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Renewal

Nourishing the Etheric Body
Building a Shelter in Third Grade
David Spear Mitchell (1945–2012)
When a Student Dies

A JOURNAL FOR WALDORF EDUCATION

Waldorf Alumni Forum

For Two Young Alumnae, Their Life Paths Lead from Waldorf School to Social Activism and a Shared Project

Leslie Loy

Leslie Loy attended the Waldorf School of Orange County in Southern California through the eighth grade and went to high school at the Summerfield Waldorf School and Farm in Santa Rosa, California. She graduated from Summerfield in 2001. Leslie attended Reed College, majoring in English with a concentration in American literature and graduated in 2009.

Since her teenage years, Leslie has been an advocate for youth, serving on many community-wide groups. She has worked in the nonprofit sector for over ten years, focusing on integrating youth and social technologies to impact social renewal. Leslie has been active in giving voice to young social activists and providing diverse forums for them to engage in, both on- and off-line. Since 2008, Leslie has been active in the Youth Section of the School for Spiritual Science at the Goetheanum. She currently works at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. With other young people there, Leslie is exploring the possibility of an anthroposophically based education for young adults.

At the heart of all I do is the desire to create community. Today everyone, young and old alike, longs for community. We need one another. We need spaces to listen, to celebrate, to witness, and to take action for and with one another. Communities also offer the possibility of positive change. If we work together, we can make the world a better place.

When I was a pioneer student at the Waldorf School of Orange County, I watched parents pour themselves into the school, scrubbing walls and balancing books late at night, folding envelopes for appeal letters, moving the school to a different location almost every year. From them I learned that it takes courage and tenacity to create a community.

My high school years at Summerfield, an established school, were a whole new experience. There I learned

Bridget Blanning

Bridget Blanning grew up in Denver and attended the Denver Waldorf School through eighth grade before going on to public high school. She then studied Spanish and journalism at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She graduated in 2006. Bridget began working as a grant writer for a Colorado nonprofit in 2008—work she continues today. Since 2009, she has been active in the youth work of the Anthroposophical Society. Bridget's mother, Nancy Blanning, and her brother, Adam, are both involved in anthroposophical work. Bridget, Leslie Loy, and others are currently working together at Rudolf Steiner College to envision an anthroposophically based educational program that will meet the needs of today's young people.

Iwould charge across the kindergarten classroom floor—arms raised, toes pointed, silky cloth streaming behind me—so deeply engrossed in “being a ballerina” that I felt transported from my surroundings. At age six, my classmate and I would do our version of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker* again and again. I was always Clara and he was always the Nutcracker. In those moments of deep imagination, it was just the two of us—dancing and creating a masterpiece of our own making, each

time equally meaningful.

This is one of my favorite first memories from my Waldorf education. As a student at the Denver Waldorf School from preschool through eighth grade, I engaged in countless plays, projects, and artistic endeavors that were imaginative in nature, but also practical and meaningful. Unlike much of the work I did later in public high school, each project felt as if it had a purpose. As a child, I probably couldn't have told you what the purpose was, but I felt as if, in some small way, I was contributing to the beauty and goodness of the world.

In eighth grade, shortly before graduating, my class performed *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To this day, I think it is one of the most important stories that exist. I was Calpurnia, the African-American maid who serves as a bridge for



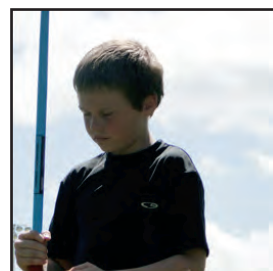
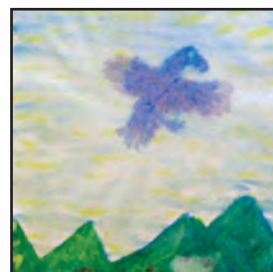
Photo by Keenan Hand

Leslie Loy and Bridget Blanning
at Rudolf Steiner College

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Honolulu Waldorf High School

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the importance of discernment and contemplation and of healthy social processes. I developed a deep interest in service. I was struck by how much need there was in the world, and was overwhelmed by how insignificant I felt. Inspired by writers like Plato, Thoreau, and Hesse, though, I was able to see what my call in the world is—to serve others as much as I can and to be tenacious in the journey.

After college, I worked in the music business, did a Waldorf teacher training, and taught in a Waldorf school. I also lived in a Camphill community, working with and supporting young people with special needs and abilities.

Some years ago, I found myself increasingly drawn to other young people with similar ideas and aspirations. These were people interested in Anthroposophy and studying at one of the major anthroposophical centers, such as the Goetheanum in Switzerland, Emerson College in England, and Rudolf Steiner College in California. Until then, my experience of anthroposophists had not

been very positive. To me, many had seemed over-serious and dogmatic. But the people I was meeting were energetic, full of laughter, and actively engaged in the world.

I picked up again the books by Rudolf Steiner from my teacher training. I sat with others and explored basic questions: What is freedom? What is social art? What is my destiny? What is my spiritual striving? I realized that my work with others, my volunteer service, my efforts toward community, my love and support for friends and family and for strangers in the street was, and is, Anthroposophy. It is living Anthroposophy, the real work of Anthroposophy—changing the world by serving humanity.

My Waldorf schooling helped prepare me for this path. It awakened my heart to the reality that life is not easy, it is not always kind, but it is an extraordinary gift. Also, it taught me to see the beauty, truth, and goodness in everything around me, even in the darkest moments. And it has helped me develop the courage, tenacity, and love that are necessary for a life of service. ☉

Blanning, *continued*

bridge for the children between the segregated worlds of white and black. As I stepped out on the stage—the lights shining on my face, my voice raised for effect—I remember feeling that what my class and I were doing was important to the community and, on some level, to humanity. It was also a unifying experience for the class. We had been through significant drama in our life together, having had a number of different class teachers before seventh grade.

After eighth grade, I attended a public high school and then went on to university, with a period of study in Spain. After graduating, I returned to Spain and—at my brother's encouragement—visited Dornach, Switzerland, where I attended a youth conference at the Goetheanum, the world headquarters of the anthroposophical movement. The days were filled with deep conversations on Anthroposophy, and the evenings held music, dance, and laughter.

The collective experience at the conference awoke in me an interest in Anthroposophy that I didn't know was sleeping. I began to read some of Rudolf Steiner's works. I realized that many of Steiner's teachings were familiar to me, because throughout my life my mother has been a living example of the striving he describes—for a true understanding of the human being, for moral and spiritual development, and for bringing goodness, beauty, and truth into the world. For me, that recognition was

a monumental discovery, and serves as a continuing inspiration.

In Denver a year later, I worked with friends to form the Denver Youth Initiative, which sought to bring together young people interested in studying and working out of Anthroposophy. I also joined the North American Youth Section and got involved in other youth initiatives—both in North America and abroad. I am now attending the Foundation Studies Program at Rudolf Steiner College in Fair Oaks, California. The yearlong program includes the systematic study of Anthroposophy as well as significant work in the arts. It is the prerequisite for the Waldorf teacher education year. I don't know if I'll continue on to Waldorf teacher training. I just know that, for now, this is where I need to be. I am also working with others exploring the possibility of establishing a program for young people at Rudolf Steiner College, which we hope will be a helpful addition to existing educational forms.

Although many years have passed since that first dance in my Waldorf kindergarten, just the other night I felt similarly transported. As friends here at the College and I danced together in a circle—piano music carrying us through space—I imagined that we were creating our own masterpiece. And maybe that's the most significant lesson of my past and ongoing Waldorf education: that each moment matters and that each dance is a masterpiece of our own making. ☉

From the Editor

Death Be Not Proud

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH, PhD



On June 8, 2012, David Mitchell—husband, father, Waldorf teacher, writer, editor, publisher, soldier, poet, blacksmith, professional football player, and anthroposophist—crossed the threshold of death.

In late August, there was a memorial service for David at Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, New Hampshire. About a hundred people—family members, friends, colleagues, and former students—were present, almost all of them connected to Waldorf Education and/or Anthroposophy. Hence, the tenor of the gathering was deeply influenced by the understanding of death inherent in Anthroposophy.

According to Rudolf Steiner, the human being is an eternal, spiritual being who incarnates on Earth to fulfill a purpose, and, if fortunate, fulfills that purpose before leaving the earth plane and returning to the spiritual world—to prepare for another incarnation. Also, it is possible for human beings to maintain a living relationship to those whom Steiner referred to as “the so-called dead.”

From the recounting of David’s biography, of his many accomplishments and his contributions to the welfare of the world, it is clear that David was a human being who had discovered his true life path and followed it. His passing, then, is really only a transition into the next phase of his eternal journey, as much a moment for celebration as for sadness.

This issue of *Renewal* contains the story of another David with a connection to the Waldorf community who has crossed the same threshold. (See page 37.) On an October morning eight years ago, David Siljeholm, an eighth grader at the Cape Ann Waldorf School in Massachusetts, was bicycling to school with his mother and younger sister. He was struck by a train and died instantly.

The death of a man in his sixties is one thing. The death of a child is quite another. David Siljeholm’s death and the shock and grief experienced by his parents, sister, teachers and classmates is beyond ordinary comprehension. The thought of it takes one’s breath away. One must question the very meaning of human life, the fundamental goodness of Creation. One must ask, where was the spiritual being whose

task was to protect and guide David? Moreover, David’s death by “accident” argues for an indifferent universe ruled by chance. If the family had left the house one minute later, would David be alive today?

It is hard to see meaning or justice, let alone loving protection, in a death such as David Siljeholm’s. But perhaps it is our earthbound perspective that prevents us from seeing a larger, grander path and plan. Were we eagles and from on high could observe the trajectory of David’s past and future lives, this short life and its cruel ending might be revealed as what was intended and what serves David and others.

Rudolf Steiner lived through World War I, in which millions of young men were slaughtered on the battlefields of Europe. Steiner said that when a child or young person dies, the still fresh and vibrant forces of that person’s etheric body become available for the benefit of those still living. (See page 6.) That death, then, becomes a sacrifice, an offering, a gift to humanity.

David Siljeholm no longer exists on the physical plane of Earth. Only photos remain, photos that show him, even as a young child, looking out at the world with a direct and knowing gaze. If Rudolf Steiner’s worldview is correct, David is in the world of Spirit and preparing for another incarnation.

David’s death occasioned great suffering for those who knew and loved him. But it also roused in them a deepening of compassion, kindness, and wisdom. And what talents, capacities, and achievements of those he left behind—his family, his classmates, his teachers—might in part be the result of David’s help from the other side of the threshold of death?

Perhaps our understanding of such a life and death as David Siljeholm’s will become clearer in time, through our own direct experience and knowing. “Now, through a glass darkly; then, face to face.” ☉

Ronald E. Koetzsch is a member of the faculty and Dean of Students at Rudolf Steiner College in California.

David Spear Mitchell (1945–2012)

In Memoriam

BY RONALD E. KOETZSCH

David Mitchell was born in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1945 on December 6. December 6 is the feast day of Saint Nicholas, a saint known for his love of children, generosity, and warmth of heart—qualities that David exemplified. From his early years, David excelled both at academics and athletics. He played football in high school and was admitted to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst on a football scholarship.



David Mitchell on Kauai, Hawaii, 2010

After two years in the pre-med program at UMass, David was drafted into the army and was trained as a demolitions expert in the Special Forces. David was assigned to go to Viet Nam, but literally at the airport just before he was to depart, a change-order arrived, sending him to Germany. David was a much-commended, model soldier during the two years he spent in Germany, but realized that the military was not part of his future life path.

After his discharge, David completed his BA at UMass Boston. He majored in literature and began writing poetry, nurturing, one might say, his distinctly nonmilitary side. There, through a fellow student, Paul O'Leary, David discovered Rudolf Steiner, Anthroposophy, and Waldorf Education. In the year after graduation, David was a lineman on the taxi squad of the New York Giants professional football team.

It was the late 1960s, the era of the hippie subculture and drugs, sex, and rock 'n' roll. David's earnestness and his compelling quest for what was wholesome and positive in life, however, led him in quite a different direction. He decided to become a teacher. He applied to the Harvard Graduate

School of Education, was accepted, and enrolled. After a few months in Cambridge, though, David decided on a path less traveled. He left Harvard and went to Emerson College in England, a center for Waldorf teacher education.

There David met and courted a beautiful Norwegian girl. After completing their training at Emerson, Anniken and David married in Norway in 1971 and stayed there for a year. The first of their four children, a daughter, was born there. David taught manual arts and chemistry at a Waldorf school outside Oslo. He became fairly fluent in Norwegian, but sometimes relied on one of the students to help him express the fine points of a lesson. That student, named Jens Stoltenberg, is currently prime minister of Norway.

In 1972 the little family returned to the United States and spent one year at Camphill Village Copake, in upstate New York. This is an anthroposophical community in which adults with special needs and coworkers live and work together. While living at Copake, David was the first-grade teacher in the seed school that was to become Hawthorne Valley School.



The Mitchell family, Lyndeboro, New Hampshire, 1981

In 1973 David was recruited as a class teacher at the newly founded Pine Hill Waldorf School in Wilton, New Hampshire. Soon after arriving there, David, working with a friend, built a house for his wife and family. David remained in Wilton for nineteen years as a class teacher at Pine Hill and also as a high

school teacher at High Mowing School. He was instrumental in founding the Waldorf teacher training program at Antioch University New England and was an adjunct professor there from 1978–1992. With his boundless energy, strong will, his love of nature, his dedication to children, and his commitment to Waldorf Education and Anthroposophy, David was a pillar of the community.



David Mitchell with his second-grade class, Pine Hill Waldorf School, Wilton, New Hampshire, 1975

their surroundings. He was unfailingly enthusiastic, ebullient, and optimistic, ready to listen, ready to help, and bright with new ideas and fresh plans. To work with him in a meeting, share a meal at a conference, even to chat by phone was an uplifting experience. In his many interests and valuable work,

and in his warmth and sensitivity to others, David embodied the ideals behind Waldorf Education.

From Wilton, David and his family moved to Boulder, Colorado, where he was instrumental in founding

the high school at Shining Mountain Waldorf School. He specialized in the teaching of science and of literature, especially Shakespeare. David also taught blacksmithing. Having retained the strength and size of a football lineman, David, when he stood bare-armed before the forge in his shop apron, looked indeed the archetypal blacksmith.



*“Compost-Man,”
Lyndeboro, New Hampshire, 1978*

During his time in Wilton, David had begun to take an active role in the larger Waldorf world. He was for some years the eastern regional chair of the Association of Waldorf Schools

of North America. In Boulder, around 1997, David stepped back from teaching and became the full-time director of AWSNA Publications. In the next fifteen years, he published a treasure chest of books, usually eight to ten a year, all intended to help Waldorf teachers fulfill their vocation. David wrote several books himself and many articles. Along the way, he founded and published the *Waldorf Science Newsletter* with his colleague John Petering. David was also, with Douglas Gerwin, the cofounder of the Waldorf Research Institute and the *Waldorf Research Bulletin*.

Remarkable as David’s many accomplishments were, they do not convey his role in the lives of his family and friends and in the Waldorf movement. David was one of those great, sunny souls who illuminate

From the founding of *Renewal* in 1991, David was an unfailing friend and supporter of the magazine. David’s energy, experience, knowledge, insight, and generosity benefited our work greatly. In recent years, we have listed David on our masthead as “Giver of Moral and Practical Support.” (We do so again in this issue, one last time.) An article by David on teaching ninth-grade science appeared in our Spring/Summer 2012 issue, published just as he was about to cross the threshold of death.

A few weeks before he died, I phoned David and told him we needed some drawings by high school students for an article in the forthcoming issue. David was at that time already very sick and weak. When I asked him how he was, he said, “Yeah, well, this thing will do me in sooner or later.” Nevertheless, two days later, a priority mail envelope arrived with a flash drive containing fifty or sixty photos of drawings that David had culled from his files.

Renewal is still created at 3911 Bannister Road in Fair Oaks, California, which for years was the national home of the Association that David served so well and so long. My wife and I are now owners of the property. We have planted a pomegranate tree—symbol of resurrection and eternal life—here in David’s memory. Soon a small plaque will read:

In memory of David Spear Mitchell (1945–2012), a tireless worker for the children of the present and of the future and for the life of the Spirit. ☉



*“Looking for Atlantis,”
Blasket Islands, off
the Dingle Peninsula,
western Ireland, 2007*

From the Association

In Celebration of the Life on Earth of David Mitchell

BY PATRICE MAYNARD

Let the wind blow through you and it will not blow you down.

—Lakota saying

Having difficulty in finding words to describe David Mitchell, who worked lifelong with language and the crafting of words, is an enormous paradox. The paradox heightens the challenge of managing the feelings that rise up in remembering and picturing a human being with a spirit so powerful, so vast in vision.



Patrice Maynard

David and I first met in 1987. Later, I felt very lucky to stay in his home for the three summers of my teacher training at Antioch University New England. I learned as much from late-night talks with David and his wife, Anniken, as ever I did in class. I learned, too, of a way of relationship, partnership—maybe it is accurate to say “artnership”—of two powerful,

gifted people who laughed at human foibles, especially their own, and insisted on clear and high standards from each other and from the world.

For me, David embodied the purpose and the work of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). His work as the initiator and chair of AWSNA Publications inspired lasting gratitude in me as a teacher. Until about 1999, my eighth year of teaching, I read almost every book AWSNA Publications produced. Then it became too much. David laid hands on all he could to get into print for the world—for teachers most especially—to better understand the significance and purpose of Waldorf Education. In all, he oversaw the publication of over 300 books and monographs.

It was a shock to both of us, in a way, when I was appointed to the position I now hold as “leader for outreach and development of AWSNA” with overall responsibility for publications. The upstart Waldorf teacher had,

in effect, become David’s supervisor. It took David and me two years to work through what our relationship as professionals in this new circumstance would be and become. But together we forged an understanding, first between us and then among our colleagues in Waldorf schools and beyond, of the magnificent body of work that David made available to the English-speaking world.



David Mitchell, China, 2006

David not only published books. He was a one-man research center for Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education. Questions of all kinds came to him from around the world, and he took the time to answer each, no matter who the questioner was. One could find David in the ancient stacks of the Rudolf Steiner Library, searching for hours without a break, pondering conundrums and discussing them energetically, all to find the answer to a question or to follow a line of research he knew would be useful. Clearinghouse, teacher, scientist, translator, recognizer, direction setter—he was all these in a single individual.

Some years ago, I attempted to write a poem to David and about him. The poem failed. It turned out to be a not-very-good, unfinished poem. However, through the effort of writing it, I realized a truth for me that brought to my heart a gesture of appreciation and admiration that this man so deserved.

Through the poem I came to see David as embodying the nature of the winds. Mighty, gentle, forming things in its path, sometimes terrible in its ferociousness and always kind in its ultimate motives—cleansing, pruning, refreshing, carrying seeds, bearing the breath of the Earth, ringing chimes, and lofting the birds of the air, like thoughts, thousands of miles beyond where they could ever go without him.

The experience of trusting and being formed by David, as by the wind—this won’t end with David’s new journey. Like the wind, it will go on without end. o

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Nourishing the Etheric Body, Source of Life and Form

BY THOMAS POPLAWSKI, MEd

The term *ether* goes back to ancient philosophers, including Hermes Trismegistus and Aristotle. It was understood as an invisible, impalpable substance that filled all space. In the nineteenth century, physicists, seeking to explain the transmission of electromagnetic waves, revived the concept of this universal substance. They hypothesized that ether transmits light and x-rays much as air carries sound waves. Ether was assumed to be weightless, transparent, frictionless, and undetectable, permeating all matter and space.

The term *etheric body*, referring to a component of the human being composed of ether, also has a long history. In ancient Indian philosophy, the *linga sarira* was an invisible double of the physical body. The Jewish Kabbalah, Christian Rosicrucianism, and other esoteric traditions also recognized the existence of a nonmaterial, etheric body. The concept was central in Theosophy, the nineteenth-century revival in the West of ancient Eastern wisdom. Into modern

times, the etheric body as an energy shadow of the physical body has been recognized as real and important by native healers and shamans, practitioners of traditional Oriental medicine and martial arts, and an occasional natural scientist or psychologist. It has a clear analogue in the invisible energetic body composed of *chi* or *ki*, which is a fundamental concept in Asian culture.

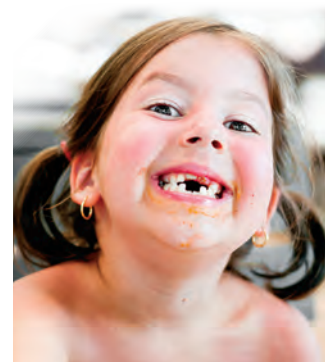
In Western science, the concept of ether was discarded in the late nineteenth century. Until recently, the terms *ether* and *etheric body* have had little place in the materialistic understand-

ing of the human being. But in past decades, the idea that the human being is pervaded by and surrounded by an energy field has gained more and more credibility in the mainstream scientific community. The terms are still not commonly used—they do not appear in my son's SAT vocabulary list—and seem archaic and mysterious. But in Waldorf schools, one often hears the etheric body spoken of in relation to education and to the development of the child.

Rudolf Steiner, the founder of Waldorf Education, began his career as a lecturer and writer on spiritual topics in 1902, initially as the head of the German section of the Theosophical Society. From that time, he described the human being as having four “bodies” or constituents—a physical body, an etheric body, an astral or emotional body, and an “Ego” or “I,” or higher spiritual self. When, in 1919, Steiner created the curriculum and pedagogy of the first Waldorf school, the care and support of the etheric body of the child was a primary concern.

The physical body is visible, palpable, has dimension, mass, and weight. It can be easily observed and studied. The other “bodies,” including the etheric body, being invisible, are much more elusive. Nevertheless, the etheric body as well as the astral body and the “I” play an important role in Waldorf Education. The nature and development of the etheric body is particularly relevant in the education of the young child and in the young child's healthy physical and emotional development.

Steiner refers to the etheric body also as the “life body” or “the body of formative forces.” It consists not of physical substance but of energy, of etheric forces. One can imagine it as composed of “ether,” invisible and impalpable, and as carrying the energy and the cosmic forces that give life and form to the physical body. If a living organism loses its etheric



The loss of baby teeth signals the end of a stage of child development in which the etheric body is wholly devoted to the forming of the physical body, especially the internal organs.



In traditional Oriental medicine, the etheric body is composed of the vital circulating energy called Chi or Ki which flows on particular pathways on the limbs, head, trunk, and through the internal organs.

body, as happens at death, it soon decomposes. The etheric body gives form and structure to living organisms. Plants and animals all have an etheric body. And when a frog loses a leg and generates a new one, that is the work of the etheric body.

In the first seven years of a child's life, the etheric body plays a central and especially critical role. It guides the rapid growth and development of the child's physical body. Steiner uses the terms *sculptural*, *formative*, and *healing* to describe its activity at this stage. During this time, an innate, unconscious wisdom is at work in the child. The work of the etheric body is very demanding. According to Steiner, its life-giving and form-giving capacities should not be diluted by having the child do structured, intellectual work. For this reason, "early academics" are not found in Waldorf kindergartens.

When the child approaches his seventh birthday, the rate of physical growth slows and significant changes occur. The child's baby teeth fall out and the adult teeth, the densest and hardest part of the human body, start to come in. Their appearance clearly marks the end of the first stage of the child's development. Now, somewhat unencumbered, the etheric forces are free to be used for other activities, such as learning to read and write and do math. Children are capable of learning to read at an earlier age (this is more often the case with girls than with boys), but in the long term there is no advantage to early reading. And the child may be harmed because the etheric forces have not been fully available for

the ongoing fine-tuning in the child's physical development.

Because of the critical role of the etheric body in the healthy development of the children, it is important that parents and teachers understand how to support its functioning. They need to learn how to help rather than hinder the natural life-giving and formative forces that are at work.

Paul Foxman, a psychologist in Burlington, Vermont, specializes in treating anxiety disorders in children and adults. Though he does not use the term *etheric body*, Foxman has found that the treatment of pediatric anxiety

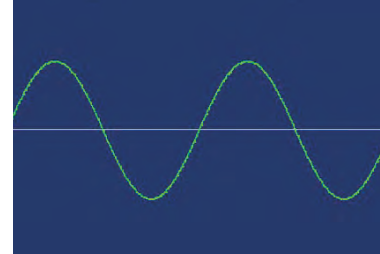
involves the same elements that foster a healthy etheric body. These are good nutrition; restful, sufficient sleep; and adequate exercise, especially outdoor exercise—what he calls the "three basics."

In our society, many people live on junk food and diets rich in refined carbohydrates; sleep deprivation is common; and many people have an inactive, indoor lifestyle. It is no won-

der that anxiety is the number one mental health problem in the United States. Simple, basic changes in a family's lifestyle, however, changes that do not require expensive and time-consuming visits to the psychotherapist's office, can be very helpful to children and to adults.

Foxman also points out that anxiety is especially common among those children who, in Waldorf circles, would be considered to be of the melancholic temperament. The typical melancholic is slender and fine-boned, very sensitive, artistically gifted, and prone to a "melancholic" view of life. The etheric body of melancholics is by nature less robust—hence their susceptibility to anxiety—and requires particular care and support. It is very important that melancholic children receive the "three basics." Otherwise, phobias, panic disorder, separation anxiety, and related problems may arise.

Another crucial element for the healthy development of the etheric body is "rhythm," or predictability and regularity in daily activities. While the physical body exists in space, the etheric body is a "body of time." The optimal pattern of the etheric body is a harmonious, alternating curve, rhythmically moving up and down, having the same untroubled regularity as the beating of the heart or the inhalation and exhalation



The regular pulse of a sine curve reflects the optimal rhythm for the etheric body.



The looping meander of a great river is a manifestation in nature of the etheric body's pattern of activity. According to Steiner, water is the "element" corresponding to the etheric body.



Adequate, restful sleep is a key to the health of the etheric body, both for children and adults.

of the breath. The astral, or emotional, body also exists in time, but moves fast, then slow, and fast again, as circumstances and responses to them change.

The etheric body of the child is supported by a rhythmic progression of activities through the course of the day. In the Waldorf kindergarten, the day has a predictable and balanced schedule of daily events, including circle time, story time, free play, nap, snacks, and goodbyes. This repetitive structuring of the child's life creates good habits. Steiner sometimes referred to the etheric body as the "habit body." By following a predictable daily rhythm in the home of mealtimes, playtimes, and bedtimes, parents can support the etheric health of their children. And since the etheric body does not recognize weekends, the established pattern should be in effect on Saturdays and Sundays as well. Adults also are helped by similar steady rhythms in their lives. Hence it is wise to resist the temptations to stay up late, eat at erratic times, and to sleep in too long on weekends.

Waldorf kindergarten children do simple eurythmy on a regular basis. This art of movement, unique to Waldorf Education, is an especially potent strengthener of the etheric body.



For adults, regular practice of yoga and other disciplines that are characterized by rhythm and have a meditative aspect benefits the etheric body.

Adults can also benefit from eurythmy, as well as from yoga, tai chi, and the playing of a musical instrument. Each of these activities involves an intrinsic, harmonious, rhythmic element, which can vitalize the etheric body and be rejuvenating and life-building. If done consciously at the same time each day, such activities are especially effective and also strengthen the will.

Challenges to Etheric Health

While some factors strengthen the etheric body, others weaken it. To some degree, the emotional body is always creating trouble for the etheric. It craves excitement, drama, newness, agony, and ecstasy. It likes to stay up late, to go to parties, to



Eurythmy is excellent for the health of the etheric body, in both children and adults.

be stimulated in the extreme, and it avoids a fixed schedule. The ups and downs, the peaks and nadirs experienced by the emotional body hinder the etheric body's attempt to keep things measured and calm. Sleep is a main ally in this natural preference of the etheric body. In sleep the astral or emotional body, except for a tenuous connection, separates from the etheric body and from the physical body also. This respite from the astral activity allows the etheric body to rebuild and energize itself.

Another challenge to the health of the etheric body, for children and for adults, is the sensory stimulation that is part of modern daily life. Bright lights, loud sounds, the constant background noise of broadcast music, colorful plastic toys, and garish advertising meant to capture our attention—these comprise a barrage of sensation that our sense organs were not designed to experience. While, as scientific research indicates, we are adapting to this onslaught, in part by becoming less sensitive, it is still a disturbing stressor to a child's delicately unfolding development. (See the author's article "Losing Our Senses," *Renewal*, F/V 2011.)

Waldorf educators try to preserve the etheric strength of their students by recommending that young children not be exposed to or have access to electronic media, such as television, computers, and video games, and by insisting on wooden (rather than plastic) toys and natural (rather than synthetic) fabrics. Sheltering children from electronic stimulation is a great challenge for parents. Television, video games,



Video games, computers, cell phones, and other electronics compromise the functioning of the etheric body.

A Kindergarten in the Forest

BY JULIANNA LICHATZ



Saratoga Springs, New York, is about one hundred miles north of New York City. A century ago, blessed with mineral springs, it became a recreational and therapeutic destination for well-to-do New Yorkers. Some of them built stately summer homes there. A racetrack and casino came later, and today the city continues to attract tourists and summer folk. The city is also the home of Skidmore College and of the Waldorf School of Saratoga Springs.

Four years ago, the school, located in a former public school building in the city, was short of space. There were enough children for an additional kindergarten but no adequate space within the school building. Two of the kindergarten teachers at the Waldorf School, Sigrid D'Aleo and Carly Lynn, were familiar with the "forest kindergartens" in Austria and Germany, where children in urban Waldorf schools spend the whole day outdoors in a town park. Inspired by these and by the similar work in Denmark by Waldorf educator Helle Heckman, they decided to create a kindergarten in nature and let that be known in the broader community.

At that time, the Saratoga Spa State Park was developing a master plan that would preserve natural areas but also encourage and expand public use of the park. The plan designated the undeveloped areas of the 2,200-acre park as natural areas to be

preserved as wildlife habitat and as a place for hiking. The plan also called for renewing use of vacant buildings in the northern part of the park. The park's plan and the aspirations of the kindergarten teachers were a perfect fit. An old farmhouse in the park was available. The park officials and the school collaborated in renovating both the ground floor, to be used by the school, and the second floor, used to house park interns. Parent volunteers helped out, and the park supplied labor and materials as available. Also, the school agreed to maintain the grounds in exchange for being able to use them. In the first year, the lease was rent-free.

With twenty-five students last year, two teachers and two assistants, the program is thriving. One secret to its success is the candid enrollment conversation the teachers have with prospective parents. "We tell the parents the children will climb trees and get dirty." There are other challenges of which the parents must be informed. One year there was a bumper crop of mosquitoes, and when insect repellent failed to protect the children, they were given head nets. In the area there are also ticks, including the Lyme disease tick. The teachers check the children before they go home and remind the parents to do the same. According to Ms. Lynn, "The risks of not being outside far outweigh the risks of being outside."

Photos courtesy of Julianna Lichatz

On a May morning, the teachers and I, a guest, share tea in the farmhouse before the day begins. Then we put on raincoats, rain pants, and colorful rubber boots and head outside to greet the children. The grass is damp, and a three-foot-wide puddle is bridged by boards strewn across it—"danger boards." The children arrive, cheerful and full of energy, also outfitted against the gray, threatening weather. Some start to do outdoor chores. Others scatter to the trees or head toward the "danger boards." Still others go to the woodwork area and start to sand their wooden swords.

Three five-year-old girls, equipped with little red pails, fill their buckets with birdseed and guide me toward the picnic table and nearby bird feeders. They lift the roofs and shovel and pour in the seed. Much falls to the table and some remains in the pail for "birdseed soup"—a project for later in the morning.

In the garden, cold frames are brimming with rapine, radish, and beet greens. I begin to dig, and helpers arrive with small wheelbarrows to move mulch. One young girl is delighted to uncover a handful of earthworms. In the woods nearby, three energetic four-year-old boys bounce on trees, climbing and moving wooden planks to build a ladder of sorts. They move nimbly between branches like aerial acrobats. The woodworking area is located by the large stumps that surround the fire pit in

the center of the yard. Some children sand their wooden swords at a picnic table, while others chisel their swords, which are held in vises attached to stumps.

One of the teachers gathers the children to a green area of the lawn with a melodic call. The children sing together, a verse is spoken, and then snack is served. There are bowls of apples, nuts,

and seeds, as well as pitchers of water on the picnic tables. The children receive mugs when they take their places at the tables. A light rain begins to fall, but only one child mentions it, more as an observation than an alarm. Snack comes to a close with young helpers taking turns carrying things to the farmhouse and children using the restroom.

Meanwhile, the other children have gathered at the nearby Papa Bear trailhead, drawn by a large fallen log and a hanging grapevine across from it, perfect for swinging. A few boys begin picking up rocks and breaking them. With all twenty-five children accounted for, Mrs. D'Aleo starts the group off on a walk. Across mud and board walks, boulders, and stepping stones, the children wander at their own paces, teachers interspersed among them. A frisky puppy barrels through the group, to the children's delight.

In about ten minutes, we reach a network of small trails within a clearing surrounded by felled trees. The children vanish immediately, but voices from nearby bushes make it clear they have not gone far. A small group is soon hard at work building fairy homes. In the clearing, several boys gather sticks and use them in various ways. One child hobbles around like an old man with a cane, while others become knights with swords. One girl has climbed high into a spruce tree and moves carefully from branch to branch, occasionally stopping to notice the sap on her fingers. "The children climb as high as we have cleared the branches," Mrs. D'Aleo assures me, and we note how the girl is now retreating, having encountered her boundary.

The teachers gather the children with the familiar kindergarten song "Come follow, follow, follow ..." For a while, each adult counts only twenty-three children. Two of us adults return to the play area and find the missing two children, deep in their wild adventure.



While not recommended for maternal viewing, these boys climbing on branches are developing their balance, agility, and self-confidence.



Time outdoors gives these girls an opportunity to explore and to discover what is to be seen, touched, and smelled in the world of nature.



Despite the rain, children and teachers head off for a walk in the forest.

We wander back down the path to a circle of small boulders and long logs. The children take their places as Mrs. D'Aleo begins her African tale of "Akimbo." I place myself beside one of the young, energetic, acrobatic tree-climbers who has been in movement all morning. He sits with such rapt attention that I hardly recognize him. No doubt, as he adds his own harmonious choral voice to Mrs. D'Aleo's animal sounds, he is totally at home in the African fell.

In every Waldorf kindergarten, the children spend time outdoors each day, usually regardless of the weather, enjoying free play, going for walks, and working in the garden. In the Forest Kindergarten, where virtually all the daily activities take place outdoors, the children benefit to a rare degree from fresh air, exposure to the elements, sunshine, physical activity, and from the opportunity to experience and explore the natural world at their own pace. As children become more and more subjected to artificial sensory stimulation, contact with nature is increasingly essential. ☺



JULIANNA LICHATZ met Waldorf Education as an exchange student in Sweden some twenty-five years ago. After studying many different types of education, she returned to Waldorf Education because of its inherent connection with the natural world. Julianna taught movement, practical arts, and was a class teacher at the Waldorf School on the Roaring Fork in Carbondale, Colorado, for nine years. She has just moved back to her native New England and is the movement teacher at the Monadnock Waldorf School in Keene, New Hampshire. Julianna is a lover of the outdoors and is an accomplished outdoorswoman.

Poplawski, continued

and computers are very alluring to children and can serve parents as a child-calmer and babysitter. Parents, of course, are not immune to the effects of electronic media. According to Foxman, late-evening television and computer use can lead to insomnia or restless sleep.

A positive, nurturing emotional environment also supports the child's etheric body. Intense, negative emotional experience can undermine it. In a recent Duke University study, one hundred children were examined. These were children who had been bullied at school, or harmed by their parents, or exposed to domestic violence. The researcher, Idan Shalev, looked at the telomeres, the genetic material at the tips of the chromosomes that is associated with adult longevity. Shalev found that the more the child was abused—or witnessed abuse—the greater the shortening of the telomeres. This shortening is believed to weaken the immune system and to lead to rapid cellular aging. Shalev warned that children exposed to toxic stress could end up losing a decade of life. Earlier research had indicated that traumatized persons tend to be susceptible to contagious illnesses. Shalev's study indicates that extreme emotional stimulation in children can affect their long-term ability to resist disease. In other words, stress undermines the etheric body.



Wooden toys are nurturing and appropriate for the young child.

The ancient philosophers searched long for the aqua vitae, the elixir of life. That elixir may lie in the boringly simple factors that make for a healthy etheric body—good nutrition, healthy daily rhythms, plenty of sleep and outdoor exercise, and the avoidance of overstimulation, especially from electronics. If we as parents and teachers can provide those factors every day in a consequent manner, we can lay the basis for physical and mental health for ourselves and for our children. ☺



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Care of a Child with a Fever

BY ESTER DELHOOFEN, MD

Fevers in children are an intrinsic part of the normal development process. They can arise suddenly and often follow a stressful event, such as exposure to cold because of inadequate clothing, a long trip, the painful emergence of a molar, or even the excitement of a birthday party. Our normal reaction, as parents, is to do whatever we can to lower the fever and shorten the discomfort of our child. However, a fever may have benefits for the child and should not necessarily be suppressed as quickly as possible.

A fever signifies that the immune system is working well. A fever increases white blood cells, which destroy viruses and bacteria. Also, through its own heat, a fever hinders the multiplication of viruses and bacteria. Some viruses multiply easily at body temperature—98.6°F—but cease multiplying at 102°F. Thus a fever is an important defense mechanism of the body.

My experience as a pediatrician tells me that fevers do more than serve an immune function. They also usher in milestones in the development of the child—some of them health-related. For example, sometimes I see that, after an illness with a high fever, a child has a psychological/emotional growth spurt. Speech becomes clearer, artistic abilities improve, or shyness disappears.

I believe these changes are because warmth can have a nonphysical origin, as well as a physical one. We feel warm inside, for example, when we are enthusiastic about something or have fallen in love. In contrast, anxiety and fear make us feel cold and look pale. From the perspective

of anthroposophically extended medicine, a complementary medical approach developed by Rudolf Steiner, warmth is the carrier of the Ego of a human being. The Ego, or “I,” is the higher, spiritual essence of the human being, that which is signified when a person says “I.”

From this perspective, when a child has a fever, the “I” of the child is more fully present in the physical body than ever before. One might say that the process of “incarnation” has taken a leap and that the child’s spirit now more fully inhabits her or his body. The child has overcome a resistance and moved more fully from the spiritual world to the physical world. Anthroposophically extended medicine explains the spurts in overall development that follow a fever in this way. In any case, a fever often precedes important steps forward in a child’s growth and development.

Normal development of a fever

Fever normally develops in two phases. In the first phase, when the temperature is increasing, the child feels cold and wants covers. When you touch him, his feet, legs and arms, and sometimes also his forehead feel cold. Sometimes the child also complains about a headache or stomach ache.

In the second phase, the child becomes and feels warm, with the forehead becoming warm first. During this phase, the child often sweats, and his whole body is very hot, like a stove. He wants to get rid of the warmth and cool down.



In the first stage of a fever, the child feels chilled and will appreciate a hot water bottle on the abdomen and/or the feet.



Fevers are a normal part of childhood and play a role in a child’s development.

The two phases can also alternate. In that case, the temperature increases and decreases a few times. Often the morning temperature is lower than the evening temperature. The cause of most fevers is a viral infection. Usually, the child's immune system suppresses the infection within three days, and the fever disappears.

Typically, parents fear a fever in their child. The child is uncomfortable, has little appetite, and is losing

weight. The weight loss is because the fever is a cleansing process, and protein is being broken down. The higher the temperature goes, the more parents worry. Hence, parents often resort to the use of Tylenol (acetaminophen) or other medications to suppress fever.

Parents should understand, however, that the fever itself is not harmful. It is the infection or other underlying condition causing the fever that can be harmful and need medical treatment. For example, appendicitis, which can be life-threatening, may lead to a temperature of only 101°F. A harmless inflammation of the throat, in contrast, might result in a temperature of 104°F. The level of fever does not indicate the severity of the underlying infection.

Weight loss is not necessary to totally darken the room. Reduce external stimuli: no television, computer, music, or visitors.



While a medication such as acetaminophen can reduce fever, it is not necessarily the best response to fever in a child.

Tylenol (acetaminophen) is a standard medicine for reducing fever. However, because fever can be a health-promoting response in a child, I recommend that parents not immediately resort to Tylenol to lower a child's temperature. Instead, they should consult with a physician and explore the possibility of allowing the fever to run its natural course. This restraint may well benefit the child in various ways.

Treating a child with a normal fever

Carefully examine your child, note her eyes and facial expressions, breathing, and movements.

Feel her forehead, chest, belly, legs, and feet. Then attend to the following:

Rest

With the first symptoms of a fever illness, such as the child being cold or pale or having a fast heart-beat, place the child in a quiet, safe place—in her bed or on the couch in the living room. Clean the room. Close the windows and curtains, although it

My experience as a pediatrician tells me that fevers ... usher in milestones in the development of the child.

Warmth

In the early stages of a fever, when the child feels cold, provide him with one or more woolen blankets and a hot water bottle for his feet and/or abdomen to help retain body heat. When his body has become warm and the child wants to cool down, remove the warm water bottle and blankets. Ideally, the child should be able to remove the blankets and kick away the water bottle himself.

More care is necessary with very small children who cannot tell you when they want to cool down. To avoid overheating, do not put a bonnet on a small child's head at any time during the two fever cycles. Also, with very small children, I do not recommend the use of warm water bottles or multiple blankets.

Drinks

When fever occurs, drinking liquids is very important. Encourage your child to drink often. When her temperature is increasing and she feels cold, give a warm herbal tea, such as chamomile, linden blossom or elderberry blossom, sweetened, if desired, with honey. In the second phase, when she feels hot, give room-temperature, diluted juices such as fresh-squeezed orange juice, apple, cherry, and lemon. Diluted rice milk at room temperature is also good.

Food

A child with a fever usually doesn't want to eat

much. You can offer her a variety of fresh fruits at room temperature, such as strawberries or raspberries. The food should be easily digestible. Do not give the child foods high in protein or fat, including meat, cheese, eggs, and milk.

Medicine

There are several remedies based on the principles of anthroposophical medicine that help the healing process without suppressing the fever. These are made of natural substances. Chamomile cramp relief suppositories relax the child. Apis belladonna flu relief pellets help with infections. Infludo in dilution accompanies a fever in the right way. For sources of



Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa) is a spiny shrub of the rose family. Its berries have therapeutic value in controlling viruses that may cause fevers.

Lemon Socks

In principle, a fever is helpful in the battle against infections. However, in some situations, lowering the child's body temperature is advisable. For example, in the second phase of a fever, if the temperature rises above 103°F and the whole body is warm, including the feet, and the child is complaining of the warmth, there is a danger of headache or even delirium. In such cases, some cooling of the body can be realized by the following procedure:

1. Put a thick towel on the mattress under the child's legs and feet to prevent the bed from getting wet.
2. Mix half a quart of lukewarm water and the juice of one-half lemon.
3. Take long cotton socks that reach over the calves.
4. Wet the socks with the water/lemon juice mixture and wring them out well.
5. Put the socks on the child's feet, covering the calves as much as possible.
6. Swaddle his feet with a towel or put wool socks on top of the wet socks to prevent the feet from cooling too much.
7. Wait approximately fifteen minutes.

When you remove the socks, they should feel warm and dry.



If necessary, repeat steps 4–7. When the child falls asleep, leave the socks on. If his feet get cold, the socks are probably too wet.

these medicaments, see the resource suggestions at the end of this article.

Supplements

The following are products that help eliminate viruses: Vitamin C, Vitamin A, Vitamin D, zinc, and Blackthorn Elderberry elixir. These are available from the sources listed.

Washing

If it feels good for your child—but only if it feels good—wet his forehead, forearms and hands, and calves and feet with lukewarm, not cold, water. Application of lukewarm water to the forehead does not lower the temperature, but it is comforting. Always tell the child what you are going to do and what you are doing!

Consulting a Physician

While much or even all of the treatment of a normal fever can be done by parents, it is always wise to consult a physician when a child begins to show a fever. As the fever develops, it is of particular importance to consult in the following circumstances:

Fever in an Infant

In general, the younger the child, the more careful one needs to be with fevers. A baby under the age of three months with a temperature higher than 99.3°F should always be seen by a pediatrician. For infants three to nine months old, a temperature over 101.3°F necessitates a visit to the doctor.



The elder (Caprifoliaceae Sambucus) includes a number of small trees and shrubs. Its berries have long been valued in folk medicine and are available today in elixir form.

Dehydration

If the feverish child does not want to drink or is unable to do so, and also is vomiting and/or has diarrhea, there is a danger of dehydration. If an infant is wetting its diaper less frequently or cries without tears, there should be a concern about dehydration. In either case, immediate medical attention is indicated.

Breathing problems

A feverish child whose breathing is faster and/or more superficial than normal should be seen by a pediatrician. The child may have pneumonia.

Symptoms of meningitis

Signs of possible meningitis include: headache, vomiting, stiffness to the extent that the child cannot touch his knees with his nose; small bloodspots that appear on the skin that do not disappear under pressure; difficulty in awakening; grogginess; apathy; and crying that is weak and/or constant. These require an immediate visit to a doctor.

Persistent Fever

A child who has had a fever for more than three days or whose condition deteriorates on the third day, rather than improves, must also see a doctor.

Convulsions

Normally an ill child's temperature will increase slowly. If the temperature rises rapidly, convulsions

may occur. Convulsions are not due to a high fever—usually they occur when the temperature is under 102°F—but to the rate of increase.

Convulsions sometimes occur in children who have been given Tylenol to suppress a fever. After the Tylenol has been eliminated from the child's system and stops suppressing the fever, the temperature may rise rapidly. Convulsions occur in 2–5% of all children with a fever. Usually convulsions cause no harm, but because they resemble an epileptic attack, they usually frighten parents. To be sure of the cause of the convulsions, I recommend that parents always consult a physician.

In conclusion, we can say that fever is often beneficial to a child with a medically nonthreatening infection. The fever activates the immune system and may stimulate both personal and health-related development. Therefore, it is good to have trust in and take time for the healing process. It is important to remain vigilant that the child gets enough rest and adequate fluids during a bout of fever. Above all, monitor your child closely throughout the fever and consult your pediatrician if you feel uncertain or concerned. ☺



ESTER DELHOOFEN is a medical doctor licensed in the Netherlands and currently living there. She has extensive training in anthroposophically extended medicine and many years of professional experience with children from birth to four years of age. Her three children attend Waldorf schools. Ester is the founder of *FloweringChild.com*, a company that sells soft wool and silk undergarments, soft woolen blankets, and sleeping sacks that support the healthy development of babies and young children. www.floweringchild.com

The remedies and special supplements

mentioned in the article are available in North America from two anthroposophically based pharmacies, Uriel Pharmacy (<http://www.urielpharmacy.com>) and from Weleda USA (<http://usa.weleda.com/our-products/index.aspx>).

Neither the writer, nor her company, Flowering Child, have any relationship, business or otherwise, to these companies.

Give Me Shelter!

Housebuilding in the Third Grade

BY BONNIE WILNER

I have taught the third-grade block on shelters three times. With my first group of students—at the Pasadena Waldorf School—I used the block to teach them about living in the world in a practical way. The block culminated in the class building a simple and functional playhouse for the kindergarten yard. With my second group of third graders—at the Sacramento Waldorf School—I broadened the scope of the block. I gave the children many experiences of building shelters. Only then did I assign the individual project: to choose a shelter from around the world, write about it, and build a model.

My third opportunity to teach this block came with my current class at the Santa Fe Waldorf School. While preparing the block, I asked myself the basic question, “Why do we teach about shelters in the third grade in a Waldorf school?” My answer—which I liked—was that the shelters block is really the first geography course the children have in a Waldorf school.

So the block included some history of the development of civilizations, as well as the study of the

people, the natural environment, and their way of life. We began with the biblical story of Adam and Eve being expelled from Paradise and having to live on the earth. The story is an appropriate metaphor for the third graders, since they are going through the nine-year change. They are experiencing the loss of childhood and of innocence and also the birth of a new awareness of themselves as individuals in the world. They are entering a new stage in which they must begin to learn how to take care of themselves. They, metaphorically, must clothe and feed themselves and find shelter, just as Adam and Eve had to do.

I posed a question to the class, “Where, in their surroundings, might Adam and Eve find a place to live?” Like a good class, they came up with the answer I was looking for—“Caves!” I put the class into working pairs, gave them clay and told them I was going to have them construct a model of a cave and the environment surrounding it. We talked about how that environment might look and ways to camouflage and protect themselves in their first shelters. Then I said, “Go,” and the fun began.

The children worked together, forming their caves. They went outside to find materials to depict the landscape around the cave. By the end of main lesson, the projects were proudly displayed around the classroom.

The following day I posed the next question, “What other kind of shelter could Adam and Eve, or other



A third grader carries straw that will help keep rain out of his shelter.



This lean-to consists of an inner frame of tree branches supporting each other and covered with more branches, straw, leaves, and dried plant matter. Sometimes, it is called a debris shelter.

first human beings, live in?” Again, the answer was the right one—“They could have built houses from the trees or branches in the place they were living.”

So we went out to the wooded area beyond the big field of the school. It was filled with fallen branches, leaves, and other great materials for building and insulation. I divided the class into four groups, and



As part of the housebuilding block, the students draw types of shelters from around the world, here a yurt in far-off Mongolia, or...

each group began to build a lean-to. The process took many days of hard work—carrying big branches to the tree that served as a base, gathering many small branches to complete the framing, and finding and carrying armloads of straw and other dried plant material to fill in the holes and insulate each shelter to make it habitable.

Each lean-to had a unique design, but each looked as if it could provide shelter from the rain and cold. When the project was nearly completed, the students assured me that the structures were in fact comfortable and warm and suggested that we spend a night in them. It has taken us a while to realize that ambition, but in the meantime the class has had many wonderful afternoons playing in them.

Since the weather was getting colder, we stayed inside the classroom for our next project. It was a model of a Plains Indian tipi village. Small groups were formed and were given materials to construct a model tipi—fabric, which they could draw symbols on, tipi poles, and string. The finished tipis were placed on a long table set up in the classroom.

We then continued a class conversation that had been started the day before about a tipi and its symbology. We talked about how the Plains people lived and what their environment was like. The class then made the village come alive with men, women, and children, animals, hide tanning stands, a nearby lake, bows and arrows, headdresses—all made in beeswax. It was a creative project that taught as we worked on it.

Next we looked at our own environment in New Mexico. “What do we build with here in New Mexico?” I asked the children. Everyone knew that answer. Imagining the buildings of Santa Fe and looking at the walls of their own classroom, they knew the answer was adobe. The next day the class made adobe bricks. We started at a spot on campus that had some particularly promising-looking dirt. We filled our wheelbarrow with it, added some straw, sand, and water. After it was all mixed together, the students began to fill shoeboxes, brought from home, with the mud mixture. Once the mixture had been packed down, they turned the boxes over and, voilà, adobe bricks. We made about sixty-four bricks. The bricks turned out well. The mud was very sticky, more so than the mud I had used in California. I realized why adobe is so widely used as a building material in New Mexico. It was an “aha” moment for me as a teacher.

In class the children learned about and drew various types of shelters from around the world. We had interesting discussions. For example, after building the caves and lean-tos, I asked the students, “Which



...draw houses created in part, at least, out of their imaginations, as here the “Mushroom House.”

shelter would you prefer to live in and why?” and “What might be some advantages or disadvantages of living in one or the other?” On another day, after looking at pictures of many unique and unusual shelters, we talked about possible ways that the builders of some of these shelters found their ideas for the designs. One boy speculated that his favorite shelter looked as if the builder went for a walk and saw two mushrooms growing side by side and decided to build his house according to that model. It was quite a plausible explanation.

Also, all during this block, each student created a main lesson book and with text and illustrations recorded the process of learning. About a month



Model of a “Blue Home” in Venice on a canal

after the block was finished, the students were given their individual project assignment. They had to do the following:

- choose one type of shelter and gather supplies for building a model of it
- draw a picture of the shelter and its environment
- write a paragraph describing the shelter, its place of origin, and its typical landscape/environment
- draw a picture of the inside of the shelter, including people and furnishings



Model of an American log cabin

- write a paragraph describing the lifestyle of the people and giving the reasons they chose this type of shelter
- build the shelter on an 18 inch by 18 inch cardboard or plywood base

The models were remarkable and included the following types of shelter: yurt, tree house, stilt house, underground Hogan, thatched Masai hut, Venetian canal house, Spanish/Granadan cave dwelling, and log cabin.

Each time I have taught the shelter block, I have felt that the children had a valuable, hands-on experience of the basic human activity of creating a place protected from the elements. I felt that the most recent approach was particularly successful, since it incorporated elements of history, geography, and ecology, as well as the experience of making shelters from local materials. I feel it helped the children become aware of and related to their environment in a new way. ☺



BONNIE WILNER is in her twentieth year of Waldorf class teaching and is currently teaching fourth grade at the Santa Fe Waldorf School. She enjoys the beauty, magical feel, and big sky of the Santa Fe area while hiking and gardening. She quilts, participates in Native American ceremony, and as a former lead singer in a touring band, she still loves to sing folk, blues, and rock 'n' roll.



How You Are Like Eagles

Thought, Imagination, and Fourth-Grade Nature Study

BY JACK PETRASH

It was a perfect fourth-grade question: “Who is the fastest runner in the class?” The hands shot up. I knew they would. Fourth graders divide their classes like fractions into a wide array of categories, the fastest runner being just one of them.

“Matthew” was the first answer that came from the students, and there were nods of agreement throughout the classroom.

“Who’s second?” I asked.

“Lydia is the second fastest.” Again there were nods of agreement, no dissension.

“Third?” I continued.

“Ben,” they said.

“Okay,” I said, “if I were to ask Matthew to stand by the window of our classroom and, when I said ‘Go,’ to run across the blacktop, touch the fence, turn around and run back, how long do you think it would take him?”

The students thought for a few seconds, and then the hands went up again.

“Sixty-five seconds,” one student suggested.

“No, that’s too long,” came an immediate reply.

“Forty seconds.”

“Twenty-seven seconds,” an exacting student offered.

I wrote all of the times up on the board and then said something that I knew would make this lesson memorable.

“Matthew, stand up. I want you to *climb out* of the classroom window and, when I say ‘Go,’ you are to run across the blacktop, touch the fence, and run all the way back. But first, who has a watch with a stopwatch?” (There is always a fourth-grade boy with one of these!)

Matthew climbed out the window while envious classmates looked on. He waited for his signal and raced across the playground and was back in thirty-two seconds. Lydia went next. Her time was thirty-five seconds. Ben was third, and his time was thirty-seven seconds.

Of course, there were more students who wanted a turn, both to run and to climb out the window, but we needed to move on. I had a lesson in mind, and all of this was just the beginning.

I started my Waldorf teaching career nearly forty years ago, and I can’t always remember where I get my ideas for lessons. So many conversations have faded in my memory that I have started to think that these ideas are mine. But the lesson I wanted to impart on this day I knew originated with Dorothy Harrer.

Dorothy Harrer was a master class teacher for many years at the Rudolf Steiner School in New York City back in the 1950s and 1960s. Her imaginative and effective methods of presenting the Waldorf curriculum have been preserved in a series of books on teaching mathematics, English, and other subjects. The lesson I was planning to use in our fourth-grade study of the eagle came from Harrer’s book *Nature Ways in Story and Verse*.

Now I was ready to ask my students the next question. “Can anyone think of a way to get to the fence and back more quickly?” I scanned the faces of my students, and I could see by the look on one student’s face that I had not been precise enough with my question.

“But you cannot use a machine,” I added.

The student in question sighed with exasperation. He had been thinking “motorcycle.” However, his spirits revived instantly.

“Bicycle,” he said.

He was disappointed when I informed him that the bicycle is also a machine even though it doesn’t have a motor. Now the rest of the class was puzzled as well.

Then a quiet girl who sat in the back of the room calmly raised her hand. When she answered, I realized once again how perceptive and thoughtful these quiet children can be.

"With my eyes," she said, "I can look at the fence and look back to the school instantly."

I smiled and then said to her, "But what if I had asked Matthew to run all the way down the hill to where the first grade plays at recess? What if I had asked him to go to a place that you couldn't see? How could you get there quickly?"

Another thoughtful child in the back of the room raised her hand.

"In my imagination," she said. "In my imagination I could go to the first-grade playground and back in an instant."

Now we were at the place where we could really begin Dorothy Harrer's lesson. I asked the children to close their eyes and to imagine that they were all outside the classroom, as Matthew and Lydia and Ben had been. Then I asked them to imagine themselves in the air above the school, something they had done when they had made their map of the school grounds—also part of the fourth-grade curriculum.

"And now," I said, "imagine yourself flying west above the blacktop. Look down; there are the basketball courts and the trees by the first-grade playground. Let's cross the Potomac River. We are over the Commonwealth of Virginia. Look up, you see the mountains in the distance. Those are the Blue Ridge Mountains. Let's keep going."



Jack Petrash and his fourth-grade class on a field trip to Port Isobel Island in Chesapeake Bay

us lies the prairie. Far up above rises the top of the cliff. Here on the ledge we find that a bird has its dwelling, which looks like a giant robin's nest. Sitting in the nest are three strange-looking young birds, already bigger than any robin. We hear the sound of wings beating in the air. As we are only here in thought, we are invisible, and the great bird that soars down to the nest doesn't even see us. And life goes on as if we weren't there at all. The big bird has a body that is almost as long as Neal is tall. Its wings spread out so far on each side that we could lay a yardstick down three times from one wing tip to the other. Now we know that it is an eagle.

In its great, hooked claws the eagle carries a fat, but lifeless, jackrabbit. This it lays before the young birds, who crouch and spread their small wings

In a Waldorf school, we are continually helping the children understand what it means to be a human being.

I continued to describe our imaginative journey across West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois—states that, as I told them, we would study in fifth grade. We crossed the Mississippi and looked down on the Great Plains. Finally, we could see the Rocky Mountains in the distance. From this point on, the lesson was pure Dorothy Harrer:

Let's let our quick, wakeful thought make its way, now, in this instant, to the high mountain cliff that rises up above the prairie way off to the west, farther than the eye can see, or legs can run. Let's go to the rocky ledge, like a platform, where the storms have made the rock break away. Far below

and utter squeals of excitement; but they do not approach the rabbit. The mother bird then stands on the dead rabbit and with her strong, hooked beak begins to tear it into pieces, swallowing some herself and passing some with her beak over to the beaks of her children. Each one of the eaglets patiently awaits his turn. It isn't long before the rabbit has disappeared entirely.

Just as the meal is over, the father eagle soars down from the blue sky, carrying in one foot a dead mole, which he soon disposes of with a few sharp strokes of his beak.

The Pentathlon and Fifth-Grade Heroes and Heroines

BY ANNAJO DOERR



Athena and Zeus greet the athletes.

In ancient Greece, the separate, often warring, city-states periodically observed an *ekécheiria*, a “laying down of arms,” or truce. Its purpose was to allow the outstanding athletes of the various states to gather and display their strength, stamina, and athletic skills. The central event in these games was the pentathlon, from *penta* (five) and *athlon* (contest), which includes the throwing of the javelin and discus, wrestling, running, and the long jump.

In the Waldorf curriculum, the fifth grade includes the study of ancient Greece. The children study its history, literature, and art. They read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* and learn a bit of the ancient Greek language. They put on a play taken from that ancient time and place. They also experience Greek culture physically, training, as did the youth of that time, in the five events of the pentathlon. This training is fitting, since in their physical development the children have reached an apex. Having passed through the rapid growth of early childhood and not yet subject to the awkwardness of adolescence, they typically possess a harmonious balance of strength and grace. Also, there are no significant differences in capacities between the boys and the girls.

Training for the pentathlon involves the mastery of five distinct events. The training develops strength, stamina, coordination, and speed. It also fosters self-confidence and a sense of self-worth in the children.

The Greeks believed that the events prepared their young people for the challenges of war and of life. Now, as then, preparation for the pentathlon fosters capacities that will serve the young person in the future. Each event has its particular physical demands and also its lesson in geometry.

The javelin is a long and straight weapon. As an object in itself and as a tool for training, it teaches its user about the upright, the vertical. Thrown well, it can describe a beautiful arc in the air and can stick in the ground at a precise, pleasing, geometric angle. The javelin thrower learns that his or her movements in the throw affect the flight and landing of the javelin.

The discus is a round, compact, slippery weapon. It teaches its user about circles and rhythm. It can fly in a soaring arc with a steady spin and cleanly slice the air or it can wobble in flight and bounce erratically upon landing. The thrown discus can deliver a prayer to the ancient gods or it can whimper in its flight.



Coordination and strength are needed to send the discus spinning in an elegant arc into the distance.

Greek wrestling requires strength, flexibility, steadfastness, and a willingness to exert oneself to the utmost. In the standing “embrace” that begins each match, the wrestler looks into the mysterious pools of his opponent’s eyes. The match is an opportunity to experience one’s own strength but also the strength and being of another.

The short sprint race tests for speed and efficiency of stride. The runner must accelerate quickly, glide rather than bounce over the ground, and hold speed through the finish line. A race of forty yards requires focus. One cannot be distracted or intimidated by one’s opponents at the starting line.

The long jump has three parts: running, leaping, and landing. The jumper must reach the jumping line at full speed. She leaps and in the brief moment of flight must organize her body to get the maximum distance. In the landing, she must be careful not to fall backward. The event is framed by the moments of silence before the run and after the landing. The whole sequence should be like a line of exquisite poetry.

Toward the end of the school year, it is usual that the fifth-grade students from the Waldorf schools in an area gather for a day or two to reenact the athletic games of ancient Greece, to emulate the heroes of that time. The children depart from their school routine, travel to a distant place, meet and get to know fifth graders from other schools. They have a chance to display their strength and skill before their peers and others and to be celebrated and honored.

The fifth graders from Waldorf schools in the northern Midwest gather each May for two days at a



The running long jump requires concentration from the start of the run to the landing and beyond.

camp facility in southwest Wisconsin. They put aside their school and class identity and become citizens of a Greek city-state—such as Athens or Sparta or Corinth. Students from the different schools become fellow citizens for the duration of the games.

The Pentathlon begins with an opening ceremony in a circle and a blessing received from the gods Zeus and Athena. The students strive in their newly formed groups to work together, support one another, witness one another’s athletic prowess, and celebrate one another’s achievements in the two-day experience they have together. Thus the joy in shared athletic activity and the pedagogical wisdom that lived in ancient Greece live today in Waldorf schools. ☺



The javelin encourages uprightness in stature and perhaps in character.



ANNAJO DOERR was a student participant at the first pentathlon event held by Waldorf schools in the Midwest region in 1990. A graduate of the Spacial Dynamics Institute, she has been the movement teacher at Three Rivers Waldorf School in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, since 2006. AnnaJo has been and is currently active in supporting pentathlons in the Midwest, Southwest, and around the world. She was a member of the Spacial Dynamics team that hosted the “Hands in Peace” events in Ecuador in 2004 and in China in 2006. Hands in Peace runs pentathlon events for intercultural groups internationally. More information at www.handsinpeace.org

Then, as the mother settles down and draws her eaglets under her great wings, the father perches on the rim of the ledge. He scans the sky as if on the lookout for any enemy that might sail down upon them. He peers downward toward the prairie as if to spy out another meal moving among the grasses far below.

As I describe the eagle lifting up and rising on the warm air currents, I tell the children how the eagle is a kin of the air, how its feathers have air within them, as do its bones, and how it even has small air-filled sacs within its body. I describe how, as the eagle rises high above the land, it can with its keen vision spot prey hundreds of feet below. “The eagle,” I say to the children, “has remarkable eyesight. I have been told that if an eagle could read, it could read a newspaper from a quarter of a mile away.” When I finish saying this, the eagle draws in its wings and plummets toward the earth like a bolt of lightning, grasps the prey with those sharp talons and carries it away. Finally I say to the class:

Do you know, children, how you are like an eagle? It is in your thinking that you can see so clearly. It is in your thinking and your imagination that you can soar to such heights and move from one place to another in an instant. It is in your thought-filled, wide-awake mind that you are like eagles.

That was my moment of insight, and I wondered why it had been so long in coming. In a Waldorf school, we

are continually helping the children understand what it means to be a human being. We teach many subjects and develop a wide array of capacities, but that understanding is the underlying aim. I realize that above our school entrance there is a sign, written in invisible letters, like that in Plato’s Academy: “Human being, know thyself.” What else should a school based on Anthroposophy—the wisdom of the human being—offer its students?

I had started out to teach the children about the eagle. But, in the end, they also learned something about themselves as human beings, that in their capacity for imagination and thought, they have the power and strength of that magnificent ruler of the skies. ☉



JACK PETRASH is currently the sixth-grade teacher at the Washington Waldorf School. He is also the director of the Nova Institute (www.novainstitute.org), an organization working with parent and teacher education and teacher renewal. Jack is the author of *Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out* and *Covering Home: Lessons on the Art of Fathering from the Game of Baseball*. Over the years, Jack’s articles have appeared in *Renewal* and the *Washington Post*, and his audio segments have been broadcast on National Public Radio.

Make Way for Reading: Great Books for Kindergarten through Grade 8

Compiled and edited by Karen Latimer and Pamela J. Fenner

Make Way for Reading is a celebration of books and the formative, creative role that books can play in the life and development of a child. As Eugene Schwartz writes in his introduction, “Books can have a powerful effect on the changing *consciousness* of a child and can serve as instruments of initiation into successive stages of life. Books such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Fellowship of the Ring* ... have awakened an entire generation and set before it a new vista of life.”

Karen Latimer is a retired Waldorf teacher. Pamela J. Fenner is head of Michaelmas Press, a leading Waldorf-oriented publisher. They have created an annotated catalogue of wholesome, age-appropriate books for children.

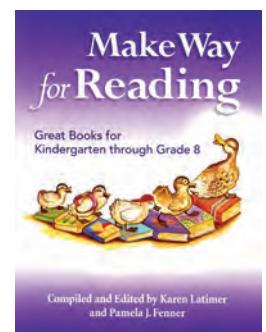
The first part of the book covers picture books. It includes sections for books for grades 1–3, 4–5, and 6–8. In each section the books are noted alphabetically, so in the grades 6–8 section it goes from *Across Five Aprils*

(a coming-of-age story set during the Civil War) to *The Yearling*. Each book listing includes a descriptive paragraph.

Subsequent sections of the book deal with biographies; myths, legends, and folklore; and celebrations, games, music, and crafts. There is a separate index for authors, titles, illustrators, and series of books.

The authors have created a compendium of wholesome books that can be read to children and/or read by children. *Make Way for Reading* is an invaluable resource for teachers and parents.

Michaelmas Press, Amesbury, MA, 2012 • 328 pages • \$17.95



Idealism and Humanity

Ninth Graders Create Workable Societies

BY PAUL GIERLACH

The Waldorf ninth-grade history block typically focuses on the events and developments of humanity in the twentieth century. Eighteen years ago, I had a ninth-grade class that would not have responded well to such a block. They needed something practical. So I designed a student-centered block that helps the students to identify their ideals and to explore the challenges of manifesting ideals in human society. I hoped that this would help prepare them for their responsibilities as individuals and as citizens.

The block, “Idealism and Humanity,” has been a success. Students often refer to it as their favorite—and most challenging—study block. The parents who attend the concluding presentations, often are amazed and delighted to see their son or daughter evincing a new thoughtfulness and maturity. History teachers at other Waldorf high schools in North America have used the block, and it has generated interest in the international Waldorf world.

The block lasts three or four weeks and occurs at the end of the school year. On the first day of the block I give the students an overview of the process and the task. They are to work in small, independent, unsupervised groups. They may not exile any member of the group. Their task is to decide on a set of shared ideals and to create a society, situated in a particular geographical location with the various elements of a real society, one that expresses the shared ideals of the group. They do not have to prepare a main lesson book or take a final test. At the



Ninth graders at the San Francisco Waldorf High School stand proudly behind a model of their imaginary land of Wahali.

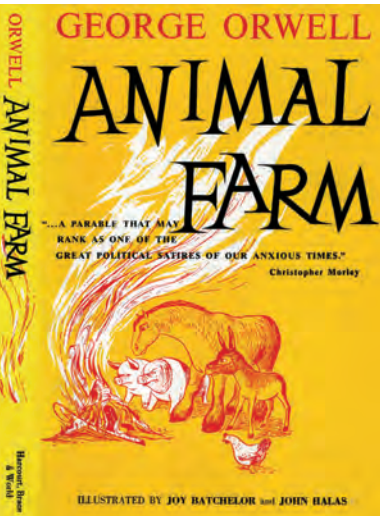
society in terms of three areas of activity. This is based on Rudolf Steiner’s analysis of human society as a threefold organism, consisting of a cultural sphere, an economic sphere, and a political sphere. Steiner observed that these three areas each has its own tasks and principles, and yet the three are all interrelated. We look at the various activities and institutions of human society and decide into which category they fall. We make three lists. Students always have a hard time placing the military in this construct.

Waldorf Education is a pedagogy that must change and adapt to meet the needs and expectations of each generation of students.

end of the block, each group will make a one-hour presentation of their “society” to an audience consisting of parents, peers, teachers, and school staff. Each member of each group will speak. Throughout, computer use for the project will be minimal.

To help the students comprehend the constituent forces and elements of a human society, we look at

We also explore what an ideal is and what our ideals are. The students write down their definitions of an ideal and list their personal ideals. I then write them on the board and we discuss them. The ideals typically include education for everyone, equal opportunity for everyone, peace and harmony rather than polarization, sufficient material wealth for all, and the



In Orwell's classic fable, the farm animals get rid of the farmer but soon find themselves oppressed by Napoleon and the other pigs.

protection of the natural environment—in effect, a happy, healthy, peaceful life for all. I tell them that they will have a chance to look at these ideals again when we review the block on the last day. Then the question will be: Does your society incorporate your listed ideals?

For the last ten years, I have told the story of the forty-seven *rōnin* from seveneenth-century Japan. A feudal lord is humiliated by another lord in the imperial court and is forced to commit hara-kiri. His retainers, now rendered *rōnin*, or

masterless samurai, vow to avenge him at all costs. They endure years of hardship and privation but in the end are successful. The forty-seven surviving warriors then all commit hara-kiri together. The students encounter the question of loyalty, the complexity of duty, and the moral ambiguity, for a Western person, of hara-kiri.

We also look at *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's 1945 novel, which we have read the previous month. This satirical fable is about an ideal-driven revolution that issues in a totalitarian society. The message for the students is simple yet crucial: be vigilant, lest your society become the opposite of what you intended it to be.

The groups of four-to-six students are randomly chosen. The students pick colored chits of paper out of a hat. There is no switching or trading, and students must stay and work with their group even if difficulties arrive. Every year there is a vital sense of chaos at the end of this class period, a chaos engendered by this particular lesson. Since we are creating something, and since all societies begin out of chaos, expectation, and indecision, I take the turbulence and sense of uncertainty to be a good sign.

Every year a student or two approaches me at the end of the first class, assures me that she cannot work with someone in her group, even though they've tried to be friends, and requests to be moved. I almost never agree.

There is always an interesting tension during the next two days. I am determined to give them some

historical models of the interaction of ideals, individuals, and societies, and the students just want to get on with their work.

Before the students start working together on their own and unsupervised, I stress two things. First, they are responsible for their behavior. I don't want to hear complaints about them from other teachers. Second, they are to be creative—to create new forms for governing themselves (political sphere), new ways to create, use and exchange goods (economic sphere), and new social connections and expressions (cultural sphere). They all know already what exists around us. Now they need to imagine an original society in which they can live.



An aerial view of Wahali, where the people live in close connection to Earth, caring for it as it cares for them

Every day for the next weeks, the students work together, creating a society and culture. The project spills over into their lives outside of school. Parents typically play a role in the process. Many will host weekend gatherings of their child's project group at which three-dimensional geographic models are created out of clay or foam, costumes are sewn, and other preparations made. Parents often report that they have had long and lively discussions with their children about the society the group is creating.

I include myself into the society-creating phase of the block by making two announced appearances. The first comes as soon as a group feels confident about its forms. I tell them that because of an unforeseen natural catastrophe, their society has been partially destroyed and their capital lies in ruins. I name a cause specific and appropriate for their

geographical location. I say: “Countless numbers of your people are dead or dying, and survivors are in jeopardy. What are you going to do now?” Every now and then a group anticipates a catastrophe as an idea, but never in its full potential scope. No group has ever truly confronted the possibility before my “destructive” visit.

I make a constructive appearance as well. I say the following: “You need to make your society sensible and viable. Here is a standard. Explain to yourselves how a child is conceived, born, raised, employed, and retired in your society. Give the process from birth to death. If you know all that comes between these markers, you know quite a bit about your society.” Some groups find this structure so helpful that they use it during their presentation.

The envisioned societies vary greatly. They range from a sparsely populated large island, dependent on agriculture and the export of a single plant-based medicament, to futuristic, technology-based societies. Each society has a name, often exotic or whimsical. It has a particular location and configuration that is represented on a map. It has flora and fauna, a distinct form of dress, a flag, a constitution, particular architecture, modes of transportation, cuisine, and a creation myth that is usually expressed in song and dance.

Then come the presentations. Each group has about one hour to explain its society’s existence. Everyone speaks, usually according to an outline or text that guides but should not control them, for each needs to learn to move beyond the facts so that others can feel the reality of the imagination. There are no exceptions; every student makes a presentation. Once all the presenters have spoken, they

need to respond to questions from the audience of peers, parents, and available teachers. The parents in particular can be relied on to ask fair and provocative questions.

Only during the presentations do the students really notice a

fact that lies near the heart of the “Idealism and Humanity” block: All the work they did, which they thought was for themselves, actually was for others, for the audience.

The overall mood of the gathering is almost always one of celebration, of joy, awe, and appreciation. At the end, we clean up, gather the visuals, and save them for next year’s school open house.

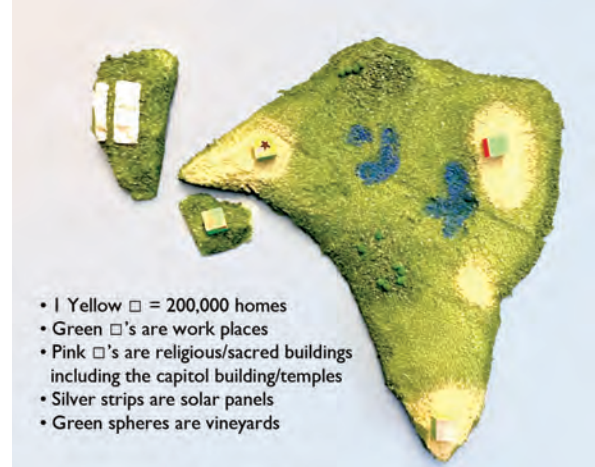
The block concludes with a class-period-long evaluation. We discuss how things went and then look at the ideals each student held on the first day, before there were groups, and check if their society incorporated their ideals into its structure.

Finally, I have the students fill out a questionnaire that not only probes the inner workings of the groups but also elicits suggestions for the future. I tell them that the block will be offered next year.

Waldorf Education is a pedagogy that must change and adapt to meet the needs and expectations of each generation of students. I have noticed that the students of 2012 are very different from the students of 1994. This kind of student-centered block that challenges the students, asks them to be creative and thoughtful; to work together with fellow students (even those they don’t get along with); to deal with real, practical issues; to supervise themselves; to learn without the presence of the teacher—a block that forces them beyond their comfort level—can be an important part of the evolving Waldorf pedagogy. ☺



PAUL GIERLACH has been a Waldorf teacher for over thirty years. He has been a grade school teacher, high school teacher, educator in teacher training programs. He currently works as an educational support coordinator and humanities teacher at the San Francisco Waldorf High School.



The island of Pax (Peace), which includes schools, vineyards, a hospital, a military base, and massive solar panels for energy



The society of Haiz, spanning the Amazon River, living sustainably off the land, and having as its motto “The Circle of Life”

A *Parzival* Immersion Experience

Starting a High School Study Block with a One-day Intensive

BY RALPH DOANE



The summer of 2005 was the first summer of my Waldorf high school teacher training at Rudolf Steiner College. Under the guidance of veteran teacher Betty Staley, we were studying *Parzival*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's medieval epic of personal transformation, as part of the eleventh-grade curriculum. We were supposed to have read it in advance, but in keeping with a main theme of the eleventh grade—procrastination—I had not done so. As a result, just before the first class, I had to give myself a crash course, learning who all the characters were, where it took place, and how everything was related, and then try to look and sound knowledgeable in class. That first day, we were with Betty from 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. with a few breaks. In other words, I had a total immersion experience.

Despite the rigorous schedule, being stuck with the same group of people, and Sacramento's unforgiving heat, I came away from that day with a deep experience of the book and its meaning. This intense encounter with the Middle Ages and the *Parzival* story was the inspiration for a research project about high school teaching that was also part of the training. My thesis was that high school juniors could really benefit from a full-day immersion at the start of the *Parzival* block and that the experience would be the basis for a deep understanding of the book and its significance. This project fulfilled my aim, which was to explore something that was relevant to teaching and that could be applied to other areas of the Waldorf curriculum. Colleague Thom Schaefer and I designed a *Parzival* block starting off with a full-day experience.

The day required organizing long in advance. Besides planning the class, several schedules needed rearranging, substitute teachers were enlisted, and room assignments were adjusted.

We teachers worked together for several weeks, creating large graphic depictions of the family lineages of the characters as well as a map of the times—on which, as the block progressed, the students wrote

important place names. We gathered props, created name cards, devised games and activities, and got handouts and scripts ready. We also outfitted the students and ourselves with period costumes from the school's costume room, so that on the day the ambiance of the era could be created.

For the morning verse on the first day and for the rest of the block, we adapted something written by Karl König, founder of Camphill, the community movement for persons with special needs. We felt that this verse beautifully connected the themes of *Parzival* to the modern-day world:

There is a knighthood of the twenty-first [originally twentieth] century whose riders do not ride through the darkness of physical forces, as of old, but through the forest of darkened minds. They are armed with a spiritual armor, and an inner sun makes them radiant. Out of them shines healing, healing that flows from the knowledge of the human being as a spiritual being. They must create inner order, inner justice, peace, and conviction in the justice of our time.

In the course of the school day, from 8:20 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., we covered various aspects of life in the Middle Ages. Separate segments dealt with the geographical and historical contexts, kings and kingdoms, the royal courts, patronage and feudalism, minnesingers, the relationship of the kings to the emperor, the relationships of these rulers to the Church, and the three main religions relevant to the story—Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

The presentation of the medieval Code of Chivalry was



A modern Wolfram recounts part of the *Parzival* epic at the medieval banquet.

particularly enjoyable. We made it into a dramatic exercise, asking the students in pairs or small groups to prepare short scenes demonstrating the ideals and practices of knighthood. They did so with humor and dramatic flair. The costumes, props, and the imagination and creativity of the students combined to create strong impressions of the knightly virtues and of courtly life. It was great fun and was followed by a discussion of modern behavioral, moral, and ethical codes.

We read sections of the original German text as well as the modern translation. However, we used a process called “Readers Theater,” in which students read an adapted script (developed by Thom Schaefer) and instilled it with dramatic style, to cover the first chapters of *Parzival*. Simply reading the text out loud would have been time-consuming and not as interesting. This quickly allowed students to



After the meal, students enjoy a dance of the period as parents look on.

become acquainted with the characters and the plot. Here is an excerpt:

Narrator: “He peered through the greenery and saw the cause of the commotion. A group of armed knights with glorious hauberks, shining helmets, and mail entered into the clearing.”

Parzival: “God’s pardon! These are not devils, these are angels. And the one in front is more fair than even his companions. He must be the Lord himself.”

Narrator: “He threw himself out of the thicket and onto the ground in front of the lead horse.”

1st Knight: “Stay back. This young lad has fallen down from fear. I’m afraid if we all approach him at once he’ll die of fright and how will I be able to ask him my questions. Don’t be afraid.”

Parzival: “I’m not. You’re God, aren’t you?”

1st Knight: “God? Me? Not at all. Not by my faith. Not at all.”

Parzival: “What are you then?”

1st Knight: “I’m a knight.”

Parzival: “I don’t know what that means. But you’re more beautiful than God. I want to be just like you and shine like the sun.”



Parzival in his red armor

Besides taking on reading roles in the Readers Theater, students were assigned roles for the whole block.

Some of the assigned roles were not what the students expected. We challenged them in different ways and tried to bring elements of a student’s character into play. One year, Parzival was played by a young woman. The students should realize that Parzival’s quest is a universal, human quest, not only a male quest.

It was important to bring physical movement into the long day. We did eurythmy relevant to the theme, used the chivalric displays as opportunities for some prancing about, and had cocktail-party-like mingling, with the various characters discovering their relationships and acquaintanceships. We also enjoyed some friendly jousting.

Each jousting encounter had three stages. In the first, two students faced each other with their feet one behind the other. Both held onto a wooden pole and, moving their feet, pushed or pulled the “lance” to knock the other person off balance or to allow the other to unhorse him or herself! Stage two was a sword fight. The combatants faced each other, each standing with one foot between the other’s feet. They both held onto a shorter pole and tried to throw the other off balance with sideways jabs and parries—pushes, pulls, and letting-go’s! The third stage of the battle was hand-to-hand combat. Each tried to make the opponent fall backward or forward by increasing and decreasing the push against the other’s hands.



The first year’s event included a medieval banquet with parents in the evening. It was a lot of work, but was a memorable occasion. Emulating Wolfram, students recited summaries of the *Parzival* chapters we had covered that day! There was music of the

age played on harp, cello, and violin, as well as singing. There was also juggling and a eurythmy piece. A parent familiar with medieval German portrayed King Amfortas, reading poetry of the time.

The evening banquet made for a very long day, and in some subsequent years we have had instead a festive breakfast with the parents on the following morning. The more modern event features bagels, cream cheese, and fruit.

At one banquet, the king stood up, slammed his hand on the table, and railed against the guests for their lack of understanding, then, overwrought, rushed out of the room. Many were left gaping, but the incident depicted the seriousness of Parzival's inadequacy, of his failure to ask the suffering king, "What ails thee, Uncle?" We reflected on this later, and the theme

of gratitude came up. Had those, including parents, who had created and organized the day been thanked sufficiently? Had the student knights asked the right question?

The *Parzival* block is also an opportunity for relating the language classes to the morning lesson. In my German classes we read excerpts from the original *Parzival* and look at examples of medieval German poetry, such as this excerpt from "Under der Linden" by Walther von der Vogelweide (c. 1170–1230 AD):

*under der linden an der heide,
dâ unser zweier bette was,
dâ muget ir vinden
schône beide gebrochen bluomen
unde gras.
vor dem walde in einem tal—
tandaradei!
schône sanc diu nahtegal*

Under the linden tree
On the heath,
Where we had shared a place of rest,
Still you may find there,
Lovely together,
Flowers crushed and grass down-pressed.
Beside the forest in the vale,
Tandaradéi,
Sweetly sang the nightingale.



A student harpist helps create an atmosphere of regal elegance at the banquet.



The eleventh graders in period costume

After the one-day intensive, we ask the students to evaluate various aspects of the day, as well as its overall value. The results of these surveys have been overwhelmingly positive. The students affirm that the day helped them to get to know the story and the characters and to get an experience of the period, that the day was fun, and that the same process could be applied to other morning (main) lesson blocks.

In my opinion, other high school study blocks that would benefit from an initial one-day total immersion include, but are not limited to:

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust*,
Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*,
Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*,
Anatomy and Physiology, Botany (perhaps with a field trip), The Renaissance, World War I, World War II, History of Art, History of Music, Architecture. ☺



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The Archangel Michael and Michaelmas

The archangel Michael (“He who is like God”) is revered in the three major monotheistic religious traditions. In the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the book of Daniel, Michael is recognized as the special protector of the Jewish people. (In Hebrew, the name is pronounced “My-ky-el,” and that pronunciation is still sometimes used.) In the New Testament book of Revelation, Michael’s key role in the great battle in heaven is described. It is Michael who overpowers the rebellious angel Satan (described as a dragon) and his allies and throws them from the heavens onto Earth. Michael is mentioned also in the Koran as an angelic being closely connected to Allah.

According to Rudolf Steiner, Michael is the guiding spirit of our current age and today is playing a central role in the evolution and development of the human race. The archangel is characterized by clarity of thought, courage in the face of evil, initiative, and a strong will. Michael does not intrude into human affairs. Rather, he waits patiently for us to conceive a worthy initiative and stands ready to help us when we have begun it.

The feast of the archangel Michael in the Christian year occurs on September 29. Dr. Steiner held that the proper celebration of this day—Michaelmas—is very important for our time. Hence, from the birth of Waldorf Education, Michaelmas has been observed as a festival in Waldorf schools around the world. An essential element in the event is a dramatic reenactment of the earthly parallel to Michael’s expulsion of Satan, namely the battle between Saint George and the dragon. Saint George was a third-century soldier traveling through present-day Libya. In the story, a dragon is terrorizing the city of Silene, demanding that the citizens

offer up their children to be eaten. Saint George slays the dragon, thus saving the beautiful daughter of the king, chosen by lot to be the next devoured. The king, his daughter, and all their subjects convert to Christianity.

Now as in the past, the story can be seen as a metaphor relevant to each human being. The dragon can be thought of as representing the forces of evil in the world. The dragon may also be understood to be the dark elements within ourselves, our shadow self, where abide selfishness, greed, lust, the potential for violence. The beast, whom Saint George—our higher self—encounters, is both external and internal.

In recent years, many Waldorf schools, in North America at least, have struggled with the question, should the dragon be slain or should it rather be tamed and somehow redeemed? The following article describes how Portland Waldorf School in Oregon has dealt with this issue. Founded almost thirty years ago, the school today includes pre-kindergarten through grade twelve and is located on a seven-acre campus just south of the city.

—R.E.K.



Above: The archangel Michael
At bottom of page: Saint George and the dragon (both Russian icons)

To Slay or Tame the Dragon?



A Michaelmas Dilemma

BY ELIZABETH WEBBER

At Portland Waldorf School, the Michaelmas play and the fate of the dragon have evolved over the past three decades. The narrative of this development is a compelling one of reflection, inspiration, collaboration, and change. It is a tale of faculty, students, alumni, and parents, inspired by a story, and working in support of that story and its meaning.

The narrative has three elements. The first is the evolution of the physical design and structure of the Michaelmas dragon and how the structure expresses and supports the meaning of the play. The second is the evolution of the fate of the dragon. The



third element is the creative collaboration among members of the school community, engaging with one another, living into questions and breathing meaning into them, considering archetypal stories, and participating in the growth of ideas and in the process of change.

In the first Michaelmas festival at Portland Waldorf School, in 1991, the dragon was made from painted sheets and was challenging to maneuver. The sixth-grade parents and students fabricated a dragon out of flexible pipe, painted bed sheets, and chicken wire. In the play, the knight killed the dragon. The younger students remained inside the school, engaged in other activities.



Saint George receiving his sword, which has been forged by the gnomes

When the school moved to its permanent home in 2002, there was an initiative to create a celebratory Michaelmas that would involve the entire school community. Faculty members Katherine Pomeroy

and Nancy Pierce carried this impulse. A sculptural dragon with a painted papier-mâché head and velour body was created. That year, Saint George did not kill the dragon, but rather “tamed” him. This allowed the younger children to be present. This nonviolent version, though, was unsatisfying, having little drama and no climactic resolution.

Each spring, the school’s College of Teachers has a conversation with each graduating high school senior. The seniors share their challenges and appreciations and are asked what they would change about their education or the school. One student brought up the topic of Michaelmas



Being a gnome has its ups and downs.



Saint George subdues the dragon.

and the dragon. The young man, who had begun to deeply explore Anthroposophy, had strong and vivid memories of the knight’s strength and the conquest of the dragon. The Michaelmas play had been very meaningful to him as a child. He said that by merely taming the dragon, the school was weakening a powerful metaphor. The killing of the dragon, he felt, was crucial to the meaning of the play.

After much thought and deliberation, the school faculty decided that once again Saint George would slay the dragon in the Michaelmas play. This was not a frivolous decision. The impulse was to emphasize eliminating the forces of evil—dramatically slaying them—rather than allowing them to live on and having to contend with them indefinitely.

However, when the new version was presented, a parent objected to the depiction of the slaying of the dragon, and asked that the school return to the “taming” version. The faculty were frustrated by the challenge, but chose to reconsider the issue.

At the same time, Pomeroy was reconsidering the design and construction of the dragon. The play was rooted in eurythmy, yet the papier-mâché dragon did not move gracefully. It was cumbersome and stiff, and its tail dragged sluggishly. Through the collaborative work of Pomeroy, colleagues, students, and alumni, a new dynamic dragon was created. A new tail—one that could bounce in an animated fashion—was fashioned from flexible pipe and external frame backpacks. The head was made of fabric stretched over a rattan reed and bamboo frame, allowing it to be more dynamic as well. This fulfilled Pomeroy’s vision of a mask, rather than a costume.

The latest incarnation of the dragon made its debut in fall 2011, on the school grounds. The

entire school is involved in the play in a way that is developmentally appropriate and rooted in the curriculum. While first graders sit with their eighth-grade buddies, second graders are gnomes who forge swords, third graders are farmers and villagers, fourth graders represent the meteor shower bringing iron from the cosmos, and sixth graders act as the chorus and bear the flags. The high school students carry the story. Pomeroy matches students' temperaments with the story's archetypes, casting the knight, king, queen, princess, and the royal court from the twelfth grade. And, because tenth grade is an emotionally turbulent time, the tenth-grade eurythmists act as the dragon, as well as some of the beings of darkness and light.



Beings of light start the transformation of the dragon with eurythmic movements.

The play has two levels of performance and meaning: the cosmic battle between light and darkness and the earthly battle between Saint George and the dragon. Faculty eurythmists also represent the forces of darkness and light. And, the dragon is now *transformed* by the dramatic and emotional battle between the forces of good and evil, then guided offstage by beings of light. This version leaves room for imaginative interpretation.

Teachers, students, parents, and community members sit on the hill by the garden and watch, while children in the early childhood program gaze from a distance—in crowns and plant-dyed silk capes, hands grasping the wooden fence in awe.

One of the key elements in the process that has led to the current, satisfying, but still evolving version of

the festival has been the collaboration of many individuals. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, and even members of the broader community have contributed.

“One of my favorite things in life is collaborating artistically with others,” says Pomeroy. “I really feel this is one of the things Waldorf Education is doing to change the world—educating people to be able to collaborate with one another.”



Inside the head of the dragon

Peter Durrant is a 2008 graduate and now a student at the Rhode Island School of Design, who worked on the recent redesign of the dragon. Peter echoes Pomeroy's sentiment: “One of the strengths of the school is the close connection between students and faculty, which continues after graduation. [Many people collaborated on creating the new dragon.] ... Our school and Waldorf Education in general make students flexible and open to other people's ideas, which is the foundation of collaboration. My Waldorf education gave me a wide base of knowledge to draw on for this work and enough confidence to throw ideas out to try to improve the project.”

“You must do everything with consciousness,” says Pomeroy. “Ultimately, we arrived at the idea that transformation is what is called for. Finding courage to work and transform our inner and outer dragons is what the Michaelmas play is all about.” ☺



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The Elephant in the Eurythmy Room

Is Waldorf Education Christian?

BY WARREN LEE COHEN, MEd

“Why are prints of Raphael’s *Madonna and Child* displayed in the classrooms?”
“Why do Waldorf schools celebrate Christian festivals like Michaelmas and Advent?”
“Are Waldorf schools Christian?”

These and similar questions are often heard in Waldorf schools across North America and around the world. They are asked by prospective parents as well as by those with children already in the school. And, naturally, they are raised by parents of all faiths and backgrounds—Jews, Buddhists, Sufis, Hindus, Muslims, and secular humanists—and by parents who are or were Christians. Such questions are an opportunity to explore with others the challenging ideas that lie at the core of Anthroposophy, the worldview that underlies Waldorf Education. As a Waldorf teacher, a teacher of teachers, and a Waldorf parent of Jewish descent, I recognize that these are very sensitive and revealing questions.

Questions about the connection of Christianity and Jesus Christ to Waldorf Education are challenging to field. The two terms can have a broad range of meanings and often arouse strong feelings in people. Often behind them are deeply held beliefs, traditions, pride, prejudice, personal pain, and cultural suffering. There are no simple answers to satisfy every ques-

tioner. Yet their questions create opportunities to explore issues of great importance and to meet other people in meaningful and perhaps tender ways.

Rudolf Steiner founded the first Waldorf school in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1919. By that time, he had long been active as a writer and teacher, first within the context of the Theosophical Society and then as the founder of the Anthroposophical Society. Through those years, Steiner espoused a clearly Christian (in a broad sense) worldview. But Steiner’s version of Christianity, sometimes called “cosmic Christianity” or “esoteric Christianity,” is different from virtually all generally known Christian-based belief systems.

For Steiner, the Christ is a high cosmic being who plays a central spiritual role in the development of human consciousness and the evolution of all of humanity. The Christ as a universal spirit of love and freedom has been active throughout human history in all cultures and in all religions. The “Christ impulse” has served and serves to inspire human beings to realize their highest moral and spiritual potential. This “Representative of Humanity” is not tied to any particular culture or religion but is present, in both obvious and subtle ways, for all humanity and for Earth itself.

At one point in history—the turning point of time—the Christ Being incarnated on Earth as Christ Jesus. According to Steiner, however, Jesus of Nazareth is



Raphael's Sistine Madonna. The version that usually hangs in Waldorf kindergartens shows only the Madonna and child.



The Advent Spiral, called in many Waldorf schools the Winter Spiral, celebrates the inner light that warms and guides us in the dark of winter.

not the Christ. Jesus is a human being, a man (albeit a very highly evolved one), and it is only at the baptism in the Jordan River that the Christ Being united with the man Jesus. Christ Jesus lived then for three and a half years, teaching, healing, confronting the religious authorities of the time, was arrested, crucified, died, and was resurrected. According to Steiner, the resurrected Christ united his Being with the destiny of humanity and with Earth itself. To this day, he continues to work as a positive impulse among all peoples of the world, in all cultures and religions.

This view of Jesus and the Christ is challenging, not only for non-Christians, but for most Christians. It runs counter to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and all the mainstream Protestant denominations. But for Steiner, an understanding of the Christ impulse and its working in human history was not a repudiation of mainstream Christianity or of any other religion. He maintained that the imprint of the Christ as a cosmic being can be seen in virtually every religious tradition. He held also that one can recognize the reality and universality of the Christ impulse but retain one's identity and beliefs as a Jew, Hindu, Muslim, or Buddhist. This view is radical, provocative, exciting, and, to some, perhaps repugnant. Nevertheless, exploring it can open a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

Although Steiner's own worldview was deeply Christian, he stipulated that the Waldorf school serve all children regardless of race, religion, gender, or income. Today that is indeed the case in Waldorf schools around the world. Christianity is not promulgated in the schools. It is taught as part of human history, as are all the other major religions. Students learn about the lives of Moses, Muhammad, and the Buddha, as well as Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian festivals are celebrated in many schools, but so are the festivals of other faiths and traditions, such as Channukah and Devali. And there are no religious requirements for parents or for teachers.

In his talks to the teachers at the first Waldorf school, Steiner said that the Christ impulse, the spiritual potential of all humanity, is actively working through the pedagogy and the curriculum of Waldorf Education. Thus, Waldorf school parents, teachers, and administrators have the challenge of forming their own understanding of what Steiner says about the Christ and the relationship of the Christ to Waldorf Education. The issue can evoke a wide variety of difficult thoughts and feelings. Rather than try to avoid them, we can gain much by exploring this spiritual/religious/cultural hot topic with eyes wide open.

Dealing in an open way with the various responses to the idea of the Christ and his role in Waldorf Education can be essential to the health of every Waldorf school community. Most schools in North America have diverse student and parent populations. And there are Waldorf schools in many countries, including China, India, Kenya, and Pakistan, where the dominant religious tradition is not Christian. Each school strives to respect the individual freedom of its members and the integrity of their religious and spiritual choices. At the same time, it seeks to build a spirit-filled and unified school community.

Finding this delicate balance between the personal and universal aspects of spirituality can strengthen the sense of a shared life among teachers, parents, and staff in a Waldorf school. Members must necessarily take an interest in and learn about one another. Differences of opinion may surface and conflicts may arise. They cannot be avoided. Dealing with them is necessary and healthy. Unexpressed, unresolved

conflicts only become more intractable with time. Developing and maintaining a spirit-filled educational community requires conscious effort and effective strategies for working through the challenges, questions, and conflicts that come with this work.

Recently I was asked to visit the newly forming Saltwater School in Courtenay, British Columbia, to speak about Waldorf pedagogy, and to help them identify the unique spirit of the fledgling school. In the course of a week, I met with the faculty, the board of trustees, parents, and friends of the school.



The Representative of Humanity, a monumental thirty-three-foot-tall wooden sculpture showing the Christ standing between and subduing the forces of evil in the world



“Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River.” According to Steiner, the Christ Being incarnated in the man Jesus at the moment of the baptism.

Each person brought his or her personal worldview and religious/spiritual background to these conversations, yet each had a strong desire to create a school that nurtures the whole human being: body, soul, and spirit.

I spoke openly with them about the potentially difficult and divisive issues connected with spirituality in Waldorf Education. Experience has shown that it is best to try to work together through these challenging ideas. This mutual work supports the ability of people to stay open and to withhold judgment, and supports

the process of building a tolerant and creative learning environment. No one has to agree with anything anyone else says. What is essential to this process is to listen actively, with openness, and above all with respect. Cultivating sincere interest in the beliefs and ideas of others is essential to building a school community that is imbued with spiritual values.

The faculty members and I began our process by listening to one another’s accounts of religious upbringing, spiritual development, and current beliefs. Each faculty member shared her story. Each story was unique, yet each contained universal elements of wanting to belong, wanting to find meaning in life, and wanting to connect truthfully with the divine. We agreed to withhold any comments or questions until after everyone had spoken. When dealing with questions of our personal relationship to spirit and religion, the principles of freedom—tolerance and abiding interest—must be paramount.

Having established a foundation of openness and trust with one another, we read some of what Steiner had to say about the Christ impulse in his lectures to the first Waldorf teachers. We next paraphrased these thoughts and then discussed our responses to Steiner’s ideas. The conversations were rich, open, and wide-ranging.

Together we built a collegial vessel of trust by first listening, then speaking, studying, and finally discussing the central ideas around spirituality and Waldorf Education. The teachers came to know one another in new ways. They felt united and able to work in unison toward shaping the spiritual life of the school. They decided spontaneously that they could then create their first school festival—the autumn celebration of Michaelmas. They wanted to support the health of the whole school by acknowledging the integrity of each individual involved. They designed the festival in a way that would strengthen the unique spirit that has brought these families and teachers together, with respect for the various spiritual faiths living in their community.

These founding teachers are the core of their school. They are its guiding lights. They speak and act for the school in the ways they teach every day, in how they govern the school, and in how they speak with children and parents. It took courage to listen to and take interest in one another’s stories and then to wrestle with the idea of the Christ and of the relationship of the Christ to Waldorf Education. This process was not always easy. There were times of laughter and times of tears in our sessions.

These teachers’ efforts to understand one another in the light of the guiding impulses of Waldorf Education sets a wonderful precedent for the school. Their courageous working through these challenging issues has become an inspiration for their school community. Not every member of the community may choose to delve into these issues so deeply. In such issues, each person must be left in full freedom. Nevertheless, the integrity of these teachers lives at the heart of this school. The community will benefit from the example they have set in their earnest striving to work together and to understand one another.

In the end, we uncovered no easy answers to the question: Is Waldorf Education Christian? But, we



This Gandhāran Buddha manifests the nobility of the universal human, toward which all religions strive.

A Son's Passing, A School's Support and Guidance

BY ANITA BREWER-SILJEHOLM

In October 2004, our son, David, died in an accident while bicycling to the Cape Ann Waldorf School in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts. Quite soon after the event, the school became a guide for me between daily life and the new realm to which our beloved son had gone. I didn't recognize this until recently.

In the days and weeks after that devastating morning, a series of questions arose involving the school and ourselves. Eventually each answer became a choice. Jenny Helmick, David's main lesson teacher, and I have recently reflected on how these choices guided the way one Waldorf school and one family together chose how to respond after a child died one morning on his way to school.

David was fourteen years old when he entered eighth grade in 2004. He was five feet ten inches tall, blond, with a ready smile and a kind, thoughtful, cheerful disposition. His stature in school was that of a "senior diplomat," known to most of the children as a fair-minded and generous boy.

That morning, his ten-year-old sister Marian and I were cycling a short distance behind him on the flat, two-and-a-half-mile route to school. David was ahead of us. While he was passing through the confusing construction

zone of a public works project, the rear wheel of his bicycle was knocked aside by a train and he died instantly.

As well as I can understand those moments now, later that day I wanted to complete David's journey by telling to the school in my own words what had happened.

Accompanied by the mother of David's best friend, I left the hospital briefly to visit the school. This was the first, unplanned interaction with the school community after David's passing, and it began a special journey.

I met, standing together in the Main Hall, a group of shocked faculty, staff, and middle school students. We spoke quietly and exchanged what words of comfort we could. I remember explaining that David was not coming back, but that he had not been "squished" by the train, instead that his head was hit so hard that he died. I asked for permission to speak with my daughter's fifth-grade class and did so. The young children solemnly asked a few questions, which I answered, and then I left to return to the hospital where Marian and my husband, Jorn, were with David.

Soon after the news settled in, a question arose about services. Our family planned to begin the services a week after David's death. The school said it would like to have its own ceremony for David, expressing their intent respectfully. I agreed to this, and my family and I attended. It was a solemn, beautiful hour with music played by the faculty, a gospel hymn sung by the middle school students, and words spoken by David's best friend and his teacher. At Jenny's request, as candles were lit, I read a sentence relating to each of David's fourteen years.

A day before the school service, we had a public wake. Shortly after David died, I came to understand that his classmates wanted to see him one more time to say farewell. Wanting to allow them to visit with David in privacy, I arranged that the funeral parlor be open to them one hour before it was open to the public. The children and Jenny came early but stayed on for hours, clustered along one



David Siljeholm (1990–2004)



David, age eight, with his sister, Marian

wall of the open room near David's body, quietly chatting. The image of their unity and loving courage has never left me. Many other visitors lingered at the wake as well.

Around the same time, I asked Jenny if she knew of any guest books more like main lesson books created by students, with their intricate, colorful borders. Traditional guest books felt cramped and sterile. A few days later, to my immense surprise, two large-format, hand-stitched books were handed to me. Every page was differently bordered in color. Some were hand-ruled and others left open, and David's name was inked on each spread. The sturdy paper and clear design offered space for people to write names, essays, poems, short notes—anything at all. The books came to every event, and later on I copied or pasted more messages into them. The attention and care implicit in each colored page have stayed with me, and I continue to refer to them. The books had been made by children in the middle school classes.

As the weeks stretched on into winter, another avenue opened within the Waldorf community. Immediately after the tragedy, a meals delivery system had been set up at school, probably with our permission, though I cannot recall. Every afternoon from mid-October until Christmas, a meal was delivered to our door by a school family. It was an extraordinary gesture, which had unexpected consequences. Since evenings were the time when we found that friends helped most, we often had visitors then. Having the complete meals—usually everything from appetizer to entrees to salads, desserts, and even wine—meant we had food to eat and to share without having to shop and cook, which I was not able to do.



David's mother, Anita, center, at the eighth-grade graduation with other class parents



A scene from Death Takes A Holiday, performed by David's classmates as their eighth-grade play

About three weeks after David died, what became known as “the Monday night dinners” started. The basketball season had begun and practice took place after school on Mondays. Remembering how hungry David had been after practice and how long the drive home was for many families, I suggested a meal at our house, which was located closer to school. This weekly meal became part of our life from that time until graduation in June. Students, coaches, parents, and friends were all welcome without advance notice. Many brought food, but it was never expected. Being together on a regular schedule was extraordinarily helpful for us. Although it was not intended, the delivered meals contributed to our ability to start such a gathering.

The school and our family moved forward together in another way. The class teacher typically chooses the drama that the children put on as their annual class play. That year, though, I was asked for my opinion of the choices: *Antigone* for my daughter's class and *Death Takes a Holiday* for David's. Both scripts directly addressed the subject on all our minds. Trusting the teachers, I agreed.

Marian was willing to play the role of Antigone, a young woman in ancient Greece who begs the king to allow her to retrieve her dead brother's body, and she learned the part with energy. It would have been unimaginable at any other school. In the second play, Death visits mankind over a weekend to learn why he is not beloved. Because a play is for both actors and audience, witnessing the children recite such lines strengthened our ability to live with David's death.

Sometimes the gestures were completely unexpected. The grading quarter ended shortly after

David died. To my surprise, an envelope arrived one day from the school containing his progress report, something I had quite forgotten. In full awareness of David's life and of his death, his teachers had summoned the grace to write of his final weeks, their hopes and aspirations for him as a student, and their deep sorrow at his passing. Their words remain an extraordinary gift of the highest and deepest order.

Fall and winter passed, and some months later the school and I discussed acknowledging David's presence with a memorial on the wall. I assumed—mistakenly—they meant simply a photo. Just after David died, his teacher had brought me the last two watercolors he had painted. They were among his best. Both had been painted for a meteorology block in which images of “stormy weather” and “calm weather” were assigned. David chose the tropical setting he remembered from a family trip earlier that year, so in his works, palm trees slant and bend under a deep blue-grey sky in one image, while the same trees stand quietly in sunshine in the other. High-quality copies of the two paintings were made and incorporated into the memorial display.

In early June, the graduation of David's class was approaching. I was asked if there could be an empty chair with a rose on it to represent David on the stage. I agreed, so while Marian attended with her classmates, I sat with the parents of David's class. The ceremony was beautiful but for me also difficult. I felt the joy implicit in such an event but a terrible sadness too, as I gazed at David's empty chair and listened to the many moving words that referred to his presence in the class. For the graduation, as for the class plays, the school allowed that a videotape and photos be taken. I am glad now to have them to watch.

Eight years have elapsed since David left. Life has gone on. His classmates are now in college; Marian finished her Waldorf schooling and has graduated from high school; the school now has a permanent campus. To inform the new faculty who did not know David, the school each October reprints the insightful and moving remarks spoken by Jenny Helmick at the memorial service in 2004.

When the school identified the prospective new campus in 2010, our family released and augmented the memorial fund for David to assist with the purchase and renovation costs. During the expansion of the building, a dodecahedron containing four special items was placed within the poured concrete



The eighth-grade graduation with a single rose upon David's chair

foundation. One item was a sheaf of grasses wrapped in silk representing David. These came from the home he grew up in and his gravesite.

I am not a student of Anthroposophy, but through my years as a Waldorf school parent I have become acquainted with some of Rudolf Steiner's ideas. I know that Steiner holds that when a human being dies, the physical body perishes but the soul and spirit continue to exist. Thus when a loved one passes, the relationship continues. The relationship is unending and important, but of necessity it must change. Although I have many things that represent and remind me of David, I know that David will not reappear. But we can connect and communicate in the spirit instead.

The faculty and staff of the Waldorf school and the whole Waldorf community guided and supported our family after David's passing. They offered countless practical gifts, as well as gestures of soulful, heartwarming consolation. The understanding of death as a transition and a transformation of life, rather than an ending, is perhaps the most valuable gift, one that has sustained me through the inevitable sadness I felt and still feel. ☺



ANITA BREWER-SILJEHOLM
became a Waldorf parent in 1999 when her son, David, entered third grade at the Cape Ann Waldorf School. She has an undergraduate degree in literature from Brandeis University and a master's degree in environmental policy from Tufts University, as well as a certificate in paralegal studies. Anita has worked as a writer in the transportation and health care fields and currently manages real estate for her family.

When a Student Dies

BY JENNIFER HELMICK

On the evening of October 12, 2004, David Siljeholm called me at home inquiring about his homework. David had a way of talking that was ageless: not as an adult, but not at all as a child, and not in between those two states, either—something else, out of the ordinary. After we had discussed the homework, David said: “But I don’t really have time.”

David was unaccountably absent during main lesson the next morning, and his fellow students were uneasy. There was a knock at the classroom door, and I was asked to come to the office. There, with great care, the office staff told me that David had been struck and killed by a train on the way to school. My first thought was to run back downstairs to my class, to protect them from people who might be crawling through the windows to talk to them. As it turns out, local reporters had indeed been sent to the school to get “reaction shots” and were walking around the school grounds. Being decent people, they were relieved when we asked them to leave.

I told the class what had happened. “I have terrible news. David was hit by a train on his way to school this morning. He is gone.” Uppermost in my mind were two thoughts: their world has changed forever, and their world will continue.

Before long, to our amazement, David’s mother, Anita, appeared at school to talk with us. The eighth graders and I surrounded her as she calmly described what had happened. She was intent on helping and comforting us. “His soul is smiling,” she told us.

One of the families in the class offered their home for the eighth graders and their parents to gather that afternoon. The gathering quickly turned into a storytelling event, with all of us sharing anecdotes and memories of David. So many stories to tell: about David’s passions, his sense of justice, his antics, his gallantry, his offbeat way of looking at the world. One latecomer was astonished to find us laughing. It was the beginning of our new way of experiencing David’s presence.

The next day, we called in professional grief counselors, but it was not a good fit. The counselors



Jennifer Helmick and her class on an outing in the seventh grade, with David Siljeholm in the middle of the back row

gently chastised us for allowing the older students to “congregate,” presumably because this would exacerbate their grief. But many of those students had been congregating since the age of three. And the students, accustomed to dealing with adults who know them well and care deeply about them, did not like sharing their feelings with total strangers.

We decided to rely on our own resources, and they were formidable. Students, parents, staff, teachers, and school community mobilized to provide meals for the family, to plan and carry out the memorial events, to offer consolation as needed. Older students comforted younger ones. Expressions of condolence came from other Waldorf schools, other schools in our area, from the Association of Waldorf Schools, and from many individuals. These expressions have incalculable meaning, and last forever, as all who have lost loved ones know.

In the class, I used my intuition in deciding when to resume the normal pace of schoolwork. We kept David’s desk in the classroom, adorned with flowers, and agreed to add a verse to our day’s closing:

*What we bury deep
In the grave to sleep
Mantle of Earth must be;
What we love
Abides above
All through eternity.*

Remembering how fairy tales are stories close to the spiritual world, I chose one each night to tell the eighth graders. They drank the stories in.

I spoke little to the students directly about death. Instead I emphasized that we were forming a new relationship with David—a relationship that would evolve as we all did. This understanding was part of

every choice during the eighth grade year, including what our class play would be, how we would acknowledge David during graduation, what we would do on our class trip.

Through all this, David's parents inspired us as they remained active in the class and school community. They and their daughter, Marian, blessed us with many acts of courage, grace, and generosity. It is no exaggeration to say that without Anita, our school would not be in its beautiful new home on Moraine Farm today.

And those of us who knew David remain grateful to have known him, and sense his presence in the blessings the school has received since his death. We understand



The new building of the Cape Ann Waldorf School, built in 2011

that we have an essential task—to stay connected with those whom Rudolf Steiner referred to as “the so-called dead.” This is the purpose of the closing verse for the meeting of the College of Teachers each week:

*May love of hearts reach out to love of souls
May warmth of love ray out to Spirit-light
Even so would we draw near to you
Thinking with you Thoughts of Spirit
Feeling in you the Love of Worlds
Consciously at one with you
Willing in silent being. ☉*

JENNIFER HELMICK came to Cape Ann Waldorf School as a parent in 1991. She began teaching English in the middle school in 2000, drawing on her love of language and her work as a science writer for an environmental consulting firm. Jennifer took David Siljholm's class in seventh grade as a class teacher in 2003. She currently teaches English skills classes to the seventh and eighth grades and serves on the school's College of Teachers and Advisory Council.

did find pursuing the question remarkably fruitful in helping the teachers to build robust collegiality. Whether one answers the question with a yes or no seems less important than listening attentively to one another and exploring with openness and genuine interest. Wrestling with these questions is invaluable in building understanding and, in so doing, strengthening the core value that Waldorf Education places on individual striving and community cooperation. We are, after all, learning communities who come together in freedom to educate our most valued members—our children. ☉



According to Rudolf Steiner, all the religious traditions of the world play an important role in the evolution of humanity.



WARREN LEE COHEN, MEd, BA in physics, is the director of teacher education at the Rudolf Steiner Centre Toronto. He has been a Waldorf teacher for the past twenty years and previously directed the Foundation Studies program at Emerson College in England. He teaches and consults internationally and is the author of *Raising the Soul: Practical Exercises for Personal Development* and *Baking Bread with Children*. He can be reached at wcohen@rsct.ca

Resources

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Rudolf Steiner, *Foundations of Human Experience* (Hudson, NY: SteinerBooks, 1996).

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Waldorf Education in Central Russia

BY MARY LEE PLUMB-MENTJES

In Russia, September 1, the start of the school year, is one of the most important days in the year, second only perhaps to New Year's Day. In North America, too, there is a shift in a community's energy when school starts and the summer is turning into autumn, but in Russia the shared community excitement about the new school year is particularly intense.



Russian first graders on the first day of school

little six- and seven-year-old girls stood out, their heads almost hidden by the very large, fluffy white bows that mark their entry into first grade. The front doors of the state schools were arched with multicolored balloons, and the children came with commercial bouquets of flowers in cellophane. At the Irkutsk Waldorf School, the doorway was arched with garden flowers, and the bouquets for the teachers were made with flowers from home gardens.

As the school day began, parents, teachers, and children gathered in front of the Waldorf school on a paved lot between nondescript, dreary buildings. They formed a ring and brought the space alive with singing. A child from each class ran across the open space to claim the class flag. Each first grader then bravely crossed the space to stand together for the first time with the new first-grade teacher. As the children ran, one could see which child was firmly here now on Earth, and which child really hadn't landed yet.

Two circles formed, an inner and an outer, moving in opposite directions, each person singing and greeting and clapping hands with each new person that passed. Then, class by class, the students peeled off and ran as pairs through the arches formed by all those remaining in the circle. By the end of the morning, we visitors had met every person face-to-face. It was wonderful!

Two years previous, in 2009, I had been in Irkutsk, then too with other Waldorf educators. We were representing the ISIS Cultural Outreach International, an organization that supports Waldorf initiatives and schools around the world. (ISIS is not an acronym but refers to the spiritual being Isis Sophia.) We were giving a workshop on Anthroposophy at the school. At the same time, a group of government inspectors were walking through the freshly painted classrooms and threatening to delay the opening of school because the walls were painted with color, not the regulation white. In time, they relented (the classroom walls still have their colors), perhaps because they realized that the Waldorf school receives no government funds. Such consideration from state officials, though, is not always to be expected.

In 2011, our team traveled through central Russia, spending time not only in Irkutsk, but also in Yekaterinburg and in Kirov. Yekaterinburg, a city of well over a million, is located far to the west of Irkutsk in the Ural Mountains and on the cusp between



ISIS representatives and participants in a workshop on Anthroposophy held in Irkutsk in 2009

Europe and Asia. Kirov (formerly Vyatka) is just west of the Urals on the Vyatka River. We visited Waldorf kindergartens and schools, as well as curative centers for those with special needs. Most of these had been started between 1989 and 1991, soon after the start of glasnost and often with the help of German and Scandinavian anthroposophists.

Everywhere we went, we were impressed by the warmth, enthusiasm, and steadfastness of the teachers (almost all of them women), and the school parents (almost entirely the mothers), who must work amidst great difficulties. Aid continues to come in, particularly from Western Europe, but not as much as before. Yet the financial needs are great, as is the



The lively color of the freshly painted walls of a classroom in the Irkutsk Waldorf School does not comply with government regulations.

need for mentoring, teacher education, and professional development. The government makes building space available, but it must be paid for even when the doors, heaters, and toilets have been removed.

Such was the case at the Kirov Waldorf School (known as *Nasha Skola*, “Our School”). The teachers there work with no salaries, because the tuition money was used to renovate the school building. Now the building is beautiful, but they are prevented from occupying it, because they don’t have the “right paperwork.”

Of course, just as some of the songs sung at the start of the opening day ceremony in Irkutsk were familiar to us, the challenges faced by the Waldorf schools in Russia are also familiar. In North America,



In the vast expanse of Russia, over 6000 miles from east to west, Irkutsk and Yekaterinburg are over 2000 miles apart.

too, Waldorf schools have to contend with government regulations and bureaucracy. But here, we have much greater recourse and seldom have to spar with so much intransigent opposition.

The Russian Orthodox Church is now favored by the government, and the Church is leery of Waldorf Education. It suspects that behind Waldorf there is some kind of religion or religious cult. Another problem is that the general public views Waldorf Education as useless, because it does not have early intellectual training and computers. Proponents of Waldorf Education in Russia need to convince the public that, while based on a picture of the human being having body, soul, and spirit, this education is not founded on any religion and is not a cult. Proponents must also demonstrate that Waldorf graduates are very capable of meeting the world and succeeding in the future. Otherwise, Waldorf



A Michaelmas celebration in the kindergarten of the Irkutsk school



Snack time in the kindergarten of the Irkutsk school

Education will remain at a great disadvantage. Books, articles, and research—such as the AWSNA Waldorf graduate survey—that we have developed in the West can be shared to support the effort to overcome the negative public image of Waldorf Education in Russia.

On our trip we visited a curative center near the Mongolian-Siberian border (Talovka), a curative school (Talisman) in Irkutsk, and a day center for adults with special needs (Blagoe Delo) outside Yekaterinburg. We also visited women in Yekaterinburg wanting to start an agricultural “village” for their older boys. We were awed by their relentless determination. These mothers of children with special needs would not listen to the advice of doctors who told them to turn their children over to the State to be institutionalized for life and to start over and have a new child. Here, too, it is a matter of public opinion. The Russian public needs to realize that persons with special needs deserve to have and, in fact, can have meaningful lives. Here again, articles, books, movies, and visiting lecturers from the West—where we are slightly ahead on this issue—may be helpful. The connection of Waldorf Education with curative education for

children with special needs—children who are seen as “dummies”—affects its public image.

Most Waldorf schools around the world are in need of funds. The Russian schools are perhaps working closer to the edge. They struggle to get the money to pay for a missing classroom door, chalk good enough to be seen on the board, watercolor paints, and for teachers to travel to trainings.

On our 2011 visit, we four Waldorf educators gave two- to three-day workshops on Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education, supported by classes in watercolor painting and eurythmy. Typically, after the workshops, our hosts—the teachers, young and old, and their assistants—served us tea and homemade applesauce made from scavenged crabapples. And as we sat at the kindergarten tables, they sang Russian folk songs to us. We were very moved by their warmth and hospitality.

In July 2013, there will be an international anthroposophical conference in Yekaterinburg. I am hoping that after that conference there will be a Waldorf/Camphill “road show” with speakers and films demonstrating what Waldorf graduates have accomplished and also presenting the work of the Camphill communities in Yekaterinburg and other cities in central Russia. Persons interested in participating in or contributing to the conference and/or the broader work of ISIS can contact this author at maryplumbmentjes@yahoo.com. The ISIS contact in Canada is Arie Van Ameringen at arieva.perceval@gmail.com ☺



MARY LEE PLUMB-MENTJES *first encountered Waldorf Education in 1968 as a young coworker in Camphill Village Copake (New York), when she hurried through a kitchen being used as a small home kindergarten. She deepened her connection with Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education at Emerson College in England. Since then, Mary Lee has been part of the seed beginnings of Waldorf communities that developed into schools in Austin, New Orleans, and Anchorage. Her connection to Russia began in high school and in part motivated her move to Alaska in 1987. In 1989, she made her first trip across the Bering Strait to the Russian Far East. Since then, she has continued visiting and hosting many Russian friends.*

Painting and Drawing in Waldorf Schools: Classes 1 to 8

by Thomas Wildgruber

If there is a “bible” about painting and drawing in Waldorf schools, this book certainly is it. Published originally in German in 2007, it takes the reader on a detailed and profusely and beautifully illustrated tour through the Waldorf painting and drawing curriculum. It is meant as a teaching guide for Waldorf class teachers and for parents homeschooling their children, and it fulfills its aim admirably.

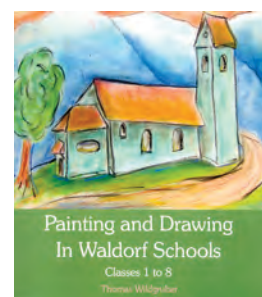
The first five chapters are general in nature. Chapter one, “The Pictorial Resources in Art Teaching,” deals with the artistic process and the interaction of the senses in art education. Chapter two presents twelve exercises to develop basic skills in painting and drawing, exercises devised by the Hungarian artist Lajos Boros. Chapter three concerns form drawing and the progression from line to plane. In chapter four, Wildgruber contrasts free and guided drawing. And in chapter five, he describes “the rules of play,” such as “the color of a foreground should always reappear in the background,” and “always put

the smaller figure in front of the larger one,” in a perspective of meaning.

The remaining 300 pages, nearly every one of which features full-color examples of student artwork, cover in detail the painting and drawing curriculum from grade one through grade eight. The reason behind each assignment and the process for each grade is clearly explained.

Painting and Drawing in Waldorf Schools is an invaluable and essential resource for class teachers and homeschooling parents. It could also be a guide for that late-blooming autodidact who did not have a Waldorf schooling, but who would like to acquire the practical skill and aesthetic discernment in painting and drawing that such a schooling can provide.

Floris Books, Edinburgh, 2012 • 384 pages • \$40.00



Invisible Guardians

by Jakob Streit

Just before Christmas, a worker in a Swiss granite quarry falls off a ladder into the quarry. He lands at the bottom of a giant slide used to send broken rock into a crushing machine below. He realizes he will be crushed by the next load. Knowing that he will not be heard above the din of the machinery, he still cries: “Christmas! Christmas!” To his amazement the rock crusher stops. He calls out again and is rescued. A truck approaching the slide had dislodged a rock; the rock had hit the fallen ladder; and the ladder had struck and disabled the electrical box, stopping the rock crusher. At home, the worker describes this very precise “accident” to his family, and his daughter says: “Father, the Christmas Angel saved you so we could have you back with us.”

A young Swiss mechanic finishes his apprenticeship and decides to travel the world. In Mexico City, he finds himself short of cash and has to eat only bananas for three days. Finally he buys three meat-and-bean tacos at a stand in a city square. He is about to eat them. Two Mexican boys are fighting

nearby and one of them crashes into him, knocks the tacos to the ground, and tramples them. The Swiss youth is disconsolate. Two days later, he sees a newspaper headline that reads: “Spoiled Meat Taken from Garbage and Used to Make Tacos: Many Customers, Poor People, in Hospital with Serious Food Poisoning.” He asks around and learns that the taco stand was the one from which he had bought his doomed tacos!

These are two of the more than two dozen true anecdotes about “invisible guardians” collected by Jakob Streit, Swiss author of many books for children. Each story illustrates the invisible working of the guardian angels who guide and protect us. The book includes a number of simple and engaging illustrations and is suitable for children age ten and older.

AWSNA Publications, Ghent, NY, 2011 • 63 pages • \$8.00



Book Review

Footprints of an Angel: Episodes from a Joint Autobiography

BY SIEGFRIED E. FINSER

Is the course of a human life the result of chance, accident, and random coincidence? Or is it a guided journey, influenced by the invisible hands of spiritual beings who have our best interests at heart and who wish us to realize our intended purpose in life? In this “joint autobiography,” Siegfried Finser argues passionately for the latter.

Born in 1932 near Stuttgart, Germany, Finser immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1935. The family lived in New Jersey. Siegfried’s parents were anthroposophists and wanted him to attend a Waldorf school. Hence Finser went to the Rudolf Steiner School of New York City and High Mowing School in Wilton, New Hampshire, then as now the only boarding Waldorf high school in North America. The summer after graduation he went to the West Coast and worked for two months selling Bibles door to door. After attending Rutgers University, Finser had a brief stint in New York City as an aspiring writer. At age 22, he made a deep connection to Anthroposophy and also discovered the love of his life, Ruth Alexander, in a study group. He and Ruth soon married and started a family.

Finser’s work career was varied. He was, in succession, a teacher at the Rudolf Steiner School of New York, an organizational consultant, a division manager at Xerox, and director of executive development worldwide for ITT. His vocational fulfillment, though, came with his founding of the Rudolf Steiner Foundation (now RSF Social Finance), a financial institution seeking to realize in practice Rudolf Steiner’s ideas about how money can be used for the benefit of society.



Siegfried Finser

In this book, Finser looks back at his long and eventful life and discerns throughout the “footprints of an angel,” particularly at points of crisis and transition. He observes that at points when a change was necessary, when he needed to embark on a new project or develop a new quality, apparently accidental events caused

him to move in the right direction.

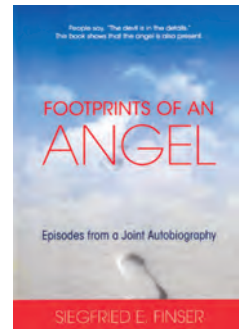
In some cases, the incident was unpleasant and the change neither intended nor desired. For example, Finser describes three accidents that occurred while he was in Europe working for ITT. One of them was a rollover car accident on a highway in Holland. The mishaps made him realize it was time to return to the United States, where in time he came to found the Rudolf Steiner Foundation.

The most poignant experience of this guidance is when Ruth becomes ill with cancer. Finser becomes her primary caregiver and is forced to put aside his own work in the world. He at first feels frustrated, and Ruth feels guilty about taking all his time. In a moment of profound insight, however, Finser realizes that being able to care for a single, other human being selflessly and out of love is a significant milestone in personal and human evolution, modeled for humans by the angel.

Siegfried Finser wrote *Footsteps of an Angel* in the hope that it would inspire others to look at their own lives and discover how they too have been accompanied and guided by a loving angelic being who wants them to develop and to evolve. As such, the book can be of interest and value to every spiritually striving person who puzzles about how certain events in life really happen.

—R. E. K.

My angel apparently could influence what came to meet me in the course of my life, but she was not allowed to interfere or even command or order me to act in certain ways. She had to leave me in charge of my decisions and actions. Most of the time when she was involved, certain ideas came to me, not as a compulsion but just as a suggestion. I would suddenly have an idea to walk toward downtown Manhattan. I had no particular reason. It just came to me, somewhere between an attractive idea and an impulse to do something. . . . [And then on that walk something significant for me or for another person would occur.] p. 109



SteinerBooks, Gt.Barrington, MA, 2012 • 216 pages • \$20.00



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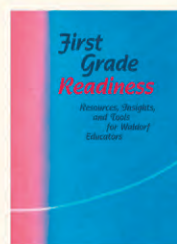
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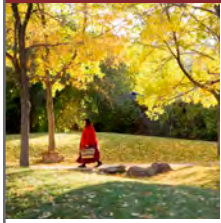
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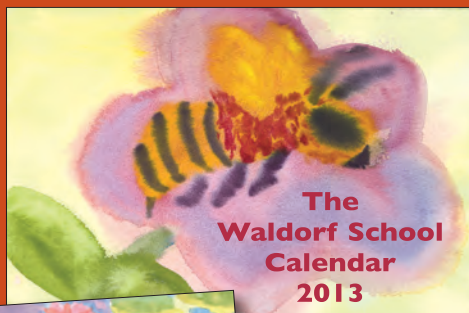


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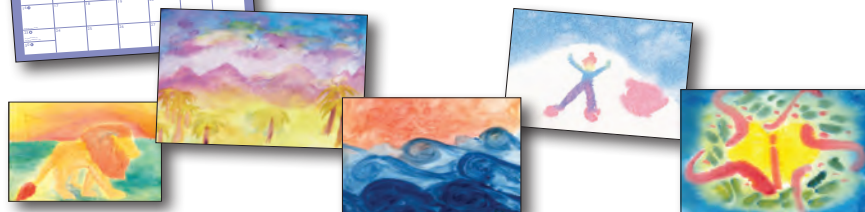


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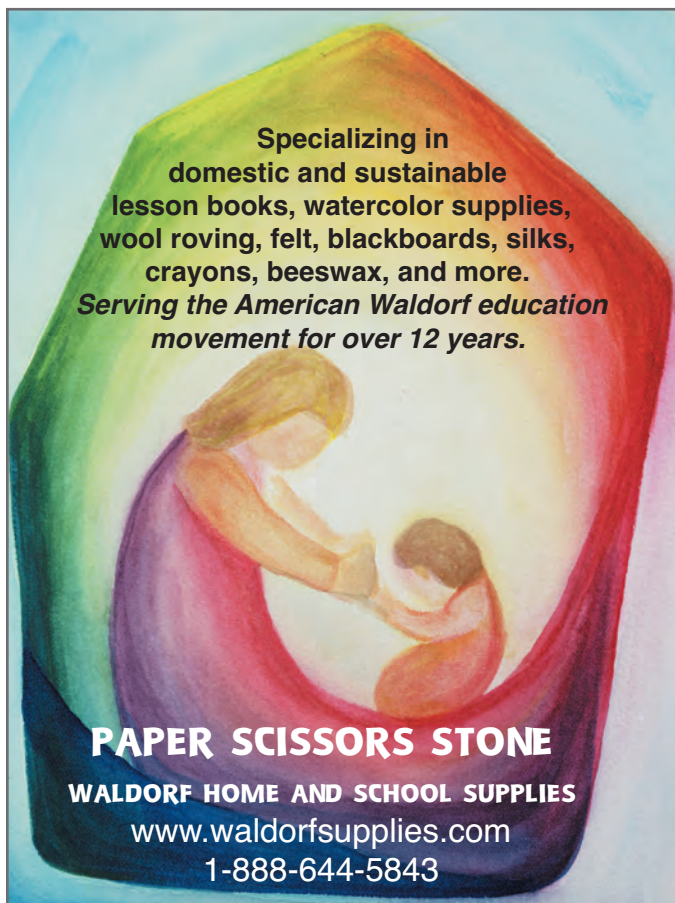
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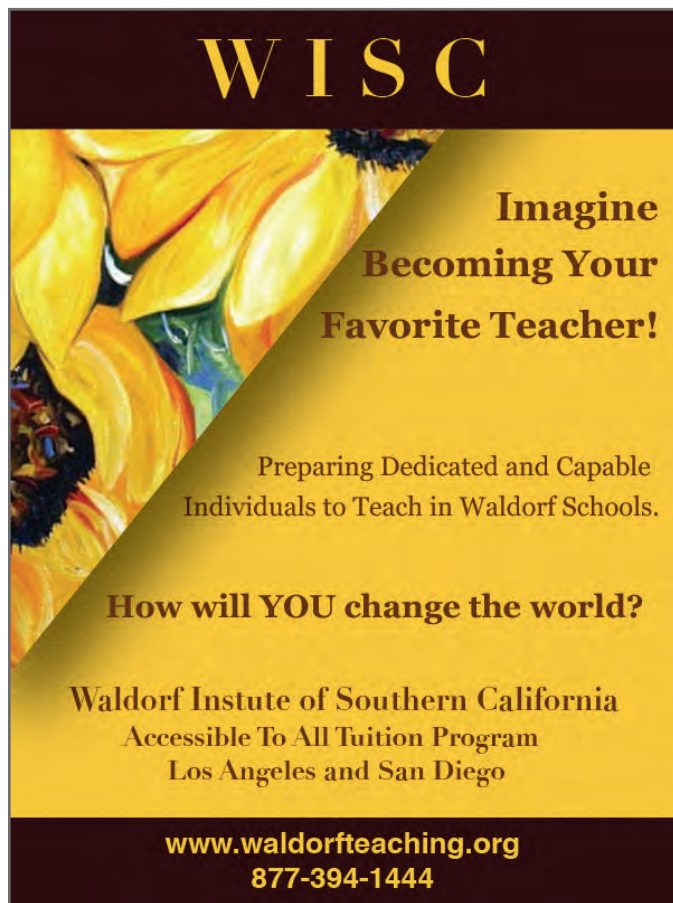
This book is for parents, teachers, and health professionals who work with children and adolescents; for young people and adults caught in unhealthy addictive behavior; and for all those who wish to understand their own human nature.

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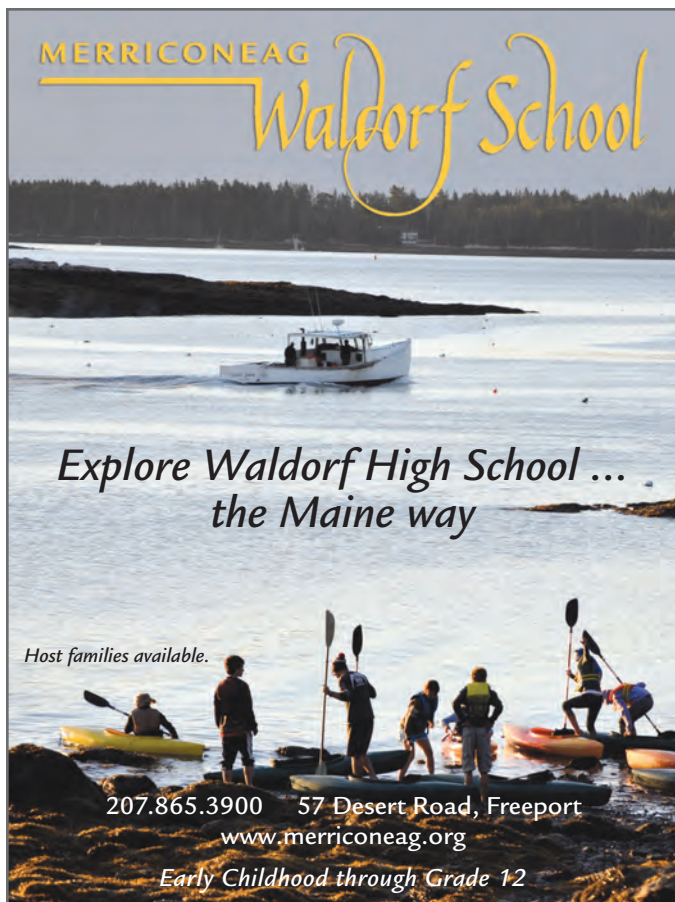
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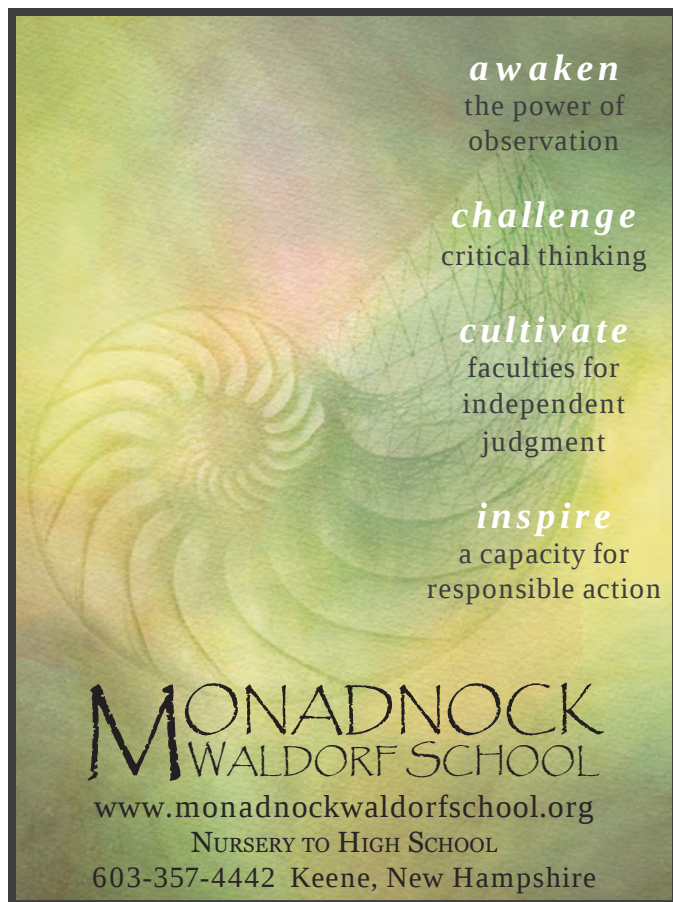


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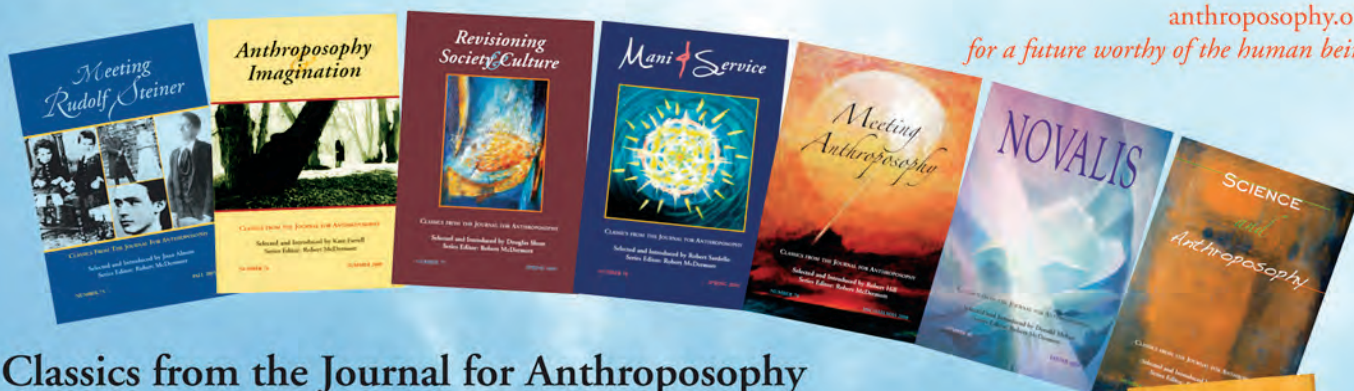
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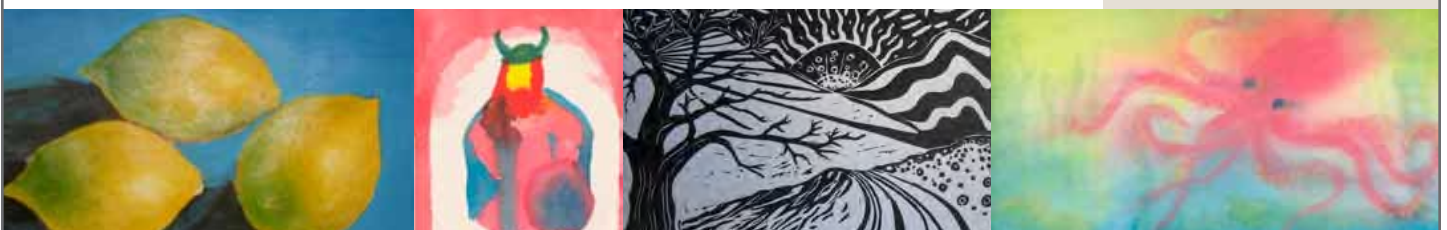


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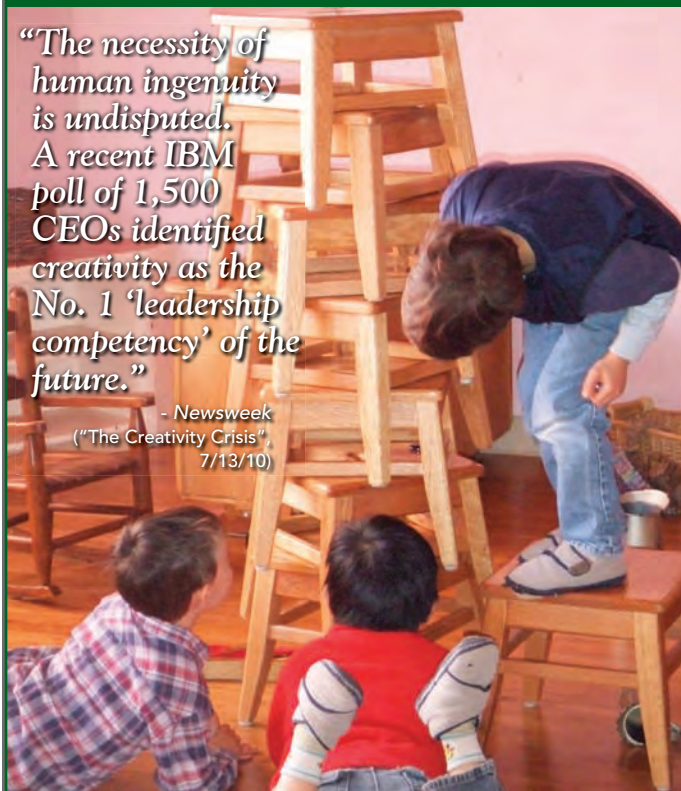
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