each other often. Last meeting we contacted the new Nebraska people listed in the *GWS* Directory. They came to our gathering and were delightful folks.

The function of our group is to share ideas, answer questions, and try to keep up with current legislation concerning schools. Some religious schools have decided their Constitutional rights are being violated by the state requirement of certified teachers to be called an approved school.

The Education committee of the Legislature held public hearings to give citizens a chance to speak their piece. Religious schools brought in Moral Majority leaders and the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joe Crawford, from North Dakota. North Dakota is having a similar problem and the teachers’ union there is so strong that legislation to exempt religious schools from the teacher certification requirement has failed to pass twice. The bottom line for the ND Superintendent is to put good families in jail. As Crawford said, “This approaches lunacy.” He also remarked, “The only people not against a monopoly are the ones that have one” (the teachers’ union). Crawford also expects he won’t be re-elected to his position next term.

Our governor has come out in favor of a bill that will allow exemption of teacher certification requirement for religious schools.

Our 9th grade boy is back in school as we aren’t an approved high school and he really likes basketball. I’m helping a Learning Center (K–8) get started. Our 13 and 11-year-old attend the center part-time. The founder of the center has 18 years’ experience in alternative education. I find her ways

of organizing space for learning enriching.

## Helpful School

*From Birdsong Sander, Sequoia Community School, 3031 Franklin Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95818:*

I work and live at an alternative school for 12–18-year-olds. We are willing to sign up kids whose parents don't want them in school at all. Last spring we did that for a boy who was too young to go here; now his step father, our English teacher, brings him to school with him every day at the boy's choosing. The other homeschoolers are a girl who is currently travelling with her mom, and is enrolled here so that her last public school would not freak out at her leaving, and a boy whose mom teaches him at home. Our arrangement with them is basically one of legal protection. We are only charging them \$50 for the school year, and are willing to do that with others. I think we could even cover students younger than 12–18.

## Success Stories

*From Elaine Andreski, 30327 Pembroke, Warren, MI 48092:*

I have been teaching my children at home for going on five years now. The children have one and two years respectively to go before they finish high school. They will receive their diploma from the Christian Liberty Academy. I am an avowed advocate of homeschooling especially because I have a basis of comparison. Two of my older sons have graduated from the government public schools and were ill equipped to handle the outside world. I thought to myself afterwards, could I do any less? Well, we've been doing just fine for the last four years; this year, our fifth, is going as well.

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*From Gail Knight (AK):*

Just two weeks ago, my husband and I took our 6-year-old son out of the first grade in the elementary school two blocks down the street. The ironic part of it is that my father, who encouraged us to take the step and called Juneau to get all the information we needed, has been in education for over 25 years (teacher, counselor, principal, superintendent). The fact that a fine,

innovative, intelligent and exceptional educator and administrator has grave doubts and fears concerning the quality of public education was of serious concern to us. The daily work our son brought home, his change in attitude and personality, the crowded classroom he studied in, and the runaround we received from both teacher and principal added to our fears.

*From a later note:*

The last 3½ months have continued in a positive way and we are amazed at the difference in our whole family life! Now I can't imagine the boys going to school. We feel we have a special and wonderful quality in our relationships.

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*An Oregon reader writes:*

We are starting our third year of homeschooling. Our son Rishi is starting the third grade and will turn seven next month. We had a very good response from the school authorities and from the school board when we requested permission to continue with our homeschool. We were lucky in that Oregon law starts mandatory attendance at the age of seven, and since we had home taught without legal interference, our son was well above his grade level. The school felt that we could offer more at home than the school could. Permission was granted without any hassle.

I have given Rishi some old blank checks, and we have started playing store. He comes into my store, buys certain objects of his choice, and writes me a check. This involves both writing and math.

I am considering not using the Advisory Teaching Service which Calvert offers. We used it for first and second grades and Rishi loved the letters and responses from his Maryland teacher. The only problem is that the Compositions are mandatory. Rishi loves doing tests. He insists on keeping his Advisory Teacher this year.

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*Claudia Jones (OR) writes:*

We are among eight families in a very small, conservative farm community in northeastern Oregon who have taken our children out of public school and enrolled them in a home study program. We are grateful to live in Oregon where the state laws are fairly liberal.

After three months of home teaching I can honestly say that I have no regrets. We are so glad to have our eight-year-old out of the negative, competitive atmosphere that damaged his self-confidence so badly his first year of school. He has not only progressed scholastically, but emotionally as well.

Our decision was greatly influenced by our faith and our own belief that the “training up” of our children is very much our responsibility. It was a difficult decision to make—we are a very middle-class family (my husband and I were both raised in Oregon and attended public schools), and it was a fearful thing to consider going against the acceptable standard in our community. We’re so glad we had the courage to take that first step.

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*Anna Sankovich (MO) wrote:*

During the summer, our family incorporated Chanticleer Learning Center, a homeschool for Stephen, 11, and Noah, 2. The process of incorporating took slightly longer than one month from the first consultation with the lawyer to receipt of the Certificate of Incorporation. Total cost was \$73, \$10 of which went to the state of Missouri. We will compose our own by-laws and file for tax exempt status ourselves—all part of the educational process.

When I inquired at the office of the State Department of Education concerning guidelines or helpful information, I was told, “If you’re a private school, you’re on your own.” I visited the superintendent of our local school and explained our private homeschool. I was treated in a professional manner and given copies of Stephen’s school records.

Most friends and acquaintances are understanding and supportive. My only negative encounter was with a kindergarten teacher who was shocked that children could so easily be kept at home with no guarantee that they would be taught an approved curriculum.

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*From Kate Smith (IN):*

We are in our third week of homeschooling, and though it surely is too early to declare ourselves free of legal hassles, there are two other families in Shelbyville who have been homeschooling since the start of the school-year and, after some initial threatening noises, the school officials seem to have

accepted the situation. Indiana law can be interpreted to permit homeschooling (indeed, a committee has formulated guidelines for attendance officers (see *GWS* #24) that strongly imply that homeschoolers should be treated as any non-public school) and though we know the local school people are not pleased with our efforts, they seem, so far, to be tolerating it so as to avoid any nasty public scrutiny.

It feels good to be doing this. We really feel as if we've reclaimed our lives and our efforts are once again all of one piece.

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*From Michael Carpenter, Rt 2 Box 104, Littlefork MN 55653:*

At this time we are teaching our children at home. We have a second-grade boy and a first-grade girl. There are also two younger ones coming to school-age soon. So far the principal of the elementary school here has been exceptionally helpful. We use the same materials as the school district and keep in close contact with the respective teachers of these grades and with the principal. We have a separate schoolroom used only for that purpose and we have a large number of books in our home library for the children's use. I am a certified teacher in secondary education. Part of my present deal with the school board is to get six credits per year toward my elementary degree. This I am doing, but may not be financially able to continue to do so. I expect trouble if I do not continue with these college credits.

## **A Mother Learns**

*Pam Robinson (UT) writes:*

Well, it is time for me to put aside my fears of spelling and grammatical errors and share my pleasures, fears, and frustrations relative to our homeschool situation. This is our fifth year of homeschooling. We have four sons: Jared, almost 13; Camden, 11; Kale, 8; and Russell, 2.

I must share the experience that brought home to me exactly what my place was (or rather, wasn't) in our homeschool situation. We had ordered a large floor map of the world that included a teacher's guide. As a dutiful instructor, I carefully read the manual and put away the teaching methods in my head. Sometime later, Kale (6 at the time) got the puzzle out and was putting South America together on the floor. Jared, who was very much into



World War II, came over, picked up Germany and Japan, and said, “Man, Cam, look at this! These two little countries fought almost the whole rest of those countries and nearly won.” Then Cam asked Kale if he could put together Asia and the communist countries. And Jared started re-enacting WWII battles. At this point, Mommy remembered the manual and jumped in with distance comparisons, etc. Jared walked off to his bedroom. A few minutes later, Cam headed for the kitchen, and shortly after, Kale went outside to play, and there sat mommy putting together the floor puzzle all by herself!

JH : Such a sad story! Poor well-meaning Mommy! The happy ending is that she learned something from this, or she wouldn’t have written to tell us about it. And it’s fair to guess that sometime later they all got back to the puzzle.

This story illustrates a very important point. Thousands of parents teaching their own children have learned from experience just as Pam did, that interfering very much in the learning of children often stops it altogether. Parents learn this lesson easily. Why is it so hard to learn for people who teach in schools? The answer is simple. The reason that Pam could see right away that her meddling had, for the time being at least, spoiled the map game for everyone, was that her children *were free to leave the room*. Suppose they hadn’t been, suppose it had been a regular classroom, and the children had been compelled, not only to stay there, but to go on doing the assigned work with the map. What would have happened is that they would have begun to do as little as they could get away with. Instead, they might have daydreamed, or bluffed, or played the old classroom game of “I don’t get it,” or bugged the teacher by putting the map together wrongly. But to the teacher all these fake activities would have *looked* as if the children were still working on the map, and so the vital lesson would have been lost.

At the end of *Teach Your Own*, I made this same point; because children *have* to be in school and *have* to do what they’re told, teaches, from first grade right through graduate school, almost never get any quick and reliable feedback about their teaching. By contrast, people teaching their own children, even if they make many mistakes at first, are soon very likely to become very effective teachers, because, like Pam above, they get from their children the kind of unmistakable feedback that tells them when their teaching is helpful and when it is not.

It's like running a restaurant. If you're running a restaurant, and put fish on the menu, you learn very quickly whether your customers like fish or not—if they don't, they don't order it. If you're running an Army mess (or school lunch) where everyone has to take the fish whether they like it or not, you don't find out—unless (like good mess cooks) you pay attention to the garbage and happen to notice that there's a lot of fish in there. But it's not so easy, in fact it's next to impossible, for classroom teachers to find out what parts of their teaching are being thrown into the mental garbage pails of their students. And so the circle winds on: because of coercion, they get no feedback; because of no feedback, they do not improve, but keep on making the same mistakes.

## **Active Family**

*More from Pam Robinson (UT):*

Cam is not much of a reader. After three years. I backed off and tried desperately to control my anxiety about his reading level. I do invent reading games from time to time, and keep a revolving supply of reading material on hand. This last year I have managed to leave him alone in regards to reading. This fall, my husband suggested putting the kids back in school (he worries that my very athletic Cam will not be able to reach his potential or gain full enjoyment of his athletic ability outside the public schools.) I panicked at the suggestion. How do I put an 11-year-old reading at a second grade level back into public school? The pro-education people would have a field day. No one would care that he had spent hours at the riding stable, had been involved in training race horses, was invited at nine years of age to watch the doctors perform surgery on the horses because of his interest and maturity. I grabbed the primers and sat him down to read to me. To my amazement, he was reading a grade level ahead of the previous year's work regardless of the fact I had not seen him pick up a "reading" book all year.

I would like to share the accomplishments of my 12-year-old. Jared has overhauled a lawn mower motor, truck rear-end, and transmission. He works summers for a neighbor driving a tractor that pulls a hay chopper and large hay wagon. He is paid very well because he is one of the most responsible, dependable employees in the area. This year at 12 he had the job of training and breaking in all the new help, 17- and 18-year-old young men. He is not

required by us to work, yet he often chooses to work long hours, Sundays, and holidays.

He is completely in charge of his own education. He went through several interest periods. He was avid on American biographies at age 7; later studied astronomy and went through ancient history, especially the Roman emperors; lately he's been interested in architecture. He does not do much math. He can add, subtract, multiply, and divide. He works with fractions and percentages but is probably not up to grade level, and is definitely slower than those who have memorized math tables. He reads avidly, however; spends very little time writing, and probably falls down in spelling, grammar, etc.

Cam likes Chisanbop and often asks for math problems (but is probably "behind" in math, too). He very much enjoys working with animals and trails behind the vet anytime anything is sick on our farm. He often is responsible for doctoring the cows on his own. He has worked the last three summers, moving sprinklers for the neighboring farms and has made enough to purchase his own horse. He has raised hamsters, mice, dogs, cats, rabbits, chickens, fish, and turtles. He has brought home wounded owls, killdeer, sparrows, crows, and swallows. He has also brought home tarantulas, scorpions, mice, ground squirrels, lizards—the list is endless. He likes to cook and build things. He built his own chicken coop and this year wants to start over and upgrade it. He also built a toy fort with a catwalk that actually supported all the kids' weight.

Sometimes I get very concerned about Cam's lack of academic interest. I know my concern is part of the problem. Any encouragement or advice will be appreciated.

Kale has never been in school. His main interest seems to be in the creative arts. I am a classical artist and he likes to paint when I paint. He drew miniature replicas of every gun picture he could find, and also large machinery. Now he is into finger puppet characters—52 to date. He reads very simple primer type books, likes me to give him phonetic spelling tests, and enjoys simple word games. He adds and subtracts, understands what multiplication and fractions are. He prints many of his letters backwards. (This is hard for Mommy to cope with—a holdover from school days—"A second grader ought to be able to.")

I'd just as soon opt for out of school social adjustment. My children get along much better with other children now than they did the few years they

were in public school, and they work around teenagers and adults comfortably.

My three older children are all capable of handling money, shopping, making bank deposits and withdrawals, cooking meals, driving and maintaining cars, trucks, tractors and other farm machinery. But they also all have problems to work out and things to learn like any other human being.

Toward the middle of summer I was at the hairdresser's, and a number of mothers were discussing the woes of summer vacation, their thankfulness for day-camp, and desire to get the kids back in school. One woman commented that she was sick of hearing, "Mommy, what is there to do?" I realized how very long it had been since I had heard those words!

When Jared was 9, he had a playmate over. They decided to play cowboy. With no adult supervision whatsoever, they got out the Britannica Junior, looked up "telegraph" and proceeded to build a telegraph. They used an old piece of wood from a discarded door, some wiring they found in the shop, and metal strips torn from a broken bucket. Believe it or not, it worked when they got it finished. I walk into our little schoolroom and see that, and it excites me more than any father sanded science fair project I have ever seen.

I have also enjoyed the spook alleys they have made that are full of the cutest, happiest monsters you could imagine. They always devise clever triggers for the pop-up skeletons and swooping bats.

Our rolls of newsprint have made stores full of paper merchandise and money, forts, African huts, Western towns, and Egyptian tombs. They almost always refer to the encyclopedia or library books for authenticity.

A friend told me her husband said, "Whatever the Robinson kids learn at home, it's not taught in public school. When they say something, you can tell they've thought about it and understand what they're talking about!" What better endorsement of home education could one receive?

## **14-Year-Old's Decision**

*Verna Helmke-Scharf (NY) wrote to John:*

Jud, our 14-year-old son, who was here for homeschool last year and who had decidedly ambivalent feelings about being home and being 13–14, has decided to return to the public school. I wish that I could say that I received the final decision of his gracefully and serenely. I did not, but I have come to.

We know each other better and I really think that we love each other more, so who cares what the arena or the issues are? I wish him well, will try to be there for him, and will see just what does happen in that jungle environment (my opinion, not necessarily his). If he is genuinely happy about his experience then I think I'm going to rejoice for him no matter what our differences. But I still have my thoughts, too. So around it goes.

You suggested in your last letter that a teenage person needs to have time with people who did not know him or her when they were younger. I'm right with you on that one. Jud spent many hours working at a horse farm with a wonderful family who are all very good at what they do. They came to be very fond of him and he excelled. We made a point of not being involved there and trusting him to do what he wanted to do. And we got to see glimpses of him outside of our environment. What a pleasure to see a fine mature person who has a lot of ability and a great sense of humor just blossom on his own terms.

Last year Jud read horse books and westerns exclusively after the first few months of homeschool. We let him do it and we're glad we did. I know that he would not have learned any more than he did if we had made him "hit the books." What he did gain last year was a large measure of self-esteem and I really don't think that he is going to compromise that as he goes back to public school to complete what he calls unfinished business.

We will go in next week to the high school to request that he not be tested. We hope that they will give him a six week trial period. I think that he will do better because his anxiety about school work has lessened, and the decision to return to school is his.

Our three other children (11, 9, and 2) are all dedicated homeschoolers and are immediate and adamant about having homeschool again this year. And so am I.

I have to admit that their doing so well makes me less defensive when people query me. But they are doing so well simply because the shackles of public school's homogenized thinking are dropping off and they are becoming free to be what children are meant to be.

We had a homeschool gathering here Sunday—three couples in the Ithaca area interested in homeschooling their children. We have been approached by about twenty families within a radius of 30 miles this year. The interest is growing but few people seem to have the courage to actually do it. We are

getting to know more who are doing it and our children are now writing to four homeschooling kids.

By the way, our three youngest didn't spend a minute wishing that they could be with their school friends last year—they were simply too busy. They saw other children through 4H and Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts. Socialization was no problem; they became especially attractive in those groups because they felt so good about themselves.

## **Living With Loneliness**

*A parent writes:*

So many people write about their children being lonely at home, a situation sometimes ending with the children going back to public school. This was a problem we confronted with E, our oldest daughter. Even when she was just 3 or 4, it created difficulties in finding a neighborhood where we could both be happy (I was a single parent at the time and she my only child). She was 7 when I got married and we moved here, all quite suddenly. Up till then she had always lived in a city, seen lots of her grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles, and attended either day care, free school, private school, or public school. The change was drastic for her in all ways. We have since then almost always lived in a secluded spot, and our life is very quiet. It happens that here we know very few people who have children close to her age, and in our new family the next child is 5½ years younger.

She let us know she did not like not having any friends. The possibility of taking her into town for extracurricular activities usually presented large problems in transportation and timing. For one year we lived practically next door to the local two-room school. E was sometimes included in special school events and she enjoyed going to birthday parties and occasionally being able to visit some of the children at their homes. One girl lived very close but there was not the basis for a good friendship between her and E, and eventually E preferred being alone to visiting with this girl.

Another year E was able to take sports lessons with the public schools of a nearby town. She came to not like going, complaining that the other kids made fun of her because she didn't go to school, had a funny haircut, etc. Now I see that from time to time she runs into one of these kids when we are in town, and she is happy to have the chance to say hello or to have a little

chat.

E is now 12½. During these past five years I have often felt bad that she had to live without friends, especially that she had no special pal. Relatives on all sides made their disapproval plain. Now I feel the tide turning, within both me and E. I think loneliness for a child is something that can be endured and child may even grow to be a better person for having gone through it. I don't think any of the children I have read about in *GWS* have desire social contacts more desperately than E. Yet I do not believe those contacts are necessary.

It's that old "socialization" bugaboo. I think the peer group has been overplayed in our time. The real world is full of people of all ages and varieties. As adults we do not relate only or even primarily to people of our particular age. "Social contacts" are indeed necessary—let me clarify myself—it is "peer group" contacts that are dispensable. I would not arbitrarily deprive a child of peer-group contacts and neither would I strive to provide them artificially. And it is a very rare child who does not have enough social contacts just as part of her own life. E has come to consider some of our adult friends her own friends, and quite correctly so. She has become closer friends with her next younger brother as he has gotten older. She can relate well to people regardless of their age and I am satisfied.

We can't give our children everything they want, and if we could and did, they wouldn't grow up into very nice adults. The people who are raising their children in "isolation" are giving them countless benefits and opportunities of a different sort, and reduced social contacts must be accepted as one of the trade-offs.

## **On a Vermont Farm**

*Pat Mattison (VT) writes:*

Early last spring I gently informed the school that Brian (8) would not be returning in the fall and Heather Joy (6) would also be learning at home. It has been a wonderful weight from my shoulders and a great joy. I was just sending them to school because that's what is expected, certainly not for the education.

With the children home, they can be more a part of life. They don't have just the token chores but instead have real work that is necessary for us to

have the life we choose. Most of the work involves feeding and watering our animals but also includes checking each of the animals. This is especially important at lambing time and to make certain that the sheep and calves are not and have not been molested by dogs or coyotes (both serious problems). Both children know the importance of their chores—Brian has already chased dogs worrying the sheep once this season—and that they are not just created jobs to give them something to do.

We feel their artwork is very important. Much of the art is done for the pure pleasure it gives us and a lot is done for something else. Like yesterday, they spent a good part of the day preparing for their father's birthday, making cards and pictures and decorating the bag his presents were in. They are also working on designs for a Christmas card I will have printed for them to use. We each have our own nature sketch books. The nature sketch books are a real delight: as we work on our drawings, we also make pertinent notes and date each page—we each decide for ourselves what is important and if someone doesn't want any notes with a particular sketch, that's okay.

We do use some of the books provided by the school and it can be fun. In one of Heather Joy's reading books there was a play, and the children spent most of the afternoon fixing a stage, making puppets, and rehearsing. When Dad arrived home that night, we were entertained by their rendition of "Billy Goat Gruff" complete with a violin prelude. This has started an interest in puppets and a grand search of the local libraries for information on making puppets.

The math workbooks leave much to be desired as far as imparting any math knowledge but Heather Joy really enjoys them since they make her feel so "smart." They learned more useful math with me this season working a market garden and the Farmer's Market.

Our days are full; in fact we rarely have enough time to do everything we want. But, before we rarely had time to do anything we wanted.

*From a later letter:*

Every day I feel more sure that our decision to have our children at home instead of handing the responsibility over to the public schools is the right one. Instead of the printed Christmas cards I mentioned in my earlier letter, the children decided on individually worked pictures—because they wanted different pictures for different people. Since they are at home, they could



devote all the time they wanted to this project. And the whole thing gave me real joy, to watch them work, to see their pictures, and to witness their developing a quality that I very much admire, a generous sharing of themselves without expecting anything in return.

I don't question them at all on their own personal reading, but many times they will come to me or their father to share something that they have read and we always enjoy that. Heather Joy wants to read at least as well as Brian; she doesn't allow herself the excuse that Brian is two years older and that there are some things that she does better than Brian and some things that he will do better than she. Heather Joy's way of learning the words varies. Sometimes she just dives right in and reads to me and when she comes to a word she doesn't know she simply asks me. Other times she will ask me to read the page or poem and then she will give it a go. She also dictates stories to me to write in a notebook she keeps; she then reads and rereads them and illustrates each story.

I must tell you the reaction got from my parents when I told them about the children learning at home. My parents are very conservative and I rather expected them to react with mild tolerance. But when I visited them before the holidays, my mother said with unusual enthusiasm that she thought it was wonderful that the children were home learning. And she couldn't believe that she had never thought of it—I was one of six children and although none of them liked school very much, I am sure my dislike for the institution surpassed the others (a fact I am also sure influenced my decision for my children). My mother has since talked about our homeschooling with others including a friend of hers, who was an educator in the school I attended as a child, and her reaction was a little surprising. She said that if my parents had made the same decision years ago she would have tried to dissuade them from such a rash choice, but now after so many years of being in the system she said that she can see where it can be a very good choice.

In the past week I have met three people interested in homeschooling. One morning we were in the library and my son had gone down to the children's section with a list of topics for which he was looking for books. The librarian asked him if they were for his mother or for school (I guess she couldn't believe he would want art books for his own pleasure). Brian said something about homeschool and the librarian quickly said she had someone who she would like to introduce to him. Later I met this mother of a seven-year-old

who was keeping him home. The other meeting occurred at a meeting of an organization I belong to; we started talking about sheep during the potluck supper. One woman present asked something about my children and I mentioned homeschooling. It was well over an hour before the conversation could be turned back to sheep and textiles.

I am careful in conversations to include that I know homeschooling is not for everyone and aren't we lucky to have the choices we do. I am not an evangelist for a cause, except maybe the right to make choices.

## 2 Homeschooled Kids

*From Kelly Clark (MI), see "At Home in Michigan," GWS #24:*

I watched your interview on the *Phil Donahue* show on Nov. 11, 1981. I'm thirteen years old and have been a homeschooler for almost a year.

At first I wasn't so keen on homeschooling, but now that I know I'm not the only one, I like it better. I get to work at my own pace, which is very nice, because I don't have to wait up for other kids. My classes consist of math, English, geography, spelling, reading, science, home economics, agriculture, physical education, art, history, equestrian training, and animal care. I also get to help my sisters with their school work if they have a problem.

I think I learn more in four hours of nonstop work than in six hours of the public school's so called school work. After I'm done, then I have the rest of the day to do whatever I want to, unless there are other things that have to be done.

I also work on weekends for the family business. We socialize with other families and use the community, like the library, for things we need. I belong to the Rainbows, which is connected to the Order of the Masons. So you see I am not deprived of anything and have lots of friends and still have a good education.

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*Jennifer Clark (age 11) added:*

If I were going to Fowlerville Schools again I would be way ahead of my class. If I already had my work done in school, I would have to wait for all others to catch up before going on. I also like homeschooling because I can be with my family more and see them more instead of spending my time

going to school and learning nothing and then riding the bus for three hours.

## **Video Volunteer**

*From Eileen Trombly (CT):*

Lori had taken a video course at Connecticut College at the age of 11. Her intense interest in this area caused her to volunteer her services in the filming of several political campaigns in New London, and also for the annual March of Dimes Telerama. She has continued this volunteer work for the last seven years and is now number-one camera person and assistant director for the Telerama. The director from New York phones to be assured of her participation each year. As a result, Lori received a job offer at the Eugene O'Neill Theater here in Waterford, via the theater director in New York.

## **Toy-Maker**

*Darlene Lester (IN) wrote:*

*Sept. 5.* My father plans to come and spend a few months. He and Ely (8) have big plans. Ely wants to earn \$100 to buy a minibike. So “Grandpa Bob” promised to help him make wooden toys (he is a carpenter) and sell them at Christmas. This sounded great to Ely and he’s already drawing up plans and lining up customers.

Last year, he and Grandpa Bob made wooden toys, too, only those toys were for Ely. They would begin working in the workshop at 9 AM, and at 6 PM I’d call them in for dinner. Ely would reply, “Already?” It was great! I’m really pleased about this opportunity he’ll be having to be close to his grandfather *and* learn a skill “apprenticeship-style.” You can be sure that any toy that comes out of Ely’s workshop will be of good quality, if Grandpa Bob has anything to say about it—which he will! He is a perfectionist and a good craftsman. This suits Ely, as he really appreciates the fine details of things and is glad to work with someone else who does too.

We have no objections to Ely getting a minibike provided he buys it with money he earns, pays all its expenses and maintains it himself (his dad will help him learn about fixing motors). We can use another good mechanic around here (who can’t?) and the sooner he learns, the better!

*Dec. 7.* Yes, Ely did finish his wooden toy making project with his

Grandpa. They produced eight different toys. He took orders for about \$240 worth, just among friends and acquaintances. He was elated. However, he had to split the money three ways—1/3 for materials, 1/3 for Grandpa Bob, and 1/3 for him. So, he had to keep reminding himself that it wasn't all his! Still, with what he'd saved and the money he made with toys, he hit his \$100 goal. Soon he will be out shopping for his minibike.

## Young Magician

*From Joel Fields (Ont.):*

I have been interested in magic for as long as I can remember. In fact, my earliest memory is of a magician at my sister's birthday party pulling a rabbit out of a hat. When I was seven, I received a magic kit from my grandparents for Chanukah. I practiced the tricks over and over, never tiring, showing them to anyone who was willing to watch me.

Perhaps this is why a course in magic offered in the evening Adult Education program at our local high school caught my mother's attention. That was back in 1974 when I was ten-years-old. After asking if I would be interested (and then at my insistence), my mother called the coordinator of the program and inquired if there were any age restrictions. There were, but after consulting with the magic teacher, the co-ordinator reluctantly agreed to take me and a friend into the course on a "trial basis."

I will never forget the first evening of that class. My friend and I stood nervously among a group of 20- to 50-year-old adults. I felt so small next to all of those big grownups. When class began, my fears faded away. The teacher, a professional magician, treated me not as a ten-year-old child outsider, but as one other member of a class whose purpose was to learn magic. He seemed to understand that, despite my age, I had the same drive and interest in the art as every other student.

Of course, he did make some rather obvious concessions. I remember his suggesting that my friend and I work with special smaller cards so that we might more easily develop our hand muscles and co-ordination for magic tricks. He even accommodated his suggested patter to certain tricks for us kids—he had all kinds of off-color stories for "blue magic" routines which he changed so that we could present them to our friends without embarrassment.

It was with him that I learned that wonderful skill of passing the deck of

cards from one hand to the other through the air. What a mess that evening was! Cards all over the floor, people frustrated and swearing. I thought I would never be able to master it. I went home and worked tirelessly for days until I had the move perfected. By comparison, I was having difficult problems concentrating on my math in school or at home, but I never seemed to get bored at going through all of my very complex card moves in front of a mirror.

I performed my first magic show six months after I had begun my studies. I was hired for two dollars and fifty cents to appear at an end-of-summer-school party. I worked for weeks preparing the show. I read several books about performing magic for children. I visited magic stores and talked with magicians about what tricks to do and how I might best present them. I wrote my own routines, rehearsed in the living room for hours.

As soon as I stepped before that audience, something inside of me changed. I felt so alive, so full of energy, so filled with power and creativity, and so ecstatic that I could make other people laugh, amaze them and entertain them. I knew that I would never be the same. I left that show with a big tip, and a real sense of pride in myself and what I could do.

Magic can lead a person in a number of different directions. For me it has opened up doors to the theater. For a friend of mine, it stimulated an interest in auto mechanics. Is there a lesson here? Perhaps it is the elementary truth that people learn best when they are free to follow their gut interests and aspirations.

## **Likes to Work**

*From Judi Brown in Indiana:*

My husband and I have a small gift shop. We sell candles that we make, plus books, jewelry, pottery, and other gift items, and a small section of health foods.

Dustin, our 5-year-old, helps Mike make candles. He can wick the molds, put dye in the wax, add oil and scent, then pour the wax in the mold. So far he has given away most of them. But he'll soon be selling them in the store, I imagine.

He is happiest when he is working with us—either cutting vegetables for lunch, chopping wood for the stoves, making candles, or arranging displays

of merchandise in the shop.

I was in the laundromat the other day and overheard a conversation he was having with a man in his late teens. The man asked Dustin if he liked doing laundry. Dustin replied yes. The man said, “Just wait a few years, then you’ll not like it, just like me.” Dustin asked why he didn’t like it. The reply, “It’s too much work!” To which Dustin said, “But I like to work!”

He seems to balance things himself—playing outdoors and doing a lot of drawing.

## **Kids in the News**

*The Grand Rapids Press, 11/13/81:*

Alert 6-Year-Old Uses Tractor To Save Dad—Six-year-old Clinton Yarrington, Jr. saved his father’s life when a car slipped from its blocks pinning the elder Yarrington beneath it. He knew enough about the nearby antique tractor to start the machine, put it in gear, and use the loader to lift the car.

Yarrington’s wife, Deborah, said her husband was working under the car at around 5 PM when the vehicle slipped off the blocks and she heard him yell for her to get the tractor. “I just came running. He hollered for help. I didn’t know what to do,” said Deborah.

Yarrington said he just assumed his wife would be able to start the tractor, but he said “she was so hysterical that she couldn’t do it.”

Deborah said she ran to get help from Ken Near and Richard Palmer, two farmers down the road. Neither man knew how to start the tractor.

In a final effort she ran to get her 6-year-old who was watching television in the house. “It dawned on me then that he might know how to start it because he was always with his dad.”

Deborah said her son got on the tractor and instructed Near and Palmer in what to do to start it. “And they didn’t know how to pick up the front loader and he did that for them. It was a lever that you have to pull up. And then he showed them what gear to put it in,” Deborah said.

“My husband said if my son wasn’t there he probably wouldn’t be here today and that’s basically how I feel. There were four of us standing there with our teeth hanging out,” she said.

Yarrington said he is not surprised that neither Near or Palmer knew how to start the tractor. “Farmers today are used to new equipment and this is an antique.”

By the time the ambulance and paramedics had arrived on the scene, her husband had been freed. Yarrington was taken to Grand Rapids Osteopathic Hospital, where he was treated for bruises and released.

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The Philadelphia Inquirer, 9/29/79:

When David DiGiacomo was 12-years-old and in the seventh grade, his favorite magazine was *Popular Electronics*, and his hobby was building electronic clocks. He didn’t build them from a kit with instructions—he used sophisticated components that he bought individually. “I experimented until they worked,” he recalls.

Now at 17, a year younger than the average freshman, DiGiacomo is a sophomore at Drexel University. He is still experimenting. He designed and constructed a machine that hears and understands when you speak to it. It has a vocabulary of 16 words.

In theory, DiGiacomo says, the device could be attached to a computer. “You’d just say, ‘Do this, or do that,’” he said, and the computer would respond—eliminating the need for a typewriter keyboard to convey commands.

An associate professor of electrical engineering arranged for him to get “limited funding” and laboratory at Drexel. Among his projects will be work on solar energy, a system for monitoring brain waves to be used in operations at Temple University Hospital, and an image-processing system for use in transcribing data from breast X-rays to detect cancer.

His parents—especially his father, a chemical engineer—supported him in his early experiments in electronics, he said, once they

understood that his interest was genuine. “At least,” he said, “they didn’t seem to get upset when I spent money on parts without visible results.”

*From the Aquarian Research Foundation Newsletter, 5620 Morton, Philadelphia PA 19144:*

On June 26, Jason Poole, a ten-year-old boy from Philadelphia gave a speech in front of the White House, denouncing the arms race. The Philadelphia Bulletin gave half of its front page to the story the next day. Jason, who addressed only about 150 people at the rally, managed to attract more media attention in Philadelphia than the thousands of protesters at other recent demonstrations. The rally was organized by the Community for Creative Non-Violence in D.C. (202-667-6407).

What kind of kid speaks at a peace rally? Jason, his parents, and eight-year old brother Jonathan, live in an attractive, middle-class home on a quiet Philadelphia street. Jason attends a racially mixed public school. His Quaker parents display loving concern and high moral values. A sign on the refrigerator says, “If you love something, set it free. If it comes back to you, it’s yours. If it doesn’t, it never was.”

Jason’s father is a business manager. His mother, a consultant in conflict resolution, formerly worked at the Friends Peace Committee, dealing with foreign officials and leaders of the peace movement in the U.S.

Jason is a friendly, talkative kid who will give you an opinion on any topic you bring up. If you so desire, he brings down his fine drawings and reports and takes you outside to show you the clubhouse he helped build from tree branches. In the following interview are some glimpses into the psyche of this unusual child-man.

Q. Why did you do it?

A. Because I felt that was what I should do. Because I feel serious about all this. Because if we want to keep living, we should stand up for what is right, because if we don’t, he (the President) is gonna keep



building more bombs, and we're gonna blow ourselves up.

Q. If you could change the world in any way you want, what changes would you make?

A. I'd make a peace-loving place without any war, and I'd make some sort of good use for bombs, like maybe planet mining or something, and I'd make sure people got to be vegetarians because I love animals. And I'd make some sort of law against war if I could do that. I'd probably knock down a couple of buildings and put woods or playgrounds for the kids because they don't have that many good places to play anymore because there are so many buildings. And I'd make more places for wildlife, and knock down a couple of factories that are making nuclear weapons. That's about it, really.

Q. Jason, did you write your speech yourself?

A. No, my mom helped me. She wrote down what we were talking about in talks that we had before we did this, and I gave her some thoughts and she gave me some thoughts.

Q. Which were your thoughts?

A. Jason's Mother: I think all of them were his thoughts. The actual process of writing them down, I did, and then checking with him to see if that was how he felt.

## **Children's Drawings**

*From the L.A. Times, 7/12/81:*

The artistic handiwork of 4- and 5-year-old students of Mona Brookes was on display at the Los Angeles Children's Museum almost continuously for about two years, but finally museum personnel decided that it was becoming a burden.

People just refused to believe that the drawings actually had been done by children that young, and museum employees grew tired of constantly being questioned about them.

Mona Brookes says, “I’ve gotten accustomed to people doubting that the work is original. There just seems to be a natural prejudice against children and a suspicion that if a drawing is too representational, that some adult must have had a hand in it.”

Parents and teachers who have watched the children draw have signed statements, at Brooke’s request, that they are certain that no adult helped the child draw the pictures.

Basically, what Brookes does is to teach children that there are only five shapes in the universe—the dot, the circle, the straight line, the curved line, and the angle. She helps them recognize those shapes in the objects around them, and has them practice forming the five shapes on paper. Gradually, she shows them how to combine the shapes to draw pictures.

She say, “At Tocaloma (nursery school and kindergarten), every single child winds up with the ability to draw representationally.”

In a slide presentation, Brookes shows how a 4-year-old girl named Tara drew her own self-portrait before being exposed to the system. The girl drew a circle for her face, with dots and lines depicting the eyes and mouth, and two stick arms protruding from the face. After one session of talking with Brookes about the basic shapes, and hearing Brookes tell her things like, “You see how necks have two sides and each hand has five fingers with oval nails at each end, and there is a little curved line over your eyes called an eyebrow,” Tara sketched an intricately detailed drawing of herself, with no help from the teacher.

“It’s just a matter of pointing these things out,” Brookes says. “The trouble is that most people underestimate what children can do.”

I think a lot of children get turned off to drawing, by adult preconceived notions that you have to be born with talent and that a picture has to turn out looking a certain way,” she says. “I got into classes of 8- and 9-year-olds and they are already saying things like, ‘Oh, I wasn’t born with artistic talent. You’ll have to ask Lisa. She’s the artist.’”

Brookes says that “crayons and watercolors are two of the most difficult media for any artist to use “and at an age when children are struggling to control their motions, we hand them the worst possible tools.”

She claims that youngsters can achieve more lifelike drawings with marking pens because they are easier to control and can be used to outline with greater definition. The finished product resembles a watercolor and is more attractive than a crayon drawing.

## **J.P. Bakes**

*From Kathy Mingl (IL):*

The other day, J.P. informed me that he was going to make a “pie cake” for everybody (he’d gotten an electric mixer from a garage sale). Visions of mess and disaster! I had a craven impulse to talk him out of it, but he had such a full head of steam going, I could see it would be much more trouble to stop him than to go along with him, and besides, my father was so skeptical of the whole idea that naturally I had to support J.P. And anyway, I don’t like to stop him when he’s being good. If you push a kid into doing something that you brightly think up for him, it’s push, push, push all the way (teachers must be exhausted all the time), with him zapping off in all directions, till you’re ready to strangle him. If you agree reluctantly to help him with some project he comes up with you have every right to insist that he does it properly, or you won’t play. (“Properly,” in cooking, means washing your hands and the beaters first, and keeping your fingers out of the works.) Just keep grumbling about how you’d rather be doing something else, and threaten to quit anytime he wants to throw ketchup in the cake-mix or leave the mess for you to clean up, or whatever, and you can actually keep the situation under control.

The thing that tickled me about J.P.’s “pie-cake” (milk, vanilla instant pudding, and carob powder, in a piecrust of crushed whole-grain cornflakes, wheatgerm, salt, honey, and oil, toasted a few minutes in the oven, and sprinkled on top with coconut) was how really impressed his grandpa was when he tasted the results. When J.P. first marched in and took over the kitchen, my dad was concerned that he’d hurt himself, or find he’d

oversimplified the problems, etc. I just handed J.P. things and he threw them in, and it came out delicious! Grandpa had two pieces and said not to forget the recipe!

What I see as the point of all that is that my dad, an able, educated adult, perfectly capable of reading recipes and throwing things into bowls, could not have made a “piecake” because he considers cooking complicated and “not for him.” He wouldn’t have tried. J.P. is only 3-years-old and has very little notion of technical details (which is what most people consider is the problem), but he could envision what he wanted and decide to do it himself. All I provided was the means bowls, spoons, ingredients, and my own experience. J.P. decided to create something, and he used me to accomplish it, so he actually did it himself. I’m learning to recognize that creative decision, and I try not to interrupt it. After all, you can always find out how to do things from books, other people’s experience, etc., but imagination is harder to come up with when you want it.

J.P. is feeling smug just now—he really outsmarted his mother this time. He made some cookies that “don’t got any sugar in them,” so he can eat them instead of breakfast! I handed him all sorts of things to throw in them—dry milk powder, honey, whole-wheat and soy flour, raisins, wheat germ, etc., along with a running lecture on nutrition, but it was all his own idea, and they’re his cookies.

## **Mom & Son Travel**

*From Valerie Vaughan (MA), who wrote “Mother and Son,” GWS #13:*

First of all, Gabe (3½) has been doing wonderfully. We left Massachusetts in June and travelled in our VW van to the Southwest, then to L. A. and San Francisco, then to southern Colorado, where I’m employed all day on a farm. Contrary to that myth about it being hard to travel with children, Gabe takes it all in stride, and likes it. His favorite thing is washing the car windows every time we stop for gas. He also likes the truck stops. Basically, I’ve seen that the same rule for homeschooling goes well for travelling—just give kids the space and permission to explore, and they’ll be happy and learning all the time. Gabe has also been interested in maps, and therefore distance and time. Since I read *Magical Child* by Joseph Chilton Pierce, and began to see that kids don’t see time as adults do (thank God?), the whole topic of how far

away someplace is, or “when will we get there,” is in a more proper perspective.

Gabe and I have both been learning about chickens, cows, horses, sheep, plus the neighboring coyotes, rabbits, and skunks. With my adult “superiority of knowledge” absent, we learn together. Gabe is discovering that his mom doesn’t actually know *everything*. Also, I’ve been finding out about pin-ball machines and those video games, which I used to have a prejudice against (“noisy, modern technological waste of money”). I notice that the best players seem to be 8 or 9-year-old boys. And it’s something they’ve taught themselves to do. I go into those arcades with Gabe and just watch in fascination the technique and expertise of those kids. Adults playing, by contrast, seem too forceful and clumsy.

There was a time when I found the little boy’s world of fighting and superheroes very unattractive, but I’ve been observing how Gabe plays and I’ve changed my attitude. Kids seem to “come into their power” around 2 or 3. They’ve mastered walking, talking, and moving their bowels, and now they’re ready to take on the world. As I see it, the superheroes—at least for Gabe—can be positive models. Superman, Lone Ranger, Popeye, Luke Skywalker—all of them. And whenever Gabe gets discouraged, I remind him of one of those heroes and he starts to play the part and pulls himself out into a positive attitude.

A few days ago, I promised Gabriel I would try to control my anger better (Gabe and I both tend to lose our tempers, blow off steam, and then make up kissing, all in about five minutes). I really don’t like to yell at him, so I told him I would make the effort. Yesterday, I was turned around and didn’t see Gabe spill juice on the bedroom rug. He said, “Mom, I spilled something. I’m sorry.” I saw it and said, “OK. Go get a towel and clean it up.” He paused, watched me, and said, “Hey, Mom, that’s great. You didn’t get angry” I said, “Hey, you’re right” Boy, did I feel supported, even rewarded, for not losing it over some spilled juice. I guess what I’m saying is that Gabe’s emotional maturity is a real help to me, and we can really be friends on those levels.

Gabe’s interest in money has grown from having a bank with columns for each kind of coin, to wanting to pay for things when we shop. I let him go to the counter with a bill and get the change. It must be frustrating for him every time because the cashier always goes searching the store for me to make sure it’s OK for him to buy it.

Gabe is always asking, “Why can’t kids do that?” whenever there’s a rule about “adults only.” Usually I try to frame my answer like “When you have learned to do such and such, then you can do that.” Like, “When you have learned to turn doorknobs that are above your head, then you can go outside whenever you want, without asking.” I try to avoid “when you grow up” statements.

You may remember I wrote before about letting Gabe handle knives at the age of one. I’m still doing it, he still hasn’t hurt himself, we’re still making other people squirm, and a few days ago, Gabe said he would slice the bread for lunch. He cut it evenly into 10 slices (no broken pieces!) and I remembered that my mother didn’t let me try that until I was 10-years-old!

Are there any single working parents out there, like me, attempting to make a living, not send their kid full-time to school or preschool, and find a little time for themselves as well as time to be with their kid(s)? I’d appreciate correspondence—I’ve found that working part-time is the only way I can handle it all.

## **Knife Story**

*From Susan Richman (PA):*

We were recently visiting a friend at another family’s home, a place we’d never been to before. My four-year-old son, Jesse, played happily with toy cars, ramps, and little people. He even was quite accommodating to our 16-month-old Jacob. The evening was going surprisingly well—no particular whining, no irritability (beyond “Watch me,” of course). After a while Jesse wanted a peanut butter sandwich. I began preparing him one on a plate on the floor. Jesse picked up the paring knife our hosts had given for spreading peanut butter, poked it in his piece of bread, and was beginning to eat his “speared” sandwich. I barely noticed. Knives do not mean danger to us—Jesse has been helping chop vegetables for family meals since he was 27 months old. He owns his own paring knife, and has talked about wanting a jack-knife for Christmas. Jacob is even trying to learn to cut.

Our hosts, it turned out, thought very differently about the subject. The husband was the first to react: “Oh-oh, watch out—he’s got the knife.” The wife then fairly lunged across the room, descending upon my son with a stern “give me the knife.” Jesse was stunned. He looked to me questioningly, grip

still firm on the knife. I began saying that it was ok that Jesse knew all about knives. The wife barely acknowledged my remark, said sternly, “Oh no! Not in my house! No children are ever allowed to play with knives here!” She then began to try to pull the knife forcefully from Jesse’s hand.

Now, Jesse is not known for giving in easily—he visibly clenched his jaw, set his weight firmly, and the struggle was on. For a moment I let it all happen—I felt that the best I could do was to be no part of it, allow this to be an interaction between Jesse and this adult. But then I began to see that now indeed the knife had become dangerous, a useful tool turned weapon in my frantically struggling four-year-old’s grip. Hating to do so, I intervened, pulling the paring knife from my son’s hand as he was writhing and kicking, held down by our host.

Jesse screamed, flailed, lashed out, his whole body one quaking outrage. I felt powerless, knowing that inside I was as outraged as my son, but knowing, too, that being an “adult” I was of course expected to act reasonably. I was probably expected to “discipline” my child, perhaps strike him, at least verbally chastise him. My friend tried to make the usual pacifying comment when faced with a “tantrum” “Oooh. I’ll bet he’s probably SOOOO tired.” This further enraged Jesse—he spit out the words, “I’m not tired, I just want that knife back.”

I thought of dragging my sons out, leaving immediately. Too many of our things scattered about for that. So I quietly asked Jesse if he’d come off to the bathroom with me. He finally came, still wrenched with fury. I realized that perhaps a main hurt was the feeling that I’d been party to it all, that in his struggle with this stranger I hadn’t aided him, but had even added to his shame by being the one who finally tore the knife from his hand. I began talking to him in whispers, saying how that woman wouldn’t even listen to me, wouldn’t even let me explain how Jesse knew about knives. I whispered that I felt sorry for her five-year-old (asleep all evening), because I bet he was never allowed to even touch a knife, that maybe she wouldn’t allow him to touch a knife till he was 15. Jesse’s sobs began to lessen, as he realized that I felt with him, not against him. We soon were laughing in whispers over that silly woman who didn’t have any idea what children could figure out to act for themselves. I said that we’d never be seeing this family again, and so it probably wouldn’t be worthwhile trying to change their thinking. We talked, still whispering, a few more minutes, then we all emerged from the bathroom

happy, stayed another half-hour pleasantly. I'm sure they all wondered what had happened.

Unfortunately, I'm sure too that they're even more convinced of the rightness of their actions. After all, hadn't this four-year-old almost cut someone? Just see what children will do when allowed to get hold of something dangerous!

For myself, I'm glad we won't be visiting there again.

## **Calming a Baby**

Not long ago I stayed with some friends who have a seven-month-old baby boy. One afternoon they had put him to bed for a nap and gone out on an errand, planning to be back before he awoke, and leaving me in the house with him. (The baby and I had by this time become good friends.) But he woke before they returned, did not like them not being there, and began to cry.

When it was clear to me that he was not going to go back to sleep, but was in real distress, I went to his room, picked him up, and began trying to comfort him—patted him, rocked him in my arms, talked to him, tried to play games with him, walked about with him, showed him himself in the mirror, turned his room light on and off—all tricks which at other times, with him or other crying babies, have had some success. But nothing helped; he cried away without stopping, clearly a cry of great sorrow and need.

Finally in desperation I went into the bathroom, hoping that I might beguile him by playing with water. I turned the sink faucet on, then off. Magic! Instantly he stopped crying, opened his eyes wide, listening intently. What was that? After a pause I turned it on and off again. More close attention. Sometimes I left the faucet on for just a split second, sometimes I let it run for several seconds. When it looked as if the faucet might be losing a bit of its magic, I switched to the shower, which interested him even more, since he could see my hand turning the shower faucet, see and hear the water come out, then hear the louder noise it made as it hit the tub. After a few turns with the shower I would go back to the faucet, then back to the shower.

I don't know how long it might have taken for the water to wear out its appeal. Fortunately his parents soon came home and I handed a now happy baby over to his mom.—JH



# Down's Syndrome Child

*From Leonard Hand, Sr., 300 Meatte Ave., Portageville MO 63873:*

Some time ago, I wrote seeking resource persons and material to support our efforts (mine and Mrs. Hand's) to control the education and development of our Down's Syndrome granddaughter at home. Paige is now 8-years-old, reading from first-grade beginner's books, doing addition and subtraction with single-digit numbers, and, most importantly, learning to cherish independence and self-reliance. I know that other Down's children have shown more rapid progress, and that Paige could be farther along in achieving the conventional milestones by which schoolers measure progress. But we are committed to the conviction that building the proper foundations for motivation will unleash a rush of demonstrated skills as products of independent learning incentives.

Meanwhile, burdened with no doubts about her ability to perform, we cherish the sheer joy of watching her personality develop, sensitivity grow, and perceptions mature.

I was pleased to note in *GWS* #23 two contributions by parents of DS children. While they are not free completely from the school trap, they have discovered that parents are not impediments to learning for the "handicapped." (See also *GWS* #11.)

We find video-tapes an effective device which gives us selective choices for the programs Paige sees. She seldom asks to watch TV live shows (or taped scheduled broadcasts), preferring the tapes from a library which now numbers over 80. She will ask for repeated showings of the tapes she enjoys. She is memorizing the story line, parts of the dialog, incidents, and so on.

## More On Work

*Mark England and Linda Short-England (OR) sent us their replies to "Questions on Work," GWS #22. First, Linda:*

I've decided to work from/at my home because I want to be with my own children. They have lots of questions that I, along with my husband, want to answer for them. Plus I love being around them—I enjoy their company.

My main job responsibility is as a midwife. I've done this for seven years

now. I do home deliveries and act as labor assistant in the hospitals. I'm what you would call a "lay," self-taught midwife. I barely graduated from high school. I've never been to college, although I've taken adult night classes. I have the respect and assistance from local doctors, which is essential for my job. I find this job more of a mission than a job; it is very satisfying as well as a challenge. It also can be very stressful.

My other jobs consist of babysitting part-time for eight kids during the week (their ages range from 15 months to six years), and I sell vitamins, and also do laundry for two families. Times are tight! My daughter Wendy (8) helps me when she's not busy. She receives pay for her help as well as her chores.

I also do a lot of volunteer work within the community—food co-op, a local anti-family-violence organization, a childbirth educational group, recycling, and translating for the Mexican migrants.

If there were a young person who wanted to learn about the body, birth, and babies, I'd be glad to have them spend time here with me going on home births, and being present for the pre-natals, etc. I won't put any age limit on it, because I've learned from Wendy that if there's an interest, anyone can learn it. My daughter often knows more about what's happening than some of the mothers I work with. And she's been going with me since she was 2½-years-old (out of necessity).

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*And from Mark:*

We are homeschooling both of our daughters at this time and it seems to work well for all of us.

I am sort of a "jack of all trades" lately, partly because of the economy in this area and partly because I enjoy doing different things. Presently I'm self-employed as a carpenter which I like because it gives me more freedom to work when and where I want and gives me more time with the girls. I have worked here as a carpenter, logger, heavy equipment operator, ski patrol director, and ski instructor; I have worked in the pear orchards and in a gas station. Some of these jobs I have liked, some I haven't. Most of all I wish I could stay home and be with the family. Linda and I have agreed to trade roles whenever she can earn enough money at another job that would support us.

My present goal is to go back to school to become a registered nurse; my experience with the ski patrol gave me an interest in this field and I feel it would be flexible enough to allow me more time at home with the family. Also we would like to travel, and nursing is a skill needed around the world.

It has been six years since I left school in my second year of college. I had finally realized that I was there spending precious time and lots of money for nothing. I decided to leave and come back when I was ready to do something that required the kind of education you get in that kind of institution. Well, here I am six years and twice as many jobs later, and suddenly I want to be in school! I dug out some old math books to study for a placement test and actually understood what had gone right over my head back then, partly because of things I had done which algebra related to and partly because now I need to know that stuff.

## **Father at Home**

*From Robert Banks (WV):*

I was prompted to write because of the section in *GWS* #22 on “Home Businesses.” I have a two person (sometimes three) freelance translating business. I have been doing this for about 12 years on a fulltime basis and it has provided an adequate living most of the time. I translate scientific, technical and medical articles, books, and journals, from Russian into English. I also do some newspaper articles on agriculture, transportation, and related subjects. For the most part I find my work satisfying, having covered some of the Apollo-Soyuz mission, many of the Soviet flights, and other interesting areas. The U.S. Air Force sent me to language school, and I worked for the government for 5 or 6 years after service before going freelance. I employ one typist full-time.

My wife did all my typing until our son was born, but being a fulltime mother (even with me working at home) took too much of her time. Brendan, our 2 year-old son, is in and out of my office all the time when I work (I dictate my translations into a dictaphone.) He sometimes pretends he is working, too, pretending to operate his own machine and microphone.

We are committed to teaching Brendan and Alyssa (2 months) at home, and are beginning to lay the groundwork now, before they reach school age. We would hate to see the aptitude and curiosity that Brendan has showed be

stifled in a rigid classroom situation. He has been helping us since he has been walking. We live on a farm with an Apaloosa mare and two goats. Brendan likes to help make bread, wash dishes, feed the animals, work on our vehicles, run the tractor, tiller, or anything else he thinks he can do. Just this morning he helped his mom cut up the ingredients and mix the tuna salad. He uses knives (with supervision), and he is learning to use scissors. He will bring a book for you to read to him anytime you sit down.

A word about paternal-infant bonding. We were fortunate in having two doctors in our area who are advocates of the Lamaze-LeBoyer method of childbirth. When Brendan was born, the first thing I did was to give him a warm-water bath, a la LeBoyer. He seemed to love it and just looked around, enjoying himself. Alyssa was born by Caesarean section due to complications, but I still gave her the LeBoyer water bath after having been present for the entire operation. Alyssa was with me for about three hours from the time she was born until Audrey came down to the obstetrics ward after recovery.

In both cases, I feel that a very strong bond was developed between both Brendan and me and Alyssa and me from the moment of birth. I feel especially close to them since I am at home most of the time, and I am able to interact with them throughout the day. I feel a much closer bond with them than with my older two (16 and 18) by a previous marriage. I had nothing to do with their births, except to visit them in the hospital after they were born.

## **Doing It By Herself**

*Jim Huegerich (NC) writes:*

Although my feelings and beliefs are strongly in favor of homeschooling, I must be honest with myself. I know myself well enough that unless we become involved with other supportive families I will not successfully homeschool my own children. I work 9-5 every day, and with my wife being equally burdened, it would be naive for me to think things would automatically work out. So I would end up sending my kids to school and feeling guilty about it.

So I continue to seek other supporters. In fact, nurturing has become a priority in my life, to the extent that I have been looking (although feebly) to other parts of the country and other job possibilities so that I could either find

the supports or the time to continue to nurture my children when they begin to learn to read and grow. I just can't imagine missing those moments of trials, tribulations, and frustrations combined with excitement and discovery. I do not believe that schools or any institution interested in surviving have the tools or directions to provide children with proper respect and nurturing. Besides, what type of fool would I be to opt for some other life/work adventure that would take me away from sharing such a growth and adventure period in my own family's lives?

What a joy the past few months have been with Amanda (6). She wanted to read, so we as bumbling parents sat down with her to help her learn. Whenever we supplied the missing words, definitions, or corrections, she became frustrated and she gave up. Gradually we just let her do the directing. She would make mistakes, but then come back and correct them later. She used techniques like context, repetition, and sounding out—all these without any help from us. Indeed, she may never have sought these learning tools on her own if we had been more forceful in “instructing her in the proper way.”

Amanda has also recently learned to jump rope and ride a bicycle, both on her own. She displayed a perseverance and tolerance we thought she did not possess. We have always known her as so quick-tempered! She just kept “failing” and laughing until she got both skills mastered. And like the reading, the more we intervened to assist, the more frustrated she became. With the bike, she wouldn't even let us support it for her.

## **Pressured to Teach**

*From homeschooler Terry Stafford, Box 438, Langley BC VOX IJO:*

One of the most valuable ideas I heard at La Leche League meetings ten years ago was that we really can trust our babies to grow to each new stage without being shoved. Our culture is constantly telling us we must “teach” a child everything. Of course Amie (now 10) did develop happily without pressure from me. I didn't have to give her solid food before she was ready to swallow or digest it, get her used to a spoon or cup, teach her to draw, write, use the toilet, read, wean from the breast, sleep in her own bed, etc.

Still, I think in the back of my mind I had the idea that eventually I would have to teach her something! As a result of this insecurity, every few months I decide to get organized and work on something—like place value,

regrouping, spelling, alphabetizing, multiplication. It always seems to follow the same course: an enthusiastic day or two, then a morning of dawdling and complaining, at which point I realize that once again I'm reacting to outside pressures. Amie tells me it's "too hard," and I think I know that she could do it if she'd just work! Certainly in school she'd be expected to work at it, and would probably learn it (and maybe I learn to hate it! Or to feel stupid). Our relationship is too friendly to include that kind of pushing for long, so we drop it there.

Amusingly, when Amie goes back to the same work a few months later, she'll say, "This is easy!" She'll then whip off a page or two and retire the workbook. This has happened so many times that I wonder when the message will get through to me!

I realize as I write this that this happens most often in math most insecure subject.

## **Learning Free**

*From Jeanine Lupinek (CT):*

It's been nearly a year since we obtained permission from the superintendent to teach our children at home (*GWS* # 19). Mary didn't hate school, she was just bored and ready for the next grade mentally but not ready physically. She wanted to read instead of practicing A's.

We were doing great with home-made materials until our box of Abeka books arrived. "Now," I thought, "we'll really get down to business." By imitating school methods I soon created school problems: Mary didn't want to read or write or have anything to do with school stuff. Although the school-required test at the end of the year hung over our heads, I decided to leave her alone and see if she would regain her former interest. It took two months!

We went back to home-made materials and just living and she scored very high on the dreaded test. She said it was fun. One question she missed: where do you go to buy medicine when you're sick? Answer: drug store. We haven't been sick enough to buy medicine in her entire span of memory!

During vacation Bible school this year, Mary's teacher told me with amazement, "When I pass out materials and explain a project, Mary is the only one who goes right to work. The others panic and say, 'Where's my

pipe-cleaner? How do you cut this? I can't do it!" I think they've lost the confidence they had in themselves before they went to school.

## **Because I Said So**

*Theo Giesy (VA) wrote:*

A friend and I talked some time ago about the kids not being in school. I said that the kids could see that there was no reason to do most of what they were expected to do in school. She said that they should learn that sometimes they would have to do things with no other reason than that they were told to. This is a reaction I have run into often. These people think "Because I told you to" is a reason that stands alone, they don't realize that there is more to it.

"Because I told you to" always has an "and." What that "and" is makes all the difference. It can either be "And you respect/love me, know that what I say generally works out to be best and even though you don't see the reason now, it is a good idea to obey"—trust. Or it can be "And I have power over you and can make you regret it if you don't obey"—fear. I don't mean to suggest that children sit down and think through all of that every time they are told "Because I told you to" as a reason. But one of those feelings underlies their reaction.

To the extent that the second "and" is used, the first is undermined. A battle results which defeats learning. The student's energy goes into resisting the power and finding ways around it, and the teacher's energy goes into hanging onto the power. As in the situation in which the parent says, "You'd better not let me catch you doing that again"—that is just what the child does: work at not getting caught, not stop. When it is the first "and," you have real influence; you can guide and teach.

## **Mary On Learning**

*Mary Bergman (see Page 1) wrote in the Home Educators Newsletter, 10/81:*

I have come across notes that I have made over the years and have read some of them to see if they'll still apply to my younger children, and have found that a correct observation or philosophy remains so regardless of whether you dig it up ten years or ten thousand years later. I will go through a

few of those notes.

Children have been referred to as uncultured little animals that must be trained and refined into the final product of a cultured un-animalistic adult. I believe that the reverse is probably more true. Children are drawn to culture, reject stupidity, and inherently enjoy refinement and gentleness.

I have found that the home grown, taught child does not need outside pressures; his own instincts will lead into paths where knowledge can be found. This does not mean that he should not be exposed to culture and higher thinking, but it does mean that it can be spontaneous and fairly painless for all concerned.

Each week we try to find new avenues for our mental expansion. Last week this included a trip to the State Capitol to investigate the law making process, another time we spent the day watching the big board at Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith. The Planetarium didn't excite anyone, but the Natural Science Museum called for several return trips. (Note: it has remained my biggest hit.)

Whenever we take in this type of activity, we go to a nice restaurant and critique what we have experienced. I generally only take one or two children, rather than trying to drag a whole crew along.

The first operetta I took Cathy and Mark to was strictly an adult affair and they never understood a word that was sung. But, they were enraptured by the melodies, the drama and the involvement. Cathy was 8 at the time, Mark was 5.

We risked a terrific snow blizzard to hear the Russian Violin Chamber Orchestra, but the wealth that we gained from that experience was uncountable. I wish I could do ever so much more with the children but I am limited somewhat by the distances to these activities, the amount of time I have between new arrivals in the family, and the budget.

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*And from the 1/8 Issue:*

In the public system children are programmed into learning as if they were all drawn from a blueprint. I often have parents call me and cry for help when their child does not fit. I tell them that in my estimation no child fits a blueprint and the only way to work with children is to treat them instead as fingerprints, where no two are exactly alike.



The two new students that I have started since beginning this paper are so different from any others that I have worked with. I assigned 17-year-old Tony to begin reading Thoreau's *Walden* as her first work. She dropped out of school after the tenth grade to get married and had never read a classic in her life. I told her flatly that I didn't think that she would like *Walden*; that I didn't particularly care if she did or did not; and that the object was for her to begin using her own critical analysis in coming to her own conclusion. Much to my surprise she brought the book today and has followed my directions to a tee. She has 12 underlined, written questions and thoughts in the margins, put question marks where she didn't comprehend. She mentioned that she had asked her husband for some help in comprehending a certain passage and that he became so interested that he wouldn't give her the book back. This is the kind of education that makes the individual think for himself and begin to realize that he has something in common with the great thinkers of the past. He is to become an examiner, not just a memorizer.

My students have been cleaning my house while I have been sitting here at the typewriter. One occasionally asks me how I am coming, as if perhaps it has some significance to him. I believe it does. He wants to know how many pages this paper will contain and what the subject matter is. It is quite fun to see that all of us can work together toward a goal.

When they left, they just waved and smiled, knowing that their help today has been important to me. No, I did not go out and take a look at what they had done and then compliment them on it. I wouldn't insult a student this way. They have done what they have done and it is enough. I rarely compliment; it is a waste of my time and it indicates that I am in a position to judge their efforts and I am not. Neither are they in a position to judge mine. Perhaps this sounds rather harsh, but most students find it very refreshing. I cannot be false to them and they cannot be false to me. That's the game plan and they catch on to it very quickly. They are not numbers, they are not statistics, and they are not helping me. I am not helping them.

I am not even teaching them anything. I hate the connotation of

“teacher.” I am not a teacher and they are not actually students. So far we haven’t come up with any better references, but we’re working on it. I offer, they receive. They think, I am stimulated. They question, I am challenged. They seek, I pray. They pray, I meditate. And when we are through, who was the teacher? Who was the student? Who learned? Who perceived? Who gained? There is a permanent bond which is established in this type of relationship which goes far beyond the everyday teacher student relationship.

JH: We will miss this good friend and staunch, articulate ally, as we all carry on the work that meant so much to her.

## **Letter From Oklahoma**

*From Kathy Bare (OK):*

We watched our son go from being a happy, inquisitive child to one who was withdrawn and resentful. In first grade his teacher called us in for a conference because he didn’t seem to comprehend by the second semester the things he had known the first semester. She felt he possibly had a learning disability and convinced us he should have a battery of tests to determine this. These tests proved instead that he was capable of doing second grade math and was up with his class on the words they were supposed to know how to read. It was then that we realized the problem was not with him.

By the time our son was in second grade and our daughter in kindergarten, we knew we had to find a better means of educating them. Jennifer had begun reading on her own at age 4 and was so far ahead of the other kindergarten children she was bored to tears.

We talked to a friend who was getting her Oklahoma teacher’s license about tutoring. We split the cost of having a lawyer research the legality of homeschooling our children. The lawyer said the laws indicated we could teach our children at home without a tutor other than the parents, and there was nothing to indicate we even had to notify the school. We did have to have an organized course of study for our children and be able to prove they were in school the required number of days. We could also be called upon to prove our courses were equal to what the school had to offer. We decided to enroll our children in Calvert correspondence school and have our tutor come

over once a week. She has much to offer the children that we could not teach them, and we intend to keep them interested in learning.

Calvert has a clause on their application form that says they need the approval of the local school principal or superintendent. We went to the local superintendent's office (the tutor and I), armed with copies of pages from law books and the tutor's teaching license. We did not anticipate any problems after what the lawyer had found out for us. I had talked to the superintendent by telephone and told him basically what we planned to do. He said he would check it out with a lawyer also, and be ready to discuss it with us by the day of our appointment.

When we got there, we found he had not discussed it with a lawyer. He had discussed it with the principal and teachers our children would have had and it didn't "feel" right to them. He totally wasted our time, just giving us his opinions, and he was no more informed about the law than anyone out on the street. He accused us of "withdrawing our children from society" and implied they would be social misfits. (In a society gone mad, I really don't care if my children stand out as different!) He finally said we would have to talk to the District Attorney's office to determine the legality of not sending our children to public school, because he didn't trust our lawyer's opinion.

The next day in the D.A.'s office, it was apparent the assistant D.A. had also been briefed about us. Even so, he looked at the laws and said we had the right to do as we pleased with our children. He said we must follow the guidelines set up by the law and we could be required to prove our courses were equivalent. Oklahoma teachers are each allowed to pick what they will teach and each year does not build on the year before; we feel Calvert courses are far superior to this hodge-podge way of teaching, and were unconcerned about showing this "proof." The assistant D.A. said he would call me the next day and let me know what the superintendent had decided. He didn't call back for several days. So I called him. He said the superintendent had "washed his hand of us," and it was up to the D.A.'s office to prosecute. That was August, and now in December we still haven't heard anything else.

We called Calvert School to see what we could do, as we had not been able to obtain approval from anyone. The principal of Calvert said we were doing more than was required by Oklahoma laws by having a tutor. He asked me to send proof that what I said about the legality of it was true, and they could send the courses anyway. We sent the letter from our lawyer and copies

of the law pages, and we received the courses for our children. It is everything we expected and we highly recommend it.

So far everything has gone smoothly, and we do not anticipate any further problems. We are required by Oklahoma law to have our children in school 180 days; I pick which days I choose, and I count zoo days and trips to museums as part of the 180 days. The children finish two Calvert lessons in one day if they feel like it, but I only count that as one day of classes.

## **Truant Officer Visit**

*From Barbara Lafferty (NJ):*

In May or June of 1980 a woman contacted me concerning homeschooling. (We have become very good friends since then.) I invited her over and we spent quite a few hours discussing the ins and outs of homeschooling—legalities, ways of approaching school officials, various approaches to homeschooling, etc. She left with an armful of information she borrowed from me to read so she would be well informed. (I now have a full-sized four drawer file cabinet filled with homeschooling info—news articles, *GWS*, legal info, etc.—that I refer to when people make inquiries.)

After looking into the various ways of unschooling she asked me if I would let her enroll her two children in my homeschool. (I registered with the state as a private school and also informed them that I would accept enrollments of children whose parents want to teach them at home under our “Home Study Program.”) We came to an agreement on how this would be done. She didn’t want to approach her school officials for personal reasons which, at the time, were legitimate.

I proceeded to enroll her children by requesting their files from their former schools—this is one place where homeschool letterheads come in handy. The records were sent to me with no problems. Their homeschooling began and everything went fine until some “neighbor” (I use that term loosely here) called their local school district and reported that her children weren’t “attending” school. Everyone on her street knew that she was teaching her children at home. She received a phone call from the school and she told them that her children were enrolled in Evergreen School (our official name) but they didn’t seem to have any record of their transfer. (Why then did I receive their records?) There were a few weeks of silence, then,

one Tuesday in March '81, I had a visitor.

At 9 o'clock in the morning there was a knock at my door. We had been up rather late the night before so we were all still in our night clothes and I had my hair up in rollers. I opened the door and there stood a woman holding up an envelope. She began to speak. "I am the attendance officer from— School District." My heart dropped to my feet! I knew why she was here. After inviting her in, we sat at my dining-room table and I began telling her of the legality of homeschooling in N.J. and what it was all about. To my surprise and sheer delight she thought it was a terrific idea! We talked for over an hour. When she was getting ready to leave she told me that if she had children of school age, homeschooling is what she would do. She was a woman in her early to mid-fifties. I will quote one of the things she said. "I have been around schools long enough to know what really goes on there."

Before the attendance officer left she wished us good luck and said that she needed some sort of verification to take back to the school superintendent. First, she asked if I would phone him and verify the enrollment but John's words "keep the ball in their court" kept rolling around in my head so I gave her my telephone number and said that, if the superintendent had any further questions, he would be welcome to phone me. I haven't heard another word since and my friend hasn't either.

To say that it was a knee-knocking experience is putting it mildly but it was very "educational." My friend and I now laugh about it but it didn't seem funny at the time.

## **From Wash. State**

*Two letters from Washington:*

Daniel (11) has been homeschooling since September and I am really pleased and surprised at how well it's going. I had visions of having to stand over him with a whip and chair but every day he seems more eager to amuse himself and less dependent on me. I make suggestions and work with him on math, which was two years below grade level, but he explores other things on his own. I know that one day he'll pick up a book and read it again.

He has a job which is small but the benefits are great. Every day he takes the mail up to a neighbor's house. She's 90 years old. He also has to carry her garbage down Monday evening. For this he gets \$5 a month and two

grandmas (her daughter lives with her). They get a daily visitor and it seems to work out well for everyone.

The bad news is that the public school Daniel attended until last January asked my neighbor what school Daniel was now attending. She lied (I hate lying) but I guess it's just a matter of time before they ask where Daniel is going to school. Previous experience with the district indicates a very unpleasant experience ahead. I am planning on approaching them and requesting permission to homeschool Dan, hopefully before they approach me.

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*Another reader wrote:*

The school principal came over to our house about three weeks ago. He had tried to get our children removed from us as supposedly being neglectful parents. He turned us in to Child Protective Service. They investigated us and the caseworker was 100% in our favor. Besides that, in Snohomish County, C. P.S. does not handle attendance laws.

The principal then went to the three prosecuting attorneys we have in our county. None of them would take the case and the principal told me they said they were broke and did not have the money to waste on people like us. The courts were backed up several months behind and the jails were too full and they had real criminals to contend with. In other words, they don't consider it important enough.

## **Good News From N.C.**

*Lee Holley, a law professor at Campbell University (PO Box 158, Buies Creek, NC 27506), sent us some good news from that state. Before we quote from his letter, let us first provide a bit of background by quoting from an August 9, 1979 North Carolina Attorney General's opinion, written by Edwin Speas, Special Deputy Attorney General:*

The 1979 Session of the General Assembly amended Chapter 115 of the General Statutes to add two new articles, Articles 32A and 32B (*GWS* #13, "More N. C. News").

Articles 32A and 32B are similar in that they both substantially limit the State's regulatory authority over non-public schools. Article 32A deals

specifically with “private church schools and schools of religious charter,” while Article 32B addresses all “qualified non-public schools.” In substance, the regulatory scheme is the same for schools falling under either Article 32A or 32B.

The word “school” is not defined in either of these Articles. The authors of the legislation set forth in Article 32B, however, did list the types of schools which shall qualify as “non-public schools.”

The provisions of this Article shall apply to non-public schools which:

- a) shall be accredited by the State Board of Education; or
- b) shall be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; or
- c) shall be an active member of the North Carolina Association of Independent Schools; or
- d) receives no funding from the State of North Carolina.” NCGS 115-257.8.

(The Attorney General’s opinion continues:) It may be inferred from the list set forth that the legislature intended only established educational institutions, whether religious or secular, to fall within this article. All schools which would be included in subsections (a), ( b), or (c) are institutions consisting of several teachers, classes of children of varying ages, a recognized and accountable administration, and a regular place for meeting. Subsection (d) is a general term, following a list of specific ones. “In the construction of statutes, the *ejusdem generis* rule is that where general words *follow* a designation of particular subjects or things, the meaning of the general words will ordinarily be presumed to be and construed as, restricted by the particular designations and as including only things of the same kind, character and nature as those specifically enumerated.” (*State v. Fenner*) Accordingly, we believe the references to schools in subsection (d) to include only established educational institutions.

It was then apparently the intent of the legislature in enacting these Articles to include only established and identifiable institutions within

the operation of these deregulatory Articles. The intent of the legislation is, of course, controlling in the interpretation of a statute. (*State v. Hunt*) We are of the opinion that home instruction of a child cannot reasonably be interpreted as instruction (Unknown word?) established and identifiable educational institution.

DR: Would-be homeschoolers who have received this Attorney General's opinion have been understandably daunted, and in fact several families who are presently teaching their own children have been prosecuted. However, Lee Holley just wrote us:

Yesterday (1/8/82), Judge Edward Greene dismissed the criminal charges pending against Larry Delconte, in the District Court of Harnett County, for truancy. The case received wide newspaper and television publicity, putting homeschooling in an excellent light in the Raleigh area.

His case was tried on a twelve page stipulation; actually, the term trial is wrong as the court proceedings were on a Motion to Dismiss by Larry's defense attorney, Mr. Strickland, supplied through the North Carolina Association of Christian Schools. The Delconte stipulation was well done. I will try to get you copies of the legal materials, i.e., stipulation, motion, and briefs. The Stipulation stressed that Larry and his family had been homeschooling in New York with the full cooperation of the school officials, that he attempted to secure cooperation here and was only met with a subpoena, that he attempted to list his home as a "school" and that he reasonably qualified or was willing to qualify with all the inspection, testing, health examination, attendance, and similar requirements.

Mr. Strickland argued that Larry Delconte had substantially complied with Part I (Chapter 505) as a private church school or school of religious charter, and with Part II (Chapter 506) of the Education Laws. He spoke with some authority since he is the admitted author and inspiration or passage of these bills. He also argued that the "other means" provisions of the North Carolina Constitution guaranteed the traditional homeschooling rights, pointing out that homeschooling was the principle educational means in North Carolina until this century.



He conceded that the State had a legitimate interest in seeing that the educational efforts were bona fide, but not in seeing that any particular results were achieved. The judge was genuinely concerned about the case where homeschooling was used as an excuse for a family to violate the child labor laws. This is somewhat ironic since the schools openly allow the family practice of keeping kids home at tobacco time to work in the fields; however, it presents the base of most public hysteria over the topic. Strickland argued most strongly that criminal proceedings were not the proper method to resolve these issues, and this was the basis of the court's ruling, even though the judge clearly specified he dismissed "for no reason."

The Attorney General's representative's basic position is that (1) Delconte had no basis to claim religious school status, (2) that Section 115-257. 8 (same as "32B" quoted above) really means to make Subsection (d) conjunctive to each of (a), (b) or (c) or the statute is ridiculous, and (3) the Legislature never intended homeschooling to be a "school." He also argued that under the truancy law, attendance at a school was required.

The judge grilled the Attorney General on the "other means" state constitutional provision, never reaching or considering the federal questions. The judge made clear that so long as homeschooling was educating, the state had no compelling interest to interfere, and he would not convict sincere parents who made sincere efforts. The judge suggested that until the Legislature established standards for homeschooling, no court would convict constitutionally, since exclusion of this viable means of education was contrary to the "other means" guarantee.

Therefore, whether or not the "or (d) receives no funding from the State of North Carolina" in NCGS 115-257.8 is intended to be *ejusdem generis* or conjunctive, I believe we were an effort to carve out some standards allowing homeschooling. In my opinion, the "or" in the statute makes it clear that "(d)" is meant to be equal and coordinate to "(a), (b), or (c)." I can see a North Carolina appellate court deciding otherwise, but I cannot see our losing the argument that it is unconstitutional, invidious, and arbitrary action to exclude a bona

fide means of educating at home so long as there is education, in addition to the “other means” argument.

(DR: as we said in “KY Ruling,” *GWS* #12, it is a very good idea to find out what your state Constitution says about education; there may be a provision that supports the idea of homeschooling. Also, in case the Legislature does take up the issue of homeschooling, we hope *GWS* readers in North Carolina will tell their representatives what kind of legislation they would like to see, and tell them about this ruling.)

## Making the Decision

*Brenda Parry (VA) wrote:*

In retrospect, I am amazed at the simplicity with which I became a homeschooler. Friday night, after a lengthy reading of *Teach Your Own*, and several reviews of a note that came home with Rebekah (9) on her second day of school, and after much prayer, pondering, and thought, I went to bed, feeling a little depressed and somewhat confused. I mean, after all, three years of trying to make a decision is too long. I remembered Donna’s letter of last May saying, “At some point, you simply have to go ahead.”

I woke up Saturday morning very early, excited, cheerful, and positive. I couldn’t even let Ted, my husband, have his extra few minutes of Saturday sleep—I woke him up and told him Rebekah wasn’t going back to school, that I was starting homeschool Monday. He said, “Fine.” I woke Beka up and told her. Big grin, sparkly eyes, and “Really??” Hugs, hugs. Nice moment.

Why I am amazed is when I didn’t think I could do it, I could name all the reasons why it wasn’t the right time or place or condition, etc. Now that I know I can, nothing is big enough to interfere—even cancer, extensive medical programs, infected tooth, another possible move, facilities, etc. Attitude truly does determine behavior.

Since Donna’s letter arrived, I contacted Abbey Lawrence and others in the area. I’ve studied and copied the law books. I’ve contacted Calvert and Home Study Institute and feel impressed, by phone anyway, to pursue the one matter, though I have requested info from both. I have ordered a curriculum book from the local Fairfax County school board (delays, delays, delays).

But mostly, we just got up this morning and started. Even with oral surgery this morning for me, Rebekah did her reading before, her math at the dentist, and is now typing a letter to her older sister who is in the Navy. A little chatting, a little TV, a ride with Mom and Dad.

This afternoon I am starting the girls in a busy, effective 4-H program with a few kids who have similar interests. They are eager for that, too. They want to do woodworking, sewing, and quilting. We are 25 minutes from the Smithsonian, Mt. Vernon, Congress, the White House, etc.—imagine the field trips!

*From a later letter:*

Noe (10) and Cay (11) are still waiting out our possible next relocation before deciding about homeschool. We'll make 23 moves in less than 13 years—hey! Perhaps that's reason enough for homeschool!

We decided against Calvert (too structured) and for Home Study Institute, only to have HSI change their policy you can't use their materials unless enrolled as a student in the full course. We have put together our own program with Bethany Homestead, Key Curriculum, McGuffey's Readers, Mary Bergman's "Life Curriculum," materials from Prof. Arnoldsen at Brigham Young University (they are expanding in the field of home education materials for parents and children), Natural Hygiene Publications, and our own original assignments, field trips, projects, etc., drawing from the area, the home, 4-H, and our extensive library and supplies that we have been collecting over the years.

The greatest benefit we see so far is that Beka's happy, singing, sunshine-y, outgoing personality has returned. No more nightmares, rashes, tenseness, bedwetting, etc., since the first day of homeschool.

## **Four Miles From Bus**

*From Sherryl Champie (OR):*

We haven't had the legal battles a lot of people have had. We live out of town, four miles from bus service, so we can get out of sending our children to school the easy way. Oregon law books state that children under 12 have to attend school if bus service is 1 miles or less from home, and over age 12, 3 miles. There are plenty of other laws in this state that would allow for

teaching at home but not quite as simple as this. We have had no hassle from the school administrators, but they're not cooperative either. They will give books for teaching at home but not without a fight. I didn't feel like fighting them so I decided not to get their books. We're doing fine without them anyway.

We're beginning to settle down to letting our daughter learn at her own rate. For a while we tried to get her to accomplish a certain amount of pages in workbooks but found she learns at a faster rate if she isn't pushed. She has a natural talent for arithmetic but has been a little slow picking up reading. We were surprised that she started reading a while back at a good rate without much hesitating, so we had been worried over nothing.

*Sam Champie added:*

Through your magazine, we contacted some people in our area and I was surprised that they all seem to have the same ideas we do. We thought that we were the only homeschoolers around, but we discovered that there are five families in this area.

We are hoping that by being in contact with other folks that we can share our talents and give the kids a chance at a better education than the schools can even dream of. I play classical and flamenco guitar and have my own 13-page method book. My wife and I both do painting, mainly Western and wildlife. I make guitars, dulcimers, and other musical instruments. I also make muzzleloading fire-arms.

DR: The states whose school attendance laws have some kind of exemption relating to distance from school or school bus route are: Alaska, AL, FL, Mich, NV, OR, TN, UT, VT, and WV. You should check the statutes for exact conditions.

## **Small-Town Resources**

*Sally Cheney (MO) writes:*

Since we decided to unschool our kids, I find myself taking them and their everyday activities much more seriously. I never realized before the many ways they "teach" themselves each day, in their play. It can get pretty hairy sometimes with six kids underfoot, but I am becoming more and more aware of what terrific people they are. I even look forward to days when we are all

home together. Some of my friends with only three kids think I'm crazy!

We have been homeschooling officially for only a month, but Mark and I feel encouraged by our experiences so far. We voiced our intentions to the school superintendent and the prosecuting attorney last spring and so far have met with no opposition.

We plan a few daily assignments for each child, trying to include activities to whet their appetites in new areas. Marty (13) and Jarnli (11) have spent a couple of mornings at the public library doing research projects on the U.N., UNICEF, and Julia Child. (Jarnli is interested in becoming a pastry chef and wrote to Julia Child for advice.) They get lots of cooperation from the librarian. When they finish at the library, they spend the rest of the day at their dad's office, a few blocks away. One day the school superintendent dropped in to the office as Anika (9) was working on a map of Missouri at her dad's drafting table. He seemed impressed to find her learning "a little geography."

The three older kids are learning to type with the use of a high school text from the library. Anika was able to have a two-hour lesson in oil painting at the local craft store and now can practice techniques she learns from instruction books. Jarnli bought a used flute with money she earns helping me with my evening aerobic dance classes, and she is teaching herself to play it with a "Learning Unlimited Cassette Series" and an occasional lesson from a high school student. I thought I would have to bone up a lot myself in order to homeschool my kids, but I'm happy to find there are resources all around us, even in a little rural Missouri town.

The older kids help the younger ones quite a bit. Tasha (7) is learning simple division with help from Anika, and likes to play with Anika's multiplication grid on the wall. Tasha, in turn, reads Cricket magazine stories and library books to Elsa (4), who "helps" Cody (1½) with crayons.

I can't get over the freedom we all enjoy as a homeschooling family. No schedules, early morning buses to catch, or tired, grouchy kids at 4:30 in the afternoon. Most "schoolwork" is done in the morning, with afternoons free. Each evening we keep a record of what each child did in the way of schooling that day, and, of course, at least half of what we record is spontaneous activity that the kids come up with themselves, with a big emphasis on craft projects, such as scrapbooks and doll houses.

Since Mark is studying for a law degree through a correspondence course

and I am teaching myself massage, we feel that we are all homeschoolers, and life is exciting!

## **No Ideal School**

Every so often someone asks me what I think would be an ideal school. My answer is that for me there is no such thing as an “ideal” school. A school is not an ideal. It is a social response to a difficult and wrong situation—a society which has no room and no use for children, and which has few people who are glad or even willing to have them around.

The ideal would be a society in which knowledge was widely available and freely shared, and in which children were everywhere safe and welcome. Such a society would have many resources for the free exchange of knowledge and skills—materials and activity centers, something like our libraries but many more of them, and much larger and with many things in them besides books. And these centers (unlike Boston libraries these days) would be open every evening and weekend.

Of course, there is no such ideal society, in this country or any other, and we are a long way from seeing one. Meanwhile, in our community of homeschoolers, we must try to come as close to making such a society as we can.—JH

## **A.C.L.U.’S Position**

Gara LaMarche, assistant director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, sent us a copy of a policy statement adopted by the American Civil Liberties Union’s national Board of Directors on Oct. 11, 1981.

Gara says it is “something of a victory for those of us who have worked for years to get the ACLU to overcome its blind spot about compulsory schooling. It concedes far more to the state than any ACLU policy statement I’ve ever read. But if you cull out the heart of the statement I think you will find it useful in your campaign for homeschooling.”

From the statement:

The ACLU endorses the concept of compulsory education and sees no threat to civil liberties in the fact of compulsion in this area. The state must provide a system of free public education available to all

children on a non-discriminatory basis. The element of compulsion should lie in assuring the attainment of at least minimal levels of literacy in order to further preparation for effective citizenship and the transmission of democratic values, not in prescribing how those levels are to be attained. Thus, attendance in a *public* school cannot be compelled—indeed this has been the case since *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 US 510 (1925)—if these ends may otherwise be served.

Practice varies on the question whether attendance in a school may be compelled. In many jurisdictions provision is made to allow children to be educated at home, usually by following an approved curriculum and validating the outcome by testing usually administered by the local education authorities or by the State Board of Education. We believe that, in the interest of parental right to choose an alternative to public education, like provisions should be extended to all jurisdictions because the state's interest in assuring minimum levels of education does not extend to control of the means by which that interest is realized.

Certain other related issues do not pose problems directly concerned with civil liberties unless they militate against the realization of the objectives for which compulsion is imposed. Among them, for example, are such matters as:

- a) What should the minimum levels of literacy and other skills be?
- b) By what means and by whom should the fact of attainment of those levels be certified?
- c) Up to what age should education be compelled?
- d) The qualifications, certification, and licensure of teachers.

These questions are primarily matters of social policy so long as the formulations addressing them are rationally related to the aims of compulsory education.

Parents who choose to further the education of their children other than in the public schools are not, in our view, entitled to receive public monies in support of that private choice.

## **Xerox Offer**

*Don Wismer (PO Box 253, Winthrop ME 04364) makes an offer that might help readers living far from a large public library or law library:*

I'd be happy to photocopy court cases for *GWS* readers. The local law library carries the laws of the states, plus case law (court reports) from the highest appellate court of each state (e.g., State Supreme Court), and also federal case law from the district level up.

I must recover my costs, however, and at present I would charge 25¢ per photocopied page to meet the various expenses involved, plus postage. I think I'll just break even at that rate—we'll see. Turnaround time would normally be one working day from receipt of request to mailing of reply.

I'm not a lawyer and so of course cannot offer advice based on the laws that I find. If someone asked me to trace down case law citations, i.e., if someone asked me to be a legal researcher, I'd charge \$12 per hour for that. But the 25¢ per page rate holds for me rely photocopying cases for which the client gives me the proper citation.

I ask advance payment of \$3 per case or law, from which I will deduct the actual cost and refund the remainder with the order. If no prepayment is received, I'll fill the order and add a \$1 billing charge.

## **On Certification**

*Ed Nagel of the National Association for the Legal Support of Alternative Schools (PO Box 2823, Santa Fe NM 87501) sent the following letter to Pennsylvania State Senator Hess (Senate Education Committee, Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg PA 17120):*

We understand that you are currently reviewing H.B. 1300 as passed by the PA House of Representatives, and we would like to share our concern with you regarding a particular aspect of that proposed legislation.

Current School Code in PA permits tutoring by "properly qualified" tutors, which is a consistent standard recognized and upheld by various courts around the country.

In contrast, the proposed change under H.B. 1300 would require all tutors to be "certificated" by the State's Education Department.



In other states where a judicial review has been made in this regard, the “certification” requirement by the State has already been determined not to be a viable standard:

It cannot be said as an absolute that a teacher in a non-public school who is not certified. will be unable to instruct children to become intelligent citizens.

*Hinton v. Kentucky State Board of Education*, No. 78-SC-642-TG (1979) (see *GWS* #8, 12, 15).

Based in part on this Kentucky decision, Michigan State District Court Judge Gary Stewart dismissed charges against Peter and Ruth Noble (*People v. Noble*, 57th Dist., #791-0114 & 0115A, 12/12/791 (see *GWS* #14) for teaching their own children at home in compliance with “all of the State compulsory education requirements except for the certification of the teacher therein.” Judge Stewart’s Opinion noted that the “Supreme Court of Kentucky found the certification procedure unnecessary as the State failed to show that there was any overriding State interest in such uniform requirements being applied without exemption.” Comparing that to the State of Michigan’s case against the Nobles—which was “based solely on the need for uniform application of the certification requirement for home instruction, not lack of teaching ability”—the Court then held that “the State has failed to produce any evidence whatsoever on the interests served by the requirement of teacher certification, and the defendants’ experts to the contrary demonstrated there was no rational basis for such requirements.” Having previously acknowledged in his opinion the “qualifications” of Mrs. Noble in particular to teach her own children, Judge Stewart then concluded:

For her to accept certification would not make her a better teacher, nor would it make her children learn easier, nor would it make her children more intelligent, nor would it provide any additional benefits for her, her children, or the State, but it would, indeed, interfere with her freedom to exercise her religious beliefs.

Similar attempts to impose State regulatory standards were being challenged by a coalition of private school groups in North Carolina, for example, when the State Legislature there made the whole question moot by

passage of bills which removed any such state authority to regulate the operation of private educational alternatives, which included a standard for teacher certification. Under their new legislation, only notification to the State, compliance with health and safety requirements, and administration of a self-chosen student testing program are legally required of educational alternatives to the public school system.

Passage of the bill as is, changing “properly qualified” to “certificated” would lead to unnecessary harassment of private individuals who have chosen to educate their own children in accordance with sincerely held beliefs, a constitutional right upheld by several U.S. Supreme Court decisions; it would add an additional burden to court calendars already overlaid with more pressing matters to the State; and it would unduly tax the resources of parents who have already chosen to pay twice for their own children’s education.

For these reasons, on behalf of parents interested in an educational alternative to public school attendance, without unduly burdening their free exercise of such a choice, we urge your committee to leave unchanged the requirement that tutors be “properly qualified” and strike the proposed change that such persons be “certificated.” Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

## **Constitutional Basis—2**

*DR: In GWS #24 we printed the summary of a statement John presented to the Massachusetts Legislature on the “Constitutional Basis for Homeschooling.” We are making photocopies of the complete statement available for \$2. John hopes that homeschoolers and lawyers will use some of the arguments in their legal briefs, homeschooling proposals, etc.*

*Here are some quotes from the complete report that may be of special interest to readers:*

The Constitution itself is, of course, altogether silent on the matter of education. When it was written, most people did in fact educate their own children, with little outside help or interference. The framers of the Constitution said nothing about education in the Constitution because they assumed that free American citizens could be trusted to go on educating their children as, with few exceptions, they had in the

past.

Because the Constitution is silent about the right of parents to educate their children does not mean that the framers felt they had no such right. Many rights are constitutionally protected that are not specifically mentioned, among these the right to choose our work and our homes, to travel, to marry whom we like, and so on.

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In *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the U. S. Supreme Court struck down an Oregon statute abolishing all private schools. It is worth noting that the Oregon legislature passed such a law for the very reason even now put forward by school authorities as an argument against homeschooling, namely, that unless all children were compelled to attend uniform state schools, the parents of many of them might be able to pass on to them various kinds of bad and dangerous ideas.

Just because the Court has upheld compulsory education as being permitted under the Constitution, it does not follow that the state schools have a Constitutional mandate for anything and everything they want to do. If no one objects to what the schools want to do, fine. But when a family objects, the schools' legal power to do it comes into question.

Many parents seem willing to accept methods of education based on the idea that children will not learn anything unless made to, and that the best way to make them is to make them memorize long lists of disconnected facts. But other parents say, "Until they went to school, our children were curious, eager, skillful learners. Now we see them becoming every day more bored, fearful, uncurious, unmotivated. Why must we put up with methods of education that are destroying the intelligence and character of our children?"

There is no Constitutional reason why they should. In fact, the state schools cannot show that anything they do produces better results than other methods—not their choice of what subjects to teach, or the order in which they teach them, or their ways of teaching, testing, evaluating, grouping, and scheduling, or their textbooks and other

materials. Often, as in Kentucky, they cannot even show that their results are as good. There are many schools all over the country whose curricula and methods are completely different from the state schools, like Montessori schools, or Waldorf (Steiner) schools, where children are not formally instructed in reading until age 10, that have shown outstanding results. Still other schools achieve equally successful results in spite of having very little formal curriculum or none at all.

But even if the state schools could show that their curricula, etc., did in fact produce substantially better results, they still would not have the power under the Constitution to impose these on all parents. For what the Supreme Court in *Pierce and Farrington* said to the states was *not* that they could impose a uniform system of education on all parents, provided only that they could show that it produced better results. It said that they could not impose a uniform system *at all*.

There is, after all, an inherent conflict of interest and a possibility for injustice when we ask state schools to evaluate homeschooling plans. It is a little like telling people they can own any kind of car they want, as long as they have the approval of the local General Motors dealer. In law, judges must disqualify themselves in cases where they have a personal interest. Yet the state schools, especially with their declining budgets, can hardly be disinterested evaluators of family education plans; many a school superintendent has flatly told a family that he would not let them teach their own children because of the state aid he would lose. People asked to assess homeschooling plans should, at the very least, be financially disinterested, and should not disapprove of homeschooling on principle.

## English Unschoolers

*From Jackie Fearnley, Homestead, Metfield near Harleston, Norfolk, England:*

Our oldest child still does not read at age nearly 8, but he does enjoy writing things—such as birthday cards, menus, place names, events on the calendar. These are always in capital letters as they are much easier to write—and she likes them best. I'm sure that it will gradually all fit into place

when the time is right.

It was good to read about the mother with the 2-year-old who cooked (*GWS* #3)—my youngest boy who is a similar age is usually allowed to turn off the knobs and to stir soup or rice on the Rayburn. He also cracks his own eggs and puts them in the frying pan once I've moved it from the fire.

I wonder if your idea of student teachers living in families could be extended so that for some it could involve six months or a year in this country. Of course it would be more of a gamble. So perhaps a shorter time would be best. Did you know that in Finland they have a system where students go and help out in large families for a year? A friend of mine has four children and one of these helpers at the moment.

We have a pottery and have had several young people helping here. At the moment we have someone who lives in a caravan (trailer), eats with us and has a low wage for helping in the pottery. It works out very well as occasionally he gives me a break from cooking or plays with the children, mends their toys, explains things to them that he knows about, etc.

I wonder if children can also learn things from their parents quite subconsciously—which they could not do from teachers whom they are not so close to. For example, the other day we had to go to Norwich to be on local radio. Our “helper” took the children to the museum. At the building you could not go into the cloakroom without knowing a combination of three figures for the lock. I did not mention this to the children at all but the next day they shut their bedroom door and issued tickets with 3-figure numbers on it for a “password.” Every so often they changed the three numbers involved.

Sometimes we dream the same dreams or can carry on a conversation without at first mentioning what we are talking about. I think another thing schools do is cut children off from these ways of apprehending the world, so that as they gradually distrust this area in themselves, it ceases to exist.

I was interested in your remarks about social change (*GWS* #1). I think it is gradually happening. Sometimes when Rose says she doesn't go to school, people say, “Oh, you're taught at home, are you?” in quite a matter-of-fact sort of way.

We sell our pottery at fairs during the summer. Quite often we take the wheel and my husband demonstrates. Often our 2½-year-old insists on taking over and draws just as many people. He's usually ended up with nothing on and looks quite angelic as he tries to control the clay going round the wheel.

At the same time he keeps up a running commentary to the audience as to why he can do it because he is bigger and what sort of a pot he's making. Then he asks his dad to turn it off in case it wastes the battery. (JH: a good point about children's way of mixing fantasy and reality.)

The other day, Rose asked to be taught how to add up large numbers. She caught on straightaway and spent about three hours doing sums, making very few mistakes. She couldn't bear to stop for lunch—she said it was so exciting.

## **A West VA Family**

*Ronni Miller (WV) wrote:*

We have been officially homeschooling since October 1980. We were approved by the school board—I have an expired out-of-state teaching certificate. There are approximately six families in our county doing this (approved) and most of them haven't any certification.

Rachel did have to enroll in the local public school—this way they get the funds. I agreed to this because we do get materials from the school and it's required that we keep in touch to let them know how everything is going. The assistant superintendent of schools and the local school principal have been to visit twice so far this year. Very friendly, easygoing visits.

Our program is very loose and is working well. Both Rachel (7) and Seth (5) are doing “above grade level” work.

So far no testing. The standardized tests for the state this year are being given to only 3rd and 6th grades. They may want to give Rachel some type of test but hopefully just seeing her work and listening to her read, etc., will be enough.

I don't feel that homeschooling is a drain or a lot of work. Our routine (if we have one) isn't much different than before. Some days we'll sit for an hour or more with “official schoolwork,” but not every day. The individualized time the kids get is vastly superior to what they would get in a regular classroom situation. I'm always there to answer questions or help them out with something.

So much of their learning is done on their own: reading and looking at books of their choosing, writing letters to friends and family, exploring the environment, helping Richard or me on various projects.

We have no television so Rachel and Seth have been read to a lot and they also listen to story programs on public radio. They listen to “The Spider’s Web” and a program called “The Mind’s Eye” which has been discontinued. We all enjoy the stories we’ve heard. Some of them: *Charlotte’s Web*, *A Wrinkle In Time*, *The Lord Of The Rings*, *Otto Of The Silver Hand*, *Huckleberry Finn*. These were of course in serial form and we eagerly awaited each night to hear the next part. The listening skills that Rachel and Seth developed amaze me. They can listen to these stories and follow what is going on as well or better than Richard and I can at times.

I was shocked to realize that if we had had a TV they wouldn’t have learned nearly as much as they have, simply because of the time element. All the hours Rachel and Seth have put into writing, coloring, thinking up things to play, and absorbing what’s going on around them, would have been spent absorbing what the TV feeds them. I realize there are some good things on television but I also realize that if I had one I couldn’t control the time spent in front of it as much as I would like to.

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*Ronni sent this letter to the superintendent of schools along with her responses to the state’s “Guidelines for Home Instruction”:*

I am writing this letter to request that my daughter, Rachel, be able to continue her schooling at home. Since the birth of our children, first Rachel and then Seth, my husband Richard and I have been very much interested in their education—beginning with the first awarenesses, then on to motor skills, speaking, socialization, and recognition, identification, and understanding of the many things they come into contact with. We wanted an environment for them which would stimulate their curiosity and provide them with the security needed for growth.

We had toyed with the idea of moving to the country from a busy metropolitan area for several years and when Rachel was born we became more and more impressed to do so. We felt that the rural environment with so much of God’s creation still intact would be the best place to raise our children. A place where they could run free, unhindered by restricted yard and traffic, to explore and absorb in their own way. When Rachel was eleven months old we moved to West Virginia.

A year later we bought a piece of land and Richard became busy clearing

it and building our home. Rachel and Seth have shared in the whole experience.

They have watched the building progressing, nailed down floors, learned the workings of many tools and how to use some of them. They have planted gardens, been made aware of the need of good soil for proper growth of plants, and learned what goes into making that soil good. They have helped in the planting of fruit, nut, and pine trees.

They observe and help with the preparation of our meals, the baking of our bread, and the canning of our food for the winter. Through this they have learned much about nutrition and diet.

They watched a pipeline being put in through our property and observed the workings of many large machines. They saw our pond being dug by several of these machines, watched it fill up, learned to swim in it, and now enjoy watching all the creatures that live in it, particularly the bass and blue-gill fingerlings which may someday be an addition to our diet.

They have raised chickens, kittens, ducks, and a puppy. They are very much aware of the changes of the seasons and the effects of these on people, animals, birds, fish, insects, and plants. They can identify most of the trees that grow in this area and many plants.

We take trips back to Northern Virginia to visit our families. While there, we have gone into Washington and visited the Smithsonian museums many times. We have also enjoyed watching the animals at the National Zoo.

They have many interactions with other children. They go to a Children's Center once or twice a week where they have a variety of planned and spontaneous activities, and they visit often with their friends.

All these experiences are just a drop in the well of many which they have had and which are part of their ongoing learning experience. We try our best to give them immediate feedback to their interests and questions. If we don't know the answer, or if we want to look deeper into a certain area of interest we look it up in our encyclopaedias or other books we have at home. If we want still more information, we can go to the library or some other resource.

Rachel and Seth are now reading, writing, and doing basic arithmetic facts. They go at their own speed and according to their individual readiness.

Richard and I are very positive, excited, and intent on teaching both of our children. We feel that as parents, we best know their needs and interests, and can give them a rich and full education. We have been doing this for many



years and I have endeavored to give you some idea of that in this letter.

## Playing With Math

*More from Susan Richman (PA):*

Two nights ago, I told Jesse (4) the funny story I'd read a few years back about a king who measured a proposed bed using his feet, only to have the much smaller carpenter make it by measuring with his own smaller feet—a story about the need for a standard unit of measure. We cut ourselves wooden rulers (free scrap wood, of course) that were as long as our own feet, six for each of us. We began—exploring measurements around our house—how many of Jesse's rulers would fit across his toy store? His chair legs? Our piano bench? His bulldozer shovel? Jesse set to work eagerly, seeing just what had to be done.

We right away faced the problem of needing divisions of our rulers—often a little bit of the last ruler would hang out over the edge. I suggested we might draw marking lines on our rulers, to show where the objects actually ended. A marker was brought out, the lines drawn. At first I thought I'd need to urge him to mark out even “units”—halves, thirds, etc., I soon realized that Jesse himself could sense the need for more markings, and the more concretely that need was felt, the better. Always we compared one length to another, making guesses and estimates—“I wonder if the piano bench is as long as the tunnel? Is Daddy's briefcase as long as the chess board?” I was struck by the very intelligent, common sense approach Jesse used in all this. He'd put series of new markings as needed, always being delighted and amazed when one of his “old” lines helped to pinpoint a new length. His estimates and comparisons were always quite accurate. And how easy it will be for him, when he eventually goes to use “real” rulers, to understand why there are all those 18 little lines all over them. And I'll always remember the spirit of discovery, the creative thinking, the excitement and energy of that evening. How refreshingly different from a textbook approach to measuring!

Another fun toy that allows a child to assimilate quite a lot of mathematical thinking gradually is the geo-board. We've made a variety of sizes, depending on what size wood we've scrounged. The making is simple—find a square piece of plywood or particle board, measure off an array of points to form a grid, hammer in 1” finishing nails, get a pack of assorted

rubber bands, and start experimenting with shapes, lines, and designs. My son began using one when he was two years old—at first the challenge was simply to get a rubber band stretched from nail to nail without it popping back at him. Soon he discovered opening a line into a triangle or square. Now at 4½ he experiments with triangles inside of triangles, makes symmetrical patterns, casually uses words like “diagonal,” “rectangle,” “diamond,” and an occasional “hexagon.” This play has also made my son spot stray rubber bands wherever he goes: “Put this in your pocket, Mommy—we could use it with my geo-boards.”

Also lately we’ve gathered up quite a collection of small ceramic tiles—the type used on bathroom floors. We found sheets of “sample” tiles discarded behind a flooring store. We pried the little squares, rectangles, and large squares off their backing boards, and now have a wonderful new building toy. As Jesse makes pretend boats and buildings, he also muses aloud about how two small squares make a rectangle, and two rectangles make a big square, etc. We’ve retrieved half a floor’s worth of 1” square tiles from a demolished house (a bit of washing, and some hammer blows to loosen the cement on the edges, and they look quite respectable!) And most recently we made a real find—a set of 4-inch hexagonal tiles, again tossed out by a store. Our eyes are really becoming trained—we’re suddenly noticing all loosened tiles everywhere. Who says mathematics isn’t a part of the real world?

I’ve been enjoying *The I Hate Mathematics! Book*. We actually made a cake and cut it into 11 pieces using only 4 straight cuts, as the book challenges!

## Legos

*Wanda Rezac (MA) wrote:*

One thing parents of young children might find helpful. I have found Lego blocks to be fantastic. We got a large building set for Ronnie for his 4th birthday. For about 6 weeks he played almost exclusively with them. I feel he picked up a lot of basic math with them—special relationships, numerical relationships, some geometry, etc. For instance, he couldn’t count above 4 *Sesame Street* style—but he learned to tell immediately (almost intuitively) how many Legos of what sizes he needed to fill a gap on one of his projects.

He also learned, for instance, that 4 Legos are equivalent to  $2 + 2$  or  $3 + 1$ . I noticed our two-year-old Jean making a boat, and she had learned to rearrange the Legos in ways to make them fit if she didn't have the correct size to finish up. We bought them purely for enjoyment (and they save you lots of money, since you can design any item currently in demand, from fire trucks to rockets) but I've been amazed at what the kids have learned.

We've found toys in general to be a big waste of money and energy. If I could, I would rid our house of everything but: Legos, a few stuffed toys, matchbox cars, and some plastic horses that have been much loved. Other than those things, we'd live better without toys. Our children can play for an entire afternoon with two cardboard boxes, tape, string, and an adult to use a razor knife to cut doors, windows, etc., in the boxes. Fisher-Price and Mattel have us all bamboozled!

## **Books Teach Reading**

*From Norm Lee (NY):*

Did I say in a previous letter how I "taught" reading to a hundred 11th graders? My first public school job (1958). I spent my paycheck again and again on paperback books. With my last \$9 I bought an ad in the local paper asking for book contributions. I buried the kids in books and we all read our way to the door. Easy chairs and reading lamps. I skimmed a book every night before bed in search for more teen interest books.

The administration was livid. I invented a grading system that was additive: no effort could pull down a grade. I taught no "word attack skills," no grammar, no spelling. We wrote plays and journals and many pages about what we were reading. Dire predictions to the contrary, the kids scored higher on the NY State Regents' English Exam than any previous class.

## **Art Ideas**

*More from Jacque Williamson:*

I have a few suggestions for inexpensive art activities.

Q-tips are fun to use in tempera paint instead of using brushes.

Empty roll-on deodorant bottles are easy to fill with tempera paint (mixed with water and liquid starch to roll properly), or liquid glue.

Crayon drip paintings are fun and a challenge for little children. Light a candle and hold horizontally over a paper. Hold a crayon over the flame and drip a painting.

Our children have enjoyed making their own block prints for greeting cards. Take a styrofoam tray (like meat and fruit come on) and cut the edges off with a knife. The children use pencils to draw a design in the styrofoam, leaving an indentation wherever the pencil drew. Now take another tray (uncut) and squirt a little bit of block printing ink (we get large tubes of the water-soluble kind from Dick Blick, Box 26, Allentown PA 18105; I'd estimate we could get 500 prints from one 150 cc. tube—it goes a long way.) Then we roll a 4" brayer across the picture, covering it with a thin layer of ink. (A brayer is a hard rubber roller with a handle. Speedball is a common tradename for brayers; we get ours from Dick Blick.) A piece of paper is laid on the inked picture and lightly pressed with hands to make a print.

For anyone familiar with block printing, the procedure is the same except in traditional block printing, the designs are carved into blocks using chisels. This styrofoam method is fast and easy and hard to resist for anyone watching. Oil-based inks print on fabrics for curtains, pillows, etc.

## **Music in the Family**

*Carol Lani Seelbach (TX) writes:*

My husband, Rolf, was born in Germany, and grew up during the war. In his culture, music was a part of everyday life. They sang and played instruments, mastering new tunes for presents to each other! He was turned off by music lessons, yet plays any instrument well, having discovered (by observing and listening) at age twelve "what music was all about." He watched his father play the accordion from the time he was in a baby swing outside.

I have noticed that in our culture it is considered unusual if someone plays music—they're "talented" or "musical." In Europe it was as much a part of daily life as knowing how to eat or ride a bicycle. It surprises some people that our daughter (15 months old) can already dance and sing, and they think she's "musical," when all she's been doing is listening to her papa play the guitar and recorder at bedtime, play the piano and sing before dinner, etc.

I believe a child is only as "musical" as those around them. Sending them

to music lessons is like dropping them off at church and not going yourself. They learn it is something big folks don't really do!

## Playing By Ear

*From Susan Price (FL):*

I read Nancy Wallace's letter in *GWS* #19 with interest, about how Ishmael sat down to play the piano for a little bit all day long and how he barely paid attention to his playing. I had decided that I wanted to learn to play by ear and only rarely played from printed notes anymore. I'm not very good at it, for sure, but I like it. Some tricks I've learned: I watch TV while doing it, listening to what the people say. This works best when I really want to hear what the TV is saying. My problem is that I try too hard intellectually to play by ear; keeping my thinking mind occupied keeps it out of the way of the rest of my mind. I suppose you could read a book instead. Other times I stare out the window at the moving bushes when I play.

Nancy's letter made me decide to stop as soon as I get frustrated at all—I mean stop trying to play the song and instead just hit any old keys like a kid does who pretends he's playing the piano. I've been wondering if doing that a lot more is what I (and anyone) needs to do to really learn to be at home on the piano and play by ear.

Last night I had some music on the stereo and decided to see if I could play along with it at all. I'd tried before at times, and got very frustrated because I couldn't do it very well. I always was left behind—by the time I'd find a right note to play, the music would be on to other notes. Well, last night I just started hitting keys in time with the music and kept on doing it until gradually I was getting a few of the right notes. I kept getting more and more until I knew which key it was in, and by the end of a couple of songs could play the melody line pretty well. There was one song, though, that I never got—not one note—but as long as I kept my fingers moving around, I didn't get frustrated with it, for I'm always learning when I do that. Each time you play a note, your mind connects the memory of that sound to where your fingers were when you played it—it just takes a lot of doing it before the connections become strong.

Why didn't my brain make those connections when I played from written notes all those years? I can only guess that it has to do with the two sides of

the brain being so separate. When you do it by ear you're keeping it all on the right side of the brain, but when you do it by note, you're jumping over to the left side in the middle of the process each time and this fouls it up. Anyway, I really enjoy doing it this way. I love the feeling of knowing in your very bones that the key you're about to hit is going to make the sound you want, instead of feeling sure only intellectually, which feels sort of second-hand.

Another reason I decided to just keep playing was because of what John said in *How Children Learn* about little kids who would try out his cello, playing it right away and with gusto, while adults would look at it warily and gingerly ping a string here and there—in general, hang back, which was what I was doing. (JH: some children *are* cautious and timid with the cello:—and a *few* adults are bold.) And also, of course, I was helped by the idea in *How Children Learn* about the need for kids to “mess around” with educational stuff before they are able to understand it well.

## Using a Tape Recorder

*DR: We've run several stories in GWS about the usefulness of tape recorders, so I thought I'd share how helpful I found mine last spring with playing the piano. Some of the ways I used it:*

1) I wanted to practice the kind of “back-up” piano that I hear at the contra-dances I go to, where the piano provides “oom-pah” chords to accompany the fiddlers (and others) who are playing the melody. But there was no one around to play tunes for me to practice with. So I got out my tape-recorder and picked out the tunes on the piano; then I played back the tunes and accompanied myself! It worked fine and it gave me enough experience to do OK when I started accompanying real live musicians.

2) I invited musicians over to play with me, and one brought a tape recorder. When someone else played a new tune that he liked, he taped it so he could learn the tune at his leisure. When I tried doing this myself with a new tune, I was surprised at how easy it was to learn the tune the next day after playing the recording a few times. Since I am emphasizing playing by ear now, not playing from written music, this discovery is very satisfying. Reading and writing music is such a laborious, artificial job—I think tape recorders can replace a lot of that function.

3) Lately I've been working a lot on playing songs by ear. At one point I

had what seemed like a promising way to arrange a particular song, so I taped it so I could hear better what it sounded like. Since I was just starting to bumble my through that song, I had to accept the fact that there were lots of wrong notes, false starts, hesitations, etc., on the tape, but it really wasn't too hard to ignore them. I was listening for the overall effect, and I found it very encouraging. Over the next few days, I re-recorded the same tune a number of times, and each time I could hear it going faster and smoother. I had a great time working on other songs the same way.

One very interesting thing I found. Often while I was recording would be aware that I made a mistake, and I would think, "Oh, shoot." But when I played back the tape, several times those "mistakes" sounded better than I had expected—they broke the monotony, provided a change in rhythm or harmony or overall sound, and suggested a new idea that I could deliberately incorporate into the song! Talk about learning from mistakes! What a change from the usual music education attitude that a mistake is something wrong, painful, bad.

I realized from the very first note that I played back that my tape recorder, a small portable one, did a pretty lousy job at catching the true sound of a piano, but that's ok too. It lets me save face, a little—sometimes I can blame the machine for the poor quality of the playing!

Was I nervous playing while the recorder was running? Not very, and less and less as time went on. For one thing, I live in an apartment building, so I've long been used to the idea of someone listening while I play. Second, I've come to realize that a tape-recorder doesn't make judgments—it's less critical than I am! And most importantly, I think, I'm recording music for very specific reasons (to work on an arrangement, etc.), not just for vanity or curiosity; having a valid purpose makes me less self-conscious.

(For any of you who are about to write in asking, "What's a contradance?" It's quite a bit like square dancing, except that the dancers are arranged in lines instead of squares. There are a lot of contra-dances in the Boston area; I usually go dancing once a week. The music is always live—Irish, Scotch, and American fiddle tunes.)

## **Language Courses**

*Ann Bodine (NJ) wrote:*

Living Language (*GWS* #20) and similar short courses can be useful to help someone who used to know a language to brush up it. But if a raw beginner wants to really learn a language, I would advise them to invest in one of the more extensive courses. Berlitz sells a substantial Comprehensive Course in French, Spanish, German, and Italian for \$100. With diligence it is possible to learn a language from scratch using the Berlitz taped Comprehensive Course. Address, Berlitz Publications, 866 3rd Av, New York NY 10022.

Even longer foreign language courses can be bought from the National Audiovisual Center (General Services Administration, Washington DC 20409.) They're happy to send a free catalog. They have courses in Amharic, Arabic, Baluchi, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cantonese, Chinyanja, Finnish, French, Fula, German, Greek, Hausa, Hebrew, Hungarian, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Kirundi, Kituba, Korean, Lao, Lingala, Luganda, Mandarin, More, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Shona, Sinhalese, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Thai, Turkish, Twi, Urdu, Vietnamese, and Yoruba. The number of instructional tapes in each course varies. For example, Cambodian has 146 tapes, French has 111 tapes, but Hausa has only 15 tapes. If you choose a language that has a huge course you don't have to buy all the tapes at once. The courses are broken into sections and you can buy one set of tapes at a time.

The National Audiovisual Center's courses are not as entertaining as the Berlitz courses. I do think that if you can possibly afford it, it is worth buying both courses in the same language. The NAC courses have far more material at each level of difficulty than the much shorter Berlitz courses.

I've heard that Linguaphone also has a sufficiently comprehensive course to permit a beginner to really learn a language, but I have no personal experience with Linguaphone.

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DR: We sent for the National Audiovisual catalog, and one very nice feature is that a "Sampler" is available in each language for \$7.50—the first audiotape in a program, and its accompanying textbook. So if you are curious about any of the exotic languages Ann mentions (or the more familiar ones), you can get a taste of what the language is like and decide if you'd like to learn more of it. If you order a sampler, make check payable to National Archives Trust Fund. Prices for the basic courses range from about \$50 to



\$150.

(JH: I am certain that people who are fluent in another language, particularly now Japanese or Chinese, can practically write their own ticket. A very useful and important skill for homeschoolers.)

## In the Mail

*In a letter from Oklahoma:*

I end most discussions about my opposition to schools by saying that if God wanted children to grow up in groups of the same age, we'd have litters, like dogs and cats. So far no one has found a response.

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*From Ohio:*

Now that Seth is in kindergarten, his teacher tells his father and me that Seth has a behavior problem. He does not listen to instructions. The teacher sent us to our family doctor with the suggestion that Seth is "hyperactive." The doctor told us there is no testing for hyperactivity and put our child on a drug called Ritalin. It was supposed to slow Seth down—it made him speedy. He would talk for hours (really) at a time, non-stop. He was difficult to be around. My husband and I felt that Seth must be twice as uncomfortable as we were. Therefore we put the Ritalin in the garbage disposal and turned it on.

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*Linda Kester (Md.) wrote:*

Just received *GWS* #21 and 20 haven't finished reading it yet. I was constantly interrupted by Jo Ann (5), then she asked me to read it aloud. I mistakenly thought that only certain articles, those about kids, would interest her. Whenever I paused, she would pester me to keep reading; it seemed that she stopped me in the middle of every sentence to ask a question about what a word meant or tell me about an incident she was reminded of. Now she wants a turn at typing! I sometimes wish she wasn't so independent! I can always tell her how I'm feeling, though, and ask to be left alone if that's what I really want.

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*From David O'Kelley, ET 2, USS Sam Rayburn, SSBN 635 Blue, FPO NY 09586:*

I recently completed my own degree, a B.S. in Sociology with a minor in Education. I fulfilled 100 credits by testing instead of attending the classroom, using CLEP (see *GWS* # 14), DANTES, GRE, and similar exams and submitting them to New York Regents, a branch of the Univ. of the State of New York. I've never had a class or studied a text in either subject. Curious, isn't it?

## **Beating the S.A T.**

*From US Magazine, 10/13/81:*

Since 1926, the Scholastic Aptitude Test has given high school juniors and seniors the jitters. Administered by the nationwide non-profit College Board and created by the puzzling but powerful Educational Testing Service (ETS), the tests haven't gotten good grades recently from many students and educators. Some argue that the standardized exam may not be a valid measurement of knowledge and may also be unfair to minority groups. Few, however, have suggested a better way to evaluate college students.

The real question is, how do you beat the S.A.T.? Michael Donner has an answer: Relax, just consider the S .A.T. a game.

The author of *How to Beat the S.A .T.* (Workman Publishing, \$3.95), Donner is sympathetic to the test taker's plight. As he explains it, "Much of my book is about boosting the student's confidence, making the test taker more in control of the situation."

The test taker's biggest disadvantage remains the pressure. Anxiety over scores can be enough to blank out the student's retention of algebra and antonyms.

"The S.A.T. tests not only a student's learning, but also his work habits and sense of time management," says Donner. While others try to hone math and verbal skills, Donner sharpens a student's test-taking savvy. Intelligent guessing is the key to his system. He coaches stumped students on how to eliminate answers and go for the least risk

guess. The test taker already knows the odds: Score one point for each right answer, nothing for no answer, and a penalty of  $\frac{1}{4}$  point is subtracted for each wrong answer.

“The difference between right and wrong isn’t one point but  $1\frac{1}{4}$ . Even with the penalty, you can’t afford not to guess,” claims Donner. The College Board seems to agree. In their preparation booklet, they caution against random guessing but suggest, “When you know that one or more choices can be eliminated, guessing from among the remaining choices should be to your advantage.”

Not only did Donner have the laws of probability on his side, but he had six years of teaching (Latin in a junior high school) and test-making experience. By applying both, he could puzzle out ETS answer patterns, arriving at 17 practical rules. The test makers, explains Donner, presumably figured out wild guessers, like roulette players, put their money on one or more favorite columns. Donner has determined that the ETS slots the correct answer less frequently in the middle (C) and extreme columns (A and E) than the laws of chance dictate. He also found that correct answers usually don’t come in pairs or triplets. That is, it’s unlikely there will be two B answers in a row. These theories make up Rule 1: “Tame a wild guess.”

Rule 2 advises the student to avoid non-answers such as “None of the above” and “All of the above.” It’s too easy, a possible trap for a tired test taker. His other rules are trickier, but the logic and application are carefully explained.

To prove his theories, Donner used the rules to answer tests without even looking at the questions and found his scores were *140 points higher than when he filled his answer sheet with random guesses*.

*An excerpt from How to Beat the S.A.T.:*

There are several ways to squeeze the maximum number of correct answers out of a test, but the one that works best with this system is the following five-stage attack:

1. One unhurried reading of the entire test (or section), entering only answers that come without straining, and skipping over all others

without regret. The idea here is to fatten up your CATS: Correct-Answers-to-Time-Spent ratio. Your CATS should run as far ahead of your time allocation as possible. It's unwise to linger over any problems when there are questions that may be answered quickly.

2. A second reading, allowing a few moments more per question, but only if the knot seems to be unraveling. Your CATS will slow down a bit here, but that's to be expected.

3. A third reading, selecting questions that seem most solvable either by direct or indirect methods and concentrating on them. If you still have a fat CATS ratio—20 questions in ten minutes, for example—you can be quite deliberate here. If time pressure isn't a major factor, check all answers carefully, consider them carved in granite, and don't return again to completed questions.

4. The fourth reading is, in a way, the most crucial, because you will proceed to leave the test maker in the dust. You have already solved what he was expecting you to answer based on your level of intelligence and preparation. This is the time for “over-achieving” by cracking the tough nuts, returning to the doubtful cases, applying all methods at your disposal, especially for guessing. Much of your real struggle will probably take place during the fourth reading. Don't let this dismay you; that's how it should be. Seriously attempt all questions for which time permits.

5. Bail-out time: Plan to use the last ten or 15% of your time allocation (in most cases, five minutes or so) exclusively to venture guesses and fill in as many remaining blanks as possible. This procedure should pre-empt your other efforts. It's not a time for panic, but for orderly strategic withdrawal.

If you have answered all questions and have time left, continue rechecking answers if you have the least doubt.

## Magazine

Many *GWS* readers would be interested in *Families Living Naturally* (7015 W “B” St, Belleville, IL 62223), which calls itself “a mini-journal for

families who believe that ‘natural’ shouldn’t stop with the birth.” The articles, letters, and reviews deal with natural and home birth, midwifery, breastfeeding, the family bed, vegetarianism, natural foods, organic gardening, alternative healing methods, family businesses, homeschooling, self-sufficiency, and homesteading. I found two articles in the Autumn ’81 issue especially noteworthy: one, a lovely piece about a father’s changing attitudes towards babies, and the other on episiotomy, which is a routine, painful, and apparently unnecessary procedure in modern birth delivery. Published quarterly, \$8/year; sample \$1.50.—DR

## **Another Old-Timer**

*From Patricia R. Young, 71 N. Livernois, Rochester, MI 4806 3:*

When we began to teach our children at home in 1968, six of our ten children were public school age, as were my husband’s eight wards. We knew no one who had done this and simply had to stumble along, grope about, and hope for the best. Our first year we used Calvert and American School correspondence courses, but quickly learned there was something better.

Others joined us and at one time there were 24 learning together. All teaching was on a volunteer basis and as such was done by those committed to the best for the children. The best teachers turned out to be the older children who had teaching responsibility for younger ones or even for those in their own age group.

There is not a one of our kids who would not declare loud and clear that homeschooling was decidedly a blessing. Our youngest is now in college in an honors program having received a scholarship from Interlochen Arts Academy for her last year of high school, graduating with honors. Three are currently doing honors work in college. Older ones have become: a lawyer, nurse, legal assistant, computer company executive, medical secretary. None had the least difficulty going on to the school of their choice.

Our oldest daughter now teaches her four children at home.

## **Group In Calif.**

*From Linda Walsh, 12099 Oak Glen Rd, Yucaipa, CA 92399:*

Please renew our group subscription. Our group started out as seven couples, all La Leche Leaguers, who were interested in an alternative school for our children. We had met only once when your interview in *Mother Earth News* arrived. Of the original seven, four families are very committed to homeschooling, one family is undecided, one family is still interested in an alternative school, and the seventh family has somewhat shakily started their six-year-old in kindergarten with Dad going a couple of times each week too. We have recently added two more families who are very interested, so we're spreading the word.

We consider our group a support group, but we've also gotten to be good friends and had lots of good times this summer, going to the zoo, sharing cook-outs, picnicking at a nearby lake, etc. This winter, we hope to do some weekend desert camping together. We have children ranging from six months to nine years. None of us are very worried about "socialization," but it is nice to see the children making friends. We would be happy to welcome others to our monthly gatherings.

## **Self-Taught Relative**

*A reader writes:*

I recently contacted a family listed in the *GWS* directory. We live about an hour apart. My children and I visited for an afternoon with the mother and her two boys. It was nice to talk with someone who shares my fears and my conviction that unschooling is a positive idea, which can be done. Mentions of unschooling to my family and friends always brings worried looks. They all hope the idea will show itself to me as being as ludicrous as they see it. I keep hoping they will see their folly in having put such blind trust in the institution of education.

It has been especially difficult to discuss the topic with one relative. She had to leave school in the eighth grade to help support her family. This fact was "admitted" to me with great shame and the stipulation that I not tell anyone. This lady has taught herself bookkeeping and typing, helped run her husband's business, raised two sons, studied for and passed a difficult real estate exam, wall-papered the home, and constantly amazes me with her knowledge of medicine and law. She reads and learns. But she has no high school diploma, so she is ashamed.

## Gnys at Wrk—2

*GNYS AT WRK* by Glenda Bissex (\$17.50 + post). There wasn't room in *GWS* #24 for me to say all I wanted to about this marvelous book, a mother's detailed observations of how her son taught himself to write and spell.

About "tests." In her work with him, Mrs. Bissex asked Paul many questions about his learning, and gave him many of what in another context might be called tests. But the purpose of these tests was not, as with most all school tests, to find out what he *didn't* know, or to prove that he hadn't learned what he was supposed to have learned. His mother knew he was learning. What she wanted to know, and what he knew she wanted to know, was *how* he was doing it. She was interested in his work in the way a scientist (which she was) might be interested in the work of another scientist (which he was). In this very important sense they were equals. She might know more than he did about English, but he knew more than she did about "What he knew" about English and how he was learning more, and his knowledge was at least as important to her as hers was to him.

Practically everything in the book is quotable, but the following seem to me particularly striking and useful:

At this point in his spelling history (Paul) was not after correctness but rather. finding some way of representing for himself the sounds he distinguished in words. His first questions were all about which letters made particular sounds.

After writing this, Paul (5) repeatedly asked if it was all correct. When I said that I didn't have any trouble reading any of the words, he responded impatiently, "But I want to know if it's all correct" This was his first strongly expressed concern for correctness, and his enthusiasm for writing temporarily succumbed to it. (This concern) considerably preceded his entrance into first grade (which subsequently reinforced it.

Paul himself described what he was doing as "writing" rather than "spelling." Had his main interest been in spelling *words*, he would have written word lists; what he wrote, however, were *messages*. He cared about what he wrote, not just about how he wrote it.

From his observations of second grade children in four classrooms, Graves concluded that the range and amount of children's writing was inversely proportional to the amount of assigned writing (that is, assigned topics).

(At 7), Paul challenged himself to spell words more difficult than many on his weekly school lists. Four months later he asked me to give him some hard spelling words and wrote: Exercise, Encyclopeida, Physishun, Dinosaur, Astronot, Massachusetts, Explosives, Worchester, Symphony.

A challenge is something that will stretch your powers, with the likelihood of confirming them; you want to take on a challenge because you have confidence enough that you can succeed. A threat is a task that seems beyond your powers to accomplish or cope with. In setting his own tasks, Paul was able to keep them at the challenge level. He was not content to repeat his accomplishments but spontaneously moved on to harder tasks. He set up a progression of increasingly difficult tasks for himself as many other children spontaneously do. How much might self-set challenges occur in school learning if time and were allowed for them to happen and to be observed?

JH: This is what all children do as they grow up—until they get to school. What all too often happens there is that children, seeing school challenges as threats, which they often are—if you fail to accomplish them, you stand a good risk of being shamed or even physically beaten—fall more and more *out* of the habit of challenging themselves, even outside of school. Their school-induced fears infect the whole of their life. This is why parents are so seldom able, in out-of-school hours, to “make up for” what happens in school.

Much of Paul's spelling ability (at 9) cannot be accounted for in terms of what he has been systematically taught. He learned from corrections and from his own questions. Above all, probably, he learned from his considerable reading—not automatically, because the words were before his eyes, but because as a writer he was attentive to and interested in spellings.



Inventive spellers start from the assumption that they can figure things out for themselves. Perhaps this is why so many of them learn to read before formal instruction. In her study of characteristics contributing to the development of scientists, Anne Roe remarked on the importance of their youthful discovery that they could find things out for themselves.

JH: This is my objection to books about *Teach Your Baby This* and *Teach Your Baby That*. They are very likely to destroy children's belief that they can find things out for themselves, and to make them think instead that they can only find things out from others.

Learning to spell. is largely a matter of knowledge. Spelling ability grows from understanding a system and cannot be accounted for as the product of memorized lists of unpredictably spelled words. If learning to spell is not essentially a matter of habit, then spelling errors need not be feared as entrenching "bad habits."

Graves' observations in Scottish schools show that children given the responsibility for correcting errors in their own writing can do so. As Kenneth Goodman. Charles Read and Piaget (have shown), children's errors are not accidental but reflect their systems of knowledge. If teachers can regard errors as sources of information for instruction rather than mistakes to be condemned and stamped out, students. should be able to assume this more constructive view, too.

JH: This is exactly the point that Seymour Papert makes in *Mindstorms*. When children working with computers make "mistakes," i.e., get from their computer a result other than the one they wanted, they tend to say, if they are newly arrived from school, "It's all wrong!" and want to start over from the beginning. Papert encourages them to see that it's not all wrong, there's just one particular thing wrong. In computer lingo, there is a "bug" in their program, and their task is to "de-bug" it—find the one false step, take it out, replace it with the correct step.

When I taught fifth grade many of my students, filling out forms, would identify themselves as "grils." I was always touched and amused by this mistake, but I thought it was just foolish or careless. Not for many, many years did I understand that the children calling themselves "*grils*" were

thinking sensibly, were indeed doing exactly what their teachers had told them to do—sounding out the word and spelling it a sound at a time. They had been taught, and learned, that the letters *gr* made the sound “gurr.” So they wrote down *gr*. That left the sound “ul.” They knew the L had to come at the end, and they knew that there was an I in the word, so obviously it had to be *gril*. Countless adults had no doubt told them that *gril* was wrong, and I joined the crowd. But it was futile; they went on trying to spell “girl” phonetically, as they had been told to, and could only come up with *gril*. If I had had the sense to say, “You folks are on the right track, only in this case English uses the letters *gir* to make the sound ‘gurr,’” they would have said, “Oh, I see,” and could have done it correctly.

I should add that their mistake shows the folly of teaching what I call Single Letter Phonics, as opposed to syllable Phonics. The fact is that the letters *gr* do not say “gurr” in English words. They only say “gurr” when we foolishly try to say them all by themselves, or ask children to do so. All by themselves, consonants *do not say anything*. How could they; they don’t *appear* in written English all by themselves. They only appear in syllables, that is, joined with vowels, and it is only in syllables that we can say them. But the single letter phonics people go on making this obvious error, which causes great confusion to many children.

On page 125 Mrs. Bissex makes this fundamental point very clearly:

No phonics system provides sufficient information for the accurate pronunciation of most words in English because letters frequently have more than one sound. How does a beginning reader know if was is “wahss,” wayss,” “wass” (with a as in “cat”), “wahz,” “wayz,” wazz,”—or “wuz”? The letters alone cannot tell him; they can at best provide alternative approximations to spoken words. The reader must then decide, on the basis of his familiarity with spoken language and the reading context, the particular word that is intended. As Frank Smith has argued, phonics is easy when you know the words, for then you know which sounds to choose. Pure decoding. could produce strings of nonsense words.

The idiot argument which has been raging for decades between the Look–Say fanatics and the Phonics fanatics might be summed up this way: the former insist that letter sounds tell us nothing; the latter, that they tell us

everything. As Mrs. Bissex points out, neither is true; seeing an unfamiliar written word, we have to use the sounds of letters in syllables to tell us which spoken words it might be, and then context and meaning to tell us which of those words it is.

These are just some examples among many of the keen observations and good sense that fill this book, which will encourage homeschoolers as well as give much useful ammunition for dealing with schools.—JH

## Other New Books Here

*The Adventures Of Tintin: The Crab With The Golden Claws*, by Herge (\$3.65 + post). More than thirty years ago the Tintin comic books were first introduced in France. Almost overnight they became a national classic, the most famous comic books in France and some of the most famous in any country. Some years ago Little Brown began to publish them here, where again they have been a great success. If this volume, *The Crab With the Golden Claws*, proves popular enough, we will add more of the books to our list.

Tintin, the hero, is a French boy journalist-detective, about twelve-years-old. In each book in the series, he meets, chases, escapes, struggles with, and with the help of his little white dog Snowy, eventually overcomes and brings to justice a different set of criminals. Tintin is no American-style superhero; he has no miraculous equipment or unusual powers, except (like other characters in the series) the ability to walk away unhurt from auto wrecks and airplane crashes. He is an “ordinary” boy, not even unusually large or strong, but exceptionally alert, observant, quick, intelligent, resourceful, and courageous—just what ordinary children would like to be. Like many other comic book heroes, he never ages or changes from story to story, though the world changes around him—in early stories, we see propeller-driven airplanes; in later ones, jets. But he and all the other main characters remain the same. When the strip was first written, French boys of Tintin’s age wore knickers (pants that buckled just below the knee), as my friends and I did, and though by now most French kids probably wear blue jeans just like Americans, Tintin sticks to his knickers and white socks. To bring his clothes up to date would be unthinkable.

The Tintin books are wonderful. I have read many of them with great

pleasure. The drawings, all in color, are beautifully done, accurate, lively, and full of the kind of detail that children like. The plots are varied and interesting, full of action, suspense, clues, chases, and detective work. Unlike most of today's "comics," where all the humor is adult and all the adventures deadly serious, these Tintin stories will make many children laugh, since they are full of slapstick humor, people always taking pratfalls and running into things, including each other. On each of the sixty-two pages there are a dozen or more drawings, so the book contains the best part of a year's worth if kids had to read them in the papers a day at a time. Since the characters always have plenty to say, there are more words, and a much wider and more varied vocabulary, than you'd find in many regular children's books. Both because of all the talk, and all the informative detail in the drawings, which can also be talked about, they should be wonderful books to read aloud.

By the way, when you see the little dog with "Wooah! Wooah!" coming out of his mouth, don't read it that way, but do your best dog bark; that's the way the French write down the sound of a dog barking.

The Tintin books have been published in about thirty other countries, so that for any Tintin story in English you could get the same story in French, German, Italian, Japanese, etc., and use them as a way to learn (or just to look at) that other language. In fact, if there is enough interest, we might someday carry foreign editions of some of the books. Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this first one as much as I have.—JH

*Modern Display Alphabets*, selected by Paul M. Kennedy (\$2.95 + post). In the chapter "Making Letters" of *What Do I Do Monday*, John wrote:

We have such a passion for uniformity and control. One might think we had all come off one of our own assembly lines. In classrooms all over the country we can see, tacked up over the chalkboards, the same letter chart—on green cardboard—capital and lower case A, then capital and lower case B, then C, and so on. On some of these charts, and these I would really like to rip off the wall, there are even little arrows and numbers to show in what direction and in what order the child must make the strokes of the letter! Must children feel they have to make their letters in exactly the shape they see on the chart? This might make sense if it were true that only the exact shape of the A could be recognized by other people as an A. But this is not true. Even the books in our classrooms have many different kinds of A's.

Typography is one of the great crafts or even arts, with a long history of its own. Why not give children a glimpse of this part of the continuum of experience? Why not get, from any maker of type, or printer, or commercial artist, or art supply store, some sheets of samples of typefaces, so that children can see some of the many ways in which we make our letters? Better yet, why not invite the children, using old newspapers, magazines, labels, and so on, to find as many different kind of A's (or other letters) as they can?

We might start everyone thinking about the number of ways we can make a capital A. We could make it tall and thin, or short and fat. We could make it slant to the right or to the left. We could make the strokes thick (heavy) or thin (light), or a mixture of the two. We could put feet (serifs) on the legs, or leave them off. We could put the bar high in the letter, or low in the letter. We could weight the left-hand stroke, as in the type face Ultra Bodoni. We could make our strokes hollow, or fill them with cross-hatching, or dots. We could make our strokes out of wiggly lines, or right-angled steps, or dots, or short dashes. Why not tempt children with the idea of making A's (or other letters) in as many different ways as possible? Making letters would then be an exploration, an adventure, not a chore. The chances are that they would make a great many more letters. Also, by making a variety of shapes they would train and coordinate the writing muscles of hand and arm far better than they could with the old, laborious, wrinkled-brow, tongue-sticking-out-of-the-corner-of-the-mouth drill.

DR: It is in this spirit of excitement, discovery, and variety that we offer *Modern Display Alphabets*. It is a collection of 100 different type faces, one complete alphabet and set of numerals per page, reproduced from an actual type catalogue. Some of the alphabets are black and imposing; others are silly and informal. Some are outlines or scripts or shaded in various ways; some remind you of circuses or computers or antique signs. (I believe the "Display" in the book title means these type faces are likely to be used in signs, advertisements, captions, etc., as opposed to, say, the text of books.) Each style has its own name, and the sounds of the names alone are wonderful—Swash Buckle, Sweetheart, Trooper Roman, Trump Gravur, Twilight. Some of the styles have little jokes built in—for example, each

letter of “Sunrise” has a shadow in front of it as if the sun was striking it from behind.

I can imagine children of any age enjoying this book. Very young children just discovering the magic of words and books might like an adult to name the letters for them, or they might want to look through the book on their own. Children starting to draw and write could not help but get many ideas of the possible way of making letters, as John writes above. Older children might want to trace the letters to make neat captions for their own artwork, signs, etc., as well as design their own alphabets, and to find out even more about graphic lettering, typefaces, calligraphy, and the history of the written word. A very useful and inspiring book to have around the house.

*The Snow Walker*, by Farley Mowat (\$2.00 + post). This is a collection of stories, some true, some fiction but drawn from real life, about the people of the Arctic North, their ways of living and working, their religion, their terrors, their hardships, and their ways of enduring in a world and climate that seems incapable of sustaining human life, and where most of us could not survive a day.

Mowat is almost alone in having written about these brave, generous, and stoic people; other writers, like Jack London, have written about the far North, but mostly about white men there. These stories give us a short look at the inside of a way of life very different from our own, but from which we may still have important things to learn.—JH

*The Left Hand Of Darkness*, by Ursula LeGuin (\$2 .00 + post). Sometimes it troubles me that Ursula Le Guin is classified as a “science fiction” writer, because it means that many people who love books and take them seriously may never read hers. On the other hand, it has this advantage, which people who do read her books do so only because they expect to enjoy them, and not to get a good mark on an English paper or test. At any rate, I have read quite a bit of what is supposed to be the best fiction of our time, and I can think of few modern “serious” writers who write more beautifully, or whose books throw more revealing and useful light on our world, or give me more pleasure, or stand up better under re-readings.

So here is another beautifully told and exciting story, about a man who comes as an ambassador from a great Federation of civilizations to a distant planet that has not yet joined that Federation. His task is to ask them to join, and if he can, to persuade them. Since the Federation, being wise, knows that

in the long run it is useless to have planets join unless they really want to, they send their ambassadors on these missions alone and unarmed. A native of the planet asks this man what will happen if he is killed. He says that nothing will happen—except that after a while another ambassador will be sent. Since the planet does not have to say *Yes* to joining the Federation unless it wants to, when it says it, it will mean it.

The story is about the visitor's adventures on this planet, which is divided between two states, one a highly individualist, anarchic, preindustrial state, the other a modern scientific totalitarian state much like Russia. That is all I will say about it. I envy you the excitement of reading it for the first time, and hope I'll soon have a chance to read it again.—JH

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# Growing Without Schooling 26

March 1982

John Holt is away on his European lecture trip (a schedule appears elsewhere in this issue). Before he left, he delivered the final revisions for the new edition of *How Children Learn* to his Delacorte editor. Also (in addition to the events mentioned in *GWS* #25), he spoke on radio shows aired in Phoenix, Fall River, Mass., and Pittsburgh; did a TV show in Pittsburgh with homeschooler Katy White, and another TV show, *Speaking Out*, in Ontario; gave the keynote address at a conference on psychology and education in Newtonville, Mass.; and spoke at the University of Evansville on his Indiana trip.

At John's request, I have started doing the radio and TV requests that have come in. My first opportunity was an hour-long phone interview from a radio show in Pittsburgh; a week later, homeschooler Barbara Rodriguez and I were on a late-night Boston TV talk show. Since then I've been on radio in Providence RI, New York City, and Framingham MA (with Mary Maher). Several of these interviews were prompted by an excellent article by Elin McCoy in the April *Parents Magazine* on homeschooling and compulsory education.

No way of knowing when the *People Magazine* story featuring John—and the Mahers will be printed—keep a lookout for it.

A friend's family invited Tim Chapman to stay with them in Spain, so he left March 28 for a month or two. He intends to learn Spanish while he's there, and later travel around Germany and Italy. Pat Farenga, who had done volunteer work for us, will handle the subscriptions and book orders while Tim is gone.

For the first time, we have over 4000 current subscribers to *GWS*! In the first three months of 1982, we've received about 550 new subs and 400 renewals (which we especially appreciate).

Delacorte, the publishers of *Teach Your Own*, have just sent a flyer about the book to all the people who have written us since John's first appearance on *Donahue* in 1978. Too early to tell yet what kind of response we'll get to



the mailing.

The newly revised edition of *How Children Fail* (the original text plus 20–25,000 words of new writing) will be available by the time you get this. As usual, we'll sell copies from this office: \$5.35 + 75¢ postage. The original edition is no longer available.—Donna Richoux

## From Peggy

friends—a note to say many, many thanks to all of you who have sent me cards and letters of good wishes. i especially like the homemade cards; i make them myself for special people and occasions. for those of you wondering why. i was in a grisly and bizarre accident. you may have read of or seen on *60 Minutes*, the case of the “faulty ford transmission recall?” well, on feb. 20 my '73 thunderbird, which was included in that recall case, jumped out of park into reverse, and began rolling down my driveway. as i stepped back to avoid the moving car i lost my footing and slipped to the ground, landing under the car. the front wheel rolled over my left arm, jaw, and nose, and kerplunked onto the right arm. the left arm sustained multiple bruises, my nose was gashed—i suspect from a piece of gravel—and my right arm was seriously fractured.

i should be pretty well healed by the end of may, but until then my ability to help is strongly curtailed. i have a homemaker at the house, and i'm ordering the books we sell from there. i can put in a few hours a week at the office, but get very sore quickly. my one-handed typing is easiest in lower case only, and even that pulls and yanks at my back and shoulders. luckily the plans for john's europe tour needed only final touches. a lot of other work will be delayed somewhat, but all considered i'm pretty up to date. so, my thanks again for the generous and much appreciated concern. now on to law suits and healing, backed by a healthy regard for nothing short of a miracle.  
—peggy durkee

## Living Life Fully

*George Levenson (CA) wrote:*

Without knowing exactly how or why, I seem to have reached a frame of mind wherein my children's presence at home is not “instead of being in

school.” They carry on their lives much the same way I/we adults conduct ours, playing with each other and by themselves; being happy, sad, grumpy according to the match of mood and situation; being bored, being intensely interested, fretting, carefree, depending, it seems, on such variables as the weather, their hunger or tiredness, and all the other factors that make humans such interesting and unfathomable creatures.

Watching them play, sing, squabble, eat, dance, read, bathe, run, sleep, look out for each other, sort out disagreements, share so that inequalities get ironed out (or don’t)—watching all this and more has been a framework for experiencing life. And at this point, it’s hard to imagine it being otherwise. I’ve never lived in a house that is being so fully utilized as this one. It feels good.

## **Victory In Idaho**

*From Debbie Jones (ID):*

We have had an exciting time here the last month or so. The state superintendent of public instruction introduced a bill to make the local school boards have jurisdiction over unaccredited private schools in their district. Their stated intent was to get at these homeschoolers who were calling themselves private schools so that the local boards couldn’t get at them. The Idaho Federation of Independent Schools introduced an alternative bill which would have done the same thing except it limited the subjects they could require to language skills, American history and government, geography, and basic mathematical computation. We were against it too. There was another bill to have private schools register with the state each year and report the name of the director, the principal, the number of teachers and number of students. At the present time even this is not required in Idaho; the Idaho Constitution is very limiting on public school authority, stating specifically that it has authority over public instruction. The legislature so far had been consistent in its support of this principle; they are not quick to give public school people any control of private education even so much as having the private schools register with them.

We did a lot of phoning and a lot of writing. We even went over to Boise (five hour drive) and testified before the Senate HEW Committee when they had a hearing. At first the Christian school people and large private schools

were very leery of being seen with us. They wanted us to keep quiet because we were the ones who were giving private schooling a bad name or something. I used John's "legislative strategy" from *Teach Your Own* almost verbatim. Those that heard me speak thought it was great. One after another, some great people gave some excellent testimony: Linda Q. Jones, PhD; Susan Bond, certified teacher; Ed Bond; Paula West; Leslie Bair; Sherrel Olsen—each in turn making important points. Paula used what Donna gave her over the phone about the legislation going on in other states. Paula made it sound as if everyone else in the country was going just the opposite way and trying to make it easier for parents to teach their own.

After the hearing, it was as though the ice had been broken. Many Christian school people came up to shake my hand and congratulate me. We had stood up and let them know we were responsible people, parents trying to do a good job, people with credentials and titles, people who know the law. They were impressed and felt the legislators were too.

Well, we have finally defeated all the bills. The two bills which would have given control to local school boards were killed in committee. The registration bill was killed on the Senate floor, 19 to 9! We felt especially good about this because it was pretty much out in the open that it was a homeschool issue and still they were all defeated. I feel that we actually had an influence in defeating these bills.

There are between 50 and 100 families teaching their children at home in Idaho now. Sometimes I feel as if we've got a tiger by the tail, or as if we are riding on the crest of a huge wave that is rising and rising up and nothing anyone can do will stop it.

## Happy in Ithaca

*Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote in an article in Inquiry magazine, 3/29/82:*

We had been teaching our ten-year-old son, Ishmael, at home for three years when we moved from rural New Hampshire to Ithaca in upstate New York. As for Ishmael's sister, Vita, who was six, she had been learning right along with the rest of us since the day she was born.

The quality and variety of the resources here for children are incredible. As soon as we moved I found myself racking my brains over which of four ballet schools to send the kids to. We had a choice of two music schools and

three or four different types of drama and art classes, plus a gymnastics center, a fine city library, and the university library where Ishmael wanders around in the stacks practically in ecstasy. Then there are two state parks within bicycling distance, and a shopping district that the kids can walk to by themselves, complete with bookstores, record stores, a bagel shop, and a Greek pizza place. And when Ishmael wants to earn money, he has three elderly neighbors to work for, shoveling their snow, raking leaves, and mowing lawns. Vita, a competent businesswoman in her own right, has already made 75 cents by setting up a used doll stand right across the street from the school-bus stop.

Here (in New York), families can opt for homeschooling on an elementary level with no formal “approval process” at all, if they notify their local public school superintendent and agree to teach a minimum of courses required by law. In Ithaca, we found to our delight, the superintendent took a relaxed attitude toward our request to keep Ishmael and Vita out of his schools.

“Although I think we have a very good school system here,” he told us, “how parents decide to educate their children is their own business. And if you have the guts to take on the responsibility of teaching your kids at home; then I think I can assume that you are doing a good job.” Right then we knew that this was going to be our town!

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*Nancy also wrote to us:*

These past few months are the first we’ve ever had that have been completely free. Always before, I was somewhat concerned that the kids should do a smattering of all their school subjects each week—a little math, handwriting, science, etc.—since, as I told myself, the school people were looking over our shoulder. But since moving to Ithaca, we now have no one in charge of us who cares what we do, as long as we do something for five hours a day. At the same time, I find that music is taking up more and more of our time—1½ hrs. a day for each of the kids, and after working with them for three hours, I just don’t have much energy for anything. So I’m not putting the effort into “school” that I used to, although we still read to the kids at night.

What’s surprising is that even without my interference, they are just as academic as ever. Sometimes, for example, I’ll start to feel guilty and be

about to ask Vita if she'd like to do a little reading or writing, but when I find her, she'll be lying on her bed with a book, or typing on Bob's typewriter, or working in her math book. And often, out of the corner of my ear, I'll hear Ishmael say to himself resignedly, "Well, I guess I'd better do some math." And yesterday he handed me a five-page letter he'd written to me (to further my education) on the life and times of Camillo Benso Cavour.

I still try as much as possible to keep a journal of the kinds of things the kids do each day, mostly for my own peace of mind. If you are a teacher, you can just teach every day for six hours and feel fine, because you did your best, regardless of how much the kids actually learned. But if you don't teach, it is so easy to really worry about how much your kids are learning, and for me, the journal is a way to ease that worry, since the kids are so constantly busy doing neat things and the journal helps me focus on them.

## **Growing in Ontario**

*Anna Myers (Ont.) writes:*

Drew's still in hockey and doing very well. He has a different attitude than many kids on the team. He plays his hardest to win—with team spirit. He is most often the kid who gets the puck, and instead of hogging it, he passes it to someone else to score the goal. He doesn't mind when they lose, it's the playing that counts! He gets up every morning and does exercises to "get in shape." He watches NHL hockey on TV with intelligence, to get ideas; he quite often writes little drawings of plays he's going to try.

Drew's finally reading! From that sentence you must realize that we've been very anxious about this particular area. The first year that we homeschooled, Drew was six, and, true to our beliefs, we left him alone and he was coming along nicely. He would ask for us to write letters for him, he'd copy notes, etc. We read to him a lot!

Then, the trouble with the school board happened, they called him in for testing, and made him feel stupid when he couldn't read the list of words. They also made us very nervous about maybe having a court fight on our hands, with not a leg to stand on—since he really couldn't read!

So, that summer poor Drew had reading pushed down his throat every day, until August when we had him tested by a private psychologist who put him at the "halfway through grade 1" level. We wanted this in case we had to go

to court. Drew realized the severity of our problem at the time and went along with it so he wouldn't have to return to school, but as soon as we were "safe" in our own school, he forgot everything that he knew, and instead of looking forward to reading as an adventure, as he had done before, he began consciously to avoid it. He was also very frustrated as he wanted to read *National Geographic* so badly, but he figured reading was too hard and too much work. No, not too much work—he's not afraid of work—I think he thought it would take too long!

Anyway, we left him for a year, and a couple of months ago I suggested we slot sometime in the morning for reading. This is just "him and me" time and he can ask any questions he wants about the words he's reading. He seemed relieved that I brought up the topic again and this time has attacked the job with gusto—it shows, too! He's so pleased with himself and all I usually do is sit with him—not too many words are too hard for him to figure out. He's 8½ now and I would say, at the beginning stages—maybe where a Grade One kid would be at the end of the first year, but his progress is in leaps and bounds. We'll let you know when he's above grade level; we're not too interested in keeping track (testing: etc.), but when he can finally read his favorite wildlife books, space books, etc.—we'll know!

Yesterday, Drew asked, "Does the world move around in space?" I answered, "Yes, 365 days to go around the sun." Then immediately afterwards, he said, "How are hurricanes made?" I wondered all yesterday about how he could have two such unrelated questions so close together on the tip of his tongue—he does this all the time. Most of the time I can't answer his questions so he has to wait until his next trip to the library, and then he has to make a mental note of remembering what he wants to know. He does remember quite a few of the topics he's asked questions about.

I've been thinking that an important part of his learning is just asking the questions; whether he gets an answer or not doesn't seem to matter. Maybe just the sound of the question is enough for his brain to catalogue his queries for future reference—then slowly as they're answered, his brain crosses them off!

On work. Burt is editor of a magazine, *Ontario Out of Doors*. He is able to take us on many of his hunting and fishing trips and he works at home a fair bit. I was a teacher but will never return! Right now another homeschooling friend and her kids, and me and my kids, are thinking of

starting an egg delivery business which we hope will grow into a travelling “Health Food Store.”

We have arranged to have swimming lessons at the local pool—all ages and all levels in one class. We have two toddlers, four adults, and six kids who range in age from four to eleven. One teacher teaches all of us and we have a ball. We have the whole pool to ourselves since they don’t have many people who use it during the day! The teacher has to be very flexible because of the wide range of ages and levels, so there’s lots of free swimming time and a nice mix of stroke correction.

We also take advantage of the pre-school skating at the arena once a week. Recreation departments love to have people using their facilities during the day so they can justify spending the fortune they spent to build them. They’ll usually work things out on our terms, if we want daytime hours.

We’ve arranged for group music lessons now! We can choose our instruments and borrow them, included in the low group price. I guess we’ll be the first Homeschoolers’ Band! The teacher’s pleased she can earn some money during the day.

## **A Texas Family**

*From Linda Mills (TX):*

Tammy is 14 and often helps her public school friends with their assignments and projects. Last summer she said, “I’m bored.” I said, “I’m not a social director,” so she took her tape recorder and guitar (and often a brother or sister) and visited the two nursing homes in town. She interviewed a lady in her 90s who had traveled all over the world, and many other folks who were happy to reminisce about “the olden days.”

Mike is 12, an “L.D.” kid who, a year ago, read low first-grade books, haltingly. It made me *nervous* to listen to him! So I quit, guiltily, meaning to start again soon. About eight months later, driving home from the grocery store, I was amazed to hear, “Hey, Mom, let’s make this ...” He was reading, smoothly, the recipe on a flour sack.

Who knows what his reading level is now? He has pen pals from your directory (bless their hearts, they print, too!). He’s in charge of our garden, and very graciously “needs” the younger children’s help. He cooks, especially breakfast, as I’m a slow starter—helps his dad with auto repairs,

those “two-man jobs” *I hated*—keeps everyone’s bikes repaired—loves computer games—and has recently begun joining in “adult” conversations when we have friends over. (And, being the rude person I am, when they tried to ignore him, I said, “Uh, Mike has something to say.”)

Amy is 9 and was always something of a free spirit anyway. She loved school and her teachers, and they loved her. She *was* beginning to have some problems with her friends because of the teachers’ obvious preference for her. Hearing “Let’s don’t play with *her*, she’s so smart” hurt her badly. She is now able to play with those kids, as they apparently no longer feel threatened by her.

Amy likes to make things shine, crochet, mother her dolls and cats, read, skate. But I’m afraid she’s still hooked on workbooks. She cried when I told her I wasn’t going to buy any more. I’m not sure what to do—guess I’ll buy them and let her tire of them on her own.

David, now 7, was tested at the beginning of first grade, was determined to be very bright, then was continually harassed to achieve, threatened with a “lower group.” I couldn’t believe the nasty notes printed on his papers, ostensibly to him but obviously for my benefit. His suffering lasted from September to January. He spent a lot of time hiding behind the couch, crying. I watched this child shrivel before my eyes. Then I watched him heal.

I couldn’t make any sense out of your talk about “thinking math” (math is just something you follow the rules and do) until Dave informed me, “Hey, Mom, 3 won’t go two ways” (He’s not into fractions) “but 30 will—15 and 15. Nine won’t but 900 will.” He and the Cuisenaire rods get along *just fine*. He, like his dad, loves word games, puns and such. The two of them sometimes make me want to hide behind the couch.

And last, Jess. (Did you think there was no end?) Jess is 4. Last year I was so busy with the other four, trying to shovel the knowledge of the world into their minds, that I had little time for him. Guess who learned the most! Jess was born at home, and his dad has often said, “At least we seem to be doing the right things with one kid.” Jess just minds his own business, reads—having taught himself, as I did—draws, copies book covers (and I’d never noticed they come in *all styles* of print.) He writes beautiful messages: Dear God I hop I see yoo sum tim.

I took piano lessons for two years—“no talent.” Tried again last year—gave up in defeat. Finished reading *How Children Fail*, put the book down,



sat down and *played*. That was two weeks ago, and not only am I still playing, but *every child* has started doing so. Tammy, who is *very* good at it, quit her lessons and now plays every day without being told to. She hated her classical pieces; when I told her, “So don’t play them,” she decided they weren’t so bad after all.

We have a new rule: *no criticism*. Don’t laugh at Mom’s piano playing. Don’t correct another person’s grammar, spelling, etc., unless he asks. If someone asks how to spell a word, *don’t* say “Look it up in the dictionary,” *tell* him. One surprise for me—Mike (12) feels no shame at asking David (7) how to spell a word. And why should he? Dave isn’t “ashamed” to ask Mike to put air in his bike tire!

Next I’m going to try drawing. Every year, the teachers determined in the *first week* that I had no artistic ability—left me alone—and gave me a B because you can’t fail a “good kid” just because she isn’t talented. I’m very excited about *Drawing On The Right Side Of The Brain*. We did have a bit of backsliding yesterday when we were painting and Amy said, “Mom, I don’t think flowers are supposed to float up into the air toward the clouds. Oh, Mom! I’m sorry.” Undaunted, I tacked my picture on display right alongside theirs!

Today Tammy made a lovely design with Cuisenaire rods and is copying it with oil paints. The boys are making robot suits; Amy is studying American history, those fascinating colonial times. This is the year Jess would be going to kindergarten and I’d be “free.” My head has been full of long-forgotten scripture lately. The one that has been pounding at me for *days* is, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”

## Apprenticeships

*Lyn West of Tennessee (“Their Own Budgets,” GWS #23) sent us a Memphis newspaper clipping on her family’s homeschooling, which was approved by the school superintendent (unusual in that state). According to the article:*

“Apprenticeships” are arranged for the youngsters each month. They spend time and do actual work if possible with persons in various occupations. The apprenticeships have included time with a librarian, a farmer, and others. They have interviewed a stock car driver.

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*Lyn also told us:*

The boys (11 and 9) had three days prior to Christmas on their own with an Indian family that lives totally off the land (no water, electricity, heat, etc.; they eat only what they hunt, grow, or raise) in a mountainous, very remote wilderness area north of Nashville. The boys milked goats, chopped firewood, drew water from a stream, played home-made hockey on a frozen pond, climbed mountains, learned about nature, the Indian's strong beliefs about the value of non-waste, water, land, etc. They ate unusual food, slept on the floor of the hand-made dwelling. It was 3 degrees. The boys loved it and came home full of things to tell us. Next month, with an architect.

## **Working For Cousteau**

*Theo Giesy (VA) writes:*

Darrin (14) and Susie (12) volunteer three days a week at the Cousteau Society. They do all sorts of things, like work in membership. Darrin works mostly in the warehouse, packing things members have ordered (books, T-shirts, etc). He also drives the fork-lift.

Since they work there so much they were invited to the \$50-a-ticket reception the night before the Calypso sailed. Darrin couldn't go so I got to go in his place. I met Jacques and Jean-Michele Cousteau. Darrin has made friends with Jean-Michele's son, Fabien—they are about the same age and have many common interests.

I like the Cousteau's attitude toward their employees and volunteers. They appreciate Darrin and Susie very much. They were worried about the lack of work permits and the number of hours spent, so I wrote a letter on Brook School letterhead saying that they were working there as part of the Brook School Curriculum and under the responsibility of Brook School. That satisfied everyone; it looks official.

Darrin runs the spotlight for Tidewater Dinner Theater, \$40 per week (6 shows). That is why he couldn't go to the Cousteau reception. He hopes to be able to run the light board soon, \$115/week. He enjoys doing spotlight and is treated as an adult around the theater. He generally passes for 17 (he'll be 15 next month).

# Lincoln's Education

*From Manas magazine, 10/7/81:*

Abraham Lincoln told his law partner, William Herndon:

“I never read textbooks for I have no particular motive to drive and whip me to it. As I am constituted I don't love to read generally, and. I feel no interest in what is thus read. I don't, and can't remember such reading. When I have a particular case in hand I have that motive, and feel an interest in the case—feel an interest in ferreting out the questions to the bottom—love to dig up the question by the roots and hold it up and dry it before the fires of the mind. I know that general reading broadens the mind—makes it universal, but it never makes a precise deep clear mind. The study of particular cases does do that thing, as I understand it”.

A clergyman asked Lincoln, “What has your education been?”  
Lincoln replied:

“Well, as to education, the newspapers are correct; I never went to school more than six months in my life. I can say this, that among my earliest recollections I remember how, when a mere child, I used to get irritated when anybody talked to me in a way I could not understand. I don't think I ever got angry at anything else in my life. But that always disturbed my temper, and has ever since. I can remember going to my little bedroom, after hearing the neighbors talk of an evening with my father, and spending no small part of the night walking up and down, and trying to make out what was the exact meaning of some of their, to me, dark sayings. I could not sleep, though I often tried to, when I got on such a hunt after an idea, until I had caught it; and when I thought I had got it, I was not satisfied until I had repeated it over and over, until I had put it in language plain enough, as I thought, for any boy I knew to comprehend. This was a kind of passion with me, and it has stuck by me; for I am never easy now, when I am handling a thought, till I have bounded it North, and bounded it South, and bounded it East, and bounded it West.”

“Oh, yes! I ‘read law,’ as the phrase is; that is, I became a lawyer’s

clerk in Springfield, and copied tedious documents, and picked up what I could of law in the intervals of other work. But your question reminds me of a bit of education I had, which I am bound in honesty to mention. In the course of my law-reading, I constantly came upon the word “demonstrate.” I thought at first that I understood its meaning, but soon became satisfied that I did not. I said to myself, “What do I mean when I ‘demonstrate’ more than when I ‘reason’ or ‘prove’?” I consulted *Webster’s Dictionary*. That told me of “certain proof,” “proof beyond the possibility of doubt”; but I could form no idea what sort of proof that was. I thought a great many things were proved beyond a possibility of doubt, without recourse to any such extraordinary process of reasoning as I understood ‘demonstration’ to be. I consulted all the dictionaries and books of reference I could find, but with no better results. You might as well have defined blue to a blind man. At last I said, ‘Lincoln, you can never make a lawyer if you do not understand what demonstrate means’; and I left my situation in Springfield, went home to my father’s house, and stayed there till I could give any proposition in the six books of Euclid at sight. I then found out what ‘demonstrate’ means, and went back to my law-studies.”

## Edison

*Two readers sent us quotes about Thomas Alva Edison. First, from Isaac Asimov’s Quasar, Quasar, Burning Bright:*

He was a puzzling boy from the start. His curious way of asking questions was taken as an annoying peculiarity by the neighbors. When he made little progress at school, his mother inquired and was told by the schoolteacher that the boy was “addled.” His mother, furious, took him out of school.

Before he died he had patented nearly 1,300 inventions, a record no other inventor has ever matched.

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*And from an unidentified book:*

Edison’s mother would not send him to school. She kept him home to

teach him herself. Later he said she was the making of him. This gave him much *time* for reading, creating, inventing that he wouldn't have had otherwise. Later, he went to a private school where they told him he read too much! He felt that if he had stayed in school and gone on to college that he wouldn't have learned as much as he could on his own, nor would he have had time to cultivate particulars.

## Self-Made

*From the Personal Development Letter (see GWS #21, page 14):*

An interview with Mr. Russel (Bill) Gammel, a general contractor, photographer, husband, father, grandfather, and self-made man. Bill Gammel has a lot to say about living life in a courageous way while doing what one enjoys, and about becoming self-reliant. Born in Montana in 1911, Bill became a trapper at age 6 in order to help feed his family which was near starvation. Bill ran away at 9-years-old after a misunderstanding with his father.

Even though it was not until three years ago that he learned to read, he has much to teach us all. even those of us who work in affluent corporate environments, and hold graduate degrees or other commonly respected symbols of external success.

Q. You've lived your life pretty much the way you've wanted. You've always made a good living, yet I hear you're pretty fussy about the jobs you'll accept. What makes you able to do that? Aren't you afraid of not working, or not having enough business?

A. I never work on anything I don't want to work at. I listen carefully to everything my customer wants because he's got to be satisfied. I recently looked at a job where it was obvious the man wouldn't be happy with the job unless I cut a few corners and did things so that it wasn't up to code. That's a job I'll turn down quickly.

Q. What's your feeling about people who complain about being "too old" to do what they really want, or who say they can't find the right job or move into a better position because it's too late, or because they have too many responsibilities, or because they didn't get the right

breaks in life?

A. I want to answer that with a story. A while back, my wife bought me \$10.00 worth of tropical fish for a Christmas present. A year later, in addition to my regular work, I was earning \$700 a month off of that present—just doing it on the side. Later, I sold that business to a man I know who had been an aircraft worker, but had had a heart attack and thought he couldn't work anymore. I showed him exactly what to do, and today that man is the largest dealer in tropical fish in the area.

I also think it was a terrific blessing that I had no schooling. what happens to kids when they go to school? All those years under that system, they lose their way once they go there. One thing I kept hold of: my individuality. I'm an individual if there ever was one. There are many people like me, but there is no other me.

## **Self-Taught Husband**

*From a New York reader:*

My husband is a fine example of a nearly homeschooled person—except he has shame and feelings of shortcomings attached to it. His mother kept John home from school a great deal of the time. Sometimes it was because she didn't feel like driving him to school (which was a good distance away), sometimes because she wanted company during her errands and sometimes because she wanted him to do work around the house. Little did she know that she was doing him a great favor! Even though she was ashamed of her “lack of responsibility” in regard to her son's education, and transferred these feelings to him, he is still glad to have had the freedom to learn on his own.

At very young ages, John was charged with housekeeping responsibilities and even home repair and improvements. He figured out how things worked and how to fix them when they didn't—usually because he was searching for something to do after he completed the work his mother asked of him. He painted fences and rooms at his mother's request and learned to figure the amount of paint needed for a particular result.

Now, after receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts from his university, my husband is a highly respected expert in his field, technical theater, and he is as imaginative at finding a solution to any technical problem now as he was

as a child. When others say, “That’s not the way things are done,” he says “We’ll solve the problem in the best way possible,” and damn the standard procedures if they won’t achieve the desired result. John is also a wonderful boss; as production manager for theatrical events, he oversees and directs the work of many stage carpenters and electricians, etc., and everyone seems to enjoy working with him. For that is how he works—*with* people, learning from them if he can, and enjoying it all. Knowing he is this way, and knowing how he feels he learned all he knows on his own, I am fairly certain that I want our daughter (age 2) to be homeschooled.

## **Home versus Work?**

*The same reader continued:*

My feelings of uncertainty arise from my own confusion about myself and my role in the world. For a long time I wasn’t certain that we would ever have children and I was very wrapped up in my life as an arts administrator. Although I was always an assistant, I was happy to serve in this capacity and enjoyed working. I am still working, part-time most of the year, out of an office in my home. John is the production manager for an arts festival, and I assist him doing the administrative work while he handles all the technical side. This has been ideal for me as a mother, as I work when I can and have much time with my daughter.

I have always had it in my mind that when my work as a mother slacked off, i.e., when all my children are in school, I would re-enter the work world with all of its excitement and independence. I feel like my new convictions about homeschooling conflict with this “dream,” or at least postpone it many years. I will have to think very much about myself and my ideas of my life in the next years and find my new feelings.

## **Computer Job**

*From Cathy Earle (S. Cal.):*

In response to your questions about work (*GWS* #22): I am currently an editor and computer programmer at a company that develops educational materials. This currently takes me far from home (33 miles one way) for 10 hours a day, 4 days a week, plus driving time!

I'm expecting my first child now, and I have done a lot of thinking about work/child-rearing/homeschooling. What I hope to do is to work at home—doing exactly *what I do now, for the same company*. After all, what I do after my 45-minute drive is receive and respond to letters, receive and make phone calls, manage people by long distance (the people who work for me are mostly off-site free-lancers), and work on my computer terminal. I do my editing, write my memos, and write at least the drafts of all letters on an Apple computer with word-processing software. Of course, I also do my programming on the Apple computer. All this happens at my office—but I'm sure I can easily do it at home too! I have an Apple at home already, and I could send my results to the company computer instantly, via a modem.

I've spoken to my company about this, and they've said, "We'll see." I know my boss doesn't want to lose me, but they're not the most flexible people in the world either.

I very much enjoy what I do, which is basically write, edit, work with artists, create and debug ideas—and I *especially* love computer programming and didn't prepare for this kind of work in school or college (I would have shuddered at the thought of taking a course in programming, for example.) I learned *everything* I know about computers from buying one, reading the manual and other books, fiddling around on my Apple, and talking with other computer-freaks. After two years of playing with my own computer, my company asked me to write a program for them; the resulting program has been judged very good and highly professional by computer programmers. So even though I keep wishing I had the time and energy to enroll in some computer classes, I know they're not really necessary.

I got my job by ignoring the list of required experience in the advertisement and applying anyway. In the interview I explained how I felt my areas of expertise and my past experiences could contribute to the company. They didn't seem to care much that I'd never worked as an editor before, not even on a school paper, and that I'd never taken a journalism class.

By the way, my college had a policy of allowing students the choice of getting grades or merely "credit" for each course. I was absolutely the only person I knew who didn't opt for grades! Everyone kept telling me that I should ask for grades so I could get a good job. Naturally, once I hit the job market, I found that *not one* prospective employer asked about my college



grades or asked to see my transcript. Most didn't care if I had a B.A. They went on the basis of the interview and the resume—and most of the experiences and skills listed on my resume had nothing to do with school.

As to your last questions, the only thing I have to offer (which I've offered before and nobody has yet taken me up on it) is that if a *GWS*'er wants to learn what I know about computers, or wants to have access to my computer, I'd be happy to share my enthusiasm!

## **Babies at Jobs**

*From Dema Hinson (Cal.):*

While my husband was in graduate school I became pregnant with our first child. I was working at the YMCA as an art teacher (pre-school through adults). I had made myself indispensable by careful planning and buying, so when the baby came I was asked by my boss to please return to work. I told her I was unwilling to leave the baby with a sitter. My boss promptly told me to bring her with me.

Darcy was my constant companion even at work! She really loved summer camp. I used a baby carrier when she was an infant and brought a playpen when she was older. I seldom used the playpen; she mostly rode on my hip. Everyone loved having her in class! When my husband finished school, I promptly quit teaching and concentrated on my mothering.

We now have a 9-year-old and 6-year-old twins, and I'm working again. I have a cottage industry as a seamstress. I need help now and then, so I hire a friend on a piece-work basis. She brings her baby with her and is able to meet the needs of the baby and work for me too.

My 9-year-old is now learning to sew and soon I hope to hire her on a piece-work basis as I do my friend. Piece-work is perfect for children and mothers because they can work as fast or as slow as they want; the pace is totally up to them.

We are homeschooling all the girls and we love it. My oldest went to school until this year; the twins have never been. This is the way it was meant to be! I only wish I had known before I put Darcy in school!

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*From an Ohio reader:*

My daughter (now 8) was two weeks old when she began attending graduate classes with me, and never lacked for people to hold and talk to her. Until age 6 she was with me in every school situation I taught in. Your description of the 10-year-old boys loving to care for babies (*GWS* #24, “Oh, Boy! Babies”) did not surprise me. I found an infant in the classroom to be a very positive experience for all involved. My daughter loved to be around the children and in that exciting environment. “Tough” 5 and 6-year-olds would melt around her, and for children who had no siblings, there was a tremendous amount of learning—and lots of questions about breastfeeding and diaper-changing. Since that time many more teachers in the city have been bringing their infants to school; though the health codes did not deem this an acceptable practice, fortunately for all of us it was allowed.

## Computer at Two

*From Don Wismer (ME):*

A note on infants and the computer. We’ve had a TRS-80 Model III microcomputer with two disk drives for about nine months, and our daughter Sarah is just short of 26 months old.

From the beginning she was interested in the machine and wanted to type on it. At first she would type a few letters with a finger, and then with her whole hand, and then would be pounding the keyboard with both hands, a practice that was gently rechanneled.

With great rapidity she learned to associate the sounds of the letters (from Daddy’s or Mommy’s mouth) with the appearance of the letters on the keyboard and on the screen. By the time she was two she knew the entire alphabet, all the numbers, their sounds, and was well on her way to recognizing lower case as well. (The TRS-80 has a feature which doubles the size of the characters on the screen, and that helped a lot.)

She also knows that if she had used the *break* key on a program, she can recapture the program by typing *run* and hitting the *enter* key. So she knows her first command in the BASIC computer language.

We have a few game programs that have graphics which interest her. One has a waterfall scene with a grazing deer, and another shows a sort of snowfall. She asks for them by name. The shoot-’em-up galactic death-squad type of game bores her; however, I recently added a little speaker to pick up

some of the sound effects on the programs, and she plays the programs for maximum sound variation, ignoring the games themselves.

There's also a program I wrote that flashes "Sarah will type?" on the screen, and when she types a bunch of letters and characters and hits enter, it repeats her typing 50 times. She calls it the "Sarah Program" and asks for it often.

There are of course hundreds of self-instruction programs for sale from math to Russian to history, and we'll stockpile them as she reaches the relevant age, always staying a little in advance if possible.

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JH: I hope that other readers will keep as detailed a record as is possible and convenient of what their children do with home computers: what kinds of questions they ask, what problems they run into. I think that it's very important that we begin to build up a body of information about children and their work with computers. Also, if anyone uses the new Logo "turtle geometry" programs (see *GWS* #24, "Mindstorms"), please tell us about your experiences.

## **Access to Tools**

*From Colleen Redman, 633 Texas St, Tomball TX 77375:*

Josh has always had all the natural materials in our home available to him. He's used real hammers, saws, and screwdrivers since he was walking at nine months. I know these kinds of stories aren't new to you but why does everyone seem to assume that a child with a screwdriver will poke his own eyes out, or smash a TV with his hammer? Probably we expect it because by the time he or she gets to handle a real tool they have no experience. Josh has never used his tools in a destructive or stupid way.

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*Norma Davis (NY) writes:*

We allow our children to get in on everything we do and they are learning at an alarming rate. Each time I get frustrated, I call to mind what you said about them wanting to be adults, and I realize that their frustrations are much more extreme than mine. I also call to mind how I would feel if someone talked to me like that.

Art, my husband, is a builder and carpenter and Eric (3½) has had access to real tools since day one. He could drive a nail better than I by 2½ and also use a handsaw quite successfully. My parents live next door and my mother is an avid gardener, so he helps in the garden. My dad is an excavator, so he's quite popular with Eric, who knows all the machines, their functions and names of parts. We have horses, goats, and chickens; Eric helps muck out, feed the animals, and collect the eggs.

If he has a dollar in his pocket, he's not afraid to go into a store and spend it. He speaks very openly to adults and answers the phone. This is a big feat for him, considering that a year ago he wouldn't let go of my leg. We have never pushed him, only loved and supported him, and he made the transition all on his own.

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*From Gail Powell, 54 MacKenzie Rd, Waterford CT 06385:*

Since September of last year, we have worked at building our own Geodesic Dome. We've done the entire project by hand, and the children were with us, every step of the way, including clearing and leveling the land, cutting the lumber ourselves, and erecting the dome. Tracey (3) even helped me to dig the septic system with a pick and shovel. We're just regular pioneers! We've lived in a camper just outside the dome. Last winter, with its zero degree temperatures, didn't slow us up in the least. Tracey is a storehouse of knowledge on all phases of construction. She's helped us get tools and when people came to see the dome, she was able to tell them it's a geodesic 4-frequency dome, address and all. Trever was only 2-months-old when we came here, but he's made up for lost time. This past summer he'd play in his playpen, shouting out orders to make sure the work force wasn't goofing off behind some partition or something. The children go to sleep easily and we can work on the dome after dark because of that. Anybody can build their own home and I think everybody should.

## **Learning Everywhere**

*From Jacque Williamson in West Virginia:*

At first I thought I'd take *GWS* for a year, find out how to homeschool our boys, and not need to read further. Ha! It has knocked me to my senses that

learning is everywhere and all-the-time, no matter how old you are or what you are doing. I'd been so wrapped up in part-time teaching (2 to 5-year-olds, open situation) and keeping family things going, that I'd felt frustrated I couldn't learn anything myself. It made me look twice and realize all the new things I am learning and how much more I can do, even in the hectic pace of a young family.

I really appreciated Karen Cox's letter in *GWS* #23 ("Keeping Learning Records"). Her recordkeeping is so simple and straightforward it seemed silly to me at first. I thought, "Why, you could go on and on and fill it up with a day's activities and sound like you are really covering a lot in homeschooling." Then I realized that is precisely the point. Even though I have a four-year-old and a two-year old, the teacher in me often makes me feel I should be doing more with them. Now I stop and watch what they are doing and think of Karen's categories and smile.

An example this week: "Logical Thinking/Math." Our 4-year-old, Nathan, made me a wooden bowl on his daddy's lathe. I sold it at a craft fair his daddy was selling his own bowls in. Nathan wasn't there at the time of sale so his dad paid him that night. Nathan noticed Fred had been paid by checks as well as cash, so asked for part of this payment in check. The teacher in me figured this was a great way to prod him into writing his name—so he could cash his check. No, he couldn't care less about writing his name, as he is proud to have a real check of his own to cart around! He has asked enough questions to know about banking now. When he decides he needs cash, he'll know what to do and I'm sure will suddenly take care of the name-signing for endorsement.

The other day I noticed Nathan carefully drawing plans and then trying to make something in the shop using a saw, hammer, and chisel (the real carving kind). Later he made a salad and a cake from picture recipe cards, "read" his brother a story, and helped make a scrapbook about a recent trip. Suddenly, enlightenment struck! All the years I taught in the lower grades, we did all kinds of workbook pages on eye-hand coordination, sequence, language experience, exercises, and on and on. It hit me that what Nathan was doing is the real thing and what schools are doing is the substitute. Just for fun, I got out some of the old workbooks and tried the "substitutes" for what he'd done that day. Whereas he had spent hours on the real activities, he did the "substitutes" only under coercion and then for only about five

minutes. They were too easy. Yet we had done them for months on end with six-year-olds in school.

## A Mother's Answers

*From Mary Jordan (OH):*

One idea I keep running into, when I tell people I plan to keep my two children at home to learn, is that you have to be *perfect* to do that. People say, “Oh, I know I wouldn’t have the energy,” or “I admire you for wanting to, but I know I couldn’t.” Even my husband has doubts about our ability to homeschool because neither of us is very patient with a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old helping us when we’re hurrying to get a project done.

Of course, I’ve not yet had experience with actually homeschooling school-age children, but my expectation is completely different. My experience so far has been that the older my children get, the better they can communicate, and the more they can do for themselves, the easier it all becomes for me. I don’t know why having a 4-year-old and a 6-year-old will take more energy than having a “3” and a “5,” just because one is officially school age.

As far as not being able to “teach,” that doesn’t scare me either. I’m sure there are helpful ways of presenting information, but most of what I learn comes from what I read and what I *do*, not from what I’m taught by someone else. I assume the same can be true for children. And so far they have learned to walk, talk, dress themselves, etc, with only example, conversation, and excitement over their progress to aid them. I do provide materials, experiences, and activities for them, but of course these only work if *they* enjoy them and can use them for their own learning.

In fact, my biggest joy is in seeing what they put together for themselves. Claire proudly announced one day that she knew the letter B and the number 4, before it ever occurred to me to teach her letters or numbers. Christopher reads a few words and adds fairly well, but more importantly, he asks me all throughout the day questions like, “What’s  $4 + 6$ ?” “How much is one million plus one hundred?” “What’s  $3 + 3 + 3 + 3 + 3$ ?” and “What does ‘b-e’ spell?” He’s working stuff out in his own mind and I could ruin it by trying to *teach* him what he needs to figure out for himself. I simply tell him the answers he asks for, assuming he knows what to do with them.

The patience question is a little trickier and almost caused me to give up and enroll Christopher in kindergarten. Sure, I yell a lot and I also spend a lot of time saying, “No, I want to cook supper by myself,” or “Go away, I’m busy writing.” But on the other hand, our children are almost always with one or the other or both of us. They’re always around so they get in the way a lot, but they also get talked to and hugged and sung to and danced with and loved a lot. So I figure if we’re not good at one aspect, we’ll be good at something else.

This brings me to another objection people have—that we’re isolating them from the “real world” and denying them the socialization process. Well, if family isn’t *real* and *social*, I’d like to know what is. I think it’s good for people of any age to experiment with various environments and develop a sense of self-confidence, to walk trustingly in the world, sure that they can handle life or get help if they need it, I am in no way convinced that school is the only way or the best way to do that. I hope to provide many challenging opportunities for my children, but I expect letting them learn at home will give them a feeling of control over their own time and their own lives, and I think that is vital to self-confidence.

So far I’ve still found no one in Cincinnati doing homeschooling, so I have no idea how the authorities will act. Christopher will be six in the spring of 1983. By fall I hope to have a philosophy and curriculum written, some correspondence and/or cover schools picked out, maybe some certified teachers who will agree to “supervise” us. I still long for someone “in the flesh” who shares these ideas, but I can wait.

## **Living With Two Kids**

*Susan Bobowski (NY) writes:*

I keep finding myself in the midst of movements. I didn’t know there was a home-birth movement until I was pregnant with my second child (I had the first at home anyway). I found out about the homeschooling movement sooner than that, but I had already decided not to send any of my (at that time hypothetical) kids to school.

Becky will be old enough for kindergarten next year and she has announced that she wants to go. She also said that she wants to ride the bus. She was not pleased when I said she could go to school but she couldn’t ride

the bus. We live 10 minutes from the school but the bus route is such that she would be on the bus an hour in the morning and another hour in the afternoon. I have a feeling her interest in school will wear off rather quickly after she has been exposed, but I told her she could go if she wants to and I have tried not to influence her in any way. I know it's impossible not to let your own feelings through at least a little, but I do want her to make up her own mind.

My husband and I both have master's degrees in biochemical genetics and, while I don't have a teaching certificate, the school board felt that I was competent enough to be hired as a substitute teacher a couple of years ago. That might be an idea for other homeschoolers to help them in their discussions with schools. If they have been hired for even one day as substitute teachers, it would help to weaken any arguments against their competency that the schools might try to bring. I am sure that one day in a classroom would also strengthen their resolve to get their own children out of such a place.

Becky is a very bright, very verbal four-year-old. At the moment she is engaged in teaching herself how to read. For a while we had to read her stories to her over and over and I realized that she was trying to make sense of the printed words. Then she stopped asking to be read to all the time and started trying to write. I have to admit that until I got *GWS* #24 ("GNYS AT WRK") I thought she was doing it backwards, but I didn't say anything. I try very hard not to interfere in the things she wants to do. I would rather be guilty of not telling her enough at this stage than pushing her so hard that she feels she has to do these things to please me. I would rather she learn to please herself.

In any case, over the Christmas holidays she taught herself to print all the capital letters. I showed her how to make a K and an R because those seemed to give her a great deal of trouble and she asked me, but otherwise she figured out how to make them all by herself. When she writes her name she is as apt to go from left to right as right to left, but the letters are always internally consistent. In other words, if you held the backwards name up to the mirror it would be perfect. Now that she can write, she has gone back to being read to all the time. I guess she felt that she needed a more internal sense of the letters before she could make sense of the words on the page.

It is an experience living with a four-year-old. Once we had a particularly



bad day—fought all day long about mostly unimportant things. At the end of the day, when it was almost bedtime anyway, Becky got sent to bed for throwing a ball at my new lamp—for the *second* time! She was very insulted at the whole thing. She sat just inside her doorway and carried on a monologue at the top of her lungs about all the real and imagined slights and insults to which we had subjected her over the course of her life (her usual reaction to being punished—thank goodness her room is at the other end of the house). Well, in the middle of this monologue she suddenly yelled, “You know what I’ve always wanted? Foster parents!” Of course my husband and I couldn’t help but laugh, but at least we had the decency to go into the kitchen so she couldn’t see us. What are you supposed to respond to a statement like that?

Living with Jessie is also an experience. I had forgotten how absorbing a ten-month-old finds the world. I get nothing done all day long because I spend most of my time hiding around corners and watching her investigate everything. One of her favorite games at the moment is to climb up on things and then fall off. The game is actually the climbing up and standing and crowing so that everyone will know how accomplished she is. The falling off is not part of the game, but she hasn’t figured out yet how to get back down so that she can climb up again.

Another favorite game is to pretend to feed herself. She will walk around for an hour at a time with a toy bowl and spoon, scraping the spoon into the bowl until she has a good imaginary spoonful, then sticking it in her mouth and smacking her lips. She will also feed anyone else who looks interested, but if you don’t smack your lips properly she won’t play with you for long. I don’t remember from Becky that imaginative play like this began so young, but I suppose it did.

Jessie has two words which are recognizable at the moment. She says “hot,” which means anything which is not body temperature, whether hot or cold, and also means firewood (we heat with wood). She also says “da” which means daddy, dog, cat, and sheep (we raise sheep, too).

A friend’s baby at 10 months would walk around their apartment pointing at things and saying “cat.” If it was a cat (and they had two adults and 10 kittens, so it was logical), she would clap her hands and laugh, and if it wasn’t, she would shake her head no and go on to the next thing. We decided she had sorted the world into two groups, cat and not-cat.

## Treated Like a Kid

*Mary Friedl (IL) writes:*

Nathan (5) and I were in a restaurant yesterday. He accidentally spilled his drink. He said he was going to ask someone to clean it up, excused himself, and told the cashier he had a little accident, that he had spilled his pop and could she please have someone clean it up. I was *very* proud of the way he handled it! But—the cashier and another woman standing with her just laughed. Nathan was *so very* embarrassed! He came back to our table quickly, trying to hide his head in his armpit. What a terrible experience for him!

I explained to him that some people are not used to youngsters speaking in an adult manner; they laughed because they were surprised and embarrassed and they didn't know how to respond to him. It was their problem, not his—he could not have done a better job. He sat up proudly and didn't even flinch when the same woman came over and made a comment about how “cute” he was. Later he said how silly the woman had been. I think he has taken another big step. It gets harder and harder as time goes on to imagine sending him to school.

## School Stories

One of our friends just had a son start in kindergarten here. The school gave the children a test to see if they knew how to skip. When her son “failed” the test, a note was sent home saying he had a *gross motor development* problem.

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I have been told by teachers and the principal that there is something wrong with our child because she is “too quiet,” “too gentle,” and refuses to drink Kool-aid and Coke, the rewards for good performance.

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*And from Jean Toews, Rt. 12 Box 759, Spokane WA 99203:*

Josh's teacher indicated that his major difficulty with school is that he proceeds with school work before she has given the instructions to do so. We

asked if he was doing the assignments incorrectly and she said no, he just needed to wait for the go-ahead before he proceeded.

He has been reprimanded for failing to use the number line when doing his addition problems, although he does the work accurately without it. When I asked the teacher why he needed to use the number line for addition if he's able to add in his head, she replied that all first graders need to use the number lines.

## **Allergic to School**

*The Chicago Sun-Times, 4/8/81:*

"School Allergy" May Be No Joke. Dr. Leonard Caputo, an allergist from Mobile, Ala., says "Schooling provides so many exposures to allergenic and irritating materials that 'allergy to school' could easily be classified as an occupational hazard."

In a paper prepared for the annual congress of the American College of Allergists, Caputo said:

"Accumulations of dust are readily visible in most schools. Kindergarten youngsters may be especially at risk. because they are frequently required to sleep on mats upon the floor."

"Chalk dust is a decided troublesome exposure. A considerable amount of mold is present in some classrooms, particularly in older schools. Libraries may contain as much mold as they do knowledge."

"A wide variety of chemical odors permeates the corridors and classrooms of most schools. Strong industrial cleaners, waxes, and polishes are used on school floors."

"One child reported an episode of wheezing following particularly heavy use of Pine Sol used in trying to sternal a viral epidemic in the school. Strong-smelling felt-tipped markers and carpets are being used with greater frequency."

One result of allergic reactions, he said, is that children do poorly in class. Those taking antihistamines may be drowsy and inattentive. Fatigue can lead to daydreaming and failure to plug into what's going

on.

## **Playing the School Game**

*From Carol Ortiz, D-17 Grent St, Parkville, Guaynabo PR 00657:*

Had I known about homeschooling nine or ten years ago, I believe our family could have avoided much misery by opting out of the school scene. Now my children, teenagers, have adapted to their oppression, but it has been marvelous to feel the change in the tension level since I accepted the nonsense of the educational system as nonsense, and simply leveled with my kids. “Look, the schools play a game and the rules are in their favor and they can change them at will to keep you always at a disadvantage. So you can play the game and even beat them at it if you try, but don’t take their judgments too personally.” The arguments over homework, grades, behavior, etc., are over (and have been for a year—every issue of *GWS* renews my convictions) and the grades, behavior, and homework are terrific, undoubtedly because they are the players now, not me. I’ve told them they can chuck it all anytime they want, but the social scene is important now, and laboratory science and computers have an appeal we couldn’t provide very easily, so.

## **Teenagers at Home**

*From a parent in Colorado:*

Our 15-year-old daughter has joined us this year at home. I am thrilled that she has chosen to come home to study and be with the rest of us all day, especially at this time in her life, when teens are supposedly more interested in their peer groups. She always did well in school, was very popular and liked by all of her teachers. But last year (freshman in high school) she hated school, even though she had lots of friends and a part in both school plays. I think that she, on her own entirely, had the sense to want to escape from the social environment of high school, with its pressures of drugs, smoking, etc. She is using the American School program—racing through it, plus teaching herself Spanish and doing a programmed vocabulary course.

When I kept the 11-year-old and 7-year-old out of school last year, I did not seek approval from the schools. We used correspondence materials, but

were somewhat easy-going about moving through the courses. So this year we could be seen as being behind, according to grade levels.

With all of the heat and anger of the authorities having been fuelled by their recent loss (*GWS #23*) in the attempt to control private schools (first of many such attempts, I'm sure), I am very worried about our being either turned in or discovered. My worry has changed the emotional environment at our "homeschool." I am more concerned about doing the lessons, etc., and it doesn't seem as though we will be able to have as much fun this year.

*From a later letter:*

Since I wrote that letter, we have gotten better. We feel more relaxed and our homeschool is once again the productive fun we love.

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*From a New Jersey reader:*

Have other parents noticed a very easy adolescence with unschooled kids? I think that my fifteen-year-old son's early acquaintance with responsibility for his own actions has made it unnecessary for him to rebel and fight for independence. He is willing to accept my judgment at times because it is offered as one adult to another and not as a restriction on a kid who doesn't know anything.

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*Penelope Critchlow-Goldman (CA):*

I'm so excited about my 12-year-old daughter's decision to stay home next school year (8th grade)! After 1½ years of formal schooling (6th grade, now 7th) on a continuous basis, she's had it. Our rural situation kept her home from 2nd through 5th grade. She has come to realize that out of 350 kids there's only one girl she really wants for a friend.

Our mountain community sports all the typical American Values including designer jeans and feathered hair-dos for the junior set. But our place is 10 miles up out of town beyond the telephone and electricity lines and our lifestyle is extremely sane. At school she gets strokes for superficial values, like looking pretty and stylish or paraphrasing information from the encyclopedia (so what's changed in 30 years?); at home, we demand more. The contrast is too great.

Her choice is to spend her hours productively on crafts projects along with

either a self-styled home-study course or a formal home-study course from Calvert School. (I am a credentialed teacher, K–12, in California, so legally we're clear).

## **In the Mountains**

*From Laurie Fishel-Lingemann in Calif.:*

The children (13, 5, and 14 months) have never been to any school. After experimenting over the years, we find that a minimum of structure is best.

Deva, 5, works best with no structure. She's the headstrong type who doesn't take kindly to anyone telling her what to do—I've never been exceedingly tactful but she is teaching me the difference between helpful suggestions and orders.

Star, 13, enjoys some structuring; she is so amenable that I have often become manipulative. What strikes me most about her is her intention to really know herself and try to be an honest person. Once she observed, "If I feel depressed or bored and read a story book to try to change my mood, I usually feel worse afterward, but if I just sit quietly for a while and not do anything I find myself feeling better."

Once she was shy about meeting an old friend of mine, a woman in her 40s. Afterwards she remarked, "It's hard to be shy when you're taller than someone."

She enjoys reading all kinds of books and seems to be noticing the different effects various books have on her feelings and thoughts. We have started Spanish studies and she is learning it very quickly. We just started a class in conversational Spanish at our local community college outreach program (we're supposed to get permission for anyone under 16) and had our 1st class the other night. She was a bit shy but had a lot of fun and I hope she will be allowed to continue participating.

I read aloud a lot; in the middle of the day I nurse the baby, and while he sleeps on my lap I read to both girls. What's interesting is that Deva (5) will sit for a long time and listen to the teenage or adult books that I read to Star and Kurt (my husband). Sometimes she prefers these to her own story books, although not always. Often the children draw or Star will knit while I read. We have no TV and live in an isolated rural area. I read almost every evening as well as in the late morning.

Every day is different—today we climbed up to 3000’ and sat on warm pine needles under the sugar pines and enjoyed the sunshine while we ate a picnic lunch. There is still much snow here and there and we enjoyed finding animal tracks. The girls turned a big manzanita into a playhouse. They put the baby in the “bedroom” and turned pine cones into pineapples, pine nuts into almonds on snow “cookies,” leaves and twigs into salad all on a rock “dining table.” Deva calls Star on the leaf phone, “Dingaling! Come to my apartment at sunset for breakfast. Goodbye. Adios.” It is a pleasure to watch a 13-year-old relaxed enough to be silly with others. Mostly they are so gentle with Jesse, the baby, although Deva will get very angry when he messes her special projects.

Once I suggested to Deva that we were poor (we had just bought our land and were living in a tent—minimum personal possessions and cash income). She looked at me in shock—“We have a stove, we have clothes, we have a tent and a car—some people don’t have anything!”

Why am I writing all this? Just to reaffirm that it is a great joy and a privilege to have the open minds and hearts of our children in our lives—that my children are constant reminders to me of what life is really about when I allow myself to slow down and feel that world. They destroy my self-importance everyday and our worst conflicts arise from my desires to maintain my self-importance. I’m learning to develop a sense of humor that I didn’t have 10 years ago. No, my children are not always observant, thoughtful or meditative, but neither are anyone else’s.

Don’t get discouraged by a few fights or bad days; learn to play with the energy, laugh at yourself and turn it around. One emotional day after the girls and I snarled and swatted at each other for a while we turned our tearjerker into a soap opera—literally—we put baby in his bath, Deva in a tub, and Star and I washed our hair in the sink. By the time our “soap opera” was over our moods were well changed.

About learning to write. I noticed with both girls that in the early stages they didn’t seem to care much about upside-down letters, backward words (Deva is left-handed and seems too often write backwards), words all over the page, etc. I began to view these “messy” pages as works of art rather than “incorrect” examples of handwriting. Often pictures and letters and words would become interspersed to make a complete picture. Only later on when writing began to serve its real purpose, communication, did the children make

an effort to improve the readability of the handwriting. I never asked them to practice. When they wanted to write clearly it didn't take much for them to learn how to do it. I think that muscular coordination has something to do with this as well as the child's own sense of what is pleasing. I am always available to draw or write the correct version of the letter and offer help when asked.

My mother, a firm believer in public education, has always been resistant to homeschooling—so I am always sending her articles. We don't see her often although the girls write to her frequently. We finally got together about six months ago for two weeks, and she really enjoyed the energy of the children. After all her doubts about home education I was quite surprised to receive this letter from her—and I quote in part:

I really don't need to read any article to be on your side. When I see the results of Star's and Deva's growth and development, not only on the learning skills level, but on the character and emotional development, I am in awe of your ability and success as to what you have achieved with your children. Besides the many faults of the present day schools and teachers (there are always exceptions of course) the presence of drugs and violence are enough to turn anyone away from the public school.

I plan to write to her and share with her that my ability has little to do with the “achievements” of the children. I haven't so much “done” as “not done.” I really think all of us need lots of space and time to just be silent, or dreamy, or meditative, or silly.

Some of the “projects” we get into are gardening, drawing, reading, writing. Star is teaching herself to knit from a book and is learning calligraphy from a book also. I have never learned either one, and when the baby is a bit older, I hope Star will teach me! Deva at 5 is a pretty good cook; Star can put together a whole meal on our wood cook stove. We've all learned a lot about babies since Jesse's arrival last year. I am an herbalist and both children can identify many domestic plants and know some of their uses. Future projects include learning to type, becoming more proficient in Spanish, flower gardening, and on and on.

## **A 13-Year-Old Writes**



*Laurie's daughter, Star, wrote:*

I just want to add a little to my mom's letter. When she reads at night, often the books are biographies of famous people or about nature—now she is reading a story about a man raising three bear cubs. I have found that learning history is much more fun and in more depth when it is from novels or biographies. For example, we read a biography of Roger Williams and it gave so much more of a feeling of his life and those times than the few paragraphs about him in a history textbook did. Two more books that gave a real feeling of the times are *Rascal* by Sterling North, set in 1918, and *A Spirit To Ride The Whirlwind* by Athena V. Lord.

I really agree with the “learn what you want to learn when you want to learn it” idea. I didn't learn cursive handwriting until I was 11. Before then, whenever I had tried, just struggled and got nowhere because I wasn't really interested. When I finally did learn, it only took a few weeks because I really wanted to learn and I practiced.

My mom and I are taking a class in conversational Spanish and it is my first real classroom experience. I like it because I want to learn to speak Spanish. If I was in this situation (having to speak and keep up with the others) every day, I think I would start getting filled with a lot of anxiety. One way Deva and I are learning the names of common items around the house is by putting labels on everything in Spanish and English. “Door—Puerta.” Besides learning the Spanish name for everything, Deva gets to write words on little cards and tack them in the right places.

When we first moved here I thought about going to school more than I ever did before, because it would be a chance to meet new friends, but I don't think I would ever really want to go. I read the letter from “A young reader” in *GWS* #14 and it made me realize how lucky I really am to have parents who believe in homeschooling. When I read books about kids who go to school and don't like it—just accepting it and being crushed down by it—it fills me with sadness at what schools are doing to these kids.

Sometimes I have a hard time with being different from other kids. I think, though, that I am probably different for the better, and I don't really want to be like them anyway. I like to read *GWS* because then I know there are other kids out there who are different too.

## Teacher Aides

*From Portland, Oregon:*

Our daughter, 14, remained at home for her last half of eighth grade last spring, studying her algebra by herself and volunteering two and a half hours every afternoon in a primary grade school close to our house. Without any difficulty (not having “graduated” from eighth grade) she entered high school this past September, but is miserable and depressed because she is being required to learn a lot of stuff that she doesn’t want to know.

I would like to see her bright and alive again and absorbed in various learning activities. Last year during the months at home, she tailored a jacket and slacks on our treadle sewing machine, made professional-looking quilts and blouses and stuffed toys, doing all of this on her own without a bit of help.

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DR: The 1/18/81 homeschooling article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* said that Rayna Peterson, a 13-year-old homeschooler, worked as a teacher aide at a nearby elementary school for an hour each Thursday, correcting papers and reading to the younger children. We’d be very interested to hear about any other unschoolers who volunteer in classrooms.

## Out For 3 Years

*From a parent in Wash. State:*

We took our children out of school halfway through the school year: D out of 5th, B out of 4th, and W out of 1st grade.

W, now 9 ½, decided to read when he was almost 8. That’s when he was ready for it, even though he was capable of doing it at 6 when he was in first grade. He still does not devour books, but he’ll read a chapter or so a day—that’s what *he* thinks he should do—and is very proud of his own assignment.

W is also taking his own sweet time with writing. He has been forming his letters beautifully from the start, but not shown much interest in writing. I may have found the answer to what is happening. He believed he was supposed to spell correctly but he knew he could not do that. So he did not write at all. Off and on, we tried spelling (very simple basic words) or

copying a paragraph from an interesting story, but soon dropped that again.

After what you, John, said about a nephew who had his own way of talking, until he finally talked like everybody around him, and after reading the wonderful review of *Gnys At Wrk* in *GWS* #24 in which a mother describes her small child who gave her the note with RUDE (“are you deaf”), and who slowly developed writing and correct spelling, I asked W if he would like to write without everyone expecting him to spell every word correctly. He likes this idea so much that he writes about half a page almost each day, mostly phonetically. With his inborn desire for perfection (and which child does not have that?) I am completely confident that someday his spelling will be excellent.

W has not memorized the multiplication tables but has a very good concept of numbers, and figures out on his own how to multiply any two numbers in his head up to about 12 by 12. He takes his time, splits them up many different ways, and comes up with the correct answer. (It was reassuring to see you describe just that approach in *GWS* #24). I am particularly pleased to see him having gained such good number concepts, because B, who is going onto 13 and had memorized the entire multiplication tables by third grade and was fastest in her fourth grade class on that, acquired no such concept, and unless we keep reviewing, she appears to be quite lost.

Picking up on some other suggestions from *GWS*, the children now each have their own checking accounts with regular monthly allowances to take care of all their needs except for food and shelter. It costs no more whether we as parents buy that pair of pants or that coat, or whether the children do it. But if they need to manage or budget their money, we hope it will be good for them later on. They enjoy budgeting and planning, and writing their own checks. Probably not all stores will take their checks, since some require both an ID and a credit card. The children each have their own ID, issued at the driver’s license office for non-drivers for \$3. They have received some very astonished looks when they paid for their own purchases with their own checks.

To our pleasant surprise, D, who seemed to be always spending every last penny of his very small allowance, plus birthday and Christmas money, now will not spend a penny more on those little purchases that children like to make than his budget allows. So far, they have been spending their money

very wisely.

Recently, the children's grandparents visited us for two weeks. B wanted to learn how to fix the rear tire of her bike. Grandpa showed her. That led to a week of overhauling four ten-speed bikes (all having been bought at garage sales). They took everything apart and after cleaning and replacing worn parts, put them back together. D (14) very ably took complete charge of his own bike. I guess he acquired that knowledge last summer when he and a couple of friends kept tinkering with their bikes. Wand B learned a great deal while working with Grandpa.

When it was time for the children's grandparents to leave, they expressed how pleased they were with the children's actions and their behavior. They do have other grandchildren to compare with, some taught at public school, some taught at private school. Even though they love all their grandchildren equally, they noticed less fighting and arguing among ours, who, by the way, had not been putting on their best behavior but just been their normal, relaxed selves. After having the children home all this time we are taking this for granted, but we do remember when it was not so during their public school days.

This all looks so positive, but actually, I do have my worries, for example when D at 14 still does not spell correctly or care to, and does not think he wants to study much. However, he did hook up our entire stereo system, with speakers upstairs and downstairs, all without our help. He straightens out any mixed-up Rubik cube in about 1½ minutes. He is always helpful when there is a *real* need for his help, no matter what the work is or what time of day or night. And B, who is slowly making sense of math, is a fast reader (she reads 2 pages to my 1½ pages) and excellent at spelling.

## **Refused the Labels**

*Evangeline Godron (Sask.) wrote:*

In the 60s I taught my eldest daughter, Fidelia, now 19, Grade One after she'd been expelled. The school insisted she take another smallpox shot, saying that two scars from that shot were not proof enough. All I had to do was to hear her read the rest of the Grade One books, teach her something of writing, all the ABC's, and understanding of math concepts to 10. We finished Grade One between October and the end of November.

I didn't try homeschooling again (because I was under the impression I could lose my child) until last Valentine's Day. By now I had had three more children, ages 7, 8, and 10 when I removed them. They were in Grades 2 (in danger of failing), 3, and 4. Huey, then in Grade 2, was able since the summer before to read the newspaper and adult magazines which he often did, choosing articles he recommended I read on matters of excess weight and cardiovascular disease or child-raising practices. His teacher said that he only deserved to be in the beginning reader for Grade 2. Huey was not allowed to take spelling, even though it is a Grade 2 subject, on grounds that bad boys don't deserve spelling.

When Paul was in Grade 2, he too was denied spelling on grounds that his writing and printing were slow and sloppy, and left-handed children, especially boys, were behind girls when it came to writing. To keep from failing, he had to do 36 spelling lessons during summer. Paul also read 54 books hoping not to be in special-reading class the coming fall. It was not two weeks into summer vacation when Paul got so he could read a whole book in a few hours. I compared him with me and he had become a faster reader. Both boys were trying to get out of the special class by taking proper channels. That was the summer Huey started reading adult material.

Both failed to be put in normal reading class. Both became violent with the special reading teacher who was only 4'6." Both turned to vandalism and Huey frequently ditched school. When he was at school he was more often than not in the principal's hall, office, classroom hall, or being minded by the janitor as he did his cleaning. Rarely was Huey allowed out at recess. He joined a gang of 2nd and 3rd grade girls and boys who specialized as window breakers. And they say school is wholesome! Huey clowned in class and led the others to jeer his regular teacher. When Huey was allowed to do his school work (other than reading which he refused to do at their level) he would finish in a few minutes and act out rather than do the busy make-work time-killers teachers give out.

At home I had long ago taught the kids finger-math. They became super-fast at it.

When I first took the kids out of school, the authorities from the school called asking me if I was not making a mistake. Had I given sufficient thought to their education, and so on? Oh, it was *Mothering Magazine* that finally gave me the impetus to take them out. The school department

threatened court action but never did it. They don't know how lucky they were that my kids are being taught at home. I think Huey, even at 7, contemplated in his greatest hours of stress and plight never suicide but murder in the school system of his tormentors.

How have the children done since leaving school? Ericka had made up her lost grade by August 1, 1981, and now she is doing Grade 8 work. Paul is reading at 450 words a minute. We've tried your "private papers" method (see "Writing for Ourselves," *What Do I Do Monday?*) and Paul is now a fast thinking/writing person. His grade level of performance is 6-7. Huey is reading at 200 words a minute. I haven't checked Ericka since last summer and then she was about 200. Last summer using the Frye method from Volunteers of America tutor service for adults, all three were reading at grade level 7 by early August, up from grade levels 4.0, 4.5, and 5.0.

Between semesters, I took the kids to visit the different high schools. The kids had read many of the materials required for grades 9 and 10 in English, and the same subject areas for social science and the sciences, even though maybe not the same books. I guess you already know that once the kids were out of school, negative behavior problems disappeared in the neighborhood and the stores can relax when they see the boys coming.

We are non-white of Indian and Negro ancestry. I, too was in a special class, not only for slow readers but totally slow. Who taught us? "Normal" kids in the playground, and we also pooled our knowledge to teach each other. I have three years of university in a great number of things, nursing and journalism being among them. We live below the poverty line. Our hobbies are reading 200 to 400 pages a week, the library, the museum, the neighbors, pen pals, the "Y," and that's about it. We are also into homebirth and breastfeeding. I've written one not-yet published book, started several others, one with my adult homeschooling daughter down the street, who also teaches her own three at home. My three at home and I sometimes think of putting some of the endless records of their work and pictures into a book.

## **Some Frustrations**

*Bonnie Miesel (MI) writes:*

Jennifer is now in "first grade" at home and, like others, I could go on and on about the things she decides to do that turn out to be broad experiences

covering math, science, social studies, economics, and creativity all in one. Although she sometimes accepts an idea that I offer, those projects seldom have the enthusiasm or the stay-with-it that her own ideas have.

One day she spent over three hours making fancy cookies (read all instructions, doubled the recipe, etc.) and then making colored frosting — which led to experimentation with many little bowls of frosting and different food coloring combinations. We had orange, imitation chocolate, lime green, etc. I really chuckled after supper when she felt that she had “taken the day off” and so spent an hour doing school-type workbooks.

On the other side, we do have some problems. Mornings before 10 AM are really bad due to bothering, bossing, and yelling between the 6-year-old and the 3-year-old, plus a 10-month-old baby’s “requests” for service. There are times when I sit down to read a story or sing with them but cannot do a thing because of disagreement on who sits where, who holds the book (“Then I can’t see”), whose book gets read first. or then the baby starts fussing.

It is difficult to visit or tour places of business during the day. The younger ones don’t enjoy it for very long, or are unwelcome, and it’s hard to find a babysitter for during the day.

Keeping my “*School Journal*” up to date is like writing down the plays of a ball game as fast as they happen. Ha! (But reviewing it is invaluable encouragement.)

The rewards of homeschooling are large enough to compensate for these few but almost daily frustrations. Time will change these problems more than any plans I can come up with (and I do keep trying different solutions)—could this be part of that vague “adjustment period” some *GWS* letters mention? *GWS* paints a picture of families going from stress and tension to peace and harmony when they become homeschoolers. Does anyone else have my problems?

Last summer we saw a full-size billboard along the highway in Michigan saying, “Education—the experience that lasts!” And I thought it was more true to say, “Experience—the education that lasts!”

## On Testing

*John Jones (ID) wrote in the Idaho Family Education Association Newsletter (edited by Linda Q. Jones, PO Box 251, St. Anthony ID 83445):*

Some important points concerning testing as some school districts are applying it to homeschoolers are made by Joyce Kinmont (UT) in her testimony before a subcommittee hearing in Utah. In response to the question of whether she would let her boy be tested along with his age group at the local school, she replied,

Suppose that I did allow you to test one of my boys and his score was the same as the lowest boy in the same grade in the Perry School? What are you then going to do? Will you take my boy away from me? Will you take the other boy away from his mother? Or from his teacher? Will you close down my school? Will you close down the Perry School? Will you insist that my boy go to the Perry School? Where, then, would you send the other boy?

In reality there is nothing you could do. Remedial programs have proven ineffective. Furthermore, the testing itself is devastating to slow learners. (It is interesting that when a child in the public school system fails to learn it is assumed that the cause is the child's lack of ability, problems in the home, television, or the lack of money. If a child fails to learn in a private school, the school is at fault.)

*John Jones continues:*

Another real problem with standardized testing is what it does to the homeschool itself. In our second year of homeschooling we had moved back to Idaho and were going the sorry route of seeking school board approval (GWS #19). After much grief and heartburn they reluctantly approved us for one year, provided our children be tested before and after the school year. That required testing hung over us like a gallows. We felt the weight of oppression every day as we thought we had to follow the same general curriculum in the same general order as the public schools so that we would "look good" on the tests. When the tests came it was like being on trial and waiting for the verdict. We were putting such pressure on the children that it was a real trauma for them. I hated it, I hated the idea that someone could make us go through that.

As I've thought about it since, I think that the threat of standardized tests is the single biggest burr-under-the-saddle to afflict any homeschool (though an opposing in-law is pretty bad). With this threat we find ourselves



seemingly forced to do things, not as we wish but as we think will show best to “them.” Now, we felt good about homeschooling even with this pressure, as I’m sure you do even if you are feeling this pressure, but we felt it could be so much better if we could do it our way.

Well, we finally are doing it our way and we feel a peace of mind, and it is better. The other day Debbie said that this peace of mind came after deciding that our children would *never* be tested in that way again.

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DR: John Holt says that when he spoke to a teacher’s conference recently in Rockland, Mass., one of the teachers stood up and asked, “What if a homeschooled student comes back into the school system below grade level?” Bob Dolan, the Director of Special Services of the Rockland School District, answered that right now, 8th graders in the school system ranged from 5th to 11th grade level in performance, so as long as the homeschoolers fit into this range, he wasn’t going to worry about it.

Other *GWS* readers have told us about the burden placed on them by standardized testing. We hope families that see this as a problem will suggest alternatives to their schools, such as the “Testing Compromise” in *GWS* #18, “Progress Reports” of *GWS* #23, or “Portfolios,” *GWS* #19.

## Test Catalog

*We asked Barbara Lafferty (NJ) to look into the question of how easily unschoolers could obtain copies of standardized tests for their children to try. She did library research, wrote a lot of letters, and reported:*

First, use a school or organizational letterhead. Then write to the Bureau of Educational Measurements, Emporia State University, 1200 Commercial, Emporia KS 66801. They publish the “Standard Test Catalog” which contains information on the Iowa, Stanford, and other standardized tests in a variety of areas. It seems that free samples aren’t available, but complete specimen sets can be had for various prices ranging from about \$1.50 to \$8.00.

## Improved Scores

*From Marti Mikl (AZ; GWS 20, 23):*

Recent comparisons of Darris' scores from the beginning of 4th grade, when he was still in public school, and the beginning of 6th grade (after learning at home since Christmas of 5th grade) were startling, enlightening, and very encouraging. I used the national percentile rank for this comparison, in which the average score nationally for all students in the same grade, is 50:

	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Gr.</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> Gr.</b>	<b>Improvement</b>
<b>Reading</b>	50	78	56%
<b>Language</b>	50	61	22%
<b>Math</b>	25	58	96%
<b>Total</b>	38	58	53%

Even though math is still his weakest subject, there has been a 96% improvement in two years' time. and I have had him home only five months of conventional school time.

I don't intend, at all, to sound like I'm patting myself on the back. I'm just so astounded at the improvement in such a short time. Especially considering that his conventional grades during the first half of 5th grade had dropped dramatically from his previous four years' record.

I have felt sad, many times, that we were not aware of the homeschooling option much, much sooner so we could have spared Darris and ourselves several years of anguish caused by his overwhelming dislike for public school. I console myself with this thought: "Thank goodness we got him out when we did!"

## **Success Stories**

*From Darlene Graham (TX):*

We're in our second successful year of running our homeschool. We call ourselves Pine Ridge Academy, which we felt had a beautiful ring to reflect the tranquility of our little East Texas homestead, plus had an official, impressive tone in case anyone should ever ask questions! But no one does, even though we regularly appear at the library and the stores during school hours. The fact that there are several alternative schools in the area helps.

We used Christian Liberty Academy last year. Like Calvert, it was too much like running a public school from my kitchen table. The paperwork for both students and teachers was staggering, but I understand they are trying to remedy that somewhat.

This year we are thoroughly enjoying using Alpha-Omega materials (Box 3153, Tempe AZ 85281). They are well-presented and the kids need very little help. Furthermore, they seldom devote more than two hours per day to their schoolwork, and material already understood can be passed over. We feel they are getting a strong academic foundation with little or no frustration.

Sometimes we reflect back on all the tears and despair we went through when our children were in public school, and we realize that if it hadn't been for that, we would still be caught in the spell of believing that the schools were doing a good job. We would never have looked for a better way, and we surely would never have stepped out on faith to provide our children with the kind of education we wanted them to have.

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*From Linda Haman (FL):*

I have been teaching Chelsi, my daughter, for three years: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. I now am beginning to teach my other daughter, age three.

The courses I have used are from the Calvert School in Baltimore. I feel the course is well-rounded. The problem is their Advisory Teaching Service costing \$110 a year. I have not subscribed to the service this year because of cost.

With Calvert's Advisory Teaching service, I mail Chelsi's tests to the school to be graded by a teacher. I feel I can grade her myself and save \$110.

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*Diane Baker Cornwell (FL) wrote:*

Since my children have been out of school for two months now we have had some inexpressible feelings of joy and satisfaction at the closeness and unity of family life that we feel that God has wanted us to feel for a long, long time. Glory!

The children are registered with the Christian Liberty Academy in Prospect Heights, Illinois. We take field trips, as a family, about 2-3 times a month, and we are looking forward to moving to the country in 6-8 months. Learning, not education, has become a giant boost to our mental and spiritual morale.

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*From Stephanie Scheck (S. Cal.):*

This is our second year of homeschooling and all is going very well. Diana, 10, and Stephen, 7, are joyful, healthy, and confident. Compared to last year when I had many doubts about being able to “teach” my kids, I find that there is a natural flow to our lives. There is no need for me to play teacher; we all learn together.

We have added a new dimension to our homeschooling this year by getting together with other homeschoolers in San Diego County. Our group consists of nine families (19 kids, ages 2–10). We meet very informally so that the kids can enjoy group contact and we parents can share ideas, concerns, etc.

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*Sandy Housley (S. Cal.) wrote:*

We have been “teaching” our children at home for two years now, and I really can’t imagine it otherwise for us. We went the route of registering as a private school. The first year we started off very structured with Shawn and Chris and me sitting at the table at 9:00 each morning. At that point the kids insisted on a formal recess and P.E. (Shawn had attended a private school for two years, so was very familiar with routine). I don’t remember how long this lasted, but I know it slowly deteriorated and evolved into living our lives at home: doing our own separate activities and then interacting when we were interested.

Our children have the option of going to school; we discuss this possibility, and so far they have voted to stay at home, much to my delight.

Our days flow together as we learn to get along more and more, and Shawn and Chris are equally at home with people of all ages. We are all avid readers—I consider this the mainstay of our education.

I have recently found some work I enjoy. I volunteer time at our small local library. The kids come when it's day work and this has even involved Shawn in a two-hour stint of her own once a week, which she thoroughly enjoys. She's a very dependable and useful part of the volunteer staff.

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*From Dureen Vance (WA):*

I've now taken my eight-year-old son Mike out of the Winthrop Schools with their blessings. It was so easy that I'm still not sure it has happened.

We have returned to our home 33 miles from the nearest school. There are no other children up here, so the schools don't like sending the bus this far and they don't have the extra money to pay us to drive him 18 miles to the end of the bus line. Also my husband works for the local high school. I'm not sure which of these things had to do with their going along with me.

I was told that we must use the Calvert mail lessons. So we shall use them as a basis, but not the whole.

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*And from a family in Minnesota:*

There are quite a few people in this area who are thinking of homeschooling. We are the first in our school district to have a school-at-home situation, and the superintendent is very uneasy about it. But, so far, we've been able to convince him that we are doing a good job. He just seems to think he should do something about us, although he doesn't know what. He is having a teacher from the local school check with us every two months to see if we're having any problems or need any materials, etc. She is not pushy at all.

So, we're optimistic. A lot is going to depend on the end of the school year evaluation. They want to test. We don't see how we can go along with that. We are keeping a detailed journal of all we do in our "school," we have all the projects, papers, etc., to show; and they can talk to our kids to find out anything else they want to know.

## Home Scholars

*The Anchorage Daily News, 12/21/81:*

A student who began his academic career taking correspondence courses in Colville Village, a tiny North Slope (Alaska) community where his father homesteaded, capped it Saturday night by winning a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University in England.

Mark Helmericks, a geology major at Harvard University, took grades 1 through 8 by correspondence courses. He then moved to Fairbanks to attend high school. There, he earned a 4.0 grade-point average in his freshman and senior years, several science awards and won the junior sectional rifle meet three consecutive years.

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*The Boston Globe, 12/7/81:*

Ruth Lawrence of Huddersfield, England, won a mathematics scholarship to Oxford University. She topped 530 entrants and beat the best brains in Britain's high schools. She has never been to school, but was coached at home by her father who gave up his job as a computer consultant to teach his daughter. She will go to Oxford in 1983 when she is 12 to become the university's youngest scholar. Her parents will move house from Yorkshire to be with her. Ruth has not mixed a great deal with other children because she has been taught at home "but she plays the piano and has quite a wide range of interests," her father, Harry, said.

## American School Results

*From the bulletin of the American School, 850 E. 58th St, Chicago IL 60637:*

Since the American School was founded in 1897, some eighty years ago, more than 2,000,000 men and women have enrolled for the full variety of courses that were available. Since 1946, more than 150,000 men and women have graduated from our high school completion program alone. 98% of our graduates would recommend American School to their own friends and relatives.

Over 800 colleges and universities have accepted our graduates. The Army, Navy, and Air Force accept our diploma for enlistment.

Nine out of ten American School graduates who go to college make good grades. The achievement of graduates of the American School (was) rated by their college registrars, compared with that of college students generally. 57% of the graduates were rated excellent or above average compared with 30% among students generally.

## **Banding Together**

*The reader who wrote "Fire Inspection," GWS #24, also told us:*

I got some friends together who felt the same way I did about the public school system. We formed a School Committee and developed a charter and some rules that we intended to operate by. Our charter outlines that our purpose is to provide instruction on a one-to-one basis in the home environment. The committee then drew up a letter to the Office of Non-public Schools in Raleigh to provide notification of our intent to operate a private school.

Last week, when we were enrolling another family in our faculty/student body, we encountered a test of our school. The new family went to the public school with their child to withdraw and to turn in the child's borrowed books. They were being interrogated as to why the withdrawal. Even though I had explained to them to please refer all questions from the school officials to me, perhaps did not make myself completely clear. Not knowing better, they spilled the beans, that we were homeschoolers operating under an organized front school.

This principal called me to ask some questions. He started out a little hostile, asking if we were a home-bound school. I avoided the question by stating, "We are fully approved by the state." I then asked if he had checked with the Office of Non-public Schools in Raleigh to see if we were a state-approved school. He answered no. So as to avoid further confrontation, I suggested that he do so if he had further questions.

He said, "Well, if you're on the up and up, then why did Mrs. X say that you were ordering correspondence courses for her child?" I answered that our school was very small and that we did not have the resources to develop our

own courses yet, and that we used the course materials from regionally accredited correspondence schools. He asked if we sent the materials to the correspondence school for grading. I said the courses were supervised locally, and then the work was sent to the correspondence school to be registered.

He apologized and said that he had misunderstood and become alarmed because he thought we might be homeschoolers from what Mrs. X had said. Later he called the new family and told them that everything checked out OK and that he was satisfied our school was legal.

I have noted that when homeschoolers band together, the number of students involved seems to make the school more credible. The records that the state requires us to keep, though a little extra work, are worth the trouble to be recognized as a legal school. Plus, the children have enjoyed getting together.

We have access to films, projectors, and other materials that are available to schools in our county. Some of these materials are of questionable value, but we have used the equipment and such films as *Jungle Book*. The county has quite a large selection of films available at no cost.

Perhaps in order to be legal homeschoolers, we simply need to learn to use the buzz words that the school systems use, so that they will understand what we are saying. Nothing needed to be misrepresented to get approval. The faculty member in each “satellite classroom” also happens to be the mother of the students under her supervision. The “central school record file” is a file cabinet in my house—oops, my “satellite classroom.” A little tact and diplomacy appears to be the oil that lubricates the friction with school officials to smooth things out.

*From a later letter:*

Someone from the office of non-public schools called at our home today. He intended to inspect our school, to determine its legality. Fortunately we were ready. He asked if we had obtained the required permits and inspections. We had. He asked to see the fire inspection certificate. He was allowed to see it. He asked if we were keeping up with student immunization records. He was told, “We are.” He was very courteous and nice. He recommended that we keep all the required records on file, ready to be shown on demand. And that we be discreet, because some people “may not like the



idea of having a school in one's home." I feel he knew full well what was going on here.

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JH: I have felt for some time that it might be useful in many states to do what these families have done. A number of homeschooling families, even living in different towns, might go through the paper formalities of organizing a private school. Officials are often impressed by numbers, and many would assume that a school with a large Board of Directors or Parent Council must be OK. The Directors or Trustees might even say to the state, "We haven't yet decided what kind of a building we want or where it will be," and get themselves on the official lists without a building.

Also, this might protect the families in states with laws saying that schools must have a minimum number of pupils.

## **Letter from Wyoming**

*From Kasey Michaels, Pioneer Academy, 917 N. Lincoln, Casper, WY 82601:*

The homeschool situation in Wyoming is very shaky and I think it will take some years yet to determine if we will be able to make it go. Most of the people conducting homeschool in Wyoming are doing it behind "closed doors."

Wyoming state law allows for only two possibilities—every child between the ages of 7 and 16 must attend a (1) public or (2) private school. Anyone can start a private school, but if the school is not classified as parochial, it must be licensed. The catch is that in order to obtain a license, you must post a \$10,000 bond.

At the beginning of this school year, I wrote to my local school district and school informing them I had established Pioneer Academy, a private school, and that my daughter was enrolled. They acknowledged my letter and said if I needed help with curriculum to contact any of their principals. Also, that they were referring my letter to the State Board of Education.

The end of October, the secretary from the local school called and said that a man from the district and the local principal wanted to come talk to me. I told her that I had been advised by a lawyer not to let school officials in my

home, but that I would be glad to meet with them elsewhere. I met with them later that day and managed to convince them that although my methods were unconventional, my daughter was learning and the school was legal.

The next day I received another call from the school secretary who asked me to come over to school for another short meeting. When I got there the man from the district said that as we had had such a friendly talk the day before he felt he should inform me in person of the newest development—a letter from the State Board of Education. The letter said that if the school was not parochial or had not been licensed they would have to take legal action. I said I considered the school to be parochial as I teach religion. They said they could not determine what was or was not a parochial school and that they would have to turn it over to their lawyer.

I enrolled my daughter back in public school and explained to the principal and secretary that it was a temporary arrangement and that when I had resolved my dilemma I would be withdrawing her.

I then called the school district and asked for a copy of the letter they had received from the State Board of Education. When I received the letter I noticed that it said, “If in your (the District’s) view, the school is not parochial.” I did research at the county law library. Nothing I found said what a parochial school is or is not. I called Legal Aid and was informed that the district, after receiving this letter from the State Board of Education, must (1) make a decision, (2) back it up with a statement from the Attorney General, and (3) give me a reasonable amount of time in which to comply with the law.

I called the Attorney General’s office and asked for a statement as to what constitutes a parochial school. The man in charge of Education Law called back and said there were no laws regarding what is or is not a parochial school in Wyoming.

The first week of December I took a letter to the man in the district. The purpose of the letter was to request a decision on whether or not Pioneer Academy is a parochial school. At this time I also informed them that I was withdrawing my daughter from public school and again enrolling her in Pioneer Academy.

About a week later I received a letter from the district stating that they had been informed by their lawyer that it was not their responsibility to make a decision in this matter and that they were referring it back to the State Board

of Education. I have not heard anything more.

There is a bill in the legislature which will amend the law. First, all private and parochial schools would have to register with the local district. Second, all parents with children in private or parochial schools will have to inform their local district of their children's names, ages, grades, and the names and address of the school. Third, all elementary and secondary private and parochial schools will be exempt from the \$10,000 bond. If this bill passes as it presently stands we will be in good shape.

This letter has been sent to the many people who have been asking me about homeschools in Wyoming as a result of an article I wrote. I hope we can get organized for a newsletter and some sort of support group soon.

## **Sensible Editorial**

*An editorial in the Baltimore Sun, 1/4/82:*

The Andriolos of Bel Air have been told formally by the Hartford County school board that they can't legally educate their daughter, Zoe, at home. But don't count the Andriolos out. They have open to them an appeal to the State Board of Education and to the courts. They have lost the battle, but they may well win the war.

They may win it on legal grounds. Maryland's compulsory attendance law has been interpreted narrowly by the attorney general's office, but a reading of the exceptions allowed would seem to allow for parental teaching. There is no requirement that home teachers be certified, for example. All that is needed is "regular, thorough instruction in studies usually taught in the public schools to children of the same age." That leaves plenty of room.

Moreover, despite efforts by Hartford County school board members not to set a "precedent," home teaching has been allowed in other Maryland subdivisions for years, a fact that will interest a judge if the Andriolos case gets that far. Indeed, two of the correspondence courses often used in homeschools, including the one proposed by the Andriolos for Zoe, are approved by the state Education Department. Perhaps this particular family, in these particular circumstances, is entitled to win.

We are not among those who panic at the thought of parents educating their children at home, who fear for the demise of public schools if the practice is allowed.

It is ancient and honorable—and not meant for most families or for most children. It requires the patience of Job and the didactic skills of Socrates. So long as home teaching is not a subterfuge for truancy—and public officials can determine this much easier than they think—what is the harm?

If the public establishment weren't so busy being defensive, it might think about how its product stands up to the home teaching product. It might even learn something from the folks who honestly believe they know their children best and can bring out the best in them at home.

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*Manfred Smith (MD) tells us:*

The Andriolos sent Zoe to a local private school (on their lawyer's advice) until they could straighten out their homeschool program. Zoe likes this school, so for the time being, she's there. The case, of course, had been dropped by the superintendent since Zoe is in a school.

## **Fun Making Things**

*From Dawn Whitehead (IL)—see “Giving Them Chances,” GWS #22:*

The teachers went on strike, so Michael (7) didn't go to school for the first couple of weeks. I was trying to get him interested in reading and writing but was unsuccessful until I remembered how much he liked comics, so I said, “Hey, why don't you make your own comic book!” Michael obviously liked the idea and was soon busy stapling a hunk of papers together. Then he decided to call his book “*The Adventures of Super Squirrel*.” Super Squirrel poses as Mr. Chippy when he's not busy saving baby birds that fall from their nests or octopuses that are lost. Michael draws boxes on each page, then draws and colors in the characters. He writes the story and what's said in the margins, and numbers his pages. I help with the spelling, but the rest is all his own. He's read them to his brother Andy (3) and friend J.P. who also like his stories. He brought them to school and his teacher read them to the class for

show-and-tell day. Michael said the kids liked them a lot and wanted to hear more.

Lately, we have become very interested in birds. This is due to my friend, Kathy Mingl and a book called *Hand Taming and Feeding Wild Birds*, by Al Martin. I read the book to Michael and Andy and they were quite impressed with all the adventures the author had had with his bird friends. Now we're anxious to do the same. Michael's drawn several bird house plans from a couple of books and we've been busy making our first bird house. We also started feeding the birds in our backyard and are really delighted at the different birds that come to feed: sparrows, chickadees, and cardinals, so far.

Michael and Andy saw a landscape board at a toy store and wanted it so I said, "Why not make your own?" They did. They had an old box and I showed them how to make paper mâché. Using old cans and the paper mâché, they made their own landscape with a volcano, tunnel/cave, river, mountains, and grassland on the box top. When it dried, they painted it and played with their animals on it. I'm becoming quite convinced that no matter what they do with it or anything else they make, the most fun for them is in the *making* of it.

One time we were sitting at the kitchen table with a pile of little round pebbles I'd found at a garage sale, demonstrating what "one, tens, hundreds place" meant, to help Michael with his adding and subtracting of numbers larger than 10. He'd been having trouble once he ran out of fingers. We made groups of ten for "tens place" and counted out appropriate numbers of pebbles for "ones place" in 11, 12, 13. 20, 21, 22. 30, 31, 32. etc. All of a sudden we both brightened up and got excited about the numbers. When we were finished Michael knew how to add and subtract large numbers without having to grow any more fingers. I realized that I'd never really understood one, tens, and hundreds place either until now.

## On Math

*From Ann Bodine (NJ):*

Math is finally moving forward in our house. The materials which we are using are the *Miquon* program (*GWS* #14, 19J; a little book of number puzzles using Cuisenaire rods called *Hidden Rods, Hidden Numbers*, available from Cuisenaire Co. (*GWS* #23); the little workbooks, *Word*

*Problems and Money*, \$1.25 each plus 50¢ per order (available from *Highlights for Children*, 2300 W 5th Av, Columbus OH 43216); pattern blocks and the book *Let's Pattern Block It* (from Activity Resources Co, Box 4875, Hayward CA 94545); flash cards; and an electronic Speak-and-Math.

Does everyone know that if you learn to count by 2, 3, 4, 5, and 10, and also understand, for example, that  $5 \times 8 = 8 \times 5$ , there are only ten multiplication facts left to learn? ( $6 \times 6$ ,  $6 \times 7$ , etc., up to  $9 \times 9$ ). Most kids learn to count by 2s very early, and they learn to count by 5 and 10 when they learn to tell time and count money, so the only part they need to learn specifically for multiplication is counting by 3 and 4. My children also enjoyed learning to count by 9s because they liked the pattern of “one less than adding 10,” so they only had six multiplication facts to learn. True, when you multiply by “counting by something” it takes a bit longer: “ $4 \times 6$  is 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24.” But they eventually begin to remember many of the combinations, and I really feel that “counting by something” is a good reminder to a child just what multiplication means.

One more bit of math material my children have profited from is the Math Comics from King Features, 235 E 45th St, New York NY 10017. There are four books: *Whole Numbers and Numbers Between*, *Measurement and Geometry*, *Language of Mathematics*, *And Tables, Graphs, And Problem-Solving*. They cost \$1.50 each and \$2.25 postage per order (obviously much cheaper if a group gets together an order). I think these comics are well done.

What I've learned from our experience with math is that if you allow your children to learn organically you may be quite unprepared and inexperienced if you should ever decide that your children *must* learn something they have chosen not to learn. In my case, I overreacted. It has taken us some time to find a path so that the math is learned regularly but without unpleasantness and bad feeling, and my children will occasionally say spontaneously “I really like finding the prime numbers” or whatever. Even now I will occasionally slip and become unnecessarily rigid for a few days until I catch myself. One thing that has helped a lot is that, within the materials I've provided for them, I let my kids pick what they are going to do each day.

I've noticed other people saying things about children being briefly interested in something their parents try to teach them, then getting bored, frustrated, or resistant and dropping it, then coming back to it weeks or months later and easily doing the thing they have never touched or practiced

in those weeks or months (“Pressured To Teach,” *GWS* #25). I have had this sort of experience with my children *many* times. I don’t think this means that the children didn’t profit from those few minutes or days that the children accepted their parents’ taking the lead in introducing (i.e., “teaching”) something. Sometimes children don’t investigate an area because they don’t know it’s out there. It helps me to think of myself as just planting the seed and letting my children grow it. Then I don’t feel as if it didn’t work if they lose interest in something I thought it would be good for them to learn.

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*Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote:*

Math is really interesting these days. Vita (6) just loves numbers and has always hung over Ishmael’s shoulder while he worked on his math. She wanted a workbook of her own, and so I got one which seemed pretty nice, with word problems in the form of nursery rhymes and Mother Goose tales on one side of the page, and “math facts” rather nicely laid out on the other. For a while Vita was happy working in this book and I encouraged it. But recently she has been answering a startling number of her problems wrong. This is because the more she does, the more they lose their sense of reality—they become so abstract as to become meaningless—and she begins answering with real abandon. I can see that if she was in school, she’d be getting bad marks on her math papers, and pretty soon she’d be convinced that she was stupid in math.

My solution is to keep the workbook on the shelf as much as possible and involve Vita more in my monetary dealings. Today, for example, I handed two twenty dollar bills to a cashier and asked Vita how much that was. She divided (out loud) one of the 20’s into two tens and then counted “20 (the first 20), thirty, forty. 20 plus 20 is 40.” Since I had used the two 20’s to pay for a \$25 purchase I then asked her how much change she thought I ought to get back. First she divided 25 into 20 plus 5, and figured out that the \$5 would have to come from one of my 20’s, which would mean that I would get back the remainder from that 20. Then, counting by fives, she discovered that there were 4 fives in 20, and if the store keeper had a right to one of them, I ought to get 3 back. By counting “5, 10, 15,” she was able to figure out my change.

She still does some work in her workbook though, since sometimes she

does like it. What she doesn't seem to like is subtraction, which ordinarily she avoids. But the other day I found her confronting a page of problems like, "5-2=\_\_\_, 6-1=\_\_\_, and 8-5=\_\_\_." She was singing away happily, "What plus two is five? Three plus two is five. What plus one is six? Five plus one is six."

## Reading at Home

*From Marcia Carson (WA):*

This is our first year to have everyone at home and we really love it! We formed a non-profit corporation and have our private school under the National Parents League. We took Rachel (17) and Doug (12) out of school because of peer pressure and Jesse (8) because he was having reading problems.

This is Jesse's second year at home. Last year we left him alone to rest. I read to him a lot and loved him a lot and let him do his own things.

This year we have some structured school time (one hour) every day. I went to the Curriculum Lab at Central Washington University, bought a library card (\$5), and dug around in their textbooks until I found some old Dick and Jane readers. I told Jesse they were books I had as a child and we looked at the pictures while I reminisced out loud. Then gently encouraged him to read to me. I tried not to correct every mistake (hard!) and kept my arm around him. That was two months ago. Now he is reading a 150-page reader from that same library every week! I have seen six months' progress in three weeks!

I'm so thankful that I had the courage to leave him alone for a while and then not to *teach* him to read but let him do it himself. Now know he'll be OK.

Marnie (3) began the school year by acting jealous and interrupting me as I tried to help the older ones with lessons. I was getting very frustrated and my attempts to distract her with clay and crayons failed completely. Finally, in anger I said, "Marnie, what do you *want*?" She looked so pleased at that direct question and without hesitation she said, "Teach me to read, too!"

On the advice of another homeschooler, LeAnn Ellis, I tried making some word cards for Marnie, and she learned them quickly. I put the cards away after a while because she always ran to sit by Jesse and me when he was



reading and before long was pointing out words in the text that she knew. I found her a book at the library too and she can read a lot of words.

There's another discovery I made at the University (a teacher's college). It's called a Media Lab and is filled with educational films. We go once a week and view films right there on their projectors. It's free and is a real boon for us.

## **Music & Suzuki**

*From Darlene Graham (TX):*

We do a lot with music. Grant, 15, has taken piano lessons for a little over a year from an excellent teacher. She marveled that he wanted to begin at an age when most boys are desperate to quit, but we had let him work on his own until he was playing quite advanced pieces and felt a need for help. For the last half-year or so he has been the accompanist for our church choir.

Graham, 12, works with Suzuki violin. He, too, started on his own, then took several lessons from a wonderful teacher who said she had never had such a promising beginner. Since he was also working on piano and guitar, he wasn't justifying the price of the lessons. For several months he worked on his own with the Suzuki cassette tapes (beautiful, just for listening!) and now we've found a college student who is enjoying helping him, gratis, just to keep her own skills sharp.

Crystal, 9, has been playing piano from John Thompson, Mrs. Stewart, and now Suzuki, also with cassettes. We could hardly be more pleased with the Suzuki materials. The music is so beautiful, and even a novice musician like myself can see how the skills developed in one piece flow right into the next ones.

Even Ginger, 4, is able to learn so much from it, we're just amazed! She would also love to play violin and I can see where homeschoolers could benefit by forming lending libraries for the tiny instruments that are outgrown periodically.

We learn new piano pieces by playing "two-hand duets." One person plays the right hand part while another plays the left, then they switch. That way each hand learns its part while the student hears the total effect of the piece. We've found it to be a really delightful way to get the feel of a new piece.

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*More from Nancy Wallace (NY):*

For the past week or so, Vita and I have been improvising harmonies. I'll play *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, say, on my viola, and Vita will make up a harmony on her violin—it's improvising, obviously, and yet enough within the Suzuki structure so that, in a way, she is learning more than ever about those pieces. Without the boredom, she still focuses on bowing, rhythm and intonation, and in fact, by listening closely to my playing, in order to follow along with her harmonies, she is feeling more musical on the violin and is even thinking about dynamics. She enjoys the sounds that emerge when she plays a third or a fifth down from what I'm playing, and if I play down the scale at the end of *Twinkle*, she likes to play up. We take turns making up harmonies, and I'm learning a whole lot, although I can't intellectualize it yet. But I'm getting a feel for what works and what doesn't. The most exciting thing for me to see is Vita's bow arm, which has that combination of flexibility and control when she's happy, and which falls apart when she's unhappy.

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*From Kansas:*

I love music but have had childhood experiences that made it a constricted, angering, and frustrating thing to try play an instrument. I enrolled my 3½-year-old in Suzuki violin lessons because I had been told the approach was all positive and “as natural as learning one's mother tongue.” I'm sure this could be true, but it turned out to be false for us. The teacher, trained as an elementary school teacher, couldn't stop correcting or arguing with my daughter long enough to hear the music. Whatever my daughter was proud of learning was ignored for what she hadn't learned.

I was very frustrated with her lack of progress, so I got myself a violin and am learning from scratch. I have a good teacher who takes “nervous wrecks” from other teachers. I play for my daughter, inviting her to join me any time, but with no pressure. It's hard, since we rent her violin and it gets very little use—but sometimes she's beginning now to pick it up on her own and explore. So, we “jam.” She whistles, stomps her feet, or invents instruments from whatever's handy, and, sometimes, plays violin. My 22-month old is learning to play violin, too.

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*More from Carol Ortiz:*

As a Suzuki piano teacher beginning my fourth year (after three years' frustration with "traditional" efforts), I have become deeply absorbed and enthralled by the learning processes of young children (I teach 3-year-olds and up). Some of my families are homeschoolers, and I find these children as easy to teach as pre-schoolers—no fear of mistakes, bug-the-teacher tricks, resistance, etc.

All Suzuki teachers use other materials, i.e., non-Suzuki repertory, to deal with reading, composition, theory, etc. There is no Suzuki method for that—a teacher's imagination and openness to good ideas are the only limitations. So, to speak of a "combination" of methods (see "Suzuki and Stewart," *GWS* #22) is a bit of a misnomer. "Suzuki" is basically a *relationship* and an *approach* to music through the ear and the person as an individual. Any method which can help nurture his learning of music is considered to be *part* of Suzuki teaching, not an addition to it or contrast to it. Most of us welcome good ideas on improvisation and such. Perhaps the greatest thing we Suzuki families have in common with homeschoolers is overwhelming compulsion to *share* ideas, successes, problems, thrills, you name it. No idea of getting one-up on the next fellow—our strength is really in giving everyone a leg up toward success.

Suzuki is what has made it possible for me to *be* a teacher, dealing with kids as people to be respected rather than conditioned. Through *GWS* I see that lots of people are finding other avenues to the same thing.

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*From Susan Bobowski (NY):*

Becky (4) is taking Suzuki piano. We started when she was 3 with the violin, but that is really an abstract sort of instrument for a child whose parents do not play, and at that time neither George nor I were playing any instruments. We had quite a bit of trouble with her about it, so at 4 we switched to the piano.

She is doing better, but she is very resistant to being taught (her teacher is much gentler with her feelings than any elementary school teacher will be, which is why I don't think she'll last long in kindergarten). Even in the face of all her arguments, I intend to continue with lessons—to force her, if you will. For one thing she does enjoy being able to play; it seems to be the

thought that she has to be taught that bothers her. I think she regards it as an insult to her intelligence and her competence, and it diminishes her in her own eyes, but she gets a great feeling of accomplishment when she masters a new song.

Her teacher is very good about listening to her own compositions. Becky has the most interesting titles for them. She played one yesterday entitled *Little Bug Looking for a Piece of Cheese to Take a Nap On*. Not something you would play at Carnegie Hall, but an interesting tune nonetheless.

*From a later letter:*

Becky has quit her music lessons for the time being. She says she's going to teach herself at home. I think a large part of the problem was that she was not going quickly enough to keep up her interest. We will probably start her again in a year or two. It took me quite a while to realize that she's only four and that if we stop lessons now it doesn't necessarily mean that we have stopped them forever.

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*From Marilyn Grush, 24285 Abbey Dr, Ft. Wayne IN 46815:*

Both of my girls play the violin—Suzuki violin. They have been to the American Suzuki Institute in Stevens Point, Wisconsin for the past seven summers, and for the last 3½ years they have chosen to be without a teacher—simply playing the violin, listening to the Suzuki recordings, with the only instruction being at these summer institutes—two weeks each summer.

In October, the two girls were soloists with the Fort Wayne Philharmonic at a children's concert playing the Bach *Double Violin Concerto*, 1st and 2nd movements. They were asked to play again with the Philharmonic at a concert a few miles from Fort Wayne, missing a morning of classes.

But I never learn! I called their high school thinking this was pleasant news and asked for them to be excused from classes. I was reminded by the cold voice of the principal that the only excused absence was illness or a death in the immediate family. I ranted and raged the rest of the day only to hear my daughter suggest that next time I just call in sick for them!

PS—These two girls saw your renewal postcard and heard me say I didn't feel I had the money to continue the subscription right now. They remembered for Christmas.

## Questions On Child-Raising

*From Merry-Lynn Malbrough, 5121 Tehama Av, Richmond CA 94804:*

I just finished skimming the first 15 issues of *GWS* and have so many comments and questions. Even though my son Zay (now 7) is going to a school, the magazine is helping me to change our roles when he is at home and with Gwendy, who is one. I am giving them more credit for being able to do things and at the same time not expecting so much perfection. I can see how Zay lacks confidence because I haven't wanted him to make messes (I have trouble cleaning up my own). So he has been really surprised lately at me telling him to fix his own food. The Malt-o-meal wasn't too difficult but he insisted on help with the muffins. By the way, cooking has been a great use of math. He's been doing some math with Sterling who is setting up a model railroad.

One problem I have is organization. We don't seem to have access to things when we need them (where *is* the 3-hole punch?) and Zay seems to use things as they are available. My mother has given us some wonderful science projects but they are often buried and forgotten—or worse, key parts missing! Does anyone have a solution for this?

Not too much has been said about television. Zay would watch constantly if I let him. At present it is limited to one hour a day of his choosing (usually *Wonder Woman*). If it was up to me we'd have no TV, but my husband enjoys it. If I really, totally let Zay choose what he does and he chooses to watch TV, where does the introspection time go? He seems to need about 1½ hours of nothing before he gets himself started on a project. During that 1½ hours he frequently is a pain in the neck, complaining of nothing to do, or asking for TV but if I stick it out he usually ends up doing something like painting or creating a mask or inventing a new game. If my husband is lying on the bed reading then Zay will get a book and join him.

I try to remain accessible but I've found that he often figures things out on his own when I'm inaccessible. ("No, I can't come now, I'm changing the baby"— "Never mind, Mom, I did it.") On the other hand sometimes he just gives up ("Oh, I'm so stupid, I can't do anything!")

Do unschooled children go through periods of testing their parents with language? Zay has found that the kids at school get really tickled over certain

phrases and he tried them out on me. When it is something that bothers me I let him know. Sometimes I handle the situation well, other times I don't. ("I don't send you to school to learn to talk like that.")

Does it seem like unschooled children go through periods of being silly about the opposite sex—or their bodies in general? My concern is that Zay have respect for people in general and not feel that there is anything wrong with his body or anyone else's. But I still have reserve when it comes to "X-rated" subjects for fear that openness will lead to Zay's assuming I approve of today's moral standards (which I don't). I guess I'm looking for support and suggestions.

Basically I believe that all subjects should be left open for discussion and Zay will draw his conclusions from his experience. Kids today have access to a lot more knowledge but they still pass on falsehoods to each other: "Boys don't play with dolls" and other worse ones. As far as body education goes, we have a 4-book set called "*The Life Cycle Books*." I noticed Zay had it out the other day but what he was reading was a small pamphlet that came with it entitled "*Parents' Answer Book*."

(From a later note:) Zay really needs communication with kids not going to school. He's staying home in September and doesn't mind, but he is objecting to being different from everyone else.

## Saturday TV

Coming to the office one Saturday morning, I saw that one of the TV sets in the drugstore near our office was showing cartoons, so, as part of my on-going study of modern life, I stopped to watch a few of them. They made much stronger my already strong prejudice against TV. They also made me suspect that the many adults who complain of the violence on TV may be missing a much more important point.

The first show I saw was the one about the roadrunner and the coyote. All that happens is that the roadrunner runs at top speed along desert roads while the coyote tries in various ingenious ways to kill him. But the bird, being smarter, always manages to turn these devices against the coyote so that they fall on him, blow up in his face, etc. A defender of this thoroughly boring cartoon might say that the violence it shows is not "real," since a second after we see the coyote blown up by his own bomb, or flattened by his huge rock,

he is up again, not a bit the worse for wear, planning some other dirty trick. Since nobody is ever hurt, and the bad guy always loses, what's the worry?

This seriously misses the point. Sure, the violence is not real, and hence (supposedly) not frightening, though some little children may fear, with each new device the coyote invents, that this time it may work. But what is real, and permanent, and central, and truly damaging about this show, and all others like it, is *the malice, the endless, purposeless wish to do harm*. This is what children get from the program, the idea that it is perfectly natural and reasonable for one living creature, for no reason at all, for we are never shown any, to want to bring about the destruction of another. How easy it is, after a steady diet of these cartoons, to accept the widespread belief that in the "real world" every human being is the natural enemy and rightful prey of every other.

After a few of these delights came some commercials, which were even more shocking. The first showed two girls, perhaps nine or ten, carefully putting on elaborate makeup—cheeks, eye brows, lips, the works. They were stunningly pretty miniatures of adult women models, imitating to perfection all their seductive expressions and gestures—children used explicitly as sex objects. The makeup kits, it turned out, are made by the makers of Barbie dolls. The children who watch this commercial get the message. If you are pretty, and use the right nationally advertised makeup, boys will like you, and will want to have sex with you. If you are not pretty, not with it, you are nobody, nothing.

I thought I had seen the worst, but not so. In the next station break was another makeup commercial. Again, two extremely pretty little girls were putting on lipstick, all the while smiling flirtatiously at each other and at the camera. *But these children were five years old!* The people whose lipstick in the shape of crayons they were using were your friendly crayon makers, Crayola.

I can think of no better reason for not wanting to send children to school than that 99% of the children there watch this kind of awful junk, with its disgusting hidden messages about human nature and human life, every Saturday morning and much of the rest of the week. The schools are full of this moral and spiritual poison, and though it is true that they did not invent it and might be very glad to get rid of it, the fact is that they don't know how. More than anyone or anything else, the mass media control the values of

schools, and as long as this remains so, parents who do not approve of these values have every right to protect their children against them as far as they possibly can. This point may be well worth making in many homeschooling proposals.—John Holt

## Adoption Resources

DR: In *GWS* #24, we suggested starting “Resource Lists” of people with certain experiences who would be willing to correspond with other people interested in or curious about that topic. In particular, we asked for an Adoption Resource List, because people ask us how to adopt, whether homeschoolers have adopted children, and so on. Our request brought the following names:

Anne Bodine, 83 Knollwood, New Providence NJ 07974—Jan Evergreen, Rt 1 Box 352, Alderson WV 24910—Paula King, 26 100 Moody Rd, Los Altos Hills CA 94022—Walter & Mary Marschner, 628 Oaklawn Av, Lafayette LA 70506—Dan Shultis, Peloncillo Primary, Box 91, Rodeo NM 88056.

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*We quote from some of the good letters these people sent. First, Jan Evergreen:*

Shawn (5) and Andy (4) came to us an incredibly brief year and a half ago. We adopted them through the W. V. Department of Welfare and they are now legally ours. We plan to adopt as many children as we have energy for and work in as many ways possible to make this world better for those *already* here.

Adoption was difficult but certainly not impossible. It took us two years to obtain a home-study—a dictum from the welfare department approving us. The home-study is the key to state, national, and international children. We believe there is no incentive towards adoption by the federal agencies, because the *money* rests in foster and institutionalized care. Private agencies are much more encouraging, but then *their* fees are involved. Once our WV home-study was completed, we were matched to our two boys within a month. We knew great changes were ahead and found ourselves wishing



things had not gone just so fast. However, we received back from our kids every bit we gave out and then some. And that exchange began from day one.

Change in diet has been incredibly important to the boys—Shawn responding best to the Feingold diet for hyperactivity. Chiropractic care has opened them up and released much built-up tension, I believe. We have been able to barter for much of this and feel this as wonderful community support.

We even bartered with the lawyer—his fee being much reduced and included several gallons of our home-canned apple cider.

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*From Paula King:*

We adopted Lindy two years ago through a private adoption. We liked private adoption partly because we got to meet Lindy's birth-parents and grandparents. Lindy's mom was seven months pregnant and 14-years-old when we met. We got a good feeling about them and they felt comfortable with us. We're now looking for a second baby. We'll be glad to talk to anyone else who's looking too.

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*From Walter and Mary Marschner:*

We are now in the process of adopting two boys, ages 13 and 11, from an orphanage in Costa Rica. The subject of "homeschooling" came up when the social worker who was doing an adoption home-study on us realized that our daughter, Jemmy Pangborn, 16, was being taught at home. It took him aback. He was mainly concerned that we not be in violation of Louisiana's compulsory attendance laws.

We knew very well we were not in violation of those laws. We petitioned the state's Attorney General (through Louisiana legislator Woody Jenkins (*GWS* #24), since a private citizen cannot directly do so), who after two or three weeks replied that he concurred with the opinion of the local District Attorney, whom we had also contacted, and whose opinion was that we "satisfactorily meet the requirements of mandatory school attendance." The Attorney General then said that he considered the matter to be closed as far as any further questions to our "legitimacy." So, we're OK.

The only further questions that arose came in the form of some fears on the part of the orphanage in Costa Rica that we were "intellectuals," and that

we and Jemmy were doing so much that they wanted to warn us that the youngsters we were adopting were just “normal.” It’s true we had bent over backwards in describing our “schooling” because most people, when they first hear of “homeschooling,” feel that it can’t be *enough* but to those good folks it must have seemed like overkill, which is certainly not the case, though Jemmy *has* accomplished so *much*! The thing is—most of what she has done has been, though hard work, also real fun, like her summer appearance with a local theater as Puck in *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, her first speaking role.

Well, anyway, then we had to bend over backwards the *other* way, and assure the folks who have the care of the boys that we were by no means expecting the boys to be “intellectuals,” “little Einsteins,” or whatever.

We are now very close to getting everything completed and are processing final papers for the Costa Rican government.

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*And from Dan Shultis:*

We were turned down for adoption here in New Mexico because of our life style and went on record as “unfit to raise children.” We went underground and now have three kids. Everything is lovely now; if we could and can live with the idea that “educated” and authoritative people say we cannot raise children, so can others.

Please refer to us those “hard” cases where there is no other standard approach to the problem of getting a kid. Our way may not be their way, but at least it is another alternative to check out.

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Finally, an Illinois reader sent us names of adoption agencies and information sources: Aid To Adoption Of Special Kids, 3530 Grand Av, Oakland CA 94610; Family Builders By Adoption, PO Box 360, Midtown Sta, NY NY 10018; National Adoption Info Exchange System, 67 Irving Pl, NY NY 10003; Committee For Single Adoptive Parents, PO Box 4074, Chevy Chase MD 20815; North American Council On Adoptable Children, 250 E Blaine, Riverside CA 92507.

**New Books Available Here**

*Science Experiments You Can Eat*, by Vicki Cobb (\$4.50 + post). Several *GWS* readers told us about this book. For example, Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote, “By doing these experiments, you can begin to understand the chemical components of the food we eat and chemical changes that happen during cooking. As the book says, it is easy to produce changes in food, and if you can produce a change, you can learn something about the starting material from the way it changes. Vita and Ishmael enjoy doing these experiments because they have such immediate relevance and also because they can eat their experiment when they are done.”

We haven’t tried any of the experiments ourselves, but they look very promising. One good thing, for example, is that the necessary ingredients are items you would be really likely to have on hand, or could easily find at the grocery store. I can remember some craft book we had around the house when I was young that required things like round-headed clothespins and coal and blueing (whatever that is), and that kept saying things like, “Find a top hat in your attic.” How many people even have an attic these days?

But as I say, the experiments in this book look quite practical and possible. Directions are simple and clear, and there are lots of drawings. Moreover, the scientific part is impressive. Chapter 3, for example, is called “Suspensions, Colloids, and Emulsions”—you learn what those are from borscht, salad dressing, mayonnaise, and strawberry bombe. Other experiments look at crystallization (rock candy), coagulating protein (custard), cellulose (boiled squash), and microbes (yeast).

We look forward to hearing more reader reactions to this book—let us know what you like and don’t like about it. (Same goes for *Physics Experiments for Children*, a book many *GWS* readers have gotten from us.)  
—DR

*Treasure Of Green Knowe*, by L.M. Boston (\$1.75 + post). In the second book of this wonderful series, Tolly goes back to his great-grandmother’s old house during a school vacation. There he learns more about the history of his family, meets some other children from the past, and with their help discovers a great treasure. An exciting and unusual story. As I said in *GWS* #19, I love the sense of tradition in the *Green Knowe* books—the importance to Tolly, and to all children, of feeling part of a long chain of past and present events.—JH

*Ladder Of Angels*, by Madeleine L’Engle (\$8.95 + post). This is a set of

Old Testament stories told in prose and poetry by Madeline L'Engle and illustrated by sixty-five paintings done by children between the ages of eight and fourteen. The paintings were chosen from twelve thousand entered in the international contest, Children of the World Illustrate the Old Testament, a celebration of the International Year of the Child. They are astonishingly varied, imaginative, colorful, and expressive, and Madeline L'Engle's simple but eloquent text is a perfect match for them. A beautiful book to look at or to read a loud and talk about.—JH

*The Second Tree from the Corner*, by E. B. White (\$1.75 + post). For the many of you who enjoyed *One Man's Meat*, here are more treats from E. B. White, including a number of delightful poems and three of his rare short stories (perhaps the only three), enough to make us wish he had written many more. One of these, *The Morning of the Day They Did It*, is about the destruction of the earth by a pair of Americans who have been stationed in space with a super weapon. White's guess, that astronauts floating in no-gravity space would lose all sense of connection with the earth seems not to have been true; so far, the men who have seen earth from space have gained a much stronger feeling for what it is, our beautiful little home and the only one we've got. But it is a powerful story anyway.

Mark Twain once said that the difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning bug. No mean hand at choosing the right word himself, Twain would have recognized and relished the rich supply of right words in this lovely book. May it be the same with you.—JH

*Working*, by Studs Terkel (\$3.15 + post). This is a very important and eloquent book about what in school terms might be called History or Social Studies. But it is a kind of history (or Social Studies) that is very rarely written—not the usual story of kings, presidents, generals, etc., but the story of how “ordinary” people experience and feel about their lives, and in particular, their work.

Many of our readers will know about Studs Terkel, who for more than twenty years has been interviewing people for his radio programs and his books. There is almost certainly no one in this country and perhaps the world who has talked to more different kinds of people, and who (because of his own small size, gentle manner, and deep trust and concern for others) has been more able to get these other people to talk fully and honestly about

themselves. In this book they talk about one of the most critical problems of modern times, not just in the U. S. but everywhere—the problem of work.

In his introduction Studs sums up what the book is about:

This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence—to the spirit as well as the body. It is, above all (or beneath all), about daily humiliations. To survive the day is triumph enough for the walking wounded among the great many of us.

It is about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash. in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.

A heavy equipment (crane) operator sums up what people need to feel about their work: There's a certain amount of pride—I don't care how little you did. You drive down the road and you say, "I worked on this road." If there's a bridge, you say, "I worked on this bridge." Maybe it don't mean anything to anybody else, but there's a certain pride knowing you did your bit. It's food for your soul that you know you did it good.

Like all of Studs Terkel's books, this is a vivid cross section of America. We will know our country and our fellow citizens much better for having read it. And it is a good example of a kind of history that some children, at least, might someday want to do in their own towns and communities, as students in rural Georgia do in their *Foxfire* books. Finally, it draws from the real lives of many people to underline what I wrote about in *GWS #6* and in *Teach Your Own*—the importance of finding work worth doing.—JH

*Food First*, by Frances Lappe and Joseph Collins (\$3 .65 + post). In this book the authors very convincingly show us a number of surprising facts:

1. Enough food is being produced *right now* to provide an adequate diet for every single person in the world.
2. In almost all countries, there is enough arable land to feed everyone who lives there.
3. In terms of food produced per input of land, capital, water, and energy, many so-called "primitive" methods of farming are far more productive than our industrial agriculture, which is in fact, in terms of those inputs, one of the most inefficient as well as destructive systems of agriculture ever invented.
4. The reason so many people in so many parts of the world can't feed

themselves is that they are denied access to the land and materials they need to do it.

5. What happens instead is that the land, from which poor peasants have often been driven by force, is used by richer farmers or even multinational food corporations to raise luxury foods for rich countries and wealthy people in the poor countries.

6. Most of whatever foreign exchange these poor countries earn from these exports is not used to buy food for their poor, but to buy luxury goods for their own rich.

7. Practically everything that is sent to poor countries in the name of “foreign aid” serves, if it is not actually intended, to speed up the above processes.

8. Even during the worst of the droughts and famines that plagued Central and West African countries during the 1970s, those very countries were exporting food to the rich nations.

And so on. It is a too-little known, astonishing, and horrifying story, carefully and thoroughly documented.

What to do? One thing we can all do is to lower the demand that we, personally, make on the world supplies of food, by eating, as the saying goes, lower down the food chain. Frances Lappe, in her earlier book *Diet for a Small Planet*, shows us how we may do this. Thus, since it takes over ten pounds of grain or vegetable to produce one pound of beef, but only three pounds to produce a pound of chicken or rabbit, from the point of view of efficient use of land, we do better to eat chicken or rabbit rather than beef, and best of all to eat vegetables and grains directly.

Of course, this does not apply in places in which, because of conditions of land and climate, we can't raise foods that we can eat, but in which we can raise animals to turn plants we can't eat into foods that we can. It makes ecological sense for Eskimos to eat caribou, or for Icelanders or Scottish highlanders or any other mountain dwellers to raise sheep, but no sense whatever to use rich farmland, as we do, to raise corn to feed to beef cattle and pigs.

Another thing we can do is grow more, and as much as possible, of our own food. About this very important remedy for the problem of world hunger, the authors say exactly six words. It is not enough. This is for me the only disappointing part of this otherwise essential book that it concentrates

almost exclusively on political remedies, i.e., supporting programs of land reform and the like. Thus, in seventeen pages of references to organizations, publications, and books, there is not one mention of any of the many people learning how to use land more conservingly and efficiently—no mention of *New Alchemists*, *Homesteader's News*, *Rodale Publications*, *Farralones Institute*, etc. One might say that the book suffers a little from the Write Your Congressman syndrome. Not that writing your Congressman isn't useful; I do it often. But it seems to me even more important that we take part as much as we can in the rapidly growing and very important movement to find out and make known as widely as possible how we can best live in greater harmony with the land.

Why is this book important to homeschoolers? For all the reasons given in the book and many more, people of any age who learn how to raise food more efficiently and conservingly will gain a piece of knowledge that is and will be very valuable to them personally, to their community, their country, and the world. The schools talk about essential knowledge; even from the narrow point of view of getting a job and making a career, no knowledge could be more essential or useful than skill at raising food. Home schooling parents should argue very strongly, as some already have, that the presence of such knowledge in their own "curriculum," and the absence of it in the schools, is a very strong reason why their home curriculum is better. We can argue very forcefully that the schools, in preparing children only for industrial work and dependence on industrial products rather than self-reliance, are failing to prepare them for a world food crisis that already exists and a national food crisis that already exists and is likely to become serious very soon.—JH

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Editor—John Holt

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# Growing Without Schooling 27

June 1982

John Holt came back recently from his two-month lecture trip to Europe; he had a wonderful time, seeing many old friends and making many new ones. He also thinks he planted a few home-schooling seedlings here and there. John writes about his trip later in this issue.

He spent last weekend in Ithaca, NY, and at a Sunday afternoon homeschooling meeting organized by Nancy Wallace, more than 150 adults (and countless children) came, despite pouring rain!

Several exciting pieces of news in this issue. One is that Hal and Lynn Kapplow now have the official approval of the Boston Schools for their home-schooling. They are the first family we can think of that has dealt successfully with any big-city bureaucracy.

In fact, in the last few months we've heard from families in half-a-dozen Massachusetts towns who have gotten permission for home-schooling. These victories seem to be a direct consequence of the *Perchemlides* court case and the "Mass. Memo" guidelines that clearly spell out what a Massachusetts family needs to do in order to get approval.

John wrote an article for *Newsday*, published 4/30/82, which may lie packed up by the wire services and reprinted across the country. Also, *Education Network News* (PO Box 6006, Alhambra CA 91801), a newsletter dedicated to the transformation of education, asked me to write a short article about *GWS* for their June issue, which I did. It was fun to try to condense everything I've learned in the last three years into 3½ pages.

Many of the volunteers who have typed for us in the past can no longer do so. If you can do any typing for us, we'd be most grateful if you'd send us another volunteer.

Mary Van Doren has been coming into the office several mornings a week, bringing her 10-month-old, Anna. Not only does Mary get a lot done for us, we love having the baby around!

—Donna Richoux



## John's Coming Schedule

July 22–25, 1982: Homesteaders' Festival. Contact Norm & Sherrie Lee, RD 2 Box 151, Addison NY 14801. July 26: Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton FL 33431; 305- 395-5100. Contact Edward Dejnozka, College of Education.

July 27: Florida homeschoolers. Fla. State U., Tallahassee. 7–10 PM. Contact Ann Mordes in Marianna or Mary Ann Balthrop, Tallahassee.

Aug 24 (tentative): Colorado Home-Schooling Network. Contact Nancy Dumke, 1902 S Oneida, Denver CO 80222.

Oct 16: Maryland Home Education Assoc. Symposium. Contact Manfred Smith, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 21045.

Oct 22 or 31: Child Education Conference, Istituto Lama Tzong Kha pa, Pisa, Italy. Contact Connie Miller, phone (050)68976-68894.

Nov 4: New York State Reading Association Conference. Kiamesha Lake NY. 9:15 AM.

## Book Customers Wanted

We are working on finding ways to expand our mail-order book business. Many people have told us they appreciate our making available at a discount so many interesting books of high quality that are not easy to find in local stores, even in big bookstores. You don't have to believe in unschooling or alternative education to like the books we offer—children's classics, literature, science fiction, art, music, social change, and so on.

We see a real opportunity for growth here. Increasing our book sales, especially by getting more customers, seems the most likely way to get our organization on a much more secure financial footing. *GWS* itself has never been self-supporting. Right now the book business is bringing in a little extra revenue, but not much; we would like to see it contribute much more, so that we can continue to publish *GWS* and provide the other services that we do.

We are going to start mailing out our booklist on a regular basis to non-subscribers who have bought books from us in the past or might want to in the future. This is where you come in. Think of people you know who you would like to see get the booklist—relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and so on. John and *I would like every single GWS reader to send us the*

*name and address of at least one such “Prospective Customer,”* and by all means more than one if you want. We will send all of these people a copy of our booklist (and probably also a short letter) in the fall, so it will reach them in time for Christmas shopping.

That means we need these names and addresses from you right away, preferably by the end of July. A postcard from you will do, or a separate sheet of paper. Please mark the names “Prospective Customers” so we know. In case you’re wondering, nothing in our mailing will indicate from where we got the person’s name.

So, please send these names and addresses to us right away before you forget. This is a painless, cheap way for you to contribute to our work, besides doing your friends a favor. We’re looking forward to getting bushels of postcards and letters from you all!—DR

## **Early G.E.D.**

*From the mother in Washington who wrote “20 Years of Unschooling,”*  
GWS #25, page 1:

Last February, our daughter (16) became impatient at having to wait till she was 18 to take her GED test and start her course at the Technical Institute (she has decided she wants to be an astronaut!) So she talked me into appealing to the school superintendent for permission to take the GED before reaching the required age.

After much soul-searching (we felt the three younger children’s home-schooling might be jeopardized if we got an unfavorable reaction from the authorities), I called up the superintendent and requested a statement of release from the age requirement. I really expected him to ask us to come in for an interview at least, but he seemed to know all about us, and as soon as he understood our request he said he would be happy to oblige, and that was that. I was amazed!

To make a long story short, she took her GED test, was congratulated by the head of the testing department at the community college for having obtained the second-highest score in their records, and has gone on to improve on her brother’s record at the Institute—so far, grade average is 100%. Does this all seem beyond belief?

Child Number 3 is getting ready to wind up his preparation for the GED

by next summer. He'll be 16 then and his most burning desire is to get a job on the railroad crew and work up to becoming an engineer.

## **Surprise From Arizona**

*From Eldon Evans, 1890 E. Don Carlos #1, Tempe AZ 85281:*

We are elated. Our home education bill made its way through the legislature; it focused attention upon home schooling in a way that had never before occurred in this state. Hardly a day went by without a major story about home schooling in the papers or on TV. The bill was opposed by the NEA, and most people thought it didn't have a chance, but we had the facts on our side, and kept the legislators' phones ringing and the letters coming to them. In two days alone, the Governor's office received over 500 telephone calls supporting the bill, and only 4 against it. We gave each member of the Senate Education Committee a copy of *GWS* #24 and presented the Governor with a copy of John Holt's *Teach Your Own*, which we think is a beautiful book. The Governor has young children of his own, so he may give the book serious thought.

We were delighted to have John Holt speak by telephone hook-up to a local radio talk show. Also Dr. Hal Lenke, a local educator, appeared on the Michael Dixon Show. Actually, the NEA's lobbying efforts against the bill were rather lame. We organized the Arizona Home Education Association and testified under that name before the Senate. The mere fact that a home education bill was even being considered stunned the general public, who, for the most part, had never heard of home schooling. We are sure that many people now take it seriously.

Home schoolers, under the new law, must, unfortunately, submit to standard achievement tests once each year. In achieving freedom from the school boards we conceded this irksome requirement, which we hope will be abolished someday. Actually most home-educated children learning under natural conditions will have no trouble passing the tests, but we fear some parents will be intimidated and create rigid curriculums. We are trying to get copies of the tests so the children can study them and see 2 what they are up against.

A beautiful part of our new law is that private schools are untrammelled. They are not required to give tests, or get permission from school boards in

order to operate. It was because of the oppression by specific local school boards that this whole home-teaching bill got started. They were trying to shut down some small religious private schools in some rural areas in a very heavy-handed way. As a result, these ministers went to Representative Jim Cooper, a stout friend of family and home liberties, and this legislation resulted.

Parents wishing to bypass the irksome standardized tests may incorporate their homes as private schools by paying the initial \$50 filing fee. As long as they do not teach persons outside their own family they will not be bothered by zoning laws, fire codes, etc. Several parents have operated as private schools in their own homes for a number of years and there have been no problems, no tests, and no interference at all.

The new Arizona law also requires parents teaching at home to pass a 3-R proficiency test, a minor concession. We consider the child's tests more serious a problem, but not insurmountable. And if parents find them unpalatable, they may incorporate as a private school.

We sent news of the liberal home education law to radio commentator Paul Harvey, who has been friendly to home schooling. His secretary says he is appreciative of material sent to him, so other readers might also send him their success stories, to 360 N. Michigan Av, Chicago IL 60601.

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*DR: Eldon later told us that Paul Harvey started one of his broadcasts with the story. The Arizona Home Education Association newsletter contains an enormous directory, almost 80 families. 33 of them are in two neighboring cities, Tempe and Mesa. John wrote to the A.H.E.A.:*

Terrific! I think that's the biggest piece of news (good or bad) that we've had since we started *GWS*.

Two words of caution. The public school people are probably in a panic about this new law. It is important to try to calm them down and tell them it doesn't mean the end of the world. I think it would be wise to make that point to them in private conversations, and also in whatever public ways you can. Talk up the idea of schools cooperating with homeschoolers, children using schools on a part-time voluntary basis, etc. Also important, as far as you can, to keep an eye on the school people—they are surely already planning to try to repeal the law.

## News From All Over

From local groups: The Colorado Home-Schooling Network (Nancy Dumke, 1902 S Oneida, Denver CO 80222) has an excellent legal packet available for \$3. It clearly spells out the legal options for Colorado homeschoolers.

A reader writes, "I am one of a number of group subscribers who receive *GWS* through Patricia de Fernos (*GWS* #21). We recently had a meeting and officially became the Puerto Rico Home Schooling Association. Our next get-together is a picnic for home-schooling families in June." Patricia's address is 503 Barbe St, Santurce PR 00912.

In the April newsletter of the North Olympic Living Lightly Association, Jana Michel wrote, "There is a group of people meeting from the Port Townsend area who are presently teaching or planning on teaching their children at home. We are meeting quarterly and would invite any interested parent to join us. Contact me at Rt. 1 Box 61-D, Port Townsend WA 98382; 385-3189.

The HOUSE newsletter (2923 W 71st St, Woodridge IL 60517) for March had several pieces of good news, including a positive comment about home-schooling from the Deerfield Superintendent of Schools; the fact that in Chicago the planetarium, arboretum, aquarium, Oriental Institute, and University of Chicago extension courses all permit children in their programs; and the formation of an incorporated home school in Chicago that may help other families (contact Deb Martin, 968-6447).

Courts: Clara Goss (Eden Private Schooler St, Alloway NJ 08001) sent us clippings about her family's prosecution in municipal court for truancy, and wrote, "We finally won. After the school's resolution stating our program was equivalent though they wanted to monitor us through testing, the judge found us not guilty and threw out the conditions."

The Home Educators Newsletter (Rt. 3 Box 324-B, Gallatin MO 64640) reported, "Robert E. Morrow of Central City, Nebraska, has just won his truancy case! Representing himself, Mr... Morrow appealed to a jury that later admitted that they were against home education. Even though the prosecuting attorney wouldn't allow any evidence to be presented that related to religious or Constitutional rights, Mr. Morrow received a unanimous decision for acquittal. Dr. Raymond Moore. was an expert witness."

Legislatures: The Home Educator's Newsletter also reports that a bill in Kansas to lower the compulsory school age from 7 to 5 was defeated after seven witnesses testified against it. Peggy Lentz also told H.E.N. that the two Wisconsin bills mentioned in *GWS* #26 were killed in committee.

Upcoming Events: Laurie Huffman of the Utah Home Education Association (641 E Malibu Dr, Salt Lake City UT 84107; 801-261-3521) told us on the phone that their convention will be August 14. She says the UHEA mailing list is now about 500 families.

Ted Wade is offering two home school seminars, July 4-7 and July 11-14. For information, contact Weimar Institute Summer Programs, Box A, Weimar CA 95736; 916-637-4111.

And the American Christian Academy is planning Home Educators' Seminars in 26 cities. For info, contact Basic Education, PO Box 893, Lewisville TX 75067; 204-462-1316.

## **Alberta Activities**

*Devon Blean (Alta.) wrote:*

After picking away at the problem of finding other home-schooling families and publicizing the possibility and advantages of home schooling for the past three years, I have finally gathered together enough people who are willing to form a provincial organization. The purpose would be to provide information and moral support to home schooling families, to connect home schooling families across the province, and to inform education personnel and MLA's about home schooling. There will be dues to finance handouts and mailing costs so a few individuals are not picking up all the expenses as has been happening up to now.

If the organization decides to have regular meetings, they can be advertised at no cost in freedistribution community newspapers. Many of the inquiries about homeschooling I have received lately stemmed from advertisements I put into the community paper regarding the conference to be held in Olds, Alberta this weekend.

The new contact person for what we are still calling the Alberta Home Schooling Information Service is Kay Wilcox, 45 Haysboro Crescent SW, Calgary Alta T2V 3G1. She has nine children, two of whom are still in school. She's planning on delegating administrative tasks to her older

children so she won't get stuck with too much work.

There was a big uproar when a *Calgary Herald* reporter claimed that the Honorable David King, Minister of Education, was thinking of dropping the compulsory schooling requirement from the School Act. The Minister now says he was misquoted and that his remarks were taken out of context, and he wishes he had never said anything. I would almost be inclined to believe him, except that I received a copy of discussion by the Legislation Council of the Alberta School Trustees Association on the proposed new attendance section of the School Act. And lo and behold, the first sentence says, "The Minister of Education has advised that he is considering removal of compulsory attendance laws."

I wrote a response about the Minister's remarks in a column of the *Herald* reserved for outside opinions. Not only did it get published, I was pleasantly surprised to receive \$40 for the piece.

## Review Published

*From David Eastman in Indiana:*

As for the review of *Teach Your Own* that I did in my hometown paper, I just sent it to them cold along with a letter that was very complimentary of their book review section. I had no connection with the paper previously other than as a regular reader. I would think other *TYO* fans could approach their local papers in the same manner and hopefully get good results. Most small-to medium size papers don't have regular book reviewers, and so accept well written free-lance material as long as it isn't too controversial.

## More Cheap Texts

From a Missouri reader: I was recently able to find Catholic school books—free—from a school that had closed in 1972. The priest told me he would give these books to anyone who wanted them, only *he* couldn't afford to pay the postage (at least 75¢ per book). His name and address: Father Gregovich, Sacred Heart, Verona MO 65769; phone 417-498-6754.

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*And from Deirdre Cox, 1919 .W Melrose, Chicago IL 60657:*

I have a lot of used textbooks (hardcover). If your readers are interested, they should send a list of grades and subjects. Books are \$1 each, postage included. This service would be most helpful for those who don't live in cities and can't get used books cheaply.

## **A New Jersey Family**

*Karen Elder (NJ) writes:*

When Krista was in first grade, I began to talk about teaching her at home. My husband and I thought it was illegal, however, and he wasn't very keen on the idea. In Krista's first months of second grade, I began formulating plans to take her out any way possible: keeping on the move, visiting far-away relatives, etc. I was ready to do anything. Our second child, Robin, was 2 and she was just blossoming before our eyes, while Krista's spirit and joy in life were withering.

Then we saw John on *Good Morning America* (I knew TV was good for something). A week later we bought *Teach Your Own*—and in our financial situation we never buy hardbound books. Two months later, Krista was out.

When people ask me how it's going I always say that it is even better than I imagined it would be. I am answering a different question than they are asking, however. They want to know if it is actually possible to sit your child down every day and give six hours of lessons. I am answering that freedom suits us—Krista smiles more, gets in her Minimum Daily Requirement of reading (from some internal need), and has plenty of time for running, dancing, and, especially, jumping (she says that's her favorite exercise). The people who ask don't believe me when I tell them that there have been no drawbacks and that the benefits seem to touch everything we do.

Both sets of grandparents have been supportive of our switch to homeschooling, but partly because before we started I only committed myself to doing it for the rest of this school year. After these past three months, however, I will certainly not send Krista back to school unless she asks to go, and even then I would cast a heavy vote against it and remind her that she could always come back home. (So far she has wanted to go back for gym —“They have really neat equipment and in April they let you use any of it for two weeks.” Actually the gym teacher is probably the best teacher they have there—other parents have commented on this to me.)



We did not have any trouble with the school when we told them (by 3-page letter, using much from *Teach Your Own*) we were taking Krista out. We had a conference with the principal, Krista's teacher and a member of the child study team. Only the teacher was actively negative, although the principal started the conference with a statement that we "should know that the school does not think this is in Krista's best interests." The member of the child study team was truly interested in how we would actually teach Krista, but I had to *GWS #27* say that I did not know what we would do exactly.

It turns out that we leave her pretty much on her own. We have a lot of books, some textbooks (which are the least used, being the least interesting) and lots of paper, various machines (typewriter, calculator, TV, tape recorder, stereo, electronic games, and, soon to be borrowed from a friend, a mini-computer), sports equipment, small animals, and ourselves and our work.

(From a later note:) The grandparents are still wonderful, even now that they realize we intend to continue home-schooling. My parents, who live nearby, see the kids about once a week, cook with them, have them help in the garden, take them on picnics, etc. The far-away paternal grandparents have flown us out to Arizona (we put it down as a field trip on the curriculum we sent to the school), and have given us a couple of magazine subscriptions and other good materials and ideas.

We are still struggling with Krista's left-over aversion to writing, with how much structure we really want and need, and with what to do about the 1-year-old's persistent desire to be right in the middle (literally) of any project we are doing. But we are all learning, especially me, I think.

## **Success in S.C.**

*From Tina Manley (SC):*

*March 15:* I have read all 23 newsletters three times—once quickly, with great relief to find other people saying what I thought; once thoroughly to absorb the ideas; and once with a pen to mark sections that would be helpful in my argument with the local school board.

My husband and I are currently teaching our four children at home. Before we moved to Rock Hill, we wrote the local school superintendent requesting permission to teach our children at home. He replied that they had never had such a request and would first have to draw up some guidelines.

We met the assistant superintendent later and he presented us with several pages of guidelines. We gave him a letter covering most of the material required by the guidelines. He admitted that he was surprised we were so well prepared (thanks to the newsletters.) The additional information required concerned my qualifications (I'm not certified), a list of our reference books and materials, and a description of our schoolroom.

Next we are to meet with the school board for an interview and approval or disapproval. If they turn me down; I can appeal to the State Board of Education. In the meantime my children are enjoying their freedom. They can easily finish their Calvert lessons in the morning and their afternoons are free for reading, special projects or "just playing." They are much happier and say they are learning more than they did in school.

*May 12:* To bring you up to date—we are now legal. We have permission from the local school board to teach our children at home for the rest of this year. Permission for next year will depend on the results of the standardized tests the children took with the public school children last month. I'm not worried since 3 of my children are good test-takers.

At the school board meeting, the people from the administrative office said I had an impressive program and they could see no reason why I should not be able to teach my children at home. The school board members interviewed me for about an hour. The questions mainly concerned what objections I had to their excellent school system. I tried to emphasize the positive aspects of home school rather than the negative aspects of public school. They finally voted—7 in favor, 1 abstention.

## **And in Oklahoma**

*From Linda Ashton (OK):*

I have not been ready to come out into the open until now. Ours is not a very big town; we have not had a specific routine or schedule for our home education, and I've felt very uncomfortable. I had made no contact with the local authorities, really fearful of their response. But I decided I couldn't start a new year without going public, getting established with the local board of education, no matter what the response. So on New Year's Day, I wrote a letter to the local superintendent and to the state superintendent asking for minimum requirements by grade and curriculum by grade.

The state superintendent sent me a handbook for administrators and principals, describing the basic approach to education—no help at all. The response I was most anxious about was from the local superintendent. I role-played in my mind numerous responses, losing a little sleep, and sweating a lot. So when my daughter called me to the phone at 8:30 in the morning, six days after I'd mailed my letter and said, "Mom, it's James Roberts," I nearly melted in my tracks. He's the administrator for elementary education and I had taught across the hall from his daughter one year. I had expected a written reply.

A very friendly conversation ensued, the bottom line of which was there is no such thing as a paper with curriculum by grade and minimum requirements. I was amazed. Mr. Roberts informed me that the curriculum was taken from the textbooks adopted by the system and whatever was in the textbooks was the basic curriculum. He agreed that I could come to the board of education and obtain this information by copying it from the texts I needed.

So I went down to the school board office that afternoon. I had "prepared" my basic curriculum from the World Book pamphlet recommended in *GWS* #20, all ready to check off my objectives against those in the texts. Instead, Mr. Robert's secretary showed me to the bookroom where we picked up the teacher's editions of texts and workbooks and I was able to bring them home to use. We hardly ever use the books. They are so tedious.

What has amazed me is there have been no questions asked about what we're doing or why we're doing it. A lot of my anxiety is gone now and I find it fun to wander through. The department stores during the day with my children, with next to no one else there shopping! And very rarely does anyone say a word about why they aren't in school.

PS—I do not need a personal response, as I feel responded to with each newsletter. And if any of this would be helpful for *GWS*, you may use it.

(DR: Several readers were kind enough to say much the same thing, that getting *GWS* was like getting a letter, in response to my remarks in *GWS* #24 about being unable to answer all the mail. We're glad people feel that way. Also, thanks to all of you who tell us when you write whether it's OK to print any part of your letter, and whether to use your name.)

## Five Years at Home

*From Penny Barker (OH):*

I last wrote about five years ago when I switched from Home Study Institute to Santa Fe Community School—that was a good decision and has worked well for us. Our 7, 8, and 13-year-olds were enrolled this year and next year the 6-year-old joins them. We have not been bothered by local school authorities in these past 5 years but I keep good records on the kids and they really don't go out into the community before 3 o'clock on school days. I do find we're relaxing on this as we feel school authorities are looking the other way.

Britt is nearly a self-taught Suzuki piano student. She began lessons at 9. After a year of once-week lessons we were unable to get to her teacher that often, so she would send tapes to her teacher. That wasn't too effective, so she has been taking lessons once a month in the fall and spring and the rest of the time she is on her own. She just finished giving a performance at a Catholic College in West Virginia and this month will be giving an hour and a half performance at a Montessori Center an hour or two away from here. She will do a duet with her 9-year-old sister and a harmonica-piano duet with her 7-year-old brother—both self-taught musicians.

What amazes me is that these are not "gifted" children—they spend most of their time doing what they want to do (after chores, that is). In the winter we do structured studies for a couple of hours each morning but that's about it. Most of their learning is completely spontaneous. As I write, Maggie and Britt stopped by the orchard (where I'm typing) to tell me they are going off to the woods to look for a doe Britt spotted this morning and to spot birds and record their calls on paper. Dan (7) and Ben (5) stopped by earlier with a big jar and said they were going wild flower hunting. They'll bring home some specimens and sketch them with colored pencils (their favorite medium).

I could go on and on about my average kids and their wonderful growth. It seems they have simply more time to grow and develop than other children I know who have probably more potential but so much less time to realize it because they are always stuck away in a school building.

We run a summer program here on our farmstead for children 6 to 16. We just had our open house and it was attended by 600 men, women, and

children. Many of the people who attended were school heads, public school teachers, and Montessori teachers. We are always asked where our children go to school. In our previous five open houses we have usually been vague and then we graduated to saying they were enrolled in a private school southwest of here (Santa Fe Community School!) This year we said our children were taught at home. For the first time people do not seem to be shocked by this answer and seem to be not only accepting but absolutely pleased. At 9 AM my answer to this question was so quiet only the person I was talking to could hear, but by afternoon time I was saying it to groups of people and recommending it to people who seemed genuinely interested. Several had read *Teach Your Own* and meeting someone who was unschooling added fuel to the fire started inside of them to take their kids out of a system that had made unpleasant people out of their children.

I'm amazed that people's attitudes have changed so much. I'm certain a lot has to do with the exposure unschooling is getting through your books, articles and television and radio appearances. I know my kids felt good being able to be open about it for the first time—I noticed a distinct absence of pressure in what used to be rather a stressful day for them.

When our summer program begins we have 26 visitors and 6 teenage apprentices each week and the farmstead becomes very much like John's submarine experience. We have no telephone, television or electricity and everybody has to work together to make the world work for that five days we're together—it is tremendous to see it happen.

## **Why Not Elitism?**

*Deirdre Purdy (WV) wrote to John:*

Elitism is a charge often heard against home schooling, though it's never clear to me why something is bad just because it may not be available to everyone.

However, I know, and in fact believe, the stock answer that most everyone could teach their children at home if they chose. (I prefer to emphasize "could let their children learn at home."). But, perhaps to deny elitism is, in a backhanded way, to acknowledge the value implicitly placed by the questioner on parents' education, degrees, etc. After your lecture at Fairmont, one faculty member with whom you had dinner accosted two other

unschoolers and me, demanding to know what degrees we had. I greatly admired your point that one's education is one's own business, but obviously had not taken it sufficiently to heart, and (out of lingering pride, too) told him what degrees I had, knowing how he would leap on this response and that the argument was lost for he would hear no more. Later I took an oath to myself not to forget your privacy point again in such a situation. However, the reason I am teaching my children at home is because I do not believe there are many people in the world who can give them the education that I can. Certainly those who could are not in the public schools and not interested in teaching my, or often any, young children. Partly that is true because no one cares more or takes more interest in them than I. But partly it is true because of the reading, thought, and talk I have participated in, partly engendered by my education and the people I met through it.

I would be proud if my children grew up to be intellectuals who knew how to deal well in the world too. That is, not just an intellectual, but an intellectual farmer, housewife, musician, shopkeeper, or whatever trade and lifestyle they choose. Where, in the public or private education establishment in America, are intellectuals being taught and encouraged in this age? Most of those in the university, in fact, are not intellectuals but scholars, pedants, or eternal schoolchildren, and even where the search for understanding and knowledge are encouraged, the will or courage to live out one's conclusions is not. Have America's philosophical leveling doctrines come to such a foolish pass that we can no longer acknowledge that every population has elite (the population of machinists as well as lecturers, coon hunters, and cosmonauts) and strive to be in ours?

## **Likes Kids Now**

*From Linda Mills (TX; GWS #26):*

Upon reading John's statement in *The Mother Earth News* interview (available here, \$3) that most people don't like their children enough to spend 24 hours a day in their company, in a moment of honest reflection (quietly, so no one could know) I said to myself, "That's me—I just really don't like my kids THAT much." It took me a good six months of home-schooling to feel really comfortable with them, to respect them as people apart from me.

## A Good Question

*From Heather Hynd, PO Box 761, Rockland ME 04841:*

One day last week, Jason (7) and Timothy (5) were playing with “play-doh.” They were making boats. I was kneading bread dough on the other end of the table.

“Would this float, Mom?”

“No, it’s too heavy.”

“Why? Ships are steel. They are heavy. How do they float?”

My memory drifted back to a sun-drenched beach in Singapore where I, then aged 16, was making castles and moats with the seven-year-old son of one of the “club wives,” whose only goal in life seemed to be lying in the sun. The boy and I stopped to watch a long, sleek, grey naval ship steam past the anchored and moored yachts. “Why does it float when it’s so heavy?” asked my little friend, and “Don’t ask silly questions” admonished his mother.

Back to the present and my own seven-year-old son. I got a basin of water and gently launched his vessel. It sank. Why?

This opened up endless roads to explore: weight/displacement, shape/construction, designing/naval architects. How some boats are fast and others slow. The boys worked the morning away and soon had a motley fleet sailing (and sinking) in their basin.

## Life at Home

*Robin Mackenzie (MI) writes:*

I’m grateful for the days and special times I have with my children. Sometimes it’s a grind (and I struggle with that), but often it is super. Like one afternoon last week. The spring sun was filtering in the windows. I was reading *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* just at the point where Cousin Ophelia was madly knitting while listening to St. Clair discuss his views of slavery. My three sons, Caleb (10), Joshua and Jacob (both 12), were also madly knitting! They’d just learned and were begging for more time to do a few more rows. There is no time for that with busy school schedules.

Yesterday we celebrated St. Patrick’s Day with a beautiful green

luncheon. (Each boy takes a week to plan and prepare lunches—this includes an attractive table setting as well as nutrition). Our elderly neighbor was invited to the lunch and we shared Joshua's study of St. Patrick.

The boys are currently writing alphabet stories for their two-year-old sister, Naomi Praise. She is a very active participant in our school (note the notepaper—I have hardly a sheet or envelope left undecorated). This fall we built her her own desk, just under the window, complete with bookshelf, bulletin board, and busy bin. Our attempt at organization is still under siege much of the time. Although I might remark that the school room has gone from the least used room to the most used.

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*A Michigan reader writes:*

This year my daughter officially became a home-schooler. Amy has become the neighborhood expert on birds, rocks, plants, star constellations, and planet identification. On weekends, weather permitting, when Amy has friends to spend the night, our 3-inch refractor telescope goes out to view the sky. This is an exciting and adventurous activity for 8- to 10-year-olds. Amy, of course, has accepted astronomy and stargazing as a natural family activity, and has become expert at locating objects with the telescope.

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*From Peter Goodman (VA):*

We have found rural farm life ideal for our lives, especially in blurring the distinctions between work and play, adult and child activities. There is little to say about our unschooling experiences because for us “unschooling,” “learning,” etc., are really nothing other than our lives—complex, interesting, boring, happy, sad, and so on. We like our lives and each other.

So—when folks ask how I do think teaching at home is working out—what can I do but smile and say, “Swell.” Teaching really doesn't exist around here but we sure learn stuff. Like the other day in the corral, I was running after a calf and in the deep mud I ran right out of my rubber boots. Next time, I'll walk.

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*From the author of “More Games,” GWS #14:*

S is 9-years-old now. He is enrolled in a private school in Ontario which is



not strictly legal here in Alberta. A private school in Alberta must be approved by the Alberta Board of Education and they do not approve schools outside of the province. However, chef school provides me with a ready answer to “Why isn’t he in school?” or if I am reported to the school board I can honestly say he is enrolled in school. The peace of mind I have obtained from this simple subterfuge is enormous.

S now has an Atari video game. We have two education-related cartridges—Basic Math and Hangman. The Basic Math is just drill but the Hangman is a little more versatile in that I can enter a word (up to six letters) and have S guess it or vice versa. We choose the words from the spelling list at the end of the Grade 4 speller of our children’s dictionary. This not only gives him a spelling drill but also practice in using the dictionary.

S bought an electric experiment kit from Radio Shack and has tried approximately half of them. The instructions are on two levels—a simple wiring diagram and a more complicated circuit diagram with directions concerning it in complicated (to me) electrician’s language. The kit has many interesting projects but its downfall is in the directions. They do not provide a bridge from the simple wiring diagram to the more difficult explanation of the project.

S now receives *Hostex News* (GWS #26) and always looks forward to the next issue. He was never interested in writing letters until he read about pen pals in *Hostex*. He is now sending his name in for their pen pal list.

Last year I was able to get a Canadian Standards Basic Test which I gave to S and marked. He scored above grade level in all subjects except math in which he was at the proper grade for his age with 90%. I try to do some formal work with him but it is usually no more than two hours, three days a week.

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*From the mother who wrote “Shakespeare and Math,” GWS #19:*

I surveyed our scene this morning and felt such peace I wanted to share what I saw. Our 9-year-old had been re-reading for the umpteenth time the *Little House* series and had constructed a prairie town and farms out of blocks, Lincoln logs, etc. It’s most realistic. It’s inhabited by the little Fisher-Price people and there is a school. Today’s history lesson at the “school” was an oral recitation about American presidents which I eavesdropped on and

which had been researched thoroughly. The afternoon English was a spirited reading of Paul Revere's ride and other such. She only recently finished *My Antonia* by Willa Cather. It's so beautifully written. Our daughter spends a while each day with *Arithmetic Made Simple*.

Our 11-year-old son is also enjoying *Arithmetic Made Simple* and is presently reading John Christopher's series *White Mountain*, *City Of Gold And Lead*, and *Pool Of Fire*. He draws many hours a day and his work is *fine*. He wonders about a career utilizing his talent. He also plays piano by ear and enjoys picking up pieces much beyond his reading level and playing them. He loves to pretend and play and these golden fall days are so perfect. I'm so glad the kids are not cooped up in a stuffy classroom. Fall holds some of Missouri's finest weather and children get such small pieces of it.

The four year old has always had siblings at home and is so much richer for it.

Now—just let me not begin to fret about re-entry to public school someday and leave them alone. When I begin assigning things to do—mostly out of fear of imagined learnings of school and their getting behind—that is when the peace stops and the quarrelling with one another becomes more frequent.

The 9-year-old, by the way, often acts out her stories, sometimes with blocks, sometimes by writing her own similar story, sometimes by *becoming* a story character for days. Fascinating—the feelings of the stories must deeply imprint in her spirit.

## Informal Routine

*Meg Johnson wrote in the Winter Bulletin of the Home Education Source Center (NJ; \$3/year):*

In our family we find that we have two specific parts of our routine that help keep things going fairly smoothly. The first is that our days are divided informally into time blocks. Mornings belong to schooling. Schoolwork is supposed to be done in the mornings and Mom is available for teaching and assistance. Afternoons are devoted to other activities which may include baking, household chores, sewing, individual interests and projects, visits with other home schoolers, etc. Generally we find that home schooling is a full-time demanding lifestyle. It has become easier as the children have

grown up, however.

The other part of our routine that makes it easier for the children to do their work independently is a written record of what they have done, and, at the beginning of each day usually, an outline of what they should do that day. They can then go on and do their work even if there is no one to watch them every minute. Of course they fool around and dawdle and sometimes bicker, but they are becoming more responsible and realize that they have to do their own work. When the older children work on their own, there is time to meet some of the needs of the younger children.

We still must face the limitations of time and energy. For some of us it may be possible to have children around all day and still keep the house spotless. I think these families are exceptions. My family finally had to set a few basic goals. We try to clean up before Daddy comes home so that there is a little room for him in our small house. We do try to keep our living room fairly neat, but this is a challenge. Serious cleaning is done when possible, but never on the weekly basis which once seemed so necessary. The only two parts of household chores which we try to keep up with are the dishes and the laundry. We do try to have time to plan and prepare nutritious meals. It will be a goal to someday have everything completely under control, but as priorities go, housekeeping is, for the time being, below quite a few other things.

## **A Good Year**

*From Anna Quinn-Smith (OR):*

It's been just a year now that Kris (11) has been un-schooled and our growth and changes together have been remarkable. Friends and relatives comment positively that Kris doesn't seem as "wired" or angry and argumentative. And it is with a heart full of love and joy that I too see the transformation from a tense, sullen, moody, confused child harboring many fears and displaying badly bitten fingernails (a stress-related habit) to a more consistently happy, calm, agreeable, cooperative, and pleasant human being, who now proudly sports longer fingernails.

I don't want to paint an all too rosy picture; I also recall our screaming bouts, our frustration with each other as we learn to work together in this new way, and our tearful embraces. I think what's important, though, is that we

acknowledge our unknowingness, but don't stop our quest to explore and discover.

Our days are so full even if we do “nothing” as Kris puts it. She likes to be on the go and even when she reacts to a stay-at-home-choreday saying “How boring,” she eventually can be found amid a pile of construction paper cut-outs, or drawing, or maybe building a fort in the basement playroom, playing “office” with an elaborate layout on her table, and so on. There's rarely a time she's not embarking on some new project, and I am proudly amazed at the reemergence of her creativity. She pretty much repressed it while in school—that took so much energy.

I feel so lucky to enjoy her the way I can - we are not limited by bedtimes, or rising times and we can set our own pace all day. Since I took her out of school my lifestyle has turned topsy-turvy. I've returned to nursing (I'm an LPN) and work part-time evenings so we can have days together. I have two roommates—one with a 7-year-old son—who are home evenings with her. Then there are the 3 days off I've got for us to do things.

Kris is involved in the local YMCA and excels in swimming and gymnastics; she also enjoys jazz dance, ice skating, roller skating, and gets together regularly with a group of friends she's known for several years. But loneliness and not having more kids around is her number one complaint. And that I'm not too sure how to solve. There are a few good friends who plan to take their girls—age 9—out of public school next fall and work on a homeschooling co-op of sorts. Kris is quite excited about a “school” with these girls whom she's already friends with. And I'm excited about the additional aid and experience. One of the parents is a single father. Both sets of parents are upset and frustrated with the public schools and the “social poisoning” of their girls.

I've applied to Oak Meadow School—I appreciate the Waldorf approach to education and children, *and* like the idea that we can adapt the program to our needs, and they can receive her past school-records. Though Kris is 11, we'll be doing a review of 4th grade level. At first I somewhat resisted “grades” and “levels,” but it hurts me to see her stumble in areas (math and writing especially) and I don't want to push her, so I welcome the Oak Meadow curriculum as a guide and form.

Kris retreats to her previous misnomers acquired at school, i.e., “dummy,” “stupid,” “lazy,” when she can't do what she feels she must. We take it slow

and easy and try not to get caught up in too much seriousness. There's always time for hugging and giggling. Kris seems to need that kind of emotional outlet—many times during our day she'll come to me for a hug or kiss, and it seems just the medicine she needs to function because afterwards she flourishes; without it, she withers. And to think she spent 3 stress-filled years in school where there was no hug breaks!

Kristin and I both are members of our local YMCA and swim there a lot. A few months ago we heard they needed volunteers to help handicapped preschoolers in a special swim program. We excitedly signed up; it was a morning class and we both were available. It didn't dawn on me that Kristin's size (she's very tiny for 11) would present a problem—and, it didn't. They instructors knew Kris and knew she was a strong, competent swimmer. She got in the water and they lowered a 3- or 4-year-old girl to her just as they did to the adults present. No questions, no problems. And the two mornings a week I have a dance and swim class, Kris assists in childcare at the Y and is respected for her work. The Y's assistant director wrote a long glowing recommendation for Kris as an introduction to the Boise YMCA where she went to visit Grammie for a month this year.

Another area of interest for us is wildlife. Last fall we went on Audubon field trips. Kristin became quite adept at bird sightings and showed a talent for detail memory, and in handling a telescope for closer looks. At the coast she spotted an osprey that the biologist said was a gull but on closer examination he discovered it *was* an osprey!

Recently I've volunteered for a nature program offered at Audubon for school groups—we'll direct wildlife activities and take small groups on nature walks through the bird sanctuary. Kris has accompanied me to some of the training session field trips—again, no questions asked—and she makes a valuable contribution to the group, having a uniquely clear, uncomplicated perspective..

I'm wondering if readers in various states are aware of neglect laws. I found out the hard way while living in Idaho that leaving a child under ten unattended constitutes negligence on the part of the parent. Kris was used to staying alone for short periods and when she was nearly six, I had to leave her alone for an hour or so with an earache to take a semi-final LPN exam for which there was no makeup. I got a call at school to hurry home—seems Kristin was crying a bit (her ear hurt quite a bit—she had been to the doctor

and we had medicine), a “helpful” neighbor who worked for the state phoned Children Protective Service, and I arrived home to a sheepish daughter and an irate official. It was all worked out but I became very aware of these statutes and the “helpfulness” of neighbors. It might be wise to check individual states so that homeschooling families who leave their kids alone wouldn’t be hassled.

P.S. I always marveled at the long letters people seem to write in, and now there I go with a booklet.

## Learning Record

*Anna sent this summary of a month of Kristin’s activities:*

Letter to her dad.

Review of math related to perimeters; measurements in inch and centimeters.

Looking up Roman numerals in encyclopedia index—pulling appropriate volume, writing numbers 1–20, clock face, 1982, and other numbers in Roman numerals.

Reading pages in encyclopedia on Norse mythology—relating synopsis of Ring of Niblung to parts of *Narnia Chronicles*.

Making cookies from scratch—1 1/2 x recipe.

Discussing N.H. after finding the lake mom’s childhood camp was on, finding towns, mountains, lakes, other states nearby.

Looking up states and population densities in atlas found a Smith, Nevada; Lund, Nevada; and Quinn River, Nevada.

Geography game. amazement in discovering Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are separate countries.

Recognition of Tchaikovsky and Beethoven, etc., recordings.

1/2 hr. reading *Happy Hollister* book aloud.

3/4 of an hour being read to by Mom (*Silver Chair*, C.S. Lewis).

Making desk name plates of folded paper for room-mates with name, address, occupation.

Cut letters from newspaper ads to form her name and other words. Shopping trip—menu planning for Chinese stir-fry chicken; cooking lunch.

Playing city-game with world atlas (choosing locale, say, Ireland, and picking a city, bay, river. Other person has to find it with hot/cold clues from

leader).

Relating stories of interest about Scotland, Ireland; examining and discussing topographic maps of Europe, Asia, and Africa. highest mountains, deserts, rainforests, and proximity of Russia to USA.

Learning about latitude (north and south), and longitude (east and west); equator and Greenwich Meridian; playing latitude/longitude game to discover African countries.

Browsing through Time-Life *Early Man* book—graph date line of man's evolution, archaeological digs, etc.

Kris took Time-Life *Weather* book out and discovered a weather symbol that's the same as Taurus and means "changing." Kris figured out map coordinate game I devised for her. Cities or countries near coordinates answered my questions. Such as, "A famous movie with Humphrey Bogart at 7 degrees west longitude, 33 degrees north latitude" (Casablanca).

Built a "diorama:" a winter scene—some cut from crafts book, the rest fabricated by Kris—in a shoebox complete with blue tissue paper sky, cotton clouds and snow, and snowflakes meticulously cut out and affixed to Saran wrap over opening to provide a snowstorm.

Began discussing verbs/nouns/adverbs and adjectives so she could write different colors for each of such in book she has begun.

Continued work on book; advances in gymnastics, swimming (plunge dive), ice and roller skating.

Made get-well card for Aunt Rosemary as well as construction paper cloud and rainbow design for her.

Made her own Geo-Board from wood; marked off proper intervals, hammered in nails, used yarn and rubber bands to make designs.

Helped paint birdhouse and dollhouse.

Real helpful and responsible in household chores/duties.

Went to free youth Philharmonic Concert at Civic Auditorium. Kris was thrilled that we could sit in box seats but then discovered that far right cut off part of stage viewing—relocated to center.

Played in cascading Fountain Park across from Auditorium. Discussed underground water pipes, recycling water, etc.

Walked around downtown—looked up at building tops to note architectural details, embellishments.

Library visit.

Jazz dance class.

Visit to OMS! For planetarium show on comets, also other exhibits.

Audobon nature training, field trips, observations.

Ice skating. Trip to Union Depot to purchase train ticket.

Trip alone to Boise, Idaho—12 hours on train! Kris assisted conductor and met lots of interesting people despite earlier anxiety.

## Travel Offer

*From Martha Laux, 1853 East Shore Dr, Ithaca NY 14850:*

I was just getting around to writing the Network for Educational Travel when I saw your request for help with it (*GWS* #26). We happily volunteer to be the new contact. We could easily keep track of the addresses on our home computer so it wouldn't be much work for us. *GWS* readers who were interested in hosting or visiting could send us their names and addresses including ages (birthdates) of their children, special interests, special needs or wishes (examples: vegetarians, nonsmokers, allergies to pets)—things that might affect comfort.

We could print a Travel Directory that could be sent to anyone who was listed and who sent a request for one along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. Those who preferred not to be on a printed list could be matched up in some other way, perhaps. Any other ideas for helping this go smoothly are welcome. I think it would be a wonderful way to travel and learn about new places through home town eyes and to make some wonderful new friends. It seems that other homeschoolers I've met have quickly become good friends.

(DR: anyone who wrote to the original Network should write now to Martha if they still want to host travellers, or find out who is hosting. As I said, we just don't have room in *GWS* to print this kind of information, so we hope everyone takes advantage of Martha's offer.)

## Meeting Other Readers

*Rachael Solem ("Kids on a Boat," GWS #23) and her family is now travelling around the country, and she wrote us from Florida:*

On our first attempt to use the *GWS* Directory to make friends, we found



Charlie and Lucy Smith, not far from where we are camped. Their kids are remarkably close in age to ours and they all even look alike! I left Lucy a note in her mailbox one day, asking her to call the campground and leave a message if she was interested in getting together. She called before I even reached home. We saw each other the following morning—shyly, with a certain tension, but she invited us to dinner, and we went last night. It was really lovely. Charlie and Fisher share many interests and skills. Zephi and Briana (5) went adventuring, colored in coloring books, played with matchbox cars and generally got along. Ezra and John-Eli (2) had some things to teach other—John-Eli learned some self-defense! Lucy and I talked about the range of topics common to women “like us.” Who knows, next time we may cross the age/sex barriers and melt down the pigeonholes of social life.

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*And from Sharon Hillestad (MN):*

Thanks to *GWS* our stay in New Jersey was useful and fun. We met Ann Bodine and her family—she was just great to us. Both of the older children stayed several days at her house; she arranged a field trip while we were there, and let me use her washing machine, and in general saved my sanity. I’m sure we will remain in contact for years. I feel as though we could go anywhere and find some *GWS* family who would give us supper and good conversation.

## **Group Sub Names**

The only disadvantage, from our point of view, of group subs is that if they expire, the only name we have on our records and mailing list is the name of whoever took out the sub. All the other names are lost to us. We need these names very much, so that from time to time we can send them special pieces of news or material—perhaps our latest book list, perhaps announcement of a new book of mine, perhaps some important home schooling news. Even if these ex-subscribers no longer feel the need for *GWS* itself, they often are still interested in buying books from our list, which is useful to them and helps support our work. And some of them may decide later to re-subscribe.

So we would like to ask you, if you hold a group subscription, or decide to take one out, to please send us the names and addresses of all the other subscribers in the group, so that we may always be able to keep in touch with them. Thanks very much.—JH

## First Boston Family

*From Lynn Kapplow (MA):*

It's finally happened! We've become the first family in Boston with official approval to teach our children at home. We began two years ago keeping a very low profile, but we were forced into the open when a truant officer left us a note. I was so nervous I could hardly steady the phone when making that first call. But as I spoke to him and later to other officials I realized they too were feeling vulnerable about their role in home-schooling. This permitted us to approach the entire matter in a less defensive way, and by making ourselves sensitive to *their* problems at every step, we were able to work things out smoothly.

I therefore assured the truant officer I would report to the superintendent of schools, which I did. I asked the superintendent's office about the procedure for home-schooling, and was sent an application.

From the first our home-schooling friends came forth to help. They brought us their copies of the Mass general laws, the *Turano* case, the *Perchemlides* case, and sample curriculums. Hal and I pored over all the old *GWS*'s for articles on the law, the very ones we'd skipped (naturally) in the past.

The application we were asked to fill out requested the children's vital statistics, the home teacher's credentials, and the proposed curriculum, and it listed the school system's monitoring and testing requirements and pertinent parts of Boston and Mass. laws. Some of these we had problems with.

Hal and I agreed to be agreeable, yet to dispense with this form and answer in our own way. We knew if we were going to do this right we needed further information from the school department. We sent a letter with a list of requests (suggested by back issues of *GWS*): 1) a copy of the entire elementary school curriculum; 2) minimum learning requirements in each subject for each grade level; 3) copies of home instruction programs that had already been approved; 4) how many hours a day the schools provided

tutoring for a child at home with an extended illness; and 5) a description of the action taken when a student does not meet the minimum learning requirements.

The Deputy Superintendent we'd been dealing with answered each request fully and candidly. He also sent us the entire curriculum plus the subjects required to be taught by law and the weekly time allotment for each. This proved most helpful in making up our own curriculum.

It took us one month to complete our curriculum! In the end we had twelve detailed pages, six for each child, a cover letter to the administrator and a cover letter to the school committee stating our position. We then submitted these in lieu of the completed application. In this way we avoided signing anything we might feel sorry about later. And too, we were giving them a chance to view us in our own words and thoughts. A kind of introduction by mail, to show we weren't to be feared or thought of as freaks but rather sane normal people making an individual choice.

The curriculum made no promises; we didn't agree to use any sort of formalized home study program, e.g., Calvert; we never stated any daily time spent on any subject. We merely stated what books the children regularly used or had read and gave an average reading list for one week. Basically, we put down on paper what we were doing as of that very moment and what we'd been having fun at in the most recent months, relating it all to the required subjects and weekly time frames.

Now let me make this clear. Our children do not sit at table and chair for a required length of time each day to complete a certain amount of work. We learn together through games, fun, practical living, exposure, availability, and, yes, workbooks, but the latter is the children's personal choice.

Our curriculum had no trouble being approved, but they still wanted us to sign the application. I decided to call the Deputy Superintendent and speak frankly about our reservations. He permitted us to alter the application before signing it. He explained the required inspection of our home was not a formal inspection but merely to cover the child abuse laws and to meet us in person. All our foolish fears were falling away one by one.

The inspection was done by our local district superintendent and his assistant. They called first to let us know we had nothing to fear from them because they were impressed with our curriculum. They immediately approved us in letter form. We then met with our local principal who also

turned out to be very nice and even wished he could do the same with his own son! He also gave us an incredible amount of texts and workbooks and has offered his support in any way we might want.

It took five months; start to finish, getting a final letter of approval. Part of this was due to our own long deliberation over each step. I am grateful my children were not in school all that time.

The entire experience has been hard work but delightful in its outcome. We feel any future dealing will be equally amicable.

## **Successful Curriculum**

Below are excerpts from the material Lynn Kapplow submitted to the Boston School Department. People who've been asked to submit a curriculum to the local officials sometimes ask us if we have models for them to follow. We don't, really; every family's situation is different, and the subjects and amount of detail you need to provide vary. We print this as one example of a successful plan, and hope you will borrow from it whatever is appropriate for your own circumstances:

On the following pages we've summarized our plan for family-centered education for our two children.

In order to give a fuller sense of our approach and how it's implemented, we feel it is appropriate to present our material in a more expanded form than the application form allows.

Since each day in a child's life is or could be a time for learning, our "school" is open 365 days a year. It might sound like exaggeration to claim that school begins when our children arise and ends when they retire. But many a bedtime finds them still absorbed in some favorite subject. For we have found that, in a home setting, a longer day fosters an unhurried learning environment which the best-written curriculum plan cannot describe.

### **EDUCATION PLAN FOR GRACE KAPLOW, Grade 1**

*Language Arts.* Grace is strongly motivated in all studies pertaining to language. She spends a minimum of 800 minutes per week reading. The following is a recent list of books Grace read in one week. It's

typical of her average reading week.

(List of all titles, authors, and number of pages.)

Grace also regularly reads these periodicals: *Cricket*, *Ranger Rick*, *World Magazine*, *Wee Wisdom*, and *The Christian Science Sentinel*.

While contemporary material has its place, we consider classic literature essential not only for the development of all language skills, but also for broadening cultural outlook, history, and the general expansion of one's horizons. Therefore, our reading program includes not only silent reading and reading aloud, but being read to. Grace regularly reads aloud from the King James Version of the *Bible*. In the recent past she's read from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Nikolenka's Childhood* by Leo Tolstoy, and is currently reading *Cyrano de Bergerac* by Edmond Rostand. In addition, both parents regularly read aloud to the children from selected classics.

For workbooks Grace uses the Merrill *Read and Learn* series (Charles Merrill Pub. Co., 1977). She has completed the *Nicky Book 3* and is presently on the *Holly Book 4*, both for ages 6–8.

For other elements including writing, spelling, thinking, and articulation, we combine the use of workbooks with a practical approach. We play many family games to develop spelling, alphabetizing, and vocabulary-building skills. Grace frequently writes short stories. She maintains an active correspondence with adult friends and relatives. She writes daily notes to her parents and sister. She often sends away for things by mail, doing the entire procedure by herself. We stimulate linkage with the world of commerce by having her do her own banking, filling out all necessary forms herself.

On her own Grace sometimes copies pages of text from books she likes. At such times attention is called to punctuation, capitalization, indentation of paragraphs, etc. She also enjoys working from *The Italic Way to Writing* by Fred Eager.

Language articulation finds expression through the memorizing of parts in plays and of rhymes and songs. She often dramatizes these as

well as her original plays performed for the family. We spend no less than 450 minutes per week on writing, articulating, and listening, often more.

Grace also visits the public library for about two hours, three times a week. She's learned to use the card catalogue and to find a book on the shelf through their number identification system.

*Mathematics.* Math being such an integral part of our daily lives, we try to approach it in ways which do not create any dislike or arouse anxiety frequently associated with this subject. All opportunities for making change are used to discuss the denominations of our coinage with Grace. Before and after purchases are made, we review the procedure to assure her understanding. The world of measurements is explored in ways such as: a) dividing and measuring various spaces in our apartment and in her room; b) making patterns for doll clothes, with enlargements and reductions; c) measuring geometric shapes, angles, and lines, and such other forms as present themselves. Grace can and does compare differences in weight among five different types of scales we use. She's also beginning on simple fractions.

As additional aids, beads, finger counting, and sticks are used for addition, multiplication, and division. Grace now adds and carries numbers to the thousands. She also subtracts and borrows to this figure. These are recorded on paper in vertical and horizontal form.

Price comparison, evaluation and logical thinking in sequence are learned through the use of calendars, catalogues, newspaper ads, record keeping, visits to stores where sizes, weights, values, and prices are observed and compared, and in volunteer community projects which afford opportunities to practice these skills.

Grace is using the *Beginning Addition and Subtraction* workbook (School Zone Pub. Co., 1979) grades 1–3 and mathematics workbook, grade 3 (Golden Press, 1979). Grace likes math and spends at least 150 minutes per week at it.

*Science.* This is another of Grace's favorite subjects. It's difficult to place a time allotment per week on such involvement because her

interest sometimes rises and she becomes intensely involved in a pursuit that may last for weeks. One such recent example was one study of bees and honey. But at other times when interest is low, we don't push her. Still, even during slackened interest, she seems to get involved in water experiments or freezing and thawing, observing the changes, or in nurturing plants and animals. Last fall we had a project involving tree identification through leaves, nuts, or fruits, and determining which ones were edible. This had followed a summer and early fall of food foraging. Grace recently undertook a study of slate rocks, marine life (barnacles, starfish, sea urchins, snails, and tides) inspired by a field trip to Rockport. She is also interested in horses and has been visiting a stable every few weeks for observation of their behavior and care through the four seasons. We also visited the Waltham Experimental Field Station for an intensive study of the changes through a wide variety of growing techniques, in vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

Grace has also visited the Museum of Transportation, the Science Museum, Children's Museum, and the Peabody Museum of Comparative Zoology in furtherance of her scientific curiosity.

She frequently uses the text, *Science Far and Near*, Heath, 1954.

*History.* This fall Grace studied the voyage of the Mayflower from Holland to America; what life on board and the first year on land were like. She joined in a family project tracing our neighborhood back to colonial times. Through a study of old maps, she observed the many changes in the Muddy River, the division of land, development of streets and highways, and the role of the John Hancock family in local history. She's also gotten an introduction to and discussion of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Grace also studies the influences, changes, and continuity of the biblical era through stories, family discussions, and Sunday school. These activities average about 90 minutes per week.

*Geography.* This is another subject that's difficult to place a time allotment on. We employ several techniques including games and field trips to stimulate her interest and bring this subject to life. Grace

enjoys map reading, using maps from *National Geographic*, the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, various state and regional maps, and the world globe in our home. Her current interest is Florida.

*Music.* Grace is now engaged in a study of the American musical theater. She listens repeatedly to our extensive album collection and augments it with loans from the library, until she has memorized selections she likes. She also performs in local community theater. The exposure to music at home ranges from the classics to popular and jazz. She is learning music notation, meanwhile composing music by dictating to her father. She's beginning to experiment on the recorder. Since music is an essential element in our home life, a great deal more than 50 minutes per week are devoted to this area.

*Visual Arts.* Our sentiments are the same for this subject; therefore Grace spends more than 50 minutes per week at this too. Media explored include water color, clay, Cray-pas, stitchery, decoupage, papier mache, acrylics, pen and ink, and pencil. Crafts employed include decoration, doll-house construction, soap and clay sculpture, and doll and clothing design. Grace periodically attends classes at the Brookline Arts Center, and art projects in the Brookline and Boston libraries. She meets from time to time with local artists and artisans. Grace attends a class in arts and crafts once a week at our local church.

*Physical Education.* Grace jogs and broad jumps and uses a trapeze bar several times a week. Depending on the season, she engages in ice skating, roller skating, bike riding, swimming, climbing, rope jumping, and long walks. She has abundant energy and spends more than 120 minutes per week on such activities.

*Health Education and Good Behavior.* Grace receives daily education in proper health in both body and mind. She's instructed according to our dietary and religious beliefs. She regularly helps in the preparation of meals and snacks as part of her education in healthful sustenance. Habits of order and cleanliness are encouraged by her part in a rotation of household chores. Grace has been appointed "secretary" by



her father. She answers the phone and takes messages. She has been instructed in proper handling and manners on the phone. Grace has also been instructed in social behavior and serves as “co-hostess” when company comes.

A LIST OF FIELD TRIPS GRACE HAS TAKEN SINCE SEPTEMBER (19 items).

A LIST OF REFERENCE BOOKS GRACE REGULARLY USES (8 items).

*Foreign Language.* Grace has just become interested in learning Spanish. She uses the Spanish American Dictionary from Berlitz. She reads the bilingual version of Dr. Seuss stories. There is daily conversation and social contact with a South American family.

## **Storefront School**

*From North Carolina:*

Another GWS reader and I are renting the front room of a store (\$45 per month). We meet there about 8 to 10 hours a week and mostly let the kids play games, etc. So far, no fire inspection or visit from the state. Will keep you posted. It is nice to let the kids get together, and the other mother and I can talk. I try to keep a low profile as I have neighbors who have already turned me in once.

## **Parents Sharing Talents**

*A Tennessee reader writes:*

Our children have not gone to school at all and we have been very happy with their home schooling. The Memphis Board of Education told me that there is no way I can teach my children at home. What we’ve done so far has been to just go ahead and do it. We’ve not been terribly secret about it—most of my neighbors know and many of our friends. So far we’ve not been bothered. We’ve gotten together with some other families and started a cooperative school this past January. We meet monthly and put out a monthly newsletter. Classes are taught by parents. Credit is given for teaching a class

and credit is spent when kids take a class. So far it has worked out great. Our kids have taken weaving, embroidery, computers, birth, tour of hospital and doctor's office, pottery, swimming, and geography. Our whole group is planning a camping trip and we've had a few potluck picnics together. All of this has given our kids plenty of social life—they've also learned a lot from other people's skills. It's amazing how many talents people have that they can share.

## From New Holt Book

*John wrote in How Children Fail (revised edition, available [here](#), \$5.35 + 75¢ postage):*

After this book came out, people used to say to me, "When are you going to write a book about how *teachers* fail?" My answer was, "But that's what this book is about."

But if it is a book about a teacher who often failed, it is also about a teacher who was not satisfied to fail, not resigned to failure. It was my job and my chosen task to help children learn things, and if they did not learn what I taught them, it was my job and task to try other ways of teaching them until I found ways that worked.

I've decided to leave the original exactly as I wrote it, and where I have second thoughts about what I then wrote, I've put those in. It may seem to some that it took me too long to learn what I have learned, and that I made many foolish mistakes, and missed many obvious clues. I feel no guilt about this. I was trying as best I could to discover something difficult and important, and I suspect there was no path much quicker or shorter than the one I took.

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"Success," as much as "failure," are adult ideas which we impose on children. The two ideas go together, are opposite sides of the same coin. It is nonsense to think that we can give children a love of "succeeding" without at the same time giving them an equal dread of "failing."

Babies learning to walk, and falling down as they try, or healthy six- and seven-year-olds learning to ride a bike, and falling off, do not think, each time they fall, "I failed again." Healthy babies or children, tackling difficult

projects of their own choosing, think only when they fall down or off, “Oops, not yet, try again.” Nor do they think, when finally they begin to walk or ride, “Oh, boy! I’m succeeding,” They think; “Now I’m walking! Now I’m riding!”

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Asking children questions that required them to do something, rather than merely say something, was still no improvement if, having tried to do what we asked, they still had to depend on us to tell them whether they had done it right. What we needed were tasks with an evident goal, like puzzles—unlock the rings, make the ball go in the whole, etc. No one ever asks, “Have I done this jigsaw puzzle right?”

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It took me a long time to learn, as a classroom teacher, that on the days when I came to class just bursting with some great teaching idea, good things rarely happened. The children, with their great quickness and keenness of perception, would sense that there was something “funny,” wrong, about me. Instead of being a forty-year-old human being in a room full of ten-year-old human beings, I was now a “scientist” in a room full of laboratory animals. I was no longer in the class to talk about things that interested me, or them, or to enjoy what I and they were doing, but to try something out on them. In no time at all they fell back into their old defensive and evasive strategies, began to give me sneaky looks, to ask for hints, to say “I don’t get it.” I could see them growing stupid in front of my eyes.

By the time I was teaching my last fifth-grade class, I usually knew enough, when I saw this happening, to back off and drop my big project and go back to our more normal, natural, honest classroom life. If I had some sort of gadget that I thought might interest the children, I would leave it in a corner of the room and say nothing about it until someone said, “What’s that, what’s it for, how do you work it?” Or if there was some kind of activity I wanted to “expose” them to, I would do it myself, without saying anything. I assumed that whatever did not interest me would probably not interest them, and was not trying to seduce them into doing things that I myself found boring. But if there were things I liked to do and could do in the classroom, I often did them there.

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What the schools wanted was good test takers. Nothing else was anywhere near as important.

I remember an old chief machinist on an obsolete training submarine in Key West saying bitterly about his worn-out engines, which he had spent many hours polishing up for an official inspection, “They shine, don’t they? Who the hell cares if they don’t work?”

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So many people have said to me, “If we didn’t make children do things, they wouldn’t do anything.” Even worse, they say, “If I weren’t made to do things, I wouldn’t do anything.” *It is the creed of a slave.*

When people say that terrible thing about themselves, I say, “You may believe that, but I don’t believe it. You didn’t feel that way about yourself when you were little. Who taught you to feel that way?” To a large degree, it was school.

## English/Science Swap

*Suzanne Alexandre, who is teaching English at a Berlitz School in Germany, wrote:*

One of my students was working in an advanced book called *The Science, Engineering and Construction Book*. The story we happened to be working on was about the space shuttle. The student is a scientist who works as a researcher in a company. He is improving his English because part of his job involves receiving technical literature from the United States which he has to translate and explain in German.

I loved being his “teacher.” I sat there and listened to him explain gravity, magnetism, etc., etc., and only supplied a word now and then when he couldn’t think of it. He received what he needed—practice in explaining using English, thus familiarizing himself with technical English words. At the same time I received the best science lecture I’ve ever had! It was incredible. I had a scientist wanting me to ask him questions so he could practice explanations! Amazing.

## Not Teaching

*Maggie Edmundson (ME) wrote:*

My mother often comments on how hard I must have worked to teach the kids things since their last visit, and she finds it hard to believe that everything seems to come in its own good time. Last time they stayed, my mother tried to teach Joe (then just turned 3) to write his name and draw things that “looked like something.” I remember coming in to the room to find her sitting at the table with him, explaining over and over how to form a *J*. He just stared blankly at her and went back to his favorite “mommy and daddy in a banana” picture. About one month ago (age 3½), he became very interested in writing and in no time at all was writing his name. The day after he perfected it, he made his name out of blocks and has gone on to spell his sister Anna’s name, both on paper and with blocks.

He then became interested in using the alphabet puzzle we have, to spell out other people’s names. Right after Emily was born a month ago, he asked me to pick out the right letters for him to spell her name. I lined them up and then we mixed them back in with the rest. He picked out the right letters to make her name again with no hesitation.

I’ve found that all I should do is answer the questions he asks and do only what he asks of me. When I try to teach, he either looks blank, or giggles, or just waits for me to get done and goes back to the track he had been on. For example, he asked me to spell names of some of his friends using the puzzle pieces. I spelled “Bridget” and then started playing with the letters: I took away the “t” and said brightly, “Now it says ‘Bridge.’” I did similar things making bride, bird, get, ridge, etc. He smiled indulgently at me and when I was done said “That’s nice, now spell Jared.”

As I was trying to read the *GWS* that arrived a few days ago, he started picking out the letters he knew all over the place, exclaiming in wonder, “They’re using my letters on there (J-O-E), and Anna’s letters, too.” As I’m writing this, he’s asking me to read the words on the side of his crayons and is very excited that they make the color the word says they make.

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JH: What I’d like to say about the “Bridget” episode is this. It’s perfectly OK, as this mother did, to suggest to children an activity that they might not have thought of themselves, in this case, using the blocks that spelled one word to spell other words. Some children, or even this child on another day, might say, “Hey, that’s neat!” And who knows?—Maybe one day this child

will say, “Hey, Mom, remember that thing you showed me with the blocks, let’s try it again.”

So there’s nothing wrong with offering suggestions. But there are several things you have to be careful about.

1. If you make a suggestion, be sure that you know, and that the child knows, that it is a suggestion, which the child is free to refuse.

2. If you make a suggestion and the child directly refuses to go along with it, or goes along with it but obviously without enthusiasm, let the matter drop, and quickly. Don’t coax, and don’t keep on with the activity on the theory that if the child does it long enough he will eventually get to like it. Learn to take “No” for an answer.

3. If the child turns down your suggestion, don’t be hurt or disappointed. If you do, after a while the child will begin to think, “When Dad or Mom suggest something, I’d better do it, or otherwise they’ll feel bad.” Using these feelings, or the fear of these feelings, to get children to do what we want is much worse than giving plain old-fashioned commands. If you can’t stop yourself from being hurt when your suggestions are turned down, then better stop making them.

4. But even if children do go along with these learning suggestions, it’s better not to make too many of them. If we’re always thinking up neat things for the kids to do, they won’t have enough time to think up things of their own. Beyond that, they may get the idea that all good ideas come from adults, and so become dependent on us. It’s nice to entertain children some of the time, but it wouldn’t make any sense to get ourselves out of the full-time teaching business only to put ourselves in the full-time entertainment business. We have things of our own to do. So, even with good ideas, moderation is important.

## **Unrelated, But Family**

*From Davis, Calif.:*

We are Cherilyn and Larry Larsen (and Leah, 2) and Chris Laning. I (Chris) am not related by blood to the others, but we’ve been friends for years and consider ourselves a family, hopefully a permanent one. We recommend this arrangement to other couples and single adults, if you are sure you have enough basic values in common (we have a shared religious commitment)

and if you are willing and able to talk-out problems as they arise.

It will be especially good for Leah as she has three adults of very diverse background and professions to draw on for her learning—Larry is a farmer and statistician, Cherilyn a seamstress and businesswoman, and I am an educator at the local food co-op and an amateur botanist. All of us will be able to take her along with us to work, and she'll be able to give us some real help.

I recommend, by the way, food co-ops as learning centers, if they're the type where co-op members do a lot of the necessary work. Both adults and children can learn a lot about how a business operates by unloading shipments, calculating prices from invoices, running the cash/ register—you're counting out real change.

We took Leah with us one evening when we were stocking the bulk bins: a somewhat frustrating experience keeping her out of the food, but made quite worthwhile by her valiant and enthusiastic efforts to help us carry bags of beans across the storeroom. I turned around from putting one bag away to see her put both arms around the next one (it must have had five or six pounds left in it), lift it up, and start staggering across the room with it, beaming from ear to ear!

## **Kids at Work**

*Anna Quinn-Smith (OR) sent this clipping:*

Rose Hendricks is a newcomer into the long list of women who've decided to go into business for themselves. She is a former elementary schoolteacher with an interest in vintage clothing. Her female partner put up the investment capital and Swee' Peas: Children's Collectible Clothing came into being.

It was while Rose was pregnant with Samantha, now 10-months-old, that she decided to go into the business. She knew whatever she did; she didn't want to be separated from her child. So it is that space was set aside in the store so that "whatever she gets into is OK." Changes will be made as her daughter gets older. "The nature of the business helps—it's child-oriented," she says. The store sells vintage clothing for children and contemporary resale in classic lines.

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*From the New York Daily News:*

Every weekday afternoon around 2:30, Paul Vega wanders into the kitchen at everybody's Cafe in Red Bank, N.J., where his mother, Janet, does a lot of the cooking. He may pick up a broom and do some sweeping, or perhaps wheel a 100-pound sack of something down the block to Everybody's Gourmet Shop, the restaurant's sister enterprise.

At the shop, he may price some coffee beans (the shop carries more than 60 kinds), or wait on customers if owners Barbara and Randy Chan are busy. But on a good day, when all else is in order, he bakes bread—or pies or cookies or tortes or flan. Often, said Ms. Chan, he stops only “when we shove him out the door.”

It a nice attitude to find in any employee. It's especially nice, not to mention unusual, when the employee is just 14-years-old.

“I guess baking is my favorite part,” said Paul, who has undertaken the task with such enthusiasm that Chan says he now makes almost all the bread that is sold or served by Everybody's, as well as many of the other baked goods. “His only problem,” said Chan, casting a friendly glance in his direction, “is that sometimes when he tries to do too much, he goes too fast and leaves out an ingredient.”

Paul laughed at that observation as he bounced around the shop. He's sort of a perpetual motion machine, smiling and friendly if slightly nervous about the idea of someone interviewing him.

No, he doesn't cook much at home. He just started fooling around with it at the restaurant. He likes baking anything. He likes eating cake. He doesn't tinker much with the recipes. He makes breads a couple of days a week, desserts a couple of other days.

He laughed again when asked if he plans to go into the food business. “We're trying to discourage it,” his mother said, pleasantly. Paul laughed again.

His career started about two years ago quite by accident. Since his school is only a block away, he would come in afterward. To pass the time, he started helping out.



“The first couple of times he makes something,” said Chan, “I go over it with him. But after that, I know I can leave him alone.”

## Useful at 10

*Tom Spicer (MI) wrote:*

Jacob (10) is still a volunteer at the main library downtown. He is quite the bookworm, always has been, and now even helps decide what books the library should buy. He got a part with a civic play over the summer. That took up a lot of his time and seems a priceless experience.

All the kids travel extensively to outlying rural friends' homes, take a weekly gymnastics class, and help at the food co-op. Jacob runs the cash register whenever he gets a chance and oftentimes ends up being relied upon by the general manager as the only person who will get the job done.

## Children Welcome Here

*From Peter Devine in Maine:*

Please find the enclosed statement of current “Children in the workplace” policy adopted by Hungry Chuck’s Food Store and Cooperative in January. Wrote to you some time back asking if *GWS* had any information on such policies of other businesses. At that time, you didn’t have anything. If space permits, I’d appreciate your putting our statement in *GWS*, with a request for comments from others working on the question.

1) Hungry Chuck’s encourages the presence of children for a number of reasons. Not all agree on each of these reasons and some valid ones are undoubtedly missing.

a) Parents and children working together strengthen and enhance the family.

b) Families working together can avoid the expense and other difficulties of custodial care for the children. For some families this may make participation in the co-op possible.

c) Awareness of and participation in real work is essential to the social and political development of children. Being kept in ignorance of

work is miseducative.

d) Children can often do real work at the co-op, helping to fulfill their household's work obligation and contributing to the functioning of the store.

e) The presence of members of the community of all ages helps establish a full and humane environment.

f) Exclusion of or discrimination against a person solely because of age is contrary to the co-operative spirit.

2) Nonetheless, children in the store have posed serious difficulties for themselves and for the store. The following are guidelines for accommodating the needs of children and of the co-op store.

a) Children usually do best if they are actively a part of the store's purposes. Members of the collective are responsible for finding appropriate tasks for them.

b) When not working, children should do things that do not disrupt the functioning of the store. There is a children's corner with books, toys, etc. Members of the collective should make sure that this area is adequately maintained and parents will make sure that the children understand how to use it.

c) The physical safety of the children in the store is primarily the responsibility of their parents. Often the collective member managing the store may help supervise a child (e.g., making sure she/he doesn't throw her/himself down the elevator shaft while her/his parent carries a bag of flour downstairs), but parents must explicitly request such assistance and collective members must be free to deny it if they are too busy.

d) Parents are primarily responsible for making sure that their children don't seriously disrupt the functioning of the store. As stated above (2a & 2b), collective members should help children find appropriate things to do but steadfastly outrageous children should be dealt with by their parents. If necessary, collective members should point out situations in which parental supervision is needed.

e) Working members accompanied by children should evaluate the effect of their children's presence. If the children contributed to the store's functioning, their work should contribute to their household's work hours. If, on the other hand, a member's work was very inefficient because much time was spent in child care, the member should not count all of her/his time in the store as work time.

f) Collective members with their own children in the store must make sure that their parental responsibilities do not interfere with their store managing duties. Some inefficiency is acceptable and can be worked out, as with regular members, by counting some of their time as "child care" rather than "work time." Unlike regular members, however, collective members are primarily responsible for the overall operation of the store and must carefully evaluate their ability to do so while caring adequately for their children. The store does not provide day care for its workers. If a child is continually disruptive while the parent is working, the parent must find an alternate facility for the child. If there is disagreement between parents and other workers concerning whether a child is disruptive, the matter should be brought to the collective for resolution.

## **Child Care**

*Deirdre Cox in Chicago responded to "Questions on Work," GWS #22:*

I was a cabinetmaker and was laid off. I decided to go into child care; I discovered that most of the "babysitters" here make more than union journeymen carpenters (\$400-500 per week is average). The average day care home here has 6-12 children at \$45-65 per week per child. I charge \$50 a week, a rate I used to pay for someone who fed my son Kool-Aid and Pop-Tarts with heavy doses of TV—she wasn't a particularly bad sitter, either.

So, for the same price I offer weird hours (I used to work them myself; kids came in PJ's at 5 AM), hot breakfast, hot lunch, and nutritious snacks (juice, fruit, crackers). I offer "organized" craft time, which means if the child isn't interested in something else at the moment they can join me in the activity. We also play outside every day; I read stories till my jaw drops off. I also have a couple of children come over after school.

I currently care for three children, which brings in what I made on unemployment. I hope to have six children eventually. I really enjoy it; I think it is very rewarding. By working at home, I find I'm a lot more relaxed and happier, and I save over \$100 a week (day care, housecleaning, food, transportation).

I also have several small businesses which I hope will eventually push out my babysitting. I've been writing, and recently it is getting a little more regular. I write about *basic* carpentry, aimed primarily at women and children. I also do glass painting that sort-of looks like stained glass. Finally, I make wooden games, priced at \$5, from all over the world.

My son, who is 3, likes to help me a lot. I can't say it saves time, in fact it usually takes me five times longer with his help; but, I think it is the only way to learn.

As to how I became a cabinetmaker—I simply joined the union and they trained me.

*From a later letter:*

This weekend the *Chicago Tribune* ran an article on working at home and they suggested the following sources. *Worksteads: Living And Working In The Same Place*, by Jeremy & Joan Hewes, Doubleday \$8.95. *Women Working From Home: The New Entrepreneurs*, Terri & Nona Dawe Tepper, Universe Books, \$7. 25. (Leigh Communications, 312- 751-7600, carries both books.) A newsletter, *Mind Your Own Business*, \$15 for 3 issues, 2520 N. Lincoln #60, Chicago, IL 60614. Also, the National Alliance Of Home Based Businesswomen, Box 95, Norwood, NJ 07648. These people publish a newsletter and an excellent “nuts and bolts” book on home businesses, including legalities.

## **Home Business Catalog**

*From Betty Porter-Perrin, Good Morning Farm, RD 2, Box 102, and Centreville, MD 21617:*

I'm sending you a copy of our latest *Good Stuff For Kids* catalog to give you an idea of what we're doing here at Good Morning Farm. So far, we represent the work of over thirty different “family-centered” businesses, but the catalog keeps growing and I'd like to let other home-schooling families

know that if they create or distribute products for infants and children, we'd certainly consider including their stuff in a future issue.

Anyone desiring a catalog please send 37¢ for postage. Good Morning Farm has also compiled a list of other "family-centered" businesses that offer child-related products such as natural-fiber clothing, toys, birth supplies, maternity wear, and more. For a copy, send \$2.00.

## A Hard Struggle

A few years ago, I corresponded with many underground schools, hoping to keep my kids out of the New York City schools. They are unsafe to get to, unsafe there, have too much unnecessary curriculum, etc. ... And I've succeeded so far. Actually, at the end of last year, they caught up with me, and I told them we were moving, and we did! Yet we're still here, but in a different district.

I've been teaching my kids at their own pace, from many books: the old *McGuffey Readers*, *Bible*, dictionary, etc. Also everyday math, as we use it.

My kids have won several scholarships for music and dance programs at age 7, and have auditioned for Broadway stage and TV.

*From a later letter:*

I'd love to rap with you or others on education, single mothering, going back to old-fashioned values, living on welfare and all of its problems, then going off of it and existing on drabs. I am a 46-year-old single parent of twin daughters, age 8. I've "adopted" elderly (80+) friends, who act as grandparents—we love and care for each other.

I've had some college, majoring in arts, music, and drama. Have been in the theater, but no longer. I am a registered nurse. In the last five years; I've worked as a private nurse in hospitals, through agencies.

After my twins were born, I worked 10-12 hours a day while babysitters "sat" with my babies—and unfortunately, the sitters were negligent, on pot, etc. When I realized this, I nearly cracked up. Plus, after working all night and caring for the girls all day, I had NO help. Everywhere I had to go; the twins had to go too.

It didn't take long to break under this strain. I physically fell asleep, or fainted, and was out of work. No work—no pay—no food—sickness—no medical coverage—no sitters—no rent = eviction.

It took six months of, court battles with Legal Aid to get me on Welfare. We were on Welfare about 4–5 years. The end came because at age 6 kids are required to attend school. One of the many documents required for eligibility to continue it is proof of school enrollment. If you pay for a private school, you are considered ineligible for help because your income is too high.

Therefore Welfare demanded I work in their program and get partial aid, and the kids go to public school. They pressured me—I panicked. Our apartment was to become a co-op—we were harassed to vacate. Guys would come at midnight with sledgehammers and bend and pound the steel doors. They’d run up the fire escapes and through windows, robbing. Drug peddlers were around. My last welfare check money was stolen off me as I was mugged after leaving the welfare office. No rent money—no food—no payments = eviction. Plus no school—no job—no help = RUN. We packed up, and then ALL our winter and most valued things were stolen.

An acquaintance befriended us. They are radio personalities and elderly, and happen to be sympathetic to non-schooling! They lent part of an office to live in by night, and by day we had to “work around” them. We had a hot-plate under the bed.

We were now OFF all assistance. We survived by selling their toys and clothes to resale shops, and on the street. Then singing and doing street music. Horrible! I became a maid and cleaned toilets—yet that work was sparse. I tried to get back into nursing and all doors were shut. I lied and did not tell them I’d been out and on welfare. I was refused because I was middle-aged, a single parent, two dependents, so how could I be depended on for hospital scheduling? Then I tried my Registry for private duty, and the State made a new law that said I had to have had a year of recent work on Staff, in order to reapply for private!?

I joined a new registry. The first RN job I got, for one week only, was at night. The girls were looked after by the elderly couple. Well, “someone out there” reported me to the Child Welfare office for *abused* kids, and I was investigated for (1) leaving my kids unattended (I never did!) and (2) not providing them with public school. They’d just gotten over strep throat, appendectomy, and me with three-week laryngitis. I was living off of scraps, and filching food for my kids. Thankfully, my “befrienders” got me off the hook. But later, we were asked to leave there, too.

I now do 12 hours of night work, and sleep and teach my kids in the day.

That's the only answer.

My kids are dreams—I'd rather have them with me, and learning, than in another environment that separates us. We'll come up out of this together! One taught herself to read and write and sew. The other has auditioned for Broadway, and loves singing, and won a violin scholarship! They are trying to get into modeling and show biz.

They've always wanted ballet. The School of American Ballet at Lincoln Center was having auditions. Most of the 100 applicants had had four years of dance classes. My girls never had dance or exercise (usually cooped up in that office space, etc., and going out at night so no one would know they were not in school). Miracles!! BOTH girls passed the audition, and were accepted to S.A.B. It is the elite of ballet schools. I entered them there this fall, knowing I hadn't the money to pay, yet intending and hoping to do it later. I don't have the money yet, and am pressured. It is worth it, as a hope for the future, and for pleasure now.

If we all were more creative, relied on God, and got back to preventive care, and herbal and nutritional health, we could exist without doctors. One of my kids got her first dental exam at age 8, and had NO cavities. We use health-food toothpaste, never chew gum. We don't waste money on junk, we just don't have it. Welfare taught us, painfully, how to live on nothing. (I can make a delicious soup from one tiny onion!).

At present I'm facing another court eviction. We stay in New York City despite problems. I hope to make it here, and for my girls to accomplish in their fields of talent.

To elaborate on schooling: I surrounded the twins with good books, no scary stuff. They study in the morning, go out in late afternoon. We hope to enroll in Christian Liberty Academy or Pensacola Christian School via mail.

They've seen some TV shows through their eight years, but are encouraged NOT to watch Sesame Street, the soaps, the monsters, etc. I'm very selective, and they are, too, now. We don't own a TV, but have to go to the local department store to watch it.

They daydream and pretend all the time, they relate well with each other, and LOVE to have friends. They are exceptionally kind and tender to little ones. There is no violence or sass in them; they are very patient, from all of our difficulties and working out things as a family! They long and dream to be "rich," so we can go to Disneyworld, and have a safe home, and play

outside at will.

## **“L.D.” at Home**

*Ruth Balestra (FL) wrote:*

After three months in a clinical school for kids with learning disabilities, our oldest is now a homeschooler again. He has been since we moved here a year ago from Minnesota. In the three months in school he did more ditto sheets and learned less than in the last three years in an open program and at home. I feel he needs less stress, not more, and more time to organize him from the inside out, rather than having his life and learning organized by others. He will have a tutor twice a week (4 hours total) to provide continuity and the undivided attention that he needs on a regular basis and which I can't always give with the 9-month-old.

We had an initial meeting for home-schoolers and others interested in similar alternatives at my house. We really feel a need for a support group.

## **Texas Group**

*From Diane Elder (TX):*

Since my last letter (*GWS* #23) I have heard from 50 or so home-schooling families in Texas. Some new developments have changed the way in which we can get around the law (or work with it, depending on one's perspective).

Many of us had incorporated our private schools. This is not required by law, but was so easy and inexpensive that we felt it might at least make clear our intent if we were taken to court. Part of incorporating is to secure state tax-exempt status so that you don't have to pay a yearly franchise tax of around \$100. Apparently, the state authorities were inundated by requests for tax-exempt status for private schools. Whatever the source, the State Comptroller's Office is no longer issuing tax exemptions without substantial proof that we are schools taking other than our own kids. This is a minor inconvenience.

I have a certified letter from the Texas Department of Human Resources, stating that as a home school, teaching only our own children, we do not need to be licensed. Other families who have gotten licensed say it is easy to do.



I had taken advantage of *GWS* to let people know I had information to share. Most of that centered on incorporating. Because it is no longer advisable to incorporate, I am sending back all the money I receive and am encouraging people to become familiar with the Texas Education Code and then go ahead in whatever manner is most comfortable. I'd also be happy to talk with anyone on the phone (512-533-9693). Writing is VERY time-consuming and I can't get around to answering promptly.

To date I know of two families who have had verbal battles with *Growing Without Schooling* #27 their districts. Both families have worked out arrangements to their satisfaction. Two other families were taken to truancy court. One family won on appeal, the other won hands down on the first go-round.

Locally, we have formed a loose organization, the San Antonio Home Schoolers Association, and meet more or less every two months. We put a notice in the papers and usually have one or two new people each meeting. Our lack of organization puts a lot of people off, but most of us see no need to be anything more than a social group and support network. We all share whatever information we have. I have seen that most people are very relieved to hear that we are tolerant of ALL reasons and philosophies. I don't think I've ever seen such a diverse group.

## **Group Legal Plan**

*Barbara Gonzalez (TX) wrote:*

A year ago, San Antonio and Pleasanton home-schoolers had met with an attorney, Egon Tausch, and he offered to represent us as a group. The agreement among the families was that we each put in a fund approximately \$167, and the first family to have to go to court uses the funds. The funds were to carry that family from J. P. court through county court. After that, everyone would be obliged to fundraise if we had to go to a higher court. It's like having insurance.

Other groups might want to try something like this, but make sure you have the right attorney. Mr. Tauscher has a 2-year-old that he plans to home-school, so he has a special interest in representing home-schoolers.

## **Incorporating**

An article by John Jones in the *Idaho Family Education* newsletter, 4/82, which may be useful to families in other states as well:

**INCORPORATING: WHAT IT DOES AND DOESN'T DO.** Since there has been some concern expressed about incorporating our private home schools, I want to bring out some points here. Let's go over the benefits and possible drawbacks.

What incorporating does?

1. Present Idaho law provides two ways for parents to teach their children at home.

A. Provide comparable instruction as determined by the local board of trustees.

B. Establish a private school. To establish a private school, the law sets no requirement except to be in session the same number of days as the public schools. Private schools are not required to incorporate; but at the same time, local officials do not see why they are required to recognize us as private schools. This kind of argument will probably go to court where cases have been lost as well as won. Incorporating makes it so that they can't ignore your private school status and this because your school is now a legal entity. We know of no other step you can take to accomplish that.

2. Now that most of us have incorporated and avoided prosecution, state and local officials are accepting this as the legal "hoop" that home schoolers must "jump through" to be let alone. I see this as an advantage and don't think it should be shunned as "government intrusion." So, although incorporating does not put us in the control of the government and is not registering per se as a private school, still the local officials are seeing it as doing something "legal" that relieves them of the responsibility of our children.

3. Incorporating legally protects your school name.

4. To continue as a corporation requires only the filling out of a simple postcard-sized form each year that asks who the corporate officers are, etc.

What incorporating doesn't do?

1. Incorporating your school does not give your family a "tax break." Non-profit corporations are not necessarily tax-exempt, as that status must be applied for through the IRS.

2. Incorporating does not grant a government agency a right to enter your home or violate your privacy. Your corporate records are a matter of public record. These include your articles of incorporation and yearly listing of corporate officers. Your personal or school records are no more public than any private schools.

3. Your corporation does not require an independent audit.

4. A corporation is not hard to dissolve. Simply failing to fill out and return the yearly form will forfeit your corporation. Or you can speed the process by filing a special form.

In short, incorporating does not unduly obligate you or cause you any loss of freedom whatever and is in no way threatening to your home school.

I don't believe that by incorporating we are cowing to the state. If "they" want to: lay as though incorporating is now required to establish a private school, let's just smile to ourselves that they have accepted it as "the way." I think we can be too unpliable and cause ourselves and others a lot of grief if we rigidly say, "Nope, you can't make me do anything," like Mr. Singer did a few years ago.

If any of you can disprove any of the points I have made, please let me know immediately (even though I have already checked them with a lawyer); otherwise, let's not let unfounded fears be spread, causing paranoia and potentially doing more harm to our cause than bureaucratic opposition.

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DR: An Indiana parent wrote about incorporating a home-school, "I went to the courthouse—looked it all up—took two days to type it and saved ourselves \$450."

## On Conflict

*Lawrence Williams wrote in Living Education (PO Box 1051, Ojai-CA 93 23; \$15/yr, sample free):*

Occasionally, we receive letters from parents who are not enrolled in Oak Meadow School, and are being threatened by their local school officials with various penalties if they don't immediately enroll their children in the local public schools. Although such cases involve only a very small percentage of those parents who are teaching their children at home, they nevertheless affect all of us, because of the fears that are generated by both parties. Whenever I speak with such officials on the telephone, I usually find, not ogres, but human beings like myself who are concerned about the welfare of children. Our only disagreement is about how to best help the children. When they discover that I'm not an ogre either, we usually resolve the situation in a manner that is acceptable to all concerned.

This isn't to say that public school officials aren't sometimes swayed by personal concerns; of course they are, they're human beings. Old forms don't disintegrate quickly. They are sustained by a variety of fears, to which we are all susceptible, because we are all human. There are those who like to battle the old forms. I prefer to build alternatives, and let the old forms disintegrate from lack of energy. As builders of these new forms, we must be careful not to feed these old forms unwittingly by our own fears and anger. We can best help our children not by immersing them in a sea of emotional conflict, but by looking within ourselves and discovering and releasing the conflicts within ourselves.

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*And from Harold Ingraham (NY):*

Things are improving here in New York State as clearer guidelines are being developed by the districts and state officials. Some hesitation still exists as these officials contradict themselves in advice to the districts. However, the majority of the local administrators are realizing the sincerity and abilities of parents as educators, and thus, there is a developing trust. The trend toward an open, up-front kind of presentation by parents has quickened the pace toward real understanding. As more and more families come to the official with well-developed curriculums and knowledge of the law, the

greater is his respect. The home educators know the issues now, and instead of waiting for someone to tell them what to do, they are articulating what must be done in very knowledgeable terms.

What warms my heart the most is when a family takes the time to make up a solid preparation in advance of contact with the school official. By being able to converse with others in the home school movement and to seek out the details, they are able to develop their own personal point of view on home instruction. Also, by having time to contemplate, the parents develop an understanding of the school official's point of view. It's a simple process of realizing that a scale of observation on the home scene is not like the scale of observation from the school authority's position.

With this in mind I usually recommend to parents that a very old form of moral behavior be exercised. Drop all personal hostilities, regrets and conflicts of interest with the public school district. Cast the negatives out of your sphere of influence, for they can only cause trouble. Start seeing the official as a limited human being, like ourselves, and then let him see your best side. Often we have a bunch of hard feelings that have lingered from old experiences in the public school and they can often surface at the wrong time. I wish I had had some advice along this line in 1975, because I found it hard to bury the hatchet. Thus we went to court. Inner anger is often read by the opposing party and responded to with a challenge.

These days I see family after family breeze by the school officials; all because, in my opinion, they were confident in their ability to turn the other cheek and let sleeping dogs lie. Good will pays off, even in the heaviest of endeavors. By this I don't mean compromise at every turn. They must stand firm on the issues of parent and child rights, but the public school issues must be left out of the negotiations.

This theme basically loves one's enemies. There is no time for fighting, as there is no time like the present for good will and heads-up diplomacy. Many superintendents of public schools do listen, often are very sympathetic to our cause and looking for a way to help us. Family schools carry the burden of change and are the vanguard of good will toward home education. It's up to us to spread this good will to whomever will listen. People listen best who are confronted with an unpretentious example of sincerity and integrity.

## **Problems—Fla. & Cal.**

*The only bad news we have had lately is that some people in California and Florida are now having trouble registering their homes as private schools. Ann Mordes (FL) wrote:*

In Broward County, 250 parents pulled their children out of the same high school on the same day; they said they were setting up private schools. The parents went to work during the day and the teenagers hit the streets. The school in Broward County got mad, took it to court, and a judge reinterpreted the law in the school's favor.

I asked a state official, "What if I get another child who is not my own to teach a long with my kids, charge him tuition and list him on my roll?" He said, "In that case, I would say that this ruling would not apply to you." That is what I'm going to do starting Monday. I am charging a dollar per month tuition, and my friend from another county is bringing her son here while she attends her classes at the local junior college.

The official also suggested that next year I get very religious with my school. You must set a tuition (mine's going to be \$100 per month for anyone other than people who are already unschooling). I am also putting up a wooden sign on my front lawn advertising my school. I might run an ad in the newspaper too.

The whole thing boils down to this: One may not open a private school exclusively to teach their own children. One must charge tuition. One must keep a roll book. If one says he is teaching the children for a certain time per day, then one should be with the children during that time and not at work away from the children. (If you're going to work, take them along).

There are still no rules on what you can teach, how many students you must have, or testing procedures.

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DR: The Broward County incident was a protest over busing. I'm afraid the lesson is all too clear, that if integration comes into conflict with home-schooling, the courts are going to support integration. Almost surely the Appeals Court judges in that case (Fla. vs. M.M. & S.E., 4th District Court of Appeals, Case #81-1387; 12/15/81) thought of homeschooling as a subterfuge, a way of avoiding the law. It probably never crossed their minds that there were Florida families who had chosen home-schooling as a genuine alternative form of education for their children.

The legal reasoning was that since Florida has a clause in the compulsory school law that allows for tutoring by a certified teacher, home-schooling is really tutoring (or else this clause would be meaningless) , and therefore the tutoring parent would need a credential. Notice this doesn't address the absurdity at all of why someone teaching one child must have a credential, but someone teaching four or ten or 30 children in a private school doesn't need a credential!

There is no clear pattern to the difficulties in California, except that L.A. County seems to be the hardest in which to form a private school. It is unfortunate that the only court cases on the books in California (one from the 1950s, one from the 1960s) were decided against the home-schoolers, but precedents are not binding, and a much better case could be made today.

Besides the kind of steps Ann Mordes outlines above, families in Florida and California could also consider using a certified teacher to lend his/her name as a tutor, or enrolling the child in an already existing private school, such as someone else's home-school, an alternative school, or the programs of Oak Meadow, Clonlara, Santa Fe Community School, etc.

We hope readers continue to keep us posted about these situations.

## **Success Stories**

### *From Massachusetts:*

We recently took our son out of school and surprisingly met very little opposition. We went to a meeting of school personnel, including the Director of Pupil Services, the principal, the Director of Special Education, the House Coordinator (it's a big middle-school with a "three-house" system), the school psychologist, and the classroom teacher. We told them that basically we had a different philosophy than they did and that we weren't blaming them, something they were very concerned about. After we got that settled, they were very cooperative and friendly, with the exception of the school psychologist, who said that he was concerned that we were setting up an "abnormal and restricted" learning environment. We tried to keep a straight face and changed the subject.

They did not ask us for a written plan. Our son had been a "special needs" student, and the feeling we got was that in general they were tickled to death that we were taking him off their hands. Also, I have a degree in education,

which they knew, but probably not current certification, as I never took any more courses after college and haven't taught in a classroom for thirteen years. They didn't even ask, though.

I also walked in looking efficient and well-prepared, with all of our son's school records and a copy of *Perchemlides vs. Frizzle* (available here for \$2) in a folder in front of me on the conference table. My husband lent support, but let me do most of the talking (as the teacher!) I think the fact that we were friendly but firm and obviously knowledgeable swayed things in our favor.

Incidentally, they seemed to have only the foggiest knowledge of the law and of home-schooling in general. They asked us what they should do to comply with the law, if anything! I told them that if the superintendent approved, that was all that they needed to do. They said that they would recommend to him that he do so, and a week later we got a letter from him saying that he approved and to let him know if there is anything he can do to help, and thanking us for our co-operation. We are frankly quite amazed as this is a very conservative school system in a conservative old Yankee town.

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*Sue Scott (NY) wrote:*

So far, we are delighted with Jesse's first year at "school" at home. He has learned what the local school requires of his age through his day-long play. Many people ask me how his schoolwork is going, thinking that we sit down to our books at a certain time every day.

At first, the school authorities were amazed that anyone would want to keep a child at home when they have such a fine school building. I was shown through the school in the hope that I might change my mind. Once the officials received our letter requesting permission for home-schooling, they saw that we were informed, intelligent, serious parents. While they haven't been exactly helpful or encouraging, the superintendent and school board decided to go along with us. Their big fear is that we will be the forerunners of a trend in which they lose many tax dollars.

We are thankful for the school psychologist, who told me privately that she was all for us teaching Jesse at home and would recommend it to the school board.

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*From another New York reader:*



We went some weeks ago to the superintendent and the principal of the grade school for this district and discussed our plans. They were incredibly positive and receptive to us and our wishes. They showed us around the school, introduced us to the kindergarten teacher, offered us the use of the library and gym, and invited us to come to all school functions. After contacting the New York State School Board we were given approval to begin and we must meet again with these men to work out an attendance program. We are quite excited as there are others in the community who told us about this, and were also interested themselves, but were afraid to take the first steps.

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*From Mary Alda Balthrop (FL):*

Our child, Amara, is seven-years-old and loves learning. She has a mind which eagerly opens to almost anything that is lovingly presented. She has never been in a “regular” classroom. She loves math games, playing the violin, swimming, reading, and drawing, oh, and of course, her two bunnies, Maestro and Beethoven.

She is registered at Grassroots School, which is ten-years-old, fashioned after Summerhill, and run by an old and wonderful friend, Pat Seery. She attends school only when I have to work (12 hours a week) and I have been trying to make this time less and less, but money for bananas, etc., is sometimes hard to come by. Nothing is compulsory at the school and she likes most of what goes on there. There is the meanness of interaction that you say is present in all schools, which I do not like her to be around—but it doesn’t seem to bother her usually and has not caused her to be mean.

One benefit is that when she is asked where she goes to school, in the line at the grocery store, etc., she has a ready answer. (She does, however, still have to be coached when asked what grade she is in. The school makes it unnecessary for us to have to register as a private school or enroll in a home study program (Grassroots does have one), both of which would require at least some record keeping that I would probably not do because of the feeling that no one has the right to tell me how to educate my child. So I am happy not to have to be looking over my shoulder waiting for the gunboats to arrive.

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*From Virginia:*

When we decided to take K from the traditional school system, we chose to attempt to get permission from the school board. My very tactful husband formulated a letter after having investigated the legal realm. He asked that we be allowed to teach K at home for religious reasons.

The superintendent was very nice. He did surprise us when he asked for a letter of support from our church. Even more surprisingly, our church (Mennonite) wrote a kind letter supporting us in our decision. Therefore, I can confidently and without guilt tell anyone that what we're doing is acceptable.

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*A Tennessee reader writes:*

We've been home-schooling over 3 years now. Our kids are 10, 7, and 3. The oldest went to public kindergarten and half a year of first grade. In December, 1978, we saw John Holt on *Donahue*. We'd long wanted to home school but were scared. My husband's comment at the-end-of the show was, "Let's do it" Our son was ecstatic. We enrolled him in the Santa Fe Community School to get him out, but didn't stay with it very long because the keeping of the time charts was a hindrance to our unstructured learning.

Wish we could be listed in your directory but we are still undercover. At least three Tennessee families have received the official OK to teach their kids at home. Maybe one day we will, too. In the meantime, our kids are bright and happy and learning. Their self-confidence is something I admire and envy.

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*From McHenry, Illinois:*

I called the Illinois State Board of Education and talked to a very helpful man named Dr. Emmet Slingsby who said he was a liaison between private schools and the State Board. I found out that to become a private school in Illinois, you have to do virtually nothing—just, say you are. The law “advises” that you register, but that’s it. (See “People Vs. Levisen,” *GWS* #20.)

So, the next day we withdrew our son from first grade, telling the principal and teacher he would be enrolled in a private school in our home. I also talked to the regional superintendent, and all he said was, “We don’t

recommend it, but OK.” No hassles at all.

I was really afraid to make that first step. Now that it’s done I’m so relieved.

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*From Cher Bateman (NV):*

Well, we got released from the “authorities.” Jeb is legally out for the remainder of this year and next year.

My letter for the Board was a combination of the Kendricks’ cited court cases (*GWS #12*) and wording slightly rearranged from their letter and the letter of another Nevada family. I managed to convince the board that enrolling him in a correspondence school wasn’t necessary and that if I found one I liked I would probably enroll him, but so far I hadn’t found any I totally agreed with. One stipulation that I felt I could live with was that they test him once a year (I am viewing it as a learning experience for my son so he can see what taking a test is all about). They agreed with my conditions that I can see the test, be present in the room while it is administered, and observe the scoring process. I am using a correspondence course from Oak Meadow School in Ojai, Calif., and the Nevada Elementary Course of Study.

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We live in the mountains outside of Salmon, Idaho. We’re in touch with three other families in our school district who have taken their children out of the public schools also. This is our second year—and, I must say, a lot easier than our first year by far. We’re totally on our own as far as the local school board goes. They cooperated by giving us some books and advising us to become legal private schools. The other families were not given any books, just advised as we were to become legal.

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*Esther Eyre (OR) wrote:*

We just moved from Moses Lake, Washington. A couple of months before we left, we received a letter from the school principal saying someone had reported that we didn’t have our two children (10 and 8) in school. We disregarded the letter and were surprised two weeks later when the principal came knocking at our door. We could tell right away that he was afraid he would offend us.

We had a very delightful and lengthy discussion. We did not attack the school system during our talk but stated we felt we could do better by our children on a one-to-one basis, the no-peer-pressure factor, and the children's own curiosity as the driving force behind their learning. We let him know very politely that we were completely committed to this way of education for our children even if it meant going into court.

The principal replied that he and the school board were public relations people as well as educators and that he knew there were many parents on the verge of doing what we were doing with our children. "If your case goes to court and gets in the paper and the public hears about what you're doing, all these other parents are going to start pulling their kids out of our schools."

We showed him our children's study area and some of their latest work. He said, "Oh, that's all right. I didn't come here to be nosy. You don't have to show me anything." Our children were down the street at the time, listening to Japanese tapes—music and plays—with a Japanese family. When the principal got ready to leave, he said, "I believe you're doing as well or better for your children than the schools could do. I'm going to recommend that the school board leave you alone." Now we just moved to Oregon. I hope it's as easy here.

## **At Home in Iowa**

*Patti Rowe (IA) wrote:*

We have been home-schooling now for almost a year. With the onset of the coming academic year, we will have two officially school-age (7 & 9). The school board has known about us for several months now, but has not said much, except to adopt a policy, in keeping with Iowa law, which essentially says that if you're certified they can't do much about you. Thank heaven I am! For 6 credits and \$15, I became legal again (my certificate had expired).

When I went to the board office (I had to have the superintendent verify my teaching experience) he gave me the policy adopted by the school board, and implied that I would be required to prove that we are covering the proper subjects in an organized manner, spending so much time per day on school subjects. I can find nothing in the Iowa law which states how much time per day must be spent on schooling, and the superintendent did not have a

specific number of hours either.

I'm sure you have said many times that home-schoolers easily spent as much time on actual learning as is spent in a typical classroom. I totally agree with that, but become a bit intimidated at the thought of having to prove how our time is spent. So far we have kept fairly good records on what Matthew has done—though it has not been formal schooling. He has textbooks available, which he peruses at his own rate; much of his free time is spent on drawing or constructing with blocks; he takes drawing lessons and gymnastics lessons; he helps with various tasks at the office (some filing, vacuuming, taking out the garbage, shoveling, etc.). Math, as a subject, he still avoids, and I have made a serious attempt not to force it on him. His younger brother is as interested in math as Matthew is in reading, and I think they complement each other, and will hopefully learn from each other.

*From a later letter:*

We were much encouraged the other day when Matthew decided, entirely on his own, to try his hand at 4-place addition. This is the boy who groaned at any attempt to sneak in a little “math facts” practice. He probably spent 15 or 20 minutes on several problems which he made up himself, one of which included carrying. Not knowing how to handle that, he devised his own system using brackets. Of course this presented a problem when he tried to read it to me. I suggested that there was a way that could be handled (being careful not to suggest that I knew the “right” way and his was the “wrong” way.) He was delighted to find out how to do that and proceeded to try a few more, again, by himself, coming to me only for checking. He worked just long enough so that he felt he understood the principle, then went on to something else.

Now that may not sound significant to someone else, but it made my day. It was ample reward for not having pressured him. And it wouldn't surprise me if that was as much learning as would have taken place in a month at school.

## **A N.H. Home-Schooler**

*From Vanessa Smith (NH):*

I'll begin by telling you that I'm only eleven- (almost twelve-) years-old.

My mother teaches us five kids (from 10-months to eleven-years-old) at home.

My mother gets *GWS* and often I've read it before she does. She also has many of your books.

I'm in the sixth grade. Sometimes I help out in teaching the other kids.

We haven't really had any problems with our school board. We moved to Maine and there is where we started. A little while after we had got approved there, we moved back to New Hampshire (where we had lived before). We didn't have any problems here in New Hampshire either.

Many times I've heard people worry that we kids didn't get enough association with children our age. I know we don't have that problem because as Jehovah's Witnesses we go to three meetings a week and have other activities with Jehovah's Witness children.

In addition to that I am writing to about 14 kids my age. More than half of them I have found in the *GWS* Directory. I really love writing letters. It is part of my schoolwork.

I just wrote this letter to tell about our experiences as my mother doesn't have time. I really enjoy homeschooling.

## **Unschooling in England**

*From Maureen Riley, 24 Royle Close, Chalfont St, Peter, Bucks SL9 0BB, England:*

I am the mother of a seven-year-old boy, Matthew, who left school last November and is now happily attending "homeschool." I am a single parent and Matthew is an only child, and those reasons were paramount in my decision to send him to school in the first place two years ago. As he said at the time, still only four-years-old, "But I can already read and write, mummy. I don't need to go to school." How right he was, and I wish I had listened to him. There is no point in describing my frustration over those two years. I feel he has been set free into the real, exciting world again, where there is time to think, read, and talk.

The reading material Matthew was offered at school, outside the reading scheme, was "easy reading" and comics. He is now on the last few chapters of *The Lord Of The Rings* here at home, which he can read for hours at a time if he wishes. The moral questions on the plane of good vs. evil raised in

the book have proved stimulating and link up well with his other current interest: the origins, development, and repercussions of World War II.

Matthew has recently started learning longhand (“joined-up”) writing, at his own instigation. A friend of his proclaimed with horror that “you’re not all owed to start that sort of writing until you are nine,” at which Matthew firmly and proudly rejoined that in our school, he and I can decide our own rules.

I think that the modern world with its pressure and pace will require from the next generation a new level of confidence and decision making ability. At school, Matthew was learning very effectively that it was safest to keep a low profile and do exactly what he was told. At home we discuss everything we are going to do and Matthew feels that he is taking an active part in his own education. He also takes rather a hardline view on other mothers who, to his mind, send their children to school simply to be rid of them. Sometimes I feel that that view is not wholly off the mark.

You might be interested in a quote from Plato I discovered recently: “Do not then train boys to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be the better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

## **And Italy**

*From Rome:*

We are an American family living in Italy. Two years of an Italian nursery school—one of the most chic in Rome—turned our oldest daughter into a shrieking temper tantrum. There were 35–38 kids in a class and though the teachers were well-intentioned, they resorted to shrieks, slaps, and threats to maintain order.

The local Italian primary schools would have been more of the same, so we enrolled Emily in an American school. However, to get to school would require 2–3 hours of busing each day because of our location in the center of the city and the horrors of Rome traffic.

Fortunately we spent the summer in the US where I bought and read *Teach Your Own* and several of Dr. Moore’s books. My mother put the cap on the debate which ensued by pointing out that I could teach Emily all she would need for the first grade in the time it would take to get her back and

forth to the bus.

We are using the Calvert system and enjoying ourselves very much despite the amazed looks we get from American and Italian friends. It seems that here everyone is anxious to send their children to school as soon as possible and for as many hours as possible. I can understand in part because apartments are small, the city is noisy, dirty, very short of parks, etc., etc., but I think they are missing a lot of wonderful times with their children.

Emily is calmer, less shy, more sure of herself. She and her sister (3) play all day long. Emily draws and paints and makes things and both are able to participate in the life of the church (we live in the parish house) in a way they could not if they were in school. They also see much more of Rome.

When I read your magazine I think how much easier this would be in the States with friends in the neighborhood that they could visit on their own, libraries, yards, etc. But I guess the grass is always greener.

## European Trip

Except for Easter week, I was extremely busy. Arrived in Stockholm in mid-afternoon of 3/17, after all night flight via Frankfurt. Had a meeting that evening in Stockholm, plus three the next day; then meetings in Vasteros, Linkoping, Norrkoping, Joncoping, Gothenberg, and Malmo. Next week, three meetings in Copenhagen, plus three days of visits at the Friskole 70 (formerly the Ny Lille Skole described in *Instead Of Education*), thriving in its new home and as nice as ever. After Easter, two very busy weeks in Scotland and England with the home schooling organization, Education Otherwise. Meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh; a wonderful all-day home schooling conference in Birmingham; 5-hour TV taping session next day; meetings in Trent Park (near London), London, Brighton, Milton Keynes (a new city), Birmingham, Portsmouth, Wakefield, Hull, Oxford, Portsmouth again (all day and evening), and Southampton, with a number of newspaper, radio, and TV interviews thrown in. Then to Oslo in Norway, for three meetings. Finally to Iceland, for six more meetings, and then home. Hoped-for meetings in West Germany and Ireland fell through.

To tell all that happened in those two months would take most of an entire issue of *GWS*. Here are some high points that stick in my mind.

In Vasteros, Sweden, I stayed two nights with a very nice family whose



four-year-old could not grasp that I could not understand Swedish. He would say something to me, I would say, “I’m sorry, little friend, I don’t understand a word you’re saying.” He would then look me right in the eye and repeat what he had said, only much slower and louder. It was very funny. Finally he showed me some charming beginning reader books about Lille (Little) Anna. When I read these aloud, in a more or less recognizable imitation of Swedish, his face lit up with relief—at last this man was beginning to make a little sense!

Except in Scotland and England, my hosts had not asked me to talk about home schooling in my meetings, feeling that it would seem irrelevant to my hearers. Instead I talked about such things as how children really learn, how we can teach them better, and more school-related topics. But I always mentioned that I was active in the home schooling movement, and many of the (not always sympathetic) questions and comments following my talks were on that subject.

In Scotland and England the Education Acts allow for home schooling, though only with the approval of the local education authorities. I was glad to learn that in both Sweden and Norway the law allows for home education, though only with the approval of the Ministry of Education (which may be hard to get). I met one Swedish woman who is now teaching her own children at home. How many others may be doing so, I don’t know. Hope Knutsson in Iceland thinks there are usable loopholes in that country’s compulsory attendance law, and at one of my meetings a member of the Reykjavik School Board said that a year or two ago a family there had been given permission to teach their children at home. What the Danish situation may be, I don’t know.

I went to the Scandinavian countries with a question in mind: Is there much support in the schools for the belief that children are by nature eager and skillful learners and that what they need from us is mainly access to the world, moral support, answers to questions, and help if and when they ask for it? The answer, I’m afraid, is No. I see almost no chance that in the next ten or fifteen year’s schools in those countries will be doing the kinds of things I have long tried to persuade our own schools to do. There as here, most educators seem to think that good ideas only get into children’s minds when adults put them there, that putting them there is a very complicated and difficult trick, that only trained and licensed teachers like themselves can do

the trick, and that when they do it and it doesn't work it means there is something wrong with the children. (The Learning Disability business is big in Scandinavia.) All this may of course change someday, but I didn't see the slightest sign that it is changing now or likely to change soon.

So if you want your children to grow up asking their own questions, solving their own problems, and learning out of their own curiosity and interests, the U.S., for all our worries, is a good place to be. In this we are still the pioneers. I return home sorry to have parted from so many good friends, but glad to be back in what feels to me like the center of the action, and with this thought very much in mind—since you are going to have to work for a better world wherever you are, you may as well work for it where you are.

—JH

## **Worries About Equivalence**

*Barbara Lafferty (NJ) wrote:*

We have been involved with home schooling for about three years now and I still have difficulty “not teaching.” My daughter is 7 now and she is reading quite well. From time to time I have given her formal reading lessons which don't interest her in the least. She finds them quite boring and they don't make much sense to her in that she doesn't find any need for them. My son, age 6, still isn't tremendously interested in reading—he is beginning to take a bit of an interest now—but he loves math. Again with him, I have tried formal lessons and, again, he finds them boring.

I have talked with other home-schooling mothers and we all seem to have one thing in common. We live with a fear, either conscious or subconscious, that our children will fall behind the children attending schools. I think that we are all aware that our kids will learn what they need to know and that they will learn at their own individual pace but the fear arises from an outside source. It's the old and never ending fear that someday we will be cornered by the “authorities” into proving that our kids' learning is equivalent to that of their school peers. Even those of us who have never had any trouble with the school officials worry about this.

P.S. If anyone orders textbooks, etc., on a school letterhead I would suggest that they open an account at their bank in the school's name to be used to pay for items purchased. I have done this because I felt that it would

avoid any unnecessary questions or problems. So far, not one textbook company, supply company, or testing service has “checked” on my school status. At least not that I know.

I ordered a set of letterheads from Carol Kent (*GWS* #22) and was quite pleased with them. They are well worth the price.

## **Mexican Circus Family**

*From Harold Dunn (OR):*

I’ve recently been travelling with a nomadic circus family in Mexico. None of the eight kids (or their father) has ever been to school. Rosa, the mother, has taught them all at home, without textbooks or lesson plans—just responding to their natural curiosity. She says they all begin to read by age 10 or so, and at times she is kept quite busy answering their questions. But more often the kids’ education takes care of itself, and Rosa is left free for household chores and her circus duties, which include the enormous task of moving to a new town every two or three days. These kids all read and write well, handle numbers with ease, and generally meet life’s problems with full confidence. By age four they are all performers in the circus. Nothing seems to be lacking in their education. The other day Manoa, age six, was in charge of the concession stand, making change and all. Rosa hasn’t the slightest doubt that her kids can learn, or that she can teach them. And she herself never finished second grade.

## **Mother Earth New**

*From Penny Barker (OH):*

Britton wrote an article for *Mother Earth News* last year, received \$125 for it, and it appears in the May/June ’82 issue. She had a nice correspondence with Pat Stone in regard to the article—very personal and helpful. Britt’s article appeared pretty much as she wrote except that it was edited downwards. By that I mean words were simplified (just a few) and some slang phrases like “Well.” were put in, I think to make it sound more like a 12-year-old. Interesting that we don’t really think someone that age can be as articulate as the rest of us. It was your suggestion in *GWS* #15 that stimulated Britt to write the article. She is thinking of other subjects already

—seems to have lots in mind.

(DR: Sounding simple and “folksy” is actually a policy for all M.E.N. articles—not just those by children. Any other young readers interested in selling an article to Mother Earth News, send a query to “Mother’s Children,” TMEN, PO Box 70, Hendersonville NC 28739.)

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JH: I want to add that of all the many excellent articles I have read in *Mother Earth News*, the Plowboy interview in the current issue 17 (May/June, #75) seems to me one of the most important. It is about an extraordinarily imaginative and resourceful horticulturist in Alabama named Booker T. Whatley, who out of a lifetime of experience and research—on farms, not in labs—has devised a way in which many of our fast disappearing small farms can not only survive but can actually be made highly profitable. It is “must reading” for all home schoolers who live in the country, or think they may someday, or who, like city-dwelling me, are convinced that a large number of healthy small farms are an essential part of a strong and healthy society.

## **Another Musical Family**

*From Dave Van Manen (CO):*

I found Carol Lani Seelbach’s letter (“Music in the Family,” *GWS* #25) to make a lot of sense. I’ve noticed that Sierra is often labeled “musical,” just like Carol’s daughter. Both Helene and I are musicians, yet I feel Sierra’s musical abilities and interests (and her manifesting them at such an early age) are as much due to the environment she lives in as they are due to heredity.

Since birth, even before birth, Sierra has been surrounded by music. Helene sang in a folk trio and choir, and took voice lessons until the sixth month of pregnancy. From then up until the birth, Sierra heard (muffled from within her womb world) an assortment of guitar, piano, and vocal music, as well as a great deal of diverse music from the stereo. I can recall listening to some quiet music during the early hours of labor—it was relaxing to both Helene and me (maybe even Sierra).

Her early months were filled with much singing; she seemed to respond immediately to all the tunes we would sing to her. I remember her attentive

listening to simple one-handed melodies and chords on the piano while I would hold her in my other arm. And when I'd play guitar and sing to her, she would shine and smile.

It wasn't long before she would try to "sing along" with us. She also loved to respond bodily to music. Before she could walk, she would "dance" back and forth on her hands and knees.

Her second year was full of learning nursery rhymes and songs. She seemed to have an awareness of pitch—not accurate, but she could copy ascending or descending intervals that Helene or I would sing. Lyrics to songs seemed to come easy. Now, at almost 3-years, she must know dozens of songs. She often gives us "concerts" in the evening; she'll get out her stepstool (stage), stand on it and sing her songs and dance for us.

When she was about 18 months, Helene and I decided to expand our record collection from mostly contemporary folk, bluegrass, guitar oriented albums to include some classical. I remember sitting back, listening to a flowing Mozart symphony, when Sierra walked into the room and began to dance. Her dancing had been a somewhat chaotic response to upbeat bluegrass tunes. Well, she began to move gracefully (without any cues from anyone) in a slow ballet-type movement. I was amazed to see her adjust her style of dancing to the style and feel of the music!

Lately, she likes blowing on her 18 harmonica, strumming her guitar (really a small ukulele), and messing around on the piano. She loves to sit at the piano, tinker around on the keys, and sing her songs. What she's doing reminds me of what John talks about in *How Children Learn* about "messing around." She's learning so much about music and herself by what she is doing on all these instruments.

Sierra has an album entitled *Free To Be You And Me*, by Marlo Thomas and friends (it's full of wonderful songs and stories about people being themselves, doing all the things they are interested in and capable of, without the typical limitations and expectations society has placed upon them). Sierra has practically the whole album memorized, and not because we drilled it into her or suggested she do it because it would be good for her memorization skills. She memorized it because she likes the songs and dialogues. Her "evening concerts" will often include one or more songs from this album (some of which are quite lengthy).

I've been using tape recorders in my teaching (of guitar and banjo) with a

great deal of effectiveness. I teach many people who do not read music and, for an assortment of reasons, don't care to learn how to read music. Instead, I use a simple form of tablature (a notation that tells what fret to push down on what string), in conjunction with a tape recorder. The "tab" (which can be learned in five minutes, taking a bit longer to get used to looking at) conveys the mechanical aspects of where the fingers go. The tape supplies the musical aspects (particularly, the rhythm and "feel").

The writing down of music is simply a way of graphically manifesting a musical composition, in order to pass it on to others. In many respects, the tape recorder can do this job at least as well. To quote Sufi Hazrat Inayat Khan, "The traditional ancient songs of India composed by great Masters have been handed down from father to son. The way music is taught is different from the Western way. It is not always written, but is taught by imitation. The teacher sings and the pupil imitates and all the intricacies and subtleties are learned by imitation."

The recorded music can also serve as a very important motivational factor when learning a piece of music. I generally tend to be a slow sight reader when it comes to standard notation for classical guitar. The inspiration that comes from listening to a beautiful piece of music can help pull me through that frustrating early stage of transferring the symbolic written notation into an expressive musical entity.

I also use the tape recorder the first way Donna described in her article (*GWS* #25), but instead of recording a melody in order to practice accompaniment, I will record the accompaniment and practice fiddle tunes and ad-libbing along with it. I suggest this to any students who are interested in learning how to improvise—the tape recorder substitutes for another musician to play the rhythm.

## **Bad Habit Bogey—2**

Many music teachers and music instruction books seem to be in the grip of the Bad Habit theory (*GWS* #23). "Correct every mistake at once," they say, "or it will turn into a bad habit." Only recently did it occur to me that if music teachers really thought about what this meant they would never tell their students to practice by themselves. For these students, supposedly unable to notice or correct their own mistakes, would make mistake after mistake and

keep on making them, freezing them into dozens of new bad habits, which the teacher would have to struggle to correct at the next lesson—without success, for the students would always develop many more bad habits in a week of playing than the teacher could correct in a one hour lesson. If the theory were correct and people really behaved this way, no one would ever learn music.

Of course (as Suzuki saw), students working by themselves can only learn to play a piece or exercise better if we give them, or show them how to make for themselves, a good model of how it ought to sound. It would be foolish—which too often happens—to tell a child to go home and practice for a week an exercise he had never heard. In my own earlier work with the cello, I was often in this spot, thinking, “I can’t tell whether I am playing this piece right until I know how it should sound, but I can’t tell how it should sound except by learning to play it.” With music in the baroque or classical style, I could usually catch my mistakes—they made the music sound peculiar. Still, it was for me (as for everyone) a bad idea to learn to play a piece of music thinking, as I played each note, “Is this right?” It got me into the truly bad habit, which I am struggling and just beginning to break, of thinking about the notes I had just played instead of the ones I was about to play. Later, when I began to play more romantic music, I had to have a way—fortunately I now know just enough about intervals to do this—to know what a note should be before I play it. This is important, not to avoid making a habit of hitting some wrong note, but to avoid the much worse habit of playing all notes as if they might be wrong. Many experiences have taught me that if I am uncertain and anxious when I play a passage by myself, I will be ten times more so playing it with someone else. —JH

## **JH Interfering With Art?**

*Manfred Smith (Md.) wrote:*

I thought I would tell Jamie (4) about some of the ways Mona Brookes had children “improve” their drawings (*GWS* #25 p. 8); I told her about necks being two straight lines, etc. Yes, Jamie was able to “see” necks, and drew necks on her subjects. But, I discovered that her artwork changed to something more formal—I’m not very clear about this. Jamie draws all kinds of fantastic things. She goes through numerous styles. She is not limited as to

certain styles of drawing. As a result, her work is very unique: it's Jamie! I did *not* like my *interference* in her artistic adventure. I am wondering if Brookes is not making a mistake having very young children draw "representationally." Fortunately, I think that my interference will not have any lasting effect—at least, I hope not.

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*And from Tom Wesley (GWS #9, "Child Artist" and #19, "Good Painting Materials"):*

The article in *GWS* #25 about discontinuing the "L.A. Children's Museum" show because people were skeptical that the work was done by children sounds like an old familiar song to us. As a result of many such experiences, we don't let anyone see

Mariko's paintings but a few friends who we know can appreciate them. We have our own museum right here in a cabin in the woods with an exciting show of constantly changing art. There are so many paintings I had to build another cabin.

Mariko is 11 now. Her paintings right now are swirling Michaelangelesque figures done on 4' x 4' masonite. She's doing one next to me now.

Mona Brookes' suggestion about using felt pens rather than, or in addition to, water colors is a good one. I suggest children should have a good set with good colors like they sell in art supply stores. They should also have different types: broad flat ones can be used to fill in the color, and pointed ones for drawing.

Taking children's paintings more seriously shouldn't mean getting more representational. Parents should expose their children to modern artists like Klee, Picasso, and De Kooning so they can understand that art can be free. That's the kind of art they might be able to do better than most adult painters.

## **Cheers For Books**

Our children are in the midst of "Tintin madness" (*GWS* #25). We have to be careful not leave a Tintin book from the library on the kitchen table overnight, or no breakfast will be looked at by Susan (6) or Jude (4)—Tintin is much more exciting. They just love the drawings and antics of Captain



Haddock and the Thompsons. Even Noah, at 1, is mad about Tintin and spends up to half an hour poring over the pictures. So glad you'll be carrying them; really hope you'll have them in different languages, too.—Cathy Geuer (Ont.).

Our daughter went to a cooperative pre-school for three years. One of the regular outings was a weekly visit to the library where a wonderful grandma read to the children—and where they discovered Tintin. For two years, all of the children and adults have been poring over the Tintin books. They are showing the usage, too! I really believe that the three oldest children, including our Sarah, taught themselves the reading basics by studying these books. But whatever they've found, be it the words, pictures, whatever, they love them—and so does Sarah's father! I hope you read them all!"—Sue McCullough, Washington.

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Corinne, my oldest, sat down with the *I Hate Math! Book* and read nearly half of it, interrupting my sister and me constantly to share the riddles and fun problems. She's always been "allergic" to arithmetic, so it was good to see her devouring this book.—Meg Johnson (NJ).

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Please send *Modern Display Alphabets* (GWS #25). On his own, Owen (3) started writing capital letters with serifs! He has been writing the alphabet for some months but only recently with embellishments. The time has come to show the variety of styles.—Linda Ozier (VA).

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I read *The Education Of Little Tree* aloud to my children. It is so beautifully and sensitively written that we laughed and cried with the author. The insight we got into a history and a culture was fantastic. This book portrays human integrity, values, and love on its highest plane.

I had a 14-year-old boy read it to me. He had never read a book before. It took almost two months of daily reading, but toward the end he wouldn't do anything but read the book. He ended up not only a better reader, but a better person.—Sharon Hillestad (MN).

**New Books Available Here**

*The Penguin Atlas Of Medieval History*, Colin McEvedy (\$4.50 + post). Like all children, I studied history in school. It was one of the “best” schools, and I got good marks. What stuck in my mind was a vague notion that in 410 A.D. some uncouth rascals called Vandals or Visigoths or something invaded Rome and chased all the Romans, wrapped in their white togas, out of the city. After Rome “fell” there came the Dark Ages, a long period in which gangs of people dressed mostly in animal skins roamed around Europe fighting each other until, somewhere around the 14th century, modern Europe began to come into being. In just the briefest skimming of the book I learned things I never dreamed of. Thus, on page 8:

The legionaries found that their methods and equipment were hopelessly obsolete. The German soldier at the end of the 4th century had a better sword made of better steel, and the Goths had learned the latest techniques of cavalry warfare from the nomads of the Russian steppes.

What is all this? The legions obsolete? After all we were told about how their armor, weapons, and tactics made them invincible? And the Germans had better swords made of better steel? Where and how did these primitive barbarians learn to make better steel than the Romans, with all their science, engineering, and so on? And how did the Goths find out what was going on in the Russian steppes? Not only was there no hint of such goings on in the history I learned at school, but there was none in the history that was being taught in the high-powered elementary school where I taught in the late '50s.

What this little book shows, in its maps and short texts, is that between the “fall” of Rome and the rise of modern Europe there were many dozens, scores of kingdoms, empires, civilizations, trading or fighting with each other, conquering and being conquered in turn. The maps in this book show, at intervals of roughly fifty years, who was in power where. Even in this short space of time the map undergoes radical change, and the map of one century becomes almost unrecognizable in the next.

Strange names are everywhere. On the map for 737 A.D. we see Magyars (of whom I've heard), but also Avars, the Khazar Khanate, the Umayyad Caliphate, which spreads over Spain, North Africa, and much of the Middle East. But by 830 A.D. the Umayyads hold only Spain, their place in North Africa having been taken over by the Idrisid Caliphate, the Aghlabid Emirate,

the Abbasid Caliphate (very powerful), the Tahirid Emirate, still the Khazar Khanate, and on a northern border, the Volga Bulgars. (Did they have a song?) Fifty years later there are three new Emirates (Tulunid, Saffarid, and Samanid), the Principality of Russia, the Patzinaks, and east of them the Ghuzz, who are still there in 998 and 1028. But by 1071 they are gone, and almost all the names are new. And so on.

Obviously those were busy times. One thing I can't help wondering is, on the basis of what kinds of evidence the historians know all this. Letters? Memos? Court records? Art objects? Tombs? It's easy to see that doing history—and history, the act of inquiring into the past, is something that people do—could be fascinating work, like-putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. This atlas shows us only a small part of the puzzle, the part that says who controlled what turf at what time. It does not say anything about who all these people were, or how they lived and worked, or what sorts of houses or tools or other inventions they used. Like many other good books, it raises more questions than it answers. One thing it does at least make clear—that the years after Rome were not, as so many of us was once led to believe, just a void of darkness and barbarism.

*Mrs. Stewart's Piano Reader, Book Two* (\$7.50 + post). This continues the series of piano/music lessons that we described in *GWS* #21—one of the most logical, sensible, and interesting approaches to learning the piano that I have seen, and one I will certainly make use of when I begin to study the piano, which I hope to do before too long.

*Everyone Knows What A Dragon Looks Like*, Jay Williams (\$5.35 + post). Of the many books for young readers we have added to our list, all of which I love, this is one of my special favorites. Young children will like the brief, fable-like story for its child-hero, its excitement, and its happy ending; older children and adults will smile or laugh at its gentle, ironic, and all too true humor. Do you think know what a dragon looks like? Then you too are in for a surprise.

The illustrations, in pen and ink and water color, are among the most beautiful I have seen in any children's book. The artist has caught perfectly the colors, shapes, and styles of old Chinese paintings, and added to them a liveliness and wit that perfectly match the story. One reviewer wrote that the illustrations were beautiful enough to frame, and indeed it is so—some might even want to buy an extra copy of the book for that purpose. A treasure of a

book.

*Masquerade*, by Kit Williams (\$9.95 + post). This is one of the strangest and most beautiful books I have ever seen, written and painted by a young Englishman who, from what they say, is himself as strange as he is gifted. An article about him in *Quest* magazine two years or so ago said among other things that he has independent vision in his two eyes—instead of their combining, as ours do, to make one picture, he gets one picture from his left eye and one from his right. What this might be like, I can't imagine. The article also said, as I recall, that he had had very little schooling or formal training in art, that he had at one time been labeled as retarded (or “special” in one way or another), and that most of the time he lives alone, almost a recluse, in a tiny house in a forest somewhere in Britain.

The book itself is like a dream. The story itself is dreamlike—a rabbit goes looking for the sun, to bring him a message and gift of love from the moon. The illustrations are even more dreamlike, paintings done with a beauty of color and a wealth and accuracy of minute detail that are hardly believable, all the more so when we realize that the original paintings are not much larger than the illustrations in the book. Small wonder that these originals are hanging in a major art gallery in London. In the history of painting there can hardly have been many painters who have more completely mastered the pure technique of painting than Williams, still a very young man.

Yet for all that they seem more real than reality itself, the pictures are profoundly dreamlike, and not just because of their fanciful subject matter. The animals and people in them seem caught and frozen as if by a super-fast camera. In them, time itself seems to have been caught and stopped, and as we look we wait for someone to press a button somewhere and set Time back into motion.

Both illustrations and text are full of riddles and mysteries. Some of the small riddles I have solved; most I have not. The biggest mystery of all, as many of you may have read, was the location of a treasure, a beautiful rabbit of gold and jewels that Williams himself had made and hidden. In the years since the book was first published in England, thousands of people have been searching all over the country for this treasure. It was in the news recently that a man has finally found it, not by solving the main riddle in the text, which remains unsolved, but by using even subtler clues that Williams planted in his illustrations.

Riddle or no riddle, this is a most mysterious and beautiful book. It took Williams three years to write and paint it, and it is now about three years since it was published. I can only wonder what he may show us next.

*The Long Winter* and *Little Town On The Prairie*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder (\$2.65 each + post). In these two books the Ingalls family and their friends and neighbors just barely survive a long and cruel winter; Mary goes off to college; Laura goes to work in town and prepares to become a school teacher; Almanza Wilder asks Laura if she will go sleigh-riding with him the following winter; and the people of the little town, for all their hardships and hard work, find many ways to get joy out of life. Two more lovely books in this classic series.

*Over Sea, Under Stone*, by Susan Cooper (\$4.50 + post). I had never heard of Susan Cooper until several *GWS* readers, whose names I now forget but to whom I am very grateful, recommended her books to me. In this, the first of a series of five (all of which we plan to add to our list), three children go for their summer vacation to a small fishing village in the far southwest of England. Right away they find themselves deeply involved in a search for a valuable old treasure, a search which becomes more and more dangerous as they realize that it is a central part of a struggle against enormously powerful and evil supernatural forces which threaten to take over all of England. Susan Cooper has that feeling, that so many British writers share, of the closeness and realness of the supernatural, and she knows how, with just a hint of it, to make the hairs stand up on the back of your neck. The very exciting first installment of a long and exciting adventure.

*Our Vanishing Landscape*, by Eric Sloane (\$4.50 + post). Here is another book by the author of *Diary Of An Early American Boy* and *A Reverence For Wood* (both on our booklist) about the American countryside, which he loves so much, describes so well, and draws so beautifully. The pen and ink drawings almost seem to have color in them, so true are they to life. Like his other books, it is partly about nature, but even more about the ways in which human beings have lived and worked with nature. So we see here houses, mills, walls and fences, roads, canals, bridges, and many other things built by “ordinary” people who had no special technical training, but who were skillful, resourceful, imaginative, and in the best sense of the word, artistic. Everything they made was practical, durable, and beautiful.

Sloane feels (as do I and many others) that many of our most beautiful and

satisfying landscapes are not wild, but those in which human beings have lived and worked in harmony with and respect for nature. And he is troubled and saddened (as am I and others) by the loss of these landscapes all over our country. One of our most important tasks in years ahead will be to restore and recreate these landscapes, and the ways of working that go with them. To do this will be very important and satisfying work for many people. There is a great deal of architecture, science, history, and above all beauty in this fine book.

*Paper Money*, by Adam Smith (\$3.60 + post). While on my travels I picked this book up in an airport, and literally could not stop reading it until I finished it. It is about the great “oil crisis” of the ’70s, and about the changes that this crisis has made and will go on making in the economies and finances of the world. It is, therefore, a book about modern history and about economics, both of which many of us may have come to think of as dull, or obscure, or both. But *Paper Money* is as exciting as the best suspense or mystery stories—even more exciting, in fact, because the story is true, and because it has not ended, and because we are all right in the middle of it.

We humans, young or old, are an animal that loves to make sense of things, and this book helped me make sense of many things I had understood only dimly or not at all. One of Adam Smith’s great gifts is that he can make difficult ideas more easy—just the opposite of what so many writers do. What makes him clear, interesting, exciting, and important, is that he understands that it is not trends and tendencies and other abstractions that make history, but real human beings doing real things in real places. He always begins with these real people and real events, which he describes very vividly, and then goes on to draw whatever conclusions he wants to draw. He reminds us that history is drama and that *we* make the drama and determine how it is going to come out.

Even since the book was written, there have been some important changes. Because the people (much more than the governments) of the U.S. and other oil-using nations began to get smart and conserve energy we no longer, for the moment at least, have a severe oil shortage. Instead we have an oil glut, more oil being pumped than people can use or want to buy. The oil-producing countries are even beginning to talk a little about lowering prices. But Adam Smith would not be sorry, but delighted, to hear of this surprising turn of events, even if it upsets some of his conclusions. Like all truly smart

people, he likes surprises—they give him new things to think about. He is probably working right now on another book about the economic history of our times, and when it comes out I want to read it. He is a delightful, often very funny man, and one well worth knowing. This book is a good place to start.

*Philosophy And The Young Child*, by Gareth Matthews (\$3.60 + post). In this short, very readable but also very profound and important book, Dr. Matthews, professor of philosophy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, makes clear from many of his conversations with young children (often his own) that many of their surprising and naive remarks and questions, which we adults are too liable to dismiss as ignorant and silly, are in fact questions that the greatest philosophers in history have struggled with since philosophy began. Matthews also points out, gently but convincingly, that even such close and sympathetic observers of children as Piaget and Bettelheim have consistently and gravely underestimated the intellectual capacity of children, and misunderstood or completely overlooked the philosophical implications of much of what they say.

Here are a few of the questions that children have raised:

Tim (6), while busily engaged in licking a pot, asked, “Papa, how can we be sure that everything is not a dream?” Somewhat abashed, Tim’s father said that he didn’t know and asked how Tim thought that we could tell. After a few more licks of the pot, Tim answered, “Well, I don’t think everything is a dream, ’cause in a dream people wouldn’t go around asking if it was a dream.”

Some question of fact arose between James and his father and James said, “I *know* it is!” His father replied, “But perhaps you might be wrong!” Denis (4) then joined in, saying, “But if he knows, he can’t be wrong. *Thinking’s* sometimes wrong, but *knowing’s* always right.”

Ian (6) found to his chagrin that the three children of his parents’ friends monopolized the television; they kept him from watching his favorite program. “Mother,” he asked in frustration, “Why is it better for three people to be selfish than for one?”

John (6), reflecting on the fact that in addition to books, toys, and clothes he has two arms, two legs, and a head and that these are his

toys, his arms, his head, and so on, asked, “Which part of me is really me?”

With a little reflection, we can easily see how far such questions can lead. The first question raises the philosophical issue to which Sam Johnson was responding when he said angrily, as he sent a stone flying through the air with a solid kick, “Thus I refute Berkeley” (Bishop Berkeley, who was at the time seriously arguing that everything we think of as “real” is or at any rate might be only a dream). The third question examines the idea of utilitarianism—the greatest good for the greatest number. The fourth question raises an issue that the philosopher Gilbert Ryle discussed at length some years ago in an important book called *The Problem Of Mind*, in which he used the words “The Ghost In The Machine” to describe the very popular (and perhaps correct) intuitive idea that the “real” me is not my body but something bodiless inside me which controls my body. Philosophers have agonized and fought over these questions for centuries and will surely do so for many more.

In the last chapter of his book Matthews describes in some detail a philosophical conversation he had with his then nine-year-old son, that went on for weeks and covered several profound and important philosophical topics, including how we know what words mean, and whether and how we could think if we didn’t have any words. It is a model of how adults can and should but so rarely do talk to children, for it is above all a conversation between equals. Not that the man and the boy are or pretend to be equals in everything; the boy knows as well as the man that the man has much more knowledge and experience. But they are equals, first, because they work as colleagues and partners, are equally involved in the conversation, equally determined to find as much of the truth as they can. Even more, they are equals because the man treats the boy with exactly the respect that he would grant an adult colleague and would expect an adult colleague to grant him, takes his thoughts, confusions, and questions as seriously as he would want another adult to take his own. He and the boy stand as equals before Truth; he never, as we used to say in the Navy, “pulls rank” on the boy, never says to him, “This is so because I say it’s so.” How lucky children are who have such adults to talk to. Through his book, Dr. Matthews sets a splendid example for all of us. —JH



## People/Places

We'd like to put our names in for a "student teacher" to live with us. We can't afford to unless they pay something for room and board, but we have the room and would love a visitor to join our family for a while. Sue Pregger, 19 Larnard St, Potsdam NY 13676.

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Please list me as a person who wants to live with a home-schooling family for a while. Jeff Bell, 1165 Saginaw So., Salem OR 97302.

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I am writing to you as you requested in *Teach Your Own* as a parent who would *definitely* be teaching my children at home if I could solve the day-care problem. I am a single mother, employed, off welfare recently, and I would love to get my children (5, 3, and 1 1/2) out of the State-controlled day care center where they are right now and into a truly loving home environment, with a student teacher or other person who could give them love and attention in the way that I would do it if I were there. Barbara Lawsun, 2144 W Broadway #25, Phoenix AZ 85041; 602 -276-1116.

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We have a beautiful 70-acre isolated farm in south central KY. and would like another home-schooling family to share it (particularly with children ages 3–6). Barbara, Joel, & Aurora Clark, Coopersville KY 42611.

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Wanted: apprentice to learn microcomputer programming. My ideal would be an unschooler, 10–15, who can commute to my small software company. I envision the apprentice spending about one day a week at first, later maybe 3 days a week. Scott Layson, 25B 6th St, Cambridge, MA 02141; 617-497-7389.

## Resource Lists

*These people have experience with the following subjects, and are willing to correspond with others who are interested:*

ADOPTION: Wendy & Fred Forbes, 1255 Sumner Av, El Cajon CA 92021; Elizabeth Cava, 4115 N Illinois St, Indianapolis IN 46208; Lois

Porter, Box 401, New Lebanon NY 12125 (children 12, 10, 9).

TRAVELLING FAMILIES: Wendy Forbes (above); Arlean Haight (Becky 14, Matt 11) 527 E Wilson Rd, Scottville MI 49454; Becky Howard, 1708 S Boston Pl, Russellville AR 72801.

HOME COMPUTERS: Ted & Martha Laux, 1853 East Shore Dr, Ithaca NY 14850.

SINGLE PARENTS: Naomi Siegel (Sage 3), 10 Yonge Blvd, Toronto, Ont. M5M 3G5.

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Editors—John Holt and Donna Richoux

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Subscriptions and Books—Pat Farenga

# **Growing Without Schooling 28**

July 1982

I've been busy as a bird dog since my return from Europe—the busiest summer schedule I can remember for a long time. Besides the homeschooling meetings or lectures listed in #27, there was another meeting in Woods Hole, MA, and I'm leaving soon for more in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. I have also done radio interviews in Rochester NY, St. Louis, Providence RI, Saskatoon, and two in Boston.

Nancy Plent (NJ) and I had a wonderful time at the Homesteaders' Good Life Get-Together. Much interest in home-schooling.

Both Florida meetings drew more than twice as many people as expected. In Tallahassee we had to find a new room for the lecture, and that room was jammed. I met many homeschoolers there—as everywhere, they were determined, energetic, and resourceful. They said my visit was good for their morale; it was just as good for mine.

The Massachusetts Association of School Committees invited me to be on a panel at their Nov. 4 conference in Hyannis, but as it happened I was already scheduled for a teacher's conference in New York. So Donna will be going to the Hyannis conference instead; she says it will be a nice excuse to get dressed up! I've bought a new cello, the first decent one I have ever owned, and what a difference! Playing it is a joy—I wish I could do it more.

As you will see in this issue, we are adding some cassette tapes to the list of materials we sell here. Hope you like these.

Mary Van Doren has been a regular and very valuable volunteer in the office. With her comes her 13-month-old Anna, and watching this enchanting little person exploring the office, learning to walk and talk and climb up and down the building stairs, is our joy and delight. I have been tape recording much of her talk and adventures, and plan to add these to our list of cassettes—a fascinating record of a little child's growth.—John Holt

## **John's Coming Schedule**

Aug 28, 1982: Louisiana homeschoolers. Contact June Conley, 504-343-9404, or Katherine Reves, 504-387-6319.

Sept 23: Tuba City (AZ) High School Auditorium, 7:30 PM. Contact Janet Sarkett, 602-283-5126.

Sept 24: Northern Arizona U., Flagstaff, AZ; 10 AM public lecture.

Sept 25: Phoenix home-schoolers. Contact Brian Evans, 602-966-6474.

Sept 28: Colorado home-schoolers. Contact Nancy Dumke, 1902 S. Oneida, Denver 80222.

Oct 5: Phillips Exeter Academy, morning assembly, Exeter, NH.

Oct 16: Maryland home-schoolers. Contact Manfred Smith, 9085 Flamepool Way, Columbia, MD 21045.

Oct 17: Conference on children, Kingston NY. Contact Dr. George Wotan, 914-331-40 75.

Oct 28–29: Universal Education Conference, Pisa, Italy. Contact: Connie Miller, phone (050) 68976-68894.

Nov 4: NY State Reading Conference, Kiamesha Lake, NY. Contact Jean Burns, 144 Menand Rd, Loudonville 12211.

Nov 17: San Bernadino Valley Community College. Contact Sonny Wallick, 714-882-4437.

Nov 18: UC Riverside. Contact Jim Dillon, 714-787-5228.

## Help Wanted

I can't ever remember having so many wonderful *GWS* stories to choose from; it's hard to have to leave out so much good material. John and I are looking for ways to publish more of this material—perhaps by increasing the size or frequency of *GWS*, publishing our own booklets, saving material for a major book, etc.

Whatever we do will take more time, money, and energy, and frankly, we are so busy doing what we are doing already, it's hard to see how to put any new ideas into practice. We welcome any ideas on how we could save—or create—time and money.

What we need most of all seems to be volunteers. We are finding more and more ways to make good use of the volunteers who come to our office or live in the Boston area, and we intend to keep doing so. Making practical use of volunteers across the country seems harder right now, but we're always

open to ideas.

Of course, what you are already doing is a tremendous help, and we wouldn't be here without you. Every time you tell someone about *GWS* or *Teach Your Own*, or send us a news item or a letter about yourselves, or help someone who is thinking about home-schooling, or start a local group, or monitor your legislature, or arrange a speaking engagement or interview for us, or buy our books, or renew your subscription, or contribute to our Gift Sub Fund, you are helping us, and we are most grateful.

I thought you might like to see an overview of everything we are currently doing in the office, and it might suggest some other ways you could help us:

- 1) Putting together *GWS*—editing, writing, layout.
- 2) *GWS* subscriptions—processing, handling problems, renewal reminders.
- 3) Mail-order booklist—inventory, filling orders, adding new titles.
- 4) Cassette tapes: preparing and copying.
- 5) Arranging public talks, handling travel details.
- 6) Acting as a “clearinghouse” for home-schooling information.
- 7) John's books—writing, revising, promoting.
- 8) General publicity—TV, radio, newspaper reporters; devising handouts; periodic mailings.
- 9) Creating new booklets—reprinting John's books, *GWS* articles, new material.
- 10) Acquiring a computer terminal.
- 11) Volunteers—contacting, instructing.
- 12) Handling correspondence.
- 13) Filing.
- 14) Cleaning, maintaining, and improving the office.
- 15) Finances and bookkeeping.
- 16) Keeping informed on such issues as education, society, environment, energy, peace, and music.

We know that help can take many different forms, and we appreciate anything you can do. Also, if it happens that you send us suggestions and we don't have time to respond, please be sure that we have considered them and that we truly appreciate your concern.—Donna Richoux

## **Victory in South Carolina**

*Delores White (SC) has been keeping us posted on a long struggle with the local school district. Early in July she phoned us, jubilant over the fact that the State Board of Education had decided in her family's favor. She soon sent us this note with a packet of material:*

What a joy to write good news, and send you the clippings from the local paper. There have been two other newspaper pieces, with similar stories as these, and another local weekly newspaper will come this afternoon. Two TV stations carried the story last night on the 11 PM news

I hope this information is all you will need for *GWS*. I am enclosing a copy of the brief that our lawyer sent to the State Board of Education and a copy of their reply after their final decision.

We are certainly thankful for this ruling.

I must run, since TV and newspaper reporters have consumed a couple of days, and the garden is getting behind. One of the reporters invited the kids to the studio to see the entire process of what goes on behind the scenes. All the news media were very interested and sympathetic, and were fascinated with our large family and our decision to homeschool.

We have been very surprised at the amount of publicity this has received, but since it has set a precedent for the state, we will help all we can.

*From the Columbia State, 7/10/82:*

The State Board of Education Friday reversed a decision by the Greenville County school board denying a Greenville couple's request to teach their children at home for religious reasons.

In a unanimous vote, the board ruled the Greenville trustees erred when they denied the request of Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. White on the grounds that neither held a teaching certificate.

According to state education officials, Friday's action was the first time the board of education has approved an appeal in a home-instruction case

Parents may seek to show that the instruction they provide their children is "substantially equivalent to instruction given to children of like ages in the public or private schools where such children reside."

The law makes the State Board of Education the final arbiter on the question of whether an instruction program is “substantially equivalent.” However, the board, through its regulatory power, has directed local school boards to make the initial determination.

In the White case, a home visiting committee, appointed by the Greenville school system, reviewed the family’s home-instruction program and concluded that Mrs. White was adequately prepared to teach her children.

The committee recommended that the school system approve the home instruction request, provided the instructional program was reviewed on an annual basis and that the White children participated in state and district testing programs.

Despite the committee’s recommendation, Greenville schools superintendent Floyd Hall denied the Whites’ request, stating that “nothing less than full teacher certification and training. is needed to fully ensure the acquisition of basic academic competencies by (their) children.”

The Whites, through their attorneys, appealed to the Greenville school board, which upheld Hall’s decision.

In its decision to grant the White’s appeal, the State Board of Education said Hall and the Greenville trustees failed to adequately consider the Whites’ claim that their instruction was at least equivalent to the instruction offered in private schools in Greenville County.

The board noted that, “although teacher certification may properly be required for a program alleged to be equivalent under state law to a public school program, the Appellants have alledged equivalence to public or *private* schools. Teacher certification is not necessarily a requirement in all private schools, and thus cannot be required in a program alleged to be equivalent to a private school.”

## **Local News**

ARIZONA: Sherri Pitman (6166 W Highland, Phoenix AZ 85033) writes, "I was actively involved in the amendments and passage of HB 2116 dealing with home schools in Arizona (*GWS* #27). Although we would have preferred no regulation of home schools, it was a fair compromise. The Senate Education Committee had emphatically stated they would not even hear the bill the way it was sent to them from the House. Therefore, I proposed amendments which allowed the State to be satisfied that the person teaching would at least have the basic math, reading, and grammar skills of a sixth grader, and also the children would take the same CAT test given all public school children. We also included a hearing process for the protection of the parents. There have been many, many phone calls from interested parents who wish to start home schools next school year. I have decided to compile a booklet which would detail all of the requirements."

The Arizona Home Education Association (1890 E Don Carlos #1, Tempe AZ 85281) sent us copies of some of their handouts and bulletin board notices, including a one page summary of the new legal requirements, and small (2" x 4") slips with big black letters reading, "Interested in learning more about HOME SCHOOLING? (Educating your children at home). Phone -----."

And Helen Kepler of Kingman tells us that, contrary to what she was first told, the proficiency tests that home-schooling parents will be required to take *will* be offered regularly throughout the year.

CALIFORNIA: Cyd Ropp (200 Ford Rd #251, San Jose CA 95138; 418-972-8980) writes, "Here is a copy of my Master's Thesis on Home Schooling in California. This is the most comprehensive survey of the California home-schooling experience I could put together—most of the work is of course applicable to home-schoolers everywhere. I would like to offer reprints for sale to *GWS* readers for \$12. The home-schoolers around San Jose have given me wonderful feedback and have been requesting copies."

CONNECTICUT: Charges against Deborah and Donald Corcoran (Apple Lane, Kensington CT 06037) that they were not educating their son were dismissed in Superior Court recently. They were taken to court by the local school officials, who had given them permission for one year of home-schooling, but not a second.

INDIANA: David Longstreet (719 2nd St, Shelbyville IN 46176) sent a letter to other Indiana families, saying that the Governor's Select Advisory



Commission for Primary and Secondary Education would be holding monthly meetings from May to October, and it was possible they would redefine a “school” and make a new set of guidelines for home schools. David encouraged others to attend, to write their representatives, and possibly to arrange informational meetings.

KANSAS: Cathy Bergman of the *Home Educator's Newsletter* told us, “In favor of the family was the ruling this June in the case of Keith and Paula White of Miltervale, Kansas. The State alleged that Zephyrus, the Whites’ 7-year-old son, was a ‘deprived child’ as his parents were purportedly ‘not educating’ him. The decision was made June 21 by Judge Marvin Stortz, District Magistrate Judge for Cloud County.”

LOUISIANA: Katherine Reves of Citizens For Home Education writes, “We have just finished a successful fight in the Louisiana legislature to retain home-study, prevent mandatory kindergarten, and make permanent a law which exempts private schools (those which receive no government aid) from any paperwork requirements. We are thrilled with our success but we know that we need to spread the word and attract new membership in preparation for next year’s fight.”

MASSACHUSETTS: Susan Lannen (Box 579, Woods Hole MA 02543) belongs to a Cape Cod home-schooling group that meets bi-monthly. She told us they met recently with the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, and were warmly received. He gave them advice on submitting a curriculum outline, suggested they work with the local principals to have a curriculum roughly comparable to that of the schools, gave them advice on texts, and said there would be no external testing unless a child entered school. Susan also said the parents found Danielle Fennema (“Certified Teachers,” *GWS* #26), to be very helpful.

MINNESOTA: Sharon Hillestad (9669 E 123rd, Hastings MN 55033) sent us a newsletter of the *Minnesota Home School Network*, which included one paragraph each on six home-schooling families, and announced future workshops. Sharon says, “I sent off 125 of these letters and I hear from prospective home schoolers every day. Isn’t this fun? I really mean it.”

NEW YORK: From Harold Ingraham (Calumet School, Smyrna NY 13464) “My first court case out of 140 families just received a fat dismissal on required standardized testing for home schoolers. The state challenged us in my backyard (Chenango County) so I testified on behalf of the family. The

judge dismissed the case because of lack of statute requirement.”

OHIO: OCEAN is sponsoring an Alternative Education Roundup for home-schoolers and alternative schools, Saturday Oct. 3, 1982, from 9–3. \$1 per family. To register and share ideas of what you would like to see at the Roundup, write to OCEAN, PO Box 302, Cuyahoga Falls OH 44221, or call Elizabeth Burns, 419-289-8013.

PENNSYLVANIA: Susan Richman has started *The Western Pa. Homeschoolers Newsletter*, with many good articles and ideas. In issue #2 she tells about the “First Annual Homeschooler’s Weekend,” June 11–13, at the Richman farm: 34 families with 86 children!

TEXAS: We’ve been hearing about two court battles. A Dallas County Justice of the Peace dismissed the truancy charges against Steve and Barbara Short of Richardson, saying the law inadequately describes what constitutes a school.

In another much-publicized case, Ed and Barbara Gonzalez of San Antonio were taken to court several times. They were acquitted once in March, then charged again in May, lost, and were unable to appeal because of a technicality. The last we heard, the district attorney may not bother to file charges again. The Gonzalez’s lawyer, Egon Tausch, sent us a good letter about the legalities of home schooling, which we may reprint later.

Diane Elder, Nancy Stevens, and Anibal Gonzalez (Greenbriar School, PO Box 466, Elgin TX 78621) have organized the Texas Family Schools Co-Op; annual membership is \$5.

WASHINGTON STATE: Debra Stewart reported in the *Unschoolers Project* (26611 SR 530 NE, Arlington WA 8223) that House Bill 996, which would have made it easier to start a private school, was finally defeated, 37-50.

Also interesting to note that the Stewarts financed the publication of their newsletter by selling the *My Yearbook* series, \$15 books that contain all the reading, math, science, etc., that a child is usually expected to learn in any one grade.

WEST VIRGINIA: Deirdre Purdy wrote in *Alternatives in Education* about the W.V. Supreme Court of Appeals case, *State vs. Riddle*. This case is a lesson in how not to do homeschooling. The Riddles never requested the county superintendent of schools to approve their home as a place for instruction under Exemption B in WV Code 18-8-1. They withdrew their

children from school and kept them home until they were reported as truant; then they claimed First Amendment freedom.

“The Court acknowledges that the Riddles did an excellent job of teaching their children (‘possibly better than the public schools could do’), using materials from the Christian Liberty Academy. The court objects not to home-schooling, but to homeschooling without permission from and oversight by the county board of education—as mandated in the law.”

WISCONSIN: John Ellis of Faith Academy (Rt 3 Box 84, Shell Lake WI 54871) writes:

For a yearly fee of \$100 plus the cost of the curriculum, our corporation will establish a subsidiary school at your place of residence that will be in full compliance with all Wisconsin state statutes. We are currently establishing subsidiary schools at the rate of 8 per month and not one of our schools has ever been accused of violating any state statutes and none of our students has ever been declared truant. We have just published a manual that covers all the knowledge a parent needs to establish a private school. For a copy, send \$15.

## When Writing to Us

Here are some little ways you can help us speed up our paper flow.

1.) When you send us a number of things—book orders, subscription changes, questions, speaking engagement info, news items, chatty letters—in one envelope (which is fine), please keep them on separate sheets as much as possible. We can get each item to the appropriate person instead of circulating one fat bundle.

2.) Please print or type your *full name and address* at the *top* of the *first* page of each letter. Makes it much easier to respond and to file.

3.) If you ask questions, a SASE or postcard increases your odds of a quick answer.

4.) Please tell us if it’s OK to use any part of your letter in *GWS*, and whether or not to include your name with the story. Thanks.—DR

## On Book Customers

*Diane Landis (MA) wrote:*

I think you’ve hit on a good idea with the “Prospective Customer” mailing

(*GWS* #27). You have an excellent selection of books and I think many people would order some if they knew about them. My husband and I went through our address book and culled the names of those we think would be interested in seeing your booklist. I hope this pays off.

DR: The response to our request for names of “Prospective Customers” has been heartwarming—as we go to press over 100 of you have sent in names, and there’s still mail to be opened. Many people sent one or two suggested names, many sent about a dozen, and the most so far from a single person is 58! I estimate you’ve given us a total so far of 750–1000 names. I’m hoping for 2000 by the time we do our fall mailing.

We’ll keep this file open—any time you want, send us names. We truly would like each one of you to send us at least one. Thanks so much for your support.

## Home-Schooling Reprints

We have added two new reprints about home-schooling to our list that we think will be useful to many people. The first has on one side the article John wrote for *Newsday*, “More Parents Saying ‘No’ to School,” on why schools are the way they are and who is choosing home-schooling; the other side is the article I wrote for *Education Network News*, called “Growing without Schooling. Another Viewpoint,” which includes thoughts on the “social life” question, looking up the laws, and co-operating with schools.

The second reprint is from *GWS* #27, “First Boston Family,” Lynn Kapplow’s excellent letter about getting approval from the Boston School Department, and the “Successful Curriculum” she wrote for her daughter, Grace.

We think these reprints will provide help to people who want general information on the subject, and those who are seriously looking at how they could take their own children out of school. We plan to mail these out to people who ask us lots of questions, and use them as handouts at conferences. It would be great if you wanted to do the same.

We will be happy to send you a copy of both reprints for 25¢ plus a self-addressed stamped envelope, or 50¢ without a SASE. In quantity, you can get any 10 for \$1, or 100 for \$5; this covers postage and printing (allow 4–6 weeks for delivery). Thanks. —DR

## Talk to Students

*From a reader in New Jersey:*

Another homeschooler and I went to Rutgers University to talk about homeschooling to a sociology class. There were about 40 students.

One student brought up the point that in these times it didn't seem realistic, as in most families both parents have to work. I liked my friend's answer. She said it was true that home-schooling wasn't for everyone, but that for her it was a matter of where people set their priorities. From what I see and hear, most homeschoolers don't have a lot of money and do have to give up some materialistic things or incorporate some kind of job that allows them to home school, or both.

The class was a little over two hours—it felt like ten minutes. It was a lot of fun and I wouldn't mind doing it again. By the way, we didn't tell the class what towns we lived in or our educational background. At the next class, the teacher (a friend—I babysit her 1½-year-old) asked the class to guess our educational background. Most guessed that I had at least four years of college, probably more. They were surprised to hear that I had only two years of high school.

## Winning in Mississippi

*Sandi Myers (MS) writes:*

Ours has been an interesting relationship with the school system. In March I contacted them to see if there were any rules I ought to know about concerning homeschooling. We live in military housing and a neighbor had turned us in to the Base Housing Office for having creatures (two ducks, a turtle we see occasionally, a dog, goldfish, and a gerbil) and for having the kids out of school. Come to find out, the law is even more supportive than I had imagined. The school code actually states that children should go to school or be adequately trained at home.

When I contacted the local superintendent, the assistant superintendent was fascinated, even though he strongly disagreed with me, and we talked about an hour on the phone, him asking about various areas and how we handle them, and me answering them. He asked if my husband and I would

consider coming to talk with him, the superintendent, and the lady who takes care of curriculum for elementary grades. I said sure, and went in about a week later. My husband was unable to accompany me. The kids and all supportive neighbors were sure it was a “set-up,” and Scott even suggested that I take hunting knives hidden in my socks in case I had to cut my way out of there!

We talked about two hours. The superintendent and the woman in charge of curriculum were far more positive than the asst. superintendent. But all were literally fascinated by the psychology and goals we set, agreeing with them completely. They listened to our methods and approaches and nodded as I talked. I was completely honest. When they asked what a normal day was for us, I said that I didn’t think we had had one yet. They were amazed that the children weren’t bored a good deal of the time, and loved it when I told them of the older children’s anatomy session with *The Anatomy Coloring Book* and John Michael (3½) stripped down to undies, drawing his parts all over him. The kids even included a legend beneath his lungs to show what was intended by a section with diagonal lines, and one with dots, and so on. I also said that I cut the session short when I insisted that they not do it with permanent markers again—water color markers, yes, but permanent ones, no! John wore his lungs for about three weeks!

I had an ulterior motive when I went to talk with them. I asked if they would consider loaning or selling me books from the schoolbook depository, and give me a copy of the curriculum they set for each grade. At the end of our talk, they asked me to call the Asst. Superintendent in a few days to see about both. When I called back, I was not too surprised by his comments, but they were funny. He said that I could probably tell that I had them eating out of my hand when I left. He also said that they had had to talk it over among themselves for several days before they got back to their original point of view that what I was doing was wrong. He could understand if it was from a religious point, but just because I thought the children were doing better at home was not justified. He felt particularly sorry for that little first grader of mine (Shelley, 7) who had never been to school at all. (At that point I asked why he didn’t meet that little first grader of mine to judge her personally. He didn’t answer). And since this went against his convictions so much, he just couldn’t give us books. He was particularly concerned about us not going by a schedule of any sort. He did say that the curriculum they are using now is

absolutely useless and they expect to have a very good one this summer, and for me to call later on and they could get one to me. He was speaking very nicely to me, so the conversation was not unpleasant.

I said that we probably would not use the school books as they would have us use them anyway since, dollar for dollar, they just don't measure up to some very good information that is available, so that wasn't a big loss, and invited him or others to meet and visit with the children to better understand the personal choices we had made. I also told him that we often go to the beach for a picnic lunch and a couple of hours before or afterwards, and invited him to come play hooky some day and join us to see the beauty of children learning and doing what is important to them. He said that he still feels we are making a mistake, and I answered that I could not say that I am *not* making one, but I have had to rely on my knowledge of my children and my intuition in the past and seem to have made wise choices even though they were not always in directions that were in vogue at the time, and would trust that I would make the right choices now.

During our talk at their office, he had asked me if there was a chance that my children weren't getting a view of the "real" world with keeping them at home. I answered, possibly, but I thought they were getting a better view of the "real" world because the things they do are real. I asked if he had seen some people who get boxed in in "education" and never know the "real" world. He had to laugh and admit that he certainly had.

All in all, I feel the match went to me, and at least if a family comes in who does use schedules or does it for very religious reasons, then they may be more supportive of them for having known me!

## **Success in Florida**

*Ann Mordes (FL) wrote:*

I wanted to let you know that my husband and I have been under fire here in Jackson County. H.R.S. (Health and Rehabilitative Services) called me on June 26. The social worker said they had been given a referral on my son, Daniel, from the school superintendent. He had told her that we had a truant child. I told her that was not true, that we operated a legally registered private school in our home and Daniel was enrolled. She asked that we come to her office and talk about it.

The next morning, I wrote her a letter (on school letterhead stationery) inviting her to come out and visit me. I gave her explicit instructions on how to get to our school and home. I informed her as to what the laws were regarding private schools in the state of Florida, and told her to check on these with Dr. James Kemp's office at the Department of Education in Tallahassee.

The next day this woman called my lawyer and told her that she felt that H.R.S. had no jurisdiction over us, due to the fact we were a private school. The social worker told my lawyer that she felt they were being "used" by the superintendent. "If I can get out of it, I am" she said. My attorney said that she thought that was a good idea, as we were registered as a private school and in her opinion acting as one. (I had already educated my lawyer regarding private schools.)

My husband and I also ran a small ad in the local newspaper, saying that our private school was now taking applications for the fall. We had one phone call.

The social worker never showed up nor called again. My husband and I went over the Tallahassee to visit Dr. Kemp last Friday. He knew what the problem was the minute I walked in the door. He was extremely cordial, as he always is. When we returned home, we received a copy of a letter that H.R.S. sent to the superintendent, and I thought you might like a copy. I'm thinking about framing it!

*From the H.R.S. letter to the school superintendent:*

As part of our investigation of the truancy referral on Daniel Mordes, we talked with Dr. James Kemp, Department of Education, Tallahassee, Florida. According to Dr. Kemp, the Mordes Academy is listed with the Department of Education as a private school. He told us that on December 17, 1981, the Fourth District Court of Appeals ruled that a private school 1) must charge tuition which supports school activities and 2) cannot limit enrollment to a single family.

Dr. Kemp stated that the Department of Education has no policing powers regarding private schools, and your responsibility is limited to checking attendance records (FS, Section 232. 01). We could not determine that the matter of certification of teachers in private schools has been addressed by Florida Statutes.



In view of the above information, we cannot determine that Daniel Mordes is a truant child; therefore Juvenile Court has no jurisdiction in this matter. We are closing our case as an unfounded report and notifying Mr. and Mrs. Mordes of our decision.

(Signed by the District Intake Supervisor and Direct Services Supervisor.)

## More Success Stories

*Lois Porter (NY) wrote:*

*Apr. 30:* The Committee on the Handicapped, which includes the school superintendent, approved our curriculum for John. We patterned our home schooling cover letter after several in *GWS*. The committee was very impressed with the thoroughness of the proposal, the legal precedents cited, etc. It was the first such request they had ever received. Actually, our letter *informed* them of what we were doing. We were very clear, without being belligerent, about our rights.

The board of education will approve or disapprove the program on May 25th. The superintendent assures us they will rubber-stamp it.

There is just one fly in the ointment. They are insisting on doing IQ testing on John this fall. They claim that NY State law mandates such testing every three years for “handicapped” children. I don’t want this done.

*June 7:* Several pieces of good news. Our home schooling proposal was passed by our school board without incident. In addition, the superintendent informed me that he had looked up the “compulsory,” every-three-year IQ testing rule for so-called handicapped children. He told me that if for any reason the parents felt such testing would be detrimental, we simply had to write a letter stating that fact, and the testing would be waived! That’s quite a relief!

John and I are doing well, 2½ months into our home-schooling venture. He is less anxious, and his frustration tolerance, while still low, has improved markedly.

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*From a California parent:*

*Nov ’81:* The *Phil Donahue Show* on which you and your colleagues

appeared may have saved my life. Yes, I mean that literally. Both my son and I have contemplated suicide as a result of being declared insane simply because of his resistance to attending public school, and my efforts to obtain appropriate education for him.

It has been nightmarish trying to find some legal recourse within my very limited means.

*July '82:* I am happy to say that the situation I wrote you about has been resolved.

An officer of the court, affiliated with the Welfare Dept. who was not so intent on seeing pathology in my concern for my son, after a visit to our home, determined that it was the best place for Ray, rather than public school, residential care, or any of the other drastic alternatives that had been proposed.

Since then, Ray's depression has lifted, he is much more active and healthy physically and socially—and even bikes six miles into town to study at the library! All this on his own initiative.

I have considered suing the local school district for the nightmare they put us through so unnecessarily—but just being out of it and having had my attorney let them know there was a possibility seems sufficient, at least for now.

I do wish that our experience could somehow benefit others in their struggle against the (benign) tyranny of the system.

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*From Barb Parshley (NH):*

I am just so excited to tell you that I am now officially allowed to home-school my boys. The books John wrote, especially *Teach Your Own*, were a great help. *GWS* gave me many ideas on how to write my application also.

When I went to the superintendent, I received all sorts of negative answers. He tried to act open minded, yet quietly intimidated me by reminding me that children are subjects of the state, that they would have to come into my home and evaluate my teaching, and yes, they do have trouble once in a while with parents who want to do this and have to try and take the children away. I was glad I was so well informed.

He did change his attitude greatly as we worked together. When we eventually went to the school board, he actually backed us and recommended

we be approved, even to the point of interceding on our behalf when a board member became aggressive

If I can be of help to anyone else I would like that opportunity, so you may add my name to the directory.

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DR: We don't have the room to print the many other "success stories" we have received lately. Many of them are similar—people took our advice and were delighted that it worked! For more such stories, see *GWS* #27.

## In the Mail

Sometimes I get to feel that I must be really strange or something, because I've always wanted my kids around—I've never desired to "send-them-off" somewhere. Seems most parents we know are into babysitters, daycare, school (as babysitter), whatever—just to get their kids out of the way. Then there's the betweenparents shift: "I had to have them *all day* yesterday, so you better take them today." You might think it was some object being discussed. People regularly ask me, "But how do you *stand* it all day?" What I want to know is how can *they* stand it? How can they bear to miss all the new discoveries, the joys? It all goes so quickly. —Kathie DeWees (VT).

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I've read a few letters in *GWS* where someone comments on the fact that most letters are full of glowing accounts of home-schooling, wonderfully intelligent children, etc., etc., etc. And my letters are usually like that, also—whether to *GWS* or otherwise; who wants to hear what a drag some days can be? Well, just for the record—it has taken me an inordinate amount of time to finish this letter because of the squabbles, aches and pains, accidents and misbehavior of my children today. One of *those days*, you know? So I think I'll stop here and go take a nap after banishing the wild ones to the far reaches of their own rooms where they can do whatever they want (and I don't have to know about it!).—Becky Howard (AR).

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Just got # 27 and I'm enjoying every article. I was most surprised to see the Arizona law article. Is it really happening that fast? I never expected it to happen in my lifetime even, and it's starting already.—Mary Jane Berntsen

(TX).

## A Home Schedule

*Karen Elder ("A New Jersey Family," GWS #27, page 3) wrote:*

This is our first attempt at a letterhead for our home school, made on a hectograph. I'd never heard of hectographs until reading *GWS* #19 just a few weeks ago. We are still learning the ins and outs of it, but we really enjoy all our experiments.

We are slowly coming to grips with various "problems" of home schooling, particularly the difficult one of scheduling/non-scheduling. We have several different schedules now. One is the social calendar: usually, Brownies every Tuesday afternoon; home-schoolers meeting every other Wednesday (ends up being an all-day thing for Krista and a half-day thing for Robin and Dawn); Dungeons and Dragons two out of three Friday evenings; visit to grandparents almost every weekend. Other events, special (weddings, picnics, overnights) and everyday (playing out side with friends) fill out this schedule.

The project schedule has finally been firmed up. We've been homeschooling for about six months; sometimes we would be very busy and other times we would just get caught up in a mother-housecleaning/kids-playing situation. What bothered me most about that was the kids would start to complain that there was nothing to do. "No schedule" just didn't work. Now what I do is pick out three or four projects on the weekend to do during the next week. Projects are supposed to start at 10 AM and go until just before lunch, but sometimes everyone is finished in 45 minutes and sometimes we go on all afternoon. The trick here (aha') is that only those people who have eaten breakfast, gotten dressed, and combed their hair can participate in the project. (Talking sense, making contracts, screaming and yelling, etc, all failed to get Krista to dress herself before 2 PM. No problem now.) Today we made the hectograph. We've also done potato printing, gone to a local historical museum, and made trihexaflexagons and tetrahexaflexagons (from the book *How To Enjoy Mathematics With Your Child*, by Nancy Rosenberg).

The academic schedule is still in a state of flux. I have been reading aloud to Krista (we've finished a Dr. Doolittle book, and are now reading

*Understood Betsy*) about every other night. Sometimes we work on a topic in math, like fractions or multiplication. Sometimes we use Cuisenaire rods, or just paper and pencil, or workbook pages. We've just been given a couple of *Miquon Math Lab* books (*GWS* #14, 19) and Krista has independently done a few pages in it. We've fallen off with the journal writing, which I had originally required daily. I am waiting for our mutual needs to bring about a jelling of our academic time, but one thing six months of home-schooling has taught me is that there is no need to be frantic about it. Something will happen when it is ready.

In spite of all these so-called schedules, we are really very flexible and the kids have a lot of free time to themselves. One of the reasons for the schedules, in fact, is to avoid the arbitrary filling-up of the kids' time.

## **From Westerns to History**

*Arlean Haight (MI) wrote:*

Just thought I would give you a report on Becky (now 14) and Matt (now 11). The local superintendent did approve our school program. We had incurred a \$75 legal fee before the tables were turned for us, but it was worth it. It wasn't the attorney that accomplished the victory, but he HAD done some research, for which we were charged, of course.

When we took the children out of school nearly two years ago, we had advice from several people, among them Dr. Pat Montgomery of Ann Arbor, Michigan. She told us if we would let the children follow their own interests, and just help them when they needed help, they would learn more than if we put them on a pre-planned curriculum.

I respected Dr. Montgomery, and was grateful for her help. But I just couldn't see any glimmer of hope in Becky. It seemed that 7 years of public school had successfully stamped out any inclination she might have had to learn. By her own admission, she had learned to cram for tests, make A's and B's on her report cards, and promptly forget almost everything she had "learned." Whenever I allowed her free rein on "school," her one interest was mindless fiction— nothing of any value that I could see. Pat tried to encourage me, but had the misgivings and insecurities that I see in so many other parents new to home-schooling. I was afraid Becky would learn nothing at all. So—we embarked on a "curriculum." It turned out to be just a

duplication of the old public school pattern. So I went pretty easy with it, still allowing her freedom, and limiting her fiction reading to what I felt was least objectionable.

But, Pat was right. It finally happened. This year Becky progressed from Louis Lamour Western fiction to an interest in Western history, then to the history of the United States, and is now in the process of memorizing the Constitution word for word. I am wondering—what public school teacher could ever coerce a 14-year-old into *memorizing* the Constitution? In addition, Becky has learned to type and is working for her dad, typing letters, doing payroll and other office work. We put her on our business checking account so she can even sign the checks, though we do check them over before they go to the men. They do NOT have mistakes.

I never have been able to accept the idea of total freedom in education for children. Maybe I've been too affected, myself, by our modern concept of education. The children are required, among other things, to do some math every day, or almost every day. They also must write something of their choice every week, so we can work on composition, grammar, etc. Both children take to this writing assignment, and Becky, who is required to write three pages each week, will easily write TEN. They can choose their own subject. It can be a report on something they are studying, something philosophical, or fiction.

Matt loves *Mother Earth News* in particular, and much of his reading and many of his projects come from “her” pages. His hope is someday to write an article that will appear in *Mother Earth News*. He is forever looking for ideas for his article.

## **Elaine Mahoney Report**

*From Elaine Mahoney (MA):*

Kendra and Kimberlee are fine and continue to appreciate learning at home. We recently met with the curriculum committee, consisting of an elementary curriculum director, high school curriculum director, assistant superintendent, etc. Both Kendra and Kimberlee were present and did a fine job of sharing past and future learning experiences and opportunities. The meeting seems to have gone very well. I was concerned at first, this being Kendra's first year at high school level, but from what I hear, we are going in

the right direction for continued good will and support.

Kendra has been using the Massachusetts Department of Education Correspondence English course, and has been doing very well. What she especially likes about the course is that she can work at her own pace and receives assistance when requested. What I like about the course is that she does get some feedback in a subject that I do not feel particularly comfortable with, the materials are very reasonably priced, and if the school district expresses a desire for a more precise and objective form of evaluation, then we have available assessment from the Mass. Dept. of Education.

Kendra is a 4-H teen this year. It always seemed a simple matter to meet the home-study needs of general socialization; the girls simply went out into the community and utilized any available resources, library, museums, science education center, YWCA courses, ballet lessons, Park and Recreation sports, etc. But, as Kendra grew older, I was concerned about the availability of opportunities for boy-girl interactions, companionship, and opportunities for learning with, from, and about one another. I am happy to say that 4-H teens have filled this void. The 4-H teen boys and girls work on community projects, organize dances, go on trips together, and study animal care, health, nutrition, gardening, and energy. 4-H provides wonderful opportunities for teens (actually all ages) and encourages self-awareness and development. Kendra went to the State House last week with 4-H and is going to Washington D.C. with them in July. She also has a proposal application to request funding of a community awareness project that she has in mind, sponsored by Reader's Digest, through 4-H.

She is in Tennessee at present, attending the World's Fair. A family friend extended the invitation. I could not afford to cover her expenses, so if she wanted to go, she needed to earn the money. Within two weeks' time she had raised \$150. She, along with friends and family, went to flea markets, sold cookies, did face paintings, and sold balloons. She also got a job preparing garden soil and got a job cleaning and repairing a sewing machine. One of the exciting parts about the trip is that they also plan to go to Kentucky to go to a sewing machine convention, which ties in nicely with her apprenticeship (*GWS #23*).

In the fall, Kendra plans to take a correspondence course in sewing machine repair to acquire a certificate. She has been given "seed money" from her instructor to purchase machines; she is to repair, clean, and then re-

sell them to the instructor for a profit, who then sells them for an even greater profit in her shop.

Kimberlee is also doing well. She has grown so in independence, finally discovered that reading can be interesting and useful, and is also doing a little typing. She comments that she does not wish to learn to type because it is boring. So I say, fine. But, almost daily, she goes over to the typewriter and will type a word, a comment, or her own name. When I notice the typed comment, I'll add on it; she, in turn, the next day or next week, will type a response, etc. She may not be learning according to the book, but who cares, she *is* learning to type. Someday I think she'll realize it.

She is also learning to ride a mo-ped and is participating in a National Wildlife Certificate program (you show that your land supports wildlife).

As you can see, we have been busy, but loving every minute of it.

## **A New Zealand Family**

*Jackie Haynes (see Dir.) wrote:*

You must have been wondering how we have been faring since your visit to New Zealand. Home-schooling as a whole does seem to still in be in a very precarious position. Even in Auckland, I feel from reading between the lines that the situation with regard to home-schoolers vs. the “authorities” is very uncertain. But our almost eighteen months of home learning has been really tremendous. The boys are beginning to blossom, in self-confidence and reliance.

I thought that you might be interested in one of their escapades. They have been trying to save up some money for a trip to Auckland and Waiheke Island (in the Hauraki Gulf). We have two and a half walnut trees on our property. The boys gathered up the walnuts and dried them and took them round to the local fruit shops and orchardists who, in the main, bought them. They then discovered two more walnut trees at the back of a garage in town. The boys have cleaned up these trees too and made about \$50 NZ. One day I was short of housekeeping money and didn't have enough to buy a sack of potatoes, so I told the boys that we'd have rice instead. Everybody said that they didn't mind and I forgot the incident, until Russell burst into the kitchen later in the day with a smile a mile wide on his face. He had gone round to a local market gardener and traded \$3.50 worth of walnuts for a sack of



potatoes. (Russell is 11). But that wasn't the end—oh, dear me no. When the boys ran out of walnuts to sell, Russell went back to the bloke he had traded with and bought the same walnuts back for the price he had been given, took them to *another* market gardener and sold them for 50% more. So there's 11-year-old enterprise for you! I think that there goes one home-schooler who will never be a charge on the state.

Autumn is a good time of year for raking leaves and Roy and Russell have made themselves useful around town where there are sections with lots of trees. We think that they are creating quite a nice philosophy for themselves regarding money. If they need some for a project, then they set about earning some. If they don't need any, then they are not bothered.

John, when you came to New Zealand and we had that chat, I remember only too clearly what you said to me when I asked you how you saw the boys' education going in the future. You looked a bit strangely at me and said, "What do they like doing?" and I said, "They like to read," to which you replied, "Then let them read." I must admit that I went away grumbling to myself and thinking, "How on earth does he think we can do that and not have the education board on our backs?" Almost a year later we have found the answer. I don't know if it is the one everyone would be brave enough to carry out, but we have. We have done, in fact, what you suggested—let them read, along with anything else they wish to do, and my goodness, what a wonderful result. When the children want to read, they read; when they want to do math, they do math, etc., etc., and it is quite amazing what a balanced program they have built up not only for themselves, but BY THEMSELVES.

I have had many times when I have woken up in the middle of the night, or in fact not even gone to sleep, and been seized by a very real and sheer panic about what we are doing. After two or three months of this, I pulled myself together and gave myself a talking to, and if it occurs now, as it does, very occasionally, then I get up instead of lying in bed, make a hot drink of Complan, read for a bit (preferably a *GWS* to give me courage and support), then back to bed.

We have come across *Mathematics: A Human Endeavor* (see *GWS* #7). Roy is using it and enjoying every minute of it. Have you ever heard a student unable to stop talking about this math book? That's Roy. There have been some days when Roy has done math *all* day simply because he has found it absorbing.

Roy, our eldest son, is a *very* shy but hard-thinking, hard-working boy. He took off from school at 15 because he couldn't stand it any more (and my goodness, we only wish he'd never gone at all). He is doing part-time correspondence—math and science—and the rest of the time he spends in reading and writing to his very long pen-friend list. He has friends right around the world, from a boy in the boonies in Saudi Arabia, to friends in Western countries, to a boy in Zambia whose father was formerly Zambia's representative to the United Nations.

We have been lucky enough to come across a potter who is willing to show the boys “the ropes” as far as pottery goes and without cost.

Roy wrote to the Sea World Park at San Diego for some thoughts and information on the marine life they have there, and he received a great swag of stuff back. He and his brothers are very thrilled and spend many happy hours playing “Islands to Icebergs,” a game which also teaches them about mammals, invertebrates, etc. In fact, wherever the boys have written, the doors have opened wide. I don't think that they have ever been turned down over anything. If only everyone realized that most things are there for the asking.

Roy was invited to audition for a *school children's* TV quiz show. He got through the audition and his round of the quiz has now been recorded. It was a singularly hard round and he didn't get through, BUT the fact that Roy was a home-schooler utterly fascinated the quiz-master. Every time there was a break in the questions he was after Roy asking him about home-schooling, so goodness knows what will end up on TV!

## **And Another**

*From David Campbell-Calder, Moehau Community, Sandy Bay, R.D. , Coromandel, New Zealand:*

I am 36 and so far I have been learner, teacher, “headmaster,” educational broadcaster, guitar teacher, step-parent and now parent of Oliver, 2, the unschooling of whose life occupies the forefront of my attention much of the day. My M.A. in French literature and my Diploma of Teaching avail me nothing in the stormy learning process that is parenting!

We live on a community farm by the sea in Aotearoa, about ten families, nine resident kids, others who regularly visit. The farm is sufficiently far

from the nearest school for children to be enrolled in the State Correspondence School. Preschoolers get darn good bundles of stuff in the mail for parents to try and satiate their learning wanderlust. At first grade, the materials subtly alter; the hidden curriculum and must-do start to bind the parent.

Parents of school-age kids currently “pool” at a neighboring farmhouse, alternating the supervisor role. This seems to be working rather well, and keeps our community in daily touch with the Port Charles area. The Port Charles community unanimously rejected proposed busing principally on the grounds of the condition of the road on the spine of the Meohau range, prone to flood damage at any time. Parents are used to and like the (compulsory and free) subsidized correspondence learning, which is a kind of legal teach-your own scheme of many years standing.

Our farm has houses, a pottery and craft area, a recording studio, and envisions further buildings that have the potential to provide for a child a rich learning environment that has absolutely nothing to do with schooling, just learning. We really have the opportunity to invent a non-school for them here and keep it free of all but the useful resources of state education (we’ll keep the picture books, thanks). Then what we’ll need is a Holt Associates publication which brings together all the math, reading, etc, “teaching hints” from *GWS* and elsewhere in one handy paperback. The first room of the complex to go up will be a romping room/gym.

## **The Importance Of Family**

By Wendell Berry, *New Age*, 3/82:

It was only after family life and family work became (allegedly) unnecessary that we began to think of them as “ideal.”

I do think that the ideal is more difficult now than it was. Most people now do seem to think that family life and family work are unnecessary, and this thought has been institutionalized in our economy and in our public values. How can we preserve family life—if by that we mean, as I think we must, home life—when our attention is so forcibly drawn away from home?

I am not nearly so much concerned about (public education’s) quality as I am about its length. My impression is that the chief, if unadmitted, purpose of the school system is to keep children away from home as much as possible.

Parents want their children kept out of their hair; education is merely a byproduct, not overly prized. In many places, thanks to school consolidation, two hours or more of travel time have been added to the school day. For my own children the regular school day from the first grade—counting from the time they went to catch the bus until they came home—was nine hours. An extra-curricular activity would lengthen the day to eleven hours or more. This is not education, but a form of incarceration. Why should anyone be surprised if, under these circumstances, children should become “disruptive” or even “ineducable”?

If public education is to have any meaning or value at all, then public education must be supplemented by home education. I know this from my own experience as a college teacher. What can you teach a student whose entire education has been public, whose daily family life for twenty years has consisted of four or five hours of TV, who has never read a book for pleasure or even seen a book to read; whose only work has been school-work, who has never learned to perform any essential task? Not much, so far as I could tell.

We can see clearly enough at least a couple of solutions.

We can get rid of the television set. As soon as we see that the TV cord is a vacuum line, pumping life and meaning out of the household, we can unplug it. And we can try to make our homes centers of attention and interest. Getting rid of the TV, we understand, is not just a practical act, but also a symbolic one; we thus turn our backs on the invitation to consume; we shut out the racket of consumption. The ensuing silence is an invitation to our homes, to our own places and lives, to come into being. And we begin to recognize a truth disguised or denied by TV and all that it speaks and stands for: no life and no place is destitute; all have possibilities of productivity and pleasure, rest and work, solitude and conviviality that belong particularly to themselves. These possibilities exist everywhere, in the country or in the city, it makes no difference. All that is necessary is the time and the inner quietness to look for them, the sense to recognize them, and the grace to welcome them. They are now most often lived out in home gardens and kitchens, libraries, and workrooms. But they are beginning to be worked out, too, in little parks, in vacant lots, in neighborhood streets. Where we live is also a place where our interest and our effort can be.

## **On the Road**

*From Rachael Solem (NV), in Florida:*

I keep remembering that when I first started taking pictures, a photographer friend (who taught me how to process film in exchange for my babysitting her infant) told me that one can always see more to photograph when one is travelling; the trick is to keep one's eyes like traveller's eyes even at home. Well, we have travellers' eyes, ears, and minds—empty but intricate vessels into which every breath is a new and fresh experience.

In being absent from her good old buddies, Briana (5) has taken to writing letters, both pictorial and verbose. She reads from memory all kinds of books and picks out words on signs everywhere. She wants to know the meaning of all the numbers, too—55 mph, 1.09/gal, 69¢/pack, 1525 NE 142nd St—and so we talk about speed, money, maps, distance, time, temperature, decimals. What she's ready for, she pursues, the rest is exercise for me and Fisher. She asked recently, "What is a chemical?" and we both were at a loss for a clear explanation. Lots of thinking to do. Then there was the biggie: Where do people come from—where DID they come from (i.e., where did the first mother come from?) Thank goodness for stories. Soon after, we found ourselves in the Miami Planetarium which offers a lovely explanation in its show "Child of the Universe." The two stories were not too conflicting, fortunately.

So much for the knowledge of "things," which comes sooner or later. The important stuff now is learning how to live in the world. Just now I am at yet another campground where Briana is playing with some fairly restricted kids. Parents spend much time and energy with reprimands, warnings, threats of physical abuse, etc. Briana and John-Eli (2) watch silently as kids who are doing just what she's doing (climbing on a fence, swimming into deep water, running on pavement, shouting with glee, using scissors) are yelled at—often ineffectively, but it's ugly to listen to—or hauled off physically. Worse, I think, is when they are rewarded for "good" behavior with sweets. Of course, Briana tries to exact such promises of sweets from us and doesn't succeed, but neither is she abused by us and I think she appreciates the difference in approach.

Then I hear from the old couples, "Your children are so well-behaved/bright/friendly/sure of themselves," and I want to say, "That's because I'm well-behaved," but I think it would be misunderstood. What I

mean is that I occasionally have to stop myself from issuing unreasonable demands, and occasionally I don't stop myself. When the latter happens, I see the effect. Both kids react with equally unreasonable demands, or demands unreasonably phrased. I know when I've been in a lousy frame of mind because Briana is treating me with the same arrogance I've used with her. Instant lesson. One night I suggested we both be silent for five minutes while Fisher timed it. After the reflective silence on both our parts, we all had a lovely evening.

The only reason Fisher and I can see for sending the kids to school is to have time to ourselves. This is a real problem now, without babysitters or playgroups. The light I see at the end of the tunnel is finding people (we already know many) who have special things to teach the kids and who would spend half-days or more with them. That or a governess, as Patricia Joudry had.

The kids (all kids) need gentle reminders that they need to be considerate of other people and property. That's really about all. In this way, John-Eli—after a few vague suggestions—decided to use the potty about a week ago. He has had two or three accidents (as with any new skill) but knows what he's about. All this with no bribery or tears. He knows he has to wear clothes when he wanders into the wider world, not for his shame, but because he knows people talk about his nakedness with bad feelings sometimes. He sees bed as a warm and comfortable place to sleep, not a desolate prison, removed from company. So where are the terrible twos? No sign of them so far—except when Briana tries to overmother him.

Thanks so much for having *The Bear's Toothache* on your list. That was the first book Briana ever read from memory, the first book John-Eli mentioned by name: "Ooowwoo." We have these things on tape, too: Briana reads the book (one version has me reading it) and John-Eli supplies the sound effects. John-Eli does not distinguish between up and down (it's all "up"), in or out ("out"), off or on ("on"), and neither does Briana distinguish some letters and numbers: forward and backward versions occur willy-nilly—less now with letters, but still with numbers. She says it doesn't matter; when it does, she'll do it right, I guess.

Briana first became interested in maps on the boat almost a year ago (*GWS* #23). The boat charts were great because of all the landmarks she could see. But road maps, which are what we use most now, are not as easy to follow.

Bodies of water and winding roads (around mountains) are the only real landmarks she can connect with reality. Yesterday we went to the MetroZoo in Miami—a really lovely place. Briana took charge of the map, with such authority. It was a pictorial map with letters and numbers indicating points described in a key. She picked that up immediately and began asking me, by pointing to the name of the animal—not the number—what we were going to see next. It was all just the right size for her; she could see our progress along the path without losing track due to vast distances. In addition, each animal was described on a sign near its home. There were picture symbols for its habitat, diet, time of activity, and a letter indicating its condition in the wild: Common, Rare, Threatened, or Endangered. The map had more information on all these things too. There was an enormous amount to talk about. We were there for almost seven hours.

Fisher had been working and missed being with us, but Briana brought out her map that night after dinner and took him on a tour of the whole place—completely accurately. No detail was out of place—where John-Eli played with the goat, where we had lunch near the parrots, where the monorail is being built and crosses the road into an open field. If it had been a test, I would have given her an A+.

Lots of ideas come to my mind on this. She's drawn some maps, but none too close to reality. Perhaps it might interest her more now to make a map of our motorhome, present campground, or whatever. I also found a puzzle map with the USA on one side, the world on the other. She loves puzzles. It's time to put up maps of our home town when we get back—the ones from the Boston Redevelopment Authority that show every house. And a globe. She goes wild for the huge ones she's seen in the science museums.

Another goodie was visiting Vizcaya, a wildly decadent mansion built around the turn of the century. Briana and John-El (actually all of us, eventually) spent some time in a maze of hedges. Now, it's one thing to do a maze on paper, which Briana is good at, and another to find your way through a maze of waist-high hedges—for Briana it was eye-level hedges, and for John-Eli, well, he was the proverbial rat in the maze. Briana found her way, though, to the center and out again.

John-Eli just came to tell me about a mud-dauber nest he found—beautifully hung from the branch of a small tree—he's been watching it for at least fifteen minutes. Briana is swimming longer and longer stretches around

the pool. I am struck with how far I have come from my days as a Hollow Reed School mother. There, I still thought Briana needed school for some things. Now I find we have to undo some of the ideas of discipline, peer group pressure, and schedule for the convenience of the school which even that small, caring, “alternative” school gave her.

## J.P.’S World

*From Kathy Mingl (IL):*

J.P. (3) and I have a good technique for handling situations like Susan Richman’s “Knife Story” (*GWS* # 25). If a relative or a little old lady at a garage sale comes down on my son, I just tell J.P. to please *not* do that right now because it’s upsetting the person, and it’s not nice to upset people. I’ve never tried to give J.P. any illusions about adults being any different from children, so when I point out, perfectly openly, that they’re nervous types (like mommies), or tired, or don’t know as much about some gadget as *he* does, he mostly looks at them with sympathetic interest, which is *devastating* to the inflated adult ego. One time a visiting relative, who is a dear, loving person but a trifle, um, overwhelming at times, unexpectedly ordered J.P. off a chair because she thought he’d fall. J.P. was surprised and offended, but I explained to him, very clearly, that even though Auntie *looks* like a grandma-lady, grandmas are mommies, too, and all mommies tend to be nervous about little children hurting themselves even if they’re not their *own* children (The baby talk is for the benefit of the adult—just to make sure they get the message. J.P. and I have discussed the aberrations of mommies before—he thinks they’re silly, but cute). I told him that when he jumps on his chair like that, it makes Auntie see scary pictures of little kids falling and getting hurt, and it makes her feel bad. I said that maybe some other little boy she loved had hurt himself like that, or maybe *she* did when she was little and *her* mommy was upset, and that’s what she’s looking at. J.P. thought that was all very interesting and got down off the chair, assuring her in a very kindly way, that *he* doesn’t fall off chairs, and Auntie-seemed to feel understood—though a little taken aback—rather than hurt.

We try to always acknowledge J.P.’s communications, and we try not to evaluate for him or invalidate what he tells us. He’s gotten interested in television commercials lately, and all those ads have been whipping him into



a state of wanting everything he sees. I'd been arguing with him and telling him "No, you can't have that, we don't have the money, and anyway, all that stuff is no good," and he was just getting crazier and crazier. Suddenly I took another look at what he was saying—his exact words were "Mommy, I want to buy a \_\_\_\_\_." I had never gotten and acknowledged his original communication, and all my arguments were a non-sequitur and what's more, I was taking something away from him by spoiling his game. *Now* I answer him, "OK, I *hear* you—if you want that thing, you pull in the money for it and you buy it." Now he's perfectly happy, telling me all the things he wants, and I just say "OK, fine, son," and we're in perfect accord—no need to argue at all (except when he wants candy—we still argue about that). He's been very understanding about my financial inadequacies, and he says he's going to buy me everything I want, too—that will be nice.

I never omit the technical details of whatever I'm showing J.P., even though they're way over his head. When he wants me to play card games with him, I tell him all the rules I know, and then we bend them. I just assume that he knows what he's doing at least as well as I do, which isn't too far wrong, with cards—the only games I know are War and Fish. I make him hold his end of the game up (by threatening to quit if he doesn't), and I keep up the speed of the game by telling him which card to play, and showing him what it looks like. Pretty soon he's playing his hand practically by himself, even though he doesn't "know his numbers" yet. I don't make any fuss about that—after all, he's just doing what you're *supposed* to in the game—and of course, I don't criticize him (beyond telling him that if he's going to sit on the cards, I won't play). What does delight him no end is if I complain when I lose and gloat when I win (which I manage to do in fairly equal proportion)—"Ha-ha, you didn't beat me this time!" Actually, the best compliment you can give a kid—or anyone, I guess—is that they've somehow created a real effect on you, and are a force to be reckoned with. J.P. chortles with evil glee when I call him a "dratted kid." Now *that's* real praise.

As children, we're mostly taught to hold in our hostilities and clam up when we have a problem. but I don't want to do that to *my* son. I want J.P. to know when (and-how) he's made me mad, and that I still love him every bit as much as before, and also to know that it's O.K. for *him* to be angry with *me*. I lose my temper rather a lot, but I do try not to lose my sense of humor.

The mother from New England who wrote in *GWS* #24 about "Hiding

From School” and mentioned trying to do things with her kids and having the 18-month-old toddler climbing all over the project has my absolute sympathy—J.P. was just that kind of character. (He’s calmed down a bit now, but I still don’t like to start some things until he’s safely in bed). I found that the only way to deal with him was to *show* him how to do everything, and help him do it right. (At the moment, J.P. is in the bathroom, happily washing his socks in the sink. He was dipping his sock in the cat’s water dish, because, as he said, he *likes* dipping his socks in water, so I sent him to the bathroom to do the thing properly, soap and all. J.P. *loves* soap. Strange kid.)

The thing is, if this 18-month-old is as much like J.P. as he sounds, his main concern in life is learning how things work and how to do things properly—now, immediately, and this very second. J.P. is easy enough to handle if you just take his passions seriously and that means show him how to do everything you’re doing, and make sure he finishes. You can’t *ever* treat him as though he’s too little to do something—in fact, you have to make *sure* he gets results (even if you have to almost do the thing for him at first) and admire the outcome. Sure, it’s exhausting, but at least he’s happy and busy, and in the meantime you can do something yourself. Once kids get to be 3 or 4 the system starts to pay off, because they don’t need so much supervision, and they’ve learned to trust your directions (that’s why you insist they finish things. They’ll lose faith in you and themselves both if they don’t get the results they wanted.) And of course, as a sort of by-product of maintaining (relative) peace and sanity, you get a very capable kid.

## On Learning Records

*From Louise Melson in N. C.:*

In *GWS* #23, the item about keeping learning records by Karen Cox made me remember a morning not long ago with my grandchildren. Their activities from 8 AM to 11 AM, none of which were suggested by any adult, could have fitted under the four headings.

They listened to a story record, listened to me read aloud, played on swings, took a walk. Susanna (7) read to us from a book about dinosaurs and showed us how she is teaching herself to play the piano. Both children built things with Lego blocks which require some math certainly. They also did some drawing. So that morning included some Reading, Logical Thinking,

Knowledge of the Physical World, and Musical Thought. Also I can add another heading which school administrators might approve—Physical Education.

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*And from Debbie Jones (ID):*

One thing that has helped me a lot is the suggestion in *GWS* #23 about keeping track of things in those non-traditional categories. I love it because it gives me a lot of confidence in defending our way of doing things to family friends and other home-schoolers. People are always calling me up to find out more about our home school. They ask, “What do you do?” I felt awful about saying “Nothing,” but now I don’t say “Nothing.” We do tons of things, as shown by my records. It is really great.

## **Nothing to Do**

*From an article by Debra Stewart in the North West Unschoolers Project, reprinted in The H.O.U.S.E Door, 5/82:*

Whenever my children say that there’s nothing to do, I try to restrain the feeling that I am responsible for entertaining them every minute. My upbringing conditioned me to think that to be a good mother, I should keep my children busy and happy all the time. But now I say to my child, “Why don’t you sit right there in that chair until you think of something you would like to do?” You know, they usually sit for about 5 minutes. I try to boost the hugs and conversation that I have with that child, realizing that his “nothing to do” may be a “pay attention to me.” But mainly, I try to have faith in him. To think of him as a person with ups and downs in energy and mood. To think that soon he will be thoroughly involved with some vital project, and that it is good to reevaluate from time to time. In other words, feel discontent, and sit and do nothing.

I’ve come to think of it as absorption time. My children have time out when they’re fed up. So I respect their cycles. We don’t expect ourselves to be at peak efficiency, but it’s funny how many of us are expecting it of our children. You’ll find that as your family becomes closer, the cycles of all its members will fall into a rhythm and will

complement each other. When I'm down, my husband is often up, for example. It's a new experience for many of us, to be together so much. Sometimes frustrating, but more often wondrous.

## Children's Disputes

*Arthur Harvey (NH) wrote in Peacework, 1/82:*

With our own children (Emily, 5 and Max, 2), we try to follow the Montessori concept of letting them work out their own disputes, except to send them outdoors or separate them if it becomes too noisy. If kids argue about a toy, it seems pointless to impose a "just" settlement on them. It might be helpful to take the toy to the dump and make a corresponding simplification in our own lives. I try to limit my comments to the general: "Your friends won't like you so much if you don't let them play with your things."

Gun-play should be stoutly opposed. It is one good reason to ban TV and school from our lives, and for being choosy about playmates. I insist that half of my child's time with another child must be at home, where I can see what is going on.

Nonviolence, as understood in the pacifist movement, is too vague and contradictory to mean much to young children. On the other hand, they can be sensitive to ethical laws which escape us.

For example, I recall some years ago a group of pacifist and anti-nuke people enacting a drama about someone they didn't like. When Emily, then 14-months-old, heard our sarcastic laughter, she cried for 45 minutes, longer than ever before in her life, and she was upset for several days afterward. Perhaps this was her first strong taste of violence.

This subject forces one to ask, "What is violence?" Most pacifist definitions boil down to this: anything which horrifies us is violent. Some are a bit more precise and say that the use of force or coercion is violence. But when a two-year-old pushes or hits someone, it seems farfetched to call that violence.

I would say we commit violence when we try to injure or humiliate

someone by means we would think unjust if used against us. Let us see the motive and the circumstance, not just the simple act. Therefore, most infant hitting, much fist-fighting, and even some cases of killing an aggressor in genuine self-defense should not be called violent.

## Unwanted Help

*From Virginia Ferris, 434 B Union St., San Francisco CA 94183:*

I just re-read *The Continuum Concept*. I was impressed with the idea of giving the child help when he asks for it but not otherwise offering. I've practiced this when academic-type learning was involved but was surprised to notice how often I offer unsolicited help to my 5-year-old—tying shoes, opening doors, putting on jackets—and then resent being asked to do these same things. Now I'm trying to save my energy so I'll have it when it's needed and appreciated. It seems like such a simple turn-around (though I frequently have to remind myself not to offer) but it's making a difference in our household.

## On Security

*Dr. Christine Gajzago (GWS #26, "From Australia") wrote:*

When we were more isolated (Ami would have been about 5), Ami regularly asked for friends during the day when they were at kindergarten or school. During this time, was pre-occupied with a number of domestic and social commitments and was feeling tired and run-down. Not much company! Eventually we managed to arrange regular contacts with a variety of differently aged home-educated children, and we have had a lot of exciting outings and experiences either alone or together with other families.

Then, when we were stricken with illness for a long time on and off (one or both children were contagious), we spent a long time together alone. One day she said, "Mum, have you noticed that I haven't been asking for my friends lately?" I said, "Yes." And then she added, "And I don't really want to see them that much anymore."

Just now I have been reading Joseph Pearce's book *Magical Child*, and he talks about peer contact in a way which I can only now understand, having

had the above experience with Ami. She was feeling secure (“bonded”) and obviously adequately stimulated, and that was enough for just then in her life. Since then, she only asks for someone (not necessarily her age) about once, maybe twice a week.

Pablo (2) is enjoying life so much and is so continually contented and curious and delightful and funny, that sometimes I find myself gasping. He is still intensely interested in music, actively exploring rhythms in a very systematic way, sometimes singing in accompaniment to his beats, sounding somewhat like his forebears must have done thousands of years ago! His love of the moment is performing music (on any instrument) and very often he finds anything that remotely looks like a microphone and sings into it like a miniature Pavarotti!

## **At Home in Ithaca**

*Nancy Wallace (119 Irving Pl, Ithaca NY 14850) writes:*

We are right across the street from a park, and when Bob put up a tree swing, it attracted children like flies, so Vita and Ishmael have made lots of friends, and they all seem to be really nice. But now that we have what we wanted—friends for the kids—I sometimes wonder if it is really desirable. Vita, for example, has become a potential consumer for the first time in her life. She often says, “Mommy, you should see what Carey has. I want one, too.” And after playing hard all during Easter vacation, she came up to me after the kids had gone back to school and said, “I’m bored.” It was the first time I’d ever heard her say that, and it took her three or four days to get back to being her old self again.

Now, with school back in session, we really seem to have the best of both worlds. Vita has a quiet day to read, play by herself, and play music, and then after 3:00 she can play with other kids. Ishmael, meanwhile, has made friends with a young composer who has introduced him to Schubert Lieder and it is lovely seeing them work and play at the piano together.

Vita started printing when she was about 3 or 4, moved on to cursive, then to a really elaborate squiggly cursive, and then on to typing, by which time she had almost entirely forgotten how to print. When people found out that she could type and was only six, they were universally impressed, but I didn’t dare add that her printing wasn’t worth beans. Meanwhile, her spelling was

atrocious, although she typed stories, letters, and “books” copiously. In desperation I got her a spelling book, the kind with ruled lines to help her print neatly. And print she did! She loved it and would painstakingly print out her spelling words, getting the heights of all her capital and lower case letters perfect. BUT she became so self conscious about spelling that she stopped writing. At first I was upset, but then I decided that the whole thing was funny as could be. So much for my interference! Now we are back to the copious writing, the misspelling, and the printing. What will it be next?

## Pick and Choose

*From Christine May (NY):*

Reading *GWS* is the yoga and aerobics of my mind. What a workout! My mind becomes rich and fertile while reading *GWS*. It takes me three times as long to read it than it normally should take because I read for a few minutes and then think about how what I just read applies to my life and family and how I can act on it. Then my brain nags me to put my thoughts on paper so it can be empty and available for more thoughts!

There are so many good suggestions in *GWS* written by many lovely people—all of whom I’d like to meet. I sometimes feel overwhelmed because I would like to follow through on all of them. But that would make me a zombie with no time left for the children! And then again, some of the ideas overlap simply because at the basis of all of them is the following point: we must allow them to grow and learn what they want, when they want, as they want, when the interest is there.

There is no need to do all of the good suggestions. We must take what is most applicable to and effective in our situation and always, always, just BE available to assist our children as they request. How I would love to do all of it—enroll my children in classes of their interest, take them here and there to experience museums, glass factories, etc., etc., buy them volumes of interesting books, record all of their activities on paper, etc., etc., ETC.! But alas, I’d be burned out in two, maybe three days.

The best thing for me to do is to let them reveal to me what they want me to help them with and then draw on one or two of those many great suggestions which would best facilitate my helping them. How I would have loved to have pursued my education in that way!

## **Repetitive Reading**

*Howard Richman (PA) wrote:*

As both a home-schooler and a reading teacher I can help give parents some ammunition for use in arguments with administrators.

Susan Price (*GWS* #24) and other home-schoolers who have been following up on their children's desires to have stories read to them again and again have been teaching their kids to read through the method of repetitive reading. S. Jay Samuels, the foremost reading psychologist of our day, wrote an article in *The Reading Teacher* (1/79) in which he advocate that repetitive reading be included in reading programs in the schools. He did some experimenting with second graders and found that when they repeatedly read a story out loud they became faster and more accurate with each succeeding reading. Moreover, their improved rate and accuracy carried over, to a certain extent, to the next story they read.

In my reading classes I've tried a variation of this method and found that when seventh grade students repeatedly listen to a story or watch the words while they listen to a story, their reading rates improve.

In his article Samuels noted that textbooks used for teaching reading in America's past such as the seventeenth century hornbooks and the New England Primer used prayers and verses which the children already knew for teaching reading. On the other hand in our schools today children having difficulty with reading are moved so rapidly through the reading textbooks that they never master a single page. (See "Choral Reading," *GWS* #3.)

## **Real Book As Primer**

*From Sharon Hillestad (MN):*

Last week, my first-grader found *The Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich* on the library shelves. He knew it was about World War II because of the swastika. (His sister Holly has had a big interest in that war—she read *Anne Frank* and many other stories about that era. She talks about it so my boys learn too.) Anyway, he insisted on checking out that huge book and he goes through it, finding words he can figure out. It's hilarious to see him carry it around. It's become his primer.



## Started a Newspaper

A letter in *The Mother Earth News*, July '82:

I read your article about writing a neighborhood newspaper (in “Mother’s Children,” Issue 21), and it sounded like so much fun, I had to try it. Also, I wanted to be working on something important, and when you’re eight years old, that’s hard to do. Now, my neighbors love my *Washington Ave.*

*Reporter*, and we’re all getting to know each better.

I love the newspaper business. (I hate writing it all up by hand, though. I have GOT to learn to type.) There are 75 homes now in my paper’s circulation. I have two people helping. Mom writes a recipe column, and my brother David does a cartoon and an “unusual facts” feature. I discovered the more people who help, the less I have to do!

I’m glad *The Mother Earth News* gave me the idea for this wonderful business. A reporter from the *Daily News* interviewed me about it (and let me interview her for my paper), and I’ve gotten lots of nice letters of encouragement. even one from a senator, and I can’t vote yet! —Misty Wegner, Whittier CA.

## Word Games

*From Ruth McCutchen:*

My daughter Abigail (7), who is fascinated with words right now, likes to play a game we first saw in the movie *A Christmas Carol*. We take turns, starting with A and going through the entire alphabet, saying, “The minister’s cat is a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ cat,” inserting a different adjective each time. It’s supposed to be done in rhythm and without too much break in between, so some of the “words” she comes up with have dubious meaning. It’s fun to do in the car and in places where one must wait for whatever reason.

Other good “waiting games” are: Twenty Questions, pick a number between 1 and any thing and see who can guess the closest, a humming version of Name That Tune, and Hangman. I’m always amazed at people who bring children to restaurants, etc., and can’t think of anything better to do than fuss at them for being restless. Then of course there are always lots of things that can be done on the back of a paper placemat.

## French Books & Songs

*From Maggie Edmondson (ME):*

I was thrilled to find children's books in French at our local library. Both Joe (then 2½) and Anna (then 1½) enjoyed being read to in French. They have never yet asked for a translation and I have fought off the temptation to do it. One of the first books we borrowed was a selection of French songs, and in just three weeks, they were singing along with them, and because of its excellent illustrations and the actions that go along with the songs, they picked up the meaning of a lot of the words.

We do a lot of singing at home and in the car, and I find it amazing how many songs they have memorized. They now know the words and tunes of all of the French songs and hundreds of English ones. The musical qualities have also improved tremendously—sometimes they stay in tune for a whole line—at least they always go in the right direction at the right time.

## Useful Library Services

Wisconsin has an excellent “mailbox” library system. We send a postage-paid card to the central library in our county asking for any books we want. They get these books from libraries all over the state and send them to us with *all* postage paid. We've gotten many excellent books this way, a good portion of them being new and unusual. We simply mail them back to the central library when we're finished and before the due date. In the last four years since we've left the city and have no TV, we've done more reading than ever before!—Marie Baker (WI).

(DR: In some states, this service is offered through the State Library in the capital city.)

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I want to mention the InterLibrary Loan Service. You ask your local public library for whatever book you desire and, presto, in one week to two months, I have received books, photocopies of articles, etc., from all over the United States. This used to be free—now I am charged for postage. I take notes or photocopy what I need.—Bob Post (IN).

## In Praise Of Chess

*Norm Lee (NY) writes:*

We wrote an illustrated chess instruction manual for kindergarteners when Henry was 6, Russell 5. I don't know where it is now. They weren't so very good at it: I beat them one out of three regularly! (By junior high school I beat them routinely. I hadn't improved: they deteriorated insightwise. Alas.)

To us, it's the only game. Instead of playing cards or doing crossword puzzles, we read books. Instead of playing tennis or handball, we fell oak trees and cut them up for firewood and otherwise thin and improve the woodlot. Instead of Monopoly, we garden. But Chess! All other games are but cheap substitutes.

It's been around since the time of Buddha. Imagine a game where each piece has its own individual personality and power! A world of 64 squares—64 different view of reality! 128, really: one view if black, another if white.

Those who dislike chess have thought it as a game of “figuring things out,” of outsmarting “opponents.” Wrong. It is a game of seeing. Henry and Russell would squeal when, with a blink, they'd see the reality of the relationships among the pieces.

( JH: that was my problem when I tried chess—I was so busy trying to figure out what was happening on the board, I couldn't see it.)

## Glenn Doman Math

*Debbie Khaljani (CA) writes:*

Mariam (16 months) has been gobbling up her math. We are using the dot system from *Teach Your Baby Math* by Glenn Doman and she loves it. She begs us to show her the “bers,” as she calls them. We love this system. It takes so little time and if Glenn's suggestions are followed it helps build a positive association with math. The thing we love the most about it is that the system works *only* if you *don't test*. As Glenn states in the book, the child will show you soon enough that they are absorbing the information. It took Mariam five months before she showed us that she really knew her math. It was hard to resist the temptation to test but we're glad we didn't.

We are quickly discovering that life is one of the best teachers. David is

home with Mariam all day and they do everything together. If daddy hammers, Mariam hammers; if he makes bread, she makes bread. There is nothing more insulting to her than to be left out of something that we are doing.

## Math in the Real World

*Cher Bateman (NV) wrote:*

Jeb (7) told me that he met a boy in the toy department while I was shopping, and the boy, who told Jeb he was in the third grade, couldn't understand Jeb not going to school (which is common), so Jeb told the boy that he might go to high school or college. The little boy said, "You'll never graduate! Okay, what's 1000 take away 10?" Jeb thought for awhile and said "990." The little boy said, "There's no such thing!"

Daniel (5) mentioned doing a job for Daddy that he might pay him 2000 pennies for. I asked Jeb how many dollars that would be. He said, "\$20," with no hesitation. Then he asked me how we'd get money for all those pennies; I told him we'd have to go to the bank and get penny rolls. I said, "There's 50 pennies to a roll. How many rolls would \$20 make?" He said immediately "40." I said immediately "You guessed! How many rolls make a dollar?" He said, "2." I said, "How did you get the answer so quick?" He said, "You double it." Then as I was trying to recover some inner balance, he said in a very unthreatening tone, "You better give yourself time to figure it out next time."

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*Becky Howard (AR) wrote:*

We've become a lot more relaxed in our home education. Sometimes I feel guilty about not being diligent at all with lessons and such, but, I just don't like doing it that way. Neither do the kids. And it doesn't work as well.

The kids amaze me. They learn so much, so well! My youngest, when she was 4, came up to me and said, "Hey, guess what? Three times two is six!" I was too surprised to do anything but gape and say, "That's true!" There had been NO "math teaching" of any kind. I discovered later, listening and watching her one day when it was her turn to give out the Vitamin C tablets to the other two and herself, how this came to her. She took out six tablets,

gave to each, saying, “See? Three kids, two C’s each, six tablets. Three times two is six!” I asked her if she knew that was called “multiplication.” She said, “No, but that’s okay.”

## Computers

*Debbie Jones wrote in the Idaho Family Education Association newsletter:*

Many of the Idaho Home Schoolers have opted to buy home computers of late. We have been home schooling for 3 years now and during this time have only passively considered a computer as a practical educational resource. So why did it suddenly become a priority, available option? I believe it happened for two main reasons; One: the price of home computers has dropped drastically within the last four years until now it has come within the range of most middle income families. Two: enough people finally have enough knowledge and access to computers to begin to write programs. Hundreds of educational programs are now available from early reading and math skills through calculus and other college level subjects. One program available now that especially sparked our interest is LOGO (See “Mindstorms,” *GWS* #24).

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*The Boston Phoenix, 5/11/82:*

With the personal-computer industry booming, the Boston Computer Society has grown apace. Starting in 1977 in the bedroom of a 13-year-old, it mushroomed into a 3500-member organization with ties to the leaders of all the major personal-computer companies.

Jonathan Rotenberg started the BCS when he was a (high school) freshman. Rotenberg wrote to a local industry leader asking why there weren’t any computer clubs in Boston. The man suggested starting one.

In February 1977, the Boston Computer Society’s inaugural meeting was held. Two people showed up—a friend of Rotenberg’s co-founder and somebody who happened to be working late at school. “That’s when I first learned about promotion.”

The turning point came in 1978, when Rotenberg’s proposal to invite

computer stores to a meeting evolved into “Home/Business Computers’ 78,” a major public exhibition at Boston University, with 48 participants. In seven hours some 1000 people streamed through and BCS membership shot from 70 to 225. “That’s when I called myself president.”

Rotenberg designed some stationery, invented a fictitious secretary to affix dictation initials to the bottom of his letters, and practiced his telephone voice. He was 15.

In November 1978, Rotenberg started a newsletter, the “BCS Update,” then a single mimeographed sheet. In a matter of months it had blossomed into a slick, full-color bimonthly with a circulation of 10,000. The BCS organized “user groups” (in which, for example, Atari users or Apple users would meet to discuss common problems) and “special interest groups” (which organized people by what they used their computers for—business, education, etc.) Recently, the BCS has started a series of Saturday morning clinics.

Within the next year and a half, the BCS will go national, Rotenberg says. As for Rotenberg himself, his contacts and reputation in the computer industry will leave him with no shortage of opportunities after he graduates from Brown in two years. “People are wondering which company is going to get me.” But Rotenberg is making no commitments. “The BCS might end up being my life. It’s becoming such a formidable organization.

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*From Kelly Ellenburg (OR):*

Computers are now available for home and small business use for \$400 to \$1,000. with lots of “extras” and software coming on the market all the time. Still, that is a lot of money to pay out, and which one to get? After comparing them all, we came down to three that were in our price range, were dependable companies, and had lots of software for the uses we wanted—we were not interested in “games.” When we further found we could actually sell one of these from our home, thus paying for our unit, and make an income besides, we made up our minds. The selling is a multi-level marketing plan

(such as Amway). Can you imagine having to tell your child at 1 A.M., “you must go to bed now, you can’t do any more math!” Or children up and doing spelling on the computer at 7 A.M., laughing and just having fun with it (and learning). Or helping each other with words and “programming.” It’s all true.

We feel that children, home schooling and home computers go very well together. For any home schooling friends that are interested in the marketing plan or home computers please send SASE.

## **Galvanic Skin Response**

DR: When John was in Iceland, the Knutssons showed him a Galvanic Skin Response device, called a Biofeedback Monitor, that they got from Radio Shack. A GSR meter used to be a very expensive machine, \$100 or more; research psychologists often use one in their experiments to measure the emotional reactions of their subjects, and it is also the basis of “lie detectors.” So John was delighted to find that this little monitor is now available for only \$14.95, cheap enough for many people to get one for their own use, and that it works better than some much more expensive ones he’d seen before.

To operate the monitor, you wrap the cloth with the electrical contacts around your fingers, holding it in place with Velcro. Unlike the expensive meters that have a gauge, this machine produces a tone—the higher the pitch, the more the tension you are experiencing. This suggests questions to investigate—what circumstances make the reading increase? Decrease? How do different people vary in their reactions to the same situation? The gadget can help you practice relaxation techniques, either in general or in connection with specific tasks like playing music or taking schoolwork.

John wrote more ideas on using a GSR meter in *What Do I Do Monday?*, pp. 152–154.

## **Sky Calendar**

*From a mother in Cambridge:*

Here’s a good resource I came upon for children and parents learning to recognize and follow planets and stars, right from their own backyard. I can even do it! What fun!

For \$5 a year, you can receive a “Sky Calendar” for each month—information for each night’s sky observation, plus a monthly evening skies chart—a simple diagram of the sky with explanations. “Knowing the stars” has been something I’ve been meaning to get around to studying for years now. This monthly information that I can just take outside on a clear night, and see it all for myself, has been wonderful.

For information on subscriptions, write: Sky Calendar, Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, E. Lansing MI 488 24.

## **Big Bugs**

*From David Kent (VA):*

In the course of our nature study we acquired a tarantula last December. A graceful and interesting animal (whose bite is never lethal, by the way), she has caused us to read the two or three library books about tarantulas and to acquire copies of the newsletter of the American Tarantula Society. About a month ago, she spun a large webby surface, flipped herself over and molted one night, something an adult does about once a year. Since then her appetite has been voracious.

Last week we found a very large beetle with long jointed antennae and decided to put it in with our tarantula as a treat. You can imagine the thrill Carol got when next morning she found that the beetle had climbed the glass walls of the tarantularium, bit or chewed right through the fiberglass screen on top, and was lurking somewhere in the house! Found, it was popped into a glass jar, and Robert and I went off to the Science Library at the University of Texas here in Austin to find out about it.

All but one of the general beetle books had nothing but written description, but *How To Know The Beetles* had line drawings of several beetles who looked much like the one we had. It was Robert who identified our insect (page 309), a *Plectrodera scalator*, family *Cerambycidae*: the long-horned (how appropriate for Texas!) woodborers, species cottonwood borer, described as “not very abundant but their large size and unusual pattern make them prize specimens in a collection.” This excursion has opened the whole bug world to Robert.

## **Sewing With Grandma**



*More from Ruth McCutchen:*

My daughter Alison (12) wanted a new blouse recently. I've finally had to admit, after years of trying to convince myself otherwise, that sewing isn't one of my strong suits, so Alison went with my mother and bought some material. After waiting a couple of weeks for me to help her, though I did try to help her cut it out and found we would need to piece it in one or more places, she arranged to spend a night with my folks. With my mother's expert help, the blouse was put together overnight. Alison did most of the sewing and also helped with some housework (which she would have done anyway, but it was more important than usual).

Rebeka (10) took her material for a new dress over yesterday. I have an idea that Mother will have an easier time helping her grandchildren learn sewing; she's more relaxed about their learning it than she was with me. Another reason may be my girls' fairly relaxed attitude toward adult type equipment. I showed them how to use record players, tape recorders, typewriters, etc., at an early age (about 3 or 4) and have never had reason to regret it. They've been allowed to use the sewing machine from about age six. My dislike of sewing has never dampened their ardor and with Grandma as their guide, I'm sure they'll find it's never too late!

## **Free Books**

*From Judith Schmidt (MO):*

My husband's job moves us around a lot, so home-schooling is enjoyable as well as practical, and since we are a branch of a Missouri private school, we have few legal hassles with anyone. So far in the past two years we have traveled from Kansas City to Ohio, Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida.

On arriving in Jacksonville, Florida, we met with some home-schooling friends who had access to the county school book deposit. After being shown the materials (books, workbooks) available, we asked about prices and limits and were told that we could have *as much as we wanted, free of charge*. Up to this time we had been purchasing our own books at retail prices which can get expensive. We were able to go to the book deposit and get whole series of books on such subjects as math, science, reading, language, music, typing, business, shorthand, home economics, etc.—just about any type of book that

the school had used, from 1st grade to high school.

Seeing as we live in a travel trailer (shoebox!) we were unable to carry these books around with us, so we shipped them via motor freight back to our main school. This way the other branch could share our resource as well. When we need a certain book, we simply call our “librarian,” and for shipping we have whatever books we need for however long. Our girls really enjoy the “new” books and are given free, unlimited access to whatever we have with us.

It may be possible for others to do this by calling their school and asking where the local book deposit for discarded or discontinued textbooks is. In some areas the books are used until there is little or no value left, and in other areas, they change series after a few years as a matter of habit. I did not have to give a reason for wanting the books, or answer to anyone about how many we took (48 boxes of about 20 books per box). The bigger the school system, the less curious anyone will be.

You can also acquire used school desks and furniture in like manner or at very reasonable prices just by asking your local school board.

## **The First Months**

*From Jill Bastian (MI):*

*December 18:* We’ve talked to the local Assistant Superintendent in charge of curriculum. He said that we have the right to educate our own child as we are certified teachers. We must make sure she is learning what public-schoolers in her grade are learning.

I’m feeling better about the social climate of home-schooling for an only child. Heather (6) really doesn’t get to socialize much at school and many times that 15-minute recess at noon isn’t very productive for her—a lot of negative play situations.

My daughter is positive about having us “teach” her (act as resources), even though we don’t always get along, mostly when we’re too bossy. She’s engaged in all sorts of learning experiences when she’s home and many mornings has to interrupt her learning to go to school.

*Jan. 31:* I’ve just finished an intensive 3½-week course in home schooling: reading all 24 newsletters!

I have attended Board of Education meetings for five years; and during the

past two years, I have worked in Heather's classroom one morning each week. All this effort brought about little improvement in the educational climate for the students. So, after reading *Teach Your Own*, I concluded that home-schooling couldn't be any harder and certainly seemed to be more productive.

The packet of back issues arrived Jan. 5th. By the end of dinner on Jan. 7th, we had all decided we wanted to try home-schooling immediately. I wrote a letter the next day requesting permission to homeschool Heather; we sent it to the assistant superintendent in charge of instruction, a unique educator and friend that we've known for five years. Within a week, we had a positive reply, with a curriculum guide enclosed. In that week, my husband and I registered with the county as certified teachers. I'm in the process of getting my certificate reinstated, after a 7-year lapse in employment.

I do not feel any more qualified to teach my child because I am a teacher with a master's degree than any other parent. It's amazing how many of my friends would never consider doing what we're doing because they feel "unqualified." The only reason I feel I can "teach" my child now is because of what happened while living with her for the last 6½ years. For better or worse, we've been learning right along with her.

Now, three weeks after our decision to begin home-schooling, we've been at it for one week and have obtained permission to be involved in some "school" activities. We are telling only a few friends of our decision.

I'm ecstatic after our first week of home-schooling. I'm adjusting quickly to no longer having 5 hours each day by myself (now I just need to learn how to use my time most wisely to get all my work done). My husband and I are both loners and like to have some time each day to ourselves, as well as some time together as a couple. Home-schooling may satisfy my need to "teach." I really like the flexibility of working at home. It will also allow me to spend a lot of time in our garden, something which I really enjoy doing. But, most of all, I like the positive changes that I see in Heather after only one week. Her attitude, manners, and motivation have all improved noticeably.

Already, she has a chart listing six books that she can read by herself, a feat accomplished in one week just by encouraging her to use skills that she had already mastered but was reluctant to try to use. In math, she has completed an addition grid (*GWS* #17) and partially completed a multiplication grid. As for music (which is no longer offered at school),

Heather has been learning to play my violin as well as a child's 1½ scale color-coded pipe. She also makes up songs and dances to go along with her main interest—imaginative play.

*Instead Of Education* was a real eye-opener. Only since graduation from college in 1968 have I really been learning what I wanted and how I wanted. Implementing my own style of teaching in the classroom, doing graduate work in reading, taking care of a household, designing and supervising construction of an energy-efficient house, producing our own food supply in an organic garden, arranging a study trip to France with my husband, caring for a child, changing our diet to a more natural one, and running a campaign to get a bike path system for our township, have all been accomplished as a result of lots of research—reading books or consulting experts in each area. Until now, I haven't really trusted or given much credit to my own very creative mind. My husband and I were both raised to rely on the advice of others.

A neat comment: when I was first a parent, and having difficulty with well-meaning friends and relatives giving advice on child care, a care-giver at Oakland University told a group of new mothers to respond, "You may be right." and proceed to do as you wished with your child.

*Feb. 24:* This is our fifth week of home-schooling. Heather balks at required activities, but we try to do reading, writing, and math every day, plus keep a journal so we can prove she's learning equivalent things. She would do imaginative play all day if allowed to—sometimes that bothers me, as if she's trying to escape from something. But she's read 20 books in five weeks and continues to be surprised at what she can do.

(JH: In the revised edition of *How Children Learn*, pub. 2/83, I say that children are *never* more seriously engaged in their work of making sense of the world than when they are busy with fantasy and play. Those are their ways of getting *into* the world, not out of it. They are children's chief research tools.)

*Mar. 5:* The honeymoon is over. Heather is reacting negatively to much of our imposed structure to her day. But we're trying to compromise for the time being, as we have to please the local school district. Some days are great, others are lousy, as far as personality clashes go. But things weren't much better before. And I'm struggling to keep a little alone time each day.

I've come to realize that Heather may never learn all the trivia and

assorted facts and concepts I did. But I'm beginning to believe that she may not need to, and what she learns because she wants to or needs to will, indeed, be learned, not just memorized for a test.

*Apr. 2:* The third marking period ended last week in public school. So I composed a 1½-page typed progress report for Heather based on the curriculum we had submitted in January. Heather has read 33 books and mastered 9 of the 10 math skills listed. She's played with a variety of children and had some really neat discussions about all sorts of things with us (her parents).

The Assistant Superintendent accepted the report and mentioned that we might want to have Heather take the Metropolitan Achievement Test in May. It's not required. I think I will be allowed to give it to her at home. I agreed to the test because I want to see how Heather does. We're becoming less structured in our learning and I'm still not sure what sort of arrangement is best for all of us yet.

## **An L.D. Ally**

*From Thomas Armstrong, Latebloomers' Educational Consulting Services, P.O. Box 2647, Berkeley CA 94702:*

What I'm writing about now concerns a new service I've created called Latebloomers. I'm sending along a brochure.

I come out of the whole "learning disabilities" movement. I got my Master's Degree in "L.D." in 1976 and then spent five years in Montreal, and California teaching classes for "learning disabled" kids from grade one to eight. But all along I never believed in learning disabilities, which made my teaching experience frustrating as I could never quite see eye to eye with all the administrators, specialists and others who talked about "L.D." as if it were some kind of germ or basic condition.

My whole Latebloomers stuff is an attempt to speak to people who are buying into the whole "learning disabilities" scam so that they can unlearn the whole mystification process which is rampant in the "learning disabilities movement"

I want to get feedback from people on this whole notion. I am particularly interested in hearing about examples of latebloomers children, children who were labeled "learning disabled" in one context (e.g., school, clinic, medical)

and then in another context (e.g., homeschooling) were able to be themselves and bloom both academically and non-academically. There is so much pressure on kids today to begin reading, writing and doing math by certain critical times (usually around 7) that if they're not then there is trouble around the corner for the child (lots of diagnostic tests, worried parents, teachers, administrators, and taunting peers). Yet what of the kids who surmount these obstacles, or don't have these obstacles in the first place, and read, write, and do math in "their own time" at 9, 10, 12, 15 or beyond?

I would greatly appreciate it if you could pass this information on to your readers and have them pass their stories, anecdotes, feedback, sharing or other interaction to me.

## **Special Ed. Laws**

*Deb Martin of the Illinois group H.O.U.S.E. wrote,*

Within the last three days I have had calls from four parents of handicapped children wanting to pull their children out of school. What I want to know is, where do we stand in relationship to home-schooling the handicapped, as far as the law goes? I would like permission to share any information you write to me in a special handout I will write up.

*Donna wrote back:*

Thanks for your letter. The first thing you and the parents concerned should do is read the state law concerning special education. Most states passed these in the 1970s to qualify for federal money. You should be able to get a copy from the state office handling special education, or at a law library.

The Massachusetts laws on special education are called Chapter 766. It's clear to me from reading them that the state passed the laws to make special education available; to "provide for a flexible and uniform system of special education opportunities for all children requiring special education." Contrary to what some educators—and parents—may assume, the state has no mandate declaring that every child in need of special education must come under their authority.

So there's nothing to stop parents from forming their own private school and enrolling their child in it, or enrolling their child in another private school, whether or not the child is considered "handicapped."

When you read the law, you may find provisions that actually support home education. The Mass. law does mention teaching at home as one of the “programs” a special-needs child is entitled to. There is often a clause saying something about “education best suited for the child’s needs.” One family in Massachusetts used this clause to argue that home education was best suited for their child’s needs, and got approval for it.

Attorney Frank Cochran in Connecticut sent us details of a case in that state. When the parents started teaching their son at home during the summer and giving him some eye exercises, his “learning disability” symptoms disappeared, and the hearing officer ruled that the boy was no longer “learning disabled.” The home education continued. (Anyone wanting more information on this case, please send us a SASE.)

Now, if parents want to teach a child at home and get the state to reimburse them for some of the unusual expenses related to the handicap, they may be able to arrange this. That is part of the purpose of the special education laws, to reimburse programs with federal money. Naturally, the parents would have to become very familiar with the legal requirements, and be willing to deal with the bureaucracy, in order to go after this reimbursement.

The only other thought I have is that parents of special-needs children might be more vulnerable than most parents to being accused of “neglect.” They will need to be especially careful to document each step, and to be able to point to tangible signs of their child’s wellbeing, growth, and learning, such as by keeping a portfolio of their children’s work.

## On Religion

*Sometimes people ask us if they can form a religious private school if they do not belong to an established religion, or even if they do not believe in God. We don’t know of any court cases that deal with that issue specifically, but the Council For Educational Freedom In America (2105 Wintergreen Av SE, Washington DC 20028; 301-336-1585) sent us a column by Harry J. Hogan in the New York Times, 5/20/79, which reads in part:*

We tend to think of religion as requiring belief in a transcendent God. For most people, ultimate reality is not transcendent but immanent —“God” is understood as “nature” or a force or forces within this

world. Such is true of Buddhism and Confucianism.

The courts have already accepted that non-transcendent definition of religion. In *Washington Ethical Society vs. D.C.* and in *Fellowship of Humanity vs. County of Alameda*, appeal courts held in 1957 that nontheistic humanist societies were entitled to tax exemptions as religions equal in standing to traditional theistic religions. In *Torcaso vs. Watkins* in 1961, the Supreme Court held that the plaintiff could not be denied a commission as notary public because he would not affirm a belief in God. The Court stated that “neither a state nor the Federal Government. can aid those religions based on belief in the existence of God as against those religions founded on different beliefs.”

## **Info On G.E.D.**

*Bob Sessions (IA) wrote:*

I have had some dealings with the G.E.D. in my work, and I think I can clarify some confusions which appeared in *GWS* #17. Every state has to decide three things: (1) when they will grant the high school equivalency diploma; (2) how they will decide equivalence, and (3) who they will allow to take the equivalency tests. To my knowledge, every state in the country has decided to use the G.E.D. tests for (2). But the states do not own those tests; they are owned and regulated by a private agency called the American Council on Educational Testing (1 DuPont Circle, Washington DC 20036; 202-833-4770).

Most states decree that no one can receive the diploma until they are 18 (or until their class graduates). However, you should distinguish between the equivalency diploma and the GED exams. Iowa law, for example, says little about when someone can take the exams. In fact, 17-year-olds can take the exams, and 16-year-olds on probation also can.

## **More Than “Home Schooler”**

*Meg Johnson (NJ) wrote in the Home Education Resource Center Bulletin, Spring 1982:*

I find that more and more I dislike being characterized as a “home



schooler.” It seems that that name implies that all we do when our children reach school age is add an area of schooling to the responsibilities we had toward our children at that time. It also makes it sound like schooling is the major area of concern—I find this is true of few home schoolers, except for the fact that we must provide the education—generally required by law. Most of us seem to be searching for a better alternative way of living and raising children, not just a substitute for institutionalized education.

## **No Tests Good**

Quotes from home-schooler Jane Joyce, in the Grant’s Pass (OR) *Review*, 1/82:

“There isn’t a test invented that can judge my children,” she contends. “Where is the test that can measure a child’s judgment, courage or sensitivity to the world around him?”

“There should not be a quarrel about which methods are best. We simply want what we honestly believe is best for us. To quarrel and point fingers is silly. It’s a matter of exercising our options.”

“Look—let’s say we both go over to a bowl of fruit. You pick an apple, and I pick an orange. Would you think I’m against apples?”

She grinned, and the determination showed through.

## **School Tutor**

*From Shari Melbourne (PA):*

Our oldest son, John (13, 7th grade), has had severe migraine for years. Last fall it got so bad that I convinced our pediatrician to write a letter to the school indicating that John’s migraine was so severe he required home schooling, and (precious man), he even let me draft the letter, and recommended that I be appointed tutor. In the meantime, I taught John for two months while we were arranging all this.

The school agreed to a tutor but their policy is that parents can’t teach their own. (But did I want a job tutoring someone else’s child? They could

use more tutors.) I decided to let them appoint a tutor and see what happened. By this time, John's migraine had gone from two a day to one in a six-week period.

The tutor for John has worked out well—she's very relaxed and the six hours per week of teaching time she is supposed to be giving him is usually about 30 minutes' worth. John can usually figure out most of the work himself, so only needs new assignments given and a few questions answered.

I might add that in the two months I worked with him, he finished the entire language arts book, about 90% of the math, and all of the social studies. He would have finished the science as well, but it required a microscope and other lab equipment which we did not have access to. He has since filled five looseleaf notebooks with his own research projects (science, mythology, literature, etc.) in his "spare time."

His tutor has him doing algebra, 9th grade history, and literature, and he does about 2-3 research papers a month in science, history, etc. He is also reading 3-5 books at a time (*Lord Of The Rings*, *The Changeling*—200–300 pages per week) on his own, and working as a library page on Monday mornings, and was just appointed library artist (he does all of their posters for movies, library events, etc.). He's now taking a course in genealogy at the library—4 weeks, 12 hours per week.

## More On Tutors

*Peter Van Daam (RI) writes:*

I have been pleased with Jessica's work with her Brown University tutors (GWS #20). The girl helping her with math concepts enlisted another girl so that they could work as a team. She has also helped us find another who is helping Jessica greatly with her violin. Brigitta found another Brown student, very kind and giving, who is working with all three children at a public library reading program.

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*From an article in the Middlesex (MA) News, 7/4/82, about a homeschooling family in Upton:*

A total of seven private teachers—outside the home—taught the children English, piano, mathematics and general elementary education. The seven

worked for free, Mrs. Paulson says, because they wanted to show they supported the teach-at-home idea. The teachers had been lined up previously to teach at a private school Mrs. Paulson wanted to open at her home.

## **Learning on a Truck**

*Dick Gallien, The Winona Farm, E. Burns Valley Rd, Winona, MN 55987:*

It has been 1½ years since Glenn (7) and John (9) left school, and not one word from the system. Last year I started driving a semitruck after eight years' layoff. John went with me to New York during a cold streak in January—we stopped in supermarkets for food, carried our dishes, milk, and bread from home. On that trip we passed over 200 trucks frozen up; twice our brakes froze and we came to a screeching halt. A real adventure for John and also a pleasant camping trip, with a good truck heater and stereo.

When loading or unloading the truck with John along, dock workers would ask why he wasn't in school. Since non-schooling is my favorite topic, I would tell them the truck and the world is our school. Then I'd half-jokingly say that John was looking at different work areas to see what he might want to aspire to, and ask whether there were any jobs in their area they might recommend. Inevitably they would say that there were no jobs there he would want, and when I'd ask what they would recommend, they'd suggest doctor or lawyer. I would guess that if most adults were confronted on the job with a young, wide-eyed boy and asked whether they would recommend him aspiring to take their position someday, they would automatically say no.

I get so hungry to tell the world about how great it is to have our kids home. Yesterday, while John and I were fixing fence, we noticed one of the Canada geese was off its nest. That afternoon she was still off, so we checked and the nest of down was full of egg chips. A short distance away we found the pair, the female with her wings fanned out, and then a tiny golden head would dart out and grab at a blade of grass. As we watched the pair and their five new ones, I was telling John how this, right here today, is life, not tomorrow or next year.

Would still like to find some young person who would want to live with us awhile and see what they think of our lifestyle (*GWS* #23, "People/Places"). I signed up with Sativa (*GWS* #21), a system for lining up people who will work for room and board on organic farms.

## Farm Opportunities

Anyone interested in working on an organic farm or homestead should send for *Organic Gardening's* free list of "Learning and Homesteading Centers/Formal Apprenticeship Programs." It has over 40 exchange programs, experimental farms, schools, communities, etc., that are looking for people to learn and help. Send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: 33 E Minor St, Emmaus PA 18049.

## On a Farm

*Nadine Gallien (Dick's wife) sent the following mimeographed letter to friends and relatives:*

As many of you know by now, our boys do not go to school anymore. I hope that this letter will tell you a bit about the "how," further explain the "why," and answer some of the questions that most people have about home-schooling.

The boys left a school that we had, for the most part, been happy with. We know, however, that as the years went by it would be less and less desirable for them. Also, we felt that for home education to be most effective it would be best if they didn't spend too many years being "directed." So with just a little hesitation on my part, we took them out of school.

Neither Dick nor I hold a current teaching certificate any longer, but have had an education which is "essentially equivalent" (Minn. state law wording) to certified public school teachers. So, the superintendent seemed to feel comfortable that we satisfied legal requirements and did not give us any problems. He only requested that we give quarterly attendance reports!

One question we hear a lot has to do with the children missing out on the social aspects of school. We are not isolated here and each has friends with whom they can get together periodically. In the meantime, they have each other and they get along quite well together. Like us, they can choose the who, when, and where for their socializing. On the negative side, I could cite examples of behavior picked up at school from peers that we could do well without.

Along these lines I have come to realize that with most children, their "social skills" are well developed before they enter school, since they have

already been around many other people, both children and adults. All too often a child who has had no problems relating to others before school finds difficulties once there. With the various groups, families, and individuals who stop here at the farm (see “ People/Places, “*GWS* # 23), the children have opportunities to meet many new people. Kirstin is eager to run out to be with other small people or start a conversation with adults about her new shoes or sunglasses. Glenn has been known to run after some strangers who came to visit the farm and tell them everything he knows. They are becoming social beings and we don’t feel school could do as well.

How do we carry on their education? For the most part we follow their leads. At first, we used reading books they had from school. But I soon realized that Glenn was reading by a method not at all like his book was using and John was not happy with the material in his book. So now we use whatever reading matter is around. What with a stack of library books always present, magazines, and newspapers, there is a wide variety of printed words to learn from.

The boys have math workbooks from school also and they get those out frequently for something to do. John always has numbers in his head and can figure out answers I’d have to put on paper. He also likes to have me give him problems or basic facts as I go about my housework. It is surprising how much arithmetic there is around us that we adults don’t think about. Fractions appear in recipes and on tools; money amounts show up in discount ads that the kids always look over; measurements for the many improvement projects going on or weighing feed for individual cows; temperature on outdoor thermometer; time on digital and standard clocks—these are all areas the kids come in contact with daily as they watch the days and months pass on their calendars.

We have U.S. and world maps on the wall by the table. They are quickly getting a feel for what is where. Time magazine and the newspaper are often interesting journals they enjoy having read to them.

We do not have a rigid schedule that we adhere to, but we are sure of one thing: learning is occurring almost every waking hour. For another example, they have learned about alphabetical order from the telephone book and the index from the Sears catalogue.

Because they have the time, the kids are developing interests and can pursue them. John and Glenn have a couple of old electric motors—John,

being older, really “gets into” them. John is also interested in making things with wood. At present he is making a cross from a small walnut log. He expects to finish it with varnish. When not tinkering with wood or motors, John is likely to be found drawing intricate pictures of machinery with hydraulics moving various parts.

Both boys have collected hundreds of pinecones and removed the 15 seeds from them. We have to do some research to discover the ideal conditions for germinating these and thereby raising some trees.

What is Kirstin doing while all this is going on? A great deal of time is spent playing things like house, but she too is very curious about the written word. She likes to write—her agility at it amazes me. I suspect it won’t be long before she figures out reading for herself and begins teaching Kathryn. As for Kathryn, at just 13-months-old, she picked up a pencil and scrap of paper and, holding the pencil properly, began to scribble. She’s trying hard in all areas to catch up with the big ones!

And so it goes. As time goes by and they can read more independently and pursue other interests, we expect to see children with a broad background of knowledge and confidence in themselves to tackle anything they might want to learn or do.

## **Wandering Through Town**

From *Streets For People* by Bernard Rudofsky:

In a magazine article, “The Child in the City: Urbanity and the Urban Scene,” an American scientist, Albert E. Parr, reminisces about his childhood and fondly recalls his home town at the turn of the century. He was brought up in a comfortable Norwegian town of seventy-five thousand, a seaport of about the same latitude as Alaska’s Anchorage. It was the perfect place for a little boy to roam around, indulge his passion for fishing a mere hundred yards from his home, and make himself useful around the house. One of his typical assignments was to be sent shopping. “Not as a chore,” he writes, “but as an eagerly desired pleasure, I was fairly regularly entrusted with the task of buying fish and bringing it home alone. This involved the following: walking to the station in five to ten minutes; buying ticket; watching train with coal-burning steam locomotive pull in; boarding train;

riding across long bridge over shallows separating small boat harbor (on right) from ship's harbor (on the left), including small naval base with torpedo boats; continuing through a tunnel; leaving train at terminal, sometimes dawdling to look at railroad equipment; walking by and sometimes entering fisheries museum; passing central town park where military band played during mid-day break; strolling by central shopping and business district, or, alternatively, passing a fire station with horses at ease under suspended harnesses, ready to go, and continuing past a centuries-old town hall and other ancient buildings; exploration of fish market and fishing fleet; selection of fish; haggling about price; purchase and return home."

The point of the narrative is that this experienced member of the household was all of four-years-old. The feat—if one wants to call it that—of the Norwegian child was possible for two reasons. For one thing, a European town was, and often still is, safe to walk about in even for a small child. Kindergarten tots make their way through streets unaccompanied; the door-to-door delivery of schoolchildren is unknown.

The other factor that accounts for the self-reliance of the four-year-old on the train and in the market place was his ability to read and to do sums. Such knowledge is often acquired by a child long before he reaches school age. In fact, he connects reading with schoolwork no more than learning the names of flowers or the words of a song. Spontaneous interest in reading is aroused on the optical rather than the verbal level by shop signs, street signs, and the whole flora of broadly hinting advertising symbols. They provide the link to book reading. The city stimulates the brain. No other environment—least of all the classroom—tickles the senses as much as the street. Unaware of the importance that adults attach to school learning, and not suspecting their doltish ways of teaching, the bright child attains proficiency in reading without prodding. "I would have died of shame," a European mother told me, "if my children had entered school without being able to read. " Not that it ever occurred to her to instruct them or to hire a tutor; she expected them to learn to read just as naturally as they learned to speak.

## Watching Births

*Dave Van Manen (CO) wrote:*

Helene and I have helped out at some home-births and Sierra (2½) has been at some of these. At one year, four months, Sierra was in a small room with the birthing parents and four other busy adults. She was not in the least bit in the way. She stood at the foot of the bed with eyes as big as half dollars. She never asked to be held or to nurse (which was a surprise—she was still nursing often), and wasn't at all afraid of what was happening (if she was, she didn't show it).

A couple of months ago, Sierra attended another birth and responded equally as well. The attending midwife had her doubts about Sierra staying in the same room as the birth, but, sensing Helene's trust in her ability to "behave," instructed Sierra to stay in a corner and not move. Well, that is just what she did (I missed the birth, but Sierra told me all about it). If someone obstructed her view, she would simply shift her position and continue observing the birth. Just before the baby's head was born, she left the room for a minute, but returned in time to witness the birth of the body.

At these births, Sierra was expected to act responsibly, and so she did.

## Baby on the Job

*The San Gabriel Valley (Calif.) Tribune, 1/8/82:*

Soon after she was born last August, Erin Bell started coming to work with her mother, Diana, a 34-year-old filing deputy who reviews police reports and decides if there is sufficient evidence to file charges.

Mrs. Bell set up a crib in the office's lunch room near her office, and plans to keep the baby there until late January or early February, when she will turn daytime care of the child over to a babysitter.

The unique arrangement came after Mrs. Bell applied for a leave of absence to care for her baby. Her boss, Deputy District Attorney Tom Higgins, felt he couldn't afford to lose her for a year because of budget cutbacks and a hiring freeze. "So I suggested that she bring the baby in to work with her if it would not be disruptive or keep Diana



from her work,” he said.

Mrs. Bell agreed because she wanted to be with her baby during its early development and because the department provides no salary for a woman taking a leave of absence and her only pay would have been sick leave.

Higgins said the baby has caused no problems. There has been mixed reaction to the baby from others at the courthouse. Anita Herman, an office secretary, said the baby is an especially quiet one. “She doesn’t bother us at all.” However, Judge Eugene Osko views the situation as a serious abuse of the taxpayers’ money. “Logic tells you that a baby this age needs a certain amount of care, and her mother has to take time out to do all this when she could be helping other clerks investigate cases and look at arguments,” he said.

One employee, who asked that neither her name nor her job title be used, had mixed feelings. “I’m of the personal opinion that bringing a baby to the office would be disruptive, but I’ve never heard of any complaints about the baby’s presence,” she said.

Presiding Judge John Nichols said the baby had not disrupted him, but “I don’t have an opinion as to whether a baby should be in a district attorney’s office or in any law office in the state.”

## **Learning at Home**

*From Suzanne Alejandre (Germany):*

*Jan 5:* Rick, Niko, Lee and I had a great time making potato pancakes for dinner. Lee (3) came in the kitchen first and he started helping me grate the potatoes as Rick washed them. Niko (5) came in on the tail end of the grating so I put him in charge of crushing cracker crumbs in a bag with a rolling pin. Rick cut the onions and Lee put the grated potatoes in the strainer.

Once everything was strained Lee became the stirrer (onion, cracker, potato) and Niko became the “egg man.” I don’t know why we had never asked him before! I said, “Here, Niko, you want to crack the eggs?” He jumped at the chance. Rick and I kept our mouths shut and I didn’t give any instructions. Niko had watched us so many times he knew exactly what to do.

The first two eggs he tapped on the bowl but when he went to open them, the egg went all over his hands. Because we had no reaction he didn't seem to mind and just asked for a cloth to wipe with. The third egg opening was perfect by accident. There's quite an incentive to opening an egg without having it squish everywhere! An instant learning experience.

Rick decided more eggs and crackers were required. We offered Lee the choice of "egg cracker" or "cracker crusher" and he chose the latter. So, Niko was excited to try more egg cracking—two more well done!

Then the boys each put salt in the bowl and ground the pepper (always fun) and Rick cooked the pancakes. We sat down to a tasty and very satisfying dinner!

Another experience the other day gave me time during it to reflect upon it. I have waist-length hair and Niko has asked before if he could comb it or help me wash it. So, the other day we had finished breakfast and I had given the boys a hair trim. The kitchen was flooded with sun (on a COLD winter day). I sat down on the floor and asked Niko if he wanted to comb my hair. He did. When Lee came back into the kitchen he took a turn, too. They were both very gentle, knowing how it feels when I comb their hair. With the sun streaming in, it was a nice setting and it became a close experience for all of us. Sitting there I thought how easy it is to lose close physical contact with your children. I breast-fed both Niko and Lee and once they each reached their independent (weaning) age, they often didn't want to snuggle or be held. They still need close contact, though—I think all humans do. I've read many times in *GWS* about a mother or father reading with a child while snuggling. I realized while getting my hair combed that there are more ways to achieve closeness also.

*Feb 4:* My boys have thought up an elaborate game of "train" lately. They ride on the train with us so often that they know all the action that goes on. They put on their coveralls which have lots of pockets and they fill them with whistles, paper pad, pen, watch, etc. Niko had me make him a sign (giving me exact specifications) which trainmen use to signal the driver to go. Also I made a ticket book for each and lent them my paper punch. They play their game for hours—giving us tickets, punching them, starting the train (a group of chairs), etc. They thought it up all by themselves.

*Feb 14:* A few months before we moved to Germany I decided that I wanted to teach myself to knit. I had crocheted many things and done many

other handcrafts but, for some reason, I had (unfortunately) always steered clear of knitting. I did, however, proceed to make Niko a sweater using a knitting magazine with beginner's instructions as a guide. It came out all right and I am now an avid knitter. There is a grand (and reasonably priced) supply of yarn here and I have usually three projects going on at one time.

As all this has taken place, Niko has taken an interest in my teaching myself how to knit. I showed him how I read the book and looked at the illustrations. Sometimes when I would become frustrated (having dropped a stitch or something) I remember telling Niko and Lee that they'd have to wait for what they wanted because I was having trouble. As I think back on the process, I see how much Niko was watching me as some one who he thought could do anything, yet who was learning something new. He probably felt more of a connection to me seeing the "learning child" in me. We've had similar experiences as the boys accompanied Rick to his voice lessons (when we were in California) and when I taught myself how to play piano.

Anyway, about a month ago, Niko wanted to try knitting. So, I got out some yarn and needles. I showed him how to start, then I left him with it. He sat in a chair for about half an hour trying to knit, then came to me and said he needed help. So, as he sat on my lap, I worked the needles as he worked the thread. We got about five rows completed (I had only cast on 10 stitches) when he said he'd had enough. We put it on the table and I left it there a few days. Niko didn't ask to knit again so I put it in the cupboard.

About two weeks later he wanted to know where his knitting was. I told him, he got it out, and as we knitted he talked and talked about all the things he wanted to make. It's funny because his talking reminded me of myself and the thoughts I have while making some thing—I'm always thinking of all my future projects, all kinds of grandiose plans. I used to get mad at myself for taking on too many projects but I look at it differently now. Because I have so many projects going on at once (and I do always finish each eventually), I always have something I feel like doing.

Niko only has 3" of his "purse" knitted but maybe someday he will have the urge to finish it.

*Mar 2:* Incredible things have been happening with Niko and writing! Out of the blue the other day he said he wanted to write a letter (as I was writing, of course). I happened to be writing to a family in California who are friends of all of us, so I turned the paper over and asked Niko what he wanted to

write. He said each person's name. So, I printed each name on another piece of paper. Niko copied each one. The only things he had written before were Lee's name and the "0" in his own name (he'd make the "0" and always ask us to write the rest).

The next morning Niko said he wanted to write his Uncle Andrew a letter. I gave him some stationery and again I asked him what he wanted to write. He told me two sentences. I printed it on scratch paper and he proceeded to copy it letter by letter. It came out great:

Andrew, When are you going to visit me, in winter or summer? Is your school over now? Love, Niko

Since then he has written two other letters. Each time he starts he intends to write a letter to everyone but he has only the patience for one, again reminding me of myself—I always sit down with a box of stationery but end up having written only one letter—still an accomplishment!

Last night, Niko sat down with a pad of paper and some books. He started copying words from the books and then giving his paper to Rick and asking him to read it. He did this for over an hour!

## **After Three Years**

*Anne Karcher (PA), the mother who wrote about her family's home schooling in GWS #17, including her sons' visiting their grandfather in a nursing home, writes:*

Our past three years of home schooling have been terrific. And I don't say this as some kind of optimist who may be secretly covering up discomforts or such.

My dad is still seriously ill, so the past three years have been spent taking care of him and home schooling. It has been quite a learning experience for each of us. Because my husband wanted to spend his days and years with us, we worked out a way he could quit his job, be with us all of the time, and still have enough income to get us by. It is great! The boys enjoy having their dad around, and it is wonderful to be able to share with each other without the pressures of the day coming at us from different levels.

John is now 13-years-old and is working diligently at starting his own computer company. In December 1981 he took money he had saved and

searched the market and finally bought himself a Commodore Vic-20 home computer. It comes with its own small how-to instruction book, which John devoured in two days. The Vic-20, and the Data Sette Recorder (which he needed if he wanted to save any of his programs), cost \$329. He bought an Atari Joystick, which works on a Vic-20 machine, for \$9, so he could program his own video games. He has made a few and is learning more all the time on how to improve them.

If anyone is interested in home computing and has the money, the Vic-20 is a great buy. It is easy to handle and John feels it was the one with the most advantages for the least amount of money. He had worked up a study on each of the home computers on the market.

Jim is 12-years-old now and has taken an interest in the piano. I started taking lessons this winter, and Jim, who wants no part of lessons, takes what I've learned and masters it by himself. If he doesn't understand something, he asks, but we dare only tell him what he wants to know, nothing more. To some people that sounds snotty or hard-headed, but we love it because we want our boys to be able to work things out, yet know that if they have a question, they can ask. He has memorized almost all of the songs I've learned and practices everyday. We were able to finish our schooling this year by May 3rd. That was the day we had our meeting with the school officials. We had finished the curriculum in April, and then worked on some interesting studies the officials thought might be helpful. Some were, some weren't. Anyway, we got it all done by May, so after our meeting, we let the boys follow their own pleasure. No one can accuse us of not having school; they are just schooling using their own material.

We have had no problems with the school officials these past three years. In fact, the first year they wanted us to meet with them three times (beginning, middle, and end of the school year), the second year, the same thing; this year, however, they said to only meet twice. Once in the beginning to see if we needed anything, and once at the end for review. We were pleased that they trusted us for this. We have been diligent with our curriculum each year, and Lord willing, they trust us more each year. We meet this July to make our plans for the 1982-83 term.

The boys' friends have still wanted to socialize with them even though they are not in school with them these three years. John and Jim have had much social time with children and adults, and I am convinced more each

year that children need to be with adults on a level not as parent to child, or teacher to child, but as the book *Transactional Analysis For Kids* mentions, adult to adult. I truly believe that children are just “young” adults. (I hesitated to say “short” adults, for our 13-year-old is 5’10” tall, taller than me.) And I have found both with teaching in schools and dealing with children of our families and friends, that if we talk to children on an adult level, (attitude-wise, not necessarily vocabulary-wise), a child will behave accordingly. And I found this true all the way down to ages 2 and 3.

## **Making a Difference**

From *Hostex News*, 5/82 :

What can a child do to change the world for the better? Here are a few examples of constructive action taken by children:

**WRITING:** An 8-year-old in Texas has written and illustrated a juvenile book that has become one of the most popular volumes in his school library.

**INFLATION:** A 12-year-old model airplane builder reported a glue manufacturer for illegally raising prices. He saved consumers over \$300, 000, which the company had to refund.

**CARE OF ANIMALS:** A 12-year-old conducted a one-girl campaign against cruelty to Tennessee walking horses. She ended up testifying before a House subcommittee in Washington to end the practice of “soring” the feet of the animals to force them into their characteristic gait.

**CLEANER CITIES:** Two hundred school children cleaned a park while a “soul-rock” group donated music to inspire the cleanup.

**TELEVISION:** Elementary school pupils in Boston produce, write, and act in a closed-circuit TV series.

**SCIENCE:** An 11-year-old boy conducts regular research projects at the Museum of Natural History in New York. He is one of the few living “protozoologists” to observe the rare act of a paramecium

forming a protective wall around itself as the surrounding water dries up.

ADVICE COLUMN: A 10-year-old girl in Philadelphia writes a regular advice column for young readers of a daily newspaper.

## **Working at Arcosanti**

*Rachael Solem (NV) wrote:*

You asked me to write about Arcosanti long ago. I was there in 1974 when the work had been going on for four years. I went to a small winter workshop in January, and again in April. Those first workshops were restricted by my need to put them in an academic framework. I had to write papers on community and cities, so I looked at what was there: a construction site on a desert mesa and a simple, funky camp near the riverbed below. The rest was in Paola Soleri's mind, or was then, and in the minds of the very few architects, engineers, and other useful drop-outs who saw his vision.

We worked in January in cold gray rain, making a stone path through the camp. Day by day, foot by foot, we lifted ourselves out of the thick mud. I had never known much about masonry before—except to admire New England stone fences. We really felt accomplished at the end of a day—college students who had been learning to write *ad infinitum* in carpeted classrooms—we could see and use our progress.

When I returned in April, my work was on the site of Arcosanti itself. I was hod-girl to the rock-wall crew for many weeks. After learning some about mortar, I was sent to patch some joints in concrete slabs. Then came my first big job. I had asked to do masonry since my parents' house needed all four of its chimneys rebuilt and my mother wanted some wide slate steps to lead graciously to the front door of the house. So my boss found quite a bit of bricklaying to do. The first job was taking down a cinderblock wall which had been badly laid. Under a somewhat brief apprenticeship and some reading (there was a scarcity of masons at the time at Arcosanti), I took apart the wall—noting all the mistakes I could find—cleaned the blocks, and relaid them. I rebuilt another wall, then designed and built two fireplaces and a patio with a fountain.

The days were long, beginning at 5:30; breakfast came up to the site on an

old truck called the “White Elephant” at 9 AM. Lunch was at one and we quit at 2:30. Often people stayed on the site beyond that. When you’re working for free to begin with, dedication seems to take over.

As I ran out of money (after the workshop of six weeks, I was invited to stay for the cost of food and insurance—as a novice mason), I worked weekends, too, in that hot Arizona sun—ten hours a day clearing a field of roots. So doing, I earned the \$15 a week I needed to stay for two more months. Other people were barmaids or odd-jobbers in town, forty miles away, and made more money. But I had no car and didn’t really want to leave the camp anyway. For weeks I carried no keys or wallet or general accoutrements of civilized life. I did my wash by hand, slept out among the low and gnarly mesquite trees. Cows would wander near my home in the morning. I shook the crickets from my clothes before I put them on, and avoided the rattlesnake who lived not far away.

When I left in late July, I was stronger than I’d ever been, and browner, too. Some of the friends I made there are still close in many ways. We subsequently started having babies at the same time. One friend, in fact, is the person responsible for bringing me to Boston, and so beginning a new phase in my life. She was a re-bar frame builder during the April workshop. She and another friend, a re-bar shaper, are both *GWS* readers.

Paolo Soleri is building a city of the future there. Helping him is definitely work worth doing. For information, write to Cosanti, 6433 Doubletree Rd, Scottsdale AZ 85352.

## Doing It Themselves

From *A Shift in the Wind* #12:

One of the most potent organizations in this growing network (to end hunger) is the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. A. T. Ariyaratne guides the work of Sarovdaya Shramadana.

Here is an account of Ariyaratne at work in a village which needs to repair its water tank in order to irrigate its rice fields. The people of the village had been corresponding for 15 years with the government in an attempt to have the problem resolved. All they had to show for it was a thick file of letters.



“He asks them: What do you need? Earth. How much? 200 cubes. From where could you get it? From the disused tank-bed. What do you need to dig the tank-bed? Earth pans, pickaxes. Where do you get the equipment? Everything except the pans are in the village. Is there a substitute for pans? Yes, sheaves of leaves. How many people to do the job? Two hundred working four days. How many volunteers can each bring? One, two, and so on. Right, who will feed them? One rich landowner offers to feed them for two days. Right, who will feed one other by sharing one day’s meal? The hands went up. The 15-year-old file went up in flames. The water tank was rebuilt, not in four days, but in the afternoon of the first day.”

## Choosing Housework

*From Linda Mills (TX):*

The distinction you made in *Teach Your Own* between jobs and work has laid to rest a 16-year guilt. I’m a housewife. I LOVE being a housewife. I’ve done office work but always found myself crocheting on my coffee break! My husband works for an insurance company five days a week, a job he likes and is good at, and on weekends does work he loves: mechanical work, carpentry, building fences, hauling cattle, etc. I’ve always felt he has sacrificed himself for me, for my “career.” If I’d contribute money, he could do his “work” all the time. He doesn’t feel this way. He’s pleased that I enjoy my work, and says if he did the “weekend things” all week, he’d no longer enjoy them. I’ve never really believed him!

I suppose I took from your writing what I needed: for me, I’m not being selfish in choosing work that doesn’t pay; for him, the choice of a job for pay and work for pleasure is HIS CHOICE, not something I’ve done to him.

## Home-Schooled Conductor

*Marie Friedel of the National Association For Gifted And Creative Children sent this clipping from the Providence (RI) Journal-Bulletin:*

Lance Friedel, probably this state’s most publicized “gifted child,” was reading by age three, but, except for a short stint in kindergarten, he did not “go to school” until he was 16.

He studied music at Barrington College and conducting at Boston University. Now he has established his own musical group and next Saturday will conduct the first concert of the Providence Chamber Orchestra.

Lance considers himself very fortunate to have missed the school experience. Invariably, the first thing people ask him now is how he spent all that time when other children were in school.

“I was never bored,” he said, “Contrary to what many seem to expect, I did not sit around watching television.”

He pursued his own interests and his parents encouraged him to try things, even if they seemed very difficult, he said. He’s still doing that. His recent project may be the most risky he’s tackled. He’s taking money he might have used for graduate school to start the chamber orchestra. He has contracted 30 professional musicians to play.

Young Friedel has been preparing himself for a career in conducting since he was about 13.

From the beginning of his interest in music, his goal was to conduct and he undertook his studies with the intensity that another might give to becoming an instrumental virtuoso.

More important to conducting than virtuosity in one instrument is to understand the techniques and problems of playing all the instruments, he said.

## **Guitar Maker**

*From the Louisville, KY Courier Journal, 12/13/81:*

Hascal Haile’s status as one of the world’s pre-eminent luthiers, or guitar makers, has received several recent confirmations. Late last year the Smithsonian Institution accepted one of Haile’s guitars into its collections. Last summer Haile was selected to be the featured craftsman at the National Folk Festival at the National Park Service’s Wolf Trap Farm, near Washington, D. C. Perhaps the clearest

evidence of the distinction of Haile's instruments can be found by scanning his client list and finding names like Chet Atkins and Roy Clark, along with a number of symphony musicians.

Haile didn't exactly stumble into guitar making, yet neither did his recognition come after a lifetime of apprenticeship as a luthier. In fact, *the notion of making fuitars did not occur to Haile until he was in his mid-60s* After a successful career as a maker of custom furniture. Haile began a 10-year period of study and experimentation that led to his guitars being sought by recognized artists. His skills as a luthier were all self-developed. He still, on the recent passage of his 75th birthday, had never watched or studied with any other craftsman.

## **Hanging Out a Shingle**

Donna found this sign at a streetcar stop near her home. It was printed on yellow paper, with a large picture of a flute and saxophone, with bold rub-on headlines and typed text:

Flute, Sax, Clarinet lessons with John Payne. Patient, experienced teacher. Lessons tailored to your goals in music— Seven years of teaching experience have shown me:

(1) ANYONE can learn to play an instrument when taught properly, despite any previous failures or "lack of talent."

(2) I can teach ANYONE to improvise, even complete beginners. You don't have to be born with it. Over the years I have developed my own original approach to learning to improvise and IT WORKS.

UNAVAILABLE ELSEWHERE.

(3) Practicing is fun when you are doing it right. Long hours of painful, boring practicing are not necessary.

Unique opportunity to study with a nationally known musician.

I have three albums out nationally under my own name on Arista and Mercury Records. I have toured, recorded and/or done TV with Van Morrison, Bonnie Raitt, Phoebe Snow, David Bromberg, and Michael Franks.

Beginners Welcome.

If you don't know how to even put the instrument together or make a sound out of it, that's fine with me. Reasonable rates.

If interested call John Payne at 277- 3438 in Brookline.

DR: We called John Payne and found him to be as cheerful and straightforward in person as his sign suggests. He says he started teaching music three years ago in his home, and got so many students he had to rent a studio and hire teachers. He never went to music school. He and his staff (one administrator, one full-time teacher, one three-quarter time teacher, and 10–12 part-time teachers) now give 130 lessons a week; their students also are in 12 ensembles and two saxophone quartets.

John sent us a copy of his Music Center newsletter (address: 318 Harvard St., Brookline MA 02146), in which he is quoted as saying, “I have the utmost respect and admiration for all adult beginners even before I’ve met them. The adult beginner is someone who is willing to spend time, money and effort to defy modern society’s opinion that s/he should conform and just be a spectator, that s/he can’t create anything beautiful. By simply showing up for the first lesson, the adult beginner is saying, ‘I can learn to create artistically.’ Fortunately, that’s absolutely right!”

## **Searching Teenager**

*From Christine Cales, Rt 1 Box 101, West Fork, AR 72774:*

As I am 15 and have been unschooled within the last year and a half, I am curious to know other kids my age and older, and what they are doing and how they are coping. It has been a hard struggle for me but after nearly a year of depression, trauma, withdrawal, and so forth, I have won my battle and have become a college correspondence student through the University of Arkansas.

I feel certain that more contact between depressed teenagers would answer some of the questions like, “What do I do now?” or “What am I going to do today?” These questions plagued me after nine years of math, science, history, etc. My biggest question is what rural kids do for fun, enjoyment, social outlets, etc. Is there some place to meet the more intelligent, open-

minded and interesting people I'm looking for?

## Piano and Pizza

*From the Ithaca Times:*

Vinnie Hawes is sitting in a corner by the brick wall looking over at the piano. Marcus, Kevin, Nicole, and Melanie are at another table waiting for their birthday pizza. Bart on, who's only eleven, expertly rolls out the dough, and begins the process of enlarging it by flipping the disc of dough in the air. Louise sits on a pair of stacked chairs in front of the keyboard, and sight-reads through two songs by Ralph Vaughan Williams, while a voice student from Ithaca College gets some vocal exercise.

It's not the pizza place it used to be; perhaps it has become something more. Louise Smith is the new owner of Pirro's, and she's the one who has brought the piano into the scheme of things. Smith has been a piano teacher for some twenty years. She has been teaching part-time at Henry St. John School and is currently on leave from the Community School of Music and Arts. Louise plays piano every evening at Pirro's, and has attracted all sorts of people to the place. On a given evening, you might find some neighborhood kids in for pizza and staying to marvel at Brahms or Chopin. Louise's children, Bart on and his sister Kara, who is nineteen, work here, as do other neighborhood kids who drive the deliveries all over Ithaca and even to some outlying areas.

And over all this activity come the strains of music on the old upright piano. Louise Smith can perform the classics, from a Beethoven sonata ("I've been working on that one for twenty years") to Chopin or Bach. She can also run through rags by Scott Joplin, and is not above trying to satisfy a request for some soul or jazz. But there are others who come to play as well, students of the piano who can do a jazz turn, or local people who can play and sing the blues.

People on the sidewalk outside stop and listen through the screen door. It's only a pizza place, but it seems warm and friendly as people share the music. "One of the reasons I'm here," observes Louise

Smith, “is that I want to combine my playing and teaching here. I think kids should have access to an instrument. I think it’s nice to be able to share music in an informal way. I still do some concerts. What I really like about playing here is that people really listen. People seem to feel really comfortable here—they’ll sometimes stay an hour or so after they eat.”

“It’s been a real wonderful playing experience,” she continues. “Now that I play every night, it’s more of a job, but I feel I’m sharing music like I’ve never shared it before.”

## A Young Playwright

From the Ithaca, NY *Journal*:

While the word “play” means roller skates and jump ropes to the average 10- year-old, it means footlights, curtains and stage sets to the youngest member of Ithaca’s literary elite.

Ishmael Wallace is the playwright and composer of the First Street Playhouse musical adventure “Love’s Path is Lumpy, or, Eat Your Spaghetti.” The plot reflects his love for swashbucklers. It follows the exploits of Tom and Mickey, who vow to reform their wicked ways (refusing to eat their spaghetti) and to win the heart of a girl named Lucy. The two perform all kinds of valorous deeds—sailing the seven seas as pirates, sipping tea in the parlors of the rich and powerful, and fighting valiantly with revolutionaries.

Ishmael has also composed the music for the play and will act as piano accompanist. He gave each character one or more songs to sing and wrote an overture to entertain the audience while a so-called traveling acting company cavorts across the stage and decides on a good place to put on its play.

It was when the Wallaces attended the First Street Playhouse’s Christmas workshops that the children knew they wanted to contribute. Nancy told her son to expect to start small. “I had high hopes of being an usher,” quipped Ishmael. But director Carolyn Fellman learned about his plays, read one, asked him to expand it, and

chose it for the third young people's theater production of the company's first season.

Writing does not come easily for Ishmael, who also writes a daily diary and composes a newspaper which he and his sister circulate among their neighbors." I struggle and go through phases of writing a lot and not writing at all." He also finds "accompanying a lot harder than playing solo. You have to be ready to improvise at all times when a singer forgets his part."

The First Street Playhouse, according to Fellman, is the only theater in the country which specializes in child-written scripts performed by children and adults together.

"Ishmael is fortunate," said his mother, "because he has the writing ability to say anything he wants to in any way he wants. But he's only 10-years-old and still has a child's fresh imagination."

If Ishmael has his way, that won't change. He says, "For my future, I guess I'd just like to keep on writing plays and composing music for them."

## **6-Year-Old Sculptor**

*People magazine*, 3/8/82:

Heather Soderberg was all of 2 when she astounded her father, sculptor John Soderberg, with her first work, an inch-high group of five women done in wax. Soderberg cast his daughter's work in bronze and entered it in a competition against sixth graders. "Five Women" took first place and earned its precocious creator her first astonished critical praise.

Now 6, the young artist, whose oeuvre is displayed at the West Side Gallery in Phoenix, Ariz., has produced 250 sculptures with themes ranging from "The Flying Dragon" to "The French Mountain Man." Seventysix pieces from her collection have been sold at prices from \$65 to \$150. Through a twist of fate, the value of Heather's work was enhanced by a fire last September that destroyed the Soderberg home and studio. Only one of Heather's molds was saved, "The French

Mountain Man.” As a result, “The Flying Dragon,” which gallery owner Ruth Magadini bought for \$75 only last fall, is now a unique piece worth \$800.

A first grader, Heather keeps a \$1,500 bank account, signs checks and picks up the tab for such luxuries as a new bicycle and a family trip to McDonald’s. “When I get bigger,” says Heather, “I’m going to still be an artist. I’m going to stop when I die, and that will be a long time from now.”

## **Children’s Art Show**

DR: I will be attending the Education Network’s World Conference in San Francisco November 19–21, 1982. The Network was started by a number of educators who were deeply concerned about the serious and growing problems of schools all over the world, and wanted to find ways to create “schools that work for everyone.” I see this conference as a chance to make ourselves known to many in the education field, to overcome some of the adversarial within the-system/outside-the-system rivalry, and to share what we know about what real teaching and real learning are.

According to the *Education Network News*, “A global Children’s Art Gallery is being prepared for the Conference. Direct inquiries or submit artwork, including the child’s name, age, country, medium and view of what she/he is representing, to George Fargo, PhD, University of Hawaii, Honolulu HI 96822.

“We thought that some *GWS* families might enjoy contributing artwork for this show. I’ve asked whether “unschoolers’ art” might be displayed together and have not yet heard an answer. Wouldn’t this be an interesting way to find out just how much school does affect children’s artwork? So if you do enter anything, please say if you are home-schooling.

There was no deadline in the article; my guess is you should submit your work as soon as possible. We’ll let you know what comes of this.

## **Found a Home**

*From Susan Corcoran (MO):*

Back in “People/Places,” *GWS* #24, was a letter from Gail Kuehnle telling



about Greenwood Forest. Sounded like heaven to us; we wrote, they wrote, back and forth, and now we've moved on to our 10 acres of land! It's beautiful here, lots of families and more coming soon. The land is tough but tamable, the spirit of cooperation amongst the "forest people" is tremendous. The trees are green, the rocks in the garden are big, the river is great for a swim, and we saw a magnificent owl yesterday. There's a community school—8 students last year, but several families (us, too) will be home-schooling. We're getting a musical group together to sing in town at the Saturday night sing-along in the park!

There are still eight parcels, out of 43, left to sell—there's 1000+ acres here, all set up nice and legal in a non-profit corporation.

## **The First "Schools"**

From the book *Once Upon A Word*:

You may find it difficult to believe, but the word school grew in a fairly direct way from the Greek word *scole*, and to the ancient Greeks that word meant "leisure."

For boys in their teens, school meant waking on a warm, sunwashed day. and sauntering out to find one's teacher.

Most likely, he'd be strolling though one of the cool green groves of olive and eucalyptus trees that dotted the main areas of the city. With no roll call, no attendance sheets, a group would gather and go for a walk, frequently through the city and on to the countryside. There, they would sit and talk, listen, argue, ask questions, search out answers. That was *scole*.

## **Tapes For Sale Here**

*The Universal Musical Family*, by the Lesters—Steve, Darlene, Nathan (10), Eli (7), and Damian (3). (\$6.00). For some time I've been thinking of adding some tape cassettes to our book list, and I'm very happy to begin with this, one of the most delightful tapes of adults and children playing and singing (and now and then speaking) that I have ever heard.

The Lesters, who are *GWS* readers, made the first version of this tape to

send to friends and relatives as a Christmas present. People liked it and the next year the Lesters updated the tape with new songs and material. They sent me a copy of this revised tape, just for a present, and I loved it so much that I urged them to make copies of it and sell it. Since some of the poems and music on the tape were copyrighted, they decided to cut out all the copyrighted material and replace it with new poems and songs of their own, and it is this tape which they (and we) are now selling.

I've played this tape often, and love it more every time. Friends who have heard it, both here and in Europe, love it as much as I do. In the first place, the songs themselves are wonderful. The British conductor Sir Thomas Beecham once said, wisely, that great music is music that "penetrates the ear and sticks in the mind," and by this standard these are surely great. They are part of my mental sound track; I often find myself humming or singing them almost without knowing that I am doing it. As the titles show, they are all about the life of the family: "The Incredible, Luminous, Universal, Musical Family," "Vegetables," "Big Wet Baby Kiss," "Three In The Bed," and so on. My favorite of all is "Don't Hit The Baby" ("you know you'll only make things worse")—very funny and very true advice. When Steve says in the last verse, of their little one-year-old, "He's lots of trouble cause he's little and new, but he'll be a brother in a year or two," it says so much about babies and children, and the relations and feelings between the little ones and the big ones, that I find it very moving.

All of the family sing. Steve, a very gifted musician, plays beautiful guitar. Darlene and the older boys play recorders. Someone (Darlene?) plays a little blues harmonica in "Big Wet Baby Kiss," and several of them play rhythm instruments. Steve and Darlene sing with a wonderful swinging feeling which the boys, even Damian at 3, have clearly picked up. There is great spontaneity and life in these performances; they have not been rehearsed to death, and sound like what they are, a family singing together for the fun of it.

But the star of them all is 3-year-old Damian. It would be worth the price of the tape—triple the price of the tape—just to hear his rendition of *Home On The Range*, which must be one of the great performances in the whole history of recorded music. Words can't do it justice; you'll have to hear it. I hope many of you will hear it, for this is a real treasure. And only the first of many, for the Lesters plan to write, sing, and record more tapes. I can hardly

wait for the next.

*John Holt's Speech At Goteborg* (almost 60 min.; \$6). This is a tape of a speech (plus answers to two questions) I gave to a group of student teachers and their professors at a Teachers' College just outside Coteborg (Gothenburg) in Sweden in March '82. In this speech I say, as I often have both in *GWS* and in *How Children Learn* (revised edition out Feb. '83), that children are eager, skillful, active, experimental, question-asking and meaning-making learners. I also discuss why unasked-for teaching, or constant checking up on children's learning, will slow down or prevent that learning.

When I speak at meetings of teachers and student teachers in this country, people often make tapes to play later for themselves or others; so teachers, as well as home schoolers, may want to have copies of this tape to play for or give to colleagues.

*John Holt's Interview In England* (Vols. 1–3. \$6 per tape; 60 min. ea.) These are tapes of a long interview with me in England. In the first tape I discuss children and their needs, above all the need to learn; the reasons why their learning is blocked; the ways in which parents can hinder or can help learning; the true social functions of schools; the improper and proper functions of teachers, and other topics.

In the second tape I discuss the often slow processes by which children find their true interests, and how teachers can help this; how to change opinions of parents and of teachers about learning; the central problem of fear in the classroom; the relevance of this view of learning to city schools; the problems and causes of violence in city schools; freedom; ways in which schools might deal with problem children; the failure of the school reform movement; and finally, how parents can start to teach their own children and what sorts of problems they may encounter, both outside and inside themselves, when they do so.

In the third tape I discuss: the relevance of home schooling for city and/or working people; whether parents are qualified to teach their own children; the famous question of "social life"; the possible use of schools by home schooling parents; the possible danger of parents passing their biases on to their children; how my ideas relate to and perhaps differ from A.S. Neill's; children and work; the possible relevance of home schooling to school reform; and other topics.

This is the most extended and interesting interview I have ever done, and I think that many home schoolers, other parents, and teachers may enjoy these tapes.

*John Holt's 1982 Travel Diary Tapes, Vols. 1—3* (\$6 per tape, 60 min. ea. tape). When I began my lecture trip to Sweden and other countries last March, I took a little cassette tape recorder with me, planning to make a kind of tape recorded diary of my trip to send to my friends the Wallaces, so that later, playing the tape, they might feel a little as if they were with me on the journey. Later it occurred to me that others might like to hear them too, so we have made copies of these travel diary tapes and are adding them to our book (and tape) list. In one sense these tapes are not exactly like a diary, something written at the end of the day. Instead, I recorded events as they happened. Thus the tape begins with me sitting in the plane at Logan Airport in Boston. We hear other passengers talking, a baby crying, announcements over the intercom, the plane taking off, people bringing dinner, and so on. In short, it is not so much a diary of the trip as a running record of what happened, along with my comments. In these and later tapes you will hear cars, buses, trains, ships, and also children, cats, dogs, and even, in Malmo on a bus, an old and pugnacious Swedish drunk—all the sounds of real life.

The first tape begins in Boston and takes me through the Frankfort airport and to Stockholm, where I meet my friend Ake Bystrom and go to my first meetings. The second tape takes me from Stockholm to Vasteros, where I visit a very nice family, then back to Stockholm, and from there to Linkoping. The third tape takes me from Linkoping to Norrkoping, Jonkoping, and a train to Goteborg—the tape ends just as we are coming into the city.

These tapes bring back the events of the trip much more vividly than photographs could do. Looking at photos of far-off places, even colored slides or moving pictures, we have no illusion of “being there,” we know we are in some friend’s living room. But hearing these tapes (especially using headphones), you can close your eyes and come very close to imagining that you are there.

I made these tapes with a Sony TCM-121 tape recorder (about \$70). The fidelity is very good, and even though the tape recorder is mono, not stereo, there is a good sense of space. (I now have a portable stereo recorder, so tapes I make from now on will be even more lifelike.) I mention this only to

suggest that if some of you readers go on an interesting family trip, or do something else together, you might consider buying an inexpensive portable tape recorder and making your own tape diary. You (and probably many others) will surely love listening to it later. And if some of you do make such tapes, please tell us. We might want to add some of them to our list.

When you order tapes, please make out the check to Holt Associates. Thanks very much.—JH

## **New Books Available Here**

*The Incredible Journey*, Sheila Burnford (\$1.75 + post.) Three animals, an old bull terrier, a young retriever, and a cat, become accidentally separated from their human family, and make a journey of many hundred miles through rough and wild country to join them. In their different animal ways, they work together, support each other, and more than once save each other's lives. What makes the book so exciting is that through all of this they keep their true characters as animals. The author never sentimentalizes them by turning them into people disguised in animal suits. When they finally rejoin their owners, who by this time know they are lost and despair of ever seeing them again, there won't be a dry eye in the house. A wonderful readaloud book for children of many ages.

*A Stranger At Green Knowe*, L.M. Boston (\$1.75 + post). Young Tolly, whom you'll remember from the earlier Green Knowe books, is unable to visit his great-grandmother one summer. So, eager for young people's company, she invites in his place a Chinese boy named Ping, who had earlier visited the house. Soon after he arrives, a stranger comes to Green Knowe, the strangest stranger you can imagine. Ping and the stranger become close friends. How their friendship grows, and how it ends, make up the story of this most unusual and exciting addition to the Green Knowe series.

*The Ugly Duckling*, retold by Lorinda Bryan Cauley (\$3.15 + post). Here is a modern and charmingly illustrated version of this famous old children's classic. The many birds, animals, and people are drawn in pen and ink in fine detail with great liveliness and character, and tinted in lovely shades of gold and rose and blue, so that there is much for you and the children to think or talk about while reading the text.

*A Coloring Book Of Composers* (\$2. 25 + post). Actually this is not a coloring book at all; that is a joke on the part of the publishers, who call almost all of their books “coloring books.” This book is in fact a collection of very interesting and informative short biographies of a number of famous composers. With each biography is a black-and-white portrait or sketch (often very witty) of the composer. I suppose anyone who wanted to *could* color in these illustrations, but most children who enjoyed reading the biographies would probably think that the idea of coloring in the pictures was kid stuff. In any case, it is the very interesting text that counts here, and any children (or adults) who like classical music should enjoy it very much.

*Theory Z: How American Business Can Meet The Japanese Challenge* (\$2.65 + post). You may wonder why in the world we are adding to our list a book about management practices of Japanese business. There is a very important reason, that has much to do with home schooling, and that home schoolers might be wise to mention, one way or another, in their home education proposals.

The schools defend, very sincerely, their love of rigid rules, their uniformity, and their ruthless competitiveness by saying that that is how the “real world,” by which they mean the world of business, works. What this book (like many other writings) shows very clearly that the “real world” does not work that way at all. It is because Japanese business managers understand that they are out-performing American businesses in so many fields.

In his introduction, Mr. Ouchi says:

Above all, this book recognizes that steel-pushing or fashion jeans-selling companies, mysterious hospitals, and bureaucratic post offices are social beings. This book, therefore, is about trust, subtlety, and intimacy. Without them, no social being can be successful.

It is in large part because there is so little trust, subtlety, or intimacy in so many schools that these social beings are so often in such serious trouble.

Early in his book Mr. Ouchi says, “Productivity and trust go hand in hand, strange as it may seem.” It would certainly seem strange to most Americans, businessmen or educators. This is the exact opposite of the idea put forth by Frederick Taylor in his book, *The Principles Of Scientific Management*, which for more than fifty years has had an immense influence on the managers not just of American businesses but also of American schools. (He

might well have been called the original Behavior Modifier.) What Taylor said to these managers was, in effect, “Trust your employees (or teachers and students) as little as possible; make as many decisions for them as you can; show them how to make every movement in their work; in short, make them as far as possible like machines, or parts of machines.” It does not work. It seemed to, for a while, but only because corporate managers everywhere treated their workers that way. A few people suggested, for reasons more ethical than economic, that there were other and better ways to treat human beings. But it took the Japanese to put these better ways into practice in their large corporations and to show us, in a painful way, just how much better they were. As Mr. Ouchi reports, there are signs that a few American businesses are beginning to learn this lesson. Can the others learn? Can we learn it in our schools?

Trust, subtlety, intimacy. What he means by “subtlety” is perhaps most easily shown by its opposite, rigidity, inflexibility. Anyone who has dealt with large organizations, whether businesses or schools, has heard the words, “Rules are rules, I don’t make the rules, if we make an exception for one we’ll have to make an exception for all, etc.” Japanese business managers are smarter. They understand that, as our courts say, “Circumstances alter cases,” that some times a rule doesn’t make sense, and that in such cases the sensible thing to do is adjust the rule to the case.

In the Navy, when I learned the Rules Of The Road, a set of rules governing the handling of ships, I was made to learn and memorize the most important rule of all, the General Prudential Rule, which I remember to this day: “In obeying and construing these rules, due regard shall be had to all circumstances of navigation and collision, *and to any departure from these rules which may be necessary in order to avoid immediate danger.*” In other words, if you run your ship into a rock, don’t say that the rule made you do it. A rule can never be an excuse for doing something stupid. (Not that the Navy itself always lived up to this sound principle!)

Intimacy means, again, treating people as the individuals they are, which means that you must take some time and effort to get to know who they are. It is the opposite of what I have often been told by school people, “You have to treat the children all alike.”

Two more vital quotes from Mr. Ouchi. “Letting a young person make one error of his own is believed (by business managers) to be worth more than

one hundred lectures in his education as a manager and worker.” Of all the things I have said about children and learning, nothing seems to have been harder for most parents or teachers to understand than that we should not be in a hurry to correct children’s mistakes, but wherever possible should give them time to notice and correct these mistakes themselves. The Japanese managers know this. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, “In fact, modern industrial production and industrial life are better suited to cooperation than to individualism as we practice it.” The dog-eat-dog competitiveness preached and practiced by the schools and almost everyone else in this country is, once again, not the best but the worst possible preparation even for the “real world” we live in, to say nothing of the better world we would like to live in and are going to have to make if we are to live at all. Many of us, both parents and teachers, have long suspected this, without feeling we had any way to defend it. This book gives us powerful support. It can be an extremely useful resource for home schoolers. I hope many of you will make good use of it—and if you find it useful, let us know.

*Orsinian Tales* by Ursula Le Guin (\$2.25 + post.) Between reading book reviews and browsing in bookstores, I try to keep a little in touch with the latest “important” novels, the ones that the media talk about. Almost without exception they are stories of degradation, cruelty, horror, and despair. Today’s novelists do not seem to know how to write believably about human virtue—kindness, or courage, or steadfastness, or fidelity, or trust, or hope. But Le Guin, aside from being as good a writer as she is a story-teller, can and does write *believably* about virtue, and for this reason seems to me not only an enjoyable but an important writer.

*Orsinian Tales* is a group of short stories set in different times (mostly modern) in a mythical Eastern European country, a mixture, perhaps, of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. They are in short about people living under tyranny, and trying with some success in spite of it to live with decency and dignity. They are an example and inspiration to us, for if even in their harsh circumstances they can live honorably, then under our much easier circumstances we ought to be able to live at least as well or better.

The first, very short (four pages) story in *Orsinian Tales*, “The Fountains,” makes this point very strikingly. The central character is a famous scientist. Because it makes them look good, his government lets him travel, but watches him closely to make sure he does not get away. One



afternoon, while on a tour of Versailles, he accidentally slips out of the sight of his guards. It takes him a while to realize that he has in fact escaped, and can be free. But later, as he considers which country to defect to, he realizes that in any one of these countries he will be only a kind of exhibit, like an animal in a zoo. Having discovered that in his heart he was truly free, he thought:

But he had never cared much about being safe, and now thought that he did not care much about hiding either, having found something better: his family, his inheritance. What turned him to his own land was mere fidelity. For what else should move a man, these days?

Some others of these stories don't have such happy endings—if you call this a happy ending. But all of them offer hope, if sometimes a rather grim one. What they show us is that just as one can live in spirit a slave in a society supposedly free, so one can live in spirit free in a society largely slave. This is important for us to understand, for if we fully understood that any freedom we truly possess cannot really be taken away from us, we would not feel, or fear, that we might have to go to war, perhaps destroy the earth, to prevent that from happening.

*The Dispossessed*, by Ursula Le Guin (\$2.50 + post.) This is what I would call a political novel, and one of the best I know. By political novel I mean a book that tells a story in order to state and discuss certain ideas about politics. Thus Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* said, as we now all too clearly see, that people could be as easily enslaved through pleasure and training (now Behavior Modification) as through pain and terror. Another great novel, Arthur Koestler's *Darkness At Noon*, showed how the Russian government under Stalin was able in the "treason" trials of the '30s to get people to confess to crimes they had not committed, and that the idea that good ends justify bad means must always, and usually fairly soon, lead to bad ends.

In this book Le Guin, like many writers before her, tries to show what a truly just, honest, and free society might be like, and her picture of such a society is as convincing as any I have seen. Located on a barren moon of a large rich planet, from which its founders emigrated many generations before, this society is poor, decentralized, anarchistic, based on a maximum of cooperation and sharing and a minimum of ownership, organization, and coercion. At first, it seems almost perfect, a world many of us might dream of

living in. But being both honest and experienced, Le Guin shows us that even such a society could still develop serious flaws. And thereby hangs this particular tale.

It is about a scientist, a theoretical physicist. It begins with his leaving this almost ideal world on which he was born and has lived all his life, and which he deeply believes in, to go to the large, rich planet which in most ways he distrusts, a world of enormous wealth and wretched poverty, where property is sacred and greed a virtue. He leaves because bureaucrats in his homeland—there are some even there—have made it impossible for him to complete the theory which is the great work of his life. He hopes that as an exile on the rich planet he may be able to finish and publish his theory, which may in turn bring all civilizations and people closer together. The book is just as much about him, a complicated and believable human being, as it is about societies. How he resolves his conflict I leave to readers to find out. A wonderful book, perhaps my favorite in all science fiction.

*Small Is Possible*, George McRobie (\$5.35 + post). What this book is about is well said in the subtitle: “A factual account about who is doing what, where, to put into practice the ideas expressed in E.F. Schumacher’s *Small Is Beautiful*.”

It begins with a speech by Schumacher himself to a meeting in Switzerland the day before he died, Sept. 3, 1977, at age 66. His words remind us again how great was our loss, for he was surely one of the wisest and best human beings of our time. At the beginning of his speech he said:

The first thing we ought to realize when we think about the poor is that they are real, as real as you and I, except that they can do things that you and I can’t do. I don’t know if there is a single person in this room who could survive on \$50 a year. But they are surviving. They have a knowledge that we don’t have. It is quite certain if there should be a real resources crisis or a real ecological crisis in this world, these people will survive. Whether you and I will survive is much more doubtful.

A quarter of a century ago, when I first visited Burma and then India, I realized they were able to do things we could not do. But if I as an economic magician could double the average income per head from the \$40 it was at the time to \$80, without destroying the secret pattern

of life which enabled them to live, then I would have turned Burma into the nearest thing to paradise we know. But coming from England I realized that we could not even survive on \$400 per person. If I doubled the income of Burma while changing the pattern from the traditional Burmese pattern to the English pattern, then I would have turned Burma into the world's worst slum.

I was a farm laborer in England some thirty-five years ago. We farmed very efficiently a 300 acre farm with mainly animal drawn equipment which if you were able to buy it today would cost something on the order of \$10,000. Not a single piece of this equipment is available today. It has been replaced by far more sophisticated and powerful equipment which would not cost \$10,000 but \$150,000. This means that more and more people are excluded because maybe you and I could raise \$10,000, once we had a farm, but the number who can raise \$150,000 to equip the farm is very much lower.

More than 20 years ago I concluded that overseas development aid was really a process where you collected money from the poor people in the rich countries, to give to the rich people in the poor countries.

This is of course exactly the point that Illich has kept making in his books, and that Frances Moore Lappe made in *Food First*. There is all the difference in the world between tools that enable poor people to do their work less arduously and more efficiently, and tools which put them out of work altogether. The first are truly labor-saving devices; the second we would have to call labor-eliminating or labor-destroying devices. The first turns hard-working poor people into people who are able to work slightly less hard and are slightly less poor. The second turns them into helpless and destitute unemployed.

What Schumacher and others did about this was to form an Intermediate Technology Development Group in Great Britain, and similar organizations in the U.S. and other countries. This book describes some of the work of these groups. It is an instructive, inspiring story, and above all a hopeful one, because there still remains a great deal of this work to be done, work that will require great inventiveness and skill, and that any young person (or not so

young) could feel proud of doing.

As McRobie makes clear in Part 2 of his book, the idea of Intermediate Technology—tools which are more efficient without being so expensive that only a very few can own them—is now as relevant and necessary in the rich countries as in the poor ones, for even the rich countries, almost without exception, are facing the problem of too many unemployed and too little capital, energy, or resources to put them to work.

The current political fashion in the U.S. is to say that we can solve the problem of unemployment by investing more and more money in giant high-tech corporations. But this cannot work, for many reasons. It costs a great deal to create each new high-tech job; to provide high-tech jobs for all who seek them would take far more capital than we have any way to raise. Even if we could, all the other rich countries plan to do exactly the same thing. To whom do we think we will sell all our computers?

In this connection McRobie, on page 78, gives us this most revealing piece of information:

The failure of large-scale corporations to create employment is illustrated by this evidence from the U.S.A.: between 1969 and 1976, total employment in the U.S.A. went up by nearly 10 million—but only one percent of this increase occurred in the 1,000 largest companies in the U.S.A. (listed by *Fortune* magazine each year).

McRobie then adds another urgent reason for finding a smaller, cheaper, and less destructive technology in the rich countries —“The damage done to men and women and their families by the growth of large-scale industries and the lifestyles they impose on society—boring, meaningless work, production and consumption seemingly geared to maximizing waste.” Most modern industrial work is bad work, even for those who have it and no matter how much they are paid, and we are beginning to see in all rich countries the destructive social effects of this kind of work. Even in the small and relatively peaceful and kindly Scandinavian countries, where none go homeless or hungry, even in Norway where there is as yet no serious unemployment, young people are growing increasingly alienated, angry, and violent, for the life they see stretching ahead of them is a life without challenge, interest, or worthy purpose.

An important point of this for home schoolers is that the world for which

most schools claim to be preparing their students is a world of the past, everywhere breaking down and dying out. To make the world of the future, or even to survive in it, requires a very different kind of growing and learning for children, the kind that many home schoolers are encouraging. Many of them will find this book very interesting and helpful.

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# Growing Without Schooling 29

September 1982

We're in the middle of moving again! An office suite on the third floor of our building became available, and because we are jammed to overflowing in our current space, we decided to take it. The new place has more than twice as much room, and it will be a tight squeeze on our budget, but as John says, this may be our only chance to get more space without changing mailing addresses again.

John is away right now on a week-long lecture trip to Arizona and Colorado. In the last two months, he has had more time than usual to work on stories for *GWS*. He has also done quite a few more radio phone interviews: New Orleans, Pinellas Park FL, Columbus OH, Boston, Madison WI, Saskatoon, New York City, Phoenix, and Grand Junction CO. He reports that the August home-schooling meetings in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Baton Rouge were very successful and enthusiastic. He has also gone to an unschoolers' picnic in Salem, Mass; spent a "Cello Weekend" at Apple Hill in New Hampshire; and visited for several days in Maine with George and Mabel Dennison and the apple-picking crew of Arthur Harvey and Elizabeth Gravelos.

In *GWS* #24, we asked if anyone would be interested in helping us out in the office if we could find a place for them to stay. The first to take us up on that was Phil Bradshaw, age 24, from Minneapolis, who came for three weeks in August. We surely appreciate all the help we can get; there is simply much more work to do around here than there are people to do it.

We mentioned before that Yankee magazine published an excellent biographical article on John, with a magnificent color photo of John and Vita Wallace (age 5) playing cello and violin together. We have extra copies of the article here, which we will be happy to make available for \$1 each.

The Education Network conference we mentioned in the last issue, which was inviting children's artwork for a special show, has been postponed until the spring of 1983. I don't know what this means in regard to submitting entries; it might be wise for you to check with them before sending anything

in.—Donna Richoux

## **John's Coming Schedule**

Oct 13, 1982: Lecture meeting arranged by Theo Giesy, Norfolk VA; 804-62S-75S8.

Oct 16: Maryland home-schoolers. Contact Manfred Smith, 908S Flamepool Way, Columbia MD 2104S.

Oct 17: Conference on children, Kingston NY. Contact Dr. George Wootan, 914-331-407S.

Oct 19: "Fate of the Earth" conference, New York City. Contact Friends of the Earth, 212-67S-S911.

Oct 27: Universal Education Conference, Pisa, Italy. Contact Connie Miller, phone OS0-68976-68894 (date change).

Nov 4: NY State Reading Association Conf., Kiamesha Lake NY. Contact Jean Burns, SI8-463-002S or 434-1960.

Nov 17: San Bernardino Valley Community College, San Bernardino CA. Contact Jack Mitchell, 88S-0231.

Nov 18: University of California at Riverside. Contact Jim Dillon, 714-787-S228.

Please write to me directly for information on meetings and lectures.—  
Peggy Durkee

## **N.H. Supreme Court Ruling**

From the *Valley News* (NH), 9/3/82:

The New Hampshire Supreme Court has sided with the parents of nine-year-old Justin Rice in their two and a half year struggle for the right to educate him at home.

Attorney Robert Larsen represented the Rices on behalf of the New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union. Part of his argument was that the Rices' rights to "due process" were denied because neither the state nor the local board gave them written explanations of the shortcomings of their application.

The court agreed that due process was denied. But three of the five

justices confirmed the right of school boards to deny applications for home study if a “manifest hardship” is not shown. And the majority agreed that the Rices’ 1980 application did not show that Justin would receive “special benefits” from home study, as required by state regulations.

“There’s a little bit in this decision for everyone,” said attorney Larsen after yesterday’s ruling. “Overall, I think it’s a very good decision for home schoolers in New Hampshire, even though the majority took a somewhat conservative pose.”

Larsen said the decision touched on three points that he felt favored home schooling. “First, the Supreme Court agreed that home education is permissible in New Hampshire and that parents can educate a child at home not only when the child has some (emotional or physical) difficulty, but when the parents can set up a program that offers special benefits.”

“The second point is that the court reaffirmed the working relationship between local school boards and applicants” to make a home schooling project work.

The third point in favor of home education is the dissenting opinion (DR: Actually a separate concurring opinion) written by Justices David Brock and Charles Douglas. “It’s very, very supportive of home education,” Larsen said, “This is some of the most positive language I’ve ever read in a judicial decision.”

Douglas said, “Home education is an enduring American tradition and right, having produced such notables as Abraham Lincoln (one year of schooling); Woodrow Wilson (little schooling prior to college); and Thomas Edison (basically taught at home by his mother).”

While the state may adopt a policy of requiring the education of children, Douglas wrote, “it does not have the unlimited power to require they be educated in a certain way at a certain place.”

About 10,000 children now are being taught at home in the country, Douglas wrote, pointing out that recently “our neighboring state of



Vermont held that requiring a child to attend public school or else be receiving an ‘equivalent education’ could not be read to require that attendance be exclusively confined to ‘approved schools.’”

It took the court six months to reach and publish its decision on the case. In the meantime, the Claremont School Board was forced to make a decision on the Rice application for the coming school year. On Aug. 11, the board reversed its previous stands and approved the application.

“When we won at the local board it was like something was still missing,” Mr. Rice said yesterday. “When this happened, it was like the missing link was fit into place.”

## **Travelling Through Europe**

*From Art Horovitch in Alberta:*

We have spent the last ten months on an extended vacation, as part of a “sabbatical year” arrangement from my job as a high school teacher. Our two daughters, Vivian (12) and Debbie (8), were somewhat apprehensive when we first discussed the idea of spending some time on an Israeli kibbutz, followed by several months of travel through Europe. Vivian, by the way, has been homeschooling for almost two years now, and enjoys it immensely in contrast to the hassles of attending the local school.

On the plane from Haifa to Athens, I taught the kids the Greek alphabet and what each letter sounded like. They were soon busy trying to pronounce every Greek word they saw, even though the meaning often eluded us. We did find that many English words have a Greek base, so if you use the English word with a slight variation, you may be understood.

The kids learned to count up to twenty and beyond, and would often listen for prices in stores or restaurants. This became an ongoing project for Vivian who learned to count to twenty in Hebrew, Greek, Italian, Spanish, and French.

Vivian was the official “geographer” for our trip, drawing a map of each new country as we entered it, and marking our path with dates, as we wandered from one small town to the next.

Both Vivian and Debbie delighted in making currency exchanges. Debbie

liked Greece, where the rate was about 50 drachmas to the dollar. I told her to divide by 50 to get the price in dollars, but she had her own way of doing it—multiply by 2 and move the decimal. She found this much easier. Italian conversion was much easier with a rate of 1000 lire to \$1. We just omitted the word “thousand” to get the value in dollars.

Both kids learned comparison shopping and how to live within a budget. Debbie saw a doll near the Coliseum in Rome at a cost of about \$4. Further down the road, the same item was \$3 and at the large market where most of the locals shop it was only \$2.50. We felt it was very important to give each of them a certain amount of money to spend as they wished, all the while encouraging them to think of the other countries we would be going through where they would want other souvenirs. Debbie went a bit overboard at first, but was “saved” when Granny sent her a \$10 money order for her birthday.

As we drove through southern Greece and Crete, both kids read about ancient Greek gods, learned to identify styles of architecture, and developed a large vocabulary related to archaeology. It was not unusual to hear Debbie using words like Acropolis, Olympian, prehistory, and Knossos in everyday conversation and understanding what they meant, because we had actually seen the ruins (often reconstructed) and walked through them and touched them. One of the highlights of Greece was running the “marathon” at the large race track at Delphi. It gave us all such a sense of history, and was, of course, just done for the fun of it.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of the trip was being able to meet and live with local families for several days at a time through an organization called Servas (see *GWS* #28). It is a travellers’ organization whose members receive lists of people in each country who are ready to act as hosts. There is often a valuable exchange of ideas between hosts and travellers, and you can really reach a better understanding of how other people live and think, what dislikes and likes are, and how they view us as North Americans. Many hosts are teachers, and I can remember some long discussions about education. Some were astounded to think that we could take our daughters out of school, and others thought it was quite reasonable. One child of a host in France whispered to his mother, “They aren’t going to school! Wouldn’t that be great!”

It was quite fascinating to watch the interaction of our kids with those of other families. Usually within 10 minutes of our arrival, Vivian would come

to me and say, “Dad, I need your dictionary.” This was a pocket dictionary for each country we passed through. In Italy I found her and a friend playing “bilingual scrabble”: Vivian made up words in English and her friend made words in Italian. The dictionary was used to find out what each word meant. What a way to learn a language! In Paris, they all played Monopoly, but all the street names were French.

Everywhere we went, the kids took sketch books and a diary. They tried drawing sketches of some of the ruins in Greece and Rome, and were really fascinated watching the artists in Venice at work along the canals. We visited many art museums and the kids especially liked the smaller ones in France and Spain which concentrated on the work of one artist. Debbie’s favorite artist is Picasso, and she can give quite a description of his painting.

Vivian was intrigued by the subways and insisted that we wait in the station while she drew the map with all the stops. She did this in Rome, Barcelona, and Madrid, but gave up in Paris where there must be about 15 lines and over 100 stations.

So, all in all, it was a fantastic trip and learning experience for all of us. We kept quite detailed diaries, and hope to compile these and make them the basis for a book.

## **Local News**

DR: First, I want to say how delighted and impressed we are with the quality of the local newsletters started by home-schoolers. They seem to be full of interesting offers and announcements, useful legal suggestions, thoughtful articles on learning and living with children, and practical tips. Putting together these newsletters obviously requires a lot of time, energy, and commitment, and we are thankful that so many of you are doing that work, since clearly there’s no way we could fit so much good material in *GWS*.

For addresses of home-schooling organizations, see *GWS* #27, or send \$1 for our “Home-Schooling Resource List.”

ARIZONA: From an article in an Arizona Home Education Association publication, about the home-schooling bill that passed last summer (*GWS* #27): “The governor in the two days he delayed signing the bill received five hundred phone calls in favor of it. He asked a minister to PLEASE tell his

people to stop calling, because he planned to sign it. The minister hadn't asked anybody to call. Brian Evans asked a lot of people, but he certainly didn't ask five hundred. We have no idea of where all those calls came from."

CALIFORNIA: John Boston in Escondido reports, "A growing number of home schoolers in Los Angeles and Orange County are being harassed by school districts. They are being told that they fall under a home tutorial section of the Education code and the teacher must be state certified. In our county, San Diego, the County Superintendent's office has a letter from the County Council (the schools' legal advisors) stating the same thing. I advise those who call me to ask for a private school affidavit to operate a private school, period! They cannot refuse to give that. If they did, the State Code, Section 33190, says you can file an affidavit *or statement* to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. So you can just send a statement with the required information." (See story on "*People v. Turner*," this issue.)

John Boston also offered two 6-hour workshops on home-schooling, charging \$15/person or \$20/family.

KENTUCKY: Home-schoolers had their second annual picnic Aug. 7, which included a panel discussion after lunch. Ruth McCutchen has been offering home-schooling workshops, advertising in a local periodical and on a library bulletin board.

MAINE: Maine Home Education held a "First Annual? Picnic" Oct. 3 at Reid State Park, and had a display table and panel discussion at the Common Ground Fair, Sept. 24-26.

MINNESOTA: From an article in the Midwest Libertarian Librarian Association: "According to the state Education Department there are about 1,000 children now being educated at home in Minnesota. A core group of 100 people is now on the (Minnesota Home School NeTWORK) mailing list."

NEW HAMPSHIRE: From Kathie Dupont, RFD 2 Box 255, Laconia NH 03246: "We would like to visit with other home-schooling families and a newsletter would get us in touch. NH folks, please write to me if you would like a free copy of the N.H. Home Schools Newsletter."

NEW JERSEY: the New Jersey Family Schools Association (RD 1 Box 7, Califon NJ 07830) is looking for ways to raise \$500 in order to put on a Home Education Convention and bring John to their area. Some of their ideas

are: recycling, a membership drive, an ongoing book sale, and, most interesting, market research. From their September Bulletin: “Doreen Jandoli of Phase Design, Inc., will be present at this meeting for our first fundraising. She needs adults to test childproof bottle caps. We must have at least 10 people present and she will give us \$1.50 per person tested. If we have 20 people present, she will give us \$1.75 per person. This is a painless test. She asks each person individually in a separate room to open a bottle as she times you. It takes all of 3–4 seconds. The hardest part of this fund raiser is reading the consent form and signing it. If you have done this before, you may not do it again. Please come to help us with this fund-raising and bring people with you; that will add to our profits.”

NORTH CAROLINA: Federal judge Franklin Dupree ruled Aug. 28 that the state compulsory school attendance law was unconstitutional, but only in the case of a Tyrrell County home-schooling family, Peter and Carol Duro, who had religious grounds. Officials in the state are unsure what this will mean for other home-schoolers. Thomas Strickland, the lawyer for another home-schooling family, the Delcontes (*GWS* #25, 26) cautions that the federal decision could be overturned by a higher court, so he will not lean on it too hard in his own case.

OREGON: Anna Quinn-Smith (*GWS* #27) writes from Portland, “The group of several parents planning to homeschool this fall has happened—they will use Oak Meadow curriculum within each family group and get together with the other families to share specialties—art, music, horseback riding, and so on. One of the fathers plays in the Oregon Symphony. Though Kristin is 2–3 years older than these kids, we will join in on some of the excursions and special talents offered.”

UTAH: Laurie Huffman of the Utah Home Education Association writes, “The convention (9/11) was a great success with nearly 600 in attendance! We are exhausted and want to go on a very extended leave of absence, but the phone just keeps on ringing.” Speakers were Ken Huffman, Joyce Kinmont, and Cathy Bergman. The Association will sell the extensive info packets, handed out at the Convention, for \$3.

Joyce Kinmont wrote in the newsletter she started, *Tender Tutor* (more excerpts later this issue): “If you live in Utah and your high school principal is not cooperative in allowing your child to take one or two classes, ask him to call Bernard Furse in the State Department of Education. I asked him to

verify the state policy and he said that since education is required by law to be free, when a student presents himself, he must be accepted for one course or a complete program.

WASHINGTON: Wendy Wartes sent us an announcement for an Alternative Education Conference in Edmonds, Sept. 25.

## Helpful Official's Remarks

*Bob Dolan, the Director of Special Services of the Rockland (MA) School District, sent at our request a transcript of the supportive and sensible remarks about home-schooling that he made at a teacher's workshop (GWS #26). From his question/answer session:*

I think the School Committee, the Superintendent, and myself have taken what I call a sane attitude about this whole thing and we're not going to go crazy about it. We agree with the Superior Court ruling that parents do indeed have a right to educate their children at home. We have agreed that we shall not question those reasons—which is a part of that (court) decision. It's not our business to ask why parents educate their children at home. It's a right that they have. We don't ask why parents send their children to school, so we're not going to do the reverse.

How do we evaluate? My own personal preference is to let the parents develop their own evaluation plan. If they're capable of developing an educational plan, then they're capable of evaluating that plan, and we ask that that be reported and resubmitted to the School Committee each year. So ... these parents submit to me an educational plan which goes before the School Committee in a public hearing and that's approved annually by the School Committee, and in that are the elements of whatever evaluation is going to take place.

Other things—hours. We're not going to be tacky about hours. One of the parents brought up to me the fact that one of their children learns a foreign language when they're sleeping. Are those learning hours? I maintain that they are.

Q. Do they comply with the competency testing?

A. All the parents have complied with that and they're willing to bring the children in. However, it's not a necessity. We don't do it with the kids who go to (a local private school); but as long as (the parents) are in agreement, I would like to see that done every year. If they don't want to do that, I'm not going to argue with it. They have their own evaluation plan. As I said, we don't chase the kids from the private school, we're not going to chase the children who are at home. Essentially it's a parallel system—home education is a private educational program done in the home. We'll treat it to the greatest degree we can just as we treat private schools within our own community. Once a year we re-evaluate and approve all the private kindergartens and things like that and that's the way we're going to treat home education—not any differently.

Q. What about those children who have gone into this type of program, then give up on it and return to the regular classroom? Teachers would be expected to teach these children when in fact they may not be in the same place or have received the same thing as the children coming through the school.

A. I personally don't have a lot of trouble with that because I know that. children in the 8th grade tend to have a variance in grade level ability of somewhere between 5 and 11 to 12. So as long as a kid coming from home education is somewhere between age level or grade level 5 and grade level 11, there'll be no questions asked. I don't think it's a big issue.

Q. I've heard of some cases where parents did not do a good job and children aren't disciplined and aren't learning. What can the School Department do in those cases?

A. Two separate issues you brought up. One is where a child is not thriving in the environment; the other is where a child has no external controls around him. The external controls are very easy to assess and something would be done about it. We have legal recourse in that event. However, where a child fails to thrive from year to year—if that went on over a series of years, I think we would be very emphatic about making some kind of a change. In one year we don't make

children who are in public school leave because they don't thrive from one year to the next. We try to make changes and we use that same attitude. in dealing with the education of the children at home.

## More Helpful Officials

*From a forthcoming article by Diane Divoky which will appear in Phi Delta Kappan, Feb. '83, along with an article by John Holt:*

John Rogers, superintendent of the Rockland (MA) schools, explained: "We believe that people can be educated in places other than school. I don't think we have a monopoly on education. Who's to say where children can get a proper education?" The Rockland schools are one of a handful of districts known to be friendly to home schoolers (*GWS* #27), and as a result "people who want to home school are moving into town, knowing they won't get hassled," Rogers said. He added that the district is willing to provide books and programs for home schooled children, and plans to start placing them on the district's rolls so state funds can be collected for them.

The tiny San Juan Ridge Union School District in Nevada City, CA, has had home schooled youngsters on its rolls for a number of years. When administrator Marilyn DeVore realized about a dozen children living within the district were being schooled at home, she decided to work with their parents rather than fight them. Under the arrangement, the students are tested by the district, and DeVore herself supervises the course of study the parents propose and teach. "The board approves each individual course of study," she said, and so far the children learning at home are doing very well on district tests.

## Recycling Books

We are distressed that *The Way It Spozed To Be* by Jim Herndon is out of print. This is not only one of the funniest books ever written about American life, worthy to stand beside the best of Mark Twain, but also one of the most perceptive, true, and honest of all books about schools and education. If the schools had only heard, and understood, and put to use what Herndon said, they would be in a lot less trouble than they are in now. Well, we have to do



what we can to keep this book alive, and you can help us. Please look for second-hand copies of *The Way It Spozed To Be*—in good condition—in thrift shops, flea markets, garage sales, etc., and send them in to us. We will pay \$2 for each usable book, and will resell them here for \$3 each. Books should have no missing pages or covers, and not be written in.

Because it is a nuisance for us to write a lot of small checks, we would prefer to issue the \$2 payment as a credit slip, good for your next renewal or book order. If you want to forego the \$2 and consider the book a donation to us, great—please tell us so.

We don't want any of you sending us your own personal copies! If you're tempted to do so, why not sit down and read it through again before you wrap it up. You may well find you change your mind!—DR & JH

## **Relaxing the Structure**

*From Anita Fryzel (NY):*

I would like to relate my personal experience with our home schooling venture. It may help someone else—I hope.

We were so excited about our new life-style that we wanted to do everything just right. We had our class room set up with blackboard, books, etc. Our schedule was to start at 8:30AM just like the local school. I planned lessons, timed each session, kept a daily record of everything we did—it was a perfect “school.”

But something was wrong. I began to think I had made a terrible mistake. I spent 3 hours each day teaching the children, my house work got behind, I was tied down. We were pushing against each other all the time and were very unhappy. Dena felt like she had to hide during school hours, was afraid someone from school would see her and cause trouble. I felt as if I had given up so much for them and they did not appreciate it. Then I felt guilty for feeling that way. We had promised the school that we would cover their books and keep the same hours they did. This went on for several weeks before I realized something had to change. This was just not working. When I had read John's book *Teach Your Own*, it gave us the inspiration and courage to go ahead with our plans to take them out, but I did not agree with his theory that children will learn at their own pace without us to push them. I felt that we had to be organized and do it properly for them to have a proper

education. Well, as I analyzed our proper, organized school I began to have second thoughts on his theory.

We finally called a family meeting and discussed the problem. We had promised the school to cover their books and we had to keep our word. The children went on the honor system. They would cover each subject at their leisure until they understood it, give me a couple of papers, then go on to the next subject. This way they did not have to spend hours doing repetitious pages. All of us now relaxed and began to enjoy each other again.

Since leaving school both of them have more friends and are more sociable. Several of the children from school have become more friendly. Dena, for example, had only *one* friend in school—now three of the nicest girls she knew in school have become very good friends and visit to do things together—bike riding, P.J. parties, etc. They envy her not going to school. Mike is close with two or three boys too, and never gets bored any more. He is always busy with someone.

My son who is married and is now living at the farm is very talented, so with his help the children and I decided to help remodel the house. Together we tore off a large section of the house piece by piece with the help of a tractor, which my son taught both of them to drive. All of us worked together with the help of an experienced carpenter to put a 16 X 40 foot addition on the house. We even helped on the roof. Where could they get such knowledge in school?

Our pond sides had broken during a storm so we mended it and made a new dike better than the original one. It took lots of hard work, but we did it together and all of us learned as we worked.

Dena and Mike are so much happier and relaxed, so out-going and sociable. They can carry on a conversation with anyone regardless of age or stature in life on so many subjects. They took a computer course at the university in July. Both loved it.

One day Mike and I stopped at a porch sale. The man had a chain saw for sale. Mike amazed me so much as he carried on a half-hour conversation with the man about chain saws. He had read about them in a book and knew all the name brands, how they were made, which was best for each project, etc. Mike was 10-years-old at the time; he is very large for his age so the man did not realize he was talking to a 10-year-old boy.

# It's All Learning

*From Margie Viola in California:*

Last fall we took our two oldest boys (8 and 7) out of public school. What do they do all day every day? They're normal kids. They like to watch TV and play. Sometimes they get bored and fight all day. But, honestly, from where I sit, it all (except for the TV) looks like learning of some kind.

They're learning to cook. Josh (7) makes a good mushroom omelet. They are learning a lot of math (measuring), reading (recipes), and nutrition in the kitchen. They grocery shop with me once a week and are learning how to plan meals, make a list, and comparison shop. They have regular household chores to do and earn an allowance, which teaches them responsibility and how to handle money (more math).

They like to work with clay, specializing in weird monster sculptures. They go outside and make "dioramas" (their term, learned in museums) of dinosaur scenes (they know the names of most dinosaurs and many facts about them). My oldest, Justin, at eight is an artist—sketches better than I will.

Recently we spent some time camping at the beach where they learned what redwoods and poison oak are, as well as catching hermit crabs, sand crabs, starfish, sea anemones, and fish. They put the clams in a bucket with sand and sea water and watched them dig with their feet and use their siphons. Later, at home, we checked out a book from the library to learn more about sea life. They have fished with their dad numerous times and know how to clean fish. Recently they cleaned some fish, saving all the organs to show their friends, then cooked the fish and ate them.

There is a bird nest near our home which they watched the parent birds build, watched over the four tiny eggs the mother bird laid, and saw the babies newly hatched. Now the boys are excited to see the babies getting feathers. We've taken pictures of all these stages, so they have learned to use my camera. We are anxiously awaiting the arrival in the mail of the finished pictures so they can make a notebook.

They like maps—we have a large map of the world on our den wall and a complete world atlas, both of which are consulted frequently. (It now occurs to me that I could have let them look at a map during our last camping trip,

maybe cutting down some of the car travel boredom and questions of “When will we be there?”) Recently my husband was impressed to find that Justin actually knew that New York State was on the North Atlantic Ocean, and he admitted that maybe they are learning something, after all.

They helped me, in the spring, prepare the soil and plant a garden, learning the names of several plants and flowers, plus having the satisfaction (and it really does seem to thrill them) of eating the fruits of their labor.

I could go on and on. The funny thing is, when they were in school we didn’t have time to do all this stuff together. So much of the kind of teaching done in our schools is abstract, on paper, in two-dimensional letters and numbers, with the life taken out of it. A child must decipher these abstractions then turn around and relate them to real life in order to make them useful and meaningful. To me, this seems backwards!

I’ve had lots of people say to me, “I’d love to home school my kids but I don’t have the patience.” Well, I am not a patient person, and we have our days. Once or twice the thought has occurred to me, briefly, that maybe it would be better if they were in school. Then I remember them coming home tense in the afternoons, unwinding by crying and fighting, loaded with homework. No, there’s really no question in my mind.

Sometimes I ask myself, for whom has home-schooling actually been the most beneficial, me or the kids? My own growth in the last year has amazed me. Now I have a much sharper concept of my worth as a mother. I always heard it was good to do things with your kids, to which I would reply, “OK. What?” I no longer have to ask. Our roles have changed. We are not so much “mother” and “children” any more, but just all family members. Even if they did (for some unforeseen reason) go back to school, things will just never be the same as they were before. I amaze myself, really, at my new strengths in my ability to fly in the face of everything socially acceptable. But more than the strength itself is the reasoning power and digging up of resources that lies behind it, which I never knew I possessed.

Ironically enough, my husband, who has been my biggest critic (partly because he is closest to me, of course), has also been my first inspiration. He would never settle for “the norm,” never settle for a mere 9-5 job, a tract house in some nice neighborhood, beer and football on weekends, etc. Not that there’s anything wrong with those things, if they happen to be what you want. But not Tony. He is very different, self-made, and does a lot of things

that other people aren't supposed to be able to do in just the way he has done them! Happily, he is a man who involves himself with his kids; he sometimes takes them to work with him, which I think is just great.

I read with some disbelief the *GWS* letter from a woman who said her almost-two-year-old could crack eggs. Lo and behold, *my* almost-two-year-old now cracks all our eggs. At first she was messy, but didn't like getting egg all over her hands, so I showed her a less messy way and she soon caught on. Letting her do it was not my idea, but whenever I'm cooking she insists on helping. (This child learned to talk in sentences around one year and she always knows exactly what she wants and tells us in no uncertain terms.).

## Ideas & Problems

*Denise Hodges (IL) wrote:*

A fun thing we've accidentally discovered is a "Living Maze." We go for bike rides daily, and one day I suggested we make a map of our neighborhood. So we did, and now before we go for a ride, Lucas (8) traces our proposed route on the map, and then he leads us on this route. When we get home we check the map to see if we followed the chosen route. Or I'll lead the ride, and when we get home Lucas will trace the route we went on. I'm not sure what he's learning from this but I have a hunch it's important.

Another thing I've found useful for home-schooling is our VCR (video cassette recorder). I am very strict about TV, but when there is something good on, I'll tape it and then we can watch it at our convenience. This is great because whenever there's something on I think the kids would like, they are usually involved in something else and I hate to interrupt them. For example, I taped all 13 episodes of a terrific science show on PBS called "Life on Earth." Lucas really enjoyed them, and if the narrator said something we didn't understand, we could rewind the tape and go over it again. Or we could get another look at that neat yellow and black poisonous frog!

A source of free information I've found is the local Conservation District. They offer guided nature walks, lectures, activities, booklets, and even films. My concern for the environment, and my love of nature are things I am trying to instill in my kids, and the Conservation District is helping. The Lakota Indians believed that a child would not learn to respect himself or other human beings unless he first respects nature. I believe this also, and we spend

some of our time “making the earth happy,” as Lucas says, by filling big garbage bags full of litter that the school kids have left behind.

Now I would like to share with you some of my problems. I finished my “education” totally void of any real skills. I often wonder if I have enough to offer my children. Mostly, I read and write. I am trying to teach myself to play the dulcimer. I’ve managed to master some of the homemaking arts (out of necessity and no easy matter). Other than that, I’m pretty useless!

I literally do not know how to play and get bored quickly. I am trying to let the kids teach me but again, it’s a slow process. Playing with (on) my dulcimer is a great help as I can really get into that. I think of play as being absorbed in the joyous moment, and it is a precious thing. One of the worst crimes of schools is taking PLAY away from the kids.

My husband, also a teacher, on the other hand is terrific at playing. He taught arts and crafts for 12 years, until the art program was cut, and is one of those rare teachers who inspires by his very presence. I never understood why, but now I realize it’s because of what he *didn’t* do. Basically, he provided the materials, a few suggestions, and then went about his own business, creating his own works of art! He is an artist first, and a teacher second, and I think the kids picked up on that.

Another problem: I lose my patience over my kids constant bickering. I empathized with Bonnie Miesel (*GWS* #26). Can they live together in harmony or not? Should I interfere or not? I’ve tried it all ways. Sometimes I offer suggestions to solve their differences, sometimes I ignore them, and sometimes I lose my cool and yell. It is driving me crazy!

Mostly they argue over things (toys), and about who gets to do what. Right now they are about ready to strangle each other over who gets to spread the butter on the sandwiches. (I told them each to do their own.) And *how* do you cook with six hands? How do some of these women with six kids let them all help in the kitchen? I mastered cooking with four hands (Maia’s and mine) but now with six hands I’m at a loss! I’ve practically given up baking since Lucas has been home due to this problem. It starts out fun and ends up a disaster with all three of us mad.

What we *do* do a lot is go for nature walks, ride bikes, read fairy tales, and talk. My “hyperactive” son will sit for hours listening to fairy tales! I always tire of them long before he does.

## Responsible in the Kitchen

*Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote:*

Turning over tasks that you normally do to others can be difficult. I find that in the kitchen all the time. If Bob or the kids make dinner, I am always butting in with advice and I feel this ridiculous anxiety about their spoiling everything. So I have to try, consciously, to share the kitchen, with the idea that someday they'll all work well enough in there that they'll save me a good deal of time. And really, despite my interference, Bob and the kids are really getting handy and are producing some good meals. One thing I've noticed, though, is that in order to keep up their interest in cooking, shopping, and cleaning, they need to be given enough real responsibility so that they feel as though they are accomplishing things. Although they do clear away their own plates at the end of a meal, what Vita and Ishmael like *best* is clearing the whole table, all by themselves.

## Nine in a Trailer

*Joyce Kinmont (UT) wrote in The Tender Tutor (for LDS Home Educators, \$5/yr; Rt 2 Box 106-C, Brigham City UT 84302):*

When we started our home school we had just suffered a business failure, had sold our home to pay our bills, and were renting a very tiny home. It was about 24' X 24' divided into four square rooms. One was the kitchen, one was a bathroom and a closet (the only closet), one was the living room, and we made the other one our schoolroom. We had an Indian Placement student at the time, so there were eight of us, but we felt a schoolroom was more important than a bedroom, so we all slept on the floor.

Our family now lives in a mobile home which is very nice but still crowded. Our children have chosen, again, to sleep on the living room floor rather than to clutter up our limited space with beds. Our schoolroom is in another, smaller mobile home and is very adequate. It is furnished with a blackboard, a bulletin board, bookshelves, a large work table, a desk for everyone, and lots of paper, pencils, books, and other learning aids. Because I spend a lot of time in this room, the children do too. It is the most important room in our home.

Incidentally, there are some great side benefits to having the children sleep on the living room floor. We have eliminated all bedtime problems. No one feels isolated or rejected. I never worry about trying to decide for the children when they are tired and need to go to bed—the first tired person simply puts something good on the videotape machine and rolls out his sleeping bag. The others follow when they are ready, which is usually right away. There is peace and contentment in our evenings.

In our home we have had some bad experiences with television, but most of the time we love it—because we have video equipment and are in control (we drive a ratty old car and sit on couches with protruding springs, but we do have video). We have a good collection of excellent programs—movies like *Sound of Music*, historical programs like the launching of the space shuttle and Barbara Walter's interview with President Reagan.

People often ask me, "How do you find time to do the housework?" I usually answer, "I never said I cleaned the house!"

The truth, of course, is that I have had to be better organized. Since we are a large family living in rather small quarters, we have had to learn to conserve our space as well as our time.

(For example) the laundry:

1) Every child eight-years-old and over washes his own clothing. Right now that means I am only responsible for the laundry for four of us—the two little girls and Dick and myself.

2). I try to keep all the clothing near the laundry and dressing area. The little girls' clothing is kept in apple boxes on the shelf over the washer. The three older girls prefer to keep their clothing in their own rooms, which is fine because I don't have to worry about it.

3) We keep a minimum of clothing. If the dressers or the apple boxes are too full, we have too much clothing, so we get rid of some.

4) We try not to buy clothing that cannot be washed.

5) We buy a lot of our clothing at Deseret Industries or garage sales. We try to take the pressure off our children in this area. Children, like adults, sometimes lose or ruin their clothing, especially jackets. We don't ever want our children to feel their clothing is more important or valuable than they are! If we haven't made a big investment in an item there is no trauma if something happens to it. Andrea, being a teenager, is an exception. She buys all her own clothes and gets them new. But, again, that is totally her own



domain.

6) Outgrown and out-of-season clothing is stored in boxes in the storage shed. Every four to six months we bring the outgrown clothing in and go through it, taking out what now fits someone and putting in what is now outgrown. In-between those times, I keep a file box on the closet shelf into which I toss clothing that needs to be stored away in the shed.

7) Each family member has his own towel.

8) We sleep in sleeping bags. No sheets to launder!

We eat as much of our food as possible in its natural or raw state. This practice, together with not eating meat, saves a great deal of cooking and cleaning up time. And we believe we are much healthier for it.

Since eating is not the most important thing that goes on in our house, I do not insist that it take priority over other things. After the morning's school activities, I usually fix a big salad for Dick and myself. If anyone wants to share with us, great. If they are busy or not hungry, that is fine too. I never try to decide for our children when they should be hungry or how much they should eat.

We keep on hand a variety of food the children can fix for themselves—several kinds of natural raw cereal, popcorn, baked potatoes, apples, carrots, and other vegetables. We expect the children to eat when they are hungry and to clean up after themselves. Each family member has his own bowl, plate, and cup. If they don't clean up, I pile other dirty dishes on top of theirs until they do. And of course they have to wash their dishes before they can eat again.

Many will argue about the importance of the family sitting down to the dinner table together. That is only a valid argument if dinner is the only time the family does meet together. We prefer to have daily family devotionals where we can discuss the gospel and important family matters without the distractions of eating.

## **Always Involved**

*From Meryl Runion (FL):*

Skyler (1½) is growing up much like many of the babies described in *GWS*. He has to share in every activity. When I read *The Continuum Concept*, Liedloff didn't tell me they'd still want to be carried at eighteen

months! I think Skyler likes it because he's sure to be able to participate. I wouldn't dream of unwrapping a stick of butter myself—he loves it too much. I never turn a light off or on if he's nearby, I hold him up to do it. If he spills something, I hand him the sponge. He loves to stir things, loves to load the washer and dryer, loves to vacuum, loves to sit on the vacuum while I vacuum. Things may take twice as long but they're so much more fun.

Every chore needs to be worked out as to how he can participate. Grocery shopping? I hand him the food and he puts it in the cart. He bags the produce. He carries the bread into the house. Bed-making? A variety of ways on that one!!! I try never to say no to him; if he's doing something objectionable, I redirect him. But this means finding an alternative that *really satisfies* him, and that's a challenge. Mothering is the biggest challenge I've had.

I've always identified pretty easily with the interests and desires of children, and especially now as a mom I take their feelings very seriously. This was a big problem where we used to live, because I loved the neighbor kids but I felt like the moms were unreasonable. Take Maggie—she'd ask me to hold her, her mom would say, "Get down." She'd ask me to push her on the swing, her mom would say "She doesn't want to." She wanted to examine my watch; her mom said, "Leave her watch alone." Then her mom tells me how she's spoiled Maggie and now she's a real brat. If I suggested it was OK, I didn't mind, Maggie's mom would feel undermined in her authority. I finally had to quit going over there when she passed a rule that kids had to stay in the wading pool or stay out, but no running back and forth. Skyler couldn't handle that rule, so every time Maggie was out I'd think of an outing for us so Skyler wouldn't hear her and want to go there.

Our new neighbors are easier with their kids and I relate to them more easily. But I still find myself wanting to continually explain their kids' perspective to them when they reprimand them, often every few minutes. I bite my tongue—they don't like being corrected any more than the kids do (me either)—and they are *their* kids. But when Justin wants a rag to wipe off a table his mom thinks is clean and she gets mad because he gets upset when she won't give it to him, I want to say, "Give him the rag—so what if it's cleaned extra? It's important to him even if it's unnecessary by your standards. "And when Sonny doesn't want Skyler to play with his toys, I want to say, "They're his toys, aren't they? He needs them to be his before he can be generous. What *would* you like him to play with?" Instead he gets

whacked. And when they say, “Don’t say no to your mother,” I think, why not, you say no to him all the time.

So how do most people deal with their friends of different persuasion? I wish Kathy Mingl and J.P. lived in Sarasota!

A couple more observations about Skyler. He was the most active infant I’ve ever seen. I started massaging him 20 minutes twice a day, a la Leboyer, and that calmed him and smoothed his whole day out. If I skipped a day, I noticed!

Skyler never let me put him down but crawled at 3-months and walked at 7-months anyway. He is still nursing very intensely. His interest in solids is just what it was at six-months. I don’t worry since he’s never been sick. Actually, I like it because we’re close then and he’s as still as he ever is. I would always hum or sing to him and he started humming back. Sometimes we match tones while he nurses, sometimes we’ll hum a simple tune together, sometimes he’ll pull off for a full-fledged “AH” and resume nursing. His musical career has begun! I’ve started making up songs with the 100 or so words he knows and he listens very intently.

I remember as a child I would sometimes do things by choice that I knew were “educational” I would think the entire time, “What a good girl I am—I’m doing something educational,” and my feelings of nobility were present on a conscious level, preventing me from becoming absorbed in the subject. I was so self-conscious I never learned a thing. I like the idea of work and play not being so separate. Our concepts of work keep us from life.

## **Gymnastics School**

*Melanie Nesbit (4815 Casa Manana, San Antonio TX 78233) wrote:*

I am a teacher, but frustration, exhaustion, and despair in the classroom drove me into another area of teaching. My husband and I own a small private gymnastics school. Over the past four years, our program has evolved further and further from traditional gymnastics until we are now doing “fun gym.” This includes confidence courses, trapeze, a lot of homemade equipment, and student involvement in setting up various stations.

We are finding that one of the real problems in education is that children are often required to act as obedient pets, constantly given orders. Consequently they do not develop interests on their own, nor confidence, nor

responsibility. Actually what is left to them is rebellion and stubbornness.

In our small school we have found that two hours or even one hour per week of an open, joyful environment can influence a child's life drastically. We are excited about our small school, actually our own little real-life university.

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*DR: I asked Melanie to tell us more about the school, since it sounded like the kind of ideal safe space for children that John describes in Instead Of Education, and we thought some of our readers might be inspired to start similar places. (She wrote:)*

My husband began our gymnastics school almost five years ago, a year before I met him. We rent a 40' x 60' space in a shopping center; we employ no secretary or janitor. Our registration system is very simple; I handle that as well as teach. We divide maintenance chores among all staff, as well as bookkeeping responsibilities. As a small corporation, we do accounting ourselves with occasional help from a CPA.

For the last 1½ years, all staff members have received equal pay. We have tried to divide teaching hours and additional responsibilities equally. Our pay is small; last year my husband and I made slightly more than \$9,000, joint salaries (we have an additional \$250 a month income from a house rental).

Our schedule was once quite hectic; however, we have now ironed out most of the wrinkles, and are totally equipped. We have the complete line of Olympic equipment, much of which has proved to be of very little value in teaching small children. Our most valuable piece of equipment is probably a home-made padded beam, 26" high, 12' long. We have it in constant use while our three regulation balance beams, high and low, stand unused. In addition, our assortment of mats of varying shapes and sizes are always busy. The mats and padded beam are used in an endless array of games, set-ups, and obstacle courses. The one activity we almost never use the beam for is walking along the top, the very skill it was designed for. Kids do this once or twice and they're bored. They generally want fast, endurance-type activities. Balance, co-ordination, and the natural development of skills come as a result. We have "call-forwarding" service on our telephone and can therefore receive calls at our home. A karate school rents our space 6 hours a week; their contribution helps us meet our monthly rent of \$1025.

We live simply. Our house is small; we own one car, a '72 Datsun with 100,000+ miles. We bake our own bread, garden, etc. We have no television, seldom go to movies (there are so few that interest us), eat out at cafeterias upon occasion.

Our gymnastics program is noncompetitive. Although our educational backgrounds are different (my husband a physical educator, myself a classroom teacher), we share the same views in regard to competitive education. We stress fun, co-operative efforts among students, the development of self-confidence, and creative thinking for problem solving. Midway through each class (one hour's duration), we usually break for a story or sharing of experiences.

We try to keep rules to a minimum, but we're very tough on the safety guidelines we have adopted. We regulate parent observation (one hour per month), feeling that the presence of parents (often!) affects the behavior of their children. This was illustrated to us most clearly about a year ago. Stephanie, 6-years-of-age, was a new student participating for the first time in a class of 6- to 9-year-olds. Her parents hovered at the edge of the gym, desperately anxious for her to perform well. Their silent coaching was clearly audible to her. They were the only ones who were concerned at her inability to do a forward roll. At last she walked over to them and stated, "You can leave. I don't need you here now and you're kind of embarrassing me." With shock and surprise, they did so. Stephanie then turned full attention to the class and had a blast.

We find that our more experienced students are the best teachers, whatever their age. New students will imitate the older students. Through example, they learn how to use co-operative efforts in moving the equipment. All classes, kindergym to older, participate in carrying folded mats, flipping the heavy crash mats into position, and sliding our padded beam across the floor. With us, they design new obstacle courses, one of our primary tools in the development of cardio-vascular endurance. Their ideas for games and new activities frequently prove more workable than our own.

Super-fun games are named on the spot and students request them again and again: Underground City, Spiderman, Shakes on the Bridge, You Asked For It, Challenge, Pancake—the list goes on and on. We have discovered that the very young children, ages 3–5, adore what I call Daddy Games. These are endless variations of running, chasing, trying-to-hide games that kids used to

play with their daddies on the living room floor. Most of our kids don't have that kind of time with their fathers any more and we began to recognize their tremendous need to do this. Sometimes my husband and I are the "monsters," then we will reverse and try to escape from the kids. Need I tell you they love this?

We choose activities that will involve the greatest number of students, with practically no waiting in line. Our low student-teacher ratio (6-1) further insures this.

We have found the surest way to bore children and turn them off is to line them up and begin to teach traditional gymnastic skills. This, however, is what parents frequently expect and want. Over and over we hear, "I want Amy to have fun, but also to learn something." Our experience shows that when children are having fun, that is just when learning takes place. We sometimes have a hard time convincing parents of this.

Parents seem to like what we are doing. During the slowest season of the year (summer), our registration is now over 25% higher than it ever was before. For over two years we have been doing fine without any advertising.

We truly feel that our gymnastics is just a cover-up, as what we really teach the kids is confidence in their own mental creativity. We have discovered with them, and seek to affirm, this idea: that when one regards himself as an equal, he is able to enlighten his teacher as well as himself.

## **Library Changes Policy**

*Evangeline Godron (Sask.) sent us a copy of her local library's "Open Access Policy" with the note:*

"This was one of the outcomes of home-schooling. The library, after putting my three children out of the adult section since the summer of 1980, finally gave in. Believe it or not, it has made it better for the adults, too, now they can freely use any book from the children's section without feeling embarrassed. Some of the books in the children's section are harder reading than some of the adult ones."

From the policy statement:

1. All Library materials will be available to everyone in the community, regardless of age. Children and young adults will be

given equal rights with adults, and may borrow all circulating materials.

2. The Library recognizes the fact that people—young and old—vary as to individual intellectual ability, reading skill, and level of maturity, and it cannot, therefore, place arbitrary age restrictions on the use of material.

3. The Library will provide qualified staff to acquire materials and to assist anyone wishing to use those materials.

4. The Library will not prevent patrons from using any material that they require.

5. The Library will issue to all patrons a uniform borrower's card.

## **Wonderful Museum**

*From Jeanne Finan in Virginia:*

This week we went to Washington, D.C., to the Capital Children's Museum, which is a marvelous place. We spent almost four hours there and we could have easily stayed all day (or more). One floor is set up like a Mexican Village. Everything is touchable, playable, and fun. The staff is mostly volunteers (mostly senior citizens, who were magnificent! Lively!) and they don't boss the kids around. There is little adult supervision, actually, as the environment is set up so that children of all ages can move from one thing to another as they wish. They can dress in Mexican clothes, ride on a Mexican police motorcycle, make tortillas (and eat them!).

Upstairs is a miniature kitchen (not a toy kitchen, just a kitchen with child-size real appliances). You can call other areas in the museum from the various phone booths. There's a manhole to go down into, a teletype machine, computers, a shoe store (this fulfilled a longtime fantasy of mine to play with hose metal shoe sizers!), a grocery store with stuffed fruits and vegetables, and *more!!* I think they also have special programs and classes there. There are things there for all ages of children—and adults—and it is a comfortable place to be.

The concept of the museum comes from an old Chinese proverb: "I hear

and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand.” It is too bad schools cannot be like this museum—then I would love for my children to go. Indeed, I myself would love to go. Perhaps that is a good criteria for judging whether you want your child to go to a school: would you yourself be happy and interested there?

Anyway, the Capital Children’s Museum (800 3rd St NE , Wash. DC 20002) is a wonderful place to visit. You can pay individually (\$1.50 for adults and 50¢ for children) or you can join as a member (\$30/year for a family) and get free admission plus some other things.

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JH: I have seen some very good children’s museums—we have a fine one in Boston—but the best I have seen yet is the Capital Children’s Museum. Besides the huge exhibit about Mexico, it has others including “The Living Room,” “The City Room,” “Simple Machines,” “Metricville,” “Pattern and Shape,” and “Future Center.” There is a very interesting historical exhibit about how human beings have sent messages over distances. In another room a strobe light flashes on every few seconds, allowing you to make shadows on a luminous wall which “holds” the shadows for several seconds, so that you can put more than one shadow on the wall at a time. The Future Center has many computers in it; I could easily have spent half the day there.

All in all, a fascinating place. If you go to D.C. with kids, take them there; if you live near D.C., and have kids, it’s worth a trip.

## **Real Social Studies**

*From Ruth McCutchen (KY):*

A group of interested people in Kentucky have been working on getting a midwifery reform bill through the state senate. I took all three of my girls to Frankfort on the day that SB 111 was to be voted on in the Health and Welfare Committee. A couple of weeks later, Alison went to Frankfort with me, about 10 other women, and assorted babies and toddlers to lobby for the bill. We visited the Lieutenant Governor and left messages for lots of senators. Talk about Political Science 101!

## **History from a Ranger**



*From an article "Real Curriculum" in Outlook magazine:*

Each year in September we take a group of children to a hostel by the Brenig Reservoir in North Wales. One year we encountered a bearded Falstaff who introduced himself as the Head Ranger. He welcomed the children in impeccable Welsh. We were impressed, particularly as he was undoubtedly English.

He led us off to a deserted Welsh farmhouse on the far side of the reservoir, Siano Llwyd, where the old baking oven was already being fired and where logs sparked in the living room hearth. There he told us of the old Welsh widow, Mrs. Lloyd, who last lived in the farm, how she heard faery music at twilight, how she found faery gold in the stream but it turns to water when you touch it, and how in winter she needed to be self-sufficient, as the farm would be cut off by snow for weeks on end. We believed it all; an amalgam of legend and truth is the substance of history. Then he set the children to mixing dough as old Nimes Lloyd must have done a century ago. I was sent to continue firing the bread oven with furze and pine trimmings, until the stone chamber of the oven had stored all the heat it could hold. The ash and embers were raked out and the children's dough thrust far back into the oven with a long-handled wooden shovel. Then the opening was sealed with large stones.

We went back to the farm hearth for a brief introduction to Welsh pre-history, to paleolithic man who hunted the red deer across the moors now drowned by the reservoir. He didn't hunt in the bear skins beloved of history book illustrators, our Ranger assured us; you can't keep pace with a deer dressed up like that. How did he hunt? What tools did he use? We were introduced to flint, flaked chippings from some neolithic artisan's scrap heap found near the farmhouse. But the local stone was granite; where did the flint come from? The seacoast at Rhyl, brought by men who camped briefly on this spot till the deer moved on, leaving the ashes of the fire and the flint chips for the Ranger to find. He took us out by the reservoir's edge to find our own flints and for half an hour we combed the water's edge. A cold wind blew off the water and through us; we hoped for some lucky find to end our searching. None came. We are the only school group not to

have found a flint.

We left the bleak shore and returned to the farm, the warmth, and the bread oven. Out came our loaves, brown, crusty, yeasty, flaked with white wood ash, but delicious with butter. Our lesson continued. Man learned to domesticate animals instead of hunting them; he grew and stored grain; he began to wonder what strange God made the sun die each night and return alive at dawn. We heard the Egyptian version of the god Ra and the children began to sense the drama of light and darkness. Nearby was a wooden henge which the Ranger had excavated and marked with new posts around the site of the old henge. Round it we had to dance to bring back light and Spring, round it we chanted and shouted, and one aged headmaster and one teacher (B.A. Hebrew and Philosophy) danced and chanted as loudly and as wildly as the children. It seemed neither embarrassing nor incongruous nor ridiculous. Here our ancestors danced; under the enthusiastic direction of the Ranger, so danced we.

We wandered across the moorland to where raised mounds marked the site of ancient *hafods*, summer farmhouses to which later medieval farmers came from the valleys to graze their herds. Our children were grouped into the vanished farm walls, “Grandma here by the fire, farmer’s children there, wife here to cook, spin, and weave.” So, from the grass-covered traces the farm was re-peopled and stocked. “A few boys here; what do you think they are?”—many guesses. “No, that’s where the pigsty was!” This to the delight of the girls. “A few girls here on this mound, just outside the door; what do you think that is?”—wild guesses. “No, that’s the old rubbish heap.” This to the delight of the boys. History, like dough, needs a little leaven.

The day passed. It had been one long lesson. We ended it back at the Reservoir Centre. Its prehistoric burial urns were now more real; there was the urn with its sole content—the ear bones of a child. The Ranger had said that there had been one or two similar finds elsewhere in Europe. He drove off in his Land Rover with our thanks and my admiration. I, with a group of children, had lived history for a day.

## **Becoming Skillful**

*A mother wrote:*

I'm wondering if children can become as varied in their activities without the parents' interest in those things. It seems that the initial interest of a child is an extension of an adult's activities. I am concerned about home schooling for us because I am a person who'd rather 'read' than 'do' and don't feel I'd be a good model for my children with my limited interests and accomplishments.

*Donna replied:*

First, children certainly can become interested in many activities even though their parents were not initially interested in those things. Children will pick up ideas from books, magazines, neighbors, television, and so on. Your role is to not discourage those ideas, and even actually to encourage the children to think they can follow through on them.

Second, about your "limited interests and accomplishments." I think one thing that will happen is that you will learn along with your daughters. When they get interested in something and want to find out more about it, you will almost inevitably be drawn into it too.

The other thing I want to say about this which I think is even more important, is that it would probably be exceedingly useful for you to choose a skill that you have always wanted to learn, and just go ahead and learn it. It might be learning a musical instrument, or learning to refinish furniture, or who knows what. Not only will you be learning something useful, you will probably also enjoy yourself, and you will start to notice how *you* learn things. This makes it much easier to empathize with your children when they are faced with the task of learning something new.

An example. Several years ago I wanted a good desk, with many drawers and pigeonholes. I shopped around and was aghast at the price of such furniture. Somehow I wound up in a large unfinished furniture store, and saw a great desk at a good price—a beautiful rolltop. The problem was that I knew nothing about finishing furniture. However, there was a young woman behind the counter who talked with me, off and on, for probably an hour and a half. She answered all my questions, including the dumb ones, showed me what to do, and encouraged me no end. I took home some small amounts of stain and varnish and practiced on a board; then I brought it back to show her. She assured me that if I could finish that board that well, then I would be able

to finish the entire desk. So, I went ahead. It took a lot of time, because I wanted the results to be perfect, which meant getting every single step perfect. Several times over the next months I talked with her, asking more questions. The desk turned out beautifully and I can't tell you how satisfying the whole experience was.

So that's the kind of thing I am talking about. The way to change your picture of yourself as being someone with limited interests and accomplishments is for you to start *taking* an interest in one or two things, and *working* in the area of one or two accomplishments.

## **From College to a Farm**

*From Jeanine Hardison (IL):*

I gave up on college (too much effort to satisfy their requirements). I don't intend to return unless a degree is necessary for something that's important to me.

I spent January–May in my college town, reading, writing, talking with friends, auditing a class, and attending lectures, plays, and concerts. My primary purpose was to figure out how I go about learning on my own. I ended up writing a 14-page summary of what I learned in those months. This has not only helped me clarify where I am and where I want to go next, but has also provoked some interesting responses from other people.

One thing I discovered is that part of me holds an incredibly intense perception of myself as incompetent and worthless. I'm convinced that this is at least partly due to school (even though the only subject in which I don't do well is P.E.). I've also found it interesting that I often hesitate to tell people this. "Low self-esteem" is something we're not supposed to have—only wretched, worthless people feel miserable about themselves. Fooey! Fortunately, acknowledging and exploring those feelings has to a large degree diminished their strength.

I'd like to share a few excerpts from the summary:

I'm learning to trust my own thoughts/decisions/power; I'm learning to say, "Hmm, that's interesting. I'll see what I think," instead of "Oh, if you say so!" Why don't people organize and structure differently so it's easier for me/us to do that? Why can't people say "I" more often

when proclaiming their great truths about human nature, instead of battering me with their “you”’s? Why can’t people speak more tentatively, end more sentences with a question mark, listen to others more? (I’m not saying there’s no place for firmness, or disagreement, or answers—but that we emphasize those too much.) Logically, if the unknown is so much vaster than the known, we ought to spend a correspondingly greater amount of time thinking about it.

I need to learn most things over and over before I really understand them—before I begin to think with an idea instead of about it. I doubt I’ve learned anything for the last time.

I read less, and less at one time, than I used to. As I go along, it seems more and more important—and feels more and more true or in tune—to think and feel and work as much as I can on my own, than look to someone else for a fresh spark. This means being very selective of whom and how often and when I ask for help with questions or answers. It means not letting other people give me answers before my question forms itself.

I intend to spend the next few years doing some things I’ve always wanted to do (in addition to exploring myself and looking for work that seems necessary or important to me.) I’ll be working on people’s farms and, this fall, in a natural foods bakery. I want to learn cheese and wine-making, wool-spinning and weaving, beekeeping, organic gardening and pest control, carpentry, stone masonry—at least a bit about some of those! I’m trading my labor (and delightful companionship!) for room, board, and learning. (By the way, I’d be pleased to learn any of those skills with *GWS* families.)

Since July, I’ve been with the Schwartz family in Virginia (Connie offered to share their home in *GWS* #18). I’ve enjoyed learning about and from their animals (cow, sheep, pigs, chickens, geese, ducks, turkeys, rabbits, dogs), garden, and children.

I’ve never done much babysitting, so this was one of my first opportunities to learn about living with children. I don’t really like telling other people what to do, and I’m most comfortable when I can let the kids manage their own lives as much as possible. At first I

wasn't sure how much was possible—or I had no idea—now I'm gradually figuring out how far I can step back. And they're such a delight to watch or listen to when they're figuring things out for themselves.

Reminds me of the times I was learning to bake bread, when I was twelve or fourteen. If Mom was home, I'd be constantly asking, "What do they mean by this?" "How should I do this?" "We don't have any of this—what can I use instead?" If she was gone, I answered all those questions myself—and the bread was terrific.

That applies not just to the kids, but also to me at twenty. Often I feel awkward or less than competent when I'm working with someone else (particularly a man)—whether we're measuring a straight line through the brush, digging postholes, or building shelves. I finally realized that I'm looking to that person for the same kind of guidance and approval (and standard of "success") as I was looking for in my mother when I was younger. I also realized that I don't need to—I'm perfectly capable of doing almost anything if I set up such a situation that I have to figure things out for myself and that I feel comfortable fumbling and learning slowly if that's what happens.

I'm also getting better at on-the-spot learning; I actually began to get the hang of pitching horse shoes with three skillful people watching me and offering advice. Boy, was I smug after that!

I'm also enjoying singing here—something I haven't done much of (except under cover of a loud radio) since a musician-friend told me he could hardly stand to be next to me singing Christmas carols, I was so out of tune. But a six-year-old doesn't care if my pitch is wrong, and neither does a cow, or an empty house. I'm gaining confidence, and acquiring expression, and even (I think) getting closer to "in tune."

Lots of good things happening in my life—some less pleasant ones, too. It's hard living with other people when you're fitting yourself into their life instead of building a new one together. It's hard living far away from family and friends, and now and then I become conscious of how different (sometimes unacceptable) my values and goals are

according to society's standards—that can be oddly unsettling. And often I just can't deal with four kids at once. They need too much care and attention, and I feel endlessly drained with no time or space to rejuvenate myself. (Maybe I'll have children of my own, but I'll certainly want lots of help raising them.) But the difficulties lead to more learning, and that's what I'm here for.

## Had Enough

*A mother writes from New York:*

I am quite angry about what I've seen the school system do to my child. This fall she picked up a leaf from the ground. After admiring its beauty, I was proceeding to tell her about the tree it had fallen from. She practically screamed at me. "Don't tell me!" she said. "I've had enough in school!" What have they done to my daughter?

## Imagination Wanted

*By Sam Bittner in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 4/14/82:*

I have owned a scrap-metal business for 35 years. A year ago, I hired a new manager with unusual qualifications. He has an educational background of history and English; he holds a master's degree in foreign languages, and speaks French and German fluently.

He knew nothing about the scrap-metal business. I gave him one week of instruction, and told him to make mistakes and then use intelligence, imagination, and logic. He has turned this into one of the most efficiently run metal industries in the Midwest.

My company took a contract to extract beryllium from a mine in Arizona. I called in several consulting engineers and asked, "Can you furnish a chemical or electrolytic process that can be used at the mine site to refine directly from the ore?" Back came a report saying that a search of the computer tapes had indicated that no such process existed.

I hired a student from Stanford University majoring in Latin American history with a minor in philosophy. and told him, "Go to Denver and

research the Bureau of Mines archives and locate a chemical process for the recovery of beryllium.” He left on Monday. came back on Friday. He handed me a pack of notes and booklets and said, “Here is the process. It was developed 33 years ago at a government research station. And here are also other processes for the recovery of mica, strontium, columbium, and yttrium, which also exist in residual ores that contain beryllium.”

It is unfortunate that our business world demands specialization to such a degree that young people feel the need to learn only specific trades. If we continue with the present trend of specialized education, we are going to be successful in keeping a steady supply of drones moving to a huge beehive. In my business I want people who have intelligence, imagination, curiosity, impulses, emotions, and ingenuity.

## **A School in India**

*From The English Teacher by R.K. Narayan, 1946 (a book set in a small town in India, now out of print):*

The school was in the next street: a small compound and a few trees and a small brick-red building. The noise those children made reached me as I turned the street. The schoolmaster received us at the gate. He said: “Won’t you come and have a look round?”

He had partitioned the main hall into a number of rooms. The partition screens could all be seen, filled with glittering alphabets and pictures drawn by children—a look at it seemed to explain the created universe. You could find everything you wanted—men, trees and animals, skies and rivers. “All these work for our children.” he explained proudly. “Wonderful creatures! It is wonderful how much they can see and do! I tell you, sir, live in their midst and you will want nothing else in life.” He took me round. In that narrow space he had crammed every conceivable plaything for children, seesaws, swings, sand heaps and ladders. “These are the classrooms,” he said. “Not for them. For us elders to learn. Just watch them for a while.” They were digging into the sand, running up the ladder, swinging, sliding down slopes—all so happy. “This is the meaning of the word



joy—in its purest sense. We can learn a great deal watching them and playing with them. When we are qualified we can enter their life.” he said. The place was dotted with the colored dresses of these children, bundles of joy and play. “When I watch them, I get a glimpse of some purpose in existence and creation.” He struck me as an extraordinary man.

“If they are always playing when do they study?”

“Just as they play—I gather them together and talk to them and take them in and show them writing on boards. They learn more that way. Everybody speaks of the game-way in studies but nobody really practices it.”

Sunday. I decided to spend the entire day in the company of the child. Of late my college work and the extra activities and the weekly visits to my friend took up so much of my time that I spent less than two hours a day with the child. It was a painful realization. “Oh, God,” went up my prayer, “save me from becoming too absorbed in anything to look after the child properly.” And I felt very sorry and guilty when I returned home at nights and found the child asleep.

She had her own plans for the day. As soon as she got up and was ready for the road, she insisted upon being taken to the school. “This is Sunday, you don’t have to go,” I pleaded.

But it was no use. “You don’t know about our school. We have school.” She put on her coat and stepped out. I went with her. “Why do you follow me, father?” she asked.

“I too want to see your school today,” I said.

“But my friends are filled with fear if they see you. Don’t come with me, father,” she pleaded.

“No, I will take good care not to frighten them,” I assured her. She stood for a moment undecided, looking at me and said to herself: “Poor father, let him come too,” and smiled patronizingly.

There was no sign at the school to show that it was a Sunday. It was

alive with the shouts of children—about twenty of them had already gathered and were running about and playing: the swings and see-saw were all in full use. The headmaster was with them.

“You don’t rest even on a Sunday?” I asked the headmaster.

“Rest? This is all right for a rest, what else should I do? They just come in, play, throw the sand about, and go away, and we also do it with them. It is quite good, you know. I feel quite happy. What else should I do on a Sunday?”

“Something to differentiate it from other days.”

“Quite. We don’t do sums today. We just sing, hear stories, and play.”

He took me into his room. It was thatch-roofed. Its floor was covered with clay, and the walls were of bamboo splinters filled in with mud. The floor was uneven and cool, and the whole place smelt of Mother Earth.

Along the wall was a sort of running ledge covered with a crazy variety of objects: cardboard houses, paper flowers, clumsy drawings and bead work. “These are the work of children who have studied here, and some of them have a special significance: presented to me by the outgoing children or the very special effort of a child. They are the trophies of this school. I consider them a real source of joy. For instance, the very first work of a child has some peculiar value. I don’t know if others understand that there is anything in it at all; you will understand it better if I say look at that green paper boat. Can you guess who has made it? Your daughter on the very first day she came here, she finished it within an hour.” I felt thrilled. Beside a parrot cut out of a cardboard picture and an inkpot made of paper, this green boat stood. I went over and picked it up. My little Leela in relation to an outside world, making her own mark on it: I was filled with pride and satisfaction. “It is a whaler with a knife-edge at the keel!” I cried in joy. He jumped out of his seat: “That’s what I say. See how lovely it is!” The sight of it filled him with a mystic ecstasy. “She is a grand child. So are the other children. The first work of almost every child is here and the other works go into the general hall.” The walls were

hung with different pictures, tigers and lions and trees drawn with childish hands. He swept his hands about and declared: "Every one of these is children's work. They are the real gods on earth." He stopped before each picture and enjoyed the thrill of it anew. He had done away with table and chair. In a corner he had a seat for visitors. "This will do for a school. We are a poor country, and we can do without luxuries. Why do we want anything more than a shed and a few mats and open air? This is not a cold country for all the heavy furniture and elaborate buildings. This has cost me just fifty rupees, and I had three such built. But we have not much use for them, most of our time being spent outside, under the tree."

"Many people think," I said, "that you can't have a school unless you have invested a few thousands in a building and furniture."

"It is all mere copying," he replied. "Multiply your expenses, and look to the Government for support, and sell your soul to the Government for the grant. This is the history of our educational movement."

"Sit down, sit down. I want to show you the stories I've made." He pulled out a box and brought out a big bundle of brown paper: huge pages covered with letters as well as figures cut out and pasted. "This is a new method which I find fascinating," he said. "I invent a story, write it down in words, and illustrate it with pictures cut out of illustrated books and papers and pasted at the appropriate places. For instance this," he threw down ten volumes, "is a pretty long story of a bison and a tiger in the forest ... just glance through it." Every page had a figure or two; the illustrations ran along with the story.

"They are almost real, you know," he said as I gazed on the pictures. "Just watch, I'll show you how it works." He stood in the doorway and announced: "Story! Story!" The children who had been playing about, stopped, looked at him and came running in, uttering shrieks of joy.

They sat around their master. When they subsided into silence he opened the large album and said looking at it: "This is the story of a tiger and his friend the jungle buffalo, called Bison. It happened in Mempi Forest. Who can tell me where Mempi Forest is?" There

followed a discussion among the children and one girl said, pointing at the doorway: "There, near those mountains, am I right?"

"Right, right," he said. "There are a lot of jungles there. See here." All the children leaned over each other's shoulders and fixed their eyes on the top of the album where a perfect jungle had been made with the help of dry tinted grass pasted together. "There are all bamboo jungles, full of tigers, but we are only concerned with one tiger. His name is Raja. See this. There he is, a young cub."

"He is very young," said the children, looking at him. The album was passed round for the benefit of those sitting far off. "What a fearful fellow!" commented a few. My daughter, sitting between two friends older than herself, refused to touch the album because of the tiger, but was quite prepared to see it if helped by her neighbor. "This little tiger was quite lonely, you know, because her mother had been taken away by hunters—bad fellows." Thus the story of the tiger went on. The tiger came across a friend in the shape of a young bison, who protected him from a bear and other enemies. They both lived in a cave at the tail end of Mempi Hills—great friends. The bison grew up into a thick rocklike animal, and the tiger also grew up and went out in search of prey at nights. One night a party of hunters shot at the bison and carried him off to the town. And the tiger missed his friend and his cry rang through the Mempi Forest the whole night. The tiger soon adjusted himself to a lonely existence.

The children listened in dead silence and were greatly moved when this portion was read out. They all came over to have a look at the tiger in his loneliness, and our friend, rightly guessing that they would ask for it, had procured a picture. The tiger was standing forlorn before his cave. The children uttered many cries of regret and unhappiness.

He resumed the story. My daughter, who felt she had left me alone too long, came over and sat with her elbows resting on my lap. She whispered: "Father, I want a tiger."

"A real one?"

“Yes. Isn’t it like a cat?” I nudged the teacher, and told him of her demand. He became very serious and said: “You must not think of a tiger as a pet, darling. It is a very big and bad animal. I will show you a tiger when circus comes to the town next. Meanwhile you may have a picture of a tiger. I will give you one.”

“All right, master, I will take it.”

“And you can have a real cat. I will give you a small kitten I have at home.”

She screamed with joy. “Is it in your house?”

“Yes, yes. I will give it to you and also the picture of a tiger.”

“Father, let us go with him.”

“Surely, surely,” the teacher looked delighted. “Come with me.” He went on for a few minutes more and ceased. The story would run on for a full week. He stopped because the clock struck twelve. The children wouldn’t get up. The tiger had just been caught by a circus man for training. The children wanted to know more and more.

“Master, you mustn’t stop. What happens to the tiger? Is he happy?” He would answer none of their questions. He ruthlessly shut his books and got up.

“We are hungry, teacher. We will go home.”

“That’s why I stopped the story. Go home and come and listen to it tomorrow,” he said.

“Do they kill the tiger?” asked the child.

“No, no, he is quite safe. He will be quite all right, trust me,” said the teacher. The children, greatly pleased, ran out of the school.

## **Request From India**

*From Dr. K. D. Chauhan, Jagdish Society, Post Unjha 384170, N. Guj., India:*

In our India at many places parents cannot afford to send their children to schools. We want to find out how to teach the boys and girls at home by parents. Here much painstaking were taken for this problem but none is found best. The government has tried for adult education and not yet found results.

Please continue to pour your love and harmony by sending us books and magazines. Our government has increased the postage, hence it is difficult to communicate and meet. Please circulate among your friends and neighbors our address to donate books, newsletters, etc. We have no funds to communicate the very request because of our own poverty. Thanking you cordially.

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DR: Any *GWS* readers who would like to send Dr. Chauhan books and materials can do so directly (International book postage is not much higher than domestic.) Or, if you want to send us a donation to our “Gift Subscription Fund,” we will use the money to send past and future issues of *GWS* to Dr. Chauhan.

## Food For Thought

*Raimundo Panikkar wrote on “The Contemplative Mood: A Challenge to Modernity” in the Fall ’81 issue of Cross Currents, a journal on Christianity in modern times (103 Van Houten Fields, West Nyack NY 10994):*

A contemplative act is done for its own sake. It rests on itself. Contemplation cannot be manipulated in order to gain something else. It is not a stage in this sense. It has no further intentionality. It requires that innocence in which the very will to achieve contemplation becomes an obstacle to it.

Socrates eagerly learning a new tune on his flute the night before he was to die; Luther deciding to plant an apple tree in the morning of the day on which the world would come to an end. These are examples of the contemplative attitude, whether it is called mindfulness, awareness, enlightenment, concentration, or contemplation. This attitude runs counter to the trend of modern civilization, be it “religious” or “secular,” although I would not use these two terms in

this sense, for the secular as well as the religious can be sacred and both can also be profane.

It seems in fact as if there are five great incentives in our society: 1) the Heavens above for the believers, 2) the History ahead for the progressivists, 3) the Work to be done for the realists, 4) the Conquest of the Big for the intelligent and 5) the Ambition of Success for everyone. These five incentives are radically questioned by the contemplative mood. For contemplation stresses the *hic*, the *nunc*, the *actus*, the hidden *centrum* and the inner *pax* (i.e., the here, the now, the act, the hidden center, and the inner peace); not the elsewhere, the later, the result, the greatness of external actions, or the confirmation of the majority.

## **Work, Play, & “Social Life”**

*Nancy Wallace (NY) wrote last year to the mother in “Isolated,” GWS # 20:*

Until Ishmael was 2, we lived in a tiny log cabin in northern Vermont with virtually no neighbors. We were very isolated and we felt it. Ishmael particularly seemed to need something he wasn’t getting, and it was a trying time. The winters were so long and the summers so cold that he couldn’t get out much. By the time he was a year and a half, he’d explored the whole house, broken our chess set, lost most of my little “things” and really seemed to need companionship. For a month or so, we drove and drove to a play group which he seemed to like, but he didn’t play with the other little kids much—in fact, all the young ones seemed to be doing their own thing. What he especially liked was a workbench, complete with saw and vice, and just the opportunity to mess around with new stuff.

So we bought him a set of real tools, which delighted him, and started to take him to places we wanted to go to—Bob’s work, libraries, art exhibits, etc., and generally involved him more in adult life. I let him cook, clean, plant the garden and so on, and from then on things seemed to change. He enjoyed other children, but he didn’t need them, and by the age of two, he had become a very independent little person—sociable, yes, but also capable of spending long periods on his own projects.

I notice many children who seem to have a desperate need to play. This

could be because adults have fragmented their lives so much, with school and other similar things, that they've never experienced the pleasures of long-term "projects" and self-motivated play, work, and creation.

Are my kids socially well-adjusted? Yes and no. They can be rude to people they don't like, but on the other hand, they don't push and shove and head frantically for the toys in somebody else's house the way children do who spend their days in noisy, crowded day care centers and nursery schools. And while they don't seem to need other children much, they know how to talk to adults, and very importantly, they know how to use their time well. They don't have an up-in-the-air, lost feeling when "there's no one to play with."

Out here in the country, I've talked to many old folks who grew up on farms and who rarely "played." There was too much work to be done and they lived great distances from other families (they didn't go to school much either), and they think "socialization" is for the birds. The important thing is that children should not be isolated from real life—they should be allowed to share in the work and pleasures of everyday adult living.

## **Enterprising Kids**

*From the San Francisco Sunday Examiner, 5/23/82:*

Stacey Butler, 12, has created her own flower shop on the main street of this Marin County community.

For a child who liked to pick flowers on her way home from school so her mother would have bouquets, it seemed a natural idea.

"I would always go up to people's yards and I'd pick the flowers and take them home and put them in a vase and arrange them," she said. "I was just 6 or 7, I guess."

The shop is only a few feet wide, but was a big venture financed by Stacey's life's savings of \$500 and a matching grant from her mother.

Stacey is no novice when it comes to floral shops. Her mother, Carol Butler, recalled that Stacey's love for flowers and desire to be around them led about four years ago to her first job in a Mill Valley flower



shop, where she did a little bit everything. The job paid her in ribbons, presumably for her hair. Later, she received a small salary for two years while developing her talents for floral arrangements.

Next, she found a job in a Larkspur shop called “Stacey’s Bloomer,” another small florist store to which she was admittedly drawn more by the name than the work.

A few weeks ago, after she had begun talking about opening her own shop, her father saw a small location on San Rafael’s main street available for \$250 a month. With her mother’s help, Stacey was in business.

She does her own hiring—one adult employee—and each Wednesday is driven by her mother to the whole sale San Francisco flower market at 5 a.m. There, Stacey picks out the flowers she feels are fresh and will sell. Then it’s back to the doorway store to refrigerate the flowers before heading to her sixth-grade class.

The employee opens the shop at noon daily and Stacey arrives after school to take over.

“I have a special flair for arranging flowers,” she said. “I think that when I’m 15 or so I’ll probably expand or stop. I won’t just keep going. I’ll either do real good or just stop because I will have had too much.”

Her 15-year-old sister, Keri, is helping as manager and bookkeeper.

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*The Portland Oregonian, 6/14/82:*

Jason Hardman doesn’t just run the library in the tiny town of Elsinore (Utah)—he founded it. The seventh-grader decided to open what is billed as the city library of Elsinore, population 680, after he got tired of going six miles to neighboring Monroe to get library books.

“We thought it was a whim. We figured it would go away,” his mother, Linda Hardman, said.

Jason begged his father, Wayne, to help him get a library started. Hardman finally suggested that his son go to a City Council meeting and ask the council to give him a place for a library.

“They thought I was nuts. They didn’t think I’d stick to it,” Jason said.

But after several months of Jason calling the mayor at home, the council finally gave him the use of a basement of an old school building that was being used as City Hall.

Jason and his father built shelves, the rest of the family helped wash and paint the walls, and on Nov. 4, 1980, the library opened.

He started with only a handful of books that were rounded up by the Elsinore Literary Club, purchased from a thrift store and donated by a nearby town’s library. Since then, donations have crowded the shelves with 4,000 to 5,000 volumes.

Most of the books are children’s fiction, but a number are for adults.

The library is open from 4 p. m. to 6 p. m. two days a week, unless Jason is out of town. No librarian; no library.

The first year, Jason kept the library open all winter in the unheated basement, but he won’t be doing that again. It closes for the winter when Jason starts getting cold.

Jason is not at all downcast when the minutes tick by and nobody comes. He simply munches snacks and reads, his favorite pastime.

Jason has the books divided into general categories, but has no index system because “he pretty much knows what he’s got,” Mrs. Hardman said. When someone checks out a book, Jason copies the title on a recipe card.

There are no fines for those few who fail to return books after a few weeks. Instead, they get a personal visit from Jason or his father.

Still, the library is very much Jason’s project alone. he plans to keep running the library “for a long time.”

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*The Washington Post*, 12/13/81:

“Anyone can be a waiter, but few people can be great chefs,” say Stephanie Stein and David Wallach, 12-year-old founders of *Les Chefs Chez-Vous*. Surely two of Washington’s youngest caterers, they are also among the newest, only in the last few months venturing out of their parents’ kitchens and into neighborhood dining rooms with their fare.

The two young entrepreneurs like to start work around 4:30 p.m. (after their school day ends), finish cooking by 7 or 7:30, then end the day by dropping the food at the client’s kitchen door shortly thereafter.

“It all started when David brought his chocolate mousse to school for a party,” Stein said. “It was so good that I invited him to my house to make dinner. After that we started alternating between the two houses, making dinner for our parents. We told our parents what we were going to make—just whatever looked good in the cookbooks. There is a trick to cookbook reading. Look at a recipe, see if you like it, then change it around. If I’ve learned anything, it’s that you can never follow a recipe, and can never be too sure what it’s going to come out to be.”

But they are willing to learn and take chances, even if the dishes don’t end up resembling the descriptions in the cookbooks.

“Money,” Wallach said, “was only an afterthought. The whole point was to get to cook dinner. “Not intending at this age to go into business in a big way, Stein and Wallach are cooking just for friends and neighbors; their clients pay the cost of the ingredients (which Wallach and Stein buy themselves after school) plus \$7 per person for appetizers, a main course, a vegetable and dessert.

Though Stein said she plans to continue cooking as a hobby, Wallach says he will do it “if he has to get himself through college.” Both plan to be writers someday, as their parents are. And, like their parents, both chefs write regularly. Stein publishes *Kids*, a bi-monthly magazine she created. Wallach has begun a handprinted newspaper,

featuring a recipe for Nanna's Fried Chicken.

## Becoming Experts

JH: We just had a very interesting visitor from England, Dr. David Deutsch, a brilliant theoretical physicist working on the far frontiers of that science, one of the founders and directors of a small and so far successful computer company, and a Junior Fellow at Christ's Church College of Oxford University. He showed me a paper which interested and delighted me, since in it he says, from the point of view of an expert in two of the most advanced technical fields of our time, what I, who am no technical expert, have felt strongly for years—that the apprenticeship method, being and working with people who do something well, is not only the best way to learn such arts and crafts as music or painting or pottery or skilled carpentry, but is equally the best way to learn what we think of as such highly intellectual fields as law or modern science. Here is his paper, “How Children Can Become Experts,” which I consider one of the most important things we have ever printed in *GWS*, and which I believe will prove useful to our readers in many ways:

How can opportunities for learning be provided for a child who needs to acquire expert knowledge? Since I am a theoretical physicist I am led to apply this question to my own field: What happens if a child of (say) 12 acquires a keen interest in fundamental physics? School will not go far towards meeting such an interest. But even without the impediment of school, if the interest persists he will probably soon begin to exhaust the rewards of learning singlehandedly from books and even such things as Open University broadcasts. The point here is not that he will run out of facts to learn: he will not. The point is that factual knowledge from such sources actually constitutes only part of what a physicist needs to know. The more important part is a complex set of attitudes and ideas concerning, for example, the recognition of what constitutes a physics problem, how one goes about solving it, and what might be acceptable as a solution. One can learn such things in only one way: by participating in the physics culture. This is how graduate students learn physics when they are finally permitted to participate in real research. And this—research alongside real

physicists—is what I think our hypothetical child should be doing.

This is, if you like, an “apprenticeship” model of learning, devoid, of course, of the medieval exploitative connotations of that word. How would it work in practice? The guiding principle is that the child *should be truly productive from the beginning*. He should be working on real problems and not on invented exercises with no purpose other than “education.” The details would be different in different occupations, but let me again elaborate the example from physics. How would a child begin to participate in my own research? Remember first that this would be a self-selected child, one who had already been attracted, for reasons of his own, by the idea of such participation. He may have been fascinated by some of the strange assertions of modern physics: that space and time are curved; that the entire universe is continually splitting into many almost identical copies of itself which all continue to exist simultaneously; that one could take a trip to the stars, return, and find oneself younger than one’s grandchildren.

Having read about these theories, he may want to explore them further: What do they mean? Are they really true? Where do they come from? Why do we believe them? How are they connected with everyday experience? Whatever his reasons, he will bring with him a certain set of desires and expectations—a set of problems, if you will, which he believes he can set about solving with my cooperation. He might of course be wrong. He might have had quite the wrong idea of what physics is all about, in which case he would discover this in due course (this would in itself be a valuable discovery for him) and we would be of no further use to each other. But he might find that the manner in which I answered his questions and presented him with further matters of interest did indeed arouse the same fascination and meet the same need inside him which his private study had met previously. In that case he would continue to learn from his association with me.

Quite analogously, I too would have a set of problems to solve: my research topics. What would be in it for me? Well, any complex problem is solved by splitting it into simple subproblems. There

would always be tasks integral to my overall problem which did not require a knowledge of physics but only an ability to reason. My capacity to solve the overall problem would be enhanced if I were able to share or delegate such tasks.

Such are the short-term benefits for both parties to an “apprenticeship” arrangement: each helps to solve the other’s immediate problems in exchange for help with his own. But if things went at all well, both parties would soon begin to reap greater benefits. We would find that the apprentice’s set of problems was itself changing. He would begin to “think like a physicist” as he unconsciously assimilated inexplicit knowledge simply by observing a physicist solving problems. He would begin to enjoy more and more the inner rewards of doing physics. At the same time he would become steadily more useful to me in an ever wider range of subtasks. Factual knowledge would come to him without specific effort, as a side-effect of pursuing his interests. Later he would begin to grasp the details of specific problems which I was working on, and he would begin to find research topics of his own. I would find myself learning increasingly from him, both directly and because one always learns by explaining things to a willing listener. And because we would naturally have many problems and interests in common, he would be a particularly helpful colleague for me. Finally the apprentice would be such no longer, having overtaken his teacher-colleague in knowledge and skill. This is perhaps the greatest long term benefit which would accrue to both parties.

I must stress that I am not thinking of “child prodigies” in the above example. I am convinced that arrangements such as the one I describe can and ought to be the normal way of entering any profession.

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JH: During our long conversation I asked David Deutsch at what point in his school studies of physics did he begin to hear about and become interested in the problems that now lie at the center of his work. He said that in school he never heard about them. I asked how then did he hear about them? He said, through his independent reading. He went on to add that most

of his in-school “training” as a physicist, even in the advanced years, consisted of making him learn theories that he later found today’s physicists no longer believe to be true. This is of course the very opposite of what we are led to believe, that in the sciences the training that young people get in school prepares them for the work they will do later. Perhaps in some fields—engineering, law, medicine—school training may to some small degree acquaint students with the tools and vocabulary of the trade. But I have more than once heard doctors, lawyers, or engineers say that when they started to do real work they had to forget much or most of what they learned in school.

Dr. Deutsch and I agreed that children who were in school, or who had spent much time there, would probably not work out very well in the kind of apprenticeship situation he describes. They would almost certainly be too preoccupied with pleasing the experienced person with whom they were working, with such thoughts and worries as: What does he want me to do? Is this the answer he wants? Is he pleased with me? How is he going to reward me? Being a useful colleague in serious work is very different from, indeed the exact opposite of being a good student in school. The good student concentrates on the teacher, and what he expects, wants, rewards. The serious and valuable co-worker concentrates on the work, whether this be building a house or a theory. Good work requires a kind of selflessness, a purity of motive, a willingness to submit oneself to the requirements not of the boss but of the task, which is exactly what is lost, and for the most part deliberately destroyed—because it does not fit their notions about the “Real World”—by the schools.

## **2nd Home Business Catalog**

*Jeri Lyn Walters writes:*

We have started Cotton Tales, a home mail order business that offers natural fiber clothing and other related items to infants, children, pregnant and nursing ladies. It will feature the offerings of other home businesses and cottage industries supplemented with a few products from larger manufacturers to round out the selection.

I would be happy to hear from anyone who is making a product that they feel may be appropriate for the catalog, which is free upon request. Write to: Cotton Tales, P. O. Box 56, Douglas City CA 96024.

## Success Stories

*From Judy Ann Stevenson in West Union, Ohio:*

My kids are out of public school! The superintendent received my detailed letter (7 pages) on July 6. Yesterday, 8/11, I received written approval. I spoke with him three times by phone. He went to the state board to see if it was legal. It was. He brought it before the local school board; they cited legal precedents. He checked with the prosecuting attorney, then requested a letter from us accepting the legal responsibility for educating our children.

We are thrilled and excited. I am in touch with four other parents in our county who plan to do the same thing.

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*From Mary Maher, Massachusetts:*

Thought you'd be interested to know there are now five homeschooling families in Wakefield. The Assistant Superintendent of Schools was very pleased with the progress of all the home-schooling children. As a result, the Supt. is sending these reports to the School Committee and recommending that in the future they approve home schooling requests. He feels that home schoolers are doing a very good job. He mentioned Scott in particular, and said that he had done very well.

In fact, when I sent in my request for Amanda, the school people told me I wouldn't even have to attend the School Committee meeting, because there wouldn't be any problem. All I had to do was submit a curriculum and a time schedule. I took my chances and submitted one that stated we would only do 2½ hours of school work per day! They approved it!! Things are getting better all the time!

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*Ruth McCutchen (KY) wrote:*

After hearing about the difficulties some folks in nearby counties had with health and fire officials, I expected perhaps some problem. However today, both fire and health officials inspected our "school" and again, as in Louisville, it was a very perfunctory thing. When speaking with them beforehand, I'd gently inserted the fact that I knew there were no written requirements for schools with fewer than six students. We had the place very



clean and neat, a bit neater than usual, and I was friendly and confident. The kids carried on as usual. The health inspector was with us perhaps two minutes. The fire inspector stayed longer, but only to get his curiosity satisfied about some home-schooling questions, such as “socialization.”

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*From Delaware:*

My daughter (14) stopped going to her alternative school last February. I was still under a teaching contract until May so she had a lot of “solitude” for those months. Although she felt some boredom occasionally, I was pleased and amazed at how well she handled it. She has her own horse and always spent afternoons at the barn. She has been trying to convince us since third grade that formal school was not a good place for her but it took us this long for me to step through the fear and for her to insist. She looks so different this summer just knowing that she can learn at home and in the world. She’s written for information from several correspondence schools (her decision).

## **Their Own Records**

*From Joann Sherosky (PA):*

One thing I am doing this year that I hope will ease some of my daily hassles is making up a sheet on which the kids can record what they did each day. Last year, I kept track of everything and when I got my part-time evening job, most of my record-keeping fell apart. I’m going to photostat a whole stack of the sheets and there’ll be a place to write down what books they are reading, how many lines they completed in their journals, what they did in math and other subjects. They’ll be responsible for filling them out right after lunch.

Last year was our first year of home-schooling and I think we are still evolving and trying to find what works well for us. We really use the public library—it’s good and there are lots of branch libraries so we vary where we go each week.

My kids love to be read to, so we read a lot of biographies of famous people and also some books like a children’s translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and *The Hobbit*.

## Deciding Not To

*From a parent in Delaware:*

This summer has not been positive enough to warrant my feeling up to tackling home-schooling this fall. I am simultaneously disappointed and relieved with this realization. By waiting one more year we will gain two things: I will be much more likely to have the school co-operate when I request that the children participate in some school functions; I am very active in the school and will spend next year “setting them up” for the big move! And my home situation will be much more peaceful and serene, as Baby #3 reaches the age where he can participate in games and not be disruptive.

What we lose by waiting is TIME! But I do feel I’ll be much more in control of the situation next fall.

## Good News From Washington

*Debra Stewart (WA) wrote:*

We at the Stillaguamish Learning Exchange are growing at a very phenomenal rate. We have always had our three centers, Arlington, Kirkland, and Sedro Woolley. We have already gotten fire and health approval for our new Marysville center, and the Washington-licensed teacher is in what we call “in-service,” familiarizing herself with our system for one or two quarters. We also have a teacher doing in-service who will direct a new center in Renton late next year. There were two schools structured after our model that were approved at the last meeting of the State Board of Education in July. I have just finished a letter to a teacher in Spokane who wants to set up a learning center in affiliation with our school. We are fully anticipating, if growth continues at the present rate, we will have an enrollment of 100 students by October, and 200 by Jan. ’83. I just got a call last night from a church group who want me to come and speak. They have 10 families who want to enroll *right now*.

Officials ask me if I am prepared to be sued by a family who feels that I have not provided their child with a quality education. My answer to that is usually this question, “Are you willing to sign a contract with me if I were to

enroll my child in your school, guaranteeing that my child will be educated when he is finished?" The reply is usually a clearing of the throat and a dubious answer like, "No, we're in a rather shaky position in that regard." How funny this political two-step is as we go round and round. I get the feeling that in the end, the public system will have to make some provision for cooperation with homeschoolers, or face losing a large portion of their enrollment.

A new and exciting thing that we are going to begin this fall is licensing our parents (those who want to complete their B.S. or want to update expired licenses) as State certified teachers. The way it will work is this: we will be working with Western University in Bellingham, WA. We will sponsor workshops and classes for credit towards licenses, in how to organize an educational plan, set and complete educational objectives, etc. These will be taught by a university professor, until our first teacher completes her master's next summer, using our school as her field project. Our four other teachers all want to work towards their masters, getting credit for what they are doing and helping with the courses we're sponsoring. These classes will take place in the communities (Western U. has extensions in Arlington and Kirkland, how convenient!) so there won't be a lot of commuting. The State Administrator of Private Education thought that the whole idea of beginning the process to license many of our Instructional Aides (our parents) as certified teachers not only lends credibility to our program, but is tremendously innovative.

The Washington Federation of Independent Schools is the organization that sponsored, supported, and lobbied for the House Bill 996 last year that would have liberalized the education code. We are fortunate now to have Mr. Carl Fynboe, former Administrator of Private Education for the state, and former president of the Washington Education Association (the teachers' union and the main opponent to the bill last year) as the new director of the Federation. He is a very influential man with many friends and connections. He sees the possibility of new legislation as being somewhat brighter than last year. I have volunteered to represent our school, schools like ours, and home-schoolers in our state on the board of the federation, since none of its present members seems to represent our special concerns.

We are organizing the state into home-schooling districts with the purposes of having local meetings monthly or so, having a phone tree to get info out fast for lobbying efforts, and getting news from the various parts of

the state for reporting in the newsletter (*Unschoolers' Project*). So far we have volunteer reps from four districts and northern California.

## **On Kansas Victory**

*Paula and Keith White in Kansas sent us further information on their court victory (GWS #28):*

Last summer we incorporated into a private school and notified the school district that Zephyrus was enrolled in our private school. In March, after Zephyrus turned 7, we were served with a Deprived Child Petition in the interest of Zephyrus and an ad-litem lawyer was appointed for him.

On June 21, District Magistrate Judge Marvin Stortz denied the Deprived Child Petition and found our school to be a private school within the law.

To our knowledge, this is the first case to go the Kansas courts since *State v. Lowry*, 1963. These people were denied the right to educate their children at home by the State Supreme Court.

Three primary issues were important in court. 1) How long was school in session? We stated that learning was an integral part of daily life and therefore was in session all day, every day of the year, far exceeding the state-required 1080 hours per year. 2) Did we have a competent instructor? We said yes and based our proof upon the results of the student (i.e., the student is learning—what better way to prove the competency of his teacher?). 3) Curriculum. We have daily documentation of learning activities in various subject areas. Our curriculum was devised around what is required of accredited schools and subjects we felt important. We agreed to have Zephyrus tested at the request of the ad-litem lawyer and overall he was approximately one grade level above average. These test results were important in court.

We feel that we received a favorable decision because we were well-prepared. The ad-litem lawyer argued our position—he was a most competent and articulate man. Our lawyer was well-versed and prepared, also most competent and articulate. These men collaborated on the final presentation of the case. We had laid a good foundation with incorporation papers and daily documentation. What I'm trying to say is, cover yourself from the start.

## **Kansas Private School**

*From Kelli Faidley (IA):*

*Sept. '81:* We were transferred (because of my husband's job) to Kansas. Home study is not a recognized alternative in Kansas.

We hoped to keep a low profile and not be found out by the authorities. That approach fell flat when we went to church and met the principal of the local grade school. He told the superintendent. The superintendent called my husband's boss and said we would go to jail right away if we didn't send our boys to school. (That is untrue; you are served with papers, you appear in court, you contest the charges, eventually the threat of jail might occur, but probably not).

Having read *GWS* and *Tidbits* (NALSAS) and with the advice and encouragement of Pat Montgomery (Chad and Monty are enrolled in HBEP through Clonlara), I started making phone calls. I called my State Senator and Representative, both of whom were terrific. I called the State Department of Education and found out my best option was to start a school. They were cooperative when I told them what I wanted. Meanwhile, the principal and superintendent backed off and decided to investigate us further before taking legal action.

Starting a school in Kansas is easy. You have to meet four requirements; health code (no problem if you have six children or less), fire codes (which I can't find out because no one seems to know), a competent teacher (not necessarily certified), and 180 days or 1080 hours of school a year.

*July '82:* We moved to Iowa in March. All the time we were in Kansas we had no further problems with the authorities. As soon as we became a school, they ignored us. We were ignored by the Fire Marshall whom I called and asked about fire codes. You do have to show you are willing to let children other than your own into your school, which is why you must advertise. We did advertise and got only one call. We were honest about my lack of teaching credential and we charged a very high tuition because I didn't really want children other than my own. (However, some people might not care.)

We were very happy with the way everything went. Once we got started and could quit worrying about being arrested, we had a terrific year.

We also haven't had any trouble in Iowa. The local officials did visit us to find out what we were doing. When we explained about the Home Based Education Program, they said we were O.K. to the end of the year.

## Combating Turner

A case which is often cited against home schoolers is the 1953 California case of *People v. Turner*, in which the Superior Court of Los Angeles upheld a family's conviction on charges of refusing to send their children to school. One of the family's arguments was that it was unreasonable and arbitrary for the law to require tutors to have a teaching credential yet not require teachers in private schools to have that credential. The court's reply was:

The most obvious reason for such difference in treatment is that pointed out in *Hoyt v. State* (84 NH 38, 146 A 170, 1929), namely, the difficulty in supervising without unreasonable expense a host of individuals, widely scattered, who might undertake to instruct individual children in their homes as compared with the less difficult and expensive supervision of teachers in organized private schools.

By now we have enough experience and information to show that this claim, at best a wild guess, is wholly untrue. The Kentucky Supreme Court, the Arizona legislature, and many school systems have held that the performance of a home school could be adequately monitored simply by having the students take the ordinary school standardized tests. Even if parents insist, as they should, that if these tests must be given they should be given at home, the expense of giving them and scoring them—done electronically—is negligible.

Families facing court action in any state, and any California families facing a possibly hostile school district, might do well to make this point in their education proposal or brief. Indeed, since by now there are in California a great many people who teach their children at home by calling their home a private school, the state might well be challenged there to show how much money it is spending to monitor these schools, if indeed it is spending any money at all.

By the way, it is important to realize that nowhere in *Turner* is it stated flatly that a private school may not be in a home. Yet some people have implied that that is what the ruling says.—JH & DR.

## Two Letters From Calif.

*A reader writes:*

*GWS* #26, page 5, under the heading “Independent Study,” had the particular lead that we had been searching for. We enclose a copy of the Independent Study brochure and a copy of the letter we sent to the Superintendent of our school district.

We wanted as many facts as we could get before we approached the Superintendent before school got underway this year. We met with him two weeks ago (mid-August), and after he read our letter he remarked that he was glad to hear that we had checked with Sacramento regarding the Independent Study program as he had heard some negative thoughts from a member on the school board regarding the legality of such programs except where long distances are involved. Beyond that he completely understood our concern, and he said that he wished more parents would care so much, since if families were stronger, it would enhance the role that the school plays. We agreed, of course!

For several reasons our first choice was sending our daughter on a partial week—two days. One of our favorite reasons for preferring the partial week has to do with our daughter’s choice of friends. We are very actively involved in a number of activities ranging from religious to social to recreational and we have close friends of all ages. It is a real joy for us to observe our daughter value friendships with people of all ages and not to be limited to her peers. I guess what’s so neat about this is that she’s allowed to imitate her parents’ example, which is natural for children to do, but that we don’t have to compete with the powerful influence that peers can exert during the full five day week.

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*From Southern California:*

I have two boys, ages six and eight, who have never gone to public school a day in their lives. I started a private elementary school; this is my second year. I needed only to fill out a Private School Affidavit.

In my second year of private schools, I moved to San Pedro which falls under the L.A. City schools. Problem: it was OK with the Superintendent of L.A. County schools, and it was even OK with the State Superintendent of Private Schools, but someone at L.A. *City* would not allow my school on the technicality that L.A. City uses a building code for safety that speaks of six or

more occupants in the building. Since I only have two pupils (and I don't want more), they disallow the school. The man at Pupil Services and Attendance threatened to file charges with the city attorney. Result: I moved back to the county I'm in now, where I have received help and support. The problem is I would like to live in San Pedro to be near my aging mother.

As a suggestion to other families in LA that are having trouble, I see the alternatives as twofold: 1) Move to a favorable area. This seems like a hard decision, but if you are going to be teaching your children for several years, this is hassle-free. There are many, many counties that have no problem in this matter. 2) The only other choice if you are faced with one of these hardnosed, narrow-minded city school administrators is to *fight them* all the way. It is absurd that the State Department of Education approves me but a city has an ordinance they can pull out of the woodwork.

## Irish Law

*Keith Haight in Ireland thought we would be interested in this quote from the Irish Constitution:*

Article 42: 1. The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

2. Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognized or established by the State.

3. (1) The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular type of school designated by the state.

(2) The State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, oral, intellectual and social.

## Life at Home



From Vera Evans Smith (ID):

I solved my problem with the public school by taking both our sons out and enrolling them for the remainder of this year in the Santa Fe Community School. The school didn't give me any problem at all when I withdrew our boys.

We are using a number of books from the National Geographic Society, *World* magazine, Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, and we're reading books the school doesn't encourage like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the classics. Both boys are learning how to type now and we're using the Berlitz tapes (*GWS* #25) to learn French and Spanish. If any *GWS* readers belong to the Book Of The Month Club, they can purchase fine educational books and tapes through them. I got our language tapes at \$6 a set along with instruction books.

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*Susan Coburn (VA) wrote:*

This was our first year as home-schoolers. My daughter was in 6th grade. I had many doubts throughout the year, but it went beautifully!

She enrolled in the Calvert course last year, though we did not correspond. Our books didn't come until late October and she was finished before Easter. She averaged two hours school work a day and worked at whatever pace she set. I was surprised that she could finish 180 lessons so quickly. We've had lots of good times and much learning has taken place without the tension that had previously gone with it.

This year we're not using Calvert. Our daughter still wants a structured set-up so I guess I'll make up 180 lessons just to suit her. Fortunately, I've obtained cast-off books through the school system and bought some used ones from a local Christian school.

I'd like for her to get to the point of pursuing what interests her. But, it seems school took away her desire to learn. Her present attitude is just to "get it over with." I think the natural desire to learn will be revived but I'm not sure how long it will take.

For myself, it took until I was 23 to really want to learn something. I became interested in how folks used to "get by" with so little cash and my desire has been to find out how. When I wanted to make soap, no one knew how, so I had to read and do it myself. I've made all of our soap now for six

years.

Other interests such as caning, sewing, canning, etc., were self-sought and self-taught. People are amazed at all the things I do. I make most of our clothes, can all of our fruits and vegetables, upholster, and many other things. I do these things because they're fun and interesting to *me*.

This year I've been particularly pleased with our daughter's progress in personal relationships. She was an only child for eight years, and unfortunately, six years of that time I was working and she was in daycare centers. Finally, she's coming to really care for people and be considerate and compassionate. These were characteristics not learned in the day care atmosphere because of the turnover of children as well as help. It's so worthwhile to see a child smile and be happy again!

Our life is very different from most around here. When I returned to "home-making" I was challenged to be thrifty. The result has been great. Learning more about nutrition and how to provide protein without meat, as well as canning and freezing, has allowed me to feed my family of four on a mere \$100 per month. Forming a food co-op and learning to do things ourselves have also helped us to cut expenses.

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*From a father in New York:*

I initially wrote away for correspondence school curricula, etc., but we feel their material has the same problems as that of regular schools. Instead we have been using the *Whole Earth Catalog* as a source of reference, which led, for example, to the discovery of the Edmund Scientific Company (*GWS* #12). I have been placing a book order about once a month and even so I am spending less money than in a private school.

We also got a small home computer, the ZX81 from Sinclair, which is only \$150 and Sean is getting into programming, himself. With very little help from me, he is working on a Space Invaders game. I am very pleased with this because the computer is forcing him to type accurately—or it won't work—and to develop his own logical thinking. Just by experimenting, many things may be discovered on the computer. For example, if you don't know what the SIN (trigonometric) function is, just make the machine plot "sin x vs x" and you will get a pretty good idea of what it is about.

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*From Connie Colten in California:*

As with so many of your readers I have been meaning to write and am finally doing it. Our homeschooling family includes three boys: Christopher, 10, Shawn, 7, and Devin, 3. We started our school, the Continuum Experience, a year ago.

We don't use any structured courses. All the boys love to read and still have that natural curiosity from preschool days that leads us to many topics. The main problem we had at first was the boys' fighting. It was taking adjustment for all of us to be together all day. Once Christopher was in tears trying to explain to me that he could get along with his friends but not Shawn. I asked him fearfully if he was trying to tell me he wanted to go back to school. Oh no, he replied, what he wanted was for Shawn to go back to school! Needless to say, Shawn didn't think that was a good idea.

We lived in a very open neighborhood, so I decided I'd better inform my neighbors of what we were doing. I expected censure, but received a lot of defensive talk about why they couldn't homeschool. The only problems we had in the neighborhood was when two of the children wanted to come to our school. One little boy went so far as to hide in my house so his mom couldn't send him to kindergarten. We were making candles that day and that looked like fun to him.

We have had an interesting year. We've done many things: our electric typewriter and wide-scope telescope have been enjoyed by all of us. We've taken field trips to the art museum, tide pools, the zoo, and lots of other places. We've enjoyed books from the library, the *GWS* booklist, and *National Geographic*. We have discarded text books but don't use them very often.

We have recently moved and have found we are able to cooperate and enjoy each other's company full-time with not too much friction. My husband and I attribute this to the time spent together this past year.

## **From Tough to Flexible**

*From Rose Burkel (TX):*

We have been schooling at home for the past two years and plan to continue indefinitely. Our first year was the most difficult. We were

concerned about our son, then nine-years-old. We felt he had started school before he was ready and this, coupled with our tough, authoritarian attitude, gave him a feeling of insecurity. His reaction to us was a kind of hostility and rebelliousness. My husband and I realized that now was the time to change things. We told our son and the rest of the family that we had made many mistakes but that with God's help we were going to make some changes in our family and we needed their help for the good of all.

Of course, we fell back into our old, tired ways, but when we did and felt we were wrong, we would go to the child and say, "What I said was ugly and mean, please forgive me." Invariably the child would say, "Oh, that's OK, I shouldn't have done or said that, I'm sorry, too." Nothing in the world will keep us from striving to be the kind of family and individuals that God has called us to be.

Two years later and what progress has been made! We are living proof that parents, even after age forty, can make fundamental changes in their thinking. Our philosophy now is that we finally realize there isn't just one way of doing things; we look for ways that work. We try to see, enjoy, and treasure the differences in each other, and we try to be kind in our dealings with each other. We have also found that even though we have made many mistakes in the past that were detrimental to a child, that with prayer, love, and determination, we could still fix things. There is never a situation that can't be changed.

Our doubts concerning home schooling have vanished. We look at our youngsters and we like what we see: in learning, in character development, we have seen enormous progress and we are pleased.

By the way, another family from our school district are becoming home-schoolers this year. They didn't know about us, but learned about home schooling from a series on local television. Also, four other families in our area (two other school districts) are home schooling this year. Isn't this exciting!

## **Former School Nurse**

*Judy Dechantel (WA) wrote:*

For nine years before having any children of my own, I worked as a school nurse, primarily in elementary schools in Head Start and Title I

programs. It was an enjoyable job—we had, it seemed, unlimited funds for caring for all health needs, etc. We had great staff team spirit and even managed to get parents involved. But there was a nagging going on in the back of my mind, which I wasn't able to put into words until I had my own children.

I consistently found vision, hearing, and speech “problems” (this is what the professionals labeled them) in most of the 3–7-year-olds. In fact, in vision screening, I would estimate perhaps 60–75% of all the children below age 7 didn't have 20/20 acuity. That was a recognized fact, but what makes me feel bad is all the children with 20/30 or 20/40 visual acuity in that age group who we put through further screenings, referrals to specialists, etc. I am convinced now, from experience as a mother and from further research, that visual acuity of 20/20 happens at different ages in different children, but more likely between 7-10 years old.

I can recall a whole year of monthly staffings regarding a 4- or 5-year-old child with a speech “problem,” with referrals to medical specialists, psychological workups, home visits with parents, etc., etc. After all the workups, man-hours, tax dollars and probably the worst thing, a failure syndrome for the child and parents—lo and behold, the child at age 7–8 grew out of it.

I know from a medical standpoint, there is a great deal to be said for good health screenings for children; there are a lot of health problems only correctable if found at an early age. But what a turnaround I've made personally—I used to believe the early childhood education programs were next to flawless. With my own two children, and from reading *GWS* and Raymond Moore's books, I am *convinced* along with my husband that allowing children to grow and mature at home, learning through their own interests at their own pace with parents making the world accessible to learn from, learning from real life (not artificial), learning with little or better yet no formal teaching, is the way to raise healthy, happy, self-confident children.

And they do learn by themselves! Jacinthe (6) recognizes, reads, and writes many words—we have done *nothing* but read a lot to her. It took us about 10 months to read through the *Little House on the Prairie* books; we just finished Eric Knight's *Lassie Come Home* and Rachel Field's *Hitty: Her First Hundred Years*.

We don't have a television, by choice, so have lots of free time. We're within walking distance to the ocean; lately the girls have been collecting rocks and sorting according to color, texture, etc.—a clue, perhaps, for me to gently watch for deeper interest in rocks.

Jacinthe is into categorizing things and asking “What is the biggest mountain in the world?” “The biggest field in the world?” (Yes, field!), etc. So we're having a heyday with an old almanac, my own old set of encyclopedias (like new—I don't remember using them except when I *had* to write a term paper), a world globe, and a stack of *National Geographics*.

The only thing we have in our home which would be labeled a “learning tool,” besides cases of books, reams of paper (we got a roll of end paper free from a local paper mill), and art and drawing tools, is a gift Texas Instrument “Speak and Read.” It comes with a vocabulary of preschool to 2nd grade level. You can purchase plug-in modules as necessary for under \$20. Jonquille (4) and Jacinthe both will spend hours listening to the “little man” speaking to them. (The word games are self-correcting).

PS: My brother (now 39) was told in 4th grade he had a reading problem and poor attention span. He disliked school, barely made it through high school, with C's, D's, and F's. He's now an airplane pilot and self-taught plane mechanic; also a self-taught computer programmer—has his own computer programming business. He didn't get any of it from formal schooling!

## On Computers

*Technology Review*, the magazine of M.I.T., ran a short article in January called “Housebreaking The Software,” by Robert Cowen, science editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, in which he very sensibly said: “The general-purpose home computer for the ‘average’ user has not yet arrived. Neither the software nor the information services accessible via telephone are yet good enough to justify such a purchase, unless there is a specialized need. Thus, if you have the cash for a home computer but no clear need for one yet, you would be better advised to put it in liquid investment for two or three more years.”

But in the next paragraph he says, “Those who would stand aside from this revolution will, by this decade's end, find themselves as much of an

anachronism as those who yearn for the good old one-horse shay.”

This is mostly just hot air. What does it mean to be an anachronism? Am I one, because I don’t own a car or a TV? Is something bad supposed to happen to me because of that? What about the horse-and-buggy Amish? They are as a group the most successful farmers in the country, everywhere buying up farms that up-to-date high-tech farmers have had to sell because they couldn’t pay the interest on the money they had to borrow to buy their fancy equipment.

Perhaps what Mr. Cowen is trying to say is that if I don’t learn now to run the computers of 1982 I won’t be *able* later, even if I want to, to learn to run the computers of 1990? Nonsense. Knowing how to run a 1982 computer will have little or nothing to do with knowing how to run a 1990 computer. And what about the children now being born, and yet to be born? When they get old enough, they will, if they feel like it, learn to run the computers of the 1990s. Well, if they can, then if I want to, I can.

Aside from being mostly meaningless, or where meaningful mostly wrong, these very typical words by Mr. Cowen are in method and intent exactly like all those ads that tell us that if we don’t buy this deodorant or detergent or gadget or whatever, everyone else, even our “friends,” will despise, mock, and shun us. The advertising industry’s attack on the fragile self-esteem of millions of people, this using people’s fears to sell them things, is destructive and morally disgusting. The fact that the computer industry and its salesmen and prophets have taken this approach is the best reason in the world for being very skeptical of anything they say. Clever they may be, but they are mostly not to be trusted. What they want above all is not to make a better world but to join the big list of computer millionaires.

A computer is, after all, not a revolution or a way of life, but a tool, like a pen or wrench or typewriter or car. A good reason for buying and using a tool is that with it we can do something that we want or need to do, better than we used to do it. A bad reason for buying a tool is just to have it, in which case it becomes not a tool but a toy.

—JH

## Multiplication Game

*JH: Among some memos that I wrote when teaching math to children in*

*grades 1–6 in 1962, I found this one about multiplication tables, which some of our readers, at home or in school, might find useful.*

As I said in earlier articles about multiplication (*GWS* #6, #17, #18), I don't think even this much drill is needed to help children learn tables. The best way for them to learn and remember these products is by discovering the ways in which they relate to each other and the kinds of patterns they make. Thus, children who can multiply by 2 and by 3 have a way to figure out almost all the tables. Why waste a lot of time memorizing what you know you can quickly figure out? And in any case, children who have figured out half a dozen times what a particular product is will probably remember it next time it comes up.

Still, this memo gives an interesting glimpse into children's thinking, and the kinds of things that make learning interesting and exciting for them. And it is when learning is most interesting and exciting that they learn best and remember most. Here is the memo:

The trouble with almost all kinds of arithmetic drill is that they either bore children or scare them. The result is that either they learn nothing in the first place or that their learning is so unpleasant that they quickly forget it.

I have been working with a few third graders who, though bright about numbers in many ways, have been weak on multiplication tables, which makes the school anxious. It occurred to me one day that I remember telephone numbers more by the way they sound than the way they look, and therefore, that the old-fashioned way of memorizing by verbal repetition might help the children, if I could jazz it up a bit. The trick was to engage their full attention without making them anxious.

After a while I hit on something that seemed to work quite well. I began by putting on the board a grid of all the products of the numbers 6 through 9 (below). The children have worked with these grids, and know that the square which is, for example, in the 6 row and the 7

	6	7	8	9



6	36	42	48	54
7	42	59	56	63
8	48	56	64	72
9	54	63	72	81

column should be filled in with the product of 6 and 7. I used 6 through 9 because these are the tables which children think are “hardest” and on which they have the most trouble.

I began with the products filled in, as shown. I had some kind of pointer in each hand. I said that if I put one of them against, say, the 7 at the left side, and the other against, say, the 9 on top, they were to say “Seven nines are sixty-three,” and so on. We began. As I moved the pointers around, I could tell by the slowness of their answers that they were having to look for each product. But gradually, as they became more confident, they began to answer more and more quickly, without having to look for the product, or perhaps knowing instantly where to find it.

At this point I had a sudden idea or inspiration, and made a change that made the game more interesting. I erased one of the products in the squares. All the children exclaimed at this. I made a point of asking them that product as soon as I had erased it, and quite frequently thereafter, so that it would get a chance to stick. The children were surprised and pleased to find that they did remember that product, even when it “was not there.” Whether they remembered mostly the sound of their own voices saying the product, or what it had looked like when it was written in, I don’t know; I didn’t think to ask them. Perhaps it is as well I did not; if they had had to think about *how* they remembered, I might have jarred the memory loose from their subconscious, and they might have stopped remembering.

As time went on I erased more and more products, first in the 6 row and then in the others. They became more and more excited and

interested as the number of blank squares increased, and as they found to their great astonishment that they really could remember what they could no longer see.

The time came when none of them could remember a product that belonged in one of the blank squares. When this happened, I said nothing, but simply wrote the product back in. This caused further excitement, and cries of “I knew it was that!” By the time there were only two or three products left in the grid, the children had turned this exercise into a contest in which they tried to see whether they could get all the squares blanked out before they failed to remember a product. At one point I asked for a product that none of them knew. I took the chalk and started to write it in, but before my hand reached the board one of them shouted the correct answer, and they all began to shout, “You can’t write it in, you can’t write it in!” I agreed this was only fair. Soon all the squares were blank and they had won the game.

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I have no further notes on this subject, so I guess that multiplication tables were soon no longer a serious problem for us, or at any rate, that I soon stopped seeing them as such. But this might well be a game—it reminds me a little of the card game Concentration, which children love and are good at—that children could play with adults, or each other. Those who found the game interesting could of course make it more so by adding more tables, such as the 11 and 12 and perhaps still others.

## **Growing With Books**

*From Jane Williams (CA):*

I am a great believer in the value of books and have tried to make them available to K (22 months) as best I can, opting for as much quality as possible, in addition to trying to match her interests to my selections.

I used to wonder how I would introduce books and stories to K so she would love them. I didn’t want to risk trying too hard to have her like books, thereby making her dislike them instead. As with most other areas of her development, I have found that she led the way in helping me make the right

choices for her.

She was walking at ten-months so was able to get her books and bring them to us when she wanted to read. By twelve-months she was having us read to her for as long as we had time available. Practically each night we read that book covering  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  before moving on to other books. She always had favorite pictures and pages in all her books. In the *Cat In The Hat* and *Best Word Book Ever* we did not so much read the narrative as have conversations about the pictures in the books. The first real narrative reading came at about 12-months.

As K approached eighteen-months the reading sessions fell in priority to outside play and motor skills, although we still always read at night.

Now she is having us read as much as we are willing. We will go through ten books at a time, and more if we were able to sit with her longer. She has over fifty books, available within her reach in her own corner of the book case. I was going to put the beginning books away (cardboard, ABC, etc.), until I read the article in *GWS* #24 about how some children teach themselves to read by requesting the same simple books to be read over and over again. So I have kept her picture books available, and I do believe she is learning that way. She has so many of the books, songs, and poetry in various books memorized, I never cease to be astonished.

I buy books for K I don't think she's ready for. I put them in her library as she approaches readiness. I'll then pick them up to read to her when she is having a particularly quiet time. If she doesn't like the book she lets me know and we move on to one she does want. Usually she is very specific in what she wants to read. Using this technique I stumble on the appropriate time when she is ready for new and different material.

I used to marvel several months ago while reading *GWS* at those parents who wrote about their children reading or being read to those stories which seemed to me well beyond the age of the child in degree of comprehension. I would wonder how they introduced their child to reading so the child would tolerate and enjoy such narratives. Lo and behold, we are approaching this point ourselves and K showed us the way. All we as parents had to do was be observant and ready to provide for her needs.

Her favorite story at bedtime is A.A. Milne's *Winnie The Pooh*, specifically Chapter One, in which Pooh goes hunting for honey with a balloon. I have found with K that familiarity breeds interest and attention. In

this respect I did provide some early Milne preparation. She has stuffed animals which we have called Pooh (teddy bear), Kanga and Roo (for stuffed kangaroo and baby). I have always loved Milne myself and was anxiously waiting for the time K would be ready for it. When I felt she was ready to try Milne's *Pooh*, I first read her a Disney version with beautiful color pictures of the story of Pooh, Piglet and the flood. Then we went to Milne's original which is narrative. I selected the first chapter (Pooh hunting for honey with balloons), because of the characters involved, because K loves balloons, and she was fascinated with bees at the time. She asks for the story daily now and I am sure is committing it to memory.

## Learning to Read

*From the successful "Home Study Plan" that Denise Matteau submitted to the Worcester, MA, school officials:*

Sojourner (6) has been reading independently for two years. Since she learned how to read at home, and since I intend to continue using an informal approach with her at home, it may be right to describe how she learned to read.

I have always read stories to her, and when I have not been with her, she has had caretakers who also enjoyed and read books. She had a set of magnetic plastic letters, and when she was just over two-years-old, she knew her alphabet well enough so that no one could confuse her. One day her Aunt Ellen played a game with her. At first Ellen was taking letters at random, holding them up, and giving wrong names (e.g., an "A" called "C"). Sojourner would take them back, place them in the appropriate space on their tray, and give them the proper name. After a while she became angry at Ellen for using the wrong names. Then Ellen changed the game, and took some letters to form the word "Bunny." She sounded the word out for Sojourner as she pointed at the letters, then she sang a song about bunnies. Sojourner was delighted and made her repeat this sequence several times. Sojourner herself played this game frequently over the next few weeks, always asking some adult to "make bunny" with her letters.

Around this same time, Sojourner began to recognize words in her

favorite bedtime stories, and knew some of her nursery rhymes well enough to “memory read” them. We developed a game in which I would fall silent on certain words in her stories, and she would read that word. By the time she was three, she could recognize about half a dozen words whether they appeared in the context of a familiar story or not.

When Sojourner was 3½, her Aunt Renee gave her a set of ten Little Golden Books. Sojourner enjoyed comparing these books to each other. She also was asking me to teach her to read, because she was beginning to be aware of all the words she could not recognize in her stories. One evening she took her set of Little Golden Books and spread them out on the floor, so that each one was open to the first page, and she began picking out the words she could recognize on each page, and comparing them with each other. Seeing her do that, I decided that she was serious about learning to read and so I began to systematically help her expand her vocabulary of recognized words as well as to read phonetically. I did not have to give her very much help; mainly I encouraged her in her own efforts. By the time she was four, she could read almost any children’s book independently.

The key elements in how Sojourner learned to read are that she was given material to play with, and when she expressed a desire to learn more, that desire was fulfilled. She wasn’t told, “You’re too young,” and she wasn’t forced to go at an older child’s pace. Her learning style showed itself to be very uneven in terms of a regular progression, but very regular in terms of a cyclic process. She would meet a problem, become frustrated by it, demand help in understanding it, when given help would progress more rapidly than expected, then would relax and play with what she had learned before moving on to the next step.

I still read aloud to her, because this is a time of companionship as well as reading, and I generally read her stories that are more complex than those she reads on her own. In doing this, questions often arise about different aspects of the story. For example, in Betty Baker’s *Save Sirrushany*, a question arose when the scene changed abruptly from the castle courtyard, where the main character was sitting, to the dense forest, where a wolf was thinking. This is the first time we came

across this literary device in this style, and so we discussed different ways to change scene when telling a story. Later, Sojourner became comfortable enough with this idea so that I didn't have to explain the changes of scene.

She has developed the ability to write her own short notes and comments accompanying her artwork, usually up to two sentences in length. Her ability to compose full length stories shows itself when she is able to avoid the rigorous exercise of writing by dictating her stories to me. She is highly conscious of the structure of these stories, to the point of dictating punctuation as well as sentence content.

## **Tips From Joyce**

*Some reading and writing tips from Joyce Kinmont in The Tender Tutor newsletters (see page 5):*

Poetry makes great reading material for beginners because the story is told in so few words. One of the biggest problems is finding print large enough for young eyes, but many photocopy stores can now enlarge your copy. We suggest that you collect poetry that your child enjoys, have the poems enlarged, and then put them on tape so your child can follow the words as he listens.

Laminating film is available through the Distribution Center; a 500 ft. by 11 ¼ inch wide roll is about \$5.95. Here are the directions for its use, thanks to Sherri Malnar: Cut the film to the size you need. Lay a towel or blanket on your table, then the picture or chart you are going to laminate, then the film—shiny side up, then a piece of flannel. Set your iron on “wool” and iron the middle out, keeping the iron moving. You can usually rub out any wrinkles while the film is still hot. You can also reheat any spot that got missed.

It is time for (Milli, 5) to learn to sound out words. Each day we go over the sounds; then I write a few words with the “e” sound on papers which we staple together into a book. Then we put “quickie dots” (labels) on the typewriter keys, label the dots in lower case with a felt tip pen, and she types the words she is learning. Her beginning words include: me, he, she, meet, see, tee, tweet, we. She loves it!

Lynn Ferrel wrote to tell us how much fun she and her two daughters have been having writing letters to each other and to other family members. They use regular envelopes, and cut “stamps” from pictures of vegetables and flowers in old seed catalogs. Then they put their letters in the mailbox and take turns “checking the mail.”

Good reading material for very beginning readers is almost impossible to find, so we make our own. We make small books for Milli, a new one each day, using paper scraps (about 3” by 8½”) from the print shop. Each book has several pages. Milli always wants the cover to say, “Camilla’s Book.” (One day she asked about the little line by her name, so I explained possessives to her.) The next three pages usually have just one word each, for her to sound out phonetically. Then the next two have short sentences. The last page must always say, “The end.”

We staple the book together, and on the front page I put five squares or circles or triangles. Each time Milli reads the book to someone, that person puts his initials in a box. If she reads to a cat or a doll, she makes a mark for them.

When planning your textbook budget for the next school year, consider getting magazines instead of texts. Magazines have a lot of advantages: the people who buy them are the people who read them (textbooks are purchased by people who are deciding what is good for someone else); they are more interesting; the information is up-to-date; students can have the satisfaction of completing, and reporting on, a large variety of subjects.

Consider making a trip to a good library to see what magazines are available, then subscribing. There is nothing more exciting for children than having things come to them in the mail.

## **Talking Tape**

*Linda Ozier (VA) wrote:*

I made a tape of stories (with his comments) for Owen (3) to listen to at night. He keeps a cassette player by his bed—initially it was for the Suzuki

tape—but now if he’s the least bit wakeful at bedtime or the middle of the night, he listens to his stories while playing, drawing, or even looking at other books. He calls it “the talking tape.” At one point on the tape I suggested he talk about what he had done that day (so I could take a shower) and he started out, “What I did today, tape recorder, was.” He listens to at least part of it virtually every night. When it was new he would stay awake an extra hour to listen to the tape over and over again.

## **Coins, Jigsaw, & Cuisenaire**

*Susan Richman (PA) wrote:*

Jesse, 5, a budding consumer at garage sales and food coops, is beginning to really want to understand money values. What will this bunch of coins in his pocket buy at the hardware store? What is this business of pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters, and dollar bills? What’s the sense of it? He’s understanding clearly now that it’s a good trick to only carry *one* dime rather than ten pennies—saves all that counting out and doesn’t take up so much room in a pocket—a good invention. We’ve read a children’s book on the history of money and he was quite intrigued. Could see that coins were a bit handier to tote than goats or sheep for barter.

Then one day, as we were meandering through the Pittsburgh Carnegie Museum, we stumbled upon a small exhibit of old money. I boosted him up to see the odd bills with strange faces on them, the old lumpy coins, different sizes than ours. Talked a bit again about how money was an invention, something that’s changed with time as people get new ideas, or as new governments take over. Then Jesse pointed out what seemed to be some broken or cut coins. We read the accompanying card and discovered we were looking at the original U.S. quarter! A silver dollar CUT into 4 bits! The quarters were shaped just like the quarters Jesse knew from our Sunday morning waffles. What a good laugh we had over all this. And Jesse on his own said that probably after a while they just decided to make quarters a separate round shape so that people would stop cutting up all the dollars. So Jesse now has a real visualization of what “Four quarters equals one dollar” really means.

Jesse has begun now to use my electric Dremel jig saw, to make his own wooden puzzles. I’d bought the saw with birthday money when Jesse was



two, to *make him* puzzles rather than buy the very expensive wooden ones I liked. The tool has been a real delight, providing us with puzzles made from the illustrations of favorite books, inset puzzles of all types, cut out dinosaurs drawn by Jesse, “millions” of wooden cats to go along with Wanda Gag’s book, and countless small wooden people.

Jesse is usually around when I’m using the saw, he’s seen how I turn it on and off, how I hold the wood. I realized that he would probably be fully able to use the machine himself, and asked if he’d like to try it out. He did. He was getting cautious and respectful of the jigsaw, very concentrated on his work, especially slow and careful when going around corners so that the blade would not break. He then had me try to put his completed puzzle back together. It *worked*! And I’m sure no nursery school or kindergarten in our area has “using power tools” as a part of their curriculum.

Jesse and I recently happened on a new way to use our Cuisenaire rods. It’s the closest we’ve come to using them purposely, to help us in solving a problem.

We’d made ourselves a set of American Indian stick “dice” and were trying to learn how to play some games of chance with them. A book we were using suggested a scoring system—4 points for one combination of the sticks, 6 for another, 8 for another, 0 for another. We began to play, and I very quickly saw that using numerals to keep score meant next to nothing to Jesse. The game seemed a bit pointless, but Jesse’s Indian enthusiasm made us keep at it anyway.

Suddenly an idea flew in—why not use our Cuisenaire rods for score keeping? We poured out all of our rods and set to. I told Jesse that we could use any combination of rods that would equal the same number of whites (1 cm. cube) as our scores. So a score of 4 might be made with either 4 whites, 2 reds, 1 light green plus 1 white or 1 purple. Jesse caught on immediately and with great delight. He’s very familiar with the rods and their combinations as he’s been playing with them for two years or more, building stairways, connecting patterns, buildings, roadways. We each kept score by lining up our rods along our own edges of the table; we agreed that going the width and length of the table equalled winning, and then we kept on going until our rod lines met. Anytime we saw we could exchange two or more rods for one longer length, we did it, if we wanted. I kept my own second game score entirely in yellow (5 cm.) rods.

There was an energy to the game now, active thinking and figuring, delight in the varied patterns we made. How much better than jiggling numeral symbols that as yet have no meaning, no purpose.

## **Learning When Deaf**

*Shelley Dameron (MN) wrote:*

We'd like to be listed under the heading of Special Needs Children in the Resource Section, with the sub-heading of "hearing-impaired" or "deaf." Julia (2), you may remember, wears a hearing aid.

I was concerned about Julia learning about the world because of her deafness. I thought, "How can I answer her questions when she can't even speak to ask them?" Sometimes she would try to communicate something to us but had no means to do so, and the frustration would build up in her to the point where she would yell or hit me or both. When she got her hearing aid, we thought that now that she could *hear* the sounds we made that she would be able to talk eventually. The problem, we soon recognized, was that while she could hear the sounds we made, she could not distinguish between them very well. The quality of sound she gets with the aid is poor. "Move," "more," "Mom," and "meal" all sound the same to her and don't look very different, either.

As soon as we saw the problem, we decided to use sign language in addition to speech. It was as if someone had turned a light on in her head! She now communicates quite easily. Words she doesn't know are no problem—she simply asks! She knows almost all the alphabet (using the signs for the letters) and can pick letters out of printed matter.

As for our computer, Julia is as fascinated as the youngster in "Computer at Two" (*GWS #26*), though not as skilled. She has fun seeing what each button produces on the screen. She, too, would become excited and start banging away.

## **Improved English**

*JH: To my friend Ake Bystrom, the teacher in Sweden who arranged my lecture tour there this last spring, I wrote in part:*

I have said for years, thinking of American children who did not spell

well, that if they simply read more and wrote more, for their own pleasure, their spelling would improve without their knowing exactly how and why, as more and more of the *image* of the words they read settled down into their subconscious. I am sure this is true of you. If you read a lot of English, your English spelling will improve—if you worry less about it!

During my trip to the Scandinavian countries I spent many hours in the company of Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian friends. Like you, they all spoke English, and quite well, but they did not speak it often and were not completely comfortable with it. It seemed to me that the most important and useful thing I could do for them, when we talked together, was to help them as much as I could *to feel at ease* speaking English, not to worry-about whether this or that was the right way, but simply to concentrate on whatever they wanted to say. I was always ready to help if my friends asked for help, but they almost never did, and I tried hard not to help unless they asked. And what I hoped might happen did in fact happen—all my friends, yourself included, did become more at ease speaking English, and as they became more at ease, their English improved, as the English they heard me speak settled into their subconscious, to be drawn on next time they wanted to speak. Just by talking, and without trying to send any information about “how to speak English,” I sent a lot of that information, and just by listening to me talk, without trying to get from me information about “how to speak English,” they in turn got a lot of that information, which, as I say, they drew on freely when they spoke—which is of course what children do when they speak, rather than trying to remember a lot of rules for speaking which they must obey.

## Learning German

*From Suzanne Alejandre in Germany:*

When we moved none of us knew a word of German and we had had next to no exposure to it. The sounds were completely foreign and my first impression was that it was just a jumbled noise. I could not distinguish individual sounds or words or anything. After a few weeks sounds started separating and we noticed that the boys were imitating new sounds—we could hear them in songs they made up as they played (for example, *ich*—the “ch” sound was new for us and they just repeated “ich, ich” as a song).

At this point both Lee and Niko were doing the same thing. Then Niko started learning individual words. He would ask us what a word was in German. He never spoke any sentences or responded to anyone speaking German for 11 months. Rich and I had no idea if he knew any except the individual words (all nouns).

During this time we didn't have daily contact with any one German-speaking person. We occasionally saw our neighbor and we were out shopping daily so the boys always heard German, but really they had no *need* to speak it. When they played at the park there was no need for any language and Rich and I continued using English at home. I say this because as it turned out, Niko spoke German only when he was ready and because there was a need.

What happened was that in May we went on vacation to Tunisia with a group of Germans. We were all at one beach hotel and there were eight children including Niko and Lee. The children had free rein of the lobby and garden (and beach) and all of them played together. All of a sudden Niko's mind clicked and we were amazed because he was speaking German. He had used no verbs or pronouns up to that time but overnight he was using "Ich bin" (I am), "Er ist" (he is), "Wir sind" (we are) etc., etc. It was amazing to us how it all just came out. Even since that trip Niko has used German with anyone who speaks German, and then switches to English if he previously had always spoken English with them (even if they are German). He can express anything he wants to say.

By the way, I've started corresponding with a German woman who got my name from *GWS*. She is hoping to take her 10-year-old son out of German public school. I thought it was next to impossible but we'll see what happens.

(JH—About two years ago a reader sent us a clipping from a German newspaper about a German family to whom a court did grant permission to teach their child at home. Let's hope it happens again.)

## On Music

*From Robert Banks (WV):*

Brendan (2) has a lively interest in music and likes all kinds of old-timey dance music. We have provided him with all sorts of musical instruments such as 2–3 harmonicas, pennywhistles, a kazoo, drums, etc., and he likes to

play Audrey's guitar and my dulcimer. He also likes to play on the piano and "accompanies" himself on songs. We feel he will gradually learn that he can actually play songs on these instruments. He can already sing several songs.

We ourselves are amateur musicians—Audrey plays the guitar, piano, and recorder, and I play the Appalachian dulcimer and psaltry (which is like a hammer dulcimer, but has a spinet-type cabinet, and can be played by either plucking harp style or playing hammer dulcimer style). I am also interested in learning the Celtic harp, as I have been inspired by John's comments on learning a new instrument, regardless of age.

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*Lu Vorys wrote in The Best Of Mothering (\$5.95 from Mothering Magazine, PO Box 2046, Albuquerque NM 87103):*

I would like to make one more observation which seems to me to epitomize the difference between mothering in the 1950s and in the '70s. I grew up playing the violin. At first I was made to practice by my mother, but soon I began to love it and do it on my own. Music became as necessary to me as food.

When I started raising my own children, I didn't like having them tug at my skirts for attention while I was playing, and when they were asleep I didn't want to risk waking them up, so I gave up playing the violin "in order to be a better mother and do things for the children instead of myself." Later, when they were older, I made them practice and I sat by them, sadly and impatiently urging them on to greater competency than they obviously cared to attain. Now, especially in the light of my daughter's way of mothering, I see how mistaken I was. I should have pursued my own pleasure playing the violin. Then I'm sure my children would have wanted to play too.

Now when my granddaughter wants my attention sometimes I play with her and sometimes I play my violin, for now I am grandmothering.

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*Judy Cornell (FL) wrote:*

We have an old piano in our home that was rarely used as neither my husband nor I play. The children would play with the keys but never tried to make anything resembling a tune until they began lessons at ages nine and ten. They jumped at my suggestion of taking lessons and enjoyed it for about

a year—although they did not practice much and I would not prod them. Their teacher, although she did not agree with me, began to lessen her disparaging remarks when I told her I didn't feel my money was being wasted when they had a "poor" lesson.

I encouraged the girls to continue lessons for about a year after they wanted to stop. They didn't go near the piano for about six months to a year after lessons ceased.

All of a sudden, they began to get interested again and now play so much I sometimes must discourage them so that other members of the family may use the room or the piano. They play old favorites, pick out new ones by ear, and are now showing interest in learning new "pop" tunes.

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*From Faye Jenkins in Indiana:*

At this week's Home Schooling Study Group meeting, I blurted out during a lull that I had bought a used clarinet Sunday. The other three women just stared at me blankly. "Going through my second childhood," I said. "I have a clarinet," said one. "I used to play," said the second. "I played flute and piano," said the third. A certain excitement gripped us at this discovery. We compared notes and found that among the four of us were two organs, two clarinets, five guitars, three recorders, and a definite interest in playing together. We are going to help each other. It should be interesting.

## **New Tapes Available Here**

*Wallace Family Concert* (\$6 for 60 min. cassette). Like the Lesters when they made their Universal Musical Family tape (*GWS #28*), the Wallace family first made this tape of classical music to show friends and relatives how they were all coming along in their music. But like the Lester tape, this one gave me such a sense of a family happily and lovingly making music together that I thought others might enjoy it as much as I did. And like the Lester family, the Wallaces will be taping other concerts, so that as time goes by we can see—or hear—the family's musical growth.

Nancy Wallace played the viola quite well when she was young, but stopped when she grew up. A few years ago, when her son Ishmael began to study and play Suzuki piano, she began with him. Later, when her daughter

Vita wanted to play violin (as well as piano), Nancy took up her viola again, so as to be able to play with her. After only a few years of playing the recorder, Bob just this past spring began to play the cello. As you will hear, he is coming along very well, disproving once again the old saw that adults can't learn musical instruments, above all the bowed string instruments. Ishmael (10) and Vita (7) are amazing young musicians, not just because they play correctly quite advanced music for their age, but because they play with such energy, style, and spirit. Yet what makes them different from less musical children is not so much that they have some mysterious thing called "talent" as that they have grown up in an atmosphere of love for music, they love music themselves, and since they don't go to school, they have plenty of time and energy to give to it. What they have done and are doing, I feel sure many other children (and adults) can do.

At any rate, here they all are, making music for each other and their family and friends. I hope that many will enjoy this tape as much as I have, and that it will inspire many other families who make music together to record some tapes of their own. The equipment to make a very decent musical recording is no longer very expensive. If you have a tape cassette deck, as many families do, all you need is a microphone—the Wallaces record with a stereo mike from Radio Shack that costs about \$40. If you make such tapes, I'd like very much to hear them. And if there are other families that have thought of making music together but haven't quite got round to it, I hope this tape will give them the inspiration and encouragement to begin.

*John Holt's Writers Workshop, Vols. 1, 2* (\$6 for ea. 60 min. cassette). At the Homesteader's News Get-Together I also gave a two-hour workshop on writing. We—all of us—actually did about 20 minutes or so worth of free writing, thus proving to ourselves that we actually could get words onto paper. Then we talked a little about what it felt like to do that, and went on to discuss such matters as fluency, writer's block and how to overcome it, style, organization, continuity, and so on. Those who came to the meeting seemed to find it interesting and useful, and I hope that those writers and would-be writers who hear these tapes may feel the same.

*Home Schooling At The Homesteader's Get-Together, Vols. 1–3* (\$6 for ea. 60 min. cassette). This July, I went to the Good Life Get-Together that Norm and Sherry Lee, editors of *Homesteader's News* (NY), put on every summer. It was a delight, one of the liveliest, friendliest, most comfortable,

down-to-earth, and productive gatherings I have ever attended. One of the many activities there was a home-schooling workshop or discussion group, which went on every morning during the three working days of the conference. Nancy Plent from NJ, Susan Richman from Western PA, and many others were there, and we had a wonderful time talking about home schooling from every possible angle. Since we weren't short of time, we were really able to deal thoroughly with many of the kinds of questions that concern both homeschoolers and people who are considering it, including the always agonizing questions of how much should I do? Suppose I do too much? Or not enough? Another thing that made the meetings so interesting was the great variety of people who took part.

These tapes convey wonderfully the lively spirit of the discussions and of the conference itself. Along with the talking, you can hear from time to time the sounds of various kinds of work going on, and through it all (sometimes *over* it all) the voices of babies and children. Hearing it, especially if you listen over headphones, you will feel that you are there (as I hope next summer some of you will be). As with the *Travel Diary* tapes, if people like these first ones, we will issue further tapes of these discussions.—JH

## **The African Child**

*The African Child*, by Camara Laye (\$2.35 + postage). This beautiful story of his own happy childhood and growing up in a small village in what was then French Colonial Africa was written in French in 1954 by a very gifted young writer, whom many feel to be one of the first great writers—at least, among those writing in Western languages—to have come out of Africa.

By now we have all seen enough copies of the *National Geographic*, or news stories on TV, to have an idea of what African village life *looks* like. But none of this tells us anything about what that life felt like to the people living it. Perhaps Camara Laye's experience of life in colonial Africa was not typical; perhaps the villages in which he and his family lived were more prosperous, or healthy, or beautiful, or happy than most. Or perhaps remembering his childhood from the (in every way) cold cities of Western Europe made that childhood and the life of his fellow villagers seem better than it had really been. At any rate, at least as he describes it, it was a life that



many people today, in Africa as well as Europe, might well envy.

To give some small sense of how intense, active, meaningful, and joyous this life was, I can do no better than quote from Mr. Laye's description of the annual rice harvest:

December always found me at Tindican. December is our dry season, when we have fine weather and harvest our rice. Year after year I was invited to this harvest, which is always the occasion of great junketings and feastings, and I used to wait impatiently for my uncle to come and fetch me.

Of course, the festival had no set date, since it depended on the ripening of the rice, and this, in turn, depended on the weather, the goodwill of the heavens. It depended perhaps still more on the goodwill of the spirits of the soil, whose influence could not be ignored.

When the great day had arrived, the head of each family would rise at dawn to go and cut the first swathe in his fields. As soon as this first sheaf had been cut, the tom-tom would sound, signalling the beginning of the harvest. Such is our custom.

When the signal had been given, the reapers used to set out, and I would fall into step with them, marching to the rhythm of the tom-tom. The young men used to toss their glittering sickles high in the air and catch them as they fell, shouting aloud for the simple pleasure of hearing their own strong young voices, and sketching a dance step or two on the heels of the tom-tom player. I suppose I should have done well to follow my grandmother's advice and to keep at a safe distance from those lively jugglers. But there was such a vivid freshness in the morning air, such scintillating vivacity in their juggling feats, in the spinning sickles that in the rising sun would blaze and flash with sudden brilliance and there was such irresistible alacrity in the rhythm of the tom-tom that I could never have kept myself away from them.

When they had arrived at the first harvest field, the men would line up at the edge, naked to the loins, their sickles at the ready. Then my Uncle Lansana or some other farmer—for the harvest threw people together and everyone lent a hand in each other's harvesting—would

invite them to begin work. At once the black torsos would bend over the great golden field, and the sickles would begin the reaping. Now it was not only the breeze of morning that was making the whole field sway and shiver, but the men also, with their sickles.

These sickles kept rising and falling with astonishing rapidity and regularity. They had to cut the stalk between the bottom joint and the lowest leaf, so that only the leaf was left behind; well, they hardly ever missed. Of course, such a degree of accuracy depended on the reaper: he would hold the ear with one hand and incline the stalk to receive a clean blow from the sickle. He would reap the ears one by one, but the swift rise and fall of the sickle was nevertheless amazing. Besides, each man made it a point of honor to reap as accurately and as swiftly as possible; he would move forward across the field with a bunch of stalks in his hand, and his fellow-workmen would judge his skill by the number and the size of his sheaves.

As the morning drew on, it would become hotter. The heat was a burden; the air would seem to weigh down upon us; and weariness would gradually begin to creep over us; draughts of cold water were no longer any good, and so we would begin to fight our weariness with singing.

“Sing with us,” my uncle would say.

The tom-tom, which had been following us as we advanced into the field, kept time with our singing. We sang like a choir, often very high, with great bursts of melody, and sometimes very low, so low that we could hardly be heard. And our weariness would disappear, the heat grow less.

Our husbandmen were singing, and as they sang, they reaped; they were singing in chorus, and reaping in unison; their voices and their gestures were all harmonious, and in harmony; they were one—united by the same task, united by the same song. They were bound to one another, united by the same soul; each and every one was tasting the delight, savoring the common pleasure of accomplishing a common task.

The afternoon's work was much shorter and the time used to fly. It would be five o'clock before we knew it. The great field would now be shorn of its precious yield, and we would walk back in procession to the village—the tall silk-cotton trees and the wavering smoke from the huts seemed to welcome us from far off—preceded by the indefatigable tom-tom player, and singing at the tops of our voices the Song of the Rice.

We would go home contented, weary but happy! The flowers, which would begin to unfold with the approach of evening, would be spreading their perfume on the air again, so that we walked as if attired in freshly-plucked garlands. Ah! How happy we were in those days!

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JH: The whole book breathes this spirit. Reading it, it is hard not to feel that something has gone terribly wrong, that somewhere back down the line we made some very mistaken turnings.

When I read about that procession of men toward the rice field, shouting, singing, dancing, throwing their sickles high in the air, I have to remind myself, “These men are going to *work*!” Beyond that, we must remind ourselves what that work was. Those men were going to spend all day long, bent over double under an equatorial sun, in temperatures that must have gone over one hundred degrees, chopping off rice plants close to the ground with short sickles. Few of us in the modern world could do such work for fifteen minutes, let alone an entire day. Fewer of us still would consent to do it. Those who can not escape doing it do it in anger and bitterness, feeling with reason enough that in having to do it they are shamed and oppressed.

As Wendell Berry points out in all his writings, if our modern world can be said to have any central purpose at all, it is to do away with hard physical work. He feels that this is a fundamental mistake, one of the root causes for the sickness of our world. He may well be right. Those times when I have done hard physical labor, working with friends for a common purpose, have been some of the happiest moments of my life. But since I rarely do such work, and even then only by choice, I may have no right to an opinion on the matter. Let those who sweat at their work decide the virtues of sweat. But

even in Berry's own descriptions of the hard work of farming, work that he believes in, there is much more of grim duty than of joy. The farmers he admires, as they prepare to do the hard, heavy labor of their farms, may feel that they are doing good work, may even be glad they are doing it. But they do not dance and sing.

Well, feel what we may about such questions, we will surely find this a most extraordinary and beautiful book, a glimpse of a way of life from which we all have much to learn.

## More Books Available Here

*Swallowdale*, by Arthur Ransome (\$3.35 + postage). The energetic, resourceful, and imaginative children of *Swallows And Amazons* begin their much looked forward to summer vacation and soon find themselves in a double predicament. The sailboat "Swallow" strikes a submerged rock and is lost for most of the summer, and the Blackett girls, Captain Nancy and Mate Peggy, are kept out of action by a grim old great-aunt who is visiting them. What to do? Of course, the children do find plenty to do, on the land as well as the water, and in the end overcome all obstacles—including many obstacles of their own invention.

A few people have criticized these books, saying that the children were from a privileged middle class, and therefore, that their lives and adventures would be far removed from the life experiences or possibilities of most children. Even if that were true, so what? Children's reading would be limited and dull indeed if they only read books close to their own experience. But I don't think it is true. The raw materials from which the *Swallows* children made their adventures, if not available to all modern children, are surely available to many. In both Britain and the United States, we are never very far from water—ocean, lake, pond, or river—or some hills or woods, on or in which, with the help of imagination, children might have many adventures. I have seen children have fun and excitement sailing a little raft around on a pond no more than thirty feet long.

In Sweden last spring, driving with my friend Ake Bystrom south from Stockholm to his home in Linkoping, we stopped for lunch (at a pizza place!) in the country. About fifteen or more Swedish teen-agers stood around playing some old pinball machines, or watching others play. They looked

bored to death; their faces were blank, they hardly ever spoke, and never laughed. Yet the countryside around was full of hills, small pine forests, streams, and lakes. They had just as many opportunities for adventure as the children in the Ransome books. What they lacked was not money but energy and imagination, which they had had so much of when they were little, but had lost in their schooling and growing up. What the Ransome books say to us, and I hope to all the children who read them, is “You don’t have to lose them. You can find or make up adventures anywhere.”

*Winter Holiday*, by Arthur Ransome (\$3.35 + postage). Two children, whom we have not met before in these books, go to the country for Christmas vacation. There they meet and make friends with the SWALLOWS children we already know. Ransome, whose eyes twinkle at us from the photo on the back cover of all of these books—what a nice man he must have been—really knew children as well as liked them, and one of the things he understood about them was that it was through *doing* things together (as opposed to sitting around in a circle and talking about feelings) that children get to know and like each other. The new children, coming from the city, are hopelessly ignorant of most of the things the Swallows and Amazons consider important. But they have interesting and surprising talents of their own, are quickly accepted into the gang, learn quickly, and in the end become the heroes of Captain Nancy’s big midwinter adventure.

As for Captain Nancy, she is surely one of the most appealing heroines of all literature. I often wonder whether Ransome drew her from life, after a real child he knew and loved—as who could not? Or was she simply the ideal playmate/friend/ daughter of his dreams? And if she was real, what became of her when she grew up? I wish I knew. Meanwhile, it is a joy to know her and her friends through these delightful books.

*King Ottokar’s Sceptre*, \$4.50; *Red Rackham’s Treasure*, \$3.55; *The Secret Of The Unicorn*, \$4.50; *Tintin In Tibet*, \$3.55. Four more in the wonderful series of Tintin comic books (see *GWS* #25). These have the same mixture of exciting plot, slapstick humor, accurate and detailed drawing, and interesting dialogue. As in the first book, though these stories are in comic strip form, they have more written words in them than many children’s books. I hope to keep adding them until we have the whole series.

By the way, the Tintin books are published in 28 languages. I’d like to add some of these to our list, if enough readers were interested in buying them.

So, if you would like to have Tintin in languages other than English, please tell us which languages you would like.

*A.J. Wentworth, B.A.*, by H. E. Bates (\$3.35 + postage). There have been in my life a few books that have made me laugh until I was speechless, breathless, helpless, and to all outward appearances out of my mind. This is one of them. It is the story, told in his own words in a journal that he keeps very strictly, of a middle-aged, bachelor British schoolmaster, who teaches geometry to 10–12-year-old boys at a boarding school for the young boys of wealthy British families. He is a natural figure of fun—the very model of a proper Englishman, pompous, pedantic, self-important, snobbish, full of every kind of class prejudice, very concerned always to do the correct thing, very vain of his control over his young pupils, who in fact regularly lead him round by the nose, and in countless amusing ways divert him from the unpleasant business of geometry.

We see him first in the school where he teaches, later during short tour of duty with the military in World War II, and still later in the country village to which he has retired. In all these places, always with the best of intentions and for the most perfectly logical reasons, he manages to get himself into the most unbelievable and hilarious predicaments.

But if A.J. were nothing but the pompous old fool he often appears to be, and if the author did nothing but poke malicious fun at him and invite us to laugh at his expense, this book would not have been nearly as funny as it is. What makes it so funny, and such fun to read, is that Wentworth is also a man of many virtues. He is in many ways intelligent, very serious about his work and wholly dedicated to it, indeed in love with it, very fond of the lively, resourceful, devilishly ingenious boys he has to contend with, basically kindly and generous, honorable, courageous, and proud—a really good man. It is because we are on his side, hoping desperately that this time he may manage to escape disaster, that his constant failure to escape it is so comic.

Indeed, I get a strong feeling that the author's own feelings about him changed as he wrote, that the better he got to know old Wentworth the more he liked and admired him, until by the end of the book he makes him into a kind of hero—though still a thoroughly comic hero.

I first read this book ten or so years ago, and as I say, it made me laugh till my jaws ached and the tears rolled down my cheeks—what a wonderful

feeling! When I saw it newly out in print during my trip to England last spring, I almost feared to read it again, thinking that since I could not be so completely surprised by it, I might not find it so funny. But no need to worry; if anything, I laughed harder the second time than the first. And I hope you will do the same.

*The Bridge Of San Luis Rey*, by Thornton Wilder (\$2.25 + postage). Among all the American or English novels I know, not one seems to me more true or eloquent, or more perfectly constructed or beautifully written than this gem of a book. On the surface, it is about the interconnected lives of a small group of citizens of early 18th century Peru who died when a famous mountain footbridge broke and flung them into a stream far below. Beyond that, it is a book about 18th century Lima, a Spanish colonial capital, or about the distant but still rich and powerful civilization of which it was an outpost, and the Catholic Church, in which the Inquisition was still a potent force, that ruled it. But at bottom the book is about love—the love of a mother, her own life a failure, for her beautiful, successful, and in every way distant daughter; of an intelligent and sophisticated man of the theatre for an ignorant but instinctively gifted actress; of two poor, ignorant, almost silent twin brothers for each other; of a strong and determined woman for the brilliant child whom she hopes will someday carry on and perhaps bring to completion her own life's failed work; or of that bewildered, overburdened, and lonely child for that remote older woman; and of the joys and pains—more pains than joys—of these and other loves.

One of the most remarkable and satisfying things about this book is its compactness. It is a masterpiece of compression, of things left out. In its few short pages Wilder tells us more about these people, their attachments and passions, and the life of the city they lived in, than many writers would have been able to tell in a 1200-page blockbuster. Indeed, I am afraid that later in his career, when he had lost the great art of knowing what to leave out and instead had begun to throw into his writing everything he could think of, Wilder, had he not already written this book, might have been tempted to write the blockbuster. Fortunately, we have instead this masterpiece.

Many parts of it are almost unbearably moving. There comes to mind the old Countess learning for the first time that it is possible and indeed necessary to love bravely, and realizing to her shame and despair that in her own hopeless love for her daughter there has never been any bravery or

generosity but only an anguished clutching at a person who learned only too well, even as a child, how to avoid those clutches. Or there is Manuel, tortured beyond bearing by grief for his dead brother, of whose death he thinks he is the cause, and thinking and hoping only for his own death which alone will release him from this pain, a death which his religion forbids him to seek but commands him instead patiently to await. And there is the old Captain, equally tormented by the memory of his dead little daughter, telling Manuel that he will be surprised to find how rapidly Life goes by and that longed-for Death approaches.

In short, an astonishing little book, whose intricate yet compact construction and beautiful writing makes many of the leading novels of our day look like the work of garrulous and clumsy beginners.—JH

## Learning Materials

DR: We still don't have an index to the back issues of *GWS*; meanwhile, we thought you might appreciate an address list of many of the materials and publications that we have mentioned. The materials below relate to science, math, history, languages, art, music, games, etc. We give the *GWS* issue and page number where you can read more about each.

We welcome hearing about your experiences with any of these outfits, and we would also appreciate your help in keeping this address list correct.

*ABC School Supply Catalog*, 6500 Peachtree Industrial Blvd, Norcross, GA 30071. For elementary classrooms. *GWS* #24, p. 13.

*Animal Town Game Co.*, PO Box 2002, Santa Barbara, CA 93120. Cooperative board games. *GWS* #19, p. 18.

*Art Supplies, Etc*, 702 Beacon St, Boston, MA 02115. Catalog, \$1. *GWS* #23, p. 23.

*Association Films*, 866 3rd Ave., NY, NY 10022. Free film loans. *GWS* #21 p. 9.

*Astronomy Book Club*, Riverside, NJ 08075. *GWS* #19 p. 9.

*Bureau of Educational Measurements*, Emporia State University, 1200 Commercial, Emporia, KS 66801. Free standardized test catalog. *GWS* #26 p. 14.

*Caedmon Tapes*, 1995 Broadway, NY NY 10023. Stories on cassette. *GWS* #22 p. 13.



*Cobblestones*, 28 Main St, Peterborough NH 03458. History magazine for children. \$1.50. *GWS* #20 p. 17.

*Cousteau Society*, 930 W 21st St, Norfolk VA 23517. Ocean exploration; books, *Dolphin* children's magazine, etc. 14 p. 10, *GWS* #20 p. 17.

*Creative Publications*, PO Box 10328, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Math materials. *GWS* #15 p. 9.

*Cricket*, 1058 8th St, La Salle, IL 61301. Children's magazine. *GWS* #7 p. 8.

*Cuisenaire Co. of America*, 12 Church St, New Rochelle, NY 10805. Math materials. *GWS* #23 p. 22.

*Dell Puzzle Magazines*, 245 E 47th, NY NY 100 17. Word and number puzzles. *GWS* #19 p. 17.

*Dick Blick East*, Box 26, Allentown, PA 18105. Art supplies; catalog, \$2.23 *GWS* #23 p. 23.

*Earthbooks Lending Library*, Mountainburg AR 72946. Send SASE for leaflet. 23 p. 22.

*Edmund Scientific Co.*, 101 E. Gloucester Pike, Barrington, NJ 08007. Scientific equipment; catalog \$1.12 p. 10.

*Esperanto League of North America*, PO Box I 129, E I Cerrito, CA 94530. Send SASE for free lesson. 24 p. 13.

*Family Pastimes*, RR 4, Perth, Ont., Canada K7H 3C6. Co-operative board games. 13 p. 2.

*Hostex News*, PO Box 2241, Santa Fe, NM 87501. Home-schooling children's newsletter; pen-pals. 10 p. 5, 26 p. 18.

*Hubbard Co.*, PO Box 104, Northbrook, IL 60062. Relief maps. 10 p. 11.

*Key Curriculum Project*, PO Box 2304, Berkeley, CA 94702. "Miquon" math workbooks. 14 p. 7, 19 p. 16.

*Kodak*, 343 Scate St, Rochester, NY 14650. Free films. 21 p. 9.

*Learning & Homesteading Centers/Formal Apprenticeship Programs*, 33 E Minor St, Emmaus, PA 18049. Send SASE for list. 28 p. 15.

*Markline Electronics*, PO Box 171J, Belmont, MA 02178. Calculators, recorders, stopwatches, etc. 19 p. 17.

*Medical Self-Care Quarterly*, PO Box 717, Inverness, CA 94937. 12 p. 10. Miquon—see Key Curriculum.

*National Audiovisual Center*, Gen. Serv. Admin., Washington, DC 20409. Foreign language courses. 25 p. 19.

*National Geographic Society*, PO Box 2330, Washington DC 20013.  
Magazines, including *World* for children, books, maps. 12 p. 10.

*Natural History Magazine*, Box 6000, Des Moines, IA 50340. 12 p. 10.

*New Games Foundation*, PO Box 7901, San Francisco, CA 94120. Non-competitive group games. 17 p. 11.

*Odyssey*, PO Box 92788, Milwaukee, WI 53202. Children's magazine on astronomy. 20 p. 17.

*Penny Power*, PO Box 1906, Marion OH 43302. *Consumer Reports'* magazine for children. 22 p. 12.

Pentalic Corp., 132 W 22 St, NY NY 10011. Books and materials on calligraphy. 18 p. 9.

*Publisher's Central Bureau*, 1 Champion Av, Avenel, NJ 07131. Discount books, records & tapes. 2 p. 3, 20 p. 16.

*Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine*, National Wildlife Federation, 1412 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20036. 16 p. 14.

*Selective Educational Equipment*, 3 Bridge St, Newton, MA 02195.  
Science, math. 15 p. 9.

*Sky and Telescope Magazine*, 49-51 Bay State Rd, Cambridge, MA 02138.  
22 p. 11.

*Sky Calendar*, Abrams Planetarium, Mich. State U, E Lansing, MI 48824.  
Star charts & info. 28 p. 12.

*Smithsonian Magazine*, 900 Jefferson Dr, Washington, DC 2056. 14 p. 10.

*Soil & Health Society*, 33 E Minor St, Emmaus, PA 18049. "Backyard Research" garden experiments. 21 p. 6.

*Summy Birchard Co*, Box CN-27, Princeton, NJ 08540. Suzuki music materials. 22 p. 20.

*Suzuki Association of the Americas*, PO Box 354, Muscatine, IA 5276 1-0354. Teacher Directory, \$3.25. 24 p. 12.

*Things of Science*, RD 1 Box 130A, Newtown, PA 18940. Monthly science experiments. 23 p. 22.

*3-2-1 Contact*, Box 2933, Boulder, CO. Science magazine of the Children's TV Workshop. 20 p. 17.

*Tonight's Asteroids*, 1411 N Mangum St, Durham, NC 27701. Send SASE for free copy. 22 p. 12.

*Worldbook -Childcraft International*, Educational Services Dept,  
Merchandise Mart Plaza, Chicago IL 60654. 25¢ for "Typical Course of

Study, K–12” pamphlet. 20 p. 5.

## Resources & Allies

*Certified teachers willing to help homeschoolers:* Connie ALLEN-MENTE, 7697 Isabel Av, Cotati CA 94928; 707-795-0142; K-12—Herbert HAMMER, 7001 Alvern St #A, Los Angeles CA 90045; 213-649-2975; K-8—Darrell LUCK, Dunmire Hollow, Rt 3 Box 265-A, Waynesboro TN 38485—Linda MORGAN, 1720 Flynnwood Dr, Charlotte NC 28205.

*Friendly Lawyer:* Richard Moore, 6929 W 130 St, Suite 600, Cleveland OH 44130; 216-845-6800.

*Home Computers:* Sybil Ford, 2203 N Chelton Rd, Colorado Spgs CO 80909; 303-596-6792.

*Private School willing to help homeschoolers:* Lake Mildred Private Christian School, PO Box 1700, Hawthorne FL 32640.

*Single Parent:* Cathy Payne, PO Box 654, Block Island RI 02807

*Special Needs Children:* Leonard Hand, 300 Meatte Av, Portageville MO 63873 (granddaughter Paige, Down’s Syndrome)—John & Shelley Dameron, 2100 Dupont Av N, Minneapolis MN 55411 (Julia, 2, deaf)

*Travelling Families:* Sally Shumaker-Pruitt, 172 E Lincoln, Cheboygan MI 49721—Maxine, Ken, & Neil Hartmann, 7132 Whipple Av, San Diego, CA 92122

We also welcome additions to our lists of “Friendly School Districts” (please ask yours if it wants to be listed), professors, doctors, psychologists, etc.

## Forwarding Mail

We are happy to forward mail to people whose names were not published with their letters in *GWS*, or whose addresses are not in the complete Directory. Just mark clearly on the outside of the envelope the article and issue—for example, FORWARD TO THE AUTHOR OF “20 YEARS OF UNSCHOOLING,” *GWS* #25—and then put our name and address at *GWS*. We’ll readdress it and send it on.

## People/ Places

*If you are seriously looking for a place to live or work, or would like someone to live or work with you, please tell us about it.*

We are a small rural alternative community on 175 acres. There are several homeschoolers in the area and hopes of starting an alternative school. Community facilities include a woodshop, auto shop, community center building, sauna, pond, orchards. We welcome new members (single folks and families). Darrell Luck, Dunmire Hollow, Rt 3 Box 265-A, Waynesboro TN 38485.

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I am a single mother—Melissa is 6, Ben is 1. We live on a small farm in the Umbrian Hills of Italy, accompanied by lots of friends, visitors, and travellers, who help with the garden, sheep, and all the learning processes. Anyone willing to pay £5 / week (English sterling) and share food expenses is welcome to come for any length of time. Please write to Addey, Pratale, Vallingegno, Scritto, Gubbio, Perugia, Italy.

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I am a single mother with a 2-year-old son. I am considering live-in domestic work. I would like to remain in the Northwest but would consider relocation anywhere in the country. Pam Mayfield, 19819 NE Everette Ln, Portland OR 97230.

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Living group with home-grown foods bias seeks new members. We've lived together 12 years, as a commune and alternative school, in an unmodernized Victorian mansion and cottage on 11 acres. 40 miles NW of Chicago. Cooking and housework are shared; \$300/mo room & board. Cinny Poppen, Valley Co-op School, RR 2 Box 518, Dundee IL 60118; 312-428-5973.

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We'd like to get in touch with someone who has extra land and buildings, and unschooled kids, with whom we could exchange help and use of our tools and metal and woodworking machinery for rent, and food for garden space. We have a home woodworking business, and would need a fairly accessible town nearby. North preferred. Kathy, Tony, & J.P. Mingl, 207 Bartlett Rd, Streamwood IL 60103; 312-837-3764.

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We have three children, 10-months, 3½, and 5½. We would like to share our lives with others who like and believe in children. We have room in our northern NY home for one family with children of similar ages who want to teach their own. Steve & Rhonda Solomon, PO Box 13, Bloomingdale NY 12913.

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DR: By the way, Terence Welch told us his request for a caretaker for his Hawaiian cabin got about 15 responses!

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# Growing Without Schooling 30

November 1982

Since *GWS* #29 went to press, I have spoken at large and enthusiastic meetings of home schoolers in Tempe, AZ, Denver, CO, Norfolk, VA, and Columbia, MD. Thanks very much, respectively, to Brian Evans, Nancy Dumke, Theo Giesy, and Manfred Smith, and their many energetic and efficient friends and helpers.

The Maryland meeting was perhaps the largest meeting of home schoolers I have yet attended, 300 or more people and their children. It might have been bigger yet, but for a small miscalculation. Since even a week before the meeting so many people had said they were coming that it looked as if the hall would be filled to capacity, the organizers were turning away applicants during the last week. As always happens, some of those who said they were coming didn't make it, so there was room for more. Moral of the story don't turn people away. You can always make room, and it somehow adds extra excitement to a meeting if the room is a bit crowded.

My trip to Italy was very short, so short that I can hardly believe I was really there, but also very interesting. I found to my surprise that once I was there, my Italian, which I didn't speak very well on my last visit twenty-six-years ago, came back to me in a most surprising way. As I was eating dinner with my hosts the first night there, I suddenly found myself remembering the words for all kinds of things connected with food and eating, including the word for spoon (*cucchiaio*), which a week earlier in Boston I couldn't have remembered to save me. When people asked questions in Italian during my meetings, if they didn't speak too fast I could understand most of what they were saying. A fascinating experience, to feel all kinds of things rising up out of memory that you didn't even know were there.

On this short trip I heard or saw many interesting and perhaps useful things:

- 1) My host, the director of the conference, Connie Miller, told me that the Italian laws on education allow for home schooling. I've asked her to send

me as soon as she can a copy (with translation) of this particular part of the law.

2) A Dutch friend I met there, Dick Willems, told me that under Dutch law (as in Denmark) groups of parents can start their own schools and then after five years, during which they must get a provisional permit each year, can get a permanent charter and government financial support. He added that under this provision more than 500 hundred small schools have been started (in Denmark the number is only about 40). Whether many or any of these are free schools in our sense of the word, he did not know.

3) A new monthly magazine has just appeared in Italy, called *Bimbo-sapiens* (“bimbo” is one of the many charming Italian words for babies and small children). In the way it feels and talks about children, it is very close in spirit to *GWS*, *Mothering*, and other such North American publications. We may be able to find some allies there. Their address is Viale Bligny 29, Milano.

—John Holt

## Notes from Donna

With this issue we reach a small milestone; #30 marks the completion of five full years of publishing *GWS*. As I look around our spacious new office, it feels good to see how we’ve grown, and especially to see the fat bundles of mail coming in—mostly Christmas book orders. Quite a few of those orders are from the 2700 “Prospective Customers” you sent us; I’ll try to remember to let you know how that project turns out.

Merritt Clifton (Box 129, Richford VT 05476) writes, “We have now published my investigative report *Learning Disabilities: What The Publicity Doesn’t Tell* in book form, at \$3.00. I was losing \$1.50 per copy selling photocopies, and your announcement several years ago (*GWS* #18) is still bringing an order a week.

By the time you get this, Rachael Solem will have finished the index to *GWS* #1–30. We’ll sell it here for \$2.50.

A special end-of-the-year thank you to the many volunteers who have helped us this year. We are grateful to the following Boston-area friends who have helped us in the office or in their homes: Mary Maher, Wanda Rezac, Scott Layson, Connie Bernhardt, Reba Korban, Dawn Reger, Audrey

Hodges, Mary Silva, Barbara Rosen, Susanna Darling, Mary Steele, Marilyn and Mary Pelrine, Kamal Ahmad, Rachael Solem, Linda Estrada, Terry Burch, Mario Pagnoni, Grace Andreacchi, Ed and Pam Mitchell, Maggie LeBlanc. Many of these people's children were also a real help which we appreciate as well.

Out-of-state volunteers who helped in their homes include: Lenora Alexander, Shelley Dameron, Bonnie Spear, Marie Hartwell, Sandy Hansley, Nancy Plent, Gary Floam, June and Allan Conley, Kate Gilday, Susan Rhodes, Cathy Earle, Nanda Hills, Cheryl Richardson, Debbie Khaljani, Liz Buell, Brian Evans, Linda Rieken, Jill Bastian, Keith Hallquist.

If I've left anyone out, please forgive me. There were a number of families, such as the Coxes of Michigan and the Johnsons of New Jersey, who lent a hand in the office when they were visiting Boston. To all of them, thanks again.—Donna Richoux

## Helping Vets at 12

*Frank Conley (LA) writes:*

I wanted to tell you about how I followed your advice in finding work (GWS #6).

I am presently taking a veterinary medicine course at LSU (This course is being given for "Gifted and Talented" junior high and high school students—I had no trouble registering as a home-schooler.) I became interested in learning more about it and decided to ask a local veterinarian if I could help out at his clinic in return for the experience of watching them work.

It has been very worthwhile. The three vets who work there have been very kind and helpful to me. They explain everything they do and not only allow me to watch but actually let me perform certain duties. They say I'm "indispensable."

So far some of the most interesting things I've done are: watch an autopsy on a cat, learn to draw blood from animals and prepare slides, take temperatures and fecal, watch surgery performed, and go along on emergency calls.

I go to the clinic nearly every day now, for several hours a day. I plan to take an animal science course next. I recommend this way of learning to everyone. At first I was afraid no one would want my help, since I'm only 12,



but the people I talked to were happy to have free help.

## **Grown Unschooler**

*From Allen Fannin, Westdale NY 13483:*

I am one of the very few people of my acquaintance of the pre-WWII generation to escape with little or no schooling. I was out of school completely during the latter part of grade school and never went to high school for a full five-day week during all of four years. At the end of high school, I decided that schooling and I were mutually unsuited to one another. I have always believed that school is not a good place for people to learn in and have argued this point for the past thirty years. Not until I came across a copy of *GWS* did I realize that there were other people who feel the same way.

When I encounter a worried mother who asks what will become of her kids if they don't have a diploma, I tell her that in thirty years of working for myself, no one has ever asked how I learned what I know. They only ask how much it will cost for a piece of that knowledge.

My wife and I have been in the small scale textile production business for eighteen years and nothing we presently do would have to be learned in school. This has been true for everything I have ever done for a living.

## **Local News**

ARIZONA: Sherri Pitman (*GWS* #28) writes, "I have finally finished my book on the new home school law in Arizona (\$7; 6166 W Highland Phoenix AZ 85033). We have formed a group of home schoolers called The Parents' Association Of Christian Schools."

CONNECTICUT: Attorney Frank Cochran writes, "The State Department of Education, which has little or no statutory authority but has often shown good common sense, has published a new set of 'suggested procedures'. They suggest compromises on the testing issue and make clear that parents need only cover mandatory subjects and need not provide identical or 'social' programs." Frank also sent us a copy of a letter he wrote to the Commissioner of Education about those guidelines, which in some respects resemble the "Mass. Memo." In his letter he pointed out that, unlike Massachusetts law,

Connecticut statutes cannot be read to require approval before a child is educated elsewhere than at a public school.

FLORIDA: Ann Mordes of FLASH tells us that truancy charges against Linda and Richard Rousay of Panama City have been dropped. The Rousays had registered their home as a private school with the state, and were meeting all the requirements for private schools. An article in their local paper, written while charges were pending, said, "A news team from the ABC show *20/20* is considering interviewing the family. Mrs. Rousay added that the Florida chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has selected her as a test case in support of home schooling in Florida. 'At first they said they didn't take educational issues, but then said they would take my case to represent all others in the state. '"

On the other hand, the FLASH newsletter reports, "The Steiners of Sarasota were a Scientologist family seeking to teach their own children on religious grounds. They were not registered as a private school. A truant officer took them to court and the judge ruled against them. Their court-appointed defender tried to stand on constitutionally guaranteed rights of freedom of religion; however, the judge stated that their rights were not being violated. They were threatened with jail and having their children taken away from them. After much anguish they put their children back into school."

INDIANA: From Carol Bridges (RR 3 Box 507, Nashville IN 47448): "You may be interested to know that it is a part of our religion (the Church of the Earth Nation is non-profit tax-exempt) to teach our children at home. Our church was created, in part, to provide protection for those who believe strongly enough in their right to educate their own children that it is indeed their 'religion.'"

MICHIGAN: From the newsletter of the National Coalition Of Alternative Community Schools: "Nick Dennany, father of five children, chose to educate his children at home without the state required certificated teacher. Last March the Kalamazoo Schools filed suit against Nick in criminal court. Nick compiled a 300+ page brief containing more than 20 different issues on home schooling. He spent five months researching it at the library, put it into brief form, typed it on legal size paper and presented it to the judge in advance of the appointed date. (Nick himself has a ninth grade education. He did all of the legal work by himself.)

"The judge praised the brief as one of the most thorough and precise he'd

seen in a long time. After reading it, the judge told Nick that there would be no further proceedings; he had the schools drop their suit and bade Nick to continue educating his children just as he'd been doing—no certificated teacher needed.”

MINNESOTA: Sharon Hillestad writes, “The Minnesota Network Of Home Schoolers is meeting monthly. Carmelle Pommepey (phone 612-379-4068) has taken over the leadership of the organization. She had almost no trouble getting permission from the Minneapolis school system to teach her young son. People have come as far as 200 miles to meet like-thinking people. Carmelle and I are going to hit the radio talk shows. Next summer we hope to have a symposium.”

NEW JERSEY: Ann Bodine writes, “The Commissioner of Education’s letter (*GWS* #26) has really made things easy for us in New Jersey. A new home-schooling family recently wrote their principal of their intentions and a few days later he called and read them the letter! Said he understood the situation and wanted them to understand all their rights. What a change!”

OHIO: Linda Cox and Beth Burns have started up the OCEAN newsletter again (\$3/yr.; PO Box 302, Cuyahoga Falls OH 44221). Beth says, “In July, Rich and I held a picnic for homeschoolers (present and future) at our farm. We gathered together 18 adults and 37 children by inviting everyone listed in the *GWS* directory that lived within 60 miles.”

PUERTO RICO: From Patricia de Fernos: “There is now a family in Dorado, a town near us, home-schooling their three children, and another two families in San Juan home-schooling besides ourselves. We have all been so busy, we haven’t had another P.R. Home Schoolers Association get-together, though there have been requests it be held.”

TEXAS: Harold Baer of Halvi Schools writes, “In July and August this year we received a dozen more home-schooling enrollments. Parents appear to be enthusiastic about our flexible arrangement. We’re still maintaining our \$25/year tuition.”

WASHINGTON: Debra Stewart of the Stillaguamish Learning Exchange says, “Our Urban group is growing so fast we can’t keep up with it. We now have three urban centers, 55 families with 73 children among them. We now have 11 centers state-wide and three more pending. We are approaching 150 students.”

WISCONSIN: John Ellis of Faith Academy writes, “We now have 66

families in Wisconsin who have joined Faith Academy, Inc., and are now operating subsidiary schools, or as we call them, one-family private schools. Also, we have a mailing list of over 300 persons in Wisconsin who support the home school movement.”

## Ads in GWS

Beginning with *GWS* #31, we are going to start carrying advertising in *GWS*. We probably should have done it sooner, but I feared that the money we could get from advertising would not be worth the work needed to get it, and in any case I hoped we might be able to do without it. Well, we can't do without it we badly need another source of income. And the experience of *Mothering* shows that, even for small publications like ours, advertising can earn a significant amount of money. With some luck and much hard work, advertising may soon help put *GWS* on a much sounder financial footing, and even in time enable us to put out a larger and better magazine. Note that both *Homesteaders News* and *Co-Evolution Quarterly* have begun carrying ads, and for the same reason that we feel we must.

We will carry two types of advertising: classified ads, which we will set up in the same typeface we use for the Directory, and display ads, in which the advertisers send us photo-ready copy.

Our rates for classified ads—or perhaps “unclassified,” since at first we will not try to arrange them under group headings—will be \$5 per line (47 spaces per line). People can save space and money by using abbreviations, or perhaps joining words. Thus we might write our own city address as Boston MA02116. Readers will have to decide how much abbreviating and word-joining they can use and still keep their meaning clear. We will run your ads exactly as you send them to us. (Payment must be in advance. Deadline for submitting ads for *GWS* #31 is Jan. 15; for *GWS* #32, March 15.)

If you would like to run a display ad, please ask us for our rate card. *GWS* as you see it has been reduced in size from the pages on which we lay it out. On those original pages each of our columns is four inches wide, which means that a display ad designed to use half the width of an 8½” page (as in *Mothering* and many standard magazines) will just fit one of our regular columns.

Readers can use ads (display or classified) to advertise home businesses,

to sell anything they want to sell (making *GWS* a kind of permanent garage sale), to look for things that they want to buy, or for places to live or visit, or people to live with or visit them, or transportation for long journeys, or other people with special knowledge or skills, or pen pals, or people interested in swapping skills or houses or (temporarily) children—in other words, the kind of ads you see in many small magazines.

Like all advertisers, we reserve the right to decline to run an ad if for any reason it does not seem appropriate.

There is one hitch to all this. If we carry ads we can no longer use the “Special Fourth Class” mailing rates which we use on our larger group subscriptions, so we are going to apply for a Second Class mail permit. In order to qualify, we will have to change our group rates somewhat (see chart on last page). As of Jan. 1, 1983, all new group subs and renewals must pay these rates. We’re sorry for this increase; we hope that the extra money we get from advertising will enable us to keep *GWS* prices at the present level for some time to come.

Readers can, if they wish, help us in this ad campaign. Some may be able to persuade business firms (their own or other people’s) to advertise in *GWS* as a way of contributing to us, as it would be a tax-deductible business expense. Some people may be willing to help us solicit regular commercial ads. This will involve letter-writing, which people can do in their own homes and on their own schedules. Just as *Mothering* gets a great deal of advertising from firms. Which make many kinds of baby materials, so we may in time get much advertising from publishers of books and other educational materials. But, as I say, this will require more letter writing than we are likely to be able to do in or from the office, and it will be a great help if some readers would do some of this for us.—JH

## Handicapped Parent

*A reader writes:*

Although you have many homeschooling people writing in, I’ve not seen many handicapped or chronically ill parents mentioned. We have the problems and concerns other people have and more.

I have Multiple Sclerosis. For those who don’t know what that means, it’s a degenerative neuro-muscular disease for which there is no cure. I can still

walk but it is very hard and takes much effort. I can't run or skate or dance. And I get very tired, fall down, trip or stagger often. Yet my husband and I are homeschooling our children. Our oldest is first-grade age and our youngest is preschool age. I want people in my position to know it is possible, sometimes easier, to home school than to send your children to school. You have them around to help you when necessary and you don't have to rush around on a strict time schedule or get to a PTA or board meeting.

Last year I took the kids to museums, zoos, to parks, shopping, the beach, library and many other places, often. Sometimes I got tired, but so do young children. Whenever I was too tired the kids were about ready to pack it in too. I want people to know it's not always the amount of energy you can put into homeschooling, but more how much you like being with your kids and like learning with them and responding to their questions. We also don't give kids enough credit. Even when my youngest was two he understood that when I was tired I was to be left alone for a while. He seemed to know that when I got up from my rest I'd spend time with him and be in a much better mood. He would play, usually happily, by himself or with his brother for a while.

This letter is anonymous because we fear that the school may use my illness as proof that I am unable to home school my children (my husband works long hours away from home). Please don't even print what state this is from.

## **Successful Adoption**

*From Elizabeth LaCava (IN):*

To adopt our fifth child, we applied through the Indiana Welfare Department wondering what problems we might encounter as home schoolers. We didn't mention the fact that we were until they brought Sarah for a trial visit. The social worker asked if the older children were taking a day off from school. Her face constricted when I mentioned that my children studied at home. She asked a few typical questions and then moved off the subject.

Several days later we asked when we would see Sarah again; the social worker replied, "Tomorrow." Calling the next day, however, we were suddenly informed that our home study was not complete, and we would not

be able to see the child.

Two weeks later a new social worker arrived at our house and grilled us thoroughly on home schooling. At the end of the interview, we were sure she would not place the child with us and probably would cause trouble about our schooling. We were wrong! After a silent week, the social worker called and said Sarah was ours.

Later the social worker admitted that they almost did not place the child with us because our children did not attend a formal school. We are obviously pleased that the state welfare office accepted us as home schoolers. (See also “Adoption Resources,” *GWS* #26).

## **College Credit**

*From Kathi Kearney in Vermont:*

Finally, you can list me as a certified teacher willing to help people wishing to teach their children at home. I finished my teaching certificate (K-12, art) last spring. Johnson State College has been very good—very self-directed learning—and supportive of my efforts to do more work with home schoolers. Last year as part of my field study project in Maine, they approved some of my work with a home-schooling family for credit.

## **“Doing Nothing”**

*Anna Myers writes from Ontario:*

Everything’s going so smoothly! We’re still getting calls regularly from people who need reassurance to take the next step, but I make sure they do everything themselves now, so it doesn’t seem so easy. We’ve found that people fight a much better battle with the authorities if they are not spoon-fed. They should want to home-school enough to be prepared if there’s a hassle.

Sacha Pope’s mom took her out of school a year and a half ago and had her “achievement tested” so that she would know the level to which the schools had brought her. She tested at 4.0 in English and math—exactly where she was supposed to be, as she was just finishing grade 3. She played all year only doing what she wanted to do. The family saw a big change in her personality. She started to have a direction in her life. In the spring she

decided to try out for the Canadian National Ballet School. They auditioned 800 children and chose 100 for further auditioning in the summer school. She was chosen to attend summer school 3 and while there was tested academically. She scored in the grade 6 level in Math and English! *She did two grades in one year by “doing nothing”!* Anyway, 30 children were selected to attend the boarding school in September and she was one of them! We’re all wishing her luck and fun in her chosen career.

There’s not much new with our kids. I’ve even stopped watching to see if they’re “choosing” educational activities. They just seem to be growing older and taller and smarter! The other day I was niggling at Drew to clean up his mess when he said, “Mom, don’t talk at me now, I have a picture in my mind and I’m looking for a piece of paper quickly so I can get it down.” Well! a picture in a mind is so much more important than a mess!

## **Good Times, Awful Times**

*From Gretchen Spicer (MI):*

All the kids are growing and progressing marvelously. The current 1-yr-old, Esau, is sitting on the table, “helping” me write. I was very amused by the verse out of the song on the Lesters’ *Universal Musical Family* tape (GWS #28)—“He’s a lot of trouble because he’s little and new, but he’ll be a brother in a year or two.” That’s certainly the stage we’re at. Isaac (4) and his pals can’t see any use for Esau unless they need something to close up in a box. They have absolutely no patience with Esau messing up their games and he just wants to be part of everything. Unfortunately, he does have a habit of sitting right in the middle of the town it took the boys two hours to build. The day I tried to sew with him sitting on top of my sewing machine, I did have sympathy with their impatience.

Just now I had to fetch Esau down from a shelf about 5’ high that he was tottering on. It’s such a busy age with so much to learn. This is the age where freedom matters so much, but it becomes almost a full time job for one adult, to allow them to explore to their hearts’ content and yet remain free from harm. Not to mention keeping them clean, warm and fed. You really have to learn to do things five minutes at a time.

The older kids are able to care for themselves, which is delightful. They are eager to learn anything and lots of fun to talk to. Jacob (11) spends most



of his time traveling. After spending the summer in Michigan with a friend (I just dragged Esau out of the oatmeal), he's off to Grandma's in Iowa for a while. Seth (9) and Jessica (7) and friends just came in; they spend all day going from house to house. Sometimes it seems like we play musical beds every night. It's a little disconcerting to the adults, but the kids love it.

Isaac and friends want to make cookies but I don't, so they are trying to persuade the older kids to help. In general, the kids can cook anything they want as long as they don't waste food and do clean up. Isaac likes to cook when no one's in the house. One day he made "jello" with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a jar of molasses, a box of gelatin and about 2 cups of sugar. It sat in the refrigerator for about two weeks because no one could eat it and we didn't have the heart to throw it away. I think the two things you need most in living with children are tact and a sense of humor. Heaven knows there are many days when I forget that I have either.

Which brings me to another point. As I look back on this letter I just wrote, it sounds so cheerful and encouraging, like I'm really on top of things. We have plenty of AWFUL days around here. Sometimes we are all yelling at each other, at least half of us (usually me) are in tears, the house is filthy:- all we have for lunch is cold rice and tomatoes, the phone rings 30 times, everything gets spilled, the car breaks down, the fire goes out and I go lie in bed and swear that I would sell my soul for a house in town with running water, central heat, a maid, a shelf full of Campbell's soup and white bread and a freezer full of TV dinners, the three older kids heading off to school in clean clothes (washed by the maid) just before I drop the little ones off at the best day care center in town and head over to the health club for a swim and sauna before my music and dancing lessons. There are even days when I think the kids would be better in public school, when Tom and I spend the whole day arguing.

Overall, I am really glad we keep the kids at home and are poor and live on a farm and drive old cars; in the final analysis, the good outweighs the bad. I'm just afraid that if all of us, especially those of us that are older and have weathered a few more years of life's stormy times, don't be really honest and talk about some of those really awful times and how we survived them, it might be pretty disillusioning to the young folks just starting out, when they hit some rough spots. Being around your kids 24 hours a day, 365 days a year is just not always easy, no matter how much you care about them.

Having chosen to care for our kids in a certain way, and often living in rural isolated areas, many of us have found that the only person we feel able to entrust the children to, is the other parent. It's difficult for a young family when there is no way for both parents to have relief from child-care at the same time. I don't have any good answers. I'm just leary of painting rosy pictures when I know that's not how it always is.

## **Caring For 2-Year-Old**

*A Texas parent writes:*

Jason (10) spends a lot of his time doing things that would not be considered scholastic in the usual sense; playing with his Star Wars men, reading the Great Brain series by Fitzgerald over and over again, writing to other homeschoolers and playing with a little two-year-old that I care for during the day.

By the way, having taken in Chris has helped our situation in a couple of ways. Besides just being a joy to have around, he takes the edge off Jason's loneliness during the day. That was a major concern in considering home schooling for us. Being the only child in our family, Jason has sometimes felt he was missing something terrific. On the whole, he's adjusted just fine to his loneliness, but when I see them together, even with the big difference in their ages, I see that Chris is filling a deep hole in Jason. Chris's mother gives me \$50 a week to take care of him, and that, plus making cheesecakes to sell to restaurants, has enabled me to stay home with Jason. So many obstacles that had stood in the way of home schooling have neatly taken care of themselves

## **Swapping Services**

*A New Jersey reader wrote:*

A wonderful thing has happened. Miriam Halliday ("Turned in to Welfare," *GWS* #24) and her two children, Ian (8) and Inge (5), have moved to New Jersey. Miriam got a job at the George Street Co-op, where I am an active member. We were introduced by another co-op member, who knew we would be interested in meeting.

Since then things have blossomed into a number of co-op members exchanging services. Miriam needs to work (so she can get off welfare,

which has been one big hassle for her), so Ian and Inge come to my home four days a week. In exchange Miriam is going to give my son music lessons.

We don't live close to each other so there was a problem of how to get them to and from my home. The problem was solved by Betsy (I babysit her 2-year-old Ella four days a week). Betsy lives around the corner from Miriam, so it works great. She picks up and brings home Ian and Inge. In exchange, Miriam stays with Ella two nights a week, while Betsy teaches. Miriam also feeds them supper, which Betsy cooks.

Another co-op member and homeschooler picks Ian and Inge up in exchange for something, I'm not sure what. We would do this without an exchange if necessary, as Inge and Ian are nice playmates for our children.

I just received a call from a mother who is very concerned about her six-year-old daughter. who hates school and begs not to go I suggested she send her here once a week as a break from school (an idea I got from a letter in *GWS*); she liked that idea and is coming for a visit to discuss it further. We are also going to talk about exchanging services, as she is not in a very good financial situation right now.

Tomorrow we go to Sesame Park with friends from New Jersey Schools Association. We try to go on as many trips as possible. So far this year we went to the Museum of Natural History twice. My son especially loves the dinosaur section and knows more about dinosaurs than I do. We also went to the Planetarium, the New York Aquarium, and Catskill Game Farm, where they have a huge petting zoo with hundreds of llamas, sheep, goats, deer and pigs to pet and feed. They even had bottles of warm milk that you could feed to the baby animals. They also had a baby elephant that kept on knocking off everybody's hats.

We really don't do much school work around here. At the most we work two hours, three times a week, mostly on math, writing, and spelling. We use our Speak and Spell often. It helps a lot in spelling words that can't be sounded out.

In math I usually make up problems, but I also use workbooks when I'm too busy. My son isn't thrilled about workbooks but does them, mostly to please me. Inge and Ian love to do them and beg for more.

Reading is no problem. We have hundreds of books and they read many every day. Plus there are all the books I read to them. My son learned to read with the Dr. Seuss books. They were his favorite for years. Right now he

likes to read the *Little Miss and Mr.* books. I recently purchased a lot of Ladybird cooks from England. They are excellent. My son especially likes the Robin Hood series. Another thing he likes is his Little Thinker Tapes. He spends hours listening to them.

I asked my son if there was anything he would like to add to this letter. He said to tell you the reason he likes to homeschool is because when you go to school you have to sit at a desk most of the day and listen to some teacher go “Blah, blah, blah” all day. Ian says to tell you he thinks school is very boring.

## **More From the Mountains**

*From Laurie Fishel-Lingemann (“In The Mountains,” (GWS #26):*

The girls (Star, 13; Deva, almost 6) have been visiting a woman who lives 20 miles from here. This woman invited two other girls of similar ages to share four days with her; she expects them to cook and care for themselves and help her with her gardening and other projects. She is a talented artist with fabric and crochet and plans to share her skills with them. Star brought her wool, etc., and was very excited.

Star is working as a volunteer at the library one day a week. She loves books, so you can imagine that she is in ecstasy doing this.

Star was very involved with horses (more in imagery than reality, although she had her own pony for several years) and thought she would become more involved when we moved. But as she has grown she finds craft work, reading and gardening much more appealing to her than working with animals. She had a hard time letting go of her “images,” even felt guilty that she didn’t want to own a horse (as though she were betraying herself). After much tearfulness, she gave away her six geese and their goslings when she realized the inefficient set-up she had and that she was not really that interested or attentive to them. She has been much relieved and happy now that they are gone and has put much energy into her garden, which is thriving.

Deva is alert and cheerful most of the time. She doesn’t seem to be focused on any one interest, but enjoys doing things with me or Papa. She especially likes herb walks and gathering plants and having stories read to her. She spends a lot of time alone playing with dolls, looking at books, watching the new kittens, etc.

I am also realizing how in the past, because I was and am a homeschooler,

I wanted my kids to be “super kids” to prove what a “good” job I was doing, to prove that home schooling works, to insure that authorities would leave us alone, to prove to my parents and critical friends that it was OK, etc. In the last few years, something has been released in me, and my own inner authority is strong enough so that these pressures do not feel real or threatening. Our inner and outer development as human beings, healthy, kind, open, exploring, vibrant, caring, calm, happy—this is what is important. Frankly, I think that anybody who is happy, relaxed and calm can learn anything they want to in very little time and anything they feel they have to.

We bought a typewriter at used store for \$10 and a typing textbook for 25¢ at a yard sale. Star types about 20 minutes every day (more or less) and is progressing right along.

Jesse, 19 months, is talking, shouting, running—a lot. He is a real terror and drives poor Deva crazy, messing up her projects and pestering her. He is frustrated in his baby body, always trying to use heavy adult tools or picking up enormous items. One of his first words and still the most frequent is “guck” (stuck), as he is always trying to do something he is not physically capable of handling. He is not too interested in toys and only plays with them for short periods of time. He tries to take them apart (much to Deva’s misery, as he decapitates and dismembers her Barbie dolls) or throw them. If I am cutting soft fruit, I can give him some and a knife and safely turn my back. He much prefers real things to toys, even if he can’t manipulate them at all. He’d rather look at or climb on our caterpillar tractor than play with his toy tractor. He can abstract amazingly well and loves pictures in books.

On a trip we just took to Death Valley, I got to observe families interacting with each other (in campgrounds, museums, etc.), and most of the time it was very depressing. I was appalled at the consistent lack of respect most adults had toward their own children. I observed one very well-meaning and intelligent couple so consistently manipulate their 4-year-old that she was always on the verge of tears or anger. I finally confronted them via an abstract conversation on child rearing —and!—they agreed with everything I said. These were well-educated, professional people, but they were totally unconscious of their manipulations.

I wanted to add some thoughts on gardening. When Star was young (and I was a newcomer to gardening myself), I was fairly insistent that she “help” in the garden work. As she wasn’t always very interested, this often led to

conflict. In fact, as I look back, I am amazed that in spite of some of those terrible energies, Star enjoys gardening so much now. Several years ago I read an interesting item in *Organic Gardening*, the gist of which was to enjoy your gardening and create in it spaces of delight for your children—strawberry patches, flower gardens, bean tipis and so on. Let them wander freely in the garden and enjoy the tastes, smells, and good vibes. This is the “work” they need to do to develop a positive feeling about the garden. If they are allowed to drink in this atmosphere, they will want to create this same space in the future. That piece of advice sure opened up a space for me, and I hope it’s helpful for someone else.

Deva has been taking a ballet class. I originally saw it as a social interaction for her, but now I see this is the smallest part of it. She has a real flair for dancing, and she is very pleased with her accomplishment on her own outside of the family. She is also learning to interact directly with a strange adult and to share affection with her (she has always been very shy).

Both girls plan to enter the County Fair with flowers and vegetables they have grown and arts and crafts they have been working on. They have been picking out the proper entries from the Fair book, filling out the forms and tags. This is a chance for them to experience competition in a mild sort of way.

## **In the Mail**

Since we’ve seriously decided to unschool, our attitude toward the kids (ages 2 and 1) has changed. We haven’t had a real babysitter in weeks—seems the more time we spend with the kids teaching, exploring—the less we feel the need to get away from them. In fact, on our last half dozen “Hot Date Nights” we’ve taken the kids along, and purposely chose outings they’d enjoy. I never thought this would happen to me!—Leslie Westrum (IN).

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As my attitude has changed to one of being here for my children, for my family, so has the quality of our life together. We do more together, are not so rushed, enjoy each other more. There’s no more important skill to learn than that of living harmoniously with others, which comes from being comfortable and at peace with yourself. We’re all working on that.

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My six-year-old started first grade here—his request. He is very happy with his choice. I am taking refuge in the fact that he, the learner, has sought out what he needs. I was hoping he'd be an unschooler, but perhaps he'll choose that later.

## **Developing New Attitudes**

*From an Ohio parent:*

We received the first 27 issues of *GWS*. After reading them through, I feel like I've entered an ongoing conversation and would like to add my "2¢ worth." One thing is for sure—even if we decide to stay with the public schools, *GWS* has been worth every penny. We are developing new attitudes that ought to make life easier for our children, no matter how we finally decide to handle the situation.

I have been timidly bringing up the subject of home school to various people recently. The response has been astonishing! Not one person has indicated in any way that they consider the idea crazy, weird, or stupid! One woman said wistfully, "If you decide to do this, will you take my children, too?"

I've been thinking about your statement that most adults dislike and distrust children. Could this be in part at least because we are seeing traits that we were taught to dislike and distrust in ourselves as children? For example, children are constantly being told not to be so loud, noisy, etc. How can they possibly grow up without the idea that they are less attractive or loved when they are noisy? I've noticed that the traits that bother me most in my own children are the ones that I considered to be my own worst faults as a child. We want our own children to be perfect in every way and it makes us angry at them when they aren't, especially when they have the same imperfections that we've hated in ourselves for years.

My oldest daughter's approach to a new concept sometimes reminds me of the family dog faced with a kitten in the middle of the living room floor. She circles the idea suspiciously, says, "I can't do that," or "I can't get it." At home, I can say, "Let's put it away till later (or tomorrow)." Two days later, something has clicked in her mind; it has become easy. (The dog is now asleep curled up next to the kitten.) Unfortunately, at school she isn't given that rest period for things to click into place.

Over the last few weeks I've been learning to loosen up and let the children do more and more for themselves and without my supervision. If it's something I just can't stand to watch because of messiness, I turn my back or go into the other room. It's been a quiet joy for me to see how creative they can be when turned loose on their own.

## **Weaving Class at 5**

*Robin Leidhecker (PA) writes:*

Our local community college offers Adult Education classes. I signed up for weaving and asked if my son could attend also. They said, certainly, as long as he could pay attention. It never occurred to me to mention that he was 5. We shocked a few people, but he stayed and had a good time. There were times he was bored and didn't want to listen—but he said later he stayed to be polite (don't we all?). Once the teacher and other students got over their hang-ups about age and so forth, things went smoothly. Not being able to write, Josh took no notes. I was amazed at how much he has retained. Also he asked a lot of basic questions that the others wouldn't ask because they were “dumb.” A good learning experience for all.

## **Working at Co-Op**

*From Lynn Kaplow (MA):*

About kids working in a food co-op (*GWS* #27, page 11). Ours have been doing it from the age of three. At that age they did little, but whatever they did was appreciated by the staff and workers. Today at 7 and 10 years, they are skilled workers. They cut, weigh, price, package, and stock cheese. They price and stock various other foods. The other week they bagged and priced chicken. The older girl checks in people at the reception desk. She looks up their membership cards, sees if they've fulfilled their work hours, Okays their checks and answers the phone. They help unload the delivery truck (heavy stuff). They've learned a tremendous number of skills and they're treated as any adult would be.

## **Experts On Farming**



*From “Warning: Do Not Read First” by Kenneth H. Calvert in Learning, Nov. ’81:*

“These students can’t talk, much less read,” lamented the third grade teacher from a remote rural school in the South. “They’re almost 6 nonverbal.” The teacher was at her wit’s end to come up with an instructional idea to motivate her students—90 percent of whom were from low income families, had never traveled outside their county, had never seen a shopping center, and would not have known what an escalator was. In fact, they seemed to know so little about so many things, their teacher was at a complete loss to know how to begin to inspire them to learn.

As a visiting consultant, it was up to me to find the answer for this teacher and for the others like her who had gathered for an in-service meeting.

I began with the assumption that all students can talk about something they have experienced firsthand.

Most of the students in the third grade were from families engaged in tobacco farming; in fact, many of them were part of the work force.

I began the demonstration by saying to the students, “I am new to this area. Pretend that i have bought a farm and want to learn how to grow tobacco.” I really did know nothing about tobacco farming. “Tell me what I would have to do first, then next, and so on.”

Those “nonverbal” students suddenly became so verbal that I had to interrupt to establish some order in their telling. Vocabulary was no problem. In fact, as they debated the steps to take and the details involved, they used some highly specialized vocabulary. You can imagine their delight when I had to ask them for a definition of priming.

When they eventually agreed upon the steps necessary to grow tobacco, we reviewed the sequence and I outlined it on the chalkboard. Then I posed a second question, “What should I remember not to do if I want to be a good tobacco farmer?” Again, their precise knowledge was evident, and their ability to articulate it

phenomenal, as they came to an agreement on a priority list for me.

The teachers. had been observing from the back of the room with “we-can’t-believe-what-we’re-hearing” expressions on their faces.

## **Cannot Bar Children**

*The Oakland Tribune, 2/12/82:*

The California Supreme Court decision that landlords cannot legally refuse rental units to adults with children answers a question that should never have been asked.

The court held that children, like minorities, have a right under the Unruh Civil Rights Act to be treated as individuals. Thus, they must not be barred from living in rentals just because landlords see them as members of a troublesome class.

The prohibition against discrimination based on grounds of color, race, religion, ancestry or national origin also extends to age, the court said. To allow discrimination on the basis of age could encourage other forms of discrimination.

A threat to the decision also exists in the possibility of it being overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. That threat could be removed and the court’s decision reinforced if the state Senate passes a measure sponsored by Democratic Assemblyman Leo T. McCarthy of San Francisco.

Exempting senior citizen housing, mobile-home parks restricted by regulations to adults only, and student housing, Assembly Bill 256 prohibits discrimination against children in the rental of all single family houses and dwelling complexes with two or more units.

The bill provides an approach adopted by other states including Arizona, Delaware, Illinois, and Massachusetts.

Nothing in the law would prevent landlords from evicting or penalizing families that allow children to damage apartments and impose on neighbors.

## Potential Ally in Calif.

It is too soon to say whether any of the newly elected state Governors will prove to be sympathetic or friendly to home schooling. But there is some reason to believe that in one very important state, California, we may have a potential ally. The new Governor, George Deukmejian, when he was state Attorney General, instituted a lawsuit a year or two ago against the Los Angeles County School District, naming among the Defendants the Superintendent of the County Schools, the members of the Board, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and charging them with having failed to provide even a physically safe environment for their students in the Los Angeles County Schools. How the suit was resolved, and whether it did anything to make the Los Angeles schools safer, I don't know. But it certainly suggests that Mr. Deukmejian does not stand in any great awe of school officials, particularly in Los Angeles County, where these same officials seem right now to be trying to make things as hard as they can for home schoolers.

It might therefore not be a bad idea at all for home schoolers in California, and particularly in Los Angeles County, to write Governor-elect Deukmejian, congratulating him on his election, taking note of and sharing his past concern for the safety of children in schools (where there is a good deal of moral as well as physical danger), telling him a little about home schooling both in their own home and in the state in general, and saying that there seems to be a growing campaign in some counties, particularly Los Angeles County, to stamp out home schooling, and asking him whether he might consider taking some steps to bring these anti-home schooling campaigns to a halt. (See also page 17.)

A similar letter writing campaign, adjusted to fit local conditions, might be helpful in other states where new Governors have been elected, or even in states where the incumbent Governor remains in office, especially if in those states home schoolers are having any trouble with state authorities.

Needless to say, if any of you, in California or any other state, get any replies from your Governor's office, we would like very much to hear about them.—JH.

## School Supt. Conference

DR: As we mentioned in *GWS* #28, the Massachusetts school committees and school superintendents invited John to take part in a workshop on home-schooling at their annual conference November 4, but he had a fee-paying speaking engagement that morning in New York, so I went in his place. There were two others on the panel, a Mass. Department of Education official and Dr. Frizzle, the superintendent of the Amherst schools (the defendant in the Perchemlides case!). The meeting was brief (slightly over one hour) and somewhat disorganized, so in some ways very little was accomplished. But I did come away feeling I had learned a lot about the point of view of the school people.

Early in the meeting I asked how many of those present were from school districts with home-schoolers. About two-thirds raised their hands. I was pleasantly surprised and asked them what districts they were from. Another small shock—they named many districts that we here at *GWS* had never heard had home-schoolers (which suggests that their home-schoolers do not know about us, either). So, instead of the meeting being general information about home-schooling, it turned into an opportunity for those who have already dealt with homeschoolers to air their problems and worries.

For example, one school committee member whose district had approved a home-schooler was concerned about what would happen twelve years down the road. If the school officials approved the education each year, wasn't the child entitled to a diploma? Some people at the meeting said no, but others said that graduation requirements are set by each district, so if a district wanted to grant a diploma, they could. This particular man thought the family should protect itself by getting something in writing on this question, since administrators and school board members come and go.

Someone else wanted to know if he should allow home-schooled kids to take part in school programs. Again, some people at the meeting were immediately negative, implying that he couldn't or shouldn't. But another man spoke up, saying his school district was glad to let home-schoolers participate, and others nodded in agreement.

One man asked whether the superintendent or school committee should make the decision to approve homeschoolers (Mass. law leaves it open). Dr. Frizzle felt that the superintendent and school district staff, being professional educators, were more qualified to judge individual educational programs than were school committee members.

Questions about testing were raised—what should they do if a family refused to have their children tested, what if the child did not show any progress on the tests, etc. (I answered that by reading the judge’s footnote in the Perchemlides case, “It makes sense to remember that we do not remove our children from public school when they fail tests.”)

A couple of general observations about the tone of the meeting. One, I was struck by how much energy these people were putting into the whole issue. They felt that the education of each child in their town was their serious responsibility, and they seemed afraid that home-schooled children were going to be poorly educated unless watched very closely. It seemed almost ludicrous for them to focus so much attention on so few—I am certain some of them knew more details about home-schooled children than they knew about most of the kids enrolled in their own schools!

Second, they were really looking for guidance. They kept asking, “What should we do about. How do we handle. What do we do about.” They were not always happy to hear that no one knew the solution to their problem, or that it was up to them to work something out. Several times it was suggested that the State should formulate more guidelines, procedures, etc. Some of these people had spent a lot of time negotiating various home-schooling arrangements, especially over the issues of testing and monitoring, and I think they were picturing future floods of homeschoolers demanding even more time, so they wanted a standard policy to remove this responsibility from their shoulders. On the other hand, Dr. Frizzle and several others spoke up for the advantages of local control—they did not want the State looking over their shoulders and interfering on this or other educational matters, any more than necessary.

It’s clear to me that the experiences of the first home-schooling families in each town will affect how much control the officials exercise and what kind of policies they establish for future home-schoolers. All the more reason for home-schoolers, in their initial proposals, to set up their home-schooling the way they want it to be.

## **Legislative Proposal**

JH: Until now, home schoolers have not pursued a very active policy in the state legislatures, and with good reason; if the education laws as they

stand, however unsatisfactory, make home schooling possible, why tinker with them? Above all since, as Egan Tausch points out elsewhere in this issue, the education organizations have vastly more spending and lobbying power than we do. Why thrust ourselves into such unequal contests? Instead, we have contented ourselves with trying, on the whole fairly successfully, to prevent the legislatures from passing laws that would make home schooling difficult or impossible.

For a number of reasons I think it may now be time for us, at least in some states, to take a more active position. Though the vagueness of the education laws has made it possible for home schoolers in all states to find ways to teach their own children, our position is still a bit precarious. We face always the possibility that a single court decision, or even, as in some states, the ruling of an Attorney General, will so interpret the law as to cut the legal ground out from under our feet. Of course, vague education laws that make home schooling possible are better than clear ones that make it impossible. But best of all would be laws that state specifically and unambiguously that parents may, without undue restrictions or interference, teach their own children. Until fairly recently I would have said that there was so little chance of getting such laws passed that it was hardly worthwhile making the effort. Now I am not so sure.

For one thing, we have the example of the Louisiana and Arizona legislatures, which within the past year or two have passed the most explicitly pro-home schooling laws that we have anywhere in the country. The Arizona experience is particularly significant and hopeful. In Louisiana some of the legislators, in voting in favor of home schooling, may to some degree have been influenced by their opposition to city-wide busing plans, but as far as I know, in Arizona this was not an issue. The Arizona law, again at least as far as I know, was not introduced primarily because of a large amount of organized home schooling activity around the state. There had in fact not been a great deal of such activity—though of course there is much more now. When the bill was introduced, the Arizona home schoolers who wrote us about it said that they did not think it had much chance to pass. It was strongly opposed by all the major newspapers in the state, and by all the teachers' and other educational organizations and lobbies. Yet it became law. If it can happen there, why not in other states? Perhaps we have been a little more timid than we actually need or ought to be.

All these thoughts came to a boil in my mind when, not long ago, I received a call from some home schoolers in a mid-Western state (which I won't name just yet), in which there has not been up till now much home schooling activity. The caller said that a prominent legislator had expressed great interest in introducing a pro-home schooling bill, and what is even more surprising and encouraging, that the Governor had said that he approved of the idea of such a bill and would sign it. What should they do next? What kind of bill should they try to get?

So I began to think about, and soon to try to draft, the kind of bill we might like to have if we could have everything we wanted. By the time I finished the draft, I was convinced, and have been ever since, that such a model of legislation might be very useful to us in a number of ways. Of course, we can't expect any legislature to pass it in exactly this form. But one of the things that lobbyists do for legislators is draft bills, on the principle that you are more likely to get what you want in the final bill if you begin with the bill you want. It is better to give the legislators a completely drafted bill to work from than a blank sheet of paper.

There may be other advantages, as well. We've said often, and will say again, that it is a very good idea for as many home schooling families as possible, with their children, to meet their own state representatives. If such meetings are friendly, they are likely to end with the legislator saying, "What would you like me to do?" Asking them to try to prevent anti-home-schooling laws from being passed is a fairly weak answer, not least of all because that kind of law is not likely to bear that kind of label. A much stronger answer would be to say, "Here is the kind of law we would someday like to see in this state. Anything that you can do that you think might help get such a law introduced and passed would be a great help to us." How much or what the legislators may want to do about this will be up to them to decide. But at least we will have a specific proposal to talk about.

Since most people think that talking about real laws is more practical and interesting than just talking about ideas, having such a law to talk about may help us get more of all kinds of publicity. Finally, it will give us something about which we can talk to school people themselves. We can say to them, "This law will help rather than hurt the schools; how can we work with you to get it introduced and passed." Such a specific proposal is much more likely to lead to useful conversations than vague wanderings or arguing about

whether or not home schooling is a good thing.

Here, then, is the proposed draft of model home schooling legislation, along with some brief explanatory comments, that I sent to our friends in the Mid-west. We are eager to hear what you think of the draft, what use you make of it, what responses you get to it.

## PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF PROPOSED HOME SCHOOLING LEGISLATION

I. It shall be the intent and purpose of the education laws and regulations of this state to give full encouragement and support to those parents and families who wish for whatever reasons to teach their children, in their homes, and in such other places, and by such other means, as shall seem to them useful and appropriate , and nothing in the school attendance or other laws and regulations of this state shall be construed so as (1) to deny, or severely or unduly restrict, the right of such parents and families so to teach their children, or (2) to give the state and its agencies, or any school district or districts within the state, the right to impose on these home-educated or otherwise privately instructed children a uniform curriculum or method or methods of instruction or evaluation.

II. Nor shall these laws and regulations be construed so as to deny to schools the right (1) to carry such home educated students on their pupil rolls, designating them as taking part in programs of Special Education or Independent Study or such other title as may seem appropriate, and (2) to receive for them such state, federal, or other per-pupil financial and other assistance as the schools may receive for all those pupils whose instruction is generally or mainly carried on within the actual buildings of the school.

III. Nor shall such laws and regulations be construed so as to deny to such home-educated children the right to use, during school hours and subject only to reasonable restrictions, the school buildings and their personnel, facilities, resources, classes, and activities, at such times and in such ways as they may choose (i.e., by using a library or shop or laboratory, enrolling in a particular class, singing in a chorus,



playing in an orchestra or band, taking part in sports, etc.), or, if they request, to receive from the schools whatever textbooks and other curricular materials the schools ordinarily supply to their students.

IV. The state and/or the school districts and schools shall have the right to require those parents or families wishing to educate their children at home to submit for examination and approval, either to the school districts or schools or to a designated person or agency within the state government, a written educational plan, stating in general and wherever possible specific terms what subjects or materials they intend to teach or present to their children, how they intend to teach them or assist the children to learn them, and how they intend to observe and evaluate this learning.

V. In monitoring and evaluating this learning the parents and schools may use, but shall not be compelled to use or restricted to using, such standardized achievement tests and other commercially published tests as are generally used in schools. But other possible and permissible means of evaluation shall include such things as a daily, weekly, or other regular description of the child's work and activities, including where possible actual samples of such work, or essays written by the children in response to questions or on subjects of their own choosing, or work done in and for other correspondence schools.

VI. If the state, or local school districts or schools, do not approve a home education plan submitted to them, they shall state in as specific terms as possible their reasons for disapproving of this plan, and in addition, all those changes in the plan which, if made, would make it acceptable. In all such disputes over the merits of an educational plan, the state and local school districts or schools shall accord to the parents or families involved full rights of due process; i.e., the parents or families shall be entitled to a hearing to hear objections to their plan and to defend its merits, shall be entitled to representation by counsel or other persons of their own choosing, shall have the right to examine and question witnesses testifying against them, to present expert witnesses on their own behalf, and so on.

VII. In all cases where, after such hearings, the local school districts

or schools have refused to approve the parents “or families” educational plan, and before any action may be taken in the courts against these parents or families, they shall have the right to appeal the decision of the local school districts or schools to an appropriate and designated agency of the state.

VIII. In all such cases of disagreement or dispute, the burden of proof shall be on the state or local school districts or schools to show that the educational plan submitted by the parents or family is inadequate, and to show further that, for any requirements of time, place, teaching personnel, curriculum, method, evaluation, etc., that they may wish to impose on the parents or family there is a compelling need for such requirements, i.e., that there is beyond reasonable doubt a strong probability that in the absence of such requirements the children so taught will receive an education significantly inferior to that received by the majority of children regularly attending the public schools.

IX. In all such cases of disagreement or dispute, the state or local school districts or schools shall not use charges of child abuse or neglect, or the threat of such charges, to compel the parents or family to accept its requirements.

JH: This proposed legislation, if passed, will (1) Clarify beyond possibility of doubt the legal status of home education (2) Satisfy several of the schools’ chief objections to it (3) Enact in legislation several principles already established in many rulings of federal and state courts (4) Protect the Constitutional rights of home schooling parents and families (5) Establish in law a pattern of mutually beneficial cooperation between schools and home educating families that already exists in some school districts and that we may hope will soon exist in all (6) Relieve the courts of the burden of much needless litigation.

Section I states so clearly the intent of the legislature with respect to home schooling that no schools, administrative agencies, or courts will have any need or reason to guess about them. Section I, 2) only states what the U.S. Supreme Court stated almost sixty years ago in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* and in *Farrington v. Towshe*.

Section II is an essential part of this legislation, since under it schools need no longer fear that every increase in home schooling can only mean a corresponding decrease in their budgets and a threat to their jobs.

Section III establishes in law the sound and just principle that people whose taxes support the schools should be entitled to use them as much or as little as they please. Nothing in law, logic, or equity supports the idea that children must be in school full time or not at all. This section also meets schools' worries about home educated children's "social life." Children who can go to school when they wish will be able to get as much of its social life as they want and need.

Section IV protects both children and the state from the possibility that indifferent or incompetent parents might, under the guise of homeschooling, neglect, exploit, or otherwise injure their children. Such parents could not satisfy the requirements of this section and most of them would almost certainly not even try.

Since many educators now seriously doubt the validity of standardized tests, Section V allows for other methods of evaluation, some already in use.

Section VI only says what has been said on numerous occasions by the courts. Section VII sets forth a procedure now used in several states, which reduces the possibility that overburdened courts will have to deal with questions often better dealt with at an administrative level.

Section VIII underscores the principle of the Assumption Of Innocence that lies at the heart of our legal system and that has often been upheld by the courts.

Section IX, again, only says what has already been said by several state courts.

It would be very encouraging and helpful, to put it mildly, if in some states we could get laws passed that one way or another embodied all nine sections of this draft. But it would be almost as good if we could

get into law any one or combination of the first three sections. And any one of the other sections, even if it alone was added to existing law, would greatly improve our position. So we can think of ourselves as trying to get passed, not just this law as a whole, but any part of it, particularly sections I-III. This gives us something to fall back on. If a legislator says, "You've got too much in here," we can always say, "OK, try to get us the first three, or if that seems too much, just the first two."

It will probably be very helpful if we say to the public that since this proposed legislation meets the most serious objections of most educators to home schooling, and since there is nothing in it for schools to fear, there is no reason why educators of all kinds should not support it, and that we are eager to get as many as possible to do so. Such a bill can and should begin a period of very fruitful cooperation between schools and home schoolers, from which all stand to gain.

## **Uncertified in Top Schools**

*JH: To Richard Moore, an attorney who is defending a number of home and/or private schooling families in Nebraska, I made a suggestion that might be useful to other families whose right to teach their own children is being challenged on the grounds that they do not hold teacher's certificates:*

For a listing of some of the country's top ranked independent elementary and secondary schools, you could write the National Association of Independent Schools, 18 Tremont St., Boston. Some names of famous and outstanding schools are Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH; Philips Academy, Andover MA; Deerfield Academy, Deerfield MA; Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville NJ; St. Paul's School, Concord NH; Groton School, Groton MA; Hotchkiss School, Lakeville CT; Choate School, Wallingford CT; Hill School, Pottstown PA; Milton Academy, Milton MA. You could of course add many other names to this list, but these will probably be enough to establish the point, that the "best" schools in the country, the schools to which the richest and most powerful people send their children (if they can get in), the schools which consistently send the

highest proportion of their students to the top ranked colleges, *do not hire teachers with education degrees*—with the possible and very rare exceptions of people who hold additional degrees in what I would call “real” subjects—English, mathematics, physics, German, etc. And the same would of course be true for our leading private and state universities.

## Legal Strategies

*JH: To the letter to Mr. Moore I added these legal suggestions, which we have mentioned before in GWS in one form or another, but which are worth mentioning again:*

Where a possible infringement of a Constitutionally protected right is concerned, it is not enough for the state to claim, as of course it will, that it has reasons for doing what it does, or for demanding—in this case, of parents—what it demands. It must show that those reasons are good and indeed necessary reasons, that there is in fact what many courts have called a “compelling need” for them. And it must show that the ends it wishes to serve through its regulations, in this case protecting the quality of children’s education, are not only constitutionally permissible ends, but that they cannot be served in some other way which infringes less on the parents’ rights.

There is, I believe, a very strong case to be made, in taking these matters to the Federal courts, for trying to get the narrowest possible ruling that will serve your clients interests, rather than seeking for a very broad one. For even if you get a favorable ruling from a lower Federal court, if it is too broad the state educational authorities will surely appeal it to the Supreme Court, and in these matters I am very uneasy about that court. In conflicts between the power of the state and the rights of individual citizens they tend to come down on the side of the state—they are strongly and consistently anti-libertarian. Also a clear majority of the Court is for various reasons strongly committed to the existence of public schools, and are very unlikely to make any ruling which they feel (as the schools are sure to claim) may seriously threaten the existence of public schools as such.

What I would hope for would be to win in a lower Federal court, but

on narrow enough grounds so that the Supreme Court would not feel the case was important enough to consider. Thus, while the Supreme Court will surely not deny to the states the right to exercise some control over private schools, it may be willing to rule, or let stand the ruling of a lower court, that wherever such control infringes on parental rights the state must show a compelling need for doing so. To take a more specific example, the Supreme Court would almost surely reaffirm *Pierce* in saying that the states had-me-right to assure themselves in one way or another of the quality of teachers. But they might say, first, that requiring teachers to be certified did not in fact meet this need, and that even if it did, the same need could be met in other ways that infringed less on parents' rights.

## On Religious Schools

*From John Eidsmoe, one of our "Friendly Lawyers" (GWS #27):*

On page 14 of *GWS* #28, the question was raised as to whether one can form a religious private school if he does not belong to an established religion. The real question is not whether one can establish a religious private school, but whether one may use the First Amendment religious liberty Constitutional defense if one is charged with violating the state compulsory attendance laws.

I know of no case directly on point, but one which might be helpful is *State of Ohio ex rel. Nagle vs. Olin*, 415 N.E. 2d 279, decided by the Supreme Court of Ohio on December 30, 1980. Olin called himself a "born again" Christian, but he did not belong to any organized religious denomination. He wanted to send his daughter to an Amish school, but the state refused to allow this, claiming that only the Amish were exempt from compulsory attendance laws under the *Yoder* decision. The lower court convicted him and refused to recognize a free exercise of religion defense, arguing that his beliefs could not be considered "religious" because he was not affiliated with a denomination. But the Supreme Court of Ohio disagreed, saying:

The fact that his beliefs are not in total conformity with those of the Amish or any other organized religion does not make them any less religious, or his sincerity in them any less real. Olin's beliefs are

rooted in the Bible and his interpretation of it; not in secular consideration. It was not contended that Olin's profession or belief was a sham or subterfuge adopted in order to avoid the obligation of sending Jennifer to a state-charted school. Despite the delicacy of the question whether particular beliefs are "religious," the only finding justified on this record is that Olin's beliefs grow out of deep religious conviction, are truly held, and are entitled to the protection of the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

It is, of course, necessary to clearly demonstrate a religious basis for one's objection to public education by citing religious authorities, such as the Bible.

## Legal Manuals

*Ann Bodine (NJ) writes:*

I have found a very good resource for those with legal problems. It's one of the Citizens Legal Manual series published by HALT, 'An Organization of Americans for Legal Reform,' (Suite 319, 201 Mass. Av NE, Washington DC 20002). The title is *Using A Law Library* and it gives detailed and easy-to-follow instructions for doing legal research.

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DR: We sent for HALT's literature, and found that the group is promoting such interesting and needed legal reforms as "plain language legislation" and mediation as an alternative to courtrooms. Members (\$15/year) receive a newsletter and five manuals, which besides the one Anne mentions include "Shopping for a Lawyer," "Real Estate," "Small Claims Court," and "Probate." HALT is also developing a "legal assistance referral network."

Looks like a good opportunity for *GWS* readers not only to educate themselves in order to get approval for home-schooling, but also to learn about many other legal issues and possibly become involved in improving the entire system.

## Success in N.H.

*Pearlene Gavlik (NH) writes:*

We moved to Winchester on May 15th and hid out for the remainder of the school year. On July 2nd, I mailed out a 60-page typewritten home-study application.

Three weeks later, the assistant superintendent called me. He was very impressed with my report. He said I was the first ever to apply in Winchester, so he wasn't too sure of the regulations. He said the board would have to make the decision. The meeting wouldn't be until September 16th. He asked if that would cause me any problems. I hesitated at this point He caught the pause, and said that of course he would not insist I send my children to school in the meantime. So, I said there would be no problem.

The board meeting came, and we attended it. The assistant superintendent introduced our case to the board in private executive session. He explained the basic guidelines for approving home-study programs and that we had submitted a very detailed application to him. He said that any possible question they could think to ask was already answered in my report.

They still wanted to know what our "manifest educational hardship" was. I gave them a brief summary of some of the more important points, e.g., Sherry's learning disability and the boys being able to progress at a faster rate at home at their own pace according to their interests. The board also wanted to know how the children's "social" life was going to be satisfied. I told them that they played with friends after school, met people at their Mineralogy Club and went on field trips with other home schoolers in the area.

Seeing that their attitude seemed to be responsive, I asked what their opinion would be in offering my children selected subjects, such as welding, that interest them. They were very open to this idea, saying they were looking for the best possible education for my children. The meeting ended with the superintendent asking the board to read my report before making their decision, highly recommending they approve it.

About six days later, the superintendent called me, informing me the board had approved it and that an annual evaluation would be necessary along with my portfolio. Then he asked me if that would be all right; I did expect it, didn't I? I told him that would be fine and thanked him.

Three cheers for Winchester!! I can't believe the humble, cooperative attitude the people have here. If anyone is looking for a receptive place to move to get away from bureaucrats, I would highly recommend Winchester, Keene, and Gilsum. There are a lot of home schoolers here and the people are



so warm and friendly. The Keene superintendent even supported home-study openly on the radio.

## **Listing Resource People**

*From the successful homeschooling proposal of Kate Gilday of Montague, Mass., which drew heavily on the Kendricks' letter (GWS #12):*

To encourage true learning we will provide a calm, positive atmosphere, learning materials appropriate to Suzanne's needs, and access to friends, teachers and community resources. We have been fortunate to have the following people offer their time and assistance in adding to Suzanne's home-schooling experience:

1. Lawrence and Helen Wheeler both have Native American ancestry and have lived on Chestnut Hill most of their lives. Their information and perceptions of the past fifty years are valuable and important in Suzanne's understanding of the history of our town, state, and country. The richness and knowledge these folks have to share are very special resources.
2. Marna Bunce will be our resource person for reading and language skills.
3. Kathy Burbank, R.N., is a practicing nurse for the University Health Care Facility at the University of Massachusetts. She will share her knowledge of Health and Nutrition and well-being during the year.
4. Anne Williamson, former director of the Greenfield Library and curator of the Special Collections of Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost and others at the Jones Library of Amherst, will be sharing her assistance and knowledge in poetry and language arts as well as guiding us to the realization of the fullness of the library as a resource center.
5. Nancy Darmstader of the Hitchcock Center in Amherst will be our Natural Science resource person for the year. Her knowledge plus that of my own in this field, which I have gained through the past two years of researching and leading workshops in Science and Nature for

early childhood educators in western Mass., will be shared through the seasons.

6. John Hayman will guide us through any math problems we may meet. There are many other folks with skills and resources who have offered to be available to Suzanne if and when she needs them, among them a film-maker, food cooperative manager, computer technician, potter, and farmer.

## **Busy in Ithaca**

*From Nancy Wallace (NY):*

The kids now go to school on Fridays. They hate to be teased about this, but I can't help making cracks as they bound cheerfully into their classroom without even saying good-bye. Actually, what they are doing is spending two hours a week in a delightful art room, run by a friend of ours, Carolyn Fellman. The room is just cluttered with art materials and busy children—everybody is happy except the janitor, who is going crazy with clay on the walls, paper scraps all over the floor, etc. The kids are so happy in Carolyn's room that she has to physically push them back into their regular classrooms when it is time. Vita and Ishmael have been making all kinds of things—pots on the potter's wheel, masks, paintings, sculptures, and so on. Yet despite all their pleasure, I don't think I would send them to school for more than two hours a week. Carolyn's room is like an oasis—a haven from the “real world” of school—and so far, neither Vita nor Ishmael have needed “havens”; in their lives—the whole world that they experience has been a thing of wonder.

The kids are also taking a german class with a german lady who was a language teacher in junior high, and who now teaches outside of school in order to experiment with ways of exciting children's interest in foreign language. This class that she is teaching has about 6 kids in it, ranging in age from 7 to 12, and they play german games, recite poetry, have tea parties, and generally have a great time—all in German. I'm really surprised at how much Vita and Ishmael are learning—after only two classes, they can say all sorts of things in German, and they are always asking, “how many more days until German?”

Ishmael, meanwhile, is studying music composition with a recent

composition graduate from Cornell. Ishmael adores him, although I have grave reservations because he gives Ishmael so much homework that he has hardly any time to compose. In any case they are analyzing music from Gregorian chants to Debussy to Ravi Shankar, and Ishmael is getting a full scale graduate course in melody and harmony. Mostly, I have no idea what they are doing, with their sequences, modulations and chordal structures, but Ishmael seems extremely happy during lessons. He also takes music theory lessons from a woman up the street and she is teaching him “solfege,” among other things. She has organized a girls’ chorus which Vita has joined, and that seems to be a lot of fun, too.

Vita has joined a “beginning reading” orchestra which meets on Saturdays and is full of kids about her age or older who are just beginning to read music. They all sound quite good, considering, and Vita just loves sitting behind a music stand. Boy does she feel important! She has been working awfully hard on the violin, and it really shows.

The other day, Vita measured the width of one piano key, and then she measured the length of the entire keyboard, saying to herself, “If one key is of an inch and the entire keyboard is inches, how many keys are there altogether?” Just how wide the keys are, or how long the keyboard is, I don’t know, and even whether Vita solved the problem, I don’t know, because I tuned her out (terrible me!)—I really wasn’t interested. A couple of years ago I would have felt guilty at missing an opportunity for a good math lesson, but more and more I’ve come to see that if Vita’s interested in something, she’ll pursue it; she doesn’t need me. And if I’m interested in something, she’ll either share my interest or not. (Actually, she often shares my interests, or Bob’s, just because she enjoys doing things with us, as does Ishmael.) But back to math—yesterday at lunch we had a cottage cheese carton on the table and she read, “Serving size.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup; servings per container 4.” Then after a moment, she exclaimed, “there are two cups of cottage cheese in this carton!

I guess my point is that for a long time I thought that math was different from language in that while words were everywhere, numbers were only in certain rare places. Obviously that isn’t true, since Vita can manage to find numbers to puzzle over almost anywhere.

At Ishmael’s piano lessons with his new teacher, the two of them practically jump around in excitement—she, hopping up and down to show Ishmael all her favorite pieces and Ishmael edging her aside so that he can try

and play them. Right now they are working on a Mozart Sonata, some Chopin Preludes, some Schubert dances, a Grieg piece and some Bartok pieces from the *Mikrokosmos Album No. 4*. What a new world of music.

Which reminds me. Many *GWS* parents seem to be teaching their kids piano and I think they'd be glad to know about the *Mikrokosmos* series, especially since it is "graded"—Bartok wrote the books specifically as instructional material for children (and adults) and the first book seems like an ideal beginner's book—don't know why more teachers don't use it.

## Learning in the Garden

*From a column by Peg Boyles in the New Hampshire Times, 8/30/82:*

Molly (6) practically grew up in the garden. She paid her first visit there when only a couple of hours old, and spent countless hours there her first summer, tucked snugly into a front baby carrier while I weeded, hoed and harvested. Every year since, her knowledge of the world at large deepens through her connection to this small productive space. And there is no doubt in her mind that her own contributions are important to the entire household's well-being—every day of the year we eat food that she has helped to plant, tend, harvest, preserve and prepare.

For example, she knows the name of nearly every food plant that will grow in New Hampshire, and most of the local wild plants, too. She can identify almost all of them at any stage of their development or by blossom, leaf or seed alone. She can harvest any fruit or vegetable crop we grow at its perfect peak of ripeness, yet carefully, to avoid injury to the rest of the plant. She knows about how far apart various kinds of plants must stand from each in beds or rows in order to yield well (for these and other ordinary tasks, she has learned to use a tape measure and also to judge distances by eye).

She can recognize about 15 different insects, both friends and foes, and knows most of their life cycles. The sight of an unknown species brings her running for the field guide "so we can look it up." She knows that soil is made from weathered rock and the remains of once-living matter, and that plants draw up minerals and water to help convert sunlight in their green leaves to make food. She already has learned more about human nutrition than most adults. ("No, mom, I don't need any yogurt for supper. I had scrambled eggs for protein and ate cooked broccoli and a lot of blackberries

for calcium—remember you said the cabbage family and blackberries contain a lot of calcium?”)

Molly’s questions about foods that don’t grow around here—bananas, oranges, and rice have led quite naturally to explorations of atlases and globes (and one hilarious conversation about the solar system, which sent me running around the kitchen using a variety of reasonably round fruits to explain planetary motion, night and day, and the progression of the seasons). We’ve recently begun raiding public libraries for more information on other cultures to explain how the same features of climate and geography that cause various foods to grow in a region also influence the people’s dress, architecture and customs.

## **At Home in Ohio.**

*Judy Ann Stevenson (OH) wrote:*

My main problem at first was managing my housework, canning, freezing, sewing, bread baking, time for me, and 1½ hours of school. After the first two weeks of a pre-ulcer stomach, I delegated more work to each child that rotates daily. They each already had daily chores and rooms to keep reasonable. I bought a spray bottle of cleaner. I poured two-thirds out and diluted the rest with water. They don’t mind cleaning the bath, kitchen, splattered walls, floors and messes. I don’t mind if they do either! Also vacuuming, dusting and some ironing are done by them. On the days I clean (whenever I get to it), they have the day off.

Our school starts at 10 a.m. Most of the time the kids have completed half their work before that, but I am unavailable. I do my own chores. For 1½ hours I am in constant use for their educational needs. Then Matthew usually fixes lunch, but the others are beginning to do that, too. Sometimes after lunch we have discussions about science, health, electronics, or motors. On the latter the boys talk, I listen. They are the teachers, and I try to grasp their unknown-to-me vocabulary of such topics. Each evening I am their *TV*. Carl says I am better than *TV*, because his imagination creates the scenes I have read. Yes, I read 2 to 3 hours almost nightly. Don’t tell the kids about the education they are receiving without their knowledge! I love to read aloud and must say that is one talent I have that school didn’t destroy.

Three other families have received permission in this county to teach their

children at home, all for religious reasons. Two more that I know of will apply next year. I was first and the others saw it in the papers.

## **And B.C.**

*From Terry Faubert (B.C.):*

One of the neatest things I've found about home "teaching" is how much I've learned about the world and how it functions. Jody's curiosity and probing have awakened questions in me that have long remained unanswered. Just how exactly does a zipper work? And what is a comet?! And why don't spiders stick to their own webs?! Three months ago I couldn't answer any of those, but now I can, and so much more. My knowledge seems to be increasing so that it's really a joke to say that I'm teaching him at home. We're learning together—as much outside our home as in it.

Once a week we try to go swimming, or biking, or skating. Jody has a two hour introduction to music class once a week in which he gets to use the recorder and ukulele. I "teach" kinder gym one morning a week, and Jody spends one or two mornings per week doing gym, art, or drama at an alternative school here (Sundance) which is very supportive of home "teaching."

All of that more than fills up our time. It's so nice to have the flexibility to drop everything and go kite-flying when the weather is right and to be able to take advantage of the many resources available. The Art Gallery has fantastic "hands-on" kids' days, the nature center has microscopes available for use, the museum here is excellent and free, and of course, what would we do without the library?

Sundance School has been helpful too—Jody enjoys the activities he does there, they've provided us with some good books, we've met interesting people, plus, of course, they provide us with a legal cover (I'm not sure how necessary that is, but feel a bit vulnerable since the government supplements my income). Sundance is your basic ungraded, non-competitive free school. The children are in "family groupings" of twenty kids, aged five to twelve, and choose which of five "offerings" they want to go to each hour. But somehow the social life is very destructive. That surprises and baffles me. I'm beginning to wonder if perhaps the mere fact of having 100 children together in one place is unnatural and causes negative behavior. Whatever the

reason, Jody has had more children do “mean things” to him there than in the many and varied contacts he’s had previously with children of all ages. While I don’t think one morning a week will have too much impact, I would like to convince Jody to spend that time elsewhere. Right now he’s really into it; after Christmas, or rather during the holidays, I intend to raise it again.

Jody has already wiped out any fears I had that he might not learn things on his own. Several weeks ago he asked me to show him how to print small letters (he could read them but had only formed capitals). I was in the middle of something, so I printed the alphabet on his blackboard and went back to it. A good half-hour later, Jody called me to see what he had done. I was astounded—he had copied the whole thing, every letter perfectly done! Then, for about a week and a half, he seemed to have some sort of inner need to write out the alphabet five or so times a day. He would sometimes sit and copy it three times, using a different color for each alphabet, add his name and a kiss and a hug, fold it all up, put it in an envelope, put on his mailman’s hat and deliver it to me. I marveled at how different his approach was to that of someone forced to practice their printing.

Science is something else Jody loves. Playing with magnets, using a magnifying glass, doing experiments, are some of his favorite activities. This past summer we were privileged to have a tiger swallowtail butterfly emerge from a found chrysalis, to watch a tent caterpillar spin a cocoon and emerge a moth, and to have at one time, two newts, a tree frog, a toad, and a frog stay at our house. All were carefully cared for a few weeks and released in a sanctuary.

Every month we focus on a country—finding it on the globe, cooking some of its food, visiting a restaurant, getting out a couple of books on it from the library, and doing anything else that seems relevant. What an enjoyable way to learn!

There are about a half-dozen home schooling families that I’m aware of in Victoria. I’m trying to pull together a meeting for mid-November—a support group would sure be nice, for kids as well as parents. I’ll let you know what happens.

## **Reading versus Doing**

*Kyle Shumate (VA) wrote:*

Unfortunately, my husband and I don't see eye to eye on the homeschooling issue. We began talking one evening about the upcoming school year. My husband started going on and on about how our daughter (5½) just "isn't doing anything. She should be reading," and so on. For the hundredth time, I tried to explain my views on what "learning" is, but to no avail. Her accomplishments at her tender age should be listed as: she says a most beautiful blessing at every meal, she's open and honest, she's loving and sensitive, she shows such love and patience with her "terrific two's" sister. They share a relationship that's almost unbelievable. At least it is to my schooling friends.

I tried to explain that her achievements should not be how well she can read or memorize, following everyone else, raising her hand; "book learning," so to speak. The discussion became hot and heavy, and I decided it was time to change the subject.

"Let's talk about our dream house that we want to build," I said. I suggested that we go to the library and begin learning all about building a house, solar heating, organic gardening, etc., etc. "Oh, Kyle" he said in exasperation. "We just can't get much from reading books. You have to get out there and do it!" I smiled as I saw the light bulb click over his head!

## On Questions

*Christine Hilston (OH) sent this quote from editor Robert Rodale in Organic Gardening, 10/82:*

When you are in school, you are asked the questions, and are expected to be able to find the answers. Presumably, when you are sufficiently filled up with correct answers, you are educated, and then released.

I now believe, though, that real learning occurs when you become able to ask important questions. Then you are on the doorstep of wisdom, because by asking important questions you project your mind into the exploration of new territory. In my experience, very few people have learned how important is the asking of good questions, and even fewer have made a habit of asking them. Even in my own case, had to wait until I'd almost totally forgotten the experience of schooling to be able to switch my mind into the asking as well as the answering mode.



## From Revised “Fail”

*Some more quotes from the revised How Children Fail (See GWS #27; available here for \$5.35 + postage):*

It is just as true of intelligence as it has always been true of school subjects that teaching—“I know something you should know and I’m going to try to make you learn it”—is above all else what prevents learning. We don’t have to make human beings smart. They are born smart. All we have to do is stop doing the things that make them stupid.

I now realize that when we keep trying to find out what our students understand we are more likely than not to destroy whatever understanding they may have. Not until people get very secure in their knowledge and very skillful in talking about it—which rules out almost all young children—is there much point in asking them to talk about what they know, and how they know they know it. The closest we can come to finding out what children really know—and it’s not very close—is to watch what they do when they are free to do what interests them most.

If the schools could only learn to recognize, to value, and to foster courage in children, a great many of their most serious problems, not just of learning but also of discipline, would be well on the road toward a solution.

## Natural Praise

*To a mother who was concerned about her daughter’s addiction to schoolwork and praise, Donna wrote:*

If she likes to work out of workbooks, let her, and answer her questions if she has them, but leave it at that. As long as she’s enjoying herself, great. If she really likes stars, stickers, etc., and she asks you for them, well, they don’t cost very much, and they are kind of cute, so let her buy them with her own money, and stick them on herself. I think she’ll get tired of them before long.

When she first tried to walk or talk, you didn’t worry about how much

praise or encouragement to give her. You we're excited about it, and that is natural praise, and she could see the results, which are more effective than anybody's praise.

So my advice on the praise question is, just be honest. If you like something, say so. If you don't like it, well, maybe say so, or wait for a good time to make a suggestion about it, or forget the whole thing and let time take its course.

## Talking to Yourself

*From "Go Ahead and Talk to Yourself," an article in the N.J. Unschooled Network newsletter, Issue #12:*

Under the pressure of trying to add a column of figures or find a phone number quickly, lots of people start talking to themselves. *Family Weekly* magazine recently ran a piece about a psychology professor who videotaped 38 preschoolers while they were putting a jigsaw puzzle together. The professor found that the children who talked to themselves did the puzzle faster than the others.

She believes that their mutterings as they work helped them to reinforce thoughts that they already had, but that weren't fully formed. She also added that this useful tool for thinking through a problem is trained out of children at school age; they're told not to talk while they work.

## A Mother Explores

*Kate Kerman (MI) wrote in Mothering Magazine, Spring, '82:*

I work on my own projects in and out of school times. Over the past two years I have felt a surge in my own creative forces and have happily explored things I never dared try before—drawing, poetry, songwriting, Tai Chi—and some I've wanted to try for years—playing the hammer dulcimer, typesetting and printing, and developing photographs. Often the kids join me as I learn new skills, but whether they participate directly or not, the important point is that I create space and time to keep my mind and body alive and learning so they can see learning as a lifelong engagement. In turn, as I live with my children I have at the same time been humbled and freed by their joyful curiosity and intense emotions as they reach out to establish themselves as

increasingly competent human beings.

## Outdoor Education

We have learned about several outdoor education programs that some *GWS* readers might want to take part in. Each of these, though different in structure, emphasizes learning from experience, as well as learning self-reliance and group co-operation.

Green Mountain Wilderness School, RR 1 Box 137, Starksboro VT 95487. Courses: Weekends, 4, 7, and 20 days. Backpacking, wilderness skills. Mixed ages.

Audubon Expedition Institute, 950 Third Av, New York NY 10022. Groups of 8–10. 3 week van trips, various parts of U.S. Camping, hiking, nature study, folklore. One trip is for 11–14-year-olds.

Rites Of Passage, 857 DeLong Av, Novato CA 94947; 415-892-5371. 1–2 weeks in wilderness. Some trips include several days in solitude. Separate programs for adult and youth. Draws on Native American traditions.

We're sure there must be other such programs—please tell us about any others you know of. We would particularly like to hear about any first-hand experiences you may have had with such programs.

And by the way, readers on the East coast should also find out about the Appalachian Mountain Club, 5 Joy St, Boston MA 02108. Its bulletin offers hundreds of events, many free or low-cost, including local afternoon hikes, bike trips, skiing, canoeing, and mountain climbing. I've gone on several of their hikes, and I think that even families with very young children would enjoy some of the outings.—DR.

## In the Park

*Deb Martin (IL) wrote in the 7/82 House Door:*

Until this summer, I never realized what terrific places parks are. My boys have had the opportunity to play with children of all ages and children who speak other languages. They have petted and played with other people's dogs, seen birds and squirrels and other wildlife. They have watched other people play volleyball, baseball and other games and learned the rules. They have watched older children do gymnastics on the parallel bars and other

equipment. They have seen people who use funny machines to find money in the grass. Once a week our park has performances of a musical group.

In frequent returns to the park our boys have gotten to know and see some of the same children over again, and they have made some good friends.

As a parent you may be wondering, how do you find the time to be there with your kids? I bring the writing and the reading I need to do, and I enjoy getting it done outside while they are playing.

During the last week of school many of the schools brought their kids to the park for an end-of-year school picnic. On one of those days, a class of deaf children descended on the merry-go-round my two boys were on. Asher and Bryn saw for the first time that sign language is actually used, not just as something to be demonstrated (as on *Sesame Street*). Asher now really uses the sign for "Stop." That day my children were able to see how very different groups of children behave. The deaf children were quiet, both in sound and movement.

## On Car Trips

*From an article by Barbara Miller in the N.J. Unschooled Network, issue #13:*

### LEARNING ON A LONG CAR TRIP

Before the trip, I obtain the pertinent maps. Travel clubs such as AAA offer them free to members, and I get lots so we can feel free to write on them. The kids often act as navigators for me. Last year I asked them to select the route to Colorado. They were entirely in charge of the maps on the trip. They got us there. Our only mishap was a crazy road which dwindled to nothing in the wilds of West Virginia in a blizzard. Although it was plenty scary, we'll treasure that experience for a long time.

While we're driving, the job of map marking rotates among the kids. We all watch the magic marker make progress across the state as the miles go by. And then at a meal stop, comes the astounding experience of inking in our tracks on the national map. A trip takes on a new perspective when compared to our vast country.

We often study the map to see who can most accurately predict our arrival time at various points. Using a watch with a second hand, kids can perform some experiments involving the relationship between time, speed, and distance. For instance, with the driver maintaining 55 mph, they can see how long it takes to cover the distance from one mile marker to the next. A good game we play uses a national map and allows one child to be quizmaster. Our quizmaster selects each contestant and poses a question, such as “What state is south of Georgia?” or “Name the states that border Nevada.”

We also enjoy the old “States and their Capitals” game or taking turns naming the states to see if we can get all fifty. We have a running map game we’ve played for over a year. We keep a small U.S. map in the car and color in each state as we spot the license plate. So far we’ve gotten all but seven states. The kids keep expense records for me and this is important when you have to travel cheaply. On our recent trip to Florida, the boys calculated we spent \$104.60 to travel the 1087 miles. They kept track of our gas mileage, and found that using the air conditioning lowered our mileage by about .25 mpg.

The kids love learning songs like “Dixie” when we’re in the South, and “Mississippi Mud” as we cross that river, etc. Recently my seven-year-old told me an involved dream plot which lasted non-stop from Washington, D.C., to the Jersey border. We had a wonderful time and of course we would never have had the time to indulge in that experience at home. One of the nice things about being sealed together for hours in a car is that you have lots of time to communicate with each other.

## **Problem Solving**

*From an article “How to Teach Problem Solving” by Marilyn Burns, (the author of The I Hate Mathematics! book) in Arithmetic Teacher, 2/82:*

Making proficiency at doing arithmetic with paper and pencil the major concern of elementary mathematics is absurd. As the priority, it makes no sense in terms of our responsibility of preparing children for adult life.

When do you use arithmetic in your daily life, outside of classroom

responsibilities that stem from teaching computation? When teachers attending workshops are asked to answer this question, their responses usually include the following situations: when I balance my checkbook; when I am in the supermarket keeping note of how much I am spending; when I need to know how much wallpaper, or carpet, or floor covering I need; when I am figuring the tip to give in a restaurant; when I want to know what mileage I'm getting with my car; and when deciding how long I need to bake a roast or turkey. When asked to list all the different methods for doing arithmetic, these same respondents give answers that usually fall in these categories: with a calculator, with paper and pencil, mentally, using some manipulative. Finally, when these teachers review their first responses and note the method they usually use to do the arithmetic in each of the instances, the answers again show a consistency. Using a calculator or doing arithmetic mentally are the two most consistently used methods; paper and pencil are not usually resorted to. Why then should children be spending the major portion of their mathematical time in school practicing what will be of little use to them as adults?

What are the problem-solving skills that we need to be teaching? A look at problems as they appear in real life helps in considering that question. In real-life problems, you are rarely given all the information you need in one tidy package; you usually have to collect the data, and often from a variety of sources. Only rarely is there only one possible method or only one plausible solution that emerges from real-life problems; usually you choose one from several viable possibilities. You don't always know for sure if the solution you choose is the "right" or "best" one; it may be only later that you can evaluate your choice. Sometimes you never find out for sure; life has no answer book.

The brain is an active organ, seeking to glean understanding from the information it receives, often from complicated and chaotic information. The brain is not a sponge like, passive organ. Nor does it learn in predetermined sequences as stimulus-response psychology suggests. As explained by Leslie Hart in his book *How The Brain Works*, what the brain does is extract meaning out of confusion by looking for and recognizing patterns in the confusion. This process does not have to be taught; this is what the brain does, naturally and aggressively.

Putting this all together seems to prescribe a particular kind of classroom

setting: one where children are working together, encouraged to share their ideas with each other and with you, and dealing with concrete materials from which conceptual understandings can be created. (JH: In many school systems there are few if any such classrooms—which is another compelling reason for teaching children at home.)

## On Math

*Quote from homeschooling mother Carol Everett in the Anchorage Daily News, 10/4/82:*

One of the most exciting parts of teaching the kids is being able to capture the moment when Toby or Katy (who's 5) catch on. We can stop everything else and just build on that," says Carol.

"Katy learned odd and even numbers that way. We had gone over odd and even in the workbook and she had parroted answers back to me. But she really learned at lunch when she was making peanut butter and cracker sandwiches.

"She paired up all the crackers and there was one left. I asked her to count up the crackers by twos, and the ninth one which was left over, she said, was the odd one. She was excited and ran through numbers up to 100 telling me which was odd and which was even," Carol recalls.

"The excitement was there. When it clicks we build on it. You can't always program those times.

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*Margaret Viola (CA) wrote:*

My seven-year-old last week was adding some two-column addition. I had never seen him do this before, and all his answers were right, so I asked him how he was doing it. He explained, for example, to add  $27 + 25$ , just count by tens from 27, to 37, to 47, then add 5 to 47 to get 52. I have no idea where he learned to count by tens. Today, however, he was adding some larger numbers and having difficulty. I mentioned casually that I could show him another way, if he wanted. He agreed, and I showed him two-column addition, explaining tens and ones with the use of some montessori equipment I've had stored in the closet (just in case anyone ever asks for my help!) He finished up perfectly, saying, "thanks. It's much easier now that

you showed me another way.”

(JH: When I have to add two 2-digit numbers, I always add the tens first.)

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*Cathy Earle (CA) wrote:*

A family I know just got an Apple computer. The parents bought a math drill program—one that presents math problems and waits for the student to put in the answer. The younger boy, age 7, was using the computer. The program presented this problem:  $6 + 2 =$

Cory put his finger on the “6” key, then counted right 2, then pressed that key (which, of course, was the “8” key). Cory used this method to solve each addition problem, and the same method, counting left, to solve subtraction problems.

At first Cory’s dad said, “Hey, that’s cheating.” But then he said, “Oh, well, Cory’s got to be pretty smart to have realized his method would work.” Yes, Cory is smart. He also understands what addition and subtraction really mean!

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*From another California reader:*

When Zane (6) counted to 500 last summer, we went to the bank and got 500 new, shiny pennies as a reward. That has been one of the best investments in toys ever. There are so many things you can do with imagination and 500 pennies. Great for math, of course, and drawing pictures. And so much fun to walk on and listen to, shuffle, etc.

## **Starting to Read**

*Kathy Mingl (IL) wrote:*

J.P. has just learned lately (day before yesterday, actually) that he can read. He’s not sure just what to do with it, yet, but he’s intrigued with the idea that he can sound out and decode those baffling squiggles that are all over the place, that grownups somehow come up with stories and other interesting stuff from. He only recently became able to write, too—I don’t say he learned, exactly. He’s been scribbling and making uncertain letter shapes up till now, sometimes backwards, sometimes right, sometimes



remarkably Hebraic-looking, but suddenly one day I told him to write some labels for his toy-shelf boxes, and spelled out the words for him, (as I have been all along), and he printed them right out, perfectly. There you are.

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And from Denise Hodges (IL): As far as I know, Lucas has not read anything since we took him out of school in April. He looks at books. I don't know if he reads them. I once asked him to read to me, but he declined. A few days ago, he discovered with great excitement that he could record things on his tape recorder (not just play tapes). He sat down and read aloud a comic about Smokey the Bear about grade level 3—with no trouble at all. I was beaming all day and congratulating myself for my successful struggle against pushing him to read more.

## **Backward Letters**

*From Jeanne Gaetano (MD):*

Shortly after my first child was born, I was given a used port-a-crib which had previously belonged to my niece (now 5½). I placed my child in it for the first time and was startled to notice that the “crib toys” (plastic letters suspended on a metal wire between the bars on one side of the crib) read A-B-C. Which could only mean that on the inside—where my son was—they read: backwards C, backwards B, backwards A! I snapped the wire and removed the letters and thought no more about it, except to note to my husband that baby furniture is designed for parents, not babies.

That was more than two years ago. The other night, I was visiting a friend and her new baby. The baby was in a similar port-a-crib and it, too, had the backwards alphabet on the child's side! When I questioned my friend about it, she said that she hadn't noticed that before; the crib was a hand-me-down from her six-year-old cousin.

How many “dyslexics” do you think will be starting first grade this fall? How many of them spent their first year looking at a backwards alphabet?

## **Buying Second-Hand**

*From Jane Williams (CA):*

Katie is just 22-months, but I have been preparing myself and our home to be her learning center for more than a year now.

This past summer I have spent a great deal of time at flea markets, second-hand shops and garage sales. In a few short weeks I have amassed a great deal of material which will be available to Katie if and when she needs or wants it.

For me, the biggest treasures are books. Often I find books for 25¢ for hardback and 10¢ for paper. Some 14 of the books I have found: *The Harvard Classics*, *The Library of Entertainment* (between them they contain just about every major classical writer one might want). These 27 books coming from both volumes cost me \$2.70. I have also found some of the *Little House* books; Newberry and Caldecott award winners; *The Children's Dictionary*; books on science experiments to do in the home; *National Geographic* magazines (sometimes—for free); *Cricket* magazine (10¢ each); *How and Why* books; and the list goes on. If Katie is interested, the material is there, if not, there is no great monetary loss.

In addition, I have found hats for make-believe play (Indian headdresses, firefighter hats, cowboy hats, etc.). Games are available for a quarter or fifty cents each. I have found magnifying glasses, tissue slides of blood and plants for the microscope, magnets, and toys. I have found paints (acrylics and water colors), pastels, easels, canvasses, crayons, craft supplies, etc. From Creative Playthings I found for 10¢ an entire leather kit on constructing gears. For 50¢ I picked up an electronic circuit board. In all this shopping and browsing Katie accompanies me. And together we have a marvelous time.

## **Bargains in Electronics**

One of the best places to shop for a number of different kinds of equipment, including cameras, small computers, and portable stereo tape recorders, is the entertainment section of the Thursday editions of the *New York Times*. Here a number of the largest discount stores in New York City advertise their sales, and their prices are lower than I have been able to find anywhere else.

They are a particularly good place to shop for small radios and tape recorders of the kind that the Sony Walkman made famous. Of these, the best I have seen and heard are the ones made by Aiwa, which in design and

quality of sound seem to me well ahead of the competition. Their latest model is the HS-J02, which combines an AM/FM radio with a stereo cassette player and recorder. The quality of the sound, both on FM and when playing cassettes, is remarkably good, and the small stereo microphone, which can be attached to the tape recorder itself or detached and clipped to a pocket, collar, etc., is also good, excellent for speech and not bad even for music. It is by far the cheapest and most compact complete music system one could find. Its list price is something over \$200, but the ad for Camera World And Sound (104 W. 32 St. NYC 10016 - Mail Order Dept. at G.P.O. Box 2223, NYC 10016) offered it for \$140, plus shipping cost (around \$5). At that price it is a real bargain. Any comparable music system, large or small, that was significantly better would cost at least twice as much. And it has the advantage of being portable—it can run for quite a number of hours on only two AA batteries. As I have perhaps said before, for people learning *a* musical instrument it is very helpful to tape much of their own playing, so that they can hear what they are really doing and not just what they think or hope they are doing (the difference is sometimes *a* little discouraging, as I have found many times). This Aiwa machine is by far the cheapest way I know to do this and still get reasonably accurate sound.

Also advertised in that sale were *a* number of the small computers, at very low prices; an Olivetti Lexi kon 83 Electric Typewriter for \$200, the lowest price I have ever seen for *a* typewriter using *a* ball element, which has the great advantage that little children can't get the keys tangled up if they hit more than one key at *a* time; and an electronic typewriter with *a* 16-space automatic correction for \$360, again much the lowest price I have seen. Two other companies advertising much of this same equipment, as well as cameras, at very low prices are Stereo Warehouse and Grand Central Cameras. As I said, the Thursday *New York Times*, if you can get it, is well worth looking at if you are in the market for such equipment.—JH

## Freebees

*From Michele Sokoloff:*

I work for an educational magazine. One of my tasks is to locate “valuable” freebees for teachers and parents. The response to these materials have been terrific with many people finding them quite useful.

Some examples include: using the newspaper for learning, free books offered by publishers, a solar data bank, free documentary films on American lifestyles and other topics, materials on the preservation of the sea, free slide shows, and many more.

I would like to share descriptions and addresses of these ever-growing free resources with home schoolers. Please send \$3.50 to cover Xeroxing and postage to me at: 502 Woodside Av., Narberth PA 19072; (215-664-2117).

## **Museum Catalogs**

*From Anne MacLeod in Nova Scotia:*

Museum shops put out gorgeous catalogues and they are a treasure trove of learning resources. There are generally quite a few items that appeal to children in the line of books, games, puzzles, kits, and more that are well made, aesthetically pleasing, and custom-made to instill wonder and help bring about learning. The areas and subjects covered have a very wide scope, and the prices are nearly always reasonable. The following places will send you a catalogue: Metropolitan Museum Of Art, 255 Gracie Station, New York NY 10028 (\$1); The National Trust For Historic Preservation, Preservation Shops, Dept. D, 1600 H Street NW, Washington DC 20006 (50¢); The Museum Of Modern Art, Box 1220, Radio City Station, New York NY 10019 (\$1); The Smithsonian Institution, PO Box 2456, Washington DC 20013 (\$1); The New York Botanical Gardens, Bronx NY 10458 (Free).

## **His Own Magazine**

*From Craig Conley (2248 Cherrydale, Baton Rouge, LA 70808), a 15-year-old homeschooler now at Louisiana State University:*

I first got interested in writing newspapers five years ago when I was present at the collapse of an historic old hotel in Joplin, Missouri. I wrote an article about the history of the hotel and how it collapsed, trapping four men under the rubble. I added other articles about what my family was doing, and what was going on in town. Soon I had a whole newspaper.

At first the paper was written by hand and sent to my grandparents. Then I made a really good issue, typed it, and sent copies to relatives and friends. So

many people subscribed that *Craig's Times* became a monthly newsletter.

Now my paper is read by 40 families, in fifteen different states. It is called *Craig's Quarterly* and each issue ranges from twelve to thirty pages. It contains book reviews, news articles, art work and stories. Subscribers send in articles they have written.

Each issue covers a wide area of interest, ranging from computers, dance, music, film and theatre, to pets and travel.

I think writing a paper is an excellent way to keep in touch with people. Since our family has moved a lot, this is important to us.

Reporting on activities also is good training for life. It makes me more observant and analytical. I try to look at people I know and new people I meet as possible subjects for an interview and sometimes this leads me to ask questions I might never ask otherwise. The most fascinating people are really in your own backyard.

Now that *Craig's Quarterly* has a much broader readership, I try to write articles that will be of interest to everyone. Each issue contains many contributions from all types of people, on all sorts of subjects. For instance, a ten-year-old reader in Joplin, Mo., sends in articles about baseball, and a subscriber in Eugene, OR, who enjoys gourmet cooking, contributes a "Good Food" page.

I'm interested in all aspects of theater, of film making, writing, art, dance and music. The common denominator seems to be communication. *Craig's Quarterly* is my party line to as many people as I can find who want to communicate their interests, too.

If you would like to contribute anything, John, or if any of your readers would, please let me know. As time goes on, the writing of *Craig's Quarterly* becomes more important to me and I think I will continue publishing it for quite a while.

## **The Bergmans at Home**

*From an article written by Craig, published in the Baton Rouge State Times, 9/7/82:*

Cathy Bergman, president of the National Association Of Home Educators and editor of the *Home Educator Newsletter*, was taught at home for three years, along with eight other children in her family.

She entered college at the age of 14 and was teaching college classes when she was 19.

“Thirteen years ago, when my mother decided to take us out of public school, we thought she was nuts. We are conditioned to believe that the only place you will learn anything is in a school situation. We children agreed with my mother that we would go ahead and try school at home. We hoped that she would change her mind in a few months so that we could go back to school and not be illiterate. We didn’t really like going to school, but we liked to learn.

So we embarked on our home schooling experiment. “The neighbors and school board also thought my mother was crazy,” Bergman continued, “because at the time no one else that we knew of was into home educating.

“In the middle of the school year we went on a three-week trip to Mount Rushmore, and we couldn’t have done that if we had been in school. We found there were many advantages in staying at home and being with your family.

“Many teen-agers think they wouldn’t want to spend time with their sisters and brothers. They don’t get to know their siblings. They might find out that they share interests.

“When I started home schooling,” she said, “I was 11 and my brother was 8. We really didn’t know anything about each other and fought all the time. It took us a while to get to know each other and for me to find out that he was a really neat person. Now my brother is one of my best friends.”

Bergman went on to say, “So many times when you’re in high school you’re required to take classes that will not do anything for you. In a home school situation you can follow your own ambitions and get so far ahead at what you want to do because you have the time.”

Bergman said that as a teenager her goal in life was to be a ballerina. “I had to practice six hours a day in order to be a ballerina, which I couldn’t do if I was in school. In a home school I could put all my

energies into dance. That doesn't mean I didn't do anything else. You are inspired when you have so much free time to learn and grow. Your interest will lead to another interest. My ballet led to reading about ballet, and that reading gave me history. Reading that history led me to study great figures in art."

She noted that all her brother wanted to do was build gazebos. In order to do that he had to learn math to measure, fractions and angles in order to bevel a board, and construction so that once he had it built, it wouldn't fall into the river.

## **From English Unschoolers**

*A letter from Julie Duff in Gloucestershire, England, in H.O.U.S.E. Door:*

We recently had the wonderful opportunity of having Deb and Tim Martin (IL) stay with us for a short while here in Gloucestershire. It was really exciting for us, as quite besides the pleasure of getting to know Deb and Tim, it also gave us the marvelous opportunity of finding out about home-schoolers in the States.

I am quite sure that Debbie and Tim will forgive me if I tell you that our meeting also provided a basis for a lot of good-natured laughter over cultural differences. Not only did we discover that Americans really do eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches—but Debbie and Tim actually brought a large tub with them in their suitcase. My two children thoroughly enjoyed them, by the way. On the other hand, Debbie was much amused by my fridge. I think it's quite big. However, I was assured that it was unbelievably tiny. Debbie really wondered how I coped! This led to a discussion on sizes of food packages. Malcolm and I find it impossible to imagine buying a gallon container of milk—we buy one or two pints! Then there were the church bells—but that's another story. So you see it was all "home education"—in the truest sense, "people education."

To be more serious for a moment—it is, I believe, very valuable for all countries with "alternative education" to link up in some way as, obviously, world-wide organizations carry a lot of weight and impact, including great moral support. Exchanges of views in newsletters is

one way—and if any of you would like to write for our *Education Otherwise* magazine, send it to me here in England (Has field Court, Has field, Gloucestershire). I know our members will be delighted to write for H.O.U.S.E and, of course, lots of us take *GWS*.

Now about home education here in Britain. Each county has a Local Education Authority. Each L.E.A. ensures that every child in its area is “educated.”

Although current court cases seem to prove that “no timetable,” “no curriculum” and free learning are all acceptable, if your kids cannot read and write you come up against a lot of trouble. So “free” learning is OK as long as the children show an inclination to read and write! Don’t forget our children start school at four and a half to five years and are taught to read at once—so here the area of battle for home-schoolers who wish to let kids go at their own pace begins!

Fortunately, lack of funds prevents L.E.A.’s in some cases from doing too much about us—but some are bloody and give our members a lot of flack. We have about 750 member families in *Education Otherwise*.

## **College Board Exams**

*From an article by Jean Shaffer in the May, 1982 Cruising World:*

Many colleges require an SAT score for entrance. A correspondence school graduate will not have taken this test in the course of his studies. We found, however, that information about where and when these tests are to be given, as well as application forms, can be obtained at any high school. One needs only to mail in the form and fee to receive an entrance ticket, then be present at the appointed time and place to take the test. The tests are given several times a year at selected locations, usually in larger cities.

## **Bilingual Family**

*Jane Merril Filstrup, a freelance writer, and her husband have been attempting to teach their children to be bilingual in French and English. Jane*



*sent us an article she wrote about the family in Wellesley Magazine, Summer '81, and tells us, "My children are now four, and, at that level, functionally bilingual." From her article:*

Chris's and my desire to rear our children to be bilingual stemmed from admiration for the language flexibility of students at the Tehran International School where we had taught in 1969-71. Half of the students even negotiated a dual curriculum in Persian and English, with, apparently, little strain and lots of personal and family satisfaction.

With the twins at the babbling stage, it seemed too soon. Then in conjunction with an article I was researching for *Parents Magazine* I visited several bilingual families. I learned that maintaining the "recessive" language required an artful blend of relaxation and self-discipline on the part of the adult speaker, but was greatly rewarding. The most exotic situation was a Japanese mother and Yiddish-speaking Jewish-American father. They interested me particularly because their trilingualism was deliberately constructed, as ours would be.

The father, although he had spoken Yiddish since childhood, had no connections with other Yiddish speakers. Mr. Schwartzman put me on the spot: If I was seriously attracted to bringing up our children in plural languages, what was I waiting for? I bemoaned my inadequate vocabulary, barren in the area of the concrete and household words where small children operate. He shoved aside my doubt: "I keep a dictionary by my bed. You can do the same."

From then on I did. How silly at first, speaking a "foreign language" to toddlers, but in a few months the children were answering me in French, and the reverse would have seemed odd. In a few months more, Emma and Burton were mastering some new words I took from the dictionary faster than I was, and were reinforcing my vocabulary from time to time. At three, they greatly favor English, yet their understanding of French equals their passive English. Their speech is a porphyry of English mass encrusted with French words and phrases. When given the definite article for an object, they respond with its French name. We are proud of our children's bilingual skills, which

they are achieving naturally to date. Yet we know it is an extra demand we place on them, and will modify our experiment if they show signs of stress.

Mme. Genevieve Moesle, recently from Normandy, conducts a cooking lesson in my kitchen every Sunday noon. While the others are making “oeufs en neige,” or “poulet chasseur,” I bring her my dozen or so translation problems of the week.

Despairing last year of the immigration problem and cost of bringing over an au pair from France, I placed a classified in both *France-Amerique* and a Montreal daily for a francophonic mother’s helper for any duration. Chantal, the vivacious Quebecoise who joined us, gives us an average of two hours a day of French babysitting.

Possessing both a sense of adventure and a fondness for children, she is like a sister to Emma and Burton, while, outside the home, she profits from the chance to see the world and improve her English. Chantal, as much as possible, emphasizes standard French with us, though, of course, her accent has French-Canadian over tones. Since it will be much easier for our family to spend time later in Quebec than in France, we are very pleased to have Emma and Burton exposed to a French-Canadian. If a Professor Higgins detects this souvenir in their speech at some future date, so much the better.

They like dictionaries no matter how small the pictures and are more apt to pore over them for many minutes than any other type of book. *The Cat In The Hat Dictionary In French* (Random House, 1964), Rene Guillot’s *16 Images Et Mots* (Larousse, 1970) and *Mon Larousse En Images* (Larousse, 1956) are all excellently bound and printed and “grow with” a child. Flipping to any page of any one of the three a child will find an object, action, or event represented that is apropos of his or her life at the moment.

French children start on “bandes dessinees” (comics) at a younger age than do Americans. Emma and Burton have memorized their favorite among the lower-grade books, Walt Disney’s *Uncle Donald et ses neveux* (Deux Coqs d’Or), whence Burton became Uncle Donald for Halloween.

We have a number of Babar adventures. Babar is so popular in the American nursery that the Babar books are the one segment of Emma's and Burton's French cultural experience that is continually and specifically reinforced in their surroundings. We stop to wave hello to the stuffed Babar in the shop window and receive Babarmotif greeting cards from grandma.

Certain select titles for preschoolers, mostly dictionaries and Babars, are imported and kept in stock in the United States by international book dealers like Rizzoli's at 712 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan and the Continental Book Company at 11-03 46th Avenue, Long Island City, NY 11101. But to acquire other French books is a bother, an expense, and a time-consuming process.

Fortunately, there are exciting developments in picture books closer at hand, in French Canada. Serving as a guide are Notable Canadian Children's Books 1976 and its 1978 Supplement, prepared and distributed by the National Library of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N4. One can also join the Communication-Jeunesse, 445 Rue St. Francois-Xavier, Montreal 028, Quebec H2Y 2T1 and receive Lurela, their journal on Quebec's children's literature. From a French bookseller in Toronto, Editions Champlain, 107 Church St., Toronto M5C 2G5, we blanket order anything new and good for preschoolers.

For familiar songs we like the Folkways' *Chantons en francais* in two volumes, and *Sing Children Sing, Songs of Francerom Caedmon*. Our happiest musical discovery is the six-volume, wildly fanciful *Chante les mots* (RCA, A. Colin Bourrelier).

## **An Oregon Family**

*From Lezlie Long (OR):*

In the on-going saga of the Knife (*GWS* #25, 28), may I inject my two cents' worth? Ken and I have always expected our children to be civilized human beings and this includes not interrupting conversations. At the dinner table or at restaurants, from the age of about two years, the kids are expected to cut up their own food and pour their own drink from the water pitcher. I've been pregnant or nursing for the last six years (by the time you read this I'll

have four kids), and I simply am not Wonder Woman! The kids do things for themselves or they don't get done.

You have discussed artists' supplies in detail, which is good, and the use of sharp knives, which are much safer than dull or semi dull. May I point out (and possibly throw out!) that time-honored piece of equipment, the "Children's Scissors"? A good sharp pair of four-inch Fiskar's (these have rounded tips) are much safer and tidier and less frustrating than those dull, difficult-to-open-and-shut "Children's Scissors." My three- and five-year-olds have never had their hands get in the way of their scissors when using the Fiskars as they were continually doing when using "Children's Scissors." I gave some simple instructions on how to use the full length of the scissors when cutting to keep them from getting dull, how to walk with scissors, hand them to others and keep them out of the baby's reach, and now I do not have to hover over the kids when they cut. The only bad experience I've had was when Robert (5) cut 3-year-old Rebecca's hair to pixie length. Since he doesn't want to lose his scissors forever he has agreed to leave Rebecca's hair alone.

Living with Robert has been such a fascinating experience. Do you know what the insides of a nine volt battery look like? I do. Robert showed me. He has showed me the innards of a lot of things that I didn't even know had innards. Robert went with me when he was two to help deliver a baby (an emergency). He can give you a detailed description of the event now even though he was four and a half the first time we even talked about it.

Robert's dad does electrical work, plumbing, carpentry, welding, wood working, masonry, auto mechanics, refrigeration, gun-smithing, and more. He has six big tool boxes stuffed with tools. Robert can tell you the tools and what they are used for even though his dad has never sat down and talked about them.

Robert is the go-getter in the family. When he was two he took off to the store to get some eggs because I mentioned we were out. That was when I started taking him all over town so if he left at least he could find his way home (that only helped my nerves a little bit, a two-year-old is still a two-year-old).

Robert has been jumping off things since before he could walk. Last summer he was going to jump off the 13-foot-high chicken coop. I asked him to please don't because it was nothing but rocks below and I didn't want him

hurt. He found something taller to jump off. He also likes to bail out of swings (shudder) and run the fastest and the strongest.

He's extremely proud of the scar he has from the stitches used to mend his arm where he fell off and subsequently got run over by the three wheel motorcycle. The poor emergency room nurse had to tell him what every piece of equipment was and how it was used and what the charts meant and how to run the radio, etc. And he looks forward to his next trip!

I get blow-by-blow accounts of what happened at church and what the lesson was about and who slugged who, etc. Sometimes I feel like locking myself in the bathroom for some peace and quiet except there is no door, so that avenue of escape is gone.

Math is Robert's great love, but if you ask him any questions he plays dumb. It's like numbers are his own very private thing and you may keep out please! We scrounged some brand new textbooks (K-4th grade, in math, spelling, reading, English, social studies, science) from the trash at school—Robert climbed in the dumpsters for me. He then sat down to read a wordless kindergarten math book to Richard (2) and Rebecca. Some of the concepts he was telling them were second grade level and yet I never would have known he knew them if I hadn't eaves—dropped on the conversation.

## Little Kids & Housework

*By Susan Richman in the Western PA Homeschoolers newsletter (Fall '82):*

Our 2-year-old Jacob is generally in on *everything*, often quite literally on top of me or my 5-year-old Jesse. Sometimes this can be quite frustrating, but usually we do find ways to manage, *with* his enthusiastic presence. We're also certainly known for taking advantage of Jacob's naps for special projects, quiet activities, things we're *sure* we don't want messed up. Mostly I'm amazed at how much Jacob is absorbing about what we're doing. He's fully involved in Jesse's current aluminum can recycling project, often being the first to point out a can tossed somewhere, saying, "Maybe *that* can be 'luminum, maybe that can not be rusty." He knows about acrylic paints (and that *he* now owns all our tempera!) and-seed mosaics, spouts names of dinosaurs appropriately, loves the characters in *Dr. Doolittle* (our current bedtime book), helped out with a recent papier-

mâché piñata, always is in on bread making, etc., etc. I think these young siblings gain enormously from being able to participate with the older ones, difficult as their passionate presence (and Jacob is VERY passionate!) can sometimes be. Jesse has also become adept at sometimes solving Jacob dilemmas himself. seeing solutions I wouldn't have thought of. Perhaps that's a real life skill that is more important than most of the paper-and-pencil tasks that schools set for children. I don't think having toddlers about is an insurmountable problem, but it does require full measures of our creativity.

As for housekeeping (my years' and years' nemesis.), I think it's most important to involve the children in upkeep. Participating *with* them in daily jobs seems to me more positive and effective than nagging, yelling, or assigning jobs. Probably most home schoolers do *not* have neat, showplace homes, though. Our homes are our work areas, our space to use and live in. I've always thought the most fascinating homes were those with great evidence of full living going on—half-completed projects in process, musical instruments about, art materials set out (translation: play-dough in the rug), books everywhere, new block buildings gracing living room rugs, etc., etc. The more boring homes, to me (and I don't think it's just that I'm jealous .) are those of some acquaintances who work full-time and send their kids out to babysitters—who literally never LIVE in their own homes. I think it's important perhaps to keep this perspective, remember where our values are, and *aren't*. We've chosen to have our children about with us most of the time, and it's not fair to then turn and act as if we wished our homes looked like no child's foot ever crossed our thresholds.

Also I do think children can be helped to see the need for places for things, the need for cleanup, so that more or different projects can then be started, or so prized collections of butterflies or postage stamps don't get wantonly ground into the flooring. Kids can be helped to organize their things meaningfully so that they're accessible (and no toy box does that, even if stashing everything in sight into one of the things does clear the floor a bit).

Jesse now times me with a sand egg timer for my new whirlwind

bathroom cleanup that I try to do every other day. Its fun for him, he's learning about timing devices, I zoom about with his encouragement and cheers. He's even beginning to notice when the bathroom isn't neat.

We sometimes play spur-of-the moment games to clean up a particularly messy room. I might write down all the needed jobs on slips of paper, shuffle them in a basket, then Jesse and I get to pick slips to see which jobs we'll do. Often Jesse can read these simple directions if I use words he knows and keep the format the same each time (e.g. "Put away the books," "Put away the dinosaurs"). So I suppose I could say these are actually "reading lessons" (though we don't, we're just trying to see the floor again). Or sometimes we see if we can neaten a room by the time a favorite record is over (our "music appreciation" lesson slips in. ). Sometimes we even sweep while listening to the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" and laugh over the toys that our broom tries to gobble up—Jesse must race frantically to put them away first. "I Spy" becomes a cleanup game —"I spy something red, metal, with 4 wheels and a hitch," and Jesse or Jacob scurry to vroom a tractor back to its garage. I can sometimes manage this while simultaneously washing dishes. Speaking of dishes, Jacob's current favorite helping method there is to sit directly on the drain board, feet in the sink: gleefully pouring and-rinsing and soaping—keeps the floor a lot drier, and even seems a touch safer than him standing on a progressively more slippery high-chair next to me.

I'm sure all families have found many other ways to involve children in housework fairly happily—please share your thoughts with all of us!

## **African "Discipline"**

*From Contact: The First Four Minutes by Leonard Zunin, M.D. (Nash Publishing, Los Angeles, 1972):*

When a person (among the Babemba tribes of southern Africa) acts irresponsibly or unjustly, he is placed in the center of the village, alone and unfettered. All work ceases, and every man, woman and child in the village gathers in a large circle around the accused

individual. Then each person in the tribe, regardless of age, begins to talk out loud to the accused, one at a time, about all the good things the person in the center of the circle has done in his life time. Every incident, every experience that can be recalled with any detail and accuracy is recounted. All his positive attributes, good deeds, kindnesses and strengths are recited carefully and at length. No one is permitted to fabricate, exaggerate or be facetious about his accomplishments or the positive affect of his personality.

The tribal ceremony often lasts several days and does not cease until everyone is drained of every positive comment he can muster about the person in question. At the end, the tribal circle is broken, a joyous celebration takes place, and the person symbolically and literally is welcomed back into the tribe. I repeat, not a word of criticism about him or his irresponsible, anti-social deed is allowed. The person in the center, we can only suppose, experiences a variety of feelings about his misdeed, having been flooded with the charitable warmth of his acquaintances, friends, and loved ones. Perhaps this overwhelming positive bombardment not only strengthens his positive self-image, but also helps him choose to live up to the expectations of his tribe.

## Reversing Turner

As *GWS* readers know, California is one of the states in which people have found it easy to teach their children at home by registering their own homes as private schools. On my latest trip there I was told that a recent state survey showed there were over 600 private schools with six students or less. It's a safe bet that many or most of these are home schools.

But recently home schoolers have reported that school districts in Los Angeles and San Diego counties have been threatening to prosecute, and in at least one case actually prosecuting, these home schooling families, claiming that under California law their schools do not qualify as private schools, and in support of this claim citing the 1953 case of *People v. Turner* (121 C.A. 2d Supp 861; P.2d 685), about which we wrote in *GWS* 29. In this case the Superior Court of Los Angeles said that the Turner family could not teach their children at home because they did not qualify as a private school and because, not having teaching certificates, they could not qualify as private



tutors.

We have no idea why, given the existence of *Turner*, the California State Department of Education and many school districts in the state have in the past five or ten years allowed so many parents to register their homes as private schools. And we have no idea whether these recent attacks on home schooling in Los Angeles and San Diego counties will be ignored, or followed, by school districts in other parts of the state; in short, whether we are seeing the beginnings of a state-wide campaign against home schooling. Whether or not this is the case, we are going to have to find a way to overcome *Turner*. One way to do this would be to get the legislature to pass some law or resolution explicitly favoring home schooling (see article on this subject elsewhere in this issue). Another way is to prepare and take to the courts a case which can reverse *Turner*. I think there is a very good chance that this latter can be done.

We should note to begin with that in *Turner* the court did not think of itself as attempting to write new law or overturn old. Their ruling was what is often called “strict constructionist,” that is, an attempt to guess the legislature’s intention, in this case, what they had in mind about home schooling when they wrote the school attendance laws. The anti-*Turner* argument I put forward here is based on the claim, first, that they guessed badly, and second, that they ought not to have guessed at all.

In saying that they should not have guessed at all I draw on or appeal to a fundamental principle of Anglo-American law, one older and deeper than the Constitution and on which the Constitution itself rests, namely, that the law allows what it does not clearly forbid. In a free system of law and government we do not have to ask the government for permission to do everything we want to do. If the law does not say we can’t, then we can. The California statutes, like those of most states, do not explicitly allow home schooling, but they do not explicitly forbid it either. These statutes were designed to make sure that children were educated, not to prevent their parents from educating them. If, therefore, parents can find a way of educating their children at home which is not specifically forbidden by the statutes, they have a legal right to do so. It is not the proper business of the courts to deny such a right, and I think a strong case can be made that in doing so the *Turner* court made a serious error.

This argument becomes all the stronger when we consider the fact that for

the past ten years people in all parts of California have been teaching their own children by registering their homes as private schools. This has not been some kind of well-kept secret. On the contrary, these families have been widely publicized in all the media, and beyond that have received the full cooperation of the State Department of Education itself. For at least the past three or four years it must have been well known to the legislators of California that home schooling under the private school provisions of the law was widely practiced in the state. Yet they said nothing. We can only assume that they were willing to allow it to happen. To the argument that they have not specifically said that home schooling was legal, our proper answer is that they did not have to say so. All they had to do was not say it was illegal. Their silence gave consent.

The correct position for the Turner court to have taken was that taken by the court in the Giesy case in Virginia (*GWS* #11). Private schools being virtually unregulated in that state, the Giesy family was teaching their children at home by registering their home as a private school. The local school district took them to court, saying that their home was not really a school at all, but only a way of avoiding the compulsory school attendance laws. The court ruled in the Giesys' favor, saying that since the legislature had not said anything about what was or was not a private school, it was not the proper business of the court to take it upon itself to do so. But the Turner court chose instead to try to guess what the California legislature had had in mind about home schooling when it wrote the school laws, and its guess was that the legislature meant to say that families could not teach their children at home unless they had teacher's certificates. How did the court come to such a conclusion?

The California statutes say that children between the ages of six and sixteen shall attend public schools, with three exceptions: 1) "Children who are being instructed in a private full-time day school by persons capable of teaching ." 2) "Children who are mentally gifted. " (an exception that does not concern us here) 3) "Children not attending a private, full-time day school and who are being instructed in study and recitation ... by a private tutor or other person. (who) shall hold a valid State credential for the grade taught." The Turner family claimed that their children fell under the first exception. The court ruled, on the contrary, that they fell under the third exception, and that the family could not teach their own children because they did not have

the required State certificates. In so ruling the court argued that the legislature must have meant that parents wanting to teach their own children came under the third category, because why else would they have brought it up, who else could they possibly have had in mind?

The answer is that the legislature could very well have had in mind all those persons who earned money and in many cases made their living by teaching the children of other families, privately, and usually-in the families' own homes. This was what the word "tutor" was generally understood to mean when the statutes were written. It had that meaning during all the years (1930–45) in which I was growing up; when my friends got jobs as tutors, as many did, it meant that they earned money by privately teaching the children of other people. Since this was an established business, a way in which many people earned their living, it is reasonable that the legislature should have wanted to bring it under some kind of regulation, to protect the public from the possibility of being victimized by incompetent teachers. So the Turner court's argument that in naming-exception #3 the legislature could only have had would-be home schooling families in mind is clearly not necessarily true, and since the entire ruling rests on this argument, a strong case can be made that the ruling is in error.

In saying as it did that if people wanted to teach their own children they had to have valid State certificates for all the ages of all the children, the court was clearly imposing a requirement which was in the highest degree onerous and unreasonable. I do not know how many different certificates a person or family in California would have to have to teach a child from age six up to age sixteen, or how long it would take to acquire these certificates. For most parents to get such certificates would require not only that they pay the costs of attending some teacher's college for as much time as would be required, but also that they give up much or all of the money that they might otherwise be earning. This would add up to a sum of money that the vast majority of people could not possibly afford. And this requirement is all the more unreasonable and unfair since neither the legislature nor the Turner court itself said or implied in any way that only persons holding state certificates were competent to teach.

In their defense the Turner family said that it was unreasonable for the state to say that people not holding state certificates could teach in private schools but could not teach their own children. To this very sensible claim

the court presented two arguments. The first was that since people teaching in a private school would have other people—parents of students, administrators, other teachers, trustees, etc.—concerning themselves with their competence, the state could safely leave it up to them; in short, since others are watching to be sure nothing goes wrong, we don't have to watch. The other argument was the one we spoke of in our short article on this case in *GWS* 29, namely, that to satisfy itself that many individual parents were doing a good job of teaching their own children would put a difficult and unreasonable burden on the state. To these arguments there are several answers. One is that although private schools in general have a better track record than public schools, their mechanisms of control do not guarantee either competent teaching or effective learning; plenty of bad teachers teach in private schools, and plenty of children fail to learn there. As Judge Greaney pointed out in *Perchemlides*, when children fail in public schools the state does not pull them out; the same is true of California private schools. The state, in short, accepts a certain amount of risk and failure in schools private or public. Why should it hold home schoolers to a higher standard?

Beyond this, we can make two other points. Home schooling is no longer the unknown quantity that it may have appeared to the Turner court in the early 1950s. By now it has a track record, and a good one. The state has little reason, if any at all, to fear that children who learn at home are likely to grow up uneducated; the odds are that they will be better educated than most of the children who have come up through the state schools. Nor is it true anymore that people who want to teach their own children are going to be flying blind and alone, having to invent or discover every educational wheel for themselves. As every issue of *GWS* and many other home schooling publications clearly shows, there is a very large and growing network of resources and support growing up within the home schooling movement. Indeed, any family teaching their own children, if they run into problems, can call on far wider sources of advice, support, and help than are available to all but a few teachers in schools, public or private. The quality control mechanisms of the home schooling movement, if we want to look at them that way, are at least as effective as anything existing in the schools. So there is no reason for a zealous court, like the Turner court, to protect the state from what the legislature itself has never considered, and certainly does not now consider, a danger.

These are the arguments from which can be constructed a case which I believe will be able to overcome Turner. But I don't think we need to or ought to wait to put them forward until we are actually brought into court. Let's use them, if we can, to stay out of court, by showing them to any school authorities with whom we may be having trouble.—JH

## **From Texas Lawyer**

*Egan Tausch (GWS #27), one of our most active friendly lawyers, writes from Texas:*

The compulsory attendance law in Texas states merely that a child between certain ages must go to public school a certain number of days per year unless he or she is “in attendance at a private or parochial school” with a course in good citizenship. There is absolutely no definition of “private school.” There is no requirement that such schools be “licensed” or “accredited” in any way. There is no requirement that the teachers of a private school be “certified” in any way. In fact, there are no regulations at all for private schools in Texas, unless they are also day-care centers or similar business facilities open to the public, in which case other, unrelated, laws apply. There are no Texas cases that by any stretch of the imagination apply to what is or is not a private school, or what one should be like.

Of course, the public-school establishment disapproves of home schools, and is always seeking to prosecute. Such cases have never gone high enough in the Texas court structure to set a precedent. Often the home-schooling defendants win in Justice Court (J. P.'s). Sometimes the parents lose in Justice Court, then give in and send their children to public school. Sometimes they pay a fine, continue their home school, and the school district forgets about them. Occasionally the Defendants lose in Justice Court, appeal to County Court, and the case is dismissed there by the district attorney. The most recent case, other than ours, was in Dallas, where a J.P. declared the law unconstitutional due to vagueness and acquitted the family.

In the case of our first family, two years ago, the Defendants lost. The family appealed, and we got the charges dismissed by the D.A. on the county level. That family continues to teach its children at home without interference.

Our second family was prosecuted six months ago, but the prosecutor was

unable to provide any evidence at all as to whether the child was or was not in any school—home, accredited, parochial, or otherwise. Therefore, we did not have to put up a defense and we won without one. The family will probably be prosecuted again in the fall. If so, we'll appeal any possible adverse decision to County Court.

Strategies in school cases differ. In J.P. cases, we have decided, first, to force the prosecutor to prove a prima facie case, by saying nothing ourselves, at first. If he can't show where the child is, he can't prove the child is not in school somewhere. He must bear the burden of proof in a criminal case. He cannot force us to give him evidence for his case (unless the judge permits violation of the 5th Amendment).

If the prosecutor can show, without our cooperation, that the child is in a home school, he must also provide evidence that a home school is not a "private school." Then we must rebut by showing that our home school is a school, and a good one. We have decided not to put on expert witnesses, or constitutional arguments, on the J.P. court level. We let the prosecutor bring out his entire case, rebut briefly, if necessary, and, if we lose, appeal to a court of record, County Court, where, according to Texas law, we have a complete new trial and anything that went on before is inadmissible. If we win at County Court, we will be well on our way to establishing precedent in our favor. That is why we are welcoming an appeal to County Court.

Please note that in all our steps above, we are seeking to establish that we are in compliance with the law. We believe that challenging the law constitutionally (vagueness or First Amendment) is the hardest way to go, however valid; it will also, if successful, result in a new law which might forbid home schooling. The education establishment is working on such a bill now.

Nevertheless, when we go into County Court we shall include motions raising the constitutional issues (vagueness and 1st Amendment) as a last resort.

Others in the movement have suggested that we forget these cases and work on legislative reform. As an attorney, it is my duty to defend my clients whenever they are prosecuted, whatever else I might work on. Also, if we lose a serious case, it will influence the legislature deeply and negatively. I think that a massive campaign to educate the legislature would be necessary on our part, and we don't have time; the public school lobbies are way ahead

of us. Besides, we are in compliance with the law as written. Texas has one of the safest laws. If we try to change it and fail, every judge will interpret that as proof that the law was intended to forbid home schooling.

## **Schools Weren't "Equalizers"**

JH: Home schoolers may find themselves accused now and then of weakening or destroying the public schools which are supposedly the only hope for the children of the poor. Since this accusation may cost us some public support, and even more important, since it may carry some weight if a specific home schooling case ever goes to the upper Federal courts, it is worth our while to refute it whenever we can. For this purpose readers may find interesting these words written by Colin Greer in his book *The Solution As Part Of The Problem*, published in the early '70s by Harper and Row:

For at least a century now, socio-economic class, as signified by employment rates and levels, has determined scholastic achievement, as measured by dropout and failure rates. The American school system, so the legend goes, took the backward, ragged, ill-prepared immigrants who crowded into the cities, educated and Americanized them, and pushed them into the homogeneous productive middle class that is America's strength and pride. It is a lovely legend, but it is a legend.

A brief look at the actual performance of the public schools about 100 years ago shows that more children failed in urban public schools than succeeded, both in absolute and in relative numbers. Among the school systems which had large numbers of immigrant and poor pupils—Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, and Minneapolis—failure rates were so high that in no one of those systems did the so-called normal group exceed 60 percent, while in several instances it fell even lower, to 49 percent in Pittsburgh and to 35 percent in Minneapolis.

The upward mobility of the white lower classes was never as rapid nor as sure as it has become traditional to believe. The 1920 census, for example, showed that even the favored English and Welsh migrants found half their number tied to the terrifyingly vulnerable unskilled

labor occupations, and school dropout rates for all groups, including blacks, were in direct proportion to rates of adult employment. A large proportion of immigrants never made it into middleclass society. Millions more are just now eking their way out of the lower working class. The great majority of the Italians and Irish are only just beginning to attend college; once there they sustain failure rates which are at least equal to the rates they and other minority groups, including blacks, sustained in the public school system.

The legend that our schools have been effective agents of social change persists and supports the illusion that they can now, in like manner, address the problems we so fervently wish would go away. The truth is the public schools have never done what they are now expected to do.

## Why They Did It

JH: The 10/18/82 issue of the *New Hampshire Times* carried a long and very sympathetic and well-informed story about home schooling. The article quotes at length one home schooling parent, Sally Wellborn, and what she says is so well said and so much to the point that I want to quote some of it here:

School seemed to us to be essentially a factory geared to programming children into average contributing members of an industrialized bureaucracy. I did not want my children's enthusiasm for learning increasingly complex manual and intellectual skills, their delight in discovering the interrelatedness of all things, their down-to-earth sense of social responsibility, their ingenuity and self-reliance, to be muddled by the school's unavoidable compartmentalization of such matter, classroom discipline and busywork. I did not want my children to be forced to accept, until they were old enough to confront, certain exploitative attitudes that cause grown-up people to fight wars and destroy the environment.

(A third-grade text used in local schools says) "We are quickly using up coal, oil, and other minerals. The land may become truly a desert of waste. But in the ocean there are enough minerals to supply our



needs.” I wanted to spare my children the confusion they would experience when encountering teaching materials so appallingly antithetical to the values cherished by our family.

(With home education) the learning that takes place is very amorphous, organic. Children learn by connection; everything is correlated to everything else. We would often start off with books from the public library—during the winter the boys read hundreds of books, not many in the summer—but it is impossible to predict or to program where a book or an experience would take them. The boys would often pursue something they were interested in at a breakneck pace, but when I would try to organize or program their learning, they were apt to resist and walk off.

(After the boys decided to go back to school, to see more of their friends:) We have always found the boys’ public school teachers to be genuinely concerned for our children’s intellectual growth. and we have enjoyed a reasonable and mutually respectful dialogue with school administrators. But these pleasant relationships make a frail bridge indeed across the chasm which separates my understanding of what constitutes useful, permanent learning from the system of education used in public schools.

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JH: In the same article, another home schooling parent, Barb Parshley, talks about some of the reasons she took up home schooling:

Last year, I had two children in school. It was rush, rush, rush. Rush the children up, into their clothes and through breakfast; hurry them into bed at night so they could get up in time for school. Recesses at school were so short and hectic, I felt it was important for the children to have time for extended, imaginative play with their friends on weekends. As a result, we had no family time, no quality time. The only time I was with my children, we were all rushing around. They saw their father intermittently, since he works a rotating shift and many weekends.

The boys were cranky and overtired; they were anxious; they suffered from frequent leg and stomach cramps and headaches. And their

social behavior was deteriorating badly. I saw my children becoming more and more negative and aggressive towards each other and their friends. I felt so helpless, since I couldn't be around to see what was precipitating this behavior.

When they were in school, the children also simply had no time for exploring in depth the subjects that had once really excited them. They were simply too worn out. And Sean was becoming so spoon-fed that he had lost his motivation to learn on his own. If it is important to learn to read, write, and compute, and if we want children to sustain a love of learning throughout life, why not let them learn what interests them?

## **Summary Of Reasons**

*From the H.O.U.S.E. newsletter in Illinois, 1/82:*

Why Would A Parent Make The Decision To Home School?

- 1) We can give our children a more challenging curriculum.
- 2) We can give them one-to-one time and thus have less wasted school time.
- 3) Children can be more free to follow their individual interests.
- 4) We can provide a more controlled spiritual, mental and physical environment.
- 5) We can protect our children from the meanness and competitiveness of the schools.
- 6) We can allow our children more daytime access to the community at large.
- 7) We can develop more independent learning attitudes on the part of the children.
- 8) We can go on field trips where they would not have provisions to accommodate an entire regular school classroom of kids.

9) We can maintain the continuity of family relationships, allowing more time to be together.

## New Tapes Here

*Tapiola Children's Choir* (\$8 for 90 min. cassette). This is an on location recording I made of a recent concert of one of the most remarkable 20 musical organizations of the world, the Tapiola Children's Choir, from the city of Tapiola, in Finland. They are a group of about 40 young people, eight to ten of them boys, the rest girls, average age about 14 (the boys are mostly younger), who sing and also play instruments (mostly strings), and very well, as you will hear. The chorus was started as the ordinary school choir of the Tapiola Secondary School, in 1963, by Erkki Pohjola, who was a music teacher there and has been their teacher and conductor ever since. In a few years they had won international choral competitions and had become world famous, as they have deservedly remained. By the way, the notes on the back of one of the choir's records say that Mr. Pohjola, though in other respects an accomplished string player and musician, is self-taught as a choir master and has never sung in a choir.

I already knew their work through two of their recordings, and when I heard they were going to be in this area, I jumped at the chance to hear them. As I went to their concert, in the back of my mind was the thought, "They can't possibly be quite as good as they have seemed to be." After all, records can be and are put together out of many "takes," so that the mistakes and rough spots of live performances can be ironed out. And microphones and other gadgets can make people sound somewhat better than they really are. So I was ready to hear something just a little short of perfection.

Perfection, however, was what I heard. It only took them two or three notes to convince me and all of us that they were every bit as wonderful as we had hoped. The perfection of their intonation, the purity of their tone, the clarity of their diction, and their rhythmic flexibility, precision of ensemble, and control of dynamics and of tonal color, were hardly to be believed. One song, a modern Swedish work about a magic curse to make your enemy mute, is one of the most difficult choral pieces I have ever heard. And though these young musicians were coming to the end of what had been a long and hard cross-country tour, they showed almost no signs of the fatigue they

might have been expected to feel. When at the end of their concert they sang *Finlandia* and *Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child*, there was not a dry eye in the house.

They have made four commercial recordings that I know of. One is on DG (Deutsch Gramophone 2530812), a very large international company, and so may be fairly readily available. Of the others, two are on a small Swedish label called BIS, and one on the Finnish label Finlandia. I plan to add one or more of these records to our list—we will announce titles and prices in a later issue. But though some of the songs they sang at this concert will be on some of those records, none will have the American songs they learned especially for this trip, or will give quite the same sense of a live concert.

At one point in the tape you will hear a touching little minidrama. In the seat right in front of me a little girl of about 5 was sitting with her mother. She began to get very fidgety and restless, and when her mother showed by signs that she was to be quiet and still, the child began to look defiant and angry, and seemed to be working herself up to some test of strength. Finally her rightly exasperated mother gave the child's hand a hard squeeze. Perhaps she squeezed harder than she meant to, for the little girl gave a gasp of surprise and pain, and began to cry—but very softly. As the choir sings one song, itself sad, you can hear all this going on in front of you. We will soon add to our list more of the music of this astonishing group. Meanwhile, here is a chance to get to know them.

*John Holt's Speech In Italy* (Vols. 1, 2. \$6 per each 60 min. tape). This is a tape of a talk that I gave at a center for Tibetan Buddhism in Pomaia, Italy (not far from Pisa). What is unusual about this tape, as about the meeting itself, was that since many of those attending were Italian and spoke little or no English, my talk had to be translated. Instead of using simultaneous translation, which aside from being very expensive makes it impossible for people to hear anything but the translator, they used sequential translation, which meant that I would say a sentence or part of a sentence, the translator would translate, I would say another sentence, the translator would translate again, and so on. This stop-and-go talking was a very odd experience, all the more so since I was listening to the translator to see how much of her excellent but very rapid Italian I could pick up.

So if you want to get the feel of what was a very interesting meeting, or simply want a chance to hear some Italian spoken very clearly but at rapid

conversational speed, you may enjoy these tapes. By the way, I began my talk by saying a few words about all the trouble I had getting to the meeting place, which to my surprise and pleasure they all found absolutely hilarious, and so got us off to a nice friendly start.

## New Books Available Here

*The Bear That Wasn't*, by Frank Tashlin (\$1.80 + post). Many children of around six or seven, and perhaps younger (or older), will enjoy reading this little book or having it read to them, for just the reasons Gareth Matthews speaks of in his book *Philosophy And The Young Child* (also on our list), namely, that in its very light-hearted way, it raises the kind of deep and difficult philosophical questions that young children are often very interested in. In this case these are questions about appearances, identity, and reality—how do we know (or do we know) we are what we think we are, and how could we prove it if we had to?

The plot is simple; a bear goes to sleep for the winter, and when he wakes he finds that a huge factory complex has been built all around him. Nobody he meets believes he could possibly be a real bear, and eventually the poor bear has his own doubts.

I suddenly remember that as a child I was fascinated with the whole idea of amnesia, a total loss of memory. Indeed I remember, at the age of about ten, being completely absorbed by an adult detective story called *Two O'Clock Courage*, by Gelett Burgess (who wrote the poem about the Purple Cow), which was about a man who after being knocked out by a blow on the head finds himself lying beside the body of a murder victim, with his memory completely gone, so that in order to clear himself of the crime he has to discover who he was and what happened to him. I loved the story, which I read when my parents, whose book it was and who didn't know I was reading it, were out of the house. I suspect that with quite a few children parents will spend a lot more time talking about *The Bear That Wasn't* than just in reading it.—JH

*The River At Greene Knowe*, by L.M. Boston (\$2. 65 + post). This is actually the third book in the *Green Knowe* series; I should have added it after *Treasure* and before *Stranger*. In this book our friend Tolly and his great-grandmother are away for the summer, and the house has been rented to

two middle-aged English ladies. One of them invites her niece, Ida, and two refugee children, Oskar from Poland and Ping from an unnamed country in Asia, to spend the summer with them. The three children are given a canoe and the run of the river and pretty much turned loose. The book is about their explorations and adventures. Like so many English books for children, this one is full of the writer's love of the countryside and the many things and creatures in it. The book is about the three children, who though very different become close friends, and about their adventures and discoveries on the river, which include meeting a real giant. Another fine story in this lovely series.—JH

*An Enemy At Green Knowe*, by L.M. Boston (\$1.65 + post). In this, the last of the *Green Knowe* books—and I hate to think of there not being any more—an enemy, powerful, dangerous, and ruthless, comes to Green Knowe, looking for an old piece of magic that she believes has been hidden in the house for centuries. How she tries to steal this dark treasure, and how Tolly, his friend Ping—for they are now together in one story—and Mrs. Oldknow try to fend her off with some good magic of their own, makes up the story of this very scary book.

Clearly L.M. Boston, like me, was a great fan of M.R. James, whose ghost stories are on our list. In fact, many of her ideas and magical devices are so clearly taken from James's stories that I can spot the story they came from. No matter; James's ghosts are not any the less grim or frightening for having been seen before, and to whatever she may have borrowed from the Old Master, L.M. Boston has added plenty of terrifying inventions of her own, and that James himself would have approved of. No more than James himself is this a book to read alone in an empty house on a dark night! An exciting end to a wonderful group of stories that have given me much pleasure and that I look forward to reading many times again.—JH

*The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster (\$2.65 + post). For many years my friend Tony Kallet, who edits the magazine *Outlook* from which we quote from time to time, has been telling me that I ought to read this book. Well, I finally did, and he was right. Like *Alice In Wonderland*, it is a delightful fantasy, and like *Alice* (and very few other children's books), it explores quite deeply in its lighthearted way the subtle relations between objects, words, and meanings.

A bored little boy, not interested in much of anything, finds himself in a

magical world where he visits (among other places) the cities of Dictionopolis and Digitopolis, and meets such creatures as Tock the Watch Dog, the Spelling Bee, and the Awful Dynne. Like *The Bear That Wasn't*, it is a book full of philosophy. Lewis Carroll, who loved playing with words, would have enjoyed it, and so will children of around nine or ten, which is time that most of them begin to discover the pleasures of irony and wit. The many amusing pen and ink drawings by Jules Feiffer are just right.—JH

*The Grey King*, by Susan Cooper (\$2.65 + post). This is the fourth book in the *Dark is Rising* series (*Over Sea, Under Stone* was the first) about the struggle of a group of children and a few adult friends against a great Evil threatening to overwhelm England. In *The Grey King*, we find the boy Will Stanton, whom we met in *The Dark Is Rising* and *Greenwitch*, visiting in Wales after a long illness. There he tries to uncover the meaning of a secret and very important message he has been told to remember. In the bare mountains of Wales he meets men and women who are on the side of the light, and one man who has made himself a servant of the Dark. At the end, and with the help of his spell, Will meets and overcomes even the dreadful magic of the Grey King himself. Another exciting story in this splendid series.—JH

*Self-Portrait: Trina Schart Hyman* (\$7.95 + post). This delightful book by a leading illustrator of children's books, is a brief story of her own life, with her own illustrations (in color)—one of a series of autobiographies of artists. I enjoyed it very much. Ms. Hyman had an interesting life and tells about it well, and the many colorful pictures are full of life and humor, much more personal and real than most photographs, which in comparison seem stiff and posed.

Most of all, I like the book because it answers so well a question that most children—for whom the book is intended—would often like to ask the adults they know, but usually don't quite dare: "How did you come to do what you are doing?" In this case, "How did you get to be a painter and an illustrator of books?" Nothing is more interesting to children than such real-life stories of adults, and this one is just right—not too long, with interesting detail but not too much, and as I say, brought vividly to life by the illustrations.

I suspect that this series is a bit of a gamble for the publishers, since I don't think anything like this has been done before. If our readers like this

first offering, we'll add others in the series to our list.—JH

*The Man Who Planted Hope And Grew Happiness*, by Jean Giono (\$1.80 + post). This tiny book, which for some time I have wanted to add to our list, is one of the most hopeful and encouraging true stories I have ever heard, and I am very grateful to the Friends of Nature for keeping it alive.

It is about a poor and unschooled shepherd, Elezard Bouffier, who when past fifty, finding himself in a desolate, drought-stricken region of France, had decided that the land was dying for want of trees, and that, "Having no very pressing business of his own, "He would plant them himself. when Giono first met him, in 1913, Bouffier had been planting oak trees for three years, making a small hole in the ground with a short iron bar he carried, and putting into each hole an acorn. In that time he had planted 100,000 acorns, of which 20,000 had sprouted and of which he expected about 10,000 to survive.

When Giono next saw him, six years later, the trees were taller than the men, "a sort of greyish mist that covered the mountain tops like a carpet." The forest that this one man had planted was by now about seven miles long and as much as two miles wide. Already water was flowing in brooks that had been dry for as long as people could remember. Bouffier was 87-years-old when Giono last saw him, in 1945. Giono writes, "It has taken only the eight years since then for the whole countryside to glow with health and prosperity. On the site of the ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. The villages have been rebuilt. Counting the former population. more than 10,000 people owe their happiness to Elezard Bouffier." I hope that before too long a great many people may read this little book. It shows that individual human beings are not helpless and powerless, even now.—JH

*Nomadic Furniture* by James Hennessey and Victor Papanek (\$5.35 + post). A fascinating collection of chairs, tables, beds, storage units, lights, etc., that you can buy for very little money, or even better, make for yourself for almost no money at all. Best of all, if you have to move, you can take this furniture apart into pieces that store in very little space, and take them with you (hence the title). An ideal book for people with very little money, or who would rather make their own things than buy them, or who (like me) are interested in beautiful and practical design.—JH



*Best Loved Songs Of The American People*, Denise Agay (\$13.95 + post). This fat collection has words and music to almost 200 classic songs, spanning the time from colonial days up to this century, and including ballads, folk songs, spirituals, show tunes, songs from the frontier, the Civil War, the Gay Nineties, and more. It is the perfect collection for families that want to gather around the piano and sing.

It would be impossible to list all the titles, but here are a few: *Froggie Went A-Courtin'*, *Barbara Allen*, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*, *Home Sweet Home*, *Amazing Grace*, *Turkey in the Straw*, *Buffalo Gals*, *Little Brown Jug*, *The Erie Canal*, *My Old Kentucky Home*, *Dixie*, *Grandfather's Clock*, *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, *Red River Valley*, *Clementine*, *Maple Leaf Rag*, *A Bird in a Gilded Cage*, *My Wild Irish Rose*, *Give My Regards to Broadway*, *Tea for Two*, *Stardust*, and *We Shall Overcome*. Of course, any collection is bound to leave out some of your favorites, and to include many others you've never heard of. But on the whole, this book is satisfyingly balanced and complete.

Many of these songs are part of our social and political heritage. Our ancestors sang them as they worked, travelled, and played. Literature is full of references to these songs; all my life, I've read countless song titles in books, songs I didn't know well enough to sing all the way through, or even to whistle the first line. Unless we learn these songs today in our homes, we are not apt to learn them anywhere, for popular music keeps churning out new "hits," and the old songs are overlooked.

We chose this particular collection over some others for several reasons, besides the selection of titles. For one, it has sturdy spiral binding, so it will lie flat without having to be held or weighed down. The printing is large and readable. Almost every song is on one page or on two facing pages, so you don't have to flip back and forth for different verses. The piano arrangement is simple and straightforward, and the chords are written in above the melody for those who play guitar or who want to improvise their own arrangements, in the style of *How To Play The Piano Despite Years Of Lessons*.

There are several pages of text before each section, giving the background of the era. And at the end of the book are notes on the history of each song. Two or three of the songs use the word "darker"; as the introduction of the book apologizes, "It was felt that the omission of these songs would misrepresent the continuity of American musical history and make this song

panorama deficient.” I suggest that you substitute another word or omit it altogether; the song will make just as much sense.

A good collection like this is as essential a reference book as a dictionary or atlas, something no home should be without. What fun for a beginning piano student to learn a “real” song that others can join in with, instead of a made-up exercise. Children who grew up learning the songs in this book would acquire a musical literacy that would serve them well no matter whether their tastes lead them to specialize in classical music, jazz, theater, folk music, or any other kind. Above all, this book is a source of endless hours of family entertainment.—DR

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## About John Holt

John Holt (1983–1985) is the author of *How Children Learn* and *How Children Fail*, which together have sold over a million and a half copies, and eight other books about children and learning. His work has been translated into more than 14 languages. For years a leading figure in school reform, John Holt became increasingly interested in how children learn outside of school. The magazine he founded, *Growing Without Schooling*, reflects his philosophy.