

A Tribute to Nancy Foster

Joan Almon

When I joined the Acorn Hill faculty in 1979, Nancy was already a leading figure there, and she brought a unique blend of leadership and collegueship. She carried a deep sense of responsibility for the school and an identification with it that was palpable. And while others of us came and went, Nancy remained, serving as a five-day teacher and later as a two-day teacher and parent-child teacher for more than thirty years.

While working together Nancy and I found that our individual styles were very different, and this sometimes posed a challenge for us, especially in faculty meetings. Very often we would see a question from opposite sides, and at first this led to tensions, but gradually our differences became a strength rather than a source of divisiveness.

We worked especially closely during the years that Acorn Hill had a teacher development program. This was in response to a new state regulation that all teachers in Waldorf schools needed to have at least twelve credits in Waldorf education. At first we worked through a nearby university and brought leading Waldorf teachers from Europe and the U.S. to do courses at Acorn Hill. Later, the Maryland Department of Education urged us to develop our own in-service program that would be accredited by them.

The training went well, and while all of us enjoyed our involvement with our "students" who were mainly Acorn Hill assistants, Nancy really shone out as an adult educator. She brought depth and breadth to the work, and was very committed to the training. Yet, once Sunbridge established its part time kindergarten

training, she recognized it could offer much more to our teachers than could our own program, and she encouraged us to close down our program and help our teachers go to Sunbridge instead. She had the capacity to be completely devoted to a task, but without sentimentality or unnecessary attachment.

It is over ten years since I was on the Acorn Hill faculty and board, but when I think of the school, which I do with enormous warmth, it is Nancy's presence that seems to be at the very center of it all. There is a strong group of teachers at Acorn Hill now, and I know they will do well after Nancy's retirement, but it is hard to picture the school without her. She has given enormously of her strength, wisdom and insight, and those gifts will remain for they are part of the fabric of Acorn Hill.

I am not sure what Nancy has planned for the next phase of her life, but I cannot picture her stepping back from the Waldorf early childhood community, where she has so much to offer. As Rene Querido used to say, Waldorf teachers don't retire; they just get recycled. It will be wonderful to see what evolves next in Nancy's work.

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