
Rena Osmer as Teacher and Colleague

— Charissa Johnson-Routhier

Every morning for ten years, as I would turn into the parking lot of school, there sat Ms. Rena's happy little turquoise color car in the exact same spot. Rain or shine, Ms. Rena was always the first one to arrive at school despite the fact that she lived further away from school than anyone else who worked there or attended the school. For twelve years, Ms. Rena drove an hour and a half to get to school, and an hour and a half to get back home each day. It was important to her that she was fully prepared to greet the children each morning, and she was never in a rush. In this way, as well as in countless others, Ms. Rena served as an example to her colleagues of what true dedication to the work meant.

Our school, of which Ms. Rena was the founding teacher, was called Sea Star Waldorf School up until the year Ms. Rena retired. Ms. Rena was indeed the star that was the shining and guiding light for the school. She worked tirelessly to lay strong foundations, both physically and spiritually, which allowed the school to grow from a small initiative into a strong and joyful early childhood and grade 1–8 Waldorf school. The loving guidance that she brought to the children, she also brought to the adults she worked with. In a way that was never overbearing, she taught us what was essential in our work. She was strong in never allowing the practical and business challenges of the moment to overshadow the spiritual work and study that we did together as colleagues. Also, as any good teacher does, she pushed us beyond our comfort zones to take up



work that perhaps we, ourselves, were not even aware we had the ability to accomplish.

Some of my favorite memories of Rena are seeing her sitting on her blanket in the play yard, quietly focusing on her crafting, and watching the children come freely to her to work beside her, hug her and hang on her. She had the amazing ability to “hold” any group of children—allowing them all their freedom and still maintaining harmony and orderly rhythm. The stories she told the children had the ability to captivate and inspire awe, and her beautiful puppetry brought to life the magic of the seasons. Her singing voice, which could often be heard in the hallways, was sweet and joyful—even as it became harder for her to reach the high notes.

Every day, as I now walk into the classroom I inherited from Ms. Rena, I can feel her presence. Every day I am reminded of her, and the special time we shared when I was her assistant many years ago. I am acutely aware of the great fortune and blessing that was bestowed upon me to have had her as my mentor and friend for so many years. Also, I am aware of how blessed my own children were to have her as their kindergarten teacher.



Ms. Rena, you are deeply missed and incredibly loved. Thank you for still being the shining star that guides our early childhood program—your early childhood program. The birds in the play yard have grown in number, and their song has become louder and brighter since your passing. The butterflies in the butterfly bush seem to have multiplied immensely, and as I push the children on the swing I sing our song and think of you each day with love and gratitude. You have not gone far. I know your wings have widened and you are flying with joy all around us. ♦

*Fly like a butterfly, fly like a butterfly
Fly like a butterfly in the sky!*



Charissa Johnson-Routhier is a 2012 graduate from the Sunbridge Early Childhood program. She leads the mixed-age kindergarten at the Waldorf School of Palm Beach in Boca Raton, FL where she has served in leadership positions over the last ten years. Charissa's deep love for Waldorf Education grew out of her experience as a Waldorf student herself from early childhood through 12th grade. Charissa lives in West Palm Beach with her husband and two children, who attend the Waldorf School.