Sharing Treasures

Book reviews by John Holt

Edited by Patrick Farenga and Jane Prest Holcomb

Sharing Treasures is a collection of book reviews by John Holt about education, children and learning. John Holt reviewed the literature of education for the popular press of his time, but as his interest in children and learning expanded beyond school walls, so did his search for books and materials that would be useful to people who are learning without attending school. These are John Holt's personal recommendations for homeschooling resources. His insights, wit and eclectic selection offer us new ways to view learning.

John Holt (1923- 1985)

John Holt wrote ten books about education, including *How Children Fail*, *How Children Learn, Teach Your Own* and *Learning All the Time*. His work has been translated into fourteen languages. *How Children Fail,* which the *New York Review of Books* rated "as a class with Piaget", has sold over a million copies in its many editions. John Holt, for years a leading figure in school reform, became increasingly interested in how children learn outside of school. The magazine he founded, Growing Without Schooling, continues to reflect his philosophy.

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INTRODUCTION

Sharing Treasures is a collection of John Holt's reviews, mainly of books relating to education. John Holt's talents as a book reviewer were often in demand and he wrote about education titles for the popular press of the sixties and seventies – *The New York Review of Books, Look, Harpers;* many of these reviews we reproduced in this book. However the vast majority of reviews included here were written for the magazine John founded in 1977, *Growing Without Schooling* (GWS). He started his own mail order catalog at the same time, reviewing in GWS only books and materials that he added to his catalog. From the many reviews John wrote we selected those that reveal his ideas about education as well as his understanding of the nature and interests of children.

John often used book reviews to make his own statements about education. Though certainly times have changed, and the language of some reviews is dated (such as using the word “Negro" in the early reviews, “black” in later ones), what is striking about these reviews is how much punch and relevance they have to schooling in the nineties.

The reviews in this collection also show the evolution of John's concept of education. Evident in his early works for *Harper’s* and *Book Week* are the seeds of John's later position in favor of home schooling to allow children to benefit from more access to the real world and more control over their own learning. His book introductions (particularly *My Country School Diary, Acting Out,* and the *Changing Nature of Man*) are really small essays that tell us as much about John's ideas on education as about the ideas of the authors he introduces. Other reviews, especially his passionate piece about *The Lives of Children*, further demonstrate John's clear vision about education and how to make it better. The foreword to *Somewhere Else* heralds John's future work for home schooling.

I met John Holt because of books. Not his own books though. In fact, I didn't read a book written by John Holt until I started work at Holt Associates in 1981. Before then I was the assistant manager of a bookstore John frequented, and it was there that I met John Holt, bookstore browser. Later, after I volunteered at Holt Associates, I got to know John Holt avid reader.

If I went into the office to work at night John was often there, seated near the book shelves stocked with inventory, quietly reading one of the many books that he was sent, some requested, some not, or that he had purchased. Whenever we spoke about books we often found ourselves lending them back and forth. We discovered that we each took great pleasure in fiction. Just as John made tapes of music he loved and gave them to people, or gave his Boston Symphony Orchestra to office staff when he would be out of town, so he shared books. Music is another topic altogether when remembering John, but you will get a strong sense of his love and ideas about music from the reviews included here.

As I took on more responsibility at the Holt office and worked more closely with John, he would often sit in a comfortable chair near my desk and read - first his mail, then the day's paper, then parts of a book or two that had recently arrived. John never seemed to worry that he might be perceived as “slacking off" because he was reading on the job in front of his employees. Indeed, John viewed his constant reading as an integral part of his work and, of course, it was.

John had a special fondness for ghost stories, especially those of M. R. James, and he provided me with several nights of terror! In turn, I introduced John to the works of Robertson Davies and Flann O'Brien, authors he enjoyed so much that he eventually read more books by them than I have. John could also recite many verses by Ogden Nash, Robert frost and Don Marquis from memory. So, while it is mainly John's reviews on books of nonfiction and education that are gathered into this collection, we also present you with his enthusiastic opinions on fiction for children and adults, gadgets, and children's books to round out his image as a reviewer.

One of the things that John found out as an author (and that I had learned while working in a bookstore) is that publishers do very little to promote books that don't have a quick sales turnover. New books are usually selected for sale in a bookstore when a sales representative visits with the storeowner. The sales representative shows the storeowner nothing but the dust jackets of new titles and talks about the advertising that will accompany the books. The literary merit of a book is rarely discussed; if it is discussed, it is based on skimming during the sales meeting. As a young person with the aspiration to be a writer (as many bookstore employees are), I was appalled by this reality. What a pleasant change it was for me to work at Holt Associates where book's content, the ideas it communicates, are paramount.

It was John's desire to share ideas that led him into selling books. In 1976, he outlined his book-selling plan to his friend Henry Geiger, the late publisher of *Manas*:

…A friend of mine told me that he searched hard through New York and Los Angeles trying to find a copy of my latest

book, Instead of Education No luck. The manager of one bookstore, on hearing that the book had come out in late April, about six months earlier, said with some surprise, that except for a few runaway best sellers, they would never stock a book that old....

For someone who has made it, and wants to continue to make it his chief work to write serious book - written in a style that anyone can read but serious nonetheless - this it very discouraging news. But I think something may be done about it in any case, I am going to try to do something about it following Ivan Illich's maxim that if an institution stops working for you, you not waste much time trying to make it into something very different but think about doing without it.

More specifically, I have decided to buy to sell my own books - and, along with them, the book of a few other people. .. some of them about children, learning, schools, education, and some about other topics, but all book that I feel strongly about and that do not seem to me to be getting enough exposure. In this way I hope to make good book better known and available to more people, to keep at least some of them alive when they might otherwise have died, and, along with that, to make enough money so that I can continue my own work as a serious writer. We will see how it turns out....

John entered the book selling business with a vengeance. He searched for eclectic and provocative books and materials that were often overlooked by traditional booksellers. Before he died in 1985, he had read and selected over 250 books that filled the *John Holt's Book and Music Store* catalog. In addition, there were many out of print book that John wanted to share. If he had a strong penchant for a particular book, he would try to influence a publisher to bring it back into print. As a result of John's persistent championing, book like *The Continuum Concept, The Biography of a Baby*, and *The Changing Nature of Man* have been reprinted. If John couldn't persuade a publisher to bring a book back into print, he considered publishing it himself as he did (and we continue to do) with his own book. He would also purchase whatever unsold stock ('remainder" books) and used copies he could find and then resell them. This was a far cry from business-as-usual in the book trade.

The reviews in this collection that come from *GWS* are John Holt's personal recommendations of home schooling resources. He did not choose things lightly: sometimes John would let several years go by between reading a book and adding it to the catalog. He usually did this because he needed to live with a book's ideas before feeling comfortable enough to wholeheartedly recommend that book to others. At Holt Associates we still follow that precedent - only very enthusiastic recommendations are added to our John Holt's Book and Music Store catalog, and just these book are reviewed in *Growing Without Schooling.*

On the whole John sought books and materials that are read and used by people in everyday life and not just by students in classrooms. In addition, commonplace items and popular best sellers were sometimes added to the catalog if John viewed them in a unique way. For example, airport worker hearing protectors were added because, as he says,

.. of all the painful noises I know, by far, the most painful, even unbearable, is the loud crying or screaming of babies or young children. You will still hear the screaming through there protectors but with less intensity so that instead of being driven half-frantic by the noise, you will be more able to endure it. Furthermore, the protectors would be useful for taking nap in a noisy hours or for otherwise cutting down on unwanted sound - barking dogs, loud music, chain saws, etc.... Beyond that, children of all ages find them fascinating.

The popular book, *In Search of Excellence* was added, not because it talks about teamwork and the humane management of business corporations, but because it gives

... home-schoolers a powerful answer to the schools' so-familiar argument that if children are not subjected, for all the years of their growing up, to the harsh pressure exerted by most schools, the children will be unready for the ‘real world’ where they... [will] have to live and work as adults, a 'real world,' that is (in the mythology of schools) for the most part heartless, ruthless, and cruel.

Jane Prest Holcomb and I took, great pleasure in working on this collection, and we are grateful for the help Susannah Sheffer and Donna Richoux gave us on this project.

We hope that John's thoughts about children, learning, and living will come across the pages and challenge you to see that children, and ourselves, are indeed learning all the time. -- Patrick Farenga

Chapter I
SCHOOLING

THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
George Dennison
(Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley)

This review was originally published in the *New York Review of Books* 10/9/69. It now serves y the introduction to the

1990 edition.

For some months, when speaking to teachers or to anyone else concerned with education, I have said that while there were many recently published books on education (my own among them) that I thought they should read, if they felt they had time for only one it should be *The Lives of Children*. It is by far the most perceptive, moving, and important book on education that I have ever read, or indeed ever expect to. For while I hope that in years to come we may learn much about human growth and development that we do not now know, I doubt that any one book will advance our understanding as much as this one.

It describes the lives of twenty-three children in the small private school in New York in which Dennison taught, and which has since been disbanded. They were black, white, and Puerto Rican in equal proportions. All were poor; half were on welfare, and about half "had come to us from the public schools with severe learning and behavior problems." They were, in short, children of the kind that our giant educational system conspicuously, totally, and hopelessly fails to reach or to help. This school, spending no more money per pupil than the city’s public schools, did not fail. The children got well, grew, learned.

This book must be seen also as a destroyer of alibis and excuses. We cannot say any longer that we do not know why we are failing, or that we do not know what has to be done instead, or that we cannot afford to do it. If we go on failing much longer, stunting and wrecking as we have the lives and spirits of millions of children, it can only be because for peculiar and dreadful reasons of our own that is what we really want to do.

What the book is about may be summed up in Dennison's statement, that might well be on every wall of every school of education in America, that the business of a school is not, or should not be, mere instruction, but the life of the child.' He continues:

The really crucial things at First Street (School) were these: that we eliminated--to the best of our ability--the obstacles which impede the natural growth of mind; that we based everything on reality of encounter between teacher and child; and that we did what we could (not enough, by far) to restore something of the continuum of experience within which every child must achieve his growth. It is not remarkable that under these circumstances the children came to life. They had been terribly bored, after all, by the experience of failure. For books are interesting, numbers are, and painting, and facts about the world.

The key ideas are *reality of encounter* and the *continuum of experience*. There is no reality of encounter between adults and children in most schoolrooms (or homes, for that matter), because most teachers do not feel free, do not dare, either to let the children say or to say themselves what they really feel and think. Their concern is that nothing shall be said or done in the classroom that might get them into trouble--and the trouble they can get into is real enough, as is clearly shown every year by the experience of brave and honest teachers. But what is worse is that they are neither brave nor honest enough to admit that their primary concern, the overriding reason for everything they make or let happen in class, is staying out of trouble.

It is bad enough that thousands of teachers all over the country who in their hearts would like to assign, for example, The *Catcher in the Rye* are afraid to do so. But children might learn a great deal about education and society--much more than is in their civics books - if their teacher said to them, "I know a book that I think you would enjoy and from which you would get a great deal, but I don't dare assign it to you, I don't even dare tell you its name, for fear that some of your parents, or some people in the community, will kick up such a fuss that I will lose my job--and I can't afford to lose my job." Here might be the foundation for a real curriculum and a great deal of honest talk and true learning. Our schools pretend, not altogether hypocritically or dishonestly, to be much concerned with morality, but as Dennison says, "an active moral life cannot be evolved except where people are free to express their feelings and act upon the insights of conscience" (italics mine) and this freedom hardly exists anywhere in our schools.

Of an incident in which a teacher took time, to a degree unthinkable in most schools, to help two children settle a bitter quarrel (but they settled it, not she), Dennison writes: ...

[The children's] self interest will lead them into positive relations with the natural authority of adults, and this is much to be desired, for natural authority is a far cry From authority that is merely arbitrary. Its attributes are obvious: adults are larger, are experienced, possess more words, *and have entered into prior agreements among themselves.* [Italics mine]

This last is of critical importance. I do not know of a more compact or complete definition or at least description of what we mean by the elusive word "culture." The children, living in this culture, sense it all around them, sense that in spite of its bewildering variety it must make some sense, and want more than anything else to End out how it works. What nonsense it is to speak of children living in "unstructured" situations-no one does, every human situation has a structure - or to assume that children are indifferent to the real nature of the world and society around them, and will learn nothing about it unless it is crammed down their throats.

Dennison continues:

…When all this takes on a positive instead of a merely negative character, the children see the adults as protectors and as sources of certitude, approval, novelty, and skills. In the fact that adults have entered into prior agreements, children intuit seriousness and a web of relations in the life that surrounds them. ... These two things, taken together--the natural authority of adults and the needs of children--are the great reservoir of the organic structuring that comes into being when arbitrary rules of order are dispensed with.

Organic structuring; the natural authority of adults: these are two more of the key ideas that are central to this book. In a hundred places Dennison describes how children playing, working, or even fighting--some of the best descriptions in the book, and the most significant, are of fights-will out of their needs and desires End a way to create a natural order, an order that works, and out of which further activity, growth, and order may develop. Dennison points out, "the way they find is neither haphazard nor irrational, but is a matter of observation, discernment, generosity, intelligence, patience." Remember again that the children of whom he is speaking were labeled by their public schools as unteachable and incorrigible.

Elsewhere he speaks of "the barrier of compulsion," by which he means simply that in proportion as we demand or hold over children the power to compel we give up and lose the power to influence and help. One particularly moving passage--and there are many others--makes this point well:

So many adults these days live in a world of words-the half-real tale of the newspapers, the half-real images of television-that they do not realize, it does not sink in, that compulsory attendance is not merely a law which somehow enforces itself but is ultimately an act of force: a grown man, earning his living as a cop of some kind, puts his left hand and his right on the arm of some kid (usually a disturbed one) and takes him away to a prison for the young - Youth House. I am describing the fate of hundreds of confirmed truants. The existence of Youth House, and of the truant officer, was of hot concern of two of our boys. They understood very well the meaning of compulsory attendance, and understanding it, they had not attended. We abolished that act of fierce, and these chronic truants could hardly be driven from the school.

Like Dennison, I have for some time now urged that we abolish or at least greatly relax the laws requiring compulsory attendance. No other change I advocate, however radical, provokes such a terrified and hysterical response. Proposals to wipe out half the human race with hydrogen bombs do not generate one-tenth as much anger. People say shrilly, "If we didn't make children go to school, they would never go, they would run wild, etc.!" No one seems to consider that

children do not run wild on the 180 or so days a year they do not go to school, or that, as Paul Goodman once pointed out, in at least one instance statistics showed there was more juvenile crime when school was in than when it was out. In any case, these fears about what children would do if not locked up in school are groundless for many reasons, but this above al others--they need us! At least, they need whatever in us is real and helpful and interesting, and in any of us there is far more of this than we are ever allowed to make available to them in school.

The heart of the book--if one can speak of such a thing in a book virtually every page of which contains more truth than can be found in most writings on educational psychology--is the third chapter, only eleven pages long. It deals largely with the learning problems of twelve-year-old Jose. Dennison begins:

Here we come to one of the really damaging myths of education, namely, that learning is the result of teaching, that the process Of the child bears a direct relation to methods of instruction and the internal relationships of curriculum ... To cite these as the effective causes of earning is wrong. The causes are in the child. When we consider the powers of mind of a healthy eight-year-old the avidity of the senses, the finesse and energy of observation, the effortless concentration, and the voracious memory--we realize immediately that these powers possess true magnitude in the general scale of things. ... Why is it, then, that so many children fail? Let me put it bluntly; it is because our system of public education is a horrendous, life-destroying mess. There is no such thing as learning (as Dewey tells us) except in the continuum of experience. But this continuum cannot survive in the classroom unless there is realty of encounter between the adults and the children. The teachers must be themselves, not play roles. They must teach the child, and not teach, “subject." The continuum of experience and reality of encounter are destroyed in the public schools (and most private ones) by the very methods which form the institution itself ...

Continuum of persons and experience; reality of encounter. What these or the lack of them mean in real life is made achingly clear in Dennison's description of Jose and of his work with him.

Jose had failed in everything. After five years in the public schools, he could not read, could not do sums, and had no knowledge even of the most rudimentary history or geography. He was described to us as having poor motivation," lacking 'reading skills," and (again) having 'a reading problem."

To say "reading problem” is to draw a little circle around Jose and specify its contents: syllables, spelling, grammar, etc. ...

By what process did Jose and his schoolbook come together? Is this process part of his reading problem?

Who asks him to read the book? Someone asks him? In what sort of voice and for what purpose, and with what concern or lack of concern for the outcome?

And who wrote the book? For whom did they write it? Was it written for Jose? Can Jose actually partake of the life the book seems to offer?

And what of Jose's failure to read? We cannot stop at the hat that he draws a blank. How does he do it? What does he do? Is he daydreaming? If so, of what? Aren't these daydreams part of Jose's reading problem? Did the teacher ask him what he was thinking about? Is his failure to ask part of Jose's reading problem?

Printed words are an extension of speech. Reading is conversing. But what if this larger world is frightening and insulting? Should we, or should we not, include fear and insult in Jose's reading problem?

Jose's reading problem is Jose. Or to put it another way there is no such thing as a reading problem. Jose hates books, schools, and teachers, and among a hundred other insufficiencies – all of a piece – he cannot read. Is this a reading problem?

A reading problem, in short, is not a fact of life, but a fact of school administration. It does not describe Jose, but describes the action performed by the school, i.e., the action of ignoring everything about Jose except his response to printed letters.

With these few words Dennison shows up for the empty and pretentious and pseudo-scientific nonsense it is the whole structure of mystification (specific reading disability, aphasia, dyslexia, strephosymbolia, etc., and nauseam) and quackery that has been erected in recent years by our self-styled specialists in Reading and Remedial Reading. Some may feel the word "quackery" too strong. It is carefully chosen. Our doctors of medicine do not hesitate to call chiropractors quacks, but chiropractors, and even faith healers, have probably done more good and less harm in their fields than our reading experts in theirs.

Dennison then describes Jose's behavior during a typical early reading lesson. The description is enough to break your heart, and to make you wonder later how our tens of thousands of psychologists and related experts can have been so

blind and stupid as to have ignored for so long the importance of such behavior, which must have been duplicated, and must still be duplicated, by hundreds of thousands of poor and despised children all over the country He continues:

…. We need only to look at Jose to see what his problems are: shame, fear, resentment, and rejection of others and of himself, anxiety, self-contempt, and loneliness. None of these was caused by the difficulty of reading printed words - a fact all the more evident if I mention here that Jose, when he came to this country at the age of seven, had been able to read Spanish and had regularly read to his mother (who cannot read) the post cards they received from the literate father ... in Puerto Rico. For five years he had sat in the classrooms of the public schools literally growing stupider by the year... Obviously not all of Jose's problems originated in school. But given the intimacy and freedom of the environment at First Street, his school-induced behavior was easy to observe. He could not believe, for instance, that anything contained in books, or mentioned in classrooms, belonged by rights to himself, or even belonged to the world at large, as trees and lampposts belong quite simply to the world we all live-in. He believed, on the contrary, that things dealt with in school belonged somehow to school. ... There had been no indication that he could share in them, but rather that he would be measured against them and found wanting. Nor did he believe that he was entitled to personal consideration, but felt rather that if he wanted to speak, either to a classmate or to a teacher, or wanted to stand up and move his arms and legs, or even wanted to urinate, he must do it more or less in defiance of authority…

One would not say that he had been schooled at all, but rather that for five years he had been indoctrinated in the contempt of persons, for contempt of persons had been the supreme fact demonstrated in the classrooms, and referred alike to teachers, parents, and children. For all practical purposes, Jose's inability to learn consisted precisely of his school-induced behavior.

Two things must be said here. The first is that *contempt of persons* is precisely and above all else what is taught, and learned, in almost every classroom in almost every school in the country, public or private, black or white, rich or poor, "good" or "bad." It is what our educational system brings about, and in many places is intended, as directly and specifically as basic training in the Army or Marines, to bring about--contempt for others, contempt for self, the need and ability to get a sense of identity and worth only by submitting oneself to the demands of a superior and oppressive force and acting as its agent in oppressing others.

The second has to do with the word "belong." Our educational system, at least at its middle- and upper middleclass layers, likes to say and indeed believes that an important part of its task is transmitting to the young the heritage of the past, the great traditions of history and culture. The effort is an unqualified failure. The proof we see all around us. A few

of the students in our schools, who get good marks and go to prestige colleges, exploit the high culture, which many of them do not really understand or love, by pursuing comfortable and well-paid careers as university Professors of English, History, Philosophy, etc. Almost all the rest reject that culture wholly and utterly.

The reason is simple, and the one Dennison has pointed out - their schools and teachers have never told them, never encouraged or even allowed them to think, that high culture, all those poems, novels, Shakespeare plays, etc., belonged or might belong to them, that they might claim it for their own, use it solely for their own purposes, for whatever joys and benefits they might get from it. Let us not mislead ourselves about this. The average Ivy League graduate is as estranged from the cultural tradition, certainly those parts of it that were shoved down his throat in school, as poor Jose was from his Dick and Jane. The entertainment highlight of the class dinner at my 25th college reunion, and the nearest thing to a cultural event during the whole weekend, was a low-comedy parody of grand opera. It seemed to be just what most of my classmates expected and wanted.

Dennison continues:

The gradual change in Jose's temperament drew its sustenance from the whole of our life at school, not from minuscule special programs designed especially for Jose’s academic problems. And not the least important feature of his life (it was quite possibly the most important) was the effect of the other children on him. I mean that when adults stand out of the way so children can develop among themselves the full riches of their natural relationships, their effect of each other is positively curative. ... This is the kind of statement that many professionals look upon askance and identify as Romantic, as much as to say that the sphere of the world rides upon the tortoise of their own careers.

The development or demonstration of this is one of the most important parts of the book. Precisely because it depends upon so many specific incidents, it cannot well be summarized or even represented in a brief quote.

Equally important, and equally had to summarize, is the relationship of the adults to these interactions, the ways in which they use, and the children make use of, their natural authority. This matter--the proper relationship in a non-coercive school between the old and the young - is immensely important, and is not well understood, or even understood at all, by many people in such schools, or by teachers in more conventional schools who would like to make their classrooms more free but do not know exactly what they would do, what their task and function would be, if they gave up their present roles of straw boss, cop, and judge.

As Dennison wisely points out:

If compulsion is damaging and unwise, its antithesis a vacuum of free choice is unreal. And in fact we cannot deal with the problem in these terms, for the real question is not, what shall we do about classes? It is, what shall we do about our relationships with the young? How shall we deepen them, enliven them, make them freer, more amiable, and at the same time more serious? How shall we broaden the area of mutual experience?

How did Jose get to his first reading lesson? What facts and conditions led to his going there?

... he suffered because of his inability to learn. He was afraid to make another attempt, and at the same time, he wanted to.

We established a relationship ... spent several weeks getting to know each other, roughly three hours a day of conversation, games in the gym, outings, etc. We lived in the same neighborhood and saw each other in the streets. He knew me as George, not as a teacher.

He understood immediately that our school was different, that the teachers were present for reasons of their own and that the kind of concern they evinced was unusual, for there were no progress reports, or teacher ratings, or supervisors. ...

He understood that I had interests of my own, a life of my own that could not be defined by the word 'teacher." And he knew that he, though not a large part of my life, war nevertheless a part of it.

Now given this background, what must Jose have thought about my wanting to teach him to read? For I did want to, and I made no bones about it. ... The fact is, he took it for granted. It was the right and proper relationship, not of teacher and student, but of adult and child.

...And so I did not wait for Jose to decide for himself. When I thought the time was ripe, I insisted that we begin our lessons. My insistence carried a great deal of weight with him, since, ... he expected me. ... My own demands were an important part of Jose's experience. They were not simply the demands of a teacher, nor of an adult, but belonged to my own way of caring about Jose. And he sensed this. There was something he prized in the fact that I made demands on him. This became all the more evident once he realized that I wasn't simply processing him, that is, grading, measuring, etc. And when he learned that he could refuse--could refuse altogether, could terminate the lesson, could change its

direction, could insist on something else ... we became collaborators in the business of life. ... It boils down to this ... we adults are entitled to demand much of our children. ... The children are entitled to demand that they be treated as individuals, since that is what they are. ... there is nothing in this process that is self correcting. We must rely on the children to correct us…(to) throw us off, with much yelling and jumping like a man in a pair of shoes that pinch his feet.

…I have mentioned conflict just here because I have always been annoyed by the way some Summerhillians speak of love, of "giving love" ... we cannot give love to children. If we do feel love, it will be for some particular child, or some few; and we will not give it, but give ourselves, because we are much more in the love than it is in us. What we can give to all children is attention, forbearance, patience, care, and above all justice. This last is certainly a form of love; it is precisely--love in a form that can be given, given without distinction to all, since just this is the anatomy of justice: it is the self-conscious, thoroughly generalized human love of humankind.

And if we do not have justice in our schools, how will we have it in our society, and if we don't what will become of us? Perhaps, though I have left much unsaid, and am haunted by the possibility that I may have left unsaid just what might have drawn to this book some who otherwise may not read it, this is the place to end this review.

For, as we see in Dennison's pointed and moving discussion of sexual freedom among today's young people, or his comparison between the oppressed Russian peasant boys in Tolstoy's school and the far more deeply oppressed and demoralized city boys in his own, or in any one of a number of other places, this is a book about our unhappy society--sick, sadistic, self-destructive, mystified, and manipulated at every level by self-serving experts and con men, and heading however waveringly toward war abroad and some kind of dreadful native variety of Fascism at home. There is still much we can and must do to stop this slide to disaster--we have that much freedom. But we must recognize that we are almost certainly too stunted and broken in spirit, too full of fear, greed, envy, self-doubt, self-contempt, disappointment, and rage to be able to create for the first time a society that is truly human, just, honest, and peaceful, with some reasonable prospect of survival. To do that, we must have the help of a new generation of people far more intelligent, more kind, more loving and respecting of life than most of us can ever hope to be, and our only chance of getting such help is by making our schools, as Dennison has shown us how, into the kinds of places in which such people can grow. Perhaps, if enough of us, many millions of us, read this book, take it to heart, try in every way we can to put its not too difficult lessons into practice, we may yet save ourselves.

Postscript: [written in GWS 6, June-July 1978] At the time I wrote this review, I thought that people who worked in and

for schools were (or at least might become) serious about helping children. That those people did not read or heed this book was one of the things that convinced me that they were not serious about helping our children, our society, and our world and could not be made serious about helping. A great and essential book.

ACTING OUT

Roland Betts (Boston: Little, Brown)
Introduction by John Holt

This is a very funny, sad, unsparing, compassionate, and frightening account *Acting Out* tells of the lives of students and adults in the public schools of one of our great cities.

After reading this book, school people all over the country may say, “Oh, that's just New York: hell, what did you expect the rest of us aren't like that." Such remarks should be taken with a great deal of salt. People who have worked in other school systems or been students in other systems tell us that New York's school are no worse than, and not much different from, the systems of most other big cities and are indeed better than some systems. Figures back up these statements. We may, therefore, accept this book as a very accurate description of urban mass education and mass schooling in the United States. That is, mass education/schooling is a failure and disaster.

How can such a damning and devastating book be compassionate? It is compassionate because, although Mr. Betts divides the people he describes into heroes and villains, only one character comes across to me as wholly unlikable, without any redeeming virtues. This wholly unlikable character was the head custodian who confiscated, stole, and sold the rug that a teacher had bought with his own money and put in his classroom to make it slightly more comfortable and welcoming to the students. The other characters may be foolish, irritating if not maddening, and absurd, but not hateful. At least that is how the characters seem from the safe distance of the reader, and it is hard not to feel a wry and unused affection for many of them. It could have been that many or even most of these people, when they first came into the schools to work in whatever capacity, wanted (in Mr. Betts' words) 'to do good." If instead (and usually very quickly) they have learned to do bad, it is because of de institution they work in. It is clear that in the schools Mr. Betts describes, no one -whether teacher, custodian, counselor, secretary, principal can do good work, the work he is supposed to do, is paid to do, and (at last at first) wanted to do, because anyone trying to do good work will soon be driven crazy by endless obstacles and distractions.

In order to cope with these obstacles and distractions, almost all of Bett’s characters fall back on strategies of personal

survival, i.e., each asks, how do I keep from going nuts in this place? But like something invented by Kafka, each person, in spite of spending most of his time trying to keep from going crazy, becomes instead part of a crazed group. The schools are caught in a vicious cycle: They can't be reformed from the top, as the short career of Chancellor Harvey Scribner (a determined, resourceful, and tough minded administrator) makes clear. And they certainly can't be reformed from the bottom, as shown by the demise of New York's Open Corridor movement A great many teachers put time and effort into that movement in New York's elementary school: I myself supported it. But as Betts points out by 1976 the Open Corridor movement “was out of fashion and out of sight" In the schools Mr. Betts describes, all such reforms have short lives.

It is also clear from their account that the schools of New York City have not been made better, and are not likely to be made better, by the device of
“Community control” as now defined by the laws of New York State. In the first place, the idea that a school (or any place else) can be responsive to and democratically controlled by a “community" of 20,000 or more persons is an absurdity. Democratically operating a school of less than a hundred kids is an extraordinarily difficult and demanding job for a few dozen families; it is a job that takes just about all the time, energy, and ability those families have. If thirty-six people, trying to work together responsively and democratically, have a difficult and demanding job, how can 20,000 people do it? They don't. Community control of large school systems, as Mr. Betts makes plain, means that the schools will be run by the loudest shouters and the cleverest schemers, the ones who learn best how to manipulate the machinery of control. Just as the regulatory agencies of the Federal government were quickly taken over by the industries they were supported to regulate (because no one else was willing to give the regulatory agencies so much time and serious attention), do the community school boards in New York City were quickly taken over, at least wherever it seemed worth making the effort, by the very Teachers' Union whose power the school board was supposed to counterbalance.

In the same my, the idea that parents could make better schools by going to the school building and raising hell any time the school did something the parents did not like, has completely backfired. The parents who went to raise hell were, in many or perhaps even most cases, not there with the most legitimate grievances, but simply those people who liked to raise hell, or had nothing else to do but raise hell, and whore children were more often than not among there raising most hell in school. The schools responded as they had to, and as anyone could have guessed they would: they simply set up more elaborate screens to hide and protect the teachers or administrators from the parents. These screens, amusingly described by Mr. Betts, assure that no people, even those with wholly legitimate requests or grievances, can reach the school; the school is thus made even more remote, unresponsive, and irresponsible. And so another vicious circle is perpetuated.

Of all the people Mr. Betts describes, the children, in spite of their faults and problems and low reading scores, come across as the most lively, intelligent and resourceful - dear Heaven, how resourceful! But I um unhappily reminded of what James Herndon did some years ago, in his book, *The Way It Spozed To Be*. In describing his own earlier teaching in a ghetto junior high school on the West Coast Herndon made clear at the start of his book that, though it might disappoint his readers, he was not going to tell about any violence: after all, he said, these people he was writing about were children. But children have changed; many of even the youngest elementary school children in affluent suburbs are far more frequently and dangerously violent than they used to be. In the inner city the problem is far worse. Our big city schools are largely populated, and will be increasingly populated, by the children of the non-white poor, the youngest members and victims of a sick sub-culture of a sick society, obsessed by violence and the media-inspired worship of dominance, luxury, and power.

This non-white poor culture, this anti-culture, has fragmented, degraded, and corrupted its members and victims more then centuries of slavery and the most brutal repression were able to do. Every day this anti-culture, as manifested in the children, invades the schools. If the schools had a true and humane culture of their own, a culture that was really understood, believed in, cared about, and lived by, as did the First Street School some years ago (more later on First Street), they might put up a stiff resistance, might even win over some of the children. But since the culture of the school is only a pale and somewhat timid and genteel version of the culture of the street outside, and since the adults are nowhere near as united in dealing with the children as the children are united in resisting and fighting the adults, nothing changes. Far from being able to woo the children away from greed, envy, and violence, the schools cannot even protect the children from each other.

Why would anyone want to go to such places? Perhaps more to the point why should anyone have to go? I have a private reason for asking. Unlike most people, And as far as I know, unlike Mr. Betts, I do not believe in education - i.e. compulsory learning, in any form, in or out of school - nor in the part-time jailing of children to “make them learn." I would like to see compulsory school attendance laws repealed. For some time now, individual parents here and there in different parts of the country have tried to take their children out of school on the premise that the children were not learning in the school, but with the help of the parents would learn it home. Sometimes the courts have allowed this, more often not. Where the courts have not allowed it the argument has usually been that, however skillful the parents might be at teaching school subjects, and however high the test scores of the children might be, the parent could not provide the necessary socializing, civilizing, democratizing experience of going to school with large numbers of other children. Having read *Acting Out,* I cannot but wonder, on what grounds any reasonable judge could compel children to attend the

kind of schools Mr. Betts describes? Indeed, I hope Mr. Betts book may be one piece of ammunition used by parents who are trying to get their children out of schools.

Another piece of ammunition might be the report on School Violence and Vandalism of the Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency of the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S Senate, 94th Congress. This report is in two parts. The hut part, with its 599 closely printed pages, describes the extent of the problem and suggests possible ways of dealing with it. Considered against the background of the schools Mr. Betts describes, most of the proposals in Part II seem laughable. The report's proposals would require a number of things the schools don't have and are not likely to get: much more money, a wide range of supporting social services, and above all, and most unlikely of all, a faculty and administration itself unified in spirit organized, determined, efficient and competent. Even then, any measures the faculty and administration might think up could and probably would be easily defeated as the students became more angry, better equipped (armed), and more resourceful.

Is there any hope, any remedy? Setting aside for the moment my strong conviction that all compulsory learning and compulsory schooling are by their very nature bad, and trying to see through the eyes of the majority of people who believe in compulsory learning and schooling, I think the answer is: Yes, there is a slight hope. That is, I think there are some things that might be done, even within the framework of compulsory schooling that might make these schools substantially less bad, less destructive for all the people in them. Even Mr. Bett's grim account points toward remedies. He says that the children were at their best when they went out of the school, on trips into the city (it made very little difference where) or when making preparations for a party. That is, when doing real work toward an objective the children supported and understood. The party war real and it was theirs, so they worked hard and sensibly to make it a good one. And the parents, though poor, cooked party foods that were vastly better than anything the school served from its expensive kitchens.

To see more clearly what might be done, we must look to the experiences of the First Street School, described by George Dennison in *The Lives of Children*. First Street School was a very small, privately supported, free elementary school. Its twenty-three students from various public schools were about mainly divided between white, Hispanic, and black. Most were low income or poor. Many had long histories (considering their ages) of learning problems, acting out trouble and violence. At this school all twenty-three students got better, grew, and learned, most of them at a rate two or three times faster than even good students in the public schools. And all this at a cost per pupil no greater than that spent by the public schools themselves. Why did the First Street School work so much better? For many reasons, but this above all: it was small.

Since early in this century, almost all the people who have run our schools have acted on the belief that the Army, or the large industrial corporation, was the ideal model of the way to get things done. Size, specialized function, and centralized, clearly defined authority were thought to be essential for efficiency. The schools, therefore, were made and are still being made into giant educational factories. *Acting Out* describes the terminal illness, the death throes, of one of these factories, and by extension, all of them. While these institutions, the schools, keep their present forms, they cannot be saved, cannot be made kindly, or interesting, or responsive, or even minimally competent; the weight of the past is too heavy on them. From the top of the hierarchy to the bottom, people in the schools must spend too much time and energy protecting themselves against the enduring consequences of their own and other people's mistakes. If adults insist - as they do - on compulsory schooling for their children, then the schools must be put in new places and organized on the principle that, even if all other things must remain the same, schools will become better when they are made smaller.

Without any proof or possibility of proof, I assert that if every adult - administrator, secretary, teacher, custodian, bus driver, everyone - who now works in New York City's (or any other's) public schools had his name put in a pool; and if names were drawn from that pool at random in group of six; and if each of these groups of six randomly selected adults was assigned a group of not more than 100 children of different ages, and were given some space to work in (preferably not in present school buildings), and were told, “OK you’re a school, work it out any way you can," 95% of these mini-school, and maybe all of them, would be better than almost any of the schools that now exist. This would be true even in the first year of wild confusion, and much more true later because in such small schools -where everyone knew everyone else, where people came together as people and not and not as the holder of jobs and players of roles and defenders of prerogatives, where everyone’s work had a purpose and each could see the purpose, when no one could be shielded or hidden from the consequences of his acts – *each person would learn from his experiences and would get better at his work.*

Most such mini-schools could not be as good as the First Street School, nor obtain such astonishing results, because only a small minority of the people working in the public schools are as intelligent, perceptive, compassionate, resourceful, strong, and patient as the people who worked at First Street. But the mini-schools would be better than what we now have. And those adults who could not learn to like or deal with or teach children would quit or, if they dared not quit would get themselves (or be pushed) out of the way of the people doing the teaching. More and more parents themselves would begin to enter a serious and fruitful partnership with the school. The parents could see what the school was doing. If they didn't like it they could argue with the teachers responsible. If arguing didn't change anything, the parents could find another small school that suited them better - for there would surely be a wide variety.

How can we begin to create in our large cities a growing number of small schools that could be genuinely responsive and responsible to the children and parents they serve? Perhaps the best way might be through called Voucher plans. In these plans, whatever money the city and state are ready to spend on each school-age child is given in the form of a voucher to the parents of that child. The child's parents then choose a school, public or private, for their child and pay the voucher to that school. If the parent likes none of the existing schools, he may combine his voucher with other parents' vouchers to start a new school. But so far there does not seem to be much public interest in such plans. Most parents, as the experience of "community control" shows, are not willing, for one reason or another, to use much of their time to take part in the overseeing or running of school. Where voucher plans have been instituted, most parents seem to pick whatever school is closest; few parents do the kind of comparing and choosing that the plan is supposed to make possible.

Beyond this lack of interest or willingness to participate, there are other difficulties. Any plan to give parents a wide choice of schools or the option of running school of their own, might well be overturned by the courts at least in those areas where the courts we trying to reduce inter-racial prejudice and tension by mixing children of different races in all the schools. But even if large numbers of the public wanted a voucher supported choice of school for their children, and even if the courts would allow this, there would be, in New York at least another serious obstacle: the Teachers' Union itself, i.e. Albert Shanker.

The battle over community control made clear that nothing can be done in the New York City schools unless it has Mr. Shanker's approval; at least nothing can be done that might affect in any way the pay or job security or seniority privileges of teachers. It seems certain mat Mr. Shanker would not approve any measure that might make it possible for tax supported schools to hire teachers from outride the existing public school, or under any conditions except those set forth in the present union contract. But if there were enough public demand for some sort of voucher plan, there is a chance mat Mr. Shanker would approve the plan, provided that every school receiving voucher plan money was required to hire all its teachers from the existing pool of Teachers' Union members and under the existing union contract. This voucher system would not help administrators however. In the kind of small schools I am talking about there would be no administrators. Everyone would be a teacher, and whatever work of administration there might be (in small schools there is very little administrative work) would be shared among the teachers as they thought best.

None of this is going to happen soon, say within the next five or ten years and it may not happen at all. Still, the only hope I can see lies in this direction. Meanwhile, the schools will go on as they are, desperately trying now this, now that - *Open Classrooms* one year, guard dogs the next- from time to time sending out cheery Vietnam style bulletins about the

worst of the crisis having passed and there being light at the end of the tunnel. But for the most part, the schools will remain exactly as described in *Acting Out*. Though Mr. Betts offers no message of hope, we should at least be grateful to him for making clear what really goes on.

MY COUNTRY SCHOOL DIARY

An Adventure in Creative Teaching
Julia Weber Gordon (NY: Dell)

Introduction by John Holt

This book, though written in the late 1930's and published in 1946, has great meaning for us today. We are spending much time and money on programs of education designed to help children who are poor, in one or another racial minority, victims of prejudice, emotionally disturbed, and by these and other conditions blocked off from growing and learning. We mean well. But we are not likely to do much good, and may do more harm than good, unless we learn some important lessons. Many of these are to be found in Miss Weber's experience and in her book.

The Office of Education is now operating a project called Follow Through, whose aim is to give continuing help in school to the children who have already been in Head Start. The plan seems scientific and even sensible. A number of different groups of educators will try out their own programs, using widely varying methods of teaching, based on diverse theories of learning and personality development. After a while the Office will "test" the "results" of these programs. One, perhaps more, will be declared the "official winner." Then directives will go out to hundreds of schools and many thousands of teachers telling them to put this program into effect and how to do it. If all goes well, our problems should soon be solved.

But all may not go well, and we may find ourselves once again, as so often before, with a costly and elaborate disappointment and failure. Why so? And what can be done to prevent this? By way of answer let me quote some excerpts from a draft of a memo written by my friend and colleague Bill Hull to some of his colleagues in Follow Through.

If one looks carefully at what has happened in the past it should be clear that other small differences in the way programs are handled can make very great differences in results.

... One may set out to test a special bit of curriculum or a different approach to classroom organization. If he is perceptive, honest, and fortunate enough to have contrasting results, he may realize that the quality of the program depends on factors, which have not been specified. The attitude of the principal, the anxieties of the parents, the personal problems or strengths of one or two key people, various un-verbalized assumptions about the nature of children's learning, can singly or collectively result in great variation in what is achieved....

New programs, new materials, and even basic changes in organizational structure will not necessarily bring about healthy growth. A dynamic and vital atmosphere can develop when teachers who are ready to move be given the freedom and support to innovate. One must depend ultimately upon the initiative and resourcefulness of such teachers and this cannot be promoted by prescribing continuously and in detail what is to be done.

Despite the variety in our [Elementary Science Study] materials, many of which are very sophisticated in their simplicity, there is not going to be good science in schools until more basic changes, which involve encouraging children to be self-directing and resourceful, instead of passive and dutiful, can come about...

School change - if it is to be of lasting significance – must spring from the actions of teachers in classrooms, teachers who are able to help children live creatively because they are sufficiently whole human beings to live creatively themselves.

The most efficient way of bringing about large-scale change, we feel, is to support the teachers who are most ready to move rather than to attack those who have their heels dug in. Changes brought about in this way have a way of spreading without the difficulty of trying to enforce things, which cannot be enforced anyway...

We do not believe that there should be a form of education, which is essentially different for poor children. The kind of education, which a “wise and good parent” would desire for his own child, should be available to all...

In short, the proper, the best, and indeed the only source of lasting and significant educational change must be the teacher in the classroom. *My Country School Diary* is for me eloquent proof of this. It tells what one teacher was able to do when given a chance and a little help. Certainly her situation looked hard and unpromising. Her school was a small, one-room country school in a poor and declining rural community, serving a group of children most of who were poor and many of whom were in other ways handicapped. She had very little money and only chose materials she or her students or friendly

outsiders could make, or what she could get various educational services to give or lend her.

Miss Weber does not complain about the "quality" of the children she was reaching, as so many educators do, not because she is playing the part of a modest heroine, but because she did not and does not think of them that way - as "material." of whatever grade. To understand better how hard her task was; we should look at the figures indicating the ages of the children in each of the eight grades in the class she had to work with.

Grade 8: 13-5(13 years, 5 months) and 15-8
Grade 7: 13-7, 15-2, and 11-3
Grade 6: 10-8, 11-3, 10-10, and 14-8
Grade 5: 9-3, 9-7, 12-4, and 10-10
Grade 4: 8-0, and 12-2
Grade 3: 8-3, 10-1, 8-9, 13-5, 11-2, 12-1, and 13-2
Grade 2: 8-8, 7-1, and 7-8
Beginners: 8-6, 8-4, and 5-4

This is heterogeneous grouping with a vengeance. It is worth noting that 13-5 third grader was not just behind in school, but severely retarded and disturbed, so much so that when his parents later moved they put him in an institution. Yet while he was in Miss Weber's class she did what she could for him, noting mildly once or twice that his boisterous and bizarre behavior seemed to disturb and even upset the other children. In the second year of her teaching, there were two nine-year-olds along with two six year-olds in the first grade. It hardly needs to be said that there are few schools or teachers that would allow, even in one grade, the range of age and ability that she had to cope with-and she had all eight grades. Yet, everybody counted, everybody grew, everybody learned.

Her experience tells us something else. We do not need enormous centralized schools in order to have quality education. This is the reverse of what we have been told and sold. All over the country we have destroyed small schools in which it might at least have been possible for teachers to do some of the things Miss Weber did. In their place we have built giant school-factories, which we run, for the most part, like armies and prisons because they seem too big to be run like anything else. The idea behind this was that in small schools we could not have, could not afford to have, the kinds of equipment, materials, and specialized teachers that we thought we had to have to get enough variety and depth in the children's learning. Miss Weber shows us that even in the late '30s this need not have been so. In less than a month she and her pupils were already able to make their tiny school in its impoverished rural community a more beautiful and

richer learning environment, more full of interesting things to look at and work with and think about, than most current schoolrooms ever are.

We could do very much better today. Many people and organizations have shown us how to find or make or improvise all kinds of equipment for very little money. The Physical Sciences Study Committee has shown us how to make delicate measuring instruments from cheap and easily available materials. Project Follow Through at the Educational Development Center in Newton, Massachusetts, has put together a twenty-page list of materials for use in classrooms; seven of these pages list materials that can he found for little money or no money at all. I have seen Learning Laboratories in schools in the poorest parts of a major city full of a variety of stuff that kids and teachers had found in junk piles and garbage cans. Even in the case of more expensive equipment, for less than it costs us to build our big central schools, for less than it costs us just to bus children to those schools, we could set up centers of supplies and equipment from which outlying schools could borrow what they needed. Or, just as in thinly settled parts of the country Bookmobiles go out from central libraries to towns too small to afford a library, so might specially equipped trucks - Labmobiles of various kinds - go to small rural schools. But, as I said before, even without the kind of help we could very easily give today, Miss Weber was able to create a learning environment of great variety and richness.

When she and her students needed a book or some piece of equipment, they found out who might have it and then tried to borrow it. They used other schools, the state university, the state agricultural experiment station, and the industrial Arts Cooperative Service in New York. They got some skilled carpenters to help the older boys build a playhouse for the younger children, rather like the Wendy Houses of the British Infant Schools, and a vitally needed piece of equipment for any class of young children. It is not in the book, but I remember Miss Weber telling me once that in one year her class of about thirty children borrowed seven hundred books from the country library. More than twenty books per pupil! Very few of our fancily equipped central schools get that kind of use out of their libraries; indeed, in many schools the library is so hedged about with rules and restrictions that students can hardly use it at all.

In education we cry too much about money. Sure, we could use more; but some of the best classrooms and schools I have seen or heard of, Miss Weber's among them, spend far less per pupil than the average in our schools today. We often don't spend well what money we have. We waste large sums on show-off buildings; on unproductive administrative staffs; on diagnostic and remedial specialists who do very little to help the children they have labeled as needing help; on expensive equipment that is either not needed, or underused, or badly misused; on tons of identical and dull textbooks, basal readers, and workbooks; and now on gee-whiz devices like computers with cathode screens on which children can write their "right" or "wrong" answers-what one man has aptly called the "five-thousand-dollar flash card." If we spent

our money better, we might have less trouble with our school bond and tax campaigns. For much less than what we do spend, we could, like Miss Weber, make our classrooms into far better learning environments than most of them are today.

The book contains another important lesson. Children need to grow in and into a community of older people that they can at least in part see, think about, and understand. They learn and grow best when their school is part of such a community, when their community comes into the school, when their learning touches at many points the lives, work, needs, and problems of people outside the school building. Where did Miss Weber learn this? Was she one of the few, the very few, who really understood what Dewey was writing and talking about? Or did she figure this out for herself, as she figured out many other important things? Anyway, she was able to get her children out into their community and to think about its history and life and work. And she was able to get the older people into the school, and to make them feel that it was a part of their life, not just a box where they left their children for a few hours every day.

From the book we can sense how much this did for the children, for their learning, for their sense that school was a part of the real world, not just a place where you did meaningless things today so that later you might go out and do some other meaningless things somewhere else. We can only guess what the school, and Miss Weber in it, and the influence of both on the children, did for the community. The chances are good that it was the most important, unifying, life-bringing element in the community, perhaps the only such element. Reading about it reminds me of the work that Elliot Shapiro did, many years later, in an elementary school in Harlem, which he brought to life by making it a center from which the whole community could think about its needs and problems and consider how to deal, and begin to deal, with them. It seems likely that the lack or loss of such schools and teachers, their forced amalgamation into centralized school districts, has contributed more than a little to the decline and death of so many of our country towns, whose young people desert them as soon as they are able to get away.

We seem, in spite of all our wealth and power, to have managed in the past decades a kind of miracle in reverse: we have destroyed or lost most of our sense of community in both city and country at once. We can see the results of this around us both in and out of schools. One of the most urgent social tasks of our time is to rebuild, both in our festering cities and our deserted countryside, communities of which people can feel, “I belong here; this is my place; I have something to say about what happens; I can help and count on these people around me; I can do something to make this a better place to live.” To accomplish this we will have to have schools like Miss Weber's. Indeed, we are beginning to see in some of our cities that the effort by parents to get good and meaningful education for their children is often the first step toward creating a sense of community where none existed before, which is in turn the first step toward making that community.

And this in turn is why it is not just selfish, but stupid and shortsighted, for teachers, unions, and the educational establishment in general to oppose, however much and for whatever reasons they may, the movement toward community control of schools.

The book also carries, though indirectly, in important message about the training of teachers, a subject about which there has been much bitter and futile argument. Some say, “Teaching is a special art or science, as full of difficult techniques as any other, and nobody, no matter how much he may know, can teach effectively unless he knows those techniques." Others say, "Nonsense, these techniques are trivial. Any sensible person knows them or can pick them up. What counts is that teachers have a deep and thorough knowledge of whatever subject they are teaching." And so the "methods people" and the "content people" flail away at each other. To me, both seem to miss the point. What children want and need in the adults they work with, and what the adults who work with them have to have, is, above all, competence - the ability to do things. One of the extraordinary things about Miss Weber is the great number and variety of things that she was able to do and thus help the children do. She may not have been, and probably wasn't, an expert in any of these. What was important was that she knew enough to get the children interested, get them started, and give them some help.

The bare list of these things is eloquent. She could play the harmonica; play the piano; do folk dances; sing songs; help design and build the playhouse; make and operate puppets and marionettes; play a number of games, particularly games that children of mixed ages could enjoy within limited space and given little equipment; make paper windmills; make scale drawings; identify many trees and plants; do Indian dances; grow flowers; make a rock garden; tell something about geology and identify rocks; tell Indian legends; sew; cook; make salt crystals; weave pot holders from rags; make furniture for the playhouse; design and make easels; identify and compare fabrics; work with clay; make pottery; draw and paint in various media; make plaster casts of animal tracks and identify some of them; sing carols in many languages; weave on simple looms; spin thread. And so on.

These are the kinds of things people working with children should know how to do. Not that we all need to know the same things; my own list, shorter than Miss Weber's, is quite different. What is important is that there are more things on it than there used to be, and in time there will be more than there are now. What is more important is that I am ready and eager to learn, along with the children, new skills from anyone who has them and am not afraid to do among them things that I do not do very well. It is doing that is important.

The other day a young person called me up to say that he wanted to work; with one of the schools in this area (Boston) that is giving children much more freedom, independence, choice, and responsibility in their learning. I asked what he

could do, what he liked to do, what he could show children and help them learn to do. He seemed puzzled. I said, "Can you sing, dance, speak a foreign language, play game, play musical instruments? Do you know sports? Can you do any of the arts and crafts, even a little? Can you make things, run things?" No, none of these. Perhaps, though I assured him I did not mean this, he thought I was asking if he was expert at anything. At any rate, he didn't think he could do any of these things. All he had was goodwill and a little academic book learning. Not a bad beginning, perhaps, but not enough, nowhere near enough.

Along with these many minor abilities and skills, a teacher of young children, and probably students of any age, should have I wide range of knowledge, curiosity, and interest. To make a list of the things Miss Weber knew something about, or knew how to find out, or was interested in learning, would take as much room as the list of her skills. Along with this kind of knowledge, a teacher ought to bring to a class a certain breadth of experience. It is too bad that so many people go into teaching and stay in it for years without ever having done anything but reach. How can I help a child know the world if all I know is the school and the classroom? He knows that as well as I do.

Other impressions stand out and carry other important lessons. As nice is the school was, how much more alive, natural, and real were the children when they got out on a Forestry Club picnic, a trip to the sea, or any one of their many trips out into the world around them. Many school systems are making more use of nature education and of resources in the communities around them, but we need to push much further in this direction than we have so far. How important it was for those of the older children to be able to get jobs, even without finishing school, and what a dreadful and needless mistake we have made in making a high-school diploma a kind of prerequisite for a young person to do anything with his life. Schools ought not to be in, and should get out of as fast as they can, the business of saying that this or that young person is or is not qualified to do this work or pursue that interest. They cannot make these judgments wisely or fairly, and everything they do for the sake of this kind of grading and labeling obstructs and corrupts their true work of education.

It was often the case that the questions the children asked themselves were the questions from which came the most further investigation and learning. Miss Weber's school, like so many others, made nonsense of the worn-out old adage that children can't think because they haven't got the facts with which to, think. It was their desire to make sense of things, to find out how the world around them worked and how it came to work that way, that led them to look for and collect facts. How vital it was that Miss Weber should have been free to build or, better yet, to grow the curriculum around the interests and concerns of the children. Of course she introduced ideas of her own, some of which worked better than others, some of which were successful only as long as she pushed them, and some of which the children took

up and made their own. How vital it was, too, that she was not obliged to do the same things year after year, nor slogging through that old textbook and teacher's manual, but continually exploring new territory, so that her interest and enthusiasm were always alive, and being alive could awaken interest and enthusiasm in the children. What a hopeless business to expect teachers all over the country, year after year, to "motivate" children into learning the same old material, to expect that children will be able to grow in a classroom where the teacher is required to stand still.

It would not be honest or fair to close without saying that there are a few points where I have some reservations about Miss Weber's philosophy and work, at least as they come through in her book. I think it is a mistake for schools, or anyone else to see democracy as an end, rather than a means one of the many, toward more difficult and important human ends, growth and freedom among them. And it is an equally serious mistake to equate democracy with voting, to assume that if you arrange things, in school or anywhere else, so that nothing can be done until a vote is taken, and that whatever the majority decides shall then be done, you will have democracy. Our democratic institutions still exist, in theory and on paper, but it is one of the bitter facts of our times that few people have any sense of controlling the circumstances of their lives, that most people feel that life, "reality," as they like to call it, is a kind of slavery and that they are slaves.

I am uneasy about a doctrine strong in schools to this day that children must not be allowed to fight or quarrel, that hostile and angry feelings are bad, that if children are told often enough that they should be kind, generous, forgiving, and tolerant, they will become so. We have been doing this in our schools for some time now, and quite obviously the medicine has not taken, though this is not wholly the schools' fault. What we have produced is not people who never want to quarrel, but people who do not know how to quarrel, do not know how to fight fair, do not know how to handle the emotions that conflicts arouse in them, do not know how to keep little conflicts from escalating into ever bigger ones, do not realize that in any conflict, even in war, your aim must not be to destroy your opponent but to win him over. Thus we have become romantics and fanatics of violence, of "unconditional surrender" and "victory at any price."

In fact I am generally uneasy about the doctrine, which grew out of the then fashionable behaviorist psychology and its now equally fashionable offspring, operant conditioning, that human growth, in knowledge or understanding or character, can be seen as nothing more than the development of certain patterns of behavior, good habits. We cannot too often remind ourselves that the Germans who brought Hitler to power and enthusiastically supported his monstrous regime were people with the very best habits - all the habits, I might add, that many of our schools are trying to train into our children. The best human virtues, and the ones we desperately need if man is to survive, are not habits and cannot be trained. They are an overflowing, a spreading out into a wider world about him of a person's strong sense of his being; of his dignity, competence, and worth; of the satisfaction and joy he finds in his own life.

Thus, I like to see children have a chance to do well what seems to them worth doing, because out of doing such work they get satisfaction and a stronger sense of their own being and competence. Thus, I think that often the work Miss Weber did with her children was better than the reasons for which she thought she was doing it, to develop this or that habit of industriousness or democracy or whatever. Indeed I think, as today she may well herself, that she is mistaken when she talks about the "unhealthy effects of idleness." Later she says that the children "made up for" a day of idleness, of spring fever, by working extra hard the next day, as if they had balanced some books. To me, one of the great personal and public problems of our time is that neither children nor adults know how to be idle, how to be still. We ought to be thinking of ways to acquaint children with some of the disciplines and joys of quiet thought, meditation, contemplation so that they will not always have to be trying to fill up the holes in their lives with noise, hurry, and activity, so that their leisure will not be as feverish as their work. For unless we learn this soon, we are likely to destroy the earth itself with our frantic busyness.

But these differences or reservations, which come from looking at a world that nobody in the '30s could have predicted, are at best minor. Taken as a whole, this book should be a rich source of inspiration and imagination for teachers, and indeed everyone concerned with education. We can do these kinds of things, in city as well as country, if we want to. And indeed I know, from letters from teachers and many talks with them, that there are many people in our classrooms right now, and many others who would come in if we let them, who are ready and eager to work in this kind of imaginative, innovative, and above all human way with the children in our schools.

VOICES IN THE CLASSROOM
Peter Schrag
(Boston: Beacon Press)
THE CHEERFUL PROSPECT
Charles Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin)
THE NECESSARY REVOLUTION IN AMERICAN EDUCATION
Francis Keppel (NY: Harper and Row)
A MONTESSORI HANDBOOK
R. C. Orem, editor

(NY: Putnam)

These reviews appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, May 1966, under the title, "On Schools: Are the children in the running?"

Mr. Schrag's *Voices in the Classroom,* is a most interesting and readable book that I recommend to everyone who wants to improve our schools. Describing the schools and their problems in a number of communities- large, small, rich, poor, urban, suburban, and rural - he shows that each school reflect what its community is, believes, and wants. He also reminds us what we easily forget: that America is a very diverse place; full of communities so different from one another that each might be in a distant or foreign county. Finally, and repeatedly, he makes his main point that in every community we could have, and will have, schools as good as our best, only if each community will put the needs of the whole society and nation ahead of local interests and prejudices.

This argument has much truth in it but it is neither wholly true nor wholly persuasive. Like many other writers on schools and education, Mr. Schrag's perspective of schools makes it hard for him to know what a really good school would be, or how very far from good our "best" schools really are. He thinks of a school as a kind of machine: children are the inert raw material fed into the machine and formed by it into the kind of product that a community thinks it wants. The heroes of his story are the men who design and run the machine - program planners, superintendents, and principals. The teachers run a bad second, and the children are not in the running.

Mr. Schrag writes a great deal about the programs that some dynamic administrator has imposed on a district we hear a little bit about special work done by a teacher in a class: but we hear hardly a word about something a child is doing, on his own, out of interest and curiosity. Furthermore, Mr. Schrag's examples of what he considers good teaching show that while he is scornful of the teacher who can get only short factual answers from students, he is easily snowed by the teacher who can get high-flown, intellectual sounding answers. Yet, each teacher is using what Bill Hull aptly calls 'Answer Pulling.' That the process is the same in either case, Schrag does not recognize. Only one of all the teachers described seems willing to let a discussion go where the students lead instead of where the teacher decided in advance it should go. Answer pulling is a sterile process, whether it goes on in Newton, Massachusetts, Jessup, Iowa, or the Kentucky mountains; and whether the subject is old-fashioned arithmetic or outdated science, or the very latest razzmatazz from MIT.

The interest of children as well as society requires that we by something very different and much better than answer pulling. We must give children more control and direction over their own learning, more opportunity to pursue what is

most important to them. Ironically, communities that are too poor or too prejudiced to allow the kind of top down changes in education that Mr. Schrag proposes, are the very communities where these genuine, far reaching changes - giving children more control more direction, and more opportunity- an be made. There are many children who, rather than throw around canned arguments about the UN, would benefit much more from an opportunity to talk and write honestly and imaginatively about their own lives and other matters closest to them. Giving children more control does not require millions of dollars and highly trained teachers some of the most genuine education I have ever seen was brought about by unsophisticated teachers, in old, small, poor, crowded classrooms. This kind of education can be done anywhere, and where it is done, it will do some real and lasting good.

In *The Cheerful Prospect*, Professor Benson feels that we are unwise and unjust in spending more public money to educate rich children, rather than poor. No one will argue with this. In his book Benson proposes numerous changes in the administration and functioning of schools in order to make such educational favoritism impossible. His proposals are ingenious but contain loopholes, and are, in any case, not likely to be put into effect. Also, more political than educational, his proposals involve very considerable changes in the organization of local government, in line with much current British practice. Every one of there proposed changes would be sure to arouse an organized and determined opposition, and it is hard to see - Professor Benson certainly doesn’t say - where could be found a constituency to support such changes. The book seems mistitled; if our poor must wait on Benson's reforms to get good education; they will wait a long time.

Former Education Commissioner Francis Keppel's *The Necessary Revolution in American Education* is worthy but dull. It is a collection of sermons - preached largely at Congressmen, Governors and other state officials and leading educational administration - to explain, defend, and win or hold support for the educational policies of the Johnson Administration. Those who don't understand why the federal government is sticking its nose into education, or those who worry about the government's doing so, will understand more and worry less after reading this book. For others, it will be a waste of time.

Keppel begins his book by saying that one may consider the schools as they affect the child or as they affect society. He then chooses to consider the schools as they affect society. Perhaps, in his position, he can make no other choice. But so doing, he turns away from all the significant criticisms and questions that are being made and asked (by Paul Goodman, Edgar Friedenberg, Jules Henry, and others) about education and its effect on children. There would be no harm in his choice if the problems of education as they relate to society could be solved without considering how they relate to the child. The problem cannot be solved, however, without considering the child. We cannot make 'good’ schools in our city

slums, no matter how much money we spend, unless we think about what 'good' education for slum children might be - what slum children most need to help them withstand, and understand, the extraordinary world they live in. Because this book dodges all such questions, it is much less useful than it might be.

Of the books reviewed here, *A Montessori Handbook* is the only one that talks primarily about children. It is a good introduction to the Montessori method, as well al to the Montessori cult; it tells us a good deal about the strengths of the method and the equally great weakness of the cult.

Maria Montessori made a number of fundamental and vital contributions to our thinking about educating young children. She saw and said, among other things, that children want to learn: that they learn best through their senses: that they are able to do a great deal of independent and self-directed work; that they have a strong instinct of workmanship, and want to do things well; and that they have a sense of occasion - they perceive the behavior that is reasonable and fitting in many circumstances. In a word, and in the best sense of the word, children are human beings, not monsters. Thy do not need to have humanity beaten out of them. On the contrary, we must take care not to beat it out of them.

Madame Montessori also invented a large number and variety of materials that children could use in various ways in order to gain various understandings and skills. Some of these materials are most ingenious and effective, but not all of them are equally so; her touch was surest when she was closest to the senses, much less sure in matters more intellectual. The material she devised for very young children can hardly be improved upon. For older children, better, sometimes vastly better, materials and methods have been devised for teaching numbers, mathematics, reading, writing, and many other subjects. It is the great weakness of her followers - one could say disciples - that they have been largely unable to see the deficiencies in her work and go beyond them. There is no sign, in this book or any other Montessori book I have seen, that Montessori's followers have been willing to question or challenge or change or add to her philosophy and methods. Her every word seems to be frozen into a kind of holy writ. Only if her followers can break out of this worshipful trance and see Montessori, not as a prophet, but as a pioneer, whose work is both imperfect and incomplete - to be improved and expanded - will the movement be a force for change and growth in education.

THE SCHOOLCHILDREN: Growing Up in the Slums

Orletta Ryan and Mary Frances Greene (NY: Pantheon)

This review appeared in *Book Week* 3/6/66.

This is a book to break your heart- the true story of a group of children in at elementary school in Harlem. Miss Burke, a teacher at that school, is the narrator; we are not told whether she is, in reality, a single teacher or a composite. Miss Burke's observations make up part of the book, but the most important part is an account of what the children themselves said about their lives and the world they lived in. We are not told whether this talk was taped on various occasions or was recorded later from memory: whatever the use, the children's words ring true. The quotes used give a vivid and haunting picture of these Harlem children, of what it means to grow up in a big city slum and go to school in a slum school.

It is a pity, in a way, that this book should have to follow *Up the Down Staircase,* because many people, having read the first may feel that they know all about slum schools and, therefore, won't need to read The *School children.* What a mistake. The *School children* is a better book - it is not played for laughs, and what goes on in our slum schools is no laughing matter: the children are more accurately portrayed; it does not have a fake, happy ending. Unlike the Miss Barrett of *Staircase* Miss Burke makes few converts and saves few souls. With few exceptions, these children are on the road down. Miss Burke has done her best but not only was that not good enough, in most cases it was no good at all.

I hesitate to criticize Miss Burke, for she is a true heroine. To teach in such schools is not only arduous, often humiliating, and always discouraging, but actually dangerous. Whoever criticizes the work of such people must answer, at least to themselves, the question, “Why am I not teaching in a slum school?" Why am I, John Holt, not? For one thing, I do not have the required credentials, and I have no time to waste in getting them. For another, I would not be allowed to try to teach in the only way that could possibly do these children any good.

This is not guesswork. I have on my desk a letter from a young woman who, while taking an oral exam to qualify her to teach in New York City schools, made the mistake of saying that she would have her students read books that stressed the importance of the individual. For this statement she was abusively attacked by her examiners and then failed. Another young teacher I know was kicked out of the Boston Public School's because he read, to a class largely made up of Negro slum children, a poem by Langston Hughes called the “Landlord." And a recent issue of Harper's magazine contained the article, “*The Way It Spozed To Be*," written by a young man who describes how he was able to teach slum children by highly unorthodox methods and how for his pains he was not only fired but also virtually blacklisted. I have no time to waste repeating these experiences. The burden of proof is on the city schools to show that they are interested in meaningful education for slum children and will support teachers who try to provide it. When the schools are ready to support teachers, perhaps I will be ready to work with the schools. Till then, all I can do, and perhaps the best thing I can do, is to point out some of what is wrong with what the schools and their valiant and patient Miss Burkes, are doing.

Where to begin? Perhaps with *courtesy*. A young Negro boy of about 15 went last summer to a privately run evening summer school in Boston called the Urban School. There he met people who respected him as a human king and took pains to show that respect. Trying to explain to his mother why he liked the place so much, he finally blurted out, 'Listen, I been going to school for ten years now and this is the first time a teacher ever said 'Please' to me.' Exactly. Miss Burke, sensitive and compassionate though she is, rarely says “Please" to her pupils and then only in desperation when asking them to do something for the fourth or fifth time. We may be sure that most of the teachers say it far less than she does.

Corrections: Miss Burke is always handing back papers to be corrected. Why not? Isn't that what teachers are supposed to do? Yes supposedly. But the trouble is that to have your nose rubbed in your own mistakes is an agony, even for the more stable and well-adjusted children from intelligent supportive, and loving upper-middle class families. So few children, even in private schools can or do benefit from corrected papers that one of the most gifted mathematical teachers, Lore Rasmussen (who has done some very promising work with slum children) says at every opportunity, “Mistakes are the teacher’s business not the child's.” My own experience - teaching English to about 55 secondary school children in a private school this year - confirms this. At the beginning of the year I made a standing offer, and have often repeated it: I said I would make “corrections" on the paper of anyone who wanted it, provided only that he agreed to rewrite the paper, incorporating these corrections. So far not one of my students - and these are successful, confident articulate children - has taken up my offer. How then can we expect slum children, long since robbed of their last shred of dignity, confidence, or self-respect to grapple realistically and constructively with their own errors?

Reality: The fact that Miss Burke does as well as she does in her classroom is a tribute to her instincts and her compassion, but Miss Burke's instincts and her compassion wage a gallant but losing battle with her (and the establishment's) misguided notion of what a slum school should be and do. Miss Burke would like to make her class look and sound and smell and act like a class in a Westchester suburb; she cannot do it. Meanwhile, she is willing now and then to let there children talk of their world and their lives. And what talk! They are like soldiers in the front line of battle, surrounded by depth and danger. Even at home thy are surrounded - unsafe not only from rats and wandering dope addicts but also unsafe from their own parents, who beat them brutally for almost any reason whatever. And we say they need discipline!

How an we persuade Miss Burke that this talk of theirs, instead of being a kind of safety valve to pass a little time in between struggles with Readers and Multiplication Tables should be the core and the heart and the source of all their education – not just what they occasionally talk about but what they write, and read, and draw, and sing, and dance, and act about; that the business of school should be to give these children, not just respite from the insane life of the slums but

a way of coming to grip with it of understanding it and perhaps eventually of changing it? This is what slum education must be about.

TRYING FREEDOM

Richard Meisler
(San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

This review was published in *New Age* 9/84.

The British Catholic writer, G. K. Chesterton, once wrote that Christianity had not been tried and found wanting, but had been found difficult and not tried. Today, when angry voices bellow the name of God at us from a thousand loudspeakers, Chesterton's words are even more true. We might say the same for freedom in education, with this exception: that freedom in education has often been tried, and has worked but has then been destroyed by the majority of educators who not only can't stand freedom in their own classrooms but can’t stand having it anywhere near them.

Richard Meisler's excellent book describes one of these trials of freedom - a small experimental college within a big state university. Using vivid detail Meisler describes the occasional failures but on the whole, the brilliant success of the experimental college; the great difference the college made in the lives of many of its students; and the college's swift destruction by the faculty and administration of the larger universities. His book can't be said to bring a message of hope - just about all such trials end the same way - but it is fascinating and important for what it tells us about universities and university people.

Meisler bends over backwards to be fair to those who destroyed his work - a saint could not be more generous or charitable. But what we see of his colleagues (who, according to abundant testimony, are quite typical of faulty and administration everywhere) is appalling. There are vain, devious, dishonest, ruthless, treacherous people, who, if keeping their word seems in any way risky or even inconvenient are endlessly ingenious at finding reasons and ways to break it All Meisler asked was that his colleagues give the special college a chance to prove itself on its own merits. Instead, by maneuvers worthy of the most cynical back-room politician, his colleagues finagled the special college out of existence.

It is clear that twenty years of competition in trying to show oneself to be smarter than other people is bad for the human character. By the time these clever school gamesmen become teachers, what remains of any ethical behavior is largely and soon destroyed by the kind of power they hold and exercise over their students. It is hard to ray through what back

doors we may be able to slip a little freedom into the liver of young people in this country, but this splendid book shows that it will almost certainly not be the doors of American universities.

SOMEWHERE ELSE

A living-learning catalog
(Chicago: Swallow press)

Foreword by John Holt

When I say, as I do whenever I can, that young people - who we now call “minors" or “children" - should have, if thy want it, the legal right to work, to travel, to live away from their parents, to be financially independent, to plan and direct their own learning; or when I say that attendance at school should not be compulsory, I usually get for a response two anxious, angry, horrified questions:

Where would they go?
What would they do?

Well, as it happens, there are plenty of places to go and plenty of interesting, instructive, useful things to do. Someday there will be a great many more places to go and things to do. But there are already a great many places and things, and a great many young people would go to them and use them if they were more free to do so.

This book is a guide to some of the places where people of any age can go to live-work-play-learn in ways not ordinarily provided for by conventional schools and work places. In conventional schools and work places, sharp lines are drawn between work and play and learning. *Somewhere Else* points to places where living, working, playing, and learning are all rolled into one.

I am reminded of another anxious question posed during a pleasant meeting with a group of sociologists, most from Harvard. I had been discussing some of my ideas about education when someone said to me, “But if we educate children in the way you propose, how are they later going to fit on the tracks laid down by society?"

By that question the questioner showed me that he understood very clearly what schools are for: schools are to make people think, as they had made him think, that the tracks that make a society at any particular moment are not only the

best tracks, but the only possible tracks. The question was a perfect illustration of what Ivan Illich said some years later: the institution of our society dominate not only our lives but also our imaginations not only what we do but what we even think we might or could do.

I didn't say any of this. What I said was, “They'll make new tracks!" From the listeners' expressions it was clear that most had never thought of this. “And after all," I went on, where do you think the present tracks in society came from? They weren't always there. They didn't fall from the sky. Somewhere, back in the past someone made a track, did something *that had been done before* - usually because anyone else who considered doing it, if anyone did, thought it was impossible or crazy.

Societies are constantly making new tracks. If thy don't they freeze up, get hardening of the arteries and joints, corrode, decay, and die - all symptoms we are now clearly seeing in our society. The question is, can people, the kind of people this book is written for, make enough new tracks, and fast enough? Can we find new way of living, thinking, learning, working, and playing to replace those that have quite obviously ceased to work? Nobody knows. Time will tell.

Meanwhile, here are some new tracks, some new way to make a different and better world. Here are some roads to the future, if we have a future.

Chapter 2
HOMESCHOOLING

AND THE CHILDREN PLAYED

Patricia Joudry (Toronto: University of Toronto Press)
This first appeared in GWS 9.

Many people have recommended the book. Every time I read it, I loved it but I have hesitated to recommend it to others lest the book give people an excuse to say or think, “Well, I'd be glad to try to teach my own kids if I lived in a beautiful old English farmhouse and knew people like Rex Harrison and Leonard Bernstein, but I'm just an ordinary person living in an ordinary town."

I still worry a little that some people will react this way. People wanting to oppose unschooling will find plenty of reasons

in the book. On the other hand, I have to hope that as many people as possible will read it - it is such a vivid, affectionate, true, funny, detailed, and convincing story of children growing up free and happy. How the children deal with each other and how they develop an internal discipline of their own, will put most adults to shame.

At one time, when Patricia Joudry could not sell any of her plays, and the family had almost no money and feared that at any minute they might be thrown out of their house, the children were busy playing. Mrs. Joudry writes:

... Play is children's work, and we learned to respect this as we did our own.

... They were lucky, for they had space and clumps of materials left around by the builders. ...They played with the earnest dedication of artists. Melanie played house; Stephanie played spaceship; together thy played safari. They played store, they played charge accounts, they played creditors, they played lawyers, thy played landlords, they played magic princes that came on the scene and saved the day.

Did we think they hadn't known what was going on? Our anxieties lingered but theirs they got out of their system with play. Watching this, we came to realize that children's play is more than work, it is therapy [JH: and good work is the best therapy]. But it can only be therapy when it is free, wholly created and directed by themselves.

They also played school. ... It was amusing to hear Melanie teaching Stephanie [her older sister] math. With the corrections she got from her pupil, she picked up quite a bit.

When they got tired of playing together, they played separately. A favorite was to make up a story, tell it aloud in a low murmur, acting it out as they went. I sometimes walked into a veritable buzz, like a hornet's nest of stories, as each of the three of them walked round in a private world, filled with high drama and every kind of contortion.

...John and I had been answering the question [how are they going to learn to get along with other people] by saying that you learn to get along with people, or you don't in your own home. We just couldn't believe, as 'they' did, that the best way to get socialized is to be thrust at a tender age into a class of forty, to fight for your existence. ...

[People] all asked..., 'How do you get thou children to be so good?'

We really didn't know. We never told them to sit still and keep quiet but wherever we took them they sat still and kept

quiet. We were as surprised as anybody. They developed charming Pleases and Thank Yous, though we never told them to. We hated seeing children badgered to mouth empty phrases. I can't believe John and I were as polite as all that but they must have picked it up somewhere.

Their voices were modulated; they were well under their own control. Within themselves, they were at peace.

[Felicity] had not learned a thing by the time she was seven.

She only knew who she was, that she loved life and trusted her parents, her sisters, and God, and knew how the earth yields and how life is made, and why: little things like that. We felt that it would be useful for her in addition if she knew how to read, but that didn't seem to be in the cards. I made a few attempts to teach her, but her brief experience of school had turned her off learning altogether.

We kept quoting the old occult phrase: “When the pupil is ready, the teacher will arrive." ... One day Melanie and Figgy (nickname) got into the mother and kid game. It was the old 'Eat your supper, get to bed, you're going to school in the morning' routine. The next morning the game was still on and Felicity went to school. Melanie switched from parent to teacher. She started the Kid on the alphabet.

That evening at supper, Melanie announced calmly, 'It doesn't look as though the teacher is going to come along. So, I'd better be it.'

Before she went to bed that night she turned their bedroom into a Bed- Schooler. And the Full Moon School was born. Its founder and teacher was twelve year old.

Every morning from then on Figgy raced through her breakfast with an eye on the class. 'I have to hurry, I'll be late for school.' Then she'd tear off .. to their school room, where the teacher and pupil were already at their places.

Melanie was the rest of the pupils and all the teachers. There were four teachers, two male and two female, for balance I suppose. Some were lenient and some were strict. The imaginary children possessed their own unique characteristics, and some were well behaved, while others weren't ...

Felicity leaned to read, to do sums, and spell long lists of words. They did simple chemistry experiments, had botany

classes outdoors, cooking classes in the kitchen...and creative projects beyond calculation.

This was all in the mornings. In the afternoons, Melanie attended the Full Moon School - a herself She settled down along at the long worktable and went to work on her book ... She undertook H.G. Well's *Outline of Geography* as well a geography projects like map making, she read poetry and Shakespeare, the wrote compositions, and delved into many books chosen at random from the library.

Whenever we had on interesting guest- and we had many - the children would gather quietly in the sitting room, and listen through long evenings around the fire, Melanie just sitting and watching the faces, Stephanie knitting (so as not to waste time) and Felicity slowly nodding. Because their ears and their minds were wide open everything they heard went in. And whatever they noticed came out - fortunately after the guests had left.

They learned their manners in the only way that children can learn - by example. Sometimes there were lapses. But they were learning how to behave in the world and wanted to be guided and corrected - though not humiliated in the process.

BETTER THAN SCHOOL

Nancy Wallace
(N Y: Larson)
This first appeared in GWS 39.

Nancy Wallace's book is out and it's wonderful, even better than I remember it in manuscript and I loved it then. It is the best book we have had about how homeschooling has worked and what it has been like in one family. Some might argue that the Wallace's are not 'typical," but then, no homeschooling family is 'typical'.

The Wallace's were able, thanks to enormous tact patience, stubbornness, and skill, to win the approval of a school board that was at first unanimously and angrily opposed to the idea of homeschooling. The Wallace's' story is a textbook case of how to deal with such a difficult school board (I think and hope such school boards are becoming more rare).

To school, as well as to homeschooling families Nancy Wallace shows the way out of what may people think to be a dilemma, i.e., making a choice between adult controlled or child-controlled education. This dilemma can be expressed with a question or as a statement. The question, often asked in anger, sometimes in pain, says, "Well, if learning is not the product of teaching, and if children can learn without being taught, what are we teachers for?" The statement comes out

like this: “ Some people believe in giving their children guidance and structure” (i.e., telling them what to do and making sure they do it) “and other people (like John Holt) believe in just letting them learn on their own.”

Both the question and the statement presume that a choice has to be made between equally undesirable alternatives - adult control versus child control. In fact these equally undesirable alternatives are not the only choices available for a learning/education relationship between child and adult Ishmael and Vita Wallace are not told every day, “Now you must learn this, now you must learn that" But neither are they coming “on their own." They are not alone in the world. They live in very close contact and friendship with their parents and other adults.

Here I would like to underscore some thing I said in my introduction to the book. It is clear from Nancy’s own quite modest description of her children, Ishmael and Vita that they are very talented, musically and in other ways. In the introduction I said I thought they were even more talented than Nancy suggested. I now think they are even more talented then I thought when I wrote the introduction. In the introduction I said that the children were not on their way to Carnegie Hall, meaning that they would probably not become top rank performing musicians. Four months later, I have changed my mind. It is possible that Ishmael may not choose the, in some ways narrow career of a concert pianist his musical interests are wide, and he may well become even more interested in composing, but remembering the last time I heard him play I would have to guess that if he want to be a big-time concert pianist, he probably can be. And Vita, who plays both piano and violin, seems to me to play as well as Ishmael did it her age. In addition to their musical talents, each of them loves to write and each writes well; Vita also loves to act and is very good at that. So there is no telling where they may go in life.

To these statements, many school people would reply (as I have often heard them do): homeschooling parents like the Wallaces who take their talented children out of schools, should leave them in school to struggle along with the less talented (they don't say 'dregs," but “dregs" is probably what some of them are thinking). As I said in the introduction to the book, Ishmael and Vita would most likely not have been stars in school. Not only would they have done very badly in most school subjects, but they would almost certainly have had all kinds of damaging psychological labels stuck on them - Learning Disabled, Psychologically Disturbed, the whole disgusting package. The school would have seen the children not as assets but only as problems, and would probably have convinced the children that they were, indeed, nothing but problems.

Just recently I heard read news about a child I loved. I last saw her when she was four years old. At that time she was very much like Vita - energetic, enthusiastic, irrepressible, friendly, talkative, and full of ideas, opinions, and questions

about everything. I worried a little - or I worry about every bright and energetic young child I meet - about what might happen to her when the got to school. There was reason enough to worry. When she got to school she did not like it, and she fiercely resisted the demand that the not move or speak except when given rare permission. Now, at age seven, in large part because of her resistance to school, the has-been officially labeled “schizophrenic." What is worse, she has learned to believe this of herself, in casual conversation she will say that she is crazy. This dreadful thing could very easily have happened to one or both of the Wallace children had they been forced to go to school.

The Wallace children showed no early signs of unusual talent not even in music. Ishmael did not have the perfect pitch he has now (Paul Hindemith always insisted that perfect pitch was teachable, or learnable), or any particular dexterity in his hands and fingers, and Vita’s first violin teacher, though a fine musician, in no way found Vita to be a promising pupil. It took time for the children's talents to appear and to grow. Homeschooling gave them the time.

A very important point that I wish I had thought to put into the introduction to the book is this- Nancy Wallace did not begin to learn piano because she thought that this might “get the children interested" in music. She began to learn piano because she wanted to do it for her own sake. Having started to learn piano, the asked Ishmael if he would like to do it with her. He said Yes, but I haven't the slightest doubt that if he had said No, she would have gone on taking lessons. Ishmael might have become interested later, or he might not. OK either way. The point is, as I have long said to all homeschooling parents, you can best help your children by making your own life as interesting as you can, and, as you find things you like to do, make them available to your children as well. If you want to paint, paint, and then (if they want to) let them paint, too. If you want to write, write, and let them write.

Some years ago I suggested to two friends of mine, both writers, that they buy a typewriter for their child (they could easily afford to buy one) and give him a chance to feel that he too was a writer. I don't think they have yet bought the typewriter; as far as I know, their working and professional lives, so important to them, remain closed to their child. This seems to me an unnecessary mistake. Nancy and Bob Wallace are writers, and they often discuss their books and writings with their children. As I have said, our task (as far as we can do it) is to give children access to the world. No part of that world is more interesting to our children than our own lives and work.

Read and enjoy Nancy Wallace's book and find out more about the adults in the lives of Ishmael and Vita.

SHOULD I TEACH MY KIDS AT HOME

A workbook for parents

Kate Kerman (Boston: Holt Associates)
This first appeared in GWS 38.

The author of *Who, Does, What, When*, a popular item in our catalog, has written another useful booklet for people who are teaching or thinking about teaching their own children.

Kate Kerman's introduction to *Should I Teach My Kids At Home* succinctly sums up her book:

... I am not writing this pamphlet as a series of answers to the questions and doubts you have in your mind about teaching your kids it home. I want it rather to be a series of questions for you to answer in the hope that your answers will help you decide if and how home schooling might work for you. ...

I have been teaching my kids at home since Ada, age 11, was born. ... I like homeschooling, and am happy with the results I see in my kids, but I don't think it is the right answer for every family. In talking and corresponding with many people on the subject I have seen the need for some help on deciding whether or not to teach kids at home.... Although I am clearly biased in favor of homeschooling for my own family, I hope I have written this in such a way as to let you find out for yourself whether home schooling, public school, or a private school would best fit your family's needs. .

The subjects to be discussed are divided into four main groups: family, child, you, outside factors. Under each of there topics, Kate Kerman asks a number of questions such as, "How much time do you spend together as a family now?" and "What is your child interested in most particularly right now?" Is there time to pursue the interest in school?" On the facing page, she discusses some of the ways she and her family deal with these questions. The questions are pointed and practical, and Kate presents them in a very sensible and non-dogmatic way. I could quote the book forever, but two statements seem to me particularity important: the first of the two is some thing that could and should be said in one-way or another in every family's homeschooling proposal:

... Having watched kids learning at home, I have gradually reached the conclusion that a deep interest in practically any subject is likely to lead the child to most of the subject areas taught in school. ... It would be difficult for a child to be interested in any subject deeply for a long time without learning something about language and numbers and writing words. ...

I have come to the conclusion that when you say something a bit different, many people look on it as a direct criticism of

the way they did it or are doing it. Then people who are not completely comfortable with the choices they made may choose to defend themselves by attacking you. ...

This book should make many new friends for homeschooling, persuade may people to undertake it and help many of those who do undertake it to do better.

ANYTHING SCHOOL CAN DO, YOU CAN DO BETTER

Maire Mullarney
(NY: M. Boyars)
This first appeared in GWS 40.

Here is another delightful book on homeschooling, this one by a GWS reader in Ireland. Maire Mullarney taught all of her own children at home until they were eight or nine (and later wished that she had taught them at home a lot longer). I hope it will not be long till I meet her; through her book she comes across as a sensitive, affectionate, smart, no-nonsense person. One of the things I like most about her is that she had so much fun with her children and had such a wonderful sense of the kind of things that children found fun.

The following quotes give a glimpse of Maire, her children, and the book: ... I am puzzled when I hear a mother say, “Teach them at home? I would never have the patience?" What do they think happens at school?

...As soon a Barbara could stand with her hands held, I found myself giving her little jumps. Soon we were counting the jumps up to ten. Years went by and new toddlers were clamoring for jumps, as were the others, up to nine or ten. This game must have helped the younger ones to internalize the meaning of number. It certainly helped them to get a splendid bounce, going mil up over my head to just miss the kitchen ceiling...

When Barbara was about a year old, I gave her some powder paint in a saucer, mixed with water to make a thick cream, and a long-handled paintbrush. An enamel tabletop turned on its side [JH: what a great idea!] made a good surface to spread color on, and made it easier to show her how to use the brush. Putting paint on an upright surface does not lend itself to leaning heavily on the brush... This worked so well that no baby went past a year without meeting a paintbrush.

It should be evident from the first part of the book that I found staying home with interested children much more fun than either of the “Jobs” I had before hand... It was the learning together that gave zest to the days...

After some eighteen quiet years of child watching I had come to realize that school was a time wasting and inefficient attempt to enable one generation to share knowledge with the next. When the elders felt the need to subdue the young by beating and humiliating them that went beyond mere inefficiency. It had not dawned on me that sharing knowledge was only a minor purpose of the system....

My share of the activity did not take any extra time. I moved the baby around with me... Gardening, sewing, cooking, and reading fit in with paying some attention to a baby. We would lie on a rug together, indoors or out baby on tummy, mirror to reach for; on her back, kicking at a sheet of colored paper held by parent; or parent on back, arms straight up, holding flying baby... Time spent in shared activity showed itself to be an investment. Babies who have had a solid chunk of full parental attention feel confident enough to potter around and explore for the rest of the day, making contact from time to time...

If I were able to return to the beginning I would see that every child had a chance to learn to play an instrument, just as every child had a chance to learn to read...

Looking back I see [Alasdar] out in the garden, rocking quietly on a very small rocking horse, then bringing over a bucket of tasty stones to feed it... [Thomas] did not bother to read until he was five, when he brought me a model he had made of a bird on a nest. I admired it then wrote on a card. NEST, BIRD, WING, TWIG. As soon as he realized there were books about birds he very quickly learned to read...

For several of her children, school was visibly harmful and might have been much more so if Maire had not moved quickly to prevent further damage. (At that time in Ireland it was common for children to be beaten in school; now, I believe, beating is forbidden.) Maire found other schools, but even when she was able to find smaller schools where there were some interesting teachers and where children were not beaten, her children learned very little that had anything to do with their later lives. Maire Mullorney's children make up a very varied and interesting crew. In a later chapter Maire tells us what the children (now grown up, the oldest 36) did in and with their lives. Only one of the eleven is interested in what we might think of as a school-like activity (mathematics).

HOME EDUCATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES

John Whitehead and Wendell Bird
(Westchester, IL: Good News)

This first appeared in GWS 40.

This short thoroughly researched, well organized, and clearly written book seems to me to be one of the most valuable legal resources, tools, or weapons for homeschoolers that has appeared in some time. Except as noted, I have seen no book or article that so well sums up and argues the historical and legal case for homeschooling. Virtually all homeschoolers would be wise to own this book or have a copy within easy reach, especially those who face or fear they might face hostile action by school authorities and/or the courts. And, at least in states where the right to homeschooling is not clearly and strongly established, homeschoolers might also be wise to send this book to their state representatives, the governor (no need for everyone to send one), and perhaps leading state educational officers.

The heart of the book, as well is the heart of the legal argument for homeschooling (the constitutional ground we stand on), is summed up with these words:

... In fact, any question of First [JH: or any other] Amendment freedoms... is viewed by courts within a three step process. First there must be a First [JH: or other] Amendment Right that conflicts with a governmental program or requirement. Second, the state must have burdened [i.e. mode difficult or impossible] the exercise of that right. And third, there must not be any compelling state interest that justifies the burden; or if there is, the state must have sacrificed that interest by the least burdensome means possible...

... Any statutory prohibition against home education should be presumed unconstitutional, as several court decisions have held or assumed. If a statute can be construed to preserve its constitutionality, it should be so construed. This means, for example, that a statute that mentions only public or private education should be interpreted to include home education within the definition of 'private education.' If not, the Law would be unconstitutional. [JH: the book notes that the courts have split about 50:50 on this last argument]

Any burdensome regulation of home education is also unconstitutional (just a burdensome regulation of religious schools is unconstitutional) ...

The book is, in effect a condensed and simplified legal brief. But for parents facing prosecution in court, Whitehead and Bird are prepared to offer support even more powerful than this book A footnote on page 10 of the book says:

...On behalf of the Rutherford Institute, the authors have prepared an exhaustive legal brief, with thorough appendix, that

provides a technical legal defense of home education. The brief was faced in the Georgia Supreme Court the Minnesota Supreme Court, the North Carolina Supreme Court the Arkansan Court of Appeals, and other courts. The Rutherford Institute will file this brief in similar uses. For more information, write The Rutherford Institute, P.O. Box 7485, Charlottesville. VA PP906....

Note that the homeschoolers won in Georgia; the Minnesota case is, as I write, still pending [ed: CHECK homeschoolers won in MN]; and the North Carolina family lost the long brief, while powerful, is not infallible.

What are my reservations about *Homeschooling and Constitutional Liberties?* First in the chapter "Freedom of Religion," the author overstate what the courts have actually said about the right of parents to homeschool for religious reasons, and later the authors defend this position by calling "erroneous" some of what the Supreme Court said in *Yoder* and just about all the Appeals Courts said in *Duro* (as exceedingly important else). From reading this book one might get the impression that in *Yoder* the Court gave very broad support to homeschooling for religious reasons: in fact, the support given to homeschooling for religious reasons (as we have more than once said in GWS) was very narrow.

In a Later chapter, the authors speak of "erroneous" court cases. It seems an odd and unhelpful use of the word. One might as well speak of "erroneous" legislation. One can always say of a given court ruling that it is unfair or unjust or badly reasoned or self contradictory, or that wiser and better judges would have ruled differently. None of this makes any difference. A ruling is a ruling, and unless and until a ruling is overturned by a later ruling, it is the Law. The authors say that in *Duro* the U.S. Court of Appeals made nine fundamental constitutional errors. Perhaps so. But the fact that the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal, clearly indicates that the Supreme Court did not consider that the U.S. Court of Appeals had made nine errors. The fact is, as we have pointed out in GWS, the courts in *Yoder* and *Duro* have explicitly refused to give religious homeschoolers the blank check that Whitehead and Bird think they should have, and that readers of this book might be led to believe they do have. We cannot say to the state, "I am teaching my children for religious reasons, and, therefore, what I do is none of your business."

THE COMPLETE HOME EDUCATOR
Mario Pagnoni
(N Y: Larson)

Foreword by John Holt

This clear, helpful, encouraging, and often very funny book is in fact two books. One is a book about computers - how they work, how parents and children can use them at home. And how Mario Pagnoni and his two boys are using them in their home. It is by far the clearest explanation of the difficult and rather forbidding subject that I have seen. Indeed, it is one of the best explanations I have ever seen on any scientific subject. Mario is a superb explainer - if the school had more people who were as good as he is at making things clear, and, what is even more important, people who cared as much as he does about making things clear, the schools would be in much better shape. Computer companies would be smart to pay him to write their instructional materials; up till now such materials have usually been ludicrously hard to understand.

The other and main part of the book is about homeschooling. More specifically, it is about how and why Mario took his two boys out of school and, taking one-year leave of absence from his own job, taught them at home. It is one of the very best of the growing list of books that have been written about this increasingly important subject. And among these books it is in one sense unique, for Mario is and has been for some years, a regular public school classroom teacher. In principle, he believes in public school; he believes, as indeed I do, that, good or bad, schools will be with us for a long time And that most children will be going to them. But out of his own first-hand experience he has come to believe, like many other public school teachers and administrators before him (the ranks of homeschoolers are full of these) that the schools cannot possibly give his children as good an education as he can give them - or rather help them to get for themselves. His list of reasons for helping his boys is as good a condensed argument for homeschooling as one can find anywhere, and his list of ways to help parents decide whether or not they are well-suited to homeschool is every bit as helpful.

In his preface Mario Pagnoni speaks of 'employing homeschool techniques on a part-time basis'. This option that many school press on parents – "Why don't you keep sending them to school and teach them any extra stuff you want at home after school?" - may seem at first to offer the best of both worlds. But in fact, it almost never works. A great many of the people who are now homeschooling full-time began by trying to do it part-time; they soon gave it up because the school ate up so much of the children's time that the families had nothing left. Indeed, as we see in Chapter 2, the Pangoni themselves went to full-time homechooling for just this reason, to get some time for the family's own interests and pursuits. Thanks to the schools' fatal but apparently incurable habit of consolidating themselves into ever-larger school districts, more and more children must spend more and more hours simply getting to and from school. Parents tell me often, "our children leave the house before eight and don't get home until after five or after, much later than that if thy have sports or extracurricular activities. They are exhausted from the pressures and tensions of the school day and the long, noisy, and tiring bus ride at the end, and they usually have many sheets of dumb busywork 'homework'-- forty

identical math problems, and junk like that. We barely have time to throw a little dinner into them, give them a little time to do the homework, and put them to bed. There is hardly any time even for talk, let alone any serious or demanding family activities."

This is of course not true for everyone. If your children are able to meet the demands of school and still have plenty of time and energy left over (and if so they are rare), you may indeed be able to do on a part-time basis many of the good things that Mario Pagnoni suggests. If not you will probably do better to follow his example, and the example of so many others, and find or invent a way to teach your children at home full-time.

Parents would be less inclined to begrudge the time the schools take from their children if much of that time were not wasted or ill-spent. Mario tells a story about one of his boys which I have by now heard from other families literally hundreds of times. The boy went to school already knowing how to read, and in fact reading several years above his age level. But in class he was told that he had to fill out all the reading readiness workbooks (itself an absurd idea) that the other non-reading kids in the class were filling out, supposedly so that by doing it they could learn to do what he already knew how to do, namely, to read. (Nancy Wallace tells exactly the same story in her wonderful book *Better Than School*) As usual, the parents' reasonable efforts to get the school to allow their reading child to read met a stonewall. There are probably very few classrooms in the whole country in which children who read well ahead of their classmates are just given the freedom to go ahead and do it. Teachers may say in reply that they haven't got time to 'check up" on a child who is not doing what all the other children in the class are doing. But the reason for checking up is supposedly to keep children from falling behind. But why bother to check up on a child who is clearly far ahead?

I should make clear that Mario Pagnoni is not writing here another indictment of schools. Quite the contrary. He goes out of his way to be fair and charitable to them; he says quite rightly that teachers are trying to do the best they can and are hampered by many things not under their control, including masses of unnecessary paperwork (one reason among many why many teachers leave public school to teach-at lower salaries in private schools). But just in the course of telling his own family’s story, he tells about a number of specific things that happened to him and his children in their dealings with schools, and these stories, told in his cheerful and good- humored way, add up to an indictment of schools far more devastating than any windy report ground out by this or that presidential or other commission. For indeed it is impossible to talk very much about the specific things that people actually say and do in most school, without making an indictment. Mario does not draw the conclusion toward which his anecdotes so clearly point but the conclusion is inescapable nonetheless-the schools are to an astonishing degree unintelligent and mean-spirited places and there are not signs that they are going to get better. A case might be made for schools that are smart even though not very kind, or for schools

that are kind without being very smart. But schools that are neither smart nor kind can only do great harm.

Thus he tells about one of his boys, who, while still very young, were being repeatedly bullied and beaten up in the schoolyard, and about his own futile efforts to get the school to do anything about it. Again, the incident is as typical as it is deplorable. The schools hardly even try any more to maintain, in the little kingdoms they control, the kind of minimal standards of public order and safety, which we take for, granted even in our most troubled cities. Thus, if someone should punch me in the face in the streets of Boston, something that by the way, has never happened to me in my life, everyone would admit that this was a crime, and society would do its best to catch and punish the criminal. But if some bigger kid beats up a smaller kid in the recess yard, the schools are more and more likely to say that this is a necessary and healthy social experience.

In at least two important respects schools are generally worse and indeed much worse than they were even as little as a generation ago. First, they have invented the imaginary disease of Learning Disabilities, and along with it a whole host of equally imaginary related diseases, which they use as an alibi for all their failures. Secondly, and I think, even worse, they have invented the cynical, cold-hearted, and altogether inexcusable doctrine that anything bad that happens to children at school, including violent physical assault by adults or other students can be excused by calling it part of the “socialization process” by which these children are supposedly prepared for living in a callous, cruel, and violent world. To parents who object the schools' typical response is to say that they are being 'over-protective" --as if the protection of children were not in fact the proper business and moral responsibility of adults, above all there adults who haw children entrusted in their care.

Much of the book, as I have said, is about computers and how parents and children might use them, if they choose. I want to emphasize very strongly that anyone can in fact choose not to use them. We hear a lot of talk, a little of it in this book, about the computer age and the computer revolution. Most of this has been cooked up by advertising men and computer salesmen trying to convince us that we, or at the very least our children, have to own a computer whether we want to or not that anyone who does not know how to use and even to program a computer is going to be hopelessly left out of the world of the future. All this is nonsense. To be sure, as the saying goes, computers are not going to go away. But neither are automobiles, televisions, airplanes, or ballpoint pens. All of these are tools, useful for people who have a use for them, otherwise not. Some of them I use, others not.

People must decide and can decide for themselves, which, if any, of there tools are worth the bother of having.

One good reason for having a computer in the home is to help run a home business, something that many homeschoolers do. Another is that it is a way useful (though by no means indispensable) tool for professional writers. The other good reason, and it is the only other good reason, is the same as the reason for owning a piano or violin or tennis racket or camera or tape recorder-because you can have fun with it and perhaps learn something as you do so. Talk about 'the computer age" has nothing to do with it. Most work, including most well-paid and interesting work that will be done for as far into the future as we can see, will make little or no use of computers and where it does will require no more still than we need to use a typewriter. So parents can safely ignore any and all threats that unless their children learn a lot about computers they are going to lead a poor and empty life. If they, or you, the reader, should ever find that you have real need to learn about computers, you can always do so by reading one of Mario Pagnoni's books, for I suspect and certainly hope, that this most helpful, encouraging, and entertaining book will be the first of a long line.

Chapter 3

CHILDREN & LEARNING

THE CONTINUUM CONCEPT

Jean Liedloff (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley)
This first appeared in GWS 13.

This seems to me as important a book as any I have ever read. In it Jean Liedloff says and shows that babies grow best in health, happiness, intelligence, independence, self-reliance, courage, and cooperativeness when they are born and reared in the 'continuum' of the human biological experience, that is, as ‘primitive' mothers bear and rear their babies, and probably always have born and reared them through all millions of years of human existence. For the first year or so of their lives, until they reach the crawling and exploring stage, babies have always enjoyed, needed, and thrived on constant physical contact with their mother (or someone equally well known and trusted). Up until about the first thousand years, babies always had this constant physical contact and each newborn, knowing nothing of history but everything of his own animal nature, expects it wants it, wants it, and suffers terribly if he does not get it.

Mrs. Liedloff lived for some time among the Yequana Indians of the Amazon basin. Of that experience and others she writes with extraordinary vividness and sensitivity. The following passage is her description of the early life of a Yequana baby:

From birth, continuum infants are taken everywhere. Before the umbilicus comes off the infant's life is already full of action. He is asleep most of the time but even as he sleeps he is becoming accustomed to the voices of his people, to the sounds of their activities, to the bumping, jostling, and moves without warning, to lifts and pressure on various parts of his body as his caretaker shifts him about to accommodate her work or her comfort, and to the rhythms of day and night, the changes of texture and temperature on his skin, and the safe, right feeling of being held to a living body.

The result of this kind of treatment is not as most modern people might expect a timid, clinging, whiny, dependent infant but the exact opposite. Liedloff writes:

When all the shelter and stimulus of his experience in arms have been given in full measure, the baby can look forward, outward, to the world beyond his mother. ... The need for constant contact tapers off quickly when its experience quota has been filled, and a baby, tot or child will require reinforcement of the strength it gave him only in moments of stress with which his current powers cannot cope. These moments become increasingly rare and self-reliance grows with a speed, depth, and breadth that would seem prodigious to anyone who had known only civilized children deprived of the complete in-arms experience.

As Ms. Liedloff shows, children who are taken everywhere quickly notice what people around them are doing, and they want to join in and take part as soon as and as far as their powers permit. No one has to do anything in order to “socialize" the children, or make them take part in the life of the group. They are born social; it is their nature. One of the strangest nuttiest, and most destructive ideas that “civilized" people have ever cooked up, not out of experience but out of their heads, is that children are born bad and must be threatened and punished into doing what everyone around them does. No continuum culture expects children to be bad as a matter of course - to misbehave, to make trouble, to refuse to help, to destroy things, to cause pain to others. These forms of child misbehavior, common in our culture, are simply unknown in cultures with long traditions. Some years ago a group of American child experts went to China to study Chinese children, child rearing, and schools. The Americans eagerly asked what the Chinese did when their children had tantrums, fought teased, whined, broke things, hurt people, etc. The Chinese child experts looked with baffled faces at the Americans. The Americans might as well have asked, “What do you do when your children jump 300 feet straight up in the air?" The Chinese could only say over and over, “Children don't do those things." The American visitors went away equally baffled. It never occurred to them (though it did to me) to suppose that the reason Chinese children are not bad, in the way so many of ours seem to be, is that nobody expects them to be. Being small, ignorant, inexperienced, and passionate, a child may now and then stray off the path of good behavior. But correcting him is only a matter of patiently pointing out that he has strayed, that here we don't do things like that. No one assumes that the child's deep intent is to do

wrong, and that only a long hard struggle will break him of that intent and force him to do right.

In short the problem children of the affluent Western world are as much a product of our culture as our automobiles. What we all psychology, our supposed knowledge of “human nature," is and can only be the study of our own peculiar Western world ways. We are a severely deprived people. The “human nature” that our psychologists study is so far away from the norms of long-term human biological experience that it would not be stretching matters to call the people studied - us - freaks. Liedloff’s description of “modern” “medical” “scientific" childbirth and the ensuing days and months as a baby must experience them, is enough to make one weep or have nightmares, or both. It's a wonder we're no worse off than we are.

But I wish that Ms. Liedloff had said early in the book what she finally says at the end: some or many of the most harmful effects of being severely deprived of closeness and contact can be largely made up for or cured if the deprived human being is richly supplied later in life. (Ms. Liedloff suggests ways.) This is important. Many sensitive and loving mothers and fathers who bore and raised children in the modern “civilized" way, upon reading this book and realizing what they had denied their children, might be almost overwhelmed by guilt and grief. But with enough kindness, tenderness, patience, and courage, much of this early loss can be made up.

It is impossible for me to say how important I think this book is. I have spent most of the past twenty-five years of my life realizing, more clearly all the time, that our worldwide scientific and industrial civilization, for all its apparent wealth and power, is, in fact, tearing itself apart and moving every day closer to its total destruction. What is wrong? What can we do? Many people are doing good work and are pointing toward useful answers. But only in the last year or two has it become clear, at least to me, that one of the mat deep-rooted causer of our problems is the way we treat children. I am equally convinced that no social or political change that does not begin with and include change in the ways we bear and rear children has any chance of making things better.

So I hope that many people will read this book, the more the better, and above all mothers and fathers of young children and babies, parents-to-be, people who have no children but drink someday they might, young marrieds or marrieds-to-be, teenagers, baby- sitters, older brothers and sisters of babies, and also doctors, nurses, psychologists, etc. In short anyone who may have anything to do with babies or little children. The human race, after all, changes with every new generation. A generation or two of healthy and happy babies might be enough to rum us around.

THE ACORN PEOPLE

Ron Jones (N Y: Bantam)
This first appeared in GWS 13.

This is Ron Jones's short, moving, honest account of his first two weeks as a counselor in a summer camp for severely handicapped children. He tells of his own quite natural feelings of revulsion toward these strange and misshapen children and of how, as he slowly got to know them as individuals, he came to see their handicaps as differences that didn't matter - like differences in color of eyes or hair in “normal" children. As Ron Jones points out each of us, in spite of noble ideas and intentions, is horrified by people who look and act unusual. But to be shocked or painfully surprised is a gut level reaction; we shouldn't be too ashamed. In *The Acorn People*, Ron Jones shows us that with a little effort we can move past the gut level-reaction stage and into some real human relationships.

In the second part of his story, the children, helped by the people who trust and believe in them, begin to do things that almost all experts on the handicapped would have claimed impossible to do. For example: the children in Ron's group go on a six-mile hike and climb a mountain. Their triumph refutes the experts, and in this sense makes the book a companion to *Anatomy of an Illness.* At any rate, it is a most inspiring story.

THE FAMLLY BED

Tine Thevenin
(Wayne, NJ: Avery)
This first appeared in GWS 18.

The Family Bed is a very persuasive argument for the “continuum" idea that children should not be left alone at night until they want to be. Until a child wants a private sleeping place of his own (as he will), a child, when young and even when older, should be able to sleep in the same bed with his parents, or, at least, should be able to sleep in the same room.

In the past, and perhaps still, virtually all child “experts" using various Freudian arguments, have furiously opposed this continuum idea. Their opposition never made much sense to me; in most human cultures that ever existed children have slept with adults. People who think that it is bad, immoral, unhealthy, dangerous etc., for a child to sleep with his parents will not have their minds changed by this book and should probably leave it alone. Parents whose instincts are to want to have their children dole to them at night, but who may have been intimidated by the 'experts,' my be encouraged by this book to let their children deep with them. Parents who are already doing this, but are getting criticized by relatives or friends will find here much useful argument and moral support.

GNYS AT WRK

Glenda Bissex

(MA Harvard University Press)

This first appeared in GWS 24 and 25. It is also included in John Holt's *Learning all the Time.*

This delightful and revealing book is the detailed and loving account of how the author's son Paul did what Seymour Papert talked about in *Mindstorms:* he learned without being taught Mrs. Bissex tells how Paul first built crude models of written English, and then, as he worked, he constantly refined his models until they finally matched the written English of the world around him. Glenda Bissex' book is like a splendid example of how a sympathetic and trusting teacher can be of use to a learner; not by deciding what he is to learn but by encouraging and helping him to learn what he is already busy learning. Like *Mindstorms* GNYS AT WRK gives powerful ammunition to parents who on trying to deal with the school systems and to teachers and others who are trying to change the school systems. GNYS AT WRK is expensive, and since the book is published by Harvard University Press. There is little chance that it will come out in an inexpensive paperback. It is well worth the money. [Ed. It is in paperback as of Sept 1990.]

Paul Bissex began his writing at age 5. His mother, busy talking with friends, had not noticed that the child was trying to ask her something. After several unsuccessful attempts to get her attention, Paul went away, but he soon returned with this indignant note printed on a piece of paper RUDF? Luckily for him, his mother (with whom I had a pleasant visit not long ago here in the office) was perceptive enough to decode the note (Are you deaf?), understand its importance, and quickly give the boy the attention he needed.

As Paul began to explore written English, his mother paid steady attention to how he was doing it. In her preface, Ms. Bissex writes:

...When I began taking notes about my infant son's development I did not know I am gathering 'data' for research; I was a mother with a propensity for writing things down... When Paul started spelling, I was amazed and fascinated. Only somewhat later did I learn of Charles Read’s research on children's invented spelling. Excited by his work, I started seeing my notes as 'data."

... What I hope this study offers, rather than generalizations to be “applied" to other children, is encouragement to look at individuals in the act of learning. And I do mean act, with all that implies of drama and action...

...A case study this detailed and extended over time would have been unmanageable ma I not a parent...

This last statement makes the same point I made in my final chapter of *Teach Your Own*, when I listed a number of reasons why schools would be wise, in terms of their own interests to cooperate with home-schooling families. Homeschooling families who keep notes of their work and of their ways and styles of learning are compiling valuable information. Such families often write to us (here at *Growing Without Schooling*) and to other homeschooling publications, or compile their notes into articles or books. In essence, these homeschooling families are doing long-term educational research that neither the schools nor the school of education could possibly do for themselves much in afford to pay for. This published information is available to everyone. Homeschoolers and their many communication networks, including GWS should be viewed and used as educational resources.

Continuing, Ms. Bissex describes how Paul felt about her research: At the beginning, Paul was an unconscious subject, unaware of the significance of my tape recorder and notebook. When he first became aware, at about age six, he was pleased by my interest and attention. By seven, he had become an observer of his own progress. When I... had Paul's early writings spread out on my desk, he loved to look at them with me and try to read them... Paul observed me writing down a question he had asked about spelling, and I inquired how he felt about writing it down. “Then I know that when I'm older I can see the stuff I asked when I was little." he commented.

At eight he was self-conscious enough to object to obvious observation and note taking, which I then stopped... he still brought his writings to me, sharing my sense of their importance. At nine he became a participant in the research, interested in thinking about what he had written or read things as he once had...

The study has become a special bond between us, an interest to share in each other's work, a mutual enjoyment of Paul’s early childhood and of his growing up. I have come to appreciate certain qualities in my son that I might not have seen except through the eyes of this study.

Working together has many benefits. When I was teaching fifth grade with Bill Hull and beginning to watch and listen carefully to what was said and done in the class, I used to make notes, in handwriting so tiny it was hard for the children to read. They knew I was writing about them, and at first said suspiciously, “What are you writing?" But as time went on and the children began to understand that I did not see them as strange laboratory animals but liked and respected them and was trying to see how the world looked through their eyes, they seemed to accept my note taking. It probably would

have been better if, like Glenda Bissex with Paul, I had told them more specifically what I was trying to learn and had made them conscious partners in my research.

GWS readers will remember Ann Kauble's letter in *GWS* 12 about her little daughter's angry dinner-time note: the child wrote she would not eat her 'FICH" but would eat all the “CUCEZ." Many children (I have no idea how many) seem to go more from writing to reading than the other way around. *GNYS AT WRK* is not the first work I have read about children's invented spellings. Many years ago I read, I forget where, a most interesting article on the same subject by Carol Chomsky, who has done much good work in this area. One thing about her article I remember very vividly: She reported that many children spelled words beginning in TR - tree, train, etc. - either with a CH or an H at the beginning. At first thought this baffled me. But since by this time in my life I had learned to look for reason in children’s “mistakes” I began to say “tree” “train" etc. Listening carefully to what sounds I was making, I found, to my astonishment that what I was actually saying sounded very much Like “chree" and 'chrain". It is worth noting that, like Glenda Bissex and Ann Kauble, other parents of other children who learned to write English in their own invented spelling, had not taught their children 'phonics," nor taught them to write, or even much encouraged them to write (except perhaps by their own example). The children had been helped co Learn the names of letters; from these names they had figured out for themselves the different sound of each consonant. Like Paul Bissex, there other children began writing by leaving vowels out of their words, producing a writing much like the speed-writing that many adults pay to be taught and struggle to learn.

As Mrs. Bissex makes clear in example after example, Paul did not “learn to write" or learn what schools would call the “skills of writing" so that later he could use them to write something. From the very beginning Paul wrote because he had something to say, often to himself, sometimes to others. ...Paul, like his parents, wrote (and read and talked) because what he was writing (and reading and saying) had meaning to him as an individual and a cultural being. We humans are meaning- making creatures, and language - spoken and written - is an important means for making and sharing meanings.

In her work with him, Mrs. Bissex asked Paul many questions about his learning and gave him many of what in another context might be called tests. But the purpose of these tests was not as with most all school tests, to find out what he didn't know, or to prove that he hadn't learned what he was supposed to have learned. His mother knew he was learning. What she wanted to know, and what he knew she wanted to know, was how he was doing it. She was interested in his work in the way a scientist (as she was) might be interested in the work of another scientist (as he was). In this very important sense they were equals. She might know more than he did about English, but he knew more than she did about what he knew about English and how he was learning more, and his knowledge was at least as important to her as hers

was to him.

Practically everything in Mrs. Bissex' book is quotable, but the following observations seem to me particularly striking and useful:

...At this point in his spelling history [Paul] was not after correctness but rather.., finding some way of representing for himself the sounds he distinguished in words. His first questions were all about which letters make particular sounds...

...After writing this, Paul (5) repeatedly asked if it was all correct. When I said that I didn't have any trouble reading any of the words, he responded impatiently, “But I want to know if it's all correct!" This was his first strongly expressed concern for correctness, and his enthusiasm for writing temporarily succumbed to it... [This concern] considerably preceded his entrance into first grade (which subsequently reinforced it)...

... Paul himself described what he was doing as “writing" rather than “spelling" ...Had his main interest been in spelling was he would have written word lists: what he wrote, however, were messages. He cared about what he wrote, not just about how he wrote it.

...From his observations of second grade children in four classrooms, Graves concluded that the range and amount of children's writing was inversely proportional to the amount of assigned writing (that is assigned topics). ...[At 7] Paul challenged himself to spell words more difficult than many on his weekly school lists... Four months later he asked me to give him some hard spelling word, and wrote: EXERCISE, ENCYLOPEIDA. PHYSISHUN, DINOSOUR, ASTRONOT, MASSACHUSETTS. EXPLOSIVES, WORCHESTER. SYMPHONY.

A challenge is something that will stretch your powers, with the likelihood of confirming them; you want to take on a challenge because you have confidence enough that you can succeed. A threat is a task that seems beyond your powers to accomplish or cope with. In setting his own tasks Paul was able to keep them at the challenge level. He was not content to repeat his accomplishments but spontaneously moved on to harder tasks.... He was up a progression of increasingly difficult tasks for himself as many other children spontaneously do. How much might self taught challenges occur in school learning if time and space were allowed for them to happen and to be observed?

Setting his own tasks is what each child does as he grows up - until he gets to school. What all too often happens in school is that the child sees school challenges as threats (as they often are: if you fail to accomplish them, you stand a

good risk of being shamed or even physically beaten), and he falls more and more out of the habit of challenging himself, even outside school. School-induced fears infect the whole of life. This is why parents are so seldom able during out-of-school hours to 'make up for" what happens in school.

...Much of Paul's spelling ability [at 9] cannot be accounted in terms of what he has been systematically taught He learned from corrections and from his own questions. Above all, probably, he learned from his considerable reading - not automatically, because the words were before his eyes, but because as a writer he was attentive to and interested in spellings...

...Inventive spellers start from the assumption that they can figure things out for themselves. Perhaps this is why so many of them learn to read before formal instruction. In her study of characteristics contributing to the development of scientists, Anne Roe remarked on the importance of their youthful discovery that they could find things out for themselves...

A child who assumes that he can figure things out for himself has control of what he learns. He doesn't have to wait for someone to teach him something. He doesn't have to react. He acts. Thus, my objection to books about Teach Your Baby This and Teach Your Baby That By following the advice in such books we are very likely to destroy a child's belief that he can find things out for himself; instead, we make him think that he can only find things out from others.

... Learning to spell... is largely a matter of knowledge. Spelling ability grows from *understanding a system* and cannot be accounted for as the product of memorized lists of unpredictably spelled words. If learning to spell is not essentially a matter of habit, then spelling errors need not be feared as entrenching “bad habits."

...Graves' observations in Scottish school show that children given the responsibility for correcting errors in their own writing can do so... As Kenneth Goodman... Charles Read... and Piaget [have shown], children's errors are not accidental but reflect their systems of knowledge. If teachers can regard errors as sources of information for instruction rather than mistakes to be condemned and stamped out students... should be able to assume this more constructive view, too.

This is exactly the point that Seymour Papert makes in *Mindstorms* - when a child working with computers makes a “mistake” i.e. getting from the computer a result other than the one wanted, the child tends to say (if he is newly arrived from school), “It's all wrong!” and want to start over from the beginning. Papert encourages the child to see that it's not all wrong, there’s just one particular thing wrong. In computer Lingo there is a ‘Bug' in the program, and the task is to

'debug" the program- find the one false step, take it out and replace it with the correct step.

When I taught fifth grade many of my students, when filling out forms would identify themselves as “grils." I was always touched and amused by this mistake, but I thought it was just foolish or careless. Not until many, many years later did I understand that the children calling themselves “grils." were thinking sensibly, were indeed doing exactly what their teachers had told them to do - rounding out the word and spelling it a round at a time. They had been taught and had learned, that the letters GR made the sound “gurr." So they wrote down GR. That left the sound “ul." The children knew that the L had to come at the end, and they knew that there was an I in the word, so obviously the spelling had to be GRIL Countess adults had told them, no doubt that GRIL was wrong, and I joined the crowd. But it was futile; the children went on trying to spell “girl” phonetically, as they had been told to do, and they could only come up with GRIL. If I had had the sense to say, “you folks are on the right track, but in this case English uses the letters GIR to make the sound “gurr” they would have said, “Oh, I see," and could have done it correctly.

I must add that this mistake shows the folly of teaching what I call Single Letter Phonics, as opposed to Syllable Phonics. The fact is that the letters GR do not say “gurr" in English words; they only say “gurr” when we foolishly try to say them all by themselves, or ask children to do so. Standing alone, consonants do not say anything. How could they in written English consonant don't appear alone. In written English, consonants appear only in syllables, that is, joined with vowels, and it is only in syllables that we can say them. But the Single Letter Phonics people go on making this obvious error, causing great confusion to many.

On page 125 of her book, Mrs. Bissex makes another fundamental point about phonics: No phonic system provides sufficient information for the accurate pronunciation of most words in English because letters frequently have more than one sound. How does a beginning reader know if *was* is “wahss" “wass" (with a as in 'cat'), “wahz," “wayz" “wazz" or “wuz”. The letters alone cannot tell him; they can at best provide alternative approximations to spoken words. The reader must then decide, on the basis Of his familiarity with spoken language and the reading context, the particular word that is intended. As Frank Smith has argued, phonics is easy when you know the words, for then you know which sounds to choose. Pure decoding... could produce strings of nonsense words.

The idiotic arguments that have been raging for decades between the Look-Say fanatics and the Phonics fanatics might be summed up like this: the Look-Say method insists that letter sounds tell us nothing; the Phonics method says that letters tell us everything. As Mrs. Bissex points out, neither argument is true; instead, when seeing an unfamiliar word, we just use the rounds of letters in syllables to figure out what spoken word it might be, and then we use context and meaning to

tell us what word it is.

These are just a few examples of the keen observations that fill GNYS AT WRK. Homeschoolers will be greatly encouraged.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN

Howard Cohen
(Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams and Company)
This first appeared in GWS 24.

This is a very carefully thought out tightly organized, and clearly written argument in favor of making available to children the legal rights and responsibilities of adults. I, too, proposed the idea in my book, *Escape From Childhood.* Cohen deals in a masterful way with all the conventional arguments against the idea. His book will not convince haters and fearers of children, but it will greatly strengthened those who believe, as a matter of justice, that children should be treated as human beings, not as pets and slaves, and it may convince some whose hearts yearn in that direction but whose uncertain and troubled minds hold them back.

Since the idea of giving children legal and political rights is not a live issue and, given the present public temper, is not likely to become one for a long time, one might ask what's the point of this book, why is it worth reading what difference could it possibly make? Well, in the overall society it may not make any difference, but it could make a great difference in the homes of unschoolers and in the small but growing communities that homeshoolers are making.

In the miniature society that homeschoolers are creating - this country within a country, this ancestor (I hope) of a very different larger society that some of us may someday see - the question of how children should be treated and what rights they should have is a very live one. There are those in the homeschooling movement who say that except for the right to food, clothing, shelter and health care, children have only duties and obligations and no rights at all. Mr. Cohen presents a powerful argument in favor of going as far as we can in the direction of treating children, despite their youth and inexperience, like sensible, well-meaning, and responsible people, and he tells why doing so will make stronger and better families as well as a stronger and better society.

GENERALLY SPEAKING - How Children Learn Language

Ronald Macaulay
(Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1980)
This first appeared in GWS 34.

This is a very short perceptive, interesting, wise, and witty book. I met Dr. Macaulay in November 1984 when I spoke in Claremont California, at Pitzer College, where he was then acting Dean. We enjoyed each other's company. Dr. Macaulay was interested in and sympathetic to what I had to say about home schooling, and as I left he gave me a copy of his book. On page 4 he says this:

As adults we do not have a set of ready-made utterances from which to choose when we wish to speak. Instead we have the ability to produce and understand utterances we have never heard before. For example, it is unlikely that anyone will have heard the following sentence previously: Karl Marx was playing bridge with Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and Mary Queen of Scots when Tarzan walked in."

Dry Scottish wit indeed. I knew I wanted to add this book to our catalog.

Macaulay's book is also very scholarly, for Dr. Macaulay has long been a Professor of Linguistics. (In the back of his book, in very fine print, he has listed almost six pages of references to other experts like himself). He says as I have for years, that children learn to speak not by some combination of rote learning and blind imitation, but by the most careful listening and creative thinking. When I say that children, in their explorations of the world of language, act like very capable scientists, most educators find it easy to dismiss the idea as the work of a non- expert and a “romantic” - if not an outright nut. It will not be so easy for them to dismiss Dr. Macaulay.

Generally Speaking can be useful to parents in a number ways: It can give valuable support to parents who do not want their children subjected to the blind rote learning that is the norm in many schools. To those who have not observed at first hand how children master language, or to those who never gave much thought to the process going on under their noses the book will make clearer the meaning of what the child is doing, and thus enable the parent to share in this great human adventure. To all parents it will show what many, but not all, know by instinct - how important it is to listen to what little children say, to make my effort to understand them, to answer their questions as far as we can. And to parents preparing a statement of their educational ideas and plans in order to teach their own children, it will furnish many valuable quotes, such as this from page 1 “ it is obvious that the child does not learn language like a parrot by memorizing whole utterances.” Or this from page 61: '[helping a child develop linguistic competence] means creating a

situation in which the child can be his or her natural self; happy, curious, and talkative.

Chapter 4

TESTS

NONE OF THE ABOVE

David Owen
(Boston: Houghton-Mifflin)

This first appeared in GWS 45.

This carefully and thoroughly researched book is a devastating exposé of the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test), the ETS (Educational Testing Service, that makes and sells the SAT), and, by extension, the whole idea of standardized multiple-choice tests. None of the above by far the most revealing and important of all the many books on testing that I have seen during the past fifteen or more years; it is, and will be for some time, an absolutely essential piece of information and ammunition for all homeschooling families and organizations. Until standardized tests have been generally discredited, or at last lose their present monopoly over ways of keeping track of learning it is of the utmost importance that we make sure this book stays in print and becomes known to as many a possible of the public as well as to educators, to the media, and above all, to legislators.

As I will say elsewhere, one of our chief educational and political tasks for the next ten years or so will be to wean legislators away from the idea that children's (Or anyone’s) learning can be accurately reduced to a number, and that standardized multiple-choice tests are the best or even the only way to get such a number. More and more, it looks as if most legislatures, and perhaps before too long all of them, may be ready to pass laws that say parents should have the right to teach their own children; the danger is that legislatures may then insist that all such parents must use the teaching and testing methods of the schools. To persuade legislators to change their minds on this point will take much time and patience. Owen's book will be an invaluable resource to help us persuade.

In the next issue of GWS I plan to discuss in greater detail some of the many things we can learn from this book. For now, a small but significant detail: The mailing address of the Educational Testing Service is, and for some time has been, Princeton, N.J. However the institution itself is not located in Princeton at all, but in a town called Lawrence. One

can only ask why the ETS should go to the trouble of maintaining what is in effect a false address. The obvious answer is that, without ever actually spying it (a statement that would get them in a lot of trouble), the ETS wants to encourage all people to believe what many already do believe - that there is some connection between the ETS and Princeton University. In fact, there is no connection whatever. As Owen clearly shows, most of the ETS's dealings with the public are on this ethical level: while the people at the ETS are probably sincere in believing that college admissions officers really need to be able to rank their millions of applicants in some simple numerical way, and that the SAT scores are the best or at least the easiest way to rank applicants, that is as far as their honesty goes. In defending their by now extremely profitable monopoly, the people at the ETS are habitually uncandid, unscrupulous, and untruthful.

I wish that Oven had said explicitly what his boot strongly implies - that what ETS does so badly could not be done well by anyone, for the simple reason that it is not and never will be possible to reduce all the complexities of a human being's knowledge, understanding, and learning skills to a single number. To make this point clear to the general public is one of homeschoolers' biggest and most important task of the next decade. The first step is for as many of us a possible to read, and get others to read, this vital book.

TEN SAT’S -the College Entrance Exam Board
(N Y: College Board)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

This book is just what it says it is - copies of ten different Scholastic Aptitude Tests. As such, it is a great improvement on most previous book about preparing high school students for the SAT. Those previous books had sample questions, but the trouble was that the questions had not been taken from actual SAT exams; the questions had been made up by the writers of the books. The made-up questions may have been ingenious enough, but, as David Owen points out in *None of the Above,* those made-up questions were often very different from the kinds of questions that the SAT's actually do ask, and, thus, were often quite misleading.

Some people will ask, isn't there a danger that, by the time we start using these old exams to get ready for the current SAT exam, the exams will have been changed to ask quite a different kind of question? The answer is No. Since part of what the exam makers are selling is the claim that this year's SAT score are comparable to scores for all other year, the exam makers have locked themselves into a fairly fixed pattern of questions. The exam makers may change the detail from one year to the next but the general kind of questions asked must necessarily change very little.

This would be a very good book; to study along with Owen's *None of the Above.* When Owen talks about how the SAT's are made and organized, or about ways of beating them, you can check his idea against actual SAT tests. You can also check to see if, as Owen claims, Michael Owner's ideas in *How to Beat the SAT* apply to one version of the test but not all of them and whether or not there are other rules that work more consistently. A very valuable tool.

Chapter 5

FACTS & SCIENCE

PHYSICS EXPERIMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Muriel Mandell
(N Y: Dover)
This first appeared in GWS 15.

This is a book of simple physics experiments that can be done by children, using materials that are either already in most homes or that are inexpensive and easy to get. The experiments are grouped under seven heading 1) Matter: Air, 2) Matter: Water 3) Mechanical Energy and Machines 4) Heat 5) Sound; 6) Light; 7) Magnetism and Electricity. Each experiment is clearly described and illustrated, and Mr. Mandell’s explanation of what happens is also clear. Here is one of the simpler experiments:

How To Compress Air
Hold a glass with its mouth down and push it into a deep bowl of water. You will see that the water enters the glass a little way. No bubbles of air escape.

Explanation: The water forces the air into a smaller space. The small particles of air - the air molecules - are forced closer together, or compressed. Releasing compressed air furnishes power, and many machines work on this principle.

A useful little book it my help you and your children to think of other simple physics experiments using things found right at home. If you do think of some, please let us know. We can put them in GWS and someday we might have enough to publish another collection of them.

A SAND COUNTY ALMANAC

Aldo Leopold
(NY: Ballantine)
This first appeared in GWS 32.

This book, first published in 1949, is one of the great classics of ecology (a word invented more than a hundred years ago). It is among other thing a book about a kind of biology and a way of looking at biology, that have almost but not quite, gone out of fashion. We need it now even more desperately than when Leopold wrote it.

Joseph Wood Krutch, himself a great naturalist and writer once spoke of the very interesting and important distinction between "inside" and "outside" biology. He laid that "inside" biology, the kind now very much in fashion, consists of exploring, with electronic microscopes and other exotic tools, the innermost parts - the very cells and genes - of living creatures to find out how there parts work and how to make them work differently and presumably better. "Outside" biology consists of trying to observe living things as they appear in nature, disturbing them a little as possible, to find out how they relate to each other, and how we relate to all of them. "Inside" biology seeks to understand nature so that we may change and control it; 'outside" biology seeks to understand nature so that we may live harmoniously within it.

I had feared that the inside biologist, whose doing are in the headlines every week or so, had won the battle, and that outside biology was no longer a respectable science or even a active one. I was gladly encouraged to read in the *New York Review of Books* (1/20/83) a review by R. C. Lewontin, a professor of biology and zoology at Harvard. Lewontin reviewed the books *Against Biological Determinism* and *Towards a Liberatory Biology* (I plan to read both, if they are not too technical). Lewontin wrote: ... What is surely the most powerful and influential metaphor-become-real in the Western civilization was provided in 1657 by Rene Descartes. ... It is the organism as machine....

What has happened since 1637 is that, in the minds of natural scientists and a large fraction of social scientists as well, the world has ceased to be like a machine, but instead is seen if it were a machine. Cartesian reductionism, which regards the entire world of things as, in fact a very complicated electro-mechanical device, is not simply the dominant mode of thought in natural science, but the only mode to enter the consciousness of the vast majority of modem scientists. It is no exaggeration to spy that most scientists simply do not know how to think about the world except as a machine....

The natural historical approach to understanding the world consists in attempting to reconstruct the causes of events from

observing systems in their normal state of motion or statis. The experimental approach, on the other hand, uses perturbation as its primary tool. The object under study is pushed, picked, and nicked, bits and pieces are removed, foreign agents added, and the normal working of the system generally disturbed in the hope that its response to these alterations will reveal its inner working. The Cartesian reductionists view confuses the nature of the perturbation itself with the “cause” of the system’s normal functioning. A Russian story tells of the psychologist who proves that fleas hear with their legs by training them to jump on command, and then observing that they no longer respond when their legs are amputated. ...

The term, natural historian, as defined in this elegant comparison, does indeed apply to Aldo Leopold. He liked to observe living things - plants, trees, birds, fish, animals - in their natural state, disturbing them (except for some occasional fly fishing) as little as possible. As a result of a lifetime of this kind of gentle and respectful observation, he was able to see what the inside biologist - the experimenter, the perturber, the tinkerer - never sees. Aldo Leopold saw the enormous number of interconnections between living things and the many ways that a small and supposedly unimportant change in one place may later, perhaps much later, bring about an important charge in another place.

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE DINOSAURS

David Lambert (N Y: Avon)
This first appeared in GWS 35.

This is the ultimate dinosaur book, the dinosaur book to end all dinosaur books. Everything you always wanted to know about dinosaurs but were afraid to ask - because you thought no one would know. Now you can know. I can't improve on what the back cover says about the contents of this book:

How and when did [the dinosaurs] evolve from lower reptiles? How did they differ from other animals? Were some.. .warm-blooded? What did they eat? What ate them? Did any dinosaurs care for their young? ... Over 300 kinds of dinosaurs. ... Illustrations show where they lived, their family trees, what they looked like, and their size in comparison to a man.... What plants and animals shared the dinosaurs' habitat? How did the earth's lands, climates, and living things change during [those times]? What mysterious forces of nature killed off the dinosaurs? How were dinosaur remains preserved in rock? Who were the great dinosaur discoverers? How do scientists date the fossil remains? How do they rebuild fossil skeletons?

All this is indeed in the book. You will also learn that arguments are still raging as to whether dinosaurs were cold-

blooded or warm blooded, or whether the big flesh-eating dinosaurs actually chased and killed their prey or merely fed on carrion. (I do not wish to believe the *Tyrannosaurus* fed only on carrion!) And you will also realize that much of our “knowledge" of dinosaurs is in fact ingenious guessing from very little evidence. Maybe 100 years from now a book like this will be written in which the pictures will look very different. Meanwhile, if you want to learn all that we think we know about these great and fascinating creatures, this is the place to find out.

POWERS OF TEN - On the Relative Size of Things in the Universe

Philip and Phyllis Morrison
(N. Y: W. H. Freeman)
This first appeared in GWS 57.

This is the most interesting, imaginative, far-reaching, mind-stretching, beautiful science book that I have ever seen. It was inspired by *Cosmic View*: *The Universe in Forty Jumps* written by a Dutch teacher named Ken Boeke. I first saw Boeke's book many years ago and would long since have added it to our catalog, had it not (like so many good books) gone out of print. If you ever run across it, in library or bookstore, borrow it or buy it.

Boeke's book was based on a most ingenious idea. He began with a picture of a Dutch girl sitting in a big chair and holding in her lap a white cat, girl and chair filling up most of the picture. He then asked himself “What would we see if we moved ten times farther away?” This gave him his second picture of the girl, now much smaller, in the middle of a field. Around her he drew a little square to represent the boundaries of the first picture, thus reminding us of what we had been able to see there. In the third picture we see a part of the city where the girl lives, with the entire field of the second picture in the middle of the city, and the girl just a dot on the page. In the next picture we see most of the city, while the girl and cat are much too small to be seen at all.

In the same way, page by page, we keep jumping back from the girl and the surface of the earth, getting ten times farther away with each jump. All we move away jump by jump, we see the whole earth, later the inner planets, then the entire solar system. Soon the planets disappear and we see only the sun, then later the galaxy that contains our sun. Twenty-five jumps bring us to the very edge of the visible universe where we see everything human beings now have the power to see. (If we build large telescopes on the moon or in space, as we may well do in the next century - if we don't destroy ourselves - we will be able to make more jumps, but I would guess probably not more than two or three.)

Then Kees Boeke went back to the girl and this time showed us what we would see if each time we moved ten times closer. Two jumps show use a close-up of the girl's skin. A few more jumps take us into the world of the smallest living things, such as cells. A few more jumps take us out of the world of living matter (and of photography itself) and into the imagined world of molecules, atoms, and electrons. In 15 jumps we are in the center of the atomic nucleus - as far as our instruments and imaginations will take us. (Perhaps in another generation or so we will be able to take an additional jump or two inward, but probably not more than that). Thus 40 of these jumps have taken us from the smallest things we can “see" to the largest. It is a magnificent idea, and I will always regret not having bought more copies of *Comic View* while it was in print.

Now, fortunately, Boeke's idea has been brought back to life. The architect Charles Eames, best known for the bucket-shaped plastic chair he designed, and his wife Ray Eames, with the help of Philip and Phylis Morrison made a film called *Powers of Ten* based on Kees BoeKe's *Comic View*. From the photos taken for the film [now on permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute's Aerospace Museum], and with much extra material, the Morrisons have made this astonishing book.

In many ways the book, *Powers of Ten* is a great extension of and improvement on the original idea. Where Boeke gave us black and white drawings, *Powers of Ten* gives us photographs. The first of these photographs is of a young man asleep after a picnic in a Chicago park on the edge of Lake Michigan. The photographs are in color when color is visible, and it is worth noting that nine jump outward or six jump inward from our original picture take us into worlds where, in effect, there is no color, or none that we can see - a fact that is, I guess the same thing. Along with each main illustration, the Morrisons have given us many more so that we can see far greater detail than one picture alone can show. In addition to the extra photographs, the authors have extended their text in order to introduce many ideas about size and scale that are not in the original *Comic View*.

This book, more than any I can remember, gives us a glimpse of the unity, the excitement, and the adventure - what we could almost call the romance - of the physical sciences. Hearing every day the many ways that an often corrupted and distorted science has more and more filled our world with dangerous and destructive materials and devices, I myself had begun, like many others, to think of science as a mysterious and sinister kind of magic. I had begun to forget that at its best properly understood and carried on in a responsible and ethical spirit science can still be one of the most exciting and beautiful things that human beings do.

THE STARS: A New Way To See Them

H. A. Rey
(Boston: Houghton Mifflin)
This first appeared in GWS 58.

I haw been on the lookout for a good book about the part of astronomy that deals with the position and movement of stars and planets in the sky- not a book about how big or hot they are or what they are made of or how they were made. As often happens, a GWS reader showed us this book; it is by far the best we have seen. Published in 1952, it has been in print ever since, and deserves to be. It is full of interesting facts we may never have understood, and many excellent illustrations that help elucidate those facts. It begins with there welcoming words:

...The book is meant for people who want to know just enough about the stars to be able to go out at night and find the major constellations, for the mere pleasure of it.

Of course you can enjoy the stars without knowing them. But if you know them at least a little, the pleasure is infinitely greater. It is fun to watch them announce the seasons, to see them rise at the expected times and places and follow their paths year in, year out more reliable than anything else.

Besides, if you know the stars you are not easily lost. They tell you the time and direction on land, on sea and in the air, and this can be valuable on many occasions.

And should you venture into outer space, anywhere in the solar system, where no earthly landmarkers exist the constellations would be your only guideposts, and familiar ones, too.

This book.., shows the constellations in a new, graphic way, as shapes which suggest what the names imply; it shows the group of stars known as the Great Bear, in the shape of a bear... and so on.

What a nice, patient, friendly voice behind these words. Rey is a wonderful teacher. He doesn't rush us along too fast he makes sure we know what he means by the words he uses - small things, but important. First he shows us diagrams of the major constellations. Later, he shows us pictures of what the whole sky will look like at different times of the year, at least in those latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere (25-55 degrees North) where the U.S., southern Canada, and most of Europe are located. Still later, he shows us more information about the motion of the earth and moon, and the apparent

motion of the stars.

One interesting thing he tells us that I never knew: the earth's axis now points toward the star we call Polaris, the Pole Star, but it did not always and will not always do so. Because of the wobble of its axis, the earth will slowly move away from Polaris, and in 14,000 years will point very close to the bright star Vega. From there it will take 55,000 years before it comes back again to Polaris. However, we will not see this happen; during our lifetimes, and the lifetimes of our children, grandchildren, and many generations to come, we can count on Polaris to keep showing us due north.

A most delightful and informative book.

CONCEPTUAL PHYSICS

Paul Hewitt (Boston: Little, Brown)
This first appeared in GWS 40.

I've been looking off and on for some time for a good general introductory physics text and this one seems excellent. There are many different branches of physics; the text writer has the task of deciding in what order to present these branches. Paul Hewitt has wisely begun with the study of motion. Motion is a very common event something we see, experience, and think about every day. Motion also was one of the first aspects of visible reality that human beings thought about In discussing motion, Hewitt is able to tell us a little about the history of physics, how certain discoveries led to new questions and new questions to new discoveries.

This is a college text, but don't be put off by that. Years ago, when Jud Jerome and his then eleven-year- old son, Topher, were looking for a text they could use together to learn algebra, they found that college texts were the only ones they could tolerate: the other oversimplified or talked down to the reader. Hewitt writes clearly and explains well. There are not many words (outside of scientific terms, that any student of physics must get to know anyway) that an interested twelve-year old would not know or could not soon figure out The many black-and-white drawings are helpful.

Why the word 'Conceptual" in the title? Because most physics texts are full of illustrative problems that require a great deal of calculation. Since Hewitt was writing this book for college students who wanted or needed to know something about physics but who were not and did not plan to be scientists, he wisely framed his end of chapter questions to get the students to think, about the idea and principles in the text; if and when calculation is involved, it is very simple, do-it-in-your-head kind of stuff.

I was sorry to see Hewitt waste a couple of pages on dumb talk about space colonies. But I forgive him, first, because there is very little of the air of gee-whiz science-worship in the book, and second, because of a nice little photo of sheets hung out to dry on a clothesline; under the photo is the dad-pan caption, “Solar powered clothes dryer." On the important question of the prudent and responsible use of scientific knowledge, Paul Hewitt's heart is in the right place. All in all this is a very good, clear, comprehensive introduction to a fascinating, important and, for many people, forbidding subject.

Chapter 6

HISTORY And GEOGRAPHY

HIROSHIMA

John Hersey
(N Y: Random)
This first appeared in GWS 18.

Soon after the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, John Hersey went there and wrote this report for *The New Yorker*. *Hiroshima* may well be the most widely read piece of journalism ever written: the book is now in its 50th printing.

Instead of trying to describe the results of the bomb in any overall way, Hersey let six survivors - five Japanese and one German Catholic priest - tell what happened to them when the bomb fell and in the days following. He kept out of his story his own shock, horror, and fear; as matter-of-factly as if he were describing an everyday event, he simply told what these six survivors saw, heard, thought, felt, and did. John Hersey's aim, detached, almost emotionless way of telling the story makes it all the more real and terrifying.

When I first read his article in *The New Yorker* I was horrified by the vastness of the destruction, and I intensely felt (and still feel that way) that by dropping the bomb we had not only committed a kind of crime, but also had created far worse problems than we had solved. Insofar as I thought about the people of Hiroshima, it was only or pitiful victims. Today, reading again Hersey's account and with the wisdom of hindsight, I am astonished at the patience, courage, unselfishness, and endurance shown by the Hiroshima survivors as they struggled to recover from their great disaster. If an atom bomb were to destroy an American city, would the survivors here behave as well? I hope we don't have to find out.

At any rate, this account of the results of, what by today's standards is a very small and primitive atom bomb, is something we all ought to re-read now and then, just to remind ourselves of what we are messing around with.

THE PENGUIN ATLAS OF MEDIEVAL HISTORY

Colin McEvedy
(N Y: Penguin)
This first appeared in GWS 27.

Like all children, I studied history in school. It was one of the "best" schools and I got good marks. Today, what sticks in my mind from my school days is a vague notion that in 410 A.D. some uncouth rascals called Vandals or Visigoths or something invaded Rome and chased all the Romans, wrapped in their white togas, out of the city. After Rome "fell" there came the Dark Ages, a long period of time when gangs of people dressed mostly in animal skins roamed around Europe fighting each other until somewhere around the 14th century, modern Europe began to come into being.

However, in just the briefest skimming of *The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History* I have learned things I never dreamed of .On page 8, for example:

... the legionaries found that their methods and equipment were hopelessly obsolete. The German soldier at the end of the 4th century had a better sword made of better steel, and the Goths had learned the latest techniques of cavalry warfare from the nomads of the Russian Steppes...

What is all this? The legions obsolete? After all we were told about how their armor, weapons, and tactics made them invincible? And the Germans had better swords made of better steel? Where and how did these primitive barbarians learn to make better steel than the Romans, with all their science, engineering, and so on? And how did the Goths find out what was going on in the Russian steppes? Not only was there no hint of such goings on in the history I learned at school, but also there was none in the history that was being taught in the high-powered elementary school where I taught in the late 1950's.

What this little book shows, in its maps and short text, is that between the "fall" of Rome and the rise of modern Europe there were scores of kingdoms, empires, and civilizations, trading or fighting with each other, conquering and being conquered in turn. The maps in this book, show, at intervals of roughly fifty years, who was in power where. Even in that short space of time the maps undergo radical changes, and the map of one century becomes almost unrecognizable in the

next.

Strange names are everywhere. On the map for 737 A.D. we see Magyars (of whom I've heard), Avars, the Khazar Khanate, and the Umayyad Caliphate (who spread over Spain, North Africa, and much of the Middle East). But by 830 A.D. the Umayyads hold only Spain; North Africa has been taken over by the Idrisid Caliphate, the Aghlabid Emirate, the Abbuid Caliphate (very powerful), and the Tahirid Emirate. The Khazar Khanate and the Volga Bulgars (Did they have a song?)) are still on a northern border. Fifty years later there are three new Emirates (Tulunid, Saffarid, Samanid), the Principality of Russia, the Patzinaks, and east of them the Ghuzz, who are still there in 998 and 1048. But by 1071 they are all gone, and almost all the names are new. And so on.

Obviously those were busy times. One thing I can't help wondering - on the basis of what kind of evidence do the historians know all this? Letters? Memos? Court records? Art objects? Tombs? It's easy to see that doing history - and history, the act of inquiring into the past is something that people do- could be fascinating work like putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle. This atlas shows us only a small put of the puzzle, the part that says who controlled what turf at what time. It does not say anything about who all there people were, or how they lived and worked, or what sorts of houses or tools or other inventions they used. Like many other good books, it raises more questions than it answers. One thing it does make clear - the years after Rome were not, as so many of us were once led to believe, just a void of darkness and barbarism.

GIVING UP THE GUN

Noel Perrin (N Y: Random House)
This first appeared in GWS 31.

This is on astonishing and encouraging book. Though it has practically nothing to do with home schooling, it has much to do with the world that our children and we are living and will live in. I am adding it to our catalog for a number of reasons: 1) It is finely printed and illustrated with many beautiful reproductions of Japanese prints. 2) It tells us something that I suspect none of us knew and that many of us will be glad to hear. 3) It shows us that something we have all been told was impossible has in fact been done.

In the foreword, Mr. Perrin says:

...This book tells the story of an almost unknown incident in history. A civilized country, possessing high technology,

voluntarily chose to give up an advanced military weapon and to return to a more primitive one. It chose to do this and it succeeded... Guns arrived [in Japan] in 1545, brought by the first Europeans. They were adopted at once and were used widely for the next hundred years. Then they were gradually abandoned...

How and why this all happened makes a fascinating story. I learned many things I did not know and would never have guessed, one being that in those days (16th - 18th centuries) Japanese technology was in most respects far ahead of Europe's. At the end, Mr. Perrin writes:

...None of this proves in the least, to be sure, that what the Japanese once did with guns the whole world could now do with, say, plutonium. Japan's circumstances in the seventeenth century were utterly different from those of any military power now.

What the Japanese experience does prove is two things. First, that a no growth economy is perfectly compatible with prosperous and civilized life. And second, that human beings are less the passive victims of their own knowledge and still than most men in the West suppose. “You can't stop progress," people say... This is to talk as if progress - however one defines that elusive concept - were something semi-divine, an inexorable force outside human control. And, of course, it isn't. It is something we can guide, and direct and even stop. Men can choose to remember; they can also choose to forget. As men did on Tanegashima…

WOMEN OF THE WEST

Cathy Luchetti
(Berkeley, CA: Antelope Island)
This first appeared in GWS 34.

This is one of the most unusual, informative, and thought provoking books about history that I have ever seen; a book about what I call True History, a, opposed to the textbook history that I, and I suppose most children, studied and still study in school. A British historian once mid, very aptly, "History is the propaganda of the victors." We could as well say that it is the study of What The Big Shots Did. Reading history, one would hardly think there had ever lived anyone except kings, generals, and an occasional religious leader or two. What ordinary people did, how they worked, how they lived their lives, above all how they felt about their lives, is something we almost never find out.

This is as true of the history of our own West as of the kingdoms and empires of Europe. The textbook history of our

West is almost entirely the history of men engaged in romantic and dangerous occupations and exploits- explorers, soldiers, gold-seekers, gunfighters, sheriffs, cowboys, miners. This, though true enough, is only a small part of the truth. Most of the true history of the West it a history of work - cruelly hard work - done in a bitter and hostile environment and much of this work was done by women. In this book, after a very interesting general description of the lives of pioneer women, we meet eleven of those women, and through their diaries, journals, and letters, hear the story of their own lives - the story of the Little House books as they might have been if Laura Ingalls Wilder's mother, the gentle and shadowy Caroline, had written them.

Along with the text, in itself fascinating, are reproductions of about a hundred photographs taken at the time. With a few wonderful exceptions - two women galloping on horseback at top speed, two little girls whispering and giggling to each other at school - the photographs are mostly stiff and formal portraits of women or their families, usually in front or the tiny sod or dugout houses or log cabins they lived in. Somehow these photos, in their many shades of black and gray, and their absence of motion, convey more of the harshness of the landscape and hardness of the life than modern color photos could do.

Text and photos are beautifully laid out and printed in a book that just is a book is a work of the printer's art. I know it is a more expensive book than many individual families will feel they can buy. But families who get together very often, as more and more home schoolers do, could join together to buy it for their joint use. I hope families will do so, and I hope they will also ask their local public libraries to buy it. The book is one that should be widely known and read and kept alive for future generations of children to read.

BLACK FOREMOTHERS

Dorothy Sterling
(N Y: Feminist Press)
This first appeared in GWS 36.

This is an account of a too-little known part of our history: the lives of black women. The three courageous women depicted here were among the pioneers in the long, arduous, not-yet-ended struggle to free black people, first from slavery, then from legal and political discrimination. It is hard to believe, and indeed many young people may still not know that more than eighty years after our country was founded, it was not only legal in many parts of the country to own slaves, but in all parts of the country it was also a crime to help slaves escape from slavery. *Black Foremothers* is a useful supplement and corrective to the very incomplete American history that has always been taught in our schools, even the

“best” schools, and it reminds us of the often discouraging work that must be done to do away with established customs and wrongs.

The most exciting of these stories is the life of Ellen Craft. Born in 1826, Ellen Craft was the only one of these three women to grow up a slave. When Ellen was 22, she and her new husband, William, afraid they might be separated from each other or from their children, if they should have any, decided to try to escape to the North and to freedom. Their plan was a daring one. Since Ellen was light skinned, she planned to disguise herself as an invalid Southern gentleman and to disguise her husband as her servant.

...Most of the details that made her disguise plausible were devised by Ellen. Realizing with a sudden pang that she would be asked to sign hotel registers, she made up a bandage and sling for her right arm to explain her inability to write. A poultice- a bulky, wet bandage, tied from chin to head, toothache style, would conceal her beardlessness. Then looking in a mirror, she saw that her eyes might register fear, anger, dismay, and she sent William downtown for a final purchase - a pair of green spectacles...

Continuing the story of their escape is almost unbearable - it might make a wonderful film, though it may be some time before such a film is made.

The other two women in the book did not face quite the same degree of danger as Ellen Craft but they still had to overcome every kind of difficulty. One, Ida Wells, was 16 when she lost both parents to yellow fever and had to go home to take care of five young children. She went to work as a schoolteacher so that she could support her siblings and keep her family from being broken up. Ida Wells later became the first black woman journalist, as well as one of the most tireless, eloquent, and effective speakers against racial injustice.

In today's troubled times we all may gain much needed strength and courage from the stories of these brave women.

A SAMPLER OF LIFESTYLES

Womanhood and Youth in Colonial Lyme
Mary Sterling Bakke (Lyme, CT: Advocacy Press)
This first appeared in GWS 40.

Here is another fine history book about the everyday lives of ordinary people; I wish we had more of its kind. In the

acknowledgments the author writes: “From old diaries, documents, newspapers, State Archives, records, genealogies, and oral tradition the picture of both daily life and special occasions brings to life women and young people in the time prior to 1800." This makes me wonder where future historians will look to find such records of us. Few people keep dairies any more, and the paper and ink used by modern high-speed presses to print our newspapers and books guarantee that barring some miracle method of preservation, our printed papers will crumble to dust within a few generations.

At any rate, we have this record of earlier times, to tell many interesting and some surprising things about women in pre-1800 New England. Women then were a very long way from being the sheltered, submissive, powerless, fragile creatures we sometimes imagine.

The author writes about the young whose lives were busy and active and full of time for vigorous play:

…Not all of girl’s work was done skillfully and expeditiously, in spite of supervision by elders... Diary confessions to scorching preserves and flirting with father's apprentices seem normal; and a reader perceives that such kindly, gently loving, instructive oversight gave individuals a sense of being needed and that what they did was important. They had a secure niche in the family's life.

On the Legal and economic rights of women, the writes:

...Though the statute legalizing a women’s administration of her estate of her deceased husband came in 1784 by Connecticut as a state, actual practice had given her this power in the colonial period at least a hundred years before that... Not only were widows functioning as executors of their husbands' estates in the 17th Century, but [they] were making bequests executed as legal... Aside from this in the fifth Century women had more legal prerogatives than in the 19th. Because husbands were often away, women were accustomed to the management of a farm, or shop, or trade...We get a picture of colonial women quite different from the stereotype of a property-less and legally helpless drudge in a patriarchal society. Functioning with all the necessary legal guarantees, one hundred sixty women, in New London County alone, are listed as heads of households in the first Census of the United States, 1790...

Literary and romantic notions of the helpless female, dimly subject to male domination, and a legal nonentity prove to be just that- notions - when the stories of real women who helped make this country become known...

In short the industrialization of America did not raise but lowered the general position of women in society by turning

more and more of the necessary and skilled work most often done by women into industrial job, by needlessly organizing those jobs into a hierarchy of higher and lower, and by assigning a much greater proportion of the lower jobs to women. From this most interesting book we get a picture of how different life would, perhaps, a vision of how different it might be.

THIS IS THE WAY IT USED TO BE IN THE EARLY 1900'S

Marjorie Kahl Lawrence
(Frankfort, IN M. K. Lawrence)
This first appeared in GWS 43.

Here it another example of a history book that we at GWS like; we think many children will like it, too. It is a delightful book about how ordinary people - people who were not rich, powerful, or famous - lived their daily lives. The author prepared this book in 1980 for the Clinton County Museum in Frankfort, Indiana. She must have been quite old when she wrote it. She writes as if she is telling these true stories to children. Indeed, the probably did tell them to many children before she finally wrote them. In her introduction she says:

...This little book is a history. It tells how things were in the early nineteen hundreds. That it not a hundred years ago, but it will be before long, and the people who lived it will not be here any longer to tell you how things were. That is why I have prepared this book; to let you know how it was when I was a little child, so these things will not be forgotten. When you have lived a while, then you can begin telling how things were when you were little... So, if you would like to hear about it, I will tell you what it was like to be a child early in the 1900's...

The chapter titles suggest what an amazing amount of fascinating information there is in this little book The Non-Urban Household; Our House; A Schedule for the Week's Work; Rag Carpets, Those Darn Flies; Something to Eat Bread and Butter; Making Butter; The Garden; Taking Care of the Chickens; Going to the Store; Grandmothers Were Important; Grandfathers; Baby Clothes (a delightful chapter!); Being Sick; Horse Power; Making Hay: Corn; Jelly and Jam; Quilts; and so on.

What an extra-ordinary number of things those country people knew how to do, and do well. And what pride, satisfaction, and happiness they obviously got from doing them. Today there are very few commercial farms where families raise and preserve much of their own food, or even know how. But drew skills are slowly coming back; people who have moved away from cities are interested in knowing how to do them. With luck, the skills will not be lost.

Mrs. Lawrence, from the round of her voice as we hear it in this book, is a wonderful old lady – a little tart not inclined to stand for much nonsense, but full of knowledge, enthusiasm, and affection. She obviously enjoyed life when she was a child, and she obviously enjoys it now. Lucky are the children who could or can listen to and learn from such lively and knowing grandmothers; for many children, this book will have to be the best possible substitute. The book is ideal for reading aloud.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Ingri and Edgar d'Aulaire
(N Y: Doubleday)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

For children of about eight years and up, this is an excellent short biography of a man who was in many ways most truly the father of this country. We gave that title to George Washington became he won the military victories that made independence, and later our nation, possible. But Franklin was more typical of the many Americans whose energy, industry, resourcefulness, and imagination laid the civic and economic foundation for this nation.

The text of the book draws heavily on Franklin's own autobiography, and the authors have chosen well the incidents that give the best idea of Franklin's busy and productive life. Each page of text carries one of his witty and useful proverbs. The pencil illustrations, some in color, some in black and white, are no great shaker as art but they convey the energy and bustle in this new, uncrowded land where everything was possible.

The matter-of-fact treatment of Franklin's education is of particular interest to GWS readers:

When Benjamin was eight years old, his father sent him to grammar school. He rose to the head of his class in reading and writing... But he was poor in arithmetic... So, when Benjamin was ten years old, he was taken out of school to learn his father's trade of candle making.

Benjamin hated dipping candles and cutting wicks the whole daylong. He read and he dreamed... Hoping to find Benjamin a trade that he would really like, [his father] took him to call on joiners and braziers and cutlers and bricklayers in their workshops. Benjamin learned much about these trades but he did not want to follow any of them. At last his worried father persuaded him that, since he was so fond of books, he should become a printer's apprentice...

The authors have written similar biographies of Washington and Lincoln; if those biographies are as good as this one on Franklin, we will soon have them in our catalog.

Chapter 7
MATH

ARITHMETIC MADE SIMPLE

A. P. Sperling and Samuel D. Levison
(N Y: Doubleday)
This first appeared in GWS 15.

This book is neither beautiful nor very exciting, but it is exceedingly useful and will be very helpful to many parents. To quote from the back cover, it is a step-by-step presentation of all the arithmetic material additionally covered in eight school years - now in one convenient volume. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, long division; fractions, decimals, percentage and interest: measurement of lines, angles, and perimeter of plane proportions; graphs, signed numbers."

The book is not written for younger children to read, but for adults (or older children) to use with younger children. It is well and simply written. The authors' explanations are short and clear - certainly as good as and probably better than, the explanations that most children will hear in most classrooms or read in most textbooks. The few black-and-white illustrations are helpful. For each new idea taught, the authors give a few problems - just enough to illustrate the idea - but the book is not cluttered up with pages of busywork problems. Answers are given at the end of the book.

Of the many ways that this book can help parents, this is one: parents who are writing up a home education plan for their local schools and simply copy the table of contents of the book. It will be very impressive, certainly to a judge, if the schools push things that far.

I don't particularly recommend using this book slavishly as a textbook going through a page at a time. As I wrote in earlier issues of GWS, there are better way of introducing children to numbers and their properties and operations than the ways used in school and in this book. But if you want to know what the schools are doing or want to be sure from time to time that your children can do what is being done in schools, this book will help you. In other words, it will do everything that a correspondence course in arithmetic will do and for much less money.

Though the book is too hard for beginning readers, most homeschooled children of eight or older will be able to read it themselves, with perhaps an occasional question. I recommend letting such children browse through the book in any order they like. I think that any confident child working through the book as a kind of challenge, would be able to cover all the material in a year and perhaps much less. (I'd like to hear about any such experiences.)

Here me the first three paragraphs of the book:

From the very beginning of time man has been in need of a method of expressing 'how many,' whether it be sheep, plants, fish, etc. At first man needed only a few ways to express small quantities. But as time went on, his requirements increased and a system of numbers became essential.

Did you ever stop to wonder how the cave men indicated that they wanted or needed one, two, or three items? Judging from what we have observed among uncivilized tribes in recent times, we know that they used parts of their bodies to indicate quantities. For example, they indicated the number one by pointing to their nose, the number two by pointing to their eyes, and as time went on they learned to use their fingers to express amounts up to ten.

When primitive men wanted to describe the number of sheep in a large herd, they found it difficult to do so because they lacked a number system such as we have today. Their methods were simple but intelligent, since they had no system for counting above ten. As the flock passed by they placed one stone or stick in a pile for each sheep as it passed. The number of stones or sticks in the pile then indicated the number of sheep in the flock. This was inadequate since there was no way of telling anyone else how large the flock was or for writing it on paper.

Arithmetic Made Simple was written in 1960, so it doesn't contain any New Math (“greater than" “less than” “commutative properly." etc.). However, one of the many other textbooks in this series is *New Math Made Simple.* We will be looking at that, and some of the others, to see if they may be useful to parents. Meanwhile, I strongly recommend this one.

[*Arithmetic Made Simple* was revised in 1988. *New Math Made Simple* is not in print.]

MATHEMATICIAN'S DELIGHT
W. W. Sawyer

(Harmondsworth, England: Penguin)
This first appeared in GWS 19.

This book, by a British mathematics professor, is not a textbook, though it has a lot of textbook type material - examples, exercises, etc. As the author says in his first sentence, “The main object of this book is to dispel the fear of mathematics.” I don't know any other book aimed at the same audience - adults, and children over 12 (maybe younger) - that dispels the fear of mathematics as well as this book does. Some more quotes from this friendly and sensible book:

Mathematical thinking is a tool. There is no point in acquiring it unless you mean to use it.

Why should such fear of mathematics be felt?... Quite certainly the cause does not lie in the nature of the subject itself. The most convincing proof of this is the fact that people in their everyday occupations -when they are making something - do, as a matter if fact reason along lines which are essentially as those used in mathematics…

To master anything - from football to relativity - requires effort. But it does not require unpleasant effort, drudgery.

Mathematics is like a chest of tools: before studying the tools in detail, a good worker should know the object of each, when it is used, how it is used, what it is used for.

What is true of philosophy is equally true of mathematics: its roots lie in the common experiences of daily life.

Reason is in fact neither more nor less than an experiment carried out in the imagination. It is by no means necessary that reasoning should proceed by clearly stated steps.

The two main conditions for access in any sort of work are interest and confidence.

Chapter 4, “The Strategy And Tactics of Study," is by itself well worth the price of the book. It is a solidly packed with good advice that it would be tempting to quote it all. The gist of it is this:

If you can find out what your difficulty is, you are halfway to overcoming it [JH: I would any nine-tenths of the way.] People often go about with a fog of small difficulties in their heads: they are not quite sure what the words mean, they are not quite sure what has gone before, they are not quite sure what is the object of the work. All these difficulties can be

taken one at a time.

This interesting and pleasant book will be very helpful to any people who had trouble with math, or who are working with children who have trouble with it. But it is not for them only; anyone can, and most will, enjoy *MATHEMATICIAN'S DELIGHT*. Feel free to browse and skip around. Leave alone any parts that make you feel anxious. Come back to them later - or don't do whatever you want Sawyer means what he says; it is more important that you should like the mathematics you know than that you should know a great deal. If you like what you know, you can easily learn more.

MATHEMATICS - A HUMAN ENDEAVOR

Harold R. Jacobs
(N Y: W. H. Freeman)
This first appeared in GWS 31.

When I wrote about this book in GWS 37, it was expensive and, because I thought it might come out in paperback, I didn't add it to our catalog. The book has been such a success, however, that the publishers have kept it in hardcover and, indeed, printed this second edition. Meanwhile, many people have written us about how much they like *MATHEMATICS - A HUMAN ENDEAVOR*. I have decided, therefore, to go ahead and add it to our catalog. Families who find it too expensive might find a way to share the cost of the book with other families, sharing time with the book as they might share time on a computer.

This is about the best book on mathematics, for beginners, that I have seen. What Jacobs tries to do, and does very well, is give the beginner, or even the math-hater, an idea of what mathematical thinking is about, why human beings have found it so interesting, and how (to some extent) it has grown over the centuries. It is a delightful book for people of almost any age. Some (like me) - who have done school math (and even made good grades) without ever having the slightest idea of what math is really all about - may find it interesting and exciting. Others who have always feared and hated math may find there is no reason to fear and hate it. I can't think of any book on math that would be more fun to read to and work on with children - even quite young children - because, though it was written for high school or even college students, I would guess that quite young children would like it if they could work on it with someone who would help them with the long words.

Much like a conventional text this book is laid out in chapters with questions and problems. But unlike most texts it begins by looking at the parts of billiard balls on a table, and the ways in which we might think about these balls rolling

on that table. Jacob's takes us on to many other fascinating and unfamiliar topics. The mathematical illustrations are clear and well chosen, and the book is sprinkled with pertinent and funny cartoons from "Peanut" B.C. and other sources. I can't recommend it too highly.

THE LADY OR THE TIGER AND OTHER LOGIC PUZZLES

Raymond Smullyan
(NY: Knopf)
This first appeared in GWS 35.

In this preface the author observes:

... So many people I have met claim to hate math, and yet are enormously intrigued by any logic or math problem I give them, provided I present it in the form of a puzzle. I would not be at all surprised if good puzzle books prove to be one of the best cures for so called 'maths anxiety.' ... In general, my own puzzle books tend to be different from others in that I am primarily concerned with puzzles that bear a deep and significant relation to important results in logic and mathematics....

The title of the book, *The Lady or The Tiger,* comes from the second chapter, where there are sets of variations on the old story about the prisoner who must choose between two rooms, one that contains a lady (whom he can marry) and the other that contains a tiger (that will eat him). In the first of these puzzles, the king explains to the prisoner that the two rooms contain one lady each, or one tiger each, or a lady in one and tiger in the other. On the door of the first room is a sign: "In This Room There Is A Lady, And In The Other Room There Is A Tiger": on the second door, a sign says: 'In One Of These Rooms There Is A Lady, And In One Of These Rooms There Is A Tiger." The king tells the prisoner that one of these signs is true and the other false. Assuming the prisoner does not want to be eaten, which room does he choose? There are twelve of these lady-tiger puzzles, each one a little more complicated and difficult than the one before.

The next set of puzzles concerns insane asylums. In these puzzles there are only doctors and patients, all truthful, but some of each totally sane and others totally insane. The sane ones are 100% accurate in their beliefs, the insane 100% inaccurate. A visiting inspector has been sent to determine whether there are any insane doctors or sane patients in each asylum. In the first puzzle, Inspector Craig speaks to two people, Jones and Smith. Jones tells him that Smith is a doctor. Later Smith tells him that Jones is a patient. What does this tell Craig about these two men?

In the next set of puzzles things get a bit more complicated because the action takes place in Transylvania where the population is made up of vampires, who always lie, and humans, who always tell the truth. But as in the hospital half of the humans and half of the vampires are sane and completely accurate in their beliefs, while the other two halves are insane and completely inaccurate. There are twelve of these puzzles, again, each a bit more complicated and difficult than the one before. In all of these sections, you will find the first puzzles easy enough. The last ones are far from easy. None of them require any knowledge of math; they could be solved by someone who had never heard of math. But as you solve these puzzles you will be learning or figuring out for yourself, some ideas about mathematics that are a lot closer to the true work of modem mathematicians than any math you will learn in school.

At the end of each chapter are the solutions to the puzzles, but you will be losing all of the fun of the book if you spend just a little time on each puzzle and then read the solution. This is a book to read slowly, as you might drink a rare and fine wine, a little sip at a time, savoring each sip. There's no rush! No one is going to give you a test, or a score. Don't read the solution to a puzzle until you think you have solved it, or until you have spent a long time working on it and feel so baffled that you can't stand it. So far, I write this, I have done only a few of the lady-tiger and insane asylum puzzles. I don't know if I ever will do all the puzzles in the book. But over the years I expect to have a lot of fun trying. And if I make it to the end I will know quite a lot about Godel's Incompleteness Theorem - one of the most important ideas and discoveries of modern mathematics - that up till now had never at all made any sense to me.

By the way, there's no reason why a group of people, say a family, couldn't work on these puzzles together: it might even be a lot more fun that way, sharing and testing ideas much like the times when my sister and I were young and used to sit next to our grandmother on late Sunday afternoon to help her do the big Sunday crossword puzzle. You might even try making up some puzzles of your own.

MATHPLOTS

Kate Kerman
(Boston: Holt Associates)
This first appeared in GWS 38.

Mathplots 2: Building Block for Mathematics: being at home with maths is another of Kate Kerman’s booklets, written out of her experience with her own and other homeschooled children. This one is so full of interesting and practical ideas and just plain common sense (nothing rarer!) that it is hard to choose what is best to quote. She begins:

…I am hoping by putting out this pamphlet and others a the *MATH PLOTS* series that we can help parents confront and reduce their fear of mathematics or of teaching read learning mathematics with their children, whether their children ire learning at home or in a school...

I think that people are natural learners - that children come into the world with a zest and drive for figuring out how things work and how they fit into the big picture... I don't think that people learn any given subject in an outline, one step following another fashion. I think learning comes in spurts and stops in times of reflection and consolidation... Children and adults only learn in a dramatic fashion when they want to, when they know they have a reason (pleasure often being a very strong reason) to find out about something...

... I am not offering an ordinary progression through the subject of mathematics [JH: there is no such orderly progression]. I hope to offer some insights into how much mathematics a typical pre-school child engaged in, and to give you as a parent-teacher a framework to use when you are observing your child learn, and when you are learning about mathematics yourself.

I am coming to see mathematics in terms of the information it can store up for you...

Most of the major mathematical area can be and are part of even very small children’s lives: geometry, set theory, measure and money, logic, probability and statistics perhaps even the beginning understandings of algebra, trigonometry, topology, and calculus. I am hoping this series of pamphlets will give parents-teachers some understanding of these subject area - enough to reduce their hesitation about mathematics and to foster in their children an ability to cope with if not enjoy the mathematical aspects of their lives...

...Little kids... love to find out about the world. It is very important to them to figure out how things work, how they fit into the scheme of things. They are experimenters, and will patiently try the same experiments tens hundreds, or thousands of times to make sure that results are consistent. Babies don't learn at someone else’s bidding... Little children ask a lot of questions, and learn a lot from your answers, but they aren't generally looking for much information at a time. They signal to you quickly if you are telling them more than they want to know. Pay attention to these signals if you can...

From this point Kate Kerman goes on to discuss the major mathematical areas listed above and the many ingenious ways that these areas can be made more enticing and understandable for children and for parents too. I suspect this book will be

at least as helpful to parents as to their children.

ELEMENTARY ALGEBRA

Harold Jacobs
(N Y: W. H. Freeman)
This first appeared in GWS 44.

Harold Jacobs is also the author of *Mathematics A Human Endeavor*; I wrote about it in GWS# 7 and again in # 31 when we added it to our catalog:...

[*Mathematics A Human Endeavor*] is about the best book on mathematics, for beginners that I have ever seen. What Jacobs tries to do, and does very well, is give the beginner, or even the math- hater, an idea of what mathematical thinking is about, why human beings have found it interesting, and how (to some extent) it has grown over the centuries...

This newer book *Elementary Algebra* is strictly written mostly for people studying algebra in school, but it has many of the qualities of thought writing, and design that made *Mathematics A Human Endeavor* so interesting and reader-friendly. As before, each chapter begins with a very funny cartoon on a mathematical theme. Jacobs knows that a student who has just finished laughing is better able to meet and think about new material than someone who is burdened with feelings of fear and dread. More importantly, Jacobs writes well, his explanations are clear, and his illustrations are to the point. The book itself is beautifully laid out and printed, with enough white space on the pages to keep the reader from being overwhelmed.

What is most outstanding about this book, though, is the way Jacobs introduces the basic ideas of algebra, ideas that often cause students to feel confusion, bafflement and fear. My guess (since I myself had no great trouble with algebra) is that there may be two reasons for those negative feelings. First, students who have spent years learning that letters and numbers stand for very different things - letters for sounds and numbers for quantities - now suddenly find numbers and letters mixed together and standing for the same kinds of things. Second, students read and hear a lot of talk about “unknowns." The word “unknown” connotes mystery, danger, and terror.

Jacobs help the student avoid such negative feelings by beginning his book with a trick - a trick familiar to many children and one that I and my friends played on each other when we were little (see “Bootleg Math." GWS 16). Some readers may never have encountered this trick, but they will soon see that it is a very good one, and they will wonder how it could

possibly work. In the next chapter Jacobs shows how the trick works. It is not hard to see, even for the person who has always felt himself blocked by math, but by the time he sees how the trick works, the reader will have grasped the most fundamental and difficult ideas of algebra: letters may stand for numbers, and we can think about and work with those letters without necessarily knowing exactly what numbers they stand for. Once a person has grasped these ideas, algebra is not only relatively easy, but also often very interesting.

The study of elementary algebra involves many other related ideas that can be presented to students in different orders and ways. By keeping his chapters short with one new idea per chapter, Jacobs allows the reader to browse, looking for things that interest him entering into the subject at many different places instead of feeling he must plow grimly along in a straight line, 'understanding' everything perfectly before he can look at anything new.

In every chapter there are examples and exercises. These are there only to help the reader get a better grasp of the ideas presented. When calculation is called for, Jacobs urges using a calculator. Answers to about half the problems are in the back of the book. Try not to feel that the answers are a sort of teacher's secret or that looking at them is a kind of cheating; the answers are there not to judge you but to help you. If looking it them even before you do a problem maker you feel better, go ahead and look.

Used in this way and in this spirit, this book should be very interesting and helpful to readers of many ages. There is no reason at all to deny children access to it and in idea until thy have 'finished" the school arithmetic curriculum. Experience has shown that a child even as young as six can understand the basic idea of algebra, and through understanding the idea of algebra, he is often helped to see the operations of arithmetic as much more meaningful.

SURVIVAL MATHEMATICS

Edward Williams
(N Y: Barron)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

I have never seen 1 math boot anything like this one; I don't know why someone didn't write it a long time ago. Children trying to learn arithmetic are told all the time that they have to learn arithmetic so that they will be able to do this or that thing in real life. But children never see, at least in school, anything of these adult tasks that they supposedly will one day be doing. This book has many photo reproductions of the real-life things that arithmetic is used for in the adult world: restaurant checks, time cards, and bank deposit slip; pager from catalogs; advertisements; tax tables for figuring

withholding: and so on. Along with these real-life forms or catalogs or tax tables, there are examples of the arithmetic people have to do to fill out the forms or order the clothes or compute the tax, and there are explanations of how to do the necessary arithmetic. Thug the usually abstract ad meaningless study of arithmetic is, to some extent, connected with the adult world - a world that is so interesting to children. The explanations of how to do the arithmetic are clear enough to be useful to many adults.

Chapter 8
ECONOMICS and WORK

GOOD WORK

E. F. Schumacher (N Y: Harper and Row)
This first appeared in GWS 11.

Good Work is the latest and last book of E. F. Schumacher, who died in 1977. It is largely made up of lectures he gave while on a tour of the U.S. shortly before his death. Neither children nor education is the primary subject of Schumacher's *Good Work* or *Small is Beautiful* but each book puts schooling into the context of the kind of world many of us would like to see; in so doing the books help us to rebut the arguments (or our own fears) that unschooling is unrealistic, has no connection with the world as it is, and cannot help children learn to live and work in that world. In addition, *Good Work* is a wonderful book for people of any age who have not yet found work that seems really worth doing, are not sure there even is such a thing, and don't know how to look for it.

It is a book full of rich quotes; there two may have special meaning for GWS readers:

'Recently I m seated in a restaurant next to a family of three, a father and mother and a very bright little boy, I would think between eight and ten years of age. They studied the menu and the boy said, 'Oh, I want liver and bacon.' The waitress was there; the father studied the menu, the mother studied the menu, and then the father ordered three steaks. The waitress said 'Two steaks, one liver and bacon.' and went off. The boy looked at his mother and said, 'Mummy, she thinks I'm real!'

"…I then also found that in all human traditions there has been a very great antagonism against all this counting business. I don't know how many of you still know your Bible, but you can find it in two places, in Chronicler and Kings. The first chap who arranged the census was King David, and when he arranged the census the Lord was utterly furious. He gave

him a choice of three penance punishments. And David said, Yes, yes. I know I have sinned.... He immediately understood that there was something wrong in having a census, which treats people as if they were units, whereas they are not. Each is a universe."

MUDDLING TOWARD FRUGALITY

Warren Johnson
(Boston: Shambhala)
This first appeared in GWS 18.

This is a very hopeful book about the difficult times we are living through; times that make so many people feel hopeless. What we as humans and as Americans are going to have to learn - or rather, re-learn - is to live frugally within our natural means. Johnson says that this is a good thing in itself, that living more frugally will make our lives not worse but better. He then points out that we are in fact already making this change to a more frugal way of living. And he shows very convincingly that the rather fumbling, bumbling, haphazard way we are making the change is not only the best way to do it but may be the only way we can do it - that if we tried to make this change happen through some giant sudden, top down plan it would create more problems than we solved.

In support of his idea, it's worth quoting an astonishing fact from an encouraging and important article by Amory Lovins in the Nov. '80 issue of New Age. Lovins points out that in the years '72 through '78, of the new energy that became available to the countries of the European Economic Community, only 5% come from such well-publicized sources as nuclear plants, North Sea oil, etc.; 95% of the New energy came from people using energy more efficiently. The EEC energy bureaucrats to whom he pointed this out could hardly believe it, even though his figures came out of their own books; the bureaucrats had been working so hard to get that additional 5% of energy supply that they did not even notice that people in their own countries, acting quietly, individually, in small group, or as organizations, were nineteen times better at 'finding" energy.

In the U.S. For the same period (1972 through 1978), 72% of new energy came from conservation; the figure is surely much higher now because we are beginning to build more energy-efficient houses, burn more wood, drive smaller cars, etc.

One idea, that even by itself would make Johnson's book well worth having, is his idea of ecological history, of seeing the history of any given country or region in terms of the raw materials and energy sources available to it. In some early

chapters Johnson talks about ecological history, and he includes many fascinating facts and connections between facts that I never knew, and would never have guessed, and would certainly never have found in any conventional history books.

There are a few ideas I don't altogether agree with. Johnson is 100 % right in saying that as a country, we should be paying replacement cost for our oil - that is, for every barrel we use we should pay what it would cost to add an additional barrel to our capacity. If we did this, it would greatly speed our move toward frugality. But if, as Johnson suggests, we do this through 'the market" alone, it will work the greatest hardship on the poorest people. Not only is this unjust and unfair, it's also politically unwise because these poorest people, in desperate self-defense, will find (indeed, in such cases a returnable bottle bills, already have found) ways to resist and block the changes that sooner or later we will have to make.

But this is a very minor criticism of a very good book. Most books that help us see more clearly where we are, make us feel worse about our situation. This book makes us feel better.

SHADOW WORK

Ivan Illich
(N Y: M. Boyars)
This first appeared in GWS 22.

This is Ivan Illich's latest book. He begins with the idea of what he fills “externalities" - what other economists sometimes call “externalized costs." When an auto company makes a car, the company has to pay for the internal costs- the iron, copper, rubber, etc. - that go into the car, and the tools and labor it takes to make the car. But these are not the only costs of having cars around. Another cost is smog that can spoil our pleasure and even damage our health and property. Imagine a society where the people who make cars would somehow pay for the damage that the cars do to the community. That would mean, in turn, that the people who owned cars would have to pay their fair share of this damage cost. Some may argue about whether this would be a good thing or not. The fact is that nowhere in the world does it happen. Neither the people who make cars nor the people who buy and use them have to pay for the many kinds of damage that cars do to the community - noise; destruction of land to make roads, parking lots, etc.; pollution of air and soil. The costs of these damages have been ‘externalized’ and a situation has been created whereby not the carmakers but other people have to pay for the damages, even if they don't own or never use a car.

Since nobody ever actually writes out a check for these “externalized" costs, economists don't know how to count them

and, therefore, act as if the costs did not exist. If we could put an accurate monetary value a these externalities, these unwanted side-effects of our industrial system, and if, as we should, we subtracted their monetary value figure from our Gross National Product, we might well find that the remaining Net National product - the sum of true goods and benefits - has been declining for many years. Certainly this is the reality that more and more people experience. Never mind what official statistics say; in people's own lives there are fewer things they want than there used to be and more things they don't want. In his introduction Illich sums up what he has for some years now been saying about economic development:

Up to now economic development has always meant that people, instead of doing something, are enabled to buy it... Economic development has also meant that after a time people must buy the commodity, because the conditions under which they could get along without it had disappeared... And the environment could no longer be utilized by those who were unable to buy the good or service.

The example Illich cites is streets; people used streets for many purposes until the streets were taken away from them and given to cars. Housing is another good example. Once a government starts to build houses for people, who until then had been able to build their own, the government soon starts telling people (through elaborate building codes, etc.) that they may not build their own houses, even though there is not the remotest possibility of the government being able to build a house for everyone. Before long, few people even know any more how to build their own houses.

In other words, growth in the industrial or commodity sector, on top of whatever else it may do to us or for us, makes us more helpless, more dependent on the industrial economy itself. In a recent article Illich said that the history of the last five hundred years could very well be seen as a war against the subsistence economy. A subsistence economy is one in which most people know how, perhaps with the help of some friends and neighbors, to take care of themselves, and they learned this, not by being taught it in special places but by growing up among and living with people who were taking care of themselves.

Today this right to be more self-reliant or to refuse institutionalized, compulsory help has become a luxury. Illich wisely and ironically remarks:

Defense against the damager inflicted by development rather than giving access to some new “satisfaction," has become the most sought-after privilege. You have arrived if you can commute outside the rush hour: have probably attended an elite school if you can give birth at home; are privy to rare and special knowledge if you can bypass the physician when you are ill; are rich and lucky if you can breathe fresh air; are not really poor if you can build your own shack.

In airports all over the U.S. I see advertisements for expensive and exclusive country housing estates saying things like – “Give your children the benefit of an unspoiled natural environment.... " As Illich points out fresh air, pure wirer, quiet, un-crowded space, the chance to see things not made by people - things that not so long ago everyone had, even the people who didn't have anything else - are now more and more the luxuries of a few. It won't be long before we see ads selling some expensive resort or club by saying that there you can look at blue skies.

Elsewhere Illich has written about "the right to useful unemployment" i.e. the right to do work that is useful, to yourself or others, but that does not bring in any money. Most people in developed countries define work as something that brings in money, whether it involves actually doing anything or not. Not long ago I heard one taxi-driver at a cab rank say to another, “What I'd really like to get is a nice easy job like one of those bank guards -just stand around all day." More recently, walking by a building project I heard a construction worker say to a uniformed guard, 'How do you get a good job like that, anyway - don't have to do anything." By contrast, as Illich points out

For most toiling unemployed in Mexico, *desempleado* still means the unoccupied loafer on a well-paid job, not the unemployed whom the economist means by the term.

To make clear this vital distinction between pre- industrial work and work as it is now known, Illich introducer (on page 24) the word “vernacular." the word that lies at the heart of this book: I propose... the ideas of 'vernacular work,' unpaid livelihood." Growing some of your own food is vernacular work; so is making or repairing your own clothes or dwelling; so is walking to someplace you want to go, or making your own entertainment - playing games that don't require elaborate equipment, or talking with friend, or making music.

Shadow work, on the other hand, is quite different. More and more people (more often women than men) have to do more and more shadow work. Like vernacular work, it brings in no money. But unlike vernacular work, shadow work doesn't reduce your need for money by enabling you to make what otherwise you would have to buy. You don't enjoy doing it. But still, you can’t get out of doing it - not and still stay in the industrial economy, either as worker or consumer. Driving to the job is one kind of shadow work; or taking the car (or TV, etc.) to be repaired; or driving children to a distant school or activity; or driving to the shopping center. When I tell people that I haven't owned a car for years many say enviously, 'Oh, I wish I didn't have to own one." For such people, driving is shadow work. Shadow work can be seen, then, as a kind of tax on our time and energy that we must pay just in order to avoid being dropped out of the industrial economy. And one measure of the decline in the true standard of living of many people is the increasing amounts of time they have to

spend doing shadow work. The enormously important distinction between wage labor, vernacular work, and shadow work has until now not been made.

In the chapter "Vernacular Values," Illich tells us about Nebrija, a Spaniard living at the same time as Columbus, who first tried to plan, standardize, and freeze a language by writing a dictionary and grammar that from then on would tell everyone how to speak and write. At first Queen Isabella resisted his project; the languages of her subjects belonged to them as much as their homes. The story of the arguments Nebrija used to change the queen's mind is fascinating. The authorities wanted a standardized language but not in order to make it easier to teach the people to read. The people were already reading tens of thousands of books printed in their own local, vernacular dialects - languages they learned just by living among the people who spoke them. What bothered the authorities, who did not speak all these dialects, was that they could not know and control what people were reading. The authorities wanted a single official language so that they could have a single official culture. (In much the same spirit, we hear plenty of people today saying that Standard English should be the official language of American culture.)

Along the way in his writing Illich lays to rest, I hope once and for all, the myth that the word 'educate" came from n Latin word meaning “to lead forth." It did no such thing: it meant something quite different.

It's hard to write a short review of *Shadow Work* for though it has only 107 pages of text it has more new (and surprising) information and important ideas than I ordinarily find in half a dozen books, even good ones. There is much more I could say, but I've said enough. At least, I hope I've said enough to make you want to know this very important book.

FOOD FIRST

Frances Lappe and Joseph Collins
(N. Y. Ballantine)
This first appeared in GWS 46.

In this book the authors very convincingly show us a number of surprising facts:

1. Enough food is being produced right now to provide an adequate diet for every single person in the world.
2. In almost all countries there is enough arable land to feed everyone who lives there.
3. In terms of food produced per input of land, capital, water, and energy, many so-called “primitive" methods of farming are far more productive than our industrial agriculture: in fact, our industrial agriculture is one of the most inefficient as well as destructive systems of agriculture ever invented.

4. The reason so many people in so many parts of the world can't feed themselves is that they are denied access to the land and materials they need to grow or raise their own food.
5. Instead, the land, that poor peasants have often been driven from by force, is used by richer farmers or even multinational food corporations to raise luxury foods for the people in rich countries and for the rich people in poor countries.
6. Most of what foreign exchange these poor countries earn from exports is not used to buy food or seeds or livelihood for their poor people. Instead, what is earned is used to buy luxury foods that the rich can afford to buy.
7. Practically everything that is sent to poor countries in the name of "foreign aid" serves (if it is not actually intended to serve) to speed up the above processes.
8. Even during the worst of the droughts and famines that plagued Central and West African countries during the 1970's, those same Central and West African countries were exporting food to the rich nations.

And so on. It is a too-little known, astonishing, and horrifying story that has been carefully and thoroughly documented.

What to do?

One thing each of us can do is to lower the demand that we personally make on the world supplies of food by eating lower down the food chain (as the saying goes). Frances Lappe, in her earlier book, *Diet for a Small Planet,* shows us how we may do this. Since it takes over ten pounds of grain or vegetables to produce one pound of beef, but only three pounds of grain to produce one pound of chicken or rabbit we make more efficient use of crop and land by eating chicken or rabbit instead of beef. We make best use of the land and crops by eating grains directly from the field, instead of after they are converted into meat. We can choose to eat more vegetables and grains than meat, or to eat no meat at all, thus reducing the demand for meat. Where possible we can grow our own food needs, thus putting less demand on crops imported from poor countries.

OF course, this does not apply in places where, because of land and climate conditions, we cannot raise crop to eat: in those places, we can raise animals to eat the plants we can't eat and thus turn those inedible plants into animals that we can eat. It makes ecological sense for Eskimos to eat caribou, or for Icelanders or Scottish highlanders or any other mountain dwellers to raise sheep for food, but it makes no sense whatever to use rich farmland, as we do, to raise corn to feed to beef cattle and pigs.

The authors say very little about these steps that each of us can take toward ending world hunger. This omission is for me

the only disappointing part of the otherwise essential book. *Food First* concentrates almost exclusively on political remedies i.e., supporting programs of land reform, etc. In seventeen pages of references to organizations, publications, and books, there is not one mention of any of the many people learning how to use land more conservingly and efficiently - no mention of New Alchemists, Homesteaders News, Rodale Publications, Farralones Institute, etc. One might say that the book suffers a little from the Write Your Congressman syndrome. Not that writing your congressman isn't useful; I do it often. But it seems to me even more important that we each take part as best we can in the rapidly growing and very important movement to find out how to live in greater harmony with the environment, that we practice what we learn, and that we teach others.

Why is this book important to homeschoolers? The schools talk about essential knowledge. Well, even from the narrow point of view of getting a job and making a career, no knowledge could be more essential or useful than the skills of managing our resources and raising our Food. Homeschooling parents should argue very strongly, as some already have, that the presence of such knowledge in their own “curriculum," and the absence of it in the schools, is a very strong reason why their home curriculum is better. We can also argue very forcefully that the schools, in preparing children only for industrial work and dependence on industrial products rather than preparing them to be self-reliant are failing to provide children with the skills necessary for coping with a world food crisis that already exists and is likely to become serious very soon. People of any age who learn how to live more efficiently and conservingly will gain knowledge that is and will be very valuable to them personally, to their community, to their country, and to the world.

CITIES AND THE WEALTH OF NATIONS

Jane Jacobs
(N Y: Random)
This first appeared in GWS 42 and 41.

I have read many books on economics. Of those I have read, this is the best on economics in general and economic growth in particular. I.ike Jane Jacobs' other books -*The Economy of Cities* and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* - this one is lively, observant, witty, and, above all, realistic: it is a book to open the eyes and stir up the mind. It is concrete and specific and full of real life examples. If I were teaching an economics course, *The Economy of Cities* and *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* -would be the first books I would have my students read. As things stand, it will probably be a rare economics course that even mentions Jane Jacobs' books. Precisely because the books are so concrete and specific, so full of real-life examples, they will be ignored. Most books on economics show us graphs, curves, tables, equations: Jane Jacobs show us what economics is really all about - people inventing, making, buying, and

selling things.

I must make clear that *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* is not about the very important but different question of whether we should have economic growth. Jane Jacobs fervently believes that we should, and in a world where billions live in the most wretched poverty, it is hard not to agree. Nor does this book discuss what kinds of economic growth are good and what kinds are not instead. It is a book about what makes economies lively, inventive, and productive. Since most people in every country in the world want their economies to be lively, inventive, and productive, and, since most domestic and international political argument is about how to make them that way, this is clearly a subject well worth writing about. In fact, a year or so from now we might consider any political candidate or office-holder to be politically illiterate if he has not read and does not understand this book.

On a subject of such universal interest, a subject that, so many thousands of people are continually talking and writing about, it hardly seems possible that anyone could invent a truly and wholly original idea, but Jane Jacobs has done just that. She says it is not nations but cities - at least cities of a certain kind - and the regions that surround them, that create most economic activity, invention, and growth, and she say we should be trying to understand and, a, far as we can, create, those conditions that are likely to produce and maintain such cities. She then points out that most national governments, whether capitalist socialist, communist, or whatever, are doing the exact opposite. As a result, most of the world's cities, however fast they may be growing in size, are becoming unhealthy and unproductive. From these unhealthy, unproductive cities come many of the economic problems that are plaguing every country in the world.

I hope and believe that this book, as well as *The Economy of Cities* -may help people to shake off the romantic and wholly mistaken notions that cities are nothing but sinister mistakes living as parasites off the virtuous and healthy countryside, and that everyone would live happily ever after if cities just disappeared. As Jane Jacobs clearly shows, cities are not sinister mistakes living as parasites and everyone will not live happily if cities disappear. Although most of our cities are not healthy and are growing less so all the time, the remedy is not to think about how completely to do away with cities (an act that is, in any Ease, impossible), but to drink about how to restore cities to health. On this vital subject no one has more interesting things to say than Jane Jacobs.

What has all this to do with homeschooling? Directly, and even indirectly, nothing at all. But I think many GWS readers will enjoy and even love this book; (and Jacobs' earlier books) for the reasons that I do: it helps me see things I never saw before and it helps me make sense out of what had once seemed a mystery. On the whole, I don't know what to do with this new knowledge and understanding, except maybe to urge other people, as I am now, to read these books. I feel much

stronger and happier for having gained new insights.

[In a later review John adds]: ...Very recently news has come from China showing that local import replacing had been taking place on a wide scale there. This is exactly the kind of development Jane Jacobs is talking about, and it is good news for the Chinese people and perhaps for all of us. If the present rapid growth of the Chinese economy goes on for a long time, it will put great pressure on the new Russian leaders to make their own economy, and therefore, to some extent, their whole society, less rigid. Such changes in Russia could have many helpful consequences, including improving the chances for peace.

IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE

Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman
(N Y: Warner)
This first appeared in GWS 42.

This is a book about the management of business corporations. Like *Theory Z, In Search of Excellence* may be directly useful to homeschooling families in particular and homeschoolers in general.

Recently there has been great interest in Japanese methods of corporate management - methods that are quite different and often (as we learned to our dismay) much more successful than our own. As a result of that interest many people have begun to ask themselves whether or not some American corporations have invented what might be called a American version of Theory Z - ways of running a large corporation that are on the one hand unorthodox and on the other hand unquestionably successful. This book is the result of the efforts of two men (and the organization they work with) to find an answer to that question. Peters and Waterman answer Yes, there is an American style of corporate management that has much in common with what we have come to think of as Japanese methods, and Yes, it has been, and is, outstandingly successful in corporations as well known as IBM, Hewlett Packard. Proctor and Gamble, and others. Put very simply: if you treat people as human beings rather than as replaceable cogs in a big machine, you get better results.

What the book does for homeschoolers is to give them a powerful answer to the schools so familiar argument that if children are not subjected, for all the years of their growing up, to the harsh pressure exerted by most schools, the children will be unready for the “real world" where they are going to have to live and work as adults. A real world, that is (in the mythology of schools) for the most part heartless, ruthless and cruel. *In Search of Excellence* shows clearly that the ideas about heartless, ruthless, cruel “real world” are wrong, and among these wrong ideas are virtually all of the

schools' ideas about how to deal with students.

For example, almost all schools assume that the way to get the best work from students is to raise standards so high that only a small minority of students can feel that they have done really well. Teachers and schools that do otherwise are contemptuously accused of the terrible crime of "grade inflation." But the successful corporations studied in this book know better. They know that to be judged a failure, by others and oneself, does not spur people on to do better work but demoralizes people and make them work less well. Success breeds more success, failure breeds more failure. As a result, when these successful corporations have to set standards of job performance, thy try to set standards at a level such that most of their employees can feel satisfaction and pride in having done good work.

In short, the book is a rich mine of arguments against most of the conventional practices of schools, and by contrast argues in favor of the ways many homeschooling parents relate to their own children. It also shows us what some of us might not have suspected – that great corporations do not have to heartless, that even in business, nice guys are as likely to finish first as to finish last, and that running a large corporation can be not only a highly creative activity but also one that, at least to some degree, serves the higher interests of humanity. Along with all of this, it is very clearly written and fascinating book. It deserves to be the best seller it has been.

Chapter 9
FOR A CHANGING WORLD

THE CHANGING NATURE OF MAN

J.H. van den Berg (N Y: W. W Norton)

Preface to the 1974 edition by John Holt.

It is a joy to know that J.H. van den Berg's original, profound, and very important book is back in print. Many readers are sure to find much enlightenment and truth in it. I am pleased and honored to be asked to write a preface – not that van den Berg's book needs a preface - and I hope that those who know of my work but do not know of van den Berg may be tempted to read *The Changing Nature of Man.* No other book I have read has thrown new light into so many parts of my experience or has stimulated and advanced my thinking on so many questions.

Sometimes a great book can appear ahead of its time, even come and go unknown, and thus escape the attention it deserves. Such was almost the case with *The Changing Nature of Man*. When it first appeared in English in about 1960, our country (and the worldwide scientific, technological, growth and- progress oriented and obsessed society that we are a part of) was more confident, not to say arrogant than it is now. We were in no mood to hear a serious discussion of why thing had gone wrong; we were sure that everything was going right, and we believed that whatever few small imperfections or problems might be led in our country and world could be quickly put right by enough experts with enough money.

I first saw van den Berg's book when it was in paperback, out of print, and on the bargain tables (the copy I found had been marked down from $1.95 to $1.35). I had never heard of either book or author, but something about the title caught my eye. I began to read. On the very first page, I saw:

The whole science of psychology is based on the assumption that man does not change... This book stems from the idea that man does change... This book will try to explain psychology on the basis of the assumption that man changes.

Here was more than enough to make me curious. Then, a page or two later in Chapter 1, The Need For a Theory of Changes," I read: Psychologists of the previous century would be astonished if they could see what work their modern colleagues do. In their day.. the psychologist worked for eternal science. He remained remote from daily life. He considered the walls of his study and of his laboratory the Limits of his science. He was able to do so because nobody ever asked him anything. Did people in the nineteenth century know the answers, then? Did thy know how to educate their children, how to treat their wives?... Did people know the tricks of the different phases of life and could they recognize the dangers when one phase changes into the next? Did they know which occupation suited them best? Did no one ever have doubts about being the right man in the right place?

Apparently they did know the answers: for no one asked. At one point people must have begun to ask. It is not clear why or from whom. Certainly they did not learn to ask from the psychologist the questions were there before he even thought of answering them. What then had happened? What knowledge had been lost? and how?

Now I was hooked, by van den Berg's style - witty, personal, and ironical - as well as his thought. His book is not a lecture but a conversation - a conversation with a man who it would be the greatest pleasure to know. His writing is simple, direct clear, and often poetic and moving. Standing by the counter in the bookstore, I read on. An hour or more

went by unnoticed. Then I thought, this is foolish: I'm going to buy it! (By this time I would have paid ten times the price marked.) I bought the book and took it home. It was hard to stop reading even long enough to do that.

What is the book about? Many things. First it is a long attempt by van den Berg to find an answer to his own questions: What knowledge was lost? And how? But saying this gives no hint about the extraordinary range and variety of the subjects he considers in trying to answer the questions. Van den Berg's comments, however brief, are profound and surprising and raise far-reaching and troubling questions. Let me give a partial, alphabetical listing of his topics, none touched on lightly:

Adults and Children; Alienation: Causality; Childhood; Choice; Consciousness: Death; Determinism: Disease; Education; Freedom; Freud; God; Happiness; History; Jesus; Marriage; Maturity, Meaning; Medicine; Memory. Miracles; Neurosis, Objectivity; the Past; Philosophy: Psychoanalysis; Reductionism, Religion; Science; Sex and Sexually; Society, the Sub-conscious: Testing; Vocation; Work

Such a list though, can be misleading. Van den Berg may seem to wander, to circle a question, to come at it from many angles, but there is always order and purpose in his wandering.

The first and largest section of the book “Adults and Children” is about growing up and maturing and why this process is so different and so much more difficult than it used to be. The second section “Neurosis or Sociosis” is about men and women, about sex and sexuality, it sets forth a criticism of the work and theories of Freud (whom he respects) and of much of the conventional wisdom of modern psychoanalytic psychiatric thought. To my layman's ears this criticism is as original and as plausible as any I have ever heard. Van den Berg asks questions that I have not heard before: How could it have happened that psychoanalysts, trying to help the patient uncover and see the truth, should in fact have encouraged the patients to make up and tell lies? How could the doctors have been fooled for so long by their lies? How could the patient be cured as they often were, even if only for a short while - by the telling of these lies? The final two chapters bring van den Berg back to the heart of his first question: what has gone wrong?

I would sum up the answer I hear him give, by saying that our troubles are the result of what could well be called the four great and closely linked philosophical diseases of modern man: causality, objectivity, determinism, and reductionism. These four great inventions - and he makes clear that they are inventions, inventions that did not exit until people thought them up and persuaded others to believe in them - have in many ways spoiled the world for us. Causality, objectivity, determinism, and reductionism have put a great distance between adults and children and between adults und other adults

and have emptied the world of most of its possibilities for meaning, purpose, and joy. In short these philosophical diseases have driven God from the world. People used to live in a present that was full of the past and future. The past surrounded everyone - in people, places, buildings, legends, customs, traditions, attitudes -and it was known and understood. The future also surrounded everyone because, except perhaps in timer of terrible calamity, everything everyone did had a point and a purpose, often many purposes, some short-run, some long-run, but a purpose that was known and understood. The invention of casualty, objectivity, determinism, and reductionism changed all that. If everything has a cause, if everything is determined by something that happened before it, then nothing has or can have any point or purpose or meaning in our present experience. We put the meaning of everything into the past and then, because we have changed our societies and our lives with reckless speed, we destroyed that past. The meaning of our lives has thus been lost altogether.

It is a great loss. I feel it very keenly. As I write, I am in Iceland where the sense of the living past is stronger than in any other country (all Western and modern) I have been in. But the future is also here in Iceland. The people of Iceland have the slow and arduous task, of building and maintaining a tiny country in a political world that is, at best, indifferent, and in a natural world that is new, difficult, and fragile. Here in Iceland there is more than enough work for everyone, including the young, and each knows why it must be done. Yet the young people of the U.S. and other large countries angrily tell us that we must learn to live in the immediate present, the ever disappearing “now." The irony is bitter. There never was a culture so isolated, so lost in the “now," as our U.S.

There is one point in van den Berg's thinking that seems to me inconsistent. If I understand him, then I disagree. To me he seems altogether correct in what he says about the distance we have created between adults and children and the ways we have done it. But I do not agree at all that this distance needs to be as great as it is, or that there is nothing we can do to reduce it, or that to try to reduce it would be a mistake. On page 85 he says that children should not hear, and presumably much less see, how babies are born; to know this would do them harm since it would bring them too close to the maturity we have pushed them away from. But many children, even in the Western world, even in the United States, know and see how babies are born. Many and perhaps most people in Denmark now believe that these matters should not be hidden from children. (Perhaps people did not believe this way when van den Berg wrote his book.) Today, the most explicit book about childbirth are written and widely circulated. I have not heard of any evidence that the children who know these things are hurt by them.

Indeed, when van den Berg wrote, he may have held ideas about the non-sexuality of young children; ideas that we now have many reasons to believe are untrue. The child may be closer than we think to the awareness, the maturity, that in

other respects we have hidden from him. What ignorance he has in these matters is not bliss; I know from my own experience of growing up. To have known more about such matters would have made me less anxious, not more. In the same way, our panicky flight from death, our hiding of it from ourselves and above all our children, has not made us more secure and serene or more loving and respectful of life. Quite the reverse. Van den Berg seems to know this. When he speaks of the distance between adult and child, it is always with regret. On page 95 he writes:

A group of exiles? The thought that we are good for the children is more agreeable; so good are we that we lend them the attributes of maturity to defend themselves. Look, there they go (crossing the street); the businessman, whose time is money, the large truck, whose delay can be expressed in hard cash - everybody stops for the children. Are we not good to them? Doubtless we are, but it is the least we can do; we are obligated to be good to them because of the great amount of irreparable evil we have done. Our goodness pays for a great injustice.

But we are not as good to children as we would like to believe; figures about battered children show that. In any use, I am less willing than van den Berg to believe that the injustice and evil we have done are irreparable, much less necessary. Since the private space we have made for children so often turns out to be painful if not destructive, let us give children the choice of leaving that space, of risking a more rapid approach to maturity. I think we and the children will find the leaving and the risking less dangerous than we had feared.

As van den Berg points out, the changes we have made in our lives have not really created a world of mature adults and immature children. Quite the contrary. Our changes have made a world where we all are permanently immature. We are never at home, never quite sure what is going on, never masters of even our private worlds. On pages 101 and 104 he writes:

One who is a minor is called immature. Immaturity penetrates all life's phases. With a disturbing naturalness, experts explain that education belongs to every phase of life, from the cradle to the grave. “The process of education must be regarded as continuous throughout Life." Without hesitation one speaks of “adult education," forgetting that these words contain a contradiction. There is no getting away from it the - in itself correct, in any case, necessary - desideratum of “adult education" makes children of us all. And when the adult becomes infantile, the most natural acts and attitudes must be learned... Soon there will be no act that is not learned; even the sucking of a baby will become a difficult artificial manipulation.

But such experts who contradict themselves - first saying that education belongs to every phase of life, then drawing a

line between child education and "adult education" - are themselves children, as ignorant, helpless, and dependent as any child without the possibility of choosing, determining, acting. The distance that van den Berg said should be kept between adult and child is gone. Even these experts cannot keep the distance between themselves and the child. There is no question of experts maintaining authority; they do not have any. Van den Berg anticipates what Ivan Illich and others (including myself) were to begin to say some ten years later: the institutionalized society that has taken away from almost all of us the management and control of our lives is clearly breaking down. How may we deal with this breaking down? For all concerned about the situation, this book seems to me indispensable.

But *The Changing Nature of Man* is not only for those who are concerned. Everyone should find much pleasure and enlightenment in this book and see the world more clearly because of it. I envy you the surprise and delight of reading it for the first time.

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

Stanley Milgram
(N Y: Harper and Row)
This first appeared in GWS 13.

This is the story of one of the most important and terrifying psychological experiments of our time. The experimenter, Dr. Milgram, wanted to find out up to what point will people obey the orders of experts and authorities, and at what point will people say, "No, that's enough, I won't do that".

Dr. Milgram found, first in the US and later in other countries, that in the course of “scientific experiment" almost every person taking part was willing to give what he thought were severe electric shocks to another person, who he believed to be wholly innocent of any wrong and who he saw a simply another volunteer taking part in the experiment. Worse than that large numbers of volunteers showed that they were willing to increase the pain they were giving to their fellow ' volunteer,' even up to the point of causing his death! It seems hardly believable, but there is not the slightest doubt that this is what these people (mistakenly) thought they were doing.

Milgram’s book certainly disposes of the argument that all we need to make a better country is more obedience to authority. In the front end papers of one of my earlier books I wrote obedience is the great multiplier of evil. Most people will do under orders crimes they would never think of doing on their own, and many people will order other people to do what they would never do themselves. As someone else put it during the Vietnam War “Those who kill, do not plan;

those who plan, do not kill."

I am not recommending this book to unschoolers simply to make them shudder with horror (though it will do that), or to give them one more reason for worrying about our times. It seems to me that Dr. Milgram's experiment is a powerful argument (perhaps to be used someday even in court) against the kind of unquestioning obedience that the schools try (not always successfully) to train into children and also against the kind of "socializing" that goes on in those schools.

In short, we need higher and better definitions of the authority and obedience. This book may help more of us to look for them.

THE MAN WHO PLANTED HOPE AND GREW HAPPINESS

Jean Giono (Brooksville, ME: Friends of Nature)
This first appeared in GWS 30.

For some time I have wanted to add this tiny book to our catalog. It is one of the most hopeful and encouraging true stories I have ever heard. I am very grateful to the Friends of Nature for keeping it alive. [Ed: Since John wrote this review, the veracity of the story has been doubted. Even if it is not true, it could be!]

The story is about a poor and unschooled shepherd, Elezard Bouffier, who when past fifty, found himself in a desolate, drought stricken region of France. He saw that the land was dying for want of trees, and "..having no very pressing business of his own" he decided to plant some. In 1913, when Jean Giono first met him, Bouffier had been planting oak trees for three years; he would make a small hole in the ground with a short iron bar he carried and put into each hole an acorn. In those three years he had planted 100,000 acorns 20,000 of those planted had sprouted, and he expected about 10.000 to survive.

Sis years later, when Giono next saw Bouffier, the trees were taller than the men, " a sort of grayish mist that covered the mountain tops like a carpet." The forest that this one man had planted was by now about 7 miles long and as much as two miles wide. Already, water was flowing in brooks that had been dry for as long as people could remember.

Bouffier was 87years old in 1945 when Giono last saw him. Giono writer, "it has taken only the eight years since then for the whole countryside to glow with health and prosperity. On the site of the ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat

farms... The old streams fed by the rains and snow that the forest conserves, are flowing again... The villages have been rebuilt... Counting the former population... more than 10,000 people owe their happiness to Elezard Bouffier."

I hope that before too long a great many people may read this little book. It shows that individual human beings are not helpless and powerless, even now.

WEAPONS AND HOPE

Freeman Dyson (N Y: Harper And Row)
This first appeared in GWS 41.

Since 1946 when I left the submarine service of the US Navy, I have been involved or concerned in one way or another, with the movement to bring nuclear weapons under control and to establish world peace - certainly the most urgent issue of our time. In those years I have read a great many of the books written on this question. Most of the books have been eloquent, passionate, and unconvincing - except to those people who were already convinced before reading. Hardly any of the books have looked realistically at the difficulties in the path of achieving a peaceful world, or have tackled the problems of persuading people who disagree with us. Two exceptions, published right after WWII, were *The Last Trump* by a French philosopher named Denis de Rougemont, and Edmond Taylor's magnificent book, *Richer by Asia* Taylor's book is one of the two or three most important and informative books I have read in my entire lifetime, and even now I wish I could find a way to add it to our catalog. A third such book is this new one, *Weapons and Hope* by Freeman Dyson. It is the most original, realistic, thoughtful, and persuasive book on this subject that I have read in a long lime. Because it is so well thought out and realistic, and takes such hard- headed account of the difficulties, it is an extremely hopeful book. It seems to offer us not an easy but an exceedingly possible way out of the critical situation we are in.

One point that Dyson makes - obvious when we think about it but a point that has not been made by any other writer I know of- is that no proposal for the control or elimination of nuclear or other weapons has any chance of political success unless it has the full support of a considerable part of the military establishment This is not at all the same thing as saying that the “military run the country” it meant only that any proposal that does not get the support of at least a large number of influential and respected military leaders has no chance whatever of gaining enough popular or Congressional support to become national policy. There is no sense in talking as if military people did not exist, or as if their objections could be ignored, or as if they were all malevolent or crazy. What Dyson shows us is that there are very good reasons for believing that we could in fact win the support of military leaders for a proposal to abolish or severely limit nuclear weapons because, practically speaking, nuclear weapons make sensible conduct of war impossible. I note in passing that *Giving*

Up the Gun by Noel Perrin shows, that in Japan's history such a thing did in fact once happen.

An equally astonishing and hopeful suggestion is that invention and technology may make a nuclear war increasingly obsolete. In this connection Dyson tells us what I did not know and am absolutely delighted to learn: technology has already made the Hydrogen bomb all but obsolete. As weapons become increasingly accurate, there is less and less need for enormous destructive power. For some years now both the American and Russian armed forces have been decreasing the size of their warheads. Of course, the warheads are still monstrously destructive and dangerous but the trend to make weapons more accurate and less destructive is a trend that we can expect to continue.

Dyson's book should be enormously helpful to those in the peace movement in this and other countries: if they read and heed it, they should be much more effective in their work for peace. For some lime it has troubled me that the Western peace movements were as rigid and fanatical, as closed off from the possibility of new ideas and approaches, as the most fanatic of their hawkish opponents. Indeed, for some years now I have been collecting, on paper and in my mind, rough notes for a book that I thought I might someday write on this question. Mr. Dyson has saved me the trouble, and, since he draws on a great deal of important knowledge that I did not have, he has written a book much better than any I could have written.

As the title suggests, this is truly a book about hope. It could very well prove to be a book to help change history.

MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING

Victor Frankl
(N Y: Simon and Schuster)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

This is the most inspiring, encouraging, and important book about psychology (in its broadest sense) that I have ever read. I first read it soon after it was published. If I had not wrongly assumed that after all these years, it was out of print I would have added it to our catalog long ago.

Man's Search for Meaning is in no sense a technical book; it has no psychological jargon of any kind. It is, instead, the very plainly and directly told story of how the author, then a man in his twenties or early thirties, endured and survived one of the most cruel and altogether horrifying and disgusting inventions in the human race - the German extermination camps of World War II.

One could easily fill a book the size of an encyclopedia with incident after incident of that horrifying brutality and cruelly, but Frankl has not done that; if anything, he downplays the horror of the camp. He is not trying to sicken us or to make our blood run cold; indeed, his book makes far less of an appeal to sadism than almost any modern crime novel or film. Frankl uses his story as a backdrop for the question - how can human beings find a way to live with courage, decency, dignity, and even a little hope, in a situation where, for most of us, these things would seem impossible. Frankl's answer comes out of his own experience. In brief, he says that when all the normal reasons for living are gone, when nothing seems left but unimaginable degradation and suffering and then death, we can find some meaning in the way we choose to endure our sufferings.

It is an easy thing to say. But to then read about people, like Frankl and others, who have actually put it into practice, is very moving and awe inspiring. The book is not, as it easily could have been, about human depravity, but about human courage and virtue. It may give great strength to any of us who face difficult times in the years ahead.

Chapter 10
REMEMBERING CHILDHOOD

THE EDUCATION OF LTITLE TREE

Forrest Carter
(Santa Fe: University of New Mexico)
This first appeared in GWS 10.

This is the story - true, or at any rate based on truth - of a five year old boy, the author, growing up with Cherokee Indian grandparents. Left an orphan, the boy goes to live with his grandparents on their tiny farm high in the Tennessee Mountains. The only cash crop they grow on the farm is corn, and they use the corn to make whisky. The child quickly becomes a serious, responsible, and useful member of the hard-working family, and we feel how important this sense of being useful is to his growth and happiness. Their life together is an idyll, except for the white people in the valley below. Earlier, those white people drove the Indians off their land, and at one point in the story, the white people take the child away (for a while) from his grandparents.

The book makes a number of points without being too preachy: how courteous and respectful the boy's grandparents are to him, how they treat the little boy as a worthy and responsible equal, and how this kind of treatment makes him want to

be worthy of it; how much wiser, less gullible, less easily fooled and misled, these illiterate Indians are than most of the richer and literate whites of the valley, how superior their Indian civilization, philosophy, morality, and way of life is to the white, Christian, commercial world that drove them out.

The book is not unbiased about this. It is very heavily (though believably) slanted on the Indian side. The few Indians we meet are very good people; of the whites we meet only a few are good people; the rest are foolish, dishonest bigoted, and cruel. Those who may be strongly offended by looking at things from this point of view might do better to avoid the book. All others should enjoy it - a very moving and instructive story.

THE AFRICAN CHILD

Camera Laye (Great Britain: Fontana/Collins)
This first appeared in GWS 29.

A very gifted young writer wrote this beautiful story in French in 1954. Many people feel Camera Laye to be one of the first great writers - at least among those writing in Western Languages - to have come out of Africa. *The African Child* is the story of this writer's own happy childhood and his growing up in a small village in what was then French Colonial Africa.

We have all seen enough copies of the National Geographic or news stories on TV to have an idea of what African village life is like, but none of these graphics tells us anything about what life felt like to the people living it. Perhaps Camera Laye's experience of life in colonial Africa was not typical. Perhaps the villages where he and his family lived were more prosperous, or healthy, or beautiful, or happy than most. Perhaps, as he wrote in the cold cities (cold in every way) of Europe, the contrasts between environments made his memories of childhood and the life of his fellow villagers seem better than it had really been. At any rate, his early life, as he describes it, was a life that many people today, in Africa as well as Europe, might well envy.

To give some small sense of how intense, active, meaningful, and joyous his early life was, I can do no better than quote from Mr. Laye's description of the annual rice harvest:

...December always found me at Tindican. December is our dry season, when we have fine weather and harvest our rice. Year after year I was invited to this harvest, which is always the occasion of great junketings and feastings, and I used to wait impatiently for my uncle to come and fetch me.

Of course, the festival had no set date, since it depended on the ripening of the rice, and this in turn, depended on the weather, the goodwill of the heavens. It depended perhaps still more on the goodwill of the spirits of the soil, whose influence could not be ignored...

When the great day had arrived, the head of each family would rise at dawn to go and cut the first swathe in his fields. A soon as this first sheaf had been cut, the tom-tom would sound, signaling the beginning of the harvest. Such is our custom....

When the signal had been given, the reapers used to set out, and I would fall into step with them, marching to the rhythm of the tom-tom. The young men used to toss their glittering sickles high in the air and catch them as they fell, shouting aloud for the simple pleasure of hearing their own strong young voice,, and sketching a dance step or two on the heels of the tom-tom player. I suppose I should have done well to follow my grandmother's advice and to keep at a safe distance from thou lively jugglers. But there was such a vivid freshness in the morning air, such scintillating activity in their juggling feats, in the spinning sickles that in the rising run would blaze and flash with sudden brilliance, and there was such irresistible alacrity in the rhythm of the tom-tom that I could never have kept myself away from them...

When they had arrived at the first harvest field, the men would line up at the edge, naked to the loins, their sickles at the ready. Then my Uncle Lansana or some other farmer - for the harvest threw people together and everyone lent a hand in each other's harvesting- would invite them to begin work. At once the black torsos bend over the great golden field, and the sickles would begin the reaping. Now it was not only the breeze of morning that was making the whole field sway, but the men also, with their sickles.

These sickles kept rising and falling with astonishing rapidity and regularity. They had to cut the stalk between the bottom joint and lowest leaf, so, that only the leaf was left behind: well, they hardly ever missed. Or course, such a degree of accuracy depended on the reaper: he would hold the ear with one hand and incline the stalk to receive a clean blow from the sickle. He would reap the ears one by one, but the swift rise and fall of the sickle was nevertheless amazing. Besides, each man made it a point of honor to reap as accurately and a swiftly as possible; he would move forward across the field with a bunch of stalks in his hand, and his fellow workmen would judge his skill by the number and the size of his sheaves...

As the morning drew on, it would become hotter... The heat was a burden; the air would seem to weigh down upon us;

and weariness would gradually begin to creep over us, draughts of cold water were no longer any good, and so we would begin to fight our weariness with singing.

“ Sing with us,” my uncle would say.

The tom-tom, which had been following us as we advanced into the field, kept time with our singing. We sang like a choir, often very high, with great bursts of melody, and sometimes very low, so low that we could hardly be heard.

And our weariness would disappear, the heat grow less.

Our husbandmen were singing, and as they sang, they reaped; they were singing in chorus and reaping in unison; their voices and their gestures were all harmonious, and in harmony; they were one - united by the same task, united by the same song. They were bound to one another, united by the same soul; each and every one was tasting the delight savoring the common pleasure of accomplishing a common task...

The afternoon's work was much shorter and time used to fly. It would be five o'clock before we knew it. The great field would now be shorn of its precious yield, and we would walk back in procession to the village - the tall silk-cotton trees and wavering smoke from the huts seemed to welcome us from far off- preceded by the indefatigable tom-tom player, and singing at the tops of our voices the Song of the Rice...

We would go home contented, weary but happy!... The flowers, which would begin to unfold with the approach of evening, would be spreading their perfume on the air again, so that we walked as if attired in freshly plucked garlands... Ah! How happy we were in those days!...

The whole story breathes this spirit of happiness. But where is such spirit today? Something has gone terribly wrong; somewhere back down the line we made mistaken turnings. When I read about that procession of men toward the rice fields, shouting, singing, dancing, throwing their sickles high in the air, I have to remind myself, 'Those men were going to *work!"* Those men were going to spend all day long, bent over double under an equatorial sun, in temperatures that must have gone over one hundred degrees, using short sickles to chop off rice plants close to the ground. Few of us in the modern world could do such work for fifteen minutes, let alone an entire day. Fewer of us still would consent to do it. Today, those who cannot escape doing such hard work do it in anger and bitterness; they feel, with reason enough, that in having to do it they are shamed and oppressed. What contrast of values.

As Wendell Berry points out in his writings, if our modern world can be said to have any central purpose at all, it is to do away with hard physical work. Berry feels that such a purpose is a fundamental mistake, one of the root causes for the sickness of our world. He may well be right. Some of the happiest moments of my life have been those times when I did hard physical labor, working with friends for a common purpose. I rarely do such work, however, and even then only by choice; I may have no right to an opinion on the matter. Let those who sweat at their work decide the virtues of sweat Even in Berry's own description of the hard work of farming - work that he believes in - there is much more of grim duty than of joy: as the farmers do the heavy labor of their farms, they may feel that they are doing good work, they may even be glad they are doing it, but they do not dance and sing.

Think what we may about such questions of work, we will surely find *The African Child* a most extraordinary and beautiful book – a glimpse of a way of life that offers us much to learn.

TOTTOCHAN

Tetsuko Kuroyanagi
(N Y: Kodansha)
This first appeared in GWS 31.

This is the true story of a young child's adventures in a most unusual school run by a most gifted, humane, and imaginative teacher. The school was Tomoe Gakuen, a small elementary school founded in Tokyo in 1937 and destroyed in the great fire raid eight years later. The teacher, founder of the school, and headmaster during the school's short life, was Sosaku Kobayashi, a man I wish I had known. Kobayashi died in 1963 at the age of seventy. The child grew up to become the leading TV personality in Japan - host of Japan's No. 1 rated TV top show - and the author of this book.

Tottochan has been a publishing sensation in Japan: in only sixteen months it sold more than five million copies. That is probably more copies than all the school-reform books put together have sold in this country in the last twenty years. Of course it helps that the author is one of the best known and most often seen and heard people in Japan. But that alone would not explain the book's success; biographies of our most famous TV personalities don't do nearly as well, perhaps millions of Japanese want for their children, at least while they are young, a kind of schooling very different from what they have had. Perhaps the idea that young children can and should he trusted and respected (an idea that has certainly not taken root anywhere else that I know of) is about to take root in Japan. Let us hope so. The Japanese are setting examples

for us in many other things; perhaps they will do so in this.

The book itself is altogether charming. Tottochan (the author was called that as a child) was a delightful little girl - curious, imaginative, warmhearted, friendly, energetic, logical, and impulsive - as happy children so often are. If a thing seemed sensible and interesting for her to do, she did it without worrying about whether others were doing it or what they might later say about it. Her kind parents loved this innocent courage and adventurousness, but it quite naturally got her in trouble elsewhere. While still only seven years old she was expelled from her first school, as she would probably have been expelled from almost any conventional school that could expel her. (Her mother didn't tell her she had been expelled until much later, when Tottochan was twenty.) One of her chief crimes was that when something interesting happened outside the window - and since the school was right on the street (his happened all the time - she could not keep from rushing to the window to see what it was: hence the subtitle of the book, *The Girl At the Window.* (Today she would be called “hyperactive") In her new school the kindly headmaster, knowing about the kind of trouble Tottochan had, would always say to her, “You really are a good girl, you know." It was what she needed. As she says in her preface, without him she might very easily have grown up thinking of herself as a bad and worthless person.

It is impossible in this short space to give more than the barest hint of the wonderful character of this school or the wonderful man who ran it. Two details may help: the classrooms were in a group of old railroad cars that Mr. Kobayashi found somewhere and managed to have moved to the school; and everyday he looked at the children’s lunches to be sure that each child had brought (as he had asked them to do and as they were always happy to show him) 'something from the mountain and something from the sea:

Perhaps the most characteristic and touching incident of all, the one that made me think, we have to have this book in our catalog, took place when Tottochan first went to be interviewed by the headmaster.

...The headmaster offered her a chair and turned to Mother. You may go home now. I want to talk to Tottochan

[After Mother left] The headmaster drew over a chair and put it facing Tottochan, and when they were both sitting down close together, he said, “Now then, tell me anything about yourself. Tell me anything at all you want to talk about.”

“Anything I like?" Tottochan had expected him to ask questions she would have to answer. When he said she could talk about anything she wanted, she wanted, she was so happy she began straight away... [After a long time] she could think of nothing more to say no matter how hard she tried. It made her rather sad. But just then the headmaster got up, placed

his large, warm hand on her head, and said, Well, now you're a pupil of this school"

Only some time later did she realize that she had talked for four hours. And all that time the headmaster hadn't yawned once or looked bored, but seemed just as interested in what she had to say as she was." A lovely man, a lovely book.

MY CHILDHOOD

Carl Nielsen
(Copenhagen: Edition Wilhelm Hansen)
This first appeared in GWS 34.

One of the unexpected delights of my last trip to Denmark was finding Carl Nielsen's book still in print and in an English translation (published by the company that first published and still publishes most of Nielsen's music). For a long time I had known about *My Childhood* and had hoped to someday read it. Like Emily Carr's *The Book of Small* Nielsen's book is a very vivid recollection of childhood. Written during the last year or two of Nielsen's life and from his point of view of old age, *My Childhood* is an auto biographical fragment and is the only book I know of where a great composer (the greatest Danish composer and one of my favorites of all composers) tells how he first begun to hear, love, and make music.

Though of course we can never know what thoughts and feelings people may hide from the world, from all that is known of Nielsen (who died in 1931) it does seem as if he, among the great composers was an exceptionally cheerful, serene, strong, and happy person; much of these qualities show through in his music and in this delightful memoir of his childhood and years of growing up. He was not a deliberately comic writer, trying to make us laugh in every sentence, but he could not help but notice, enjoy, and remember the comic side of everything that happened to him and around him. His book, therefore, is in many places very funny.

Nielsen also remembered, and reminds us, how endlessly mysterious and fascinating the adult world is to children, even those parts that might strike us as most humdrum. It is the great gift and genius of children to find possibilities of magic and excitement in almost everything they do. For example, on summer weekdays, since his family was very poor, Carl and his brothers had to work all day in a nearby brickyard: they used trowels to trim bricks to even shapes and sizes. But the boys managed to turn even this seemingly monotonous work into an exciting kind of sport.

As in Camara Laye's *The African Child*, a spirit of happiness breathes from Nielsen's book. Some of this spirit must have

had to do with the rural Denmark of Nielsen's time where poverty, however severe (and it often was), rarely became what Ivan Illich has called 'modern poverty" - full of squalor, helplessness, envy, and shame. Some of this spirit of happiness must have had to do with Nielsen's parents, who in their own strength, skillfulness, energy, and courage were themselves remarkable people. Much of this spirit came from Carl's own temperament probably sunny from the moment of his birth. And perhaps some of the happiness had to do with the great music that was a central part of the family's life. Carl's father was, among many other things, a musician and apparently a quite skillful one.

The presence of great music in the lives of poor people is a point that needs to be stressed. The ten in Nielsen's family lived in two small rooms and a kitchen in half of a cottage that he describes, without rancor, as “a mere hovel." Yet in this tiny house (kept spotlessly clean by his mother) there were several musical instruments; when Nielsen was six and in bed with the measles his mother took from the wall a three-quarter size violin and showed him how to play it. Music, much of it what we would call classical, was everywhere in this rural area. The British writer, J.B. Priestley, who grew up in Bradford. Woolen mill town in Yorkshire, once wrote that many of the very poor working-class families he knew had piano and regularly played at least some of the music of Bach and other great masters. We can only wonder when and how did the idea take hold that music and above all the greatest music, is the exclusive property of a small upper-middle class. And more to the point how can we get rid of this idea?

Of his own life as a great musician, Nielsen writes:

...Why should I go forward along the road for which my brothers and others had equally good qualifications some of them perhaps better and greater? Will there come a time, I wonder, when human talents will have a chance to develop freely and fully, not haphazardly and crudely but with fine observation, understanding, and tender care from the first groping start? I think so... In my childhood day’s opportunities were few...

There is a sad irony in these words; the chance of a child as poor as Nielsen getting as rich a musical education and experience seem to me much smaller now than then. I can hope only that this may soon change, and that great music may once again become the common property of all people. Meanwhile, we have Nielsen's inspiring story to show us how one child had a chance.

Chapter 11
HEALTH

ANATOMY OF AN ILLNESS

Norman Cousins
(NY: Bantam)
This first appeared in GWS 13.

Not long ago Norman Cousins, the long time editor of *Saturday Review,* lay in great pain in a hospital bed, dying from a disease that official medicine could name but could nor treat or cure. He finally decided that if the doctors couldn't cure him he was going to have try to cure himself. He thought and read about his disease - what had caused it and what might cure it. With the support of one understanding doctor, Cousin's took himself out of the hospital; he stopped taking pain-killing drugs (that he felt were making him sicker), he alleviated his pain with laughter (that worked), he ate good food (unavailable in the hospital), he took massive doses of vitamins, and he got well. In this book he tells his inspiring and exciting story.

Anatomy of an Illness seems to me to have several important meanings for unschoolers. In the first place, it shows us once again how wrong the experts can be; it shows us that an intelligent informed, and resourceful person may be able to find ways to solve a problem that the experts can't solve. Second, *Anatomy of an Illness* is all about the interconnectedness, the oneness the indivisibility of mind and body. More specifically, it may give many parents strong grounds for saying that the schools that are making their children bored, frightened, and unhappy are by the same token making their children physically sick in demanding the right to teach their children at home, parents are not just indulging a whim but actually protecting the health of their children. As more and more doctors understand (as they are beginning to) the significance of Cousins' experience, more of them may be willing to say, in good faith and without reservation that certain children should be excused from attending school for reasons strictly of health. Perhaps we should begin to look, I'm not quite sure how, for doctors who have taken Cousins' message to heart.

CONFESSIONS OF A MEDICAL HERETIC

Robert S. Mendelsohn
(NY: Warner)
This first appeared in GWS 38.

Dr. Mendelsohn is an experienced and distinguished physician; some of you may know his bulletin, *The People's Doctor*

(Ed. now called *The Doctor's People*, Box 982, Evanston II. 60204). In his book, *Confessions of a Medical Heretic,* Mendelsohn gives us some extremely important advice about doctors, hospitals, and drugs. In two words - Watch Out!

The back jacket of the book sums it up: Twenty- five years as a practicing physician have convinced Dr. Mendelsohn that: (1) Annual physical examinations are a health risk: (2) Hospitals are dangerous places for the sick; (3) Most operations do little good and many do harm; (4) Medical testing laboratories are scandalously inaccurate: (5) Many drugs cause more problems than they cure; (6) The X-ray machine is the most pervasive and most dangerous tool in the doctor's office.

Dr. Mendelsohn begins with these words:

···I do not believe in Modem Medicine. I am a medical heretic. My aim in this book is to persuade you to become a heretic, too.

I haven't always been a medical heretic. I once believed in Modern Medicine. In medical schools I failed to look deeply into a study that was going on around me, of the effects of the hormone DES - because I believed. Who could have suspected that twenty years later we would discover that DES causes vaginal cancer and genital abnormalities in children born to women receiving the drug during pregnancy?

I confess that I failed to be suspicious of oxygen therapy for premature infants; even though the best equipment and most advanced premature nurseries had an incidence of partial or total blindness of around ninety percent of all low birth weight infants... A year or two later it was proved that the cause [of blindness] was the high concentration of oxygen administered to the premies...

I believe that despite al the super technology... the greatest danger to your health is the doctor who practices Modern Medicine.

I believe that Modern Medicine's treatments for diseases are seldom effective, and that they're often more dangerous than the diseases they're designed to treat.

I believe the dangers are compounded by the widespread use of dangerous procedures for non-diseases.

I believe that more than ninety percent of Modem Medicine could disappear from the face of the earth - doctors, hospitals, drugs, and equipment- and the effect on our health would be immediate and beneficial.

Strong words! Yet Mendelsohn backs them up. He gives so many examples of outrageously careless and dangerous medical practice that it would be tempting to quote him - but there are too many examples. One way of summarizing would be to say that many doctors either do not know the risks of the drugs or procedures they recommend, or, if they know, won't tell you. And, unless you press them hard, the doctors won't tell you the track record or the chances of success of these same procedures.

A few years ago when I was in Houston at the T. C. Anderson Cancer Clinic - one of the leading orthodox cancer hospitals of Modem Medicine - I heard doctors say that they considered a treatment successful if it produced a 10% increase in the number of patients who were alive five years after the initial diagnosis. In this particular incidence they were talking about chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is an enormously expensive treatment (one child they were discussing had received over $250,000 dollars worth of treatment) and produces not only great suffering but also very destructive side effects. As I remember, the side effects included the almost total destruction of the body's immune system. Therefore, there is a very real question of how many of these statistical 'survivors' will survive another year or two. Yet these same doctors denounced as “quackery," methods of treatment involving such low-cost therapies as diet and vitamins that have demonstrated success rates much higher than ten percent.

The most dangerous thing you can possibly do, if you cannot avoid being a doctor's patient, is to be what most doctors would call a Good patient, one who asks no questions and believes and does everything that the doctor tells him. Though some of you may disagree with Dr. Mendolsohn's opinions on what we could properly consider non-medical subjects, I hope his book will persuade many of you not to be Good Patients, or better yet not to be patients at all. For your own and your children's health, I hope you will take a vigorous, determined, skeptical, and informed responsibility, as you already do in the matter of education.

Chapter 12
FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

WALK WHEN THE MOON IS FULL

Frances Hamerstrom and Robert Katona
(Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press)

This first appeared in GWS 20.

One day a mother promises her two young children that, for an entire year, each time the moon is full she will take them for a walk in the middle of the night. This slender book is the true story of these midnight explorations and adventures and of the many living creatures and interesting things the children see. All but one of the walks are in the country, but the one city walk is in its way fascinating and beautiful as the others.

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

The book is illustrated by wonderful pencil drawings - they catch the magical quality of night and moonlight in a way I would not have thought possible.

THE BEAR THAT WASNT

Frank Tashlin
(N Y: Dover)
This first appeared in GWS 30.

Many children of around six or seven, and perhaps younger or older, will enjoy this light-hearted little book because it raises the kinds of deep and difficult philosophical questions that often interest young children. Garreth Matthews speaks of these philosophical questions in his book *Philosophy and the Young Child* [Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1982; also currently available from Holt Associates]. In *The Bear That Wasn't* the questions are about appearances, identity, and reality - how do we know (or do we know?) we are what we think we are, and how could we prove it if we had to?

The plot is simple: a bear goes to sleep for the winter, and when he wakes he finds that a huge factory complex has been built all around him. Nobody he meets believes he could possibly be a real bear, and eventually the poor bear has his own doubts.
I remember that as a child I was fascinated with the whole idea of amnesia, a total loss of memory. Indeed, I remember being completely absorbed, at the age of about ten, by an adult detective story called *Two O'clock Courage* by Gelett

Burgess (who wrote the poem about the Purple Cow). *Two O'clock Courage* is about a man who was knocked out by a blow on the head. When the man regains consciousness he finds himself lying beside the body of a murder victim. The man's memory is completely gone. In order to clear himself of the crime he has to discover who he was and what happened to him. I loved the story (I read it when my parents were out of the house; it was their book and they didn't know I was reading it). I suspect that parents will spend a lot more time talking about *The Bear That Wasn't* than in reading it.

ANNO'S COUNTING BOOK

Mitsumasa Anno
(N Y: Crowell)
This first appeared in GWS 35.

Some homeschooling friends in California showed me this lovely book; it is about the only counting book that I have ever liked. Instead of lining up animals or objects in a stiff little row on each page, as is done in almost all other counting books, Mitsumasa Anno has drawn everything as if it were in a real village. His pictures are delicately painted in subtle and beautiful watercolors and follow the changing seasons.

The first picture, for Zero, has a gently rolling, snow-covered landscape that, is treeless and bare; a little river runs through the landscape and there is a strip of empty blue sky behind. As the numbers progress, the pictures progress - each a month farther into the year - until, at the end of the book, we are in the middle of winter again. In the picture for 1, there is one each of sun, cloud, tree, adult, child, bird, house, animal, and snowman. In the picture for 2, a month has gone by, the snow is beginning to melt and there are two each of buildings, trucks, rabbits, children, roads, and trees. In the picture for 3, the season is spring and there are three of many different flowers, as well as three boats in the river, three butterflies in the air, and three objects in a field. There is a church in each of the pictures for 2 on up through 12, and I just noticed, this very second as I write that in the picture for 5, the church clock points to 5 O'clock. (True for all numbers? see for yourself) Children reading the book will have to find the objects in each picture before counting them. Don't spoil the surprise with leading questions such as - Now how many trees can we see on this page, please. Allow the child to experience the pleasure of discovery, just as I did.

There is a 'mistake' on one page. But is it a mistake? Or did the painter put it there on purpose to give each of a something to notice and exclaim about? So much happens on each page that we can easily make up many different stories about what we see. In other words, *Anno's Counting Book* is not just a counting book but a storybook as well. Could any

child not enjoy it?

LOS TRES OSOS

Hannah Hutchinson
Ed Nofzieger
(Phoenix, AZ: Los Tres Osos)
This first appeared in GWS 35.

This story of the Three Bears is told in Spanish by Hannah Hutchinson and charmingly illustrated with cartoons by Ed Nofzieger. *Los Tres Osos* is the first of a series of familiar children's stories told in Spanish. Except for a Spanish-English glossary, there are only Spanish words in the book what we know of the story, plus the illustrations, tell us what these words mean - after all that is how little children learn first to hear and speak and later to read their own language. For thirty years I have thought that an adult learning a foreign language could make a good start by reading children's books in that language, and indeed, I did a little of that in 1953 when I was teaching myself Italian. So, I am delighted to be able to add this book to our list. It is already (along with *Walk When The Moon is Full*) one of the favorites of Anna Van Doren, age 2, who has often asked me to read it aloud to her. I do my best to explain that this story is in Spanish, but what she makes of if I can't imagine. Still, if she keeps asking us to read it, she must get some pleasure or intuit some meaning from it, as I think many children (even very little children) will do.

LIFETIMES

Bryan Mellonie
Illustrations by Robert Ingpen
(N Y Bantam)
This first appeared in GWS 39.

I see this book as something to be read aloud to young children if and when they ask questions about death or at a time that seems otherwise appropriate. *Lifetimes* (first published in Australia) is subtitled the beautiful way to explain death to children. Well, it is not quite that; no one, including the world's leading biologist, knows more than a tiny bit about how and why living creatures die. What this book does show, and shows in a special way, is that every Living creature does in fact die, that each creature has its proper lifespan, and that death is a part of as well as the end of life. I think this is a concept that young children can understand, and a concept that is good for them to know. Along with the text, that is simple, poetic, and elegiac in tone -a gifted and sensitive composer might well set it to music - are some of the most

beautiful watercolor paintings I have seen. (A few of Robert Ingpen's paintings remind me of works by Andrew Wyeth; others remind me paintings in Gnomes.) Each painting vividly catches the animation of life and the silence, stillness and sureness of death. We are reminded of what we can too easily forget - that life is a wonderful gift, and that we should be happy and grateful to have as much of it as we have. A treasure of a book.

Chapter 13
FICTION FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS

GREENLEAF
Constance Bernhardt
(Hancock, MD: Trunk press)
This first appeared in GWS 6.

This is a new, unique, and beautiful book by Constance Bernhardt. It is the story of a child's growing up, written by an adult but told as the child - Constance herself- might have told or written it, year by year. When Constance first asked me to read her book, I had grave misgivings I feared that the book would be full of adult ideas put in a child's mouth, or of sentimental and idealized notions about innocent children. But as I wrote in the preface to the book "As I read, my misgivings gave my to astonished delight page after page, the book rang absolutely true, true to all my adult experiences of children, true to all I could remember of my own childhood. I read on, now pleased, but still fearing the inevitable misstep particularly when the child grew older. The misstep never came. To the very end, [the author] never struck what seemed to me a false note."

The book is written in chapters - The Year Four, The Year Five, and so on, through Thirteen. Let me quote a few bits from The Year Four, to give some of the flavor of the book and (I hope) to tempt you.

... I like the willow tree.
It is where I take my naps.
It is very green under the willow tree.
It is like a castle.
I like to pull on the leaves.
I pull hard but can never pull them off.

I want to climb the willow tree.
If I run to the tree real fast I can run up to it
But when I run to the tree it gets bigger,
It is a very big willow tree.
I can’t reach around it
I try
I think I can reach around it
if I try some more.

I have a sister
and she is the one thing smaller than me.
Her name is Karen.
There is no place bigger than my backyard.
I bake gravel pies.
Karen eats them.
Daddy calls her 'pie face' because her face is a big circle.
Karen has a big mouth and her eyes are big circles.
Daddy picks her up and calls her 'pie face.'
She looks at him became she knows her name is Karen
but she doesn't know who 'pie face' is
and who Daddy is talking to.

Karen is dumb.
She doesn't want to make lines on paper.
She can't say my name right
I tell her my name.
I get mad at her.
I am bigger so she is scared.
My name is Connie.
I make her say it slow.
It is hard for her.
I don't know why it is hard for her.

I don't know why it is hard.

In the preface I also wrote, “One thing, among others, that struck me as extraordinarily true and right was this child's view of her (two years) younger sister. Little children are not sentimental about their younger brothers and sisters. They don't think they are cute. They may get on well with them, be quite fond of them. But even in their affection there is much tough-minded exasperation. Why are they so silly? Why don't they straighten up and fly right?" As examples, here are two quotes, the first from The Year Eleven, and the second from The Year Twelve:

... In the morning Karen and Jill and Julie
[sisters] and I meet and go to school.
We walk to the corner to take the school bus.
I don't see Jill at school but we ride home on the bus together.
Jill is quiet and Julie is friendly.
Julie talks a lot and is always joking.
She sometimes tells Jill what to do.
She sometimes tells Jill what to do.
I think this is strange
Because Jill is older and knows more.
I tell Karen what to do.
She could never tell me what to do.

I interrupt to say: what volumes are written in those words! Then, in the next chapter, these words that many billions of people must, at one time or another, have said to themselves about their younger brothers or sisters:

Karen is in the fifth grade.
I think it's strange that she
always seems younger than I was
when I was her age...

It is tempting to go on. As I wrote in the preface, I can hardly imagine that anyone who has any deep liking or sympathy or respect for children will not enjoy and even love this book. I do, and more each time I read it. I hope you will try it.

SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS

Arthur Ransome
(London: Puffin)
This first appeared in GWS 21.

Swallows and Amazons is the first in a long series of books by Arthur Ransome. These stories, famous in England, are about a British naval officer's four children who have lived all their lives near the water and have spent as much time as possible sailing in boats. As this story begins the parents have allowed the children to camp on a small island in a lake where they are spending their summer vacation. The four children sail to the island on their boat the 'Swallow," and there they meet two girls of the same age sailing their boat, the 'Amazon." Each party thinks that the island rightly belongs to its group, not to the others. From this beginning the children make up and enjoy a number of exciting adventures.

In *Swallows and Amazons*, Ransome shows us how extraordinarily imaginative, inventive, and serious children can be in their play. Mixing fantasy and reality as only children can, they turn a small island in a placid lake surrounded by houses into a world of risk and danger. Into this play they pour all of their knowledge, intelligence, skill, strength, and courage, and from it they learn an enormous amount.

Ransome also shows us how much it means to children to grow up in and feel part of a strong adult culture and tradition (in this case, culture and tradition center around the sea) and how willingly they submit to it, often demanding disciplines. The younger children, who would ordinarily never take orders from their older brothers and sisters, do so without a murmur when the older children are acting as captains of the sailboats. Reading this book I realize how much my own small experience of ships and the sea is a part of me and how the language of the sea is a treasured part of my store of words. Friends have told me for years that I ought to read the Ransome books. I'm glad I have, and I look forward to adding more of them to our catalog.

PIPPI LONGSTOCKING

Astrid Lindgren (N Y: Penguin)
This first appeared in GWS 15.

In Sweden these are perhaps the most popular of all children's books, and it is easy to see why. Pippi is a nine year-old Swedish super girl. Her mother died when Pippi was little; her father, a sea captain, was lost in the South Seas. Pippi lives by herself in an old house, with a pet monkey and a horse for companions, and *does exactly as she likes*. Since Pippi is so

strong that that she can lift a large policeman by the belt with one hand, who is to stop her? The book tells of her adventures with two friends, both very proper and respectable Swedish children, who are awed, fascinated, horrified, and delighted by the free spirited Pippi. Pippi is very capable and self-sufficient as well as very generous, kind, and happy. She never abuses her great power, but uses it only to foil bad people, or to prevent well-meaning busybodies from interfering with her life. A delightful book, it is sure to please many children who know all too well they are not like Pippi.

THE LITTLE BOOKROOM

Eleanor Farjeon
(Boston: Godine)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

The Little Bookroom, first published in England in 1955, is a collection of fairy tales, fables, and stories; it is my favorite of all such collections that I have read. Some of the fairy tales are in the classic vein, set in a mythical world with kings and queens. Others are set in the modern world we know, sometimes with a touch of the magical and the supernatural, sometimes without. Many of the stories preach (but very gently) a moral lesson, lesson usually a little more subtle than those of the traditional fables. All the stories are delightful; some made my eyes sting.

It is hard to say, even to myself, why I love these stories so much. It may be partly because Farjeon writes so simply and beautifully, and partly because she takes so seriously the fairy tale form. Most modern writers of fairy tales seem to make a little fun even of their own stories, as if to reassure their readers that of course, we don't really believe in any of this old fashioned stuff. Not to with Farjeon; she believes completely in her stories, and thus enables us to do the same. In any case, of all the many books in our catalog that I love, this it one of those I love the most

ROBINSON CRUSOE

Daniel Defoe
Illustrated by N. C. Wyeth
(N Y: Scribners)

Most everyone knows that this story is about how a man is cast ashore on a deserted island and survives there for twenty-eight years. What I have to confess is that, until I read *Robinson Crusoe* for this review, I had never read the book thinking- wrongly- that a story of one man alone on an island could not be very interesting. Well, it is interesting and well

told. I think it would be fascinating to many children of about ten, who, living in busy crowded worlds as they do, tend to love stories about aloneness and wildness, as much as thy need and yearn for stories about true courage, resourcefulness, and heroism. How sadly and dangerously deprived are all those children who, when asked to name their heroes can think of nothing but pop entertainers.

When I was a boy *Robinson Crusoe* was one of a series of children's classic published by Scribners and illustrated by the great painter and illustrator N.C. Wyeth (whose son Andrew and grandson Jamie were both to become famous painters). These were some of the most beautiful children's books ever published; a child who took one from its wrappings at Christmas knew that she or he had acquired a real treasure. I have often wished I could have all my old copies that, like so many of the things of childhood, disappeared over the years. Therefore, when I heard drat Scribners was bringing many of these books back into print, I decided to add them to our catalog.

What really make these books very special, aside from the beautiful paper, printing, and binding, are the illustrations, originally painted in oil by N. C. Wyeth himself. I have always liked Andrew Wyeth's work, and it has been phenomenally successful, but for me Andrew's father is a more powerful and original painter. When, as a boy, I looked for the first time at N. C. Wyeth's illustrations, it was not out of interest in them as paintings, but only to get an inking of what the book was about, and it took seeing only two or three of them to make me feel that I just had to read the book. Today I would and will be happy to get these books just for the paintings. I have recently read that in his life N. C. Wyeth did more than 4000 paintings; someday I would love to see an exhibit of the originals.

Most of N.C. Wyeth's paintings would be considered realistic, though highly romantic. They are full of action and danger or the promise of them. In *Robinson Crusoe* the paintings are more about the island itself. The way in which Wyeth conveys the remoteness and strangeness of this landscape are very far from realistic; his clouds don't look like 'real' clouds at all but more like clouds in a dream, and they powerfully convey the feeling of Crusoe's isolation and loneliness. The last picture in the book, a very moving depiction of Crusoe's rescue, is also an astonishing study of sky and clouds, and of sunlight and shadow on water. The story itself, as I have said, is a well-deserved classic, wonderful for reading aloud, and not to be missed.

TREASURE ISLAND

Robert Louis Stevenson
Illustrated by N.C. Wyeth (N Y: Scribners)
This first appeared in GWS 46.

This is another of the classics published by Scribners. In GWS 13 I wrote:

What a marvelous teller of tales Stevenson was. How varied and vivid are his characters; what rich and wonderful speech he put into their mouths. Even his villains are real people, three dimensional and worthy opponents, in some ways even admirable. What fun to read this for the first time, or even for the first time in a long time.

About Wyeth's illustrations and the book itself, I can only underscore what I wrote in the review of *Robinson Crusoe*. Wyeth was a truly marvelous painter. Just look at the picture of Jim leaving home, or of blind Pew staggering down the road at night, or of those two pirates on the cover. How could anyone look at those hard, bold, wicked men and not want to find out more about what they were up to? Truly a treasure.

Chapter 14
POETRY and LITERATURE

ROBERT FROST'S POEMS

Edited by Louis Untermeyer
(N Y: Simon and Schuster)
This first appeared in GWS 18.

This is a collection of the best poems of a great American poet - my favorite of all poets who have written in English. I can't think of any other poet who has written so many poems that I really love.

What most appeals to me about Frost's poetry is the power and depth of thought and feeling that he gets from such simple words. Take ‘Fire and Ice.' a special favorite of mine. It is only 9 lines long - 49 words. Six of these words have two syllables all the rest have only one. Yet with these short words Frost says as much about human life as most poems, or even books, ever do. In “The Death of The Hired Man," an old farmhand, worn out by a life of hard work and too old to do any more, comes unexpectedly to the house of a young farm couple who used to hire him. The young man wonders why he has come to their house, instead of going to relatives who live close by. In reply the wife says, “Home is where when you have to go there, they have to let you in.” How could it be said better?

If some of the poems are somber, others are very tender and lighthearted, and some - like “Departmental," - very funny in

Frost's dry New England way. I'll close with a quote from another favorite, “At Woodword's Gardens." In this poem a boy takes a burning glass (a magnifying glass) to a zoo and uses it to focus the sun's rays to a pinpoint of heat; he uses this heat to tease a couple of chimp. One of the chimp grabs the glass away from the boy, and the two chimps take the glass back into their cage. There, trying without success to figure out what it's for, they demolish it The chimps then come to the front of the cage to look wryly at the boy, and Frost ends the poem with these very useful words:

Thy might not understand a burning glass.
They might not understand the sun itself
It's knowing what to do with things that counts.

This book is illustrated with many beautiful woodcuts of the country Frost was writing about. It's a lovely collection.

THE OXFORD BOOK OF POETRY FOR CHILDREN
Edward Blishen
Illustrated by Brian Wildsmith (N Y: Peter Bedrick)
This first appeared in GWS 43.

This is by far the best collection of poetry for children that I have come across. I like it for two reasons. First many of the poems are old - ballads, folk songs, and the like. For me, a great deal of modem poetry written for children is too miniature in theme and outlook and language or is too cute. These old poems deal with big themes of love, death, mystery, theater; they are full of wonder, and the language has the weight and resonance of old organ music.

Second, the illustrations are astonishingly beautiful. Wildsmith is deservedly one of the most sought after among today's illustrators of children's books. He paints, in broad stokes and vivid colors. I don't know of any book that gives so many of his illustrations for this price. Indeed, I can hardly imagine how the publisher’s were able to print so much beautiful color at such a price, unless of course they printed a very large run. In any case, the book would be very much worth having if only for the illustrations. Together with the splendid collection of poems, this should make a treasured addition to a child's bookshelf.

THE POCKET BOOK OF OGDEN NASH
Edited by Louis Untermeyer

(N Y: Simon and Schuster)
This first appeared in GWS 45.

This is a very good selection of the comic verse of Ogden Nash - certainly the greatest American comic poet and very possibly the finest poet in the English language (Though some might argue for Louis Carroll or W. S. Gilbert). Nash began writing these verses in the mid-1930's when he was a young man working in a New York office. Soon he was able to give full time to writing, and this collection includes his poems written through the late 1950's. He writes about the world of middle class New York and its suburbs and his reactions to that world. His poems are a kind of social satire, but of the gentlest and most affectionate kind; most of the time Nash thought, unlike Don Marquis (of *The Lives and Times of Archy and Mehitabel*), that the world he lived in was, for all its flaws and oddities, a great place, and he was happy to live in it.

Some of his poems are in conventional rhymed and metered style (Nash was a master of that style) and his, lines seem as natural as speech. It is surprising that more composers have not set them to music (the only composer I know of who has is Ishmael Wallace). Nash never had to strain to make a rhyme or rhythm come out right he always found just the right word to do it but most of his poems were in the form that he invented and that made him famous - unmetered lines, often of greatly different lengths, rhymed in pairs, often with outrageously far-fetched rhymes. The preface of this book quoted two lines from one of his early and most famous poems:

Suppose it was the fourteenth
century and you were in an alley in
Florence at 2 AM and at the other
End was Caeser Borgia.
And he was coming torgia.

He wrote only a few non-comic poems, all of which I like, some very much. One of my favorites, called 'Listen,' begins:

There is a knocking in the skull,
An endless silent shout,
Of someone beating on a wall
And crying, “Let me out."

This is a wonderful collection and only a small part of all Nash wrote, perhaps, with luck, we may someday have more.

Chapter 15
MUSIC BOOKS AND RECORDS

SUZUKI PIANO SCHOOL, Book 1
and
SUZUKI VIOLIN SHOOL, Book 1 & 2
Shinichi Suzuki
(Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard)

This review was originally published in GWS 322 and was recently published in *Learning All the Time* 1989.

A number of our readers have children who are taking some kind of Suzuki music instruction, and many other readers are interested in music and ways to open the world of music to their children. Therefore, we have decided to add to our catalog the first volumes of the Suzuki Violin and Piano Methods. If readers seem interested, we will add other volumes of these series and also branch out into the cello, flute, and viola series. (Suzuki tuba is not yet available.)

Before I say why I like these books, let me say a few words about how I came to know about Suzuki and what I now feel is good, or not so good, about Suzuki instruction programs as I understand them.

I first learned about Dr. Suzuki 's work in Japan from an article written years ago in the *New York Times.* The article said that one day it occurred to Suzuki that since all Japanese children had the intelligence and skill to accomplish the difficult task of learning to speak Japanese, they could, if they wanted, learn to play the violin (Suzuki 's own instrument) in the same way. Since he believed that children's lives would be much enriched by music, as his own had been, he set out to devise a method for learning to play the violin as close as possible to the method a child uses to learn his own language. Suzuki realized that a child had to hear a lot of other people's speech before he could make his own speech, and that a child did a lot of speaking before he did any reading and writing. He also realized that children want very much to do what they see the adults around them do. From these sound insights Suzuki developed his method.

If a Japanese family wanted its child to study violin by this method, then, when the child was still a baby, the family would begin to listen to recordings of some of the simple violin tunes performed by expert musicians. The family would

listen at home, every day if possible, and many times each day. The tunes the child heard would be the same ones he would later learn to play. Soon the child would come to know the tunes and think of them as his own. (Later experiments have shown that babies 6 months old or younger can learn tunes well enough to respond happily when they hear them played.)

When the child was about three or four years old, one of the parents, usually the mother, would begin taking violin lessons with a Suzuki teacher; *she would take her child with her.* At the teacher's house, the teacher would give the parent a violin, show her how to hold it, etc.. and then the teacher would play one of the tunes that the child already knew. Next the teacher would show the mother how to play the tune (since it was the first, it would be simple enough so that she could quietly learn to play it). After the lesson the teacher would tell Mother to practice that little tune at home until the next lesson. This would go on for a few lessons, the child always going with the mother to the lesson. Then, in perhaps the third or fourth lesson, if the child was still really interested - for Suzuki insisted that he would not force children to play - the teacher would mysteriously produce from somewhere a tiny child-sized violin, asking the child, “Would you like to try it?" Yes, indeed! So mother and child would go home together with their violins and would practice together the little tune they both knew. After a while, though she was still expected to listen to the child play and was required to come with him to the lessons, the mother could, if she wished, stop playing by this time the child could go on alone. As time went on, the child would learn other tunes and, along with his individual lessons, would play in groups with other children, discovering with delight that they, too, knew the same tunes.

In the original Suzuki method, only after a child gained considerable skill on the violin and could play fairly complicated tunes, was he introduced to the written notes for the tunes that he already could play. It would still be some time (I'm not sure how long) before he would start learning new tunes from written notes instead of by ear.

So much for the basic method, that seemed to me then, at it does now, in good accord with all I know about children's learning. The *New York Times* article went on to say that children were encouraged to experiment with their instruments, to make sounds fast and slow, high and low. I remember the article said children were asked to make sounds 'like an elephant' or 'like a little mouse." It then said that all over Japan, hundreds of four-, five, and six year - old children taught by these methods gathered to play music by Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach.

A few years after I read the *New York Times* article, a group of these Suzuki trained children on a tour of the U.S. cane to the New England Conservatory. I was there to hear them, along with several hundred others, including many music teachers. The children, perhaps twenty of them, came on stage; they were healthy, energetic, and happy. At the time I

thought the average age of the children might be five to six; I now think they may have been perhaps a year or two older. Dr. Suzuki and a young assistant checked the tuning of each child's violin. We waited in great suspense. What would they play? Perhaps some of the slower and easier tunes of Vivaldi, Handel. or Bach. Dr. Suzuki gave the downbeat, and away they went - playing not some easy tune but the Bach Double Concerto, in perfect tune, tempo, and rhythm, and with great energy and musicality. It was breathtaking, hair-raising. I could not have been more astonished if the children had floated up to the ceiling. Rarely in my life have I seen and heard anything so far beyond the bounds of what I would have thought possible.

During the question period, Dr. Suzuki told us (through his young interpreter) that the Japanese children we had just heard were unusual in only two respects their families could afford to pay for this trip to the U.S, and their mothers could come with them. But there were apparently many hundreds or even thousands of children in Japan who could play as well.

Before saying any more about Suzuki instruction in this country, I have to emphasize that all I know about Suzuki instruction in Japan came from the *Times* story, a couple of other articles, and from what I learned during the question-answer session with Dr. Suzuki. It is possible that the picture of Suzuki instruction that I made in my mind as a result of these brief introductions was far from accurate. What actually happened at that time, or happens now in Suzuki classes in Japan, I don't know.

What I can say with certainty is that from all I have seen, heard, and read of it, Suzuki instruction in the U.S. today is very far from my idea of what it was - as I have just described it - and even farther from the method children use to learn to speak their own language. Suzuki instruction today is in fact very much like most school instruction. The material to be learned is broken down into many very small pieces; each piece is supposed to be done perfectly before the next one is attempted; mistakes are corrected instantly from the outside, by the teacher or the parent; there is considerable pressure put on children to "practice"; and children are given little room or encouragement, if any at all, to improvise and experiment with the instrument.

Some of the reasons for divergence from Suzuki in theory and Suzuki as practiced in the U.S. probably have to do with the differences between Japanese and American family life and culture. Japanese women are much more likely to be at home with their children than are American women, and Japanese parents, if told by an expert that they must play recordings of simple violin tunes for several hours a day for years on end, are perhaps more likely to do it than American parents. To some extent Dr. Suzuki surely had to modify his method, whatever it was, to take into account differences in

American family life, in American adults' ideas about how to treat children (we are generally much more severe with them than the Japanese), and in American music teacher' ideas about how music had to be taught.

It is also important to note that not all Suzuki teachers are alike, any more than are all Montessori teachers alike, or are any kind of teachers alike. Some are more inventive and flexible than others. Indeed, as happened with Montessori, some Suzuki teachers have already broken off from the rather rigid American organization and call themselves independent Suzuki teachers in order to give themselves the freedom, if they wish, to modify the strict methods handed down from above. If I ever teach string playing to adults and/or children, as someday I hope to do, I will certainly use Suzuki materials, but much of the time I will use them in my own way. For you to know how Suzuki is taught in your town, you will need to see the people doing it. I have seen some astonishingly bad teaching done under the name of Suzuki, and also some very good teaching. See what is available in your town and decide for yourself how rigid or free it is.

On the whole, though, it is safe to say that Suzuki instruction in this country has become very rigid. Whether because of this or for other reasons, Suzuki instruction certainly is not producing the kind of results that we were told it once produced in Japan. Some very fine string players are coming out of Suzuki training, no question about it but there are very few six to eight year-old American children who can play the Bach Double Concerto. If you hear large numbers of Suzuki children playing in this county, what you are more likely to hear are simple variations of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," that (for good enough musical reasons) has become a kind of Suzuki national anthem. The organization and the method are certainly doing some good things, but much less than they apparently once did in Japan. What is more to the point, the Suzuki organization and method are doing much less here in the U.S. than they could do if the methods practiced were really in keeping with the objective that is preached - to help children learn music in the same way that they learned language.

What then is so good about Suzuki materials and methods? Why are we adding them to our list and recommending them to parents?

1) Suzuki musical selections are very good. They are playable - not too hard and not too easy. They are fun to play, and, what is just as important for the parents who will have to hear them over and over again, they are fun (or at the very worst, at least tolerable) to hear. The children are very soon playing pieces written by the great masters. Some adults have objected, saying that what the children play are simplified versions of what these composers wrote, but I see no objection to that. A child I know well has already moved from a simplified version of a Bach piece to a version much closer to the real thing. The simplified version doesn't cause her any problems and I don't see why it

should: she just thinks that a piece she already liked has become even more interesting.

2) There are recordings (see the review following this one) of good performances of the music that the children will be playing. I suspect that most parents don't play these recordings as much as they might or should: still, with these recordings you *can* do Suzuki as it was supposed to be done. That is, you can make it possible for your child to really know these tunes *before* he starts trying to play them, so that, as in learning to talk, the child can correct his own mistakes rather than having parent or teacher do it One of the things American Suzuki teachers do that seems to me a complete mistake is to put little pieces of tape on the violin (or viola or cello) fingerboard so that the child (or his parents) can tell by looking where the fingers are supposed to go. This is musical nonsense; it is our *ears*, not our eyes that are supposed to tell us where to put our fingers.
3) The children become members of a musical community. In a performing art such as music, the idea of being the same or alike (an idea that the schools so mistakenly strive for in other areas of their curriculum) actually makes sense. Wherever a Suzuki child goes, she will find that other Suzuki children at about her level of skill know the same pieces she does, so they can play them together. This is fun for the children and beyond that is one of the chief joys of music. Learning a musical instrument, at least until you were good enough to play in a band or orchestra, used to be a rather lonely business for children? Now it doesn't have to be. Not only do the Suzuki teachers in a community have their pupils play together every week or so, but also there are even larger gatherings of children, often hundreds of them, at various Suzuki conferences. These gatherings can be enormously exciting to the children. The actual classes and workshops may or may not be interesting, but between the classes the children can rush around, get to know each other, and play music with each other. One mother, who has gone to several of these big get together with her two very talented children, says that the best things that happen there, as far as the children are concerned, are the things that are not planned - informal, spontaneous music -making with other children. For me this is a very important asset an asset that outweighs any objections I have to the programme.

I think that the Suzuki materials and organization can be a very useful resource – one of many resources- for children learning music and their parents (perhaps also learning music). The trick is to make use of the Suzuki material, but not to restrict yourself to them. Branch out: encourage the child to improvise freely, to make up tunes, to write down tunes, to write compositions for each other to play, and to begin as soon as possible to play real chamber music (so far, playing chamber music does not have a very big part in formal Suzuki instruction; this fact may be changing, as it should; I hope it is.) In short, put back the exploration, the discovery, the adventure, and above all the joy and excitement that is properly a part of learning music, and that too formal and rigid instruction can only kill.

SUZUKI CELLO SCHOOL, Book 1
and
SUZUKI CELLO SCHOOL, Record 1
Ronald Leonard, cellist
(Secaucus, NJ: Summy-Birchard)

This review was originally published in GWS 37 and was recently published in *Learning All the Time.*

The Suzuki Cello Book 1 has most but not all of the tunes in the *Suzuki violin schoolbook 1* but, in order to make fingering easier the two books are written in different keys. Therefore, your Suzuki violinist and Suzuki cellist will not be able to use these books to play these songs in unison.

On the cello record the musician is Ronald Leonard, principal cellist of the Los Angeles philharmonic. You and your children will hear cello playing at its best. The record is in split stereo with the cello on one channel and the accompanying piano on the other. If your stereo amplifier has a balance control, as most do, you can use it to hear cello alone, or piano alone, or both together. Very small, Walkman type machine will usually not have this control.

The cello book has some nice pictures of children playing the cello. Some of the photos show the children's instruments with little pieces of tape on the finger board in what is called "first position" to "show" the children where to put their fingers. This is standard Suzuki practice and if your children study with a Suzuki group they will have to do it. But as I have said before, it makes no sense whatever to me and seems to violate the essential Suzuki principle that the ear (not the eye) guides the hand. The issue is not worth arguing about with the Suzuki people, but I would get the markers off as soon as possible; if the tape helped good players to play better, you would see good players using it.

MRS. SIEWARTS PUNO LESSONS - 25
Lessons for Beginners
Elsie Steware
(Freemont, MI: Phylis Jansma)
This first appeared in GWS 21.

For a long time now I have known that someday I wanted to learn piano, sight-singing, and the fundamentals of theory

and harmony. Every so often I would browse in music stores, looking at beginning books on these topics hoping to find one that would make me think, 'Aha! There's a book I want to use and learn from." But none of the books I saw looked very interesting or helpful. I was discouraged. I could not imagine myself studying or learning much about music from teachers (and books are teachers) I did not like. Of course, if I plowed through and did all the things I was told, I was bound to learn something. But each book made the work look very time consuming and dull. Like most texts, these books seemed to say, 'Here, put on this blindfold and follow one step at a time, and I will lead you to a wonderful place that I (but not you) know about" None of the book illuminated the subject for me so that I could better explore it myself. None of them made music, something I already loved, seem less mysterious or more interesting. All of them made me feel as passive as helpless as totally teacher dependent as students in a classroom given a long string of meaningless tasks to do with no way of knowing except by asking the teacher, whether they have done the tasks right or not.

In addition, I could see that every piano instruction book made the same serious mistake. Each started the student playing in the key of C (on the piano, all white keys), then slowly introduced the keys with sharps and flats, beginning with G (one sharp) and F (one flat), going on to D (two sharps) and B flat (two flats), and so on. I knew enough adult amateur musicians who had been taught this way to know that this approach produces people who are convinced that there are “easy" keys and “hard" keys, and that they can only play in the easy ones. But I knew enough about music - had figured it out for myself- to know that on keyboard instruments, at least that was not true; no key is significantly harder to play than any other.

I was looking for a book to get this point across from the very beginning; a book that would encourage and enable the student, in this case me, to feel equally at home in all keys and to move freely from one key to another. But none of the books I saw did it.

Then one day Phylis Jansma, who had known and worked with Elsie Stewart and now publishes these *Mrs. Stewart’s Piano Lessons* and uses them in her own teaching, sent me a copy. I began to look it over. In reading only a few pages I realized that here was the material I wanted. The books are designed for children to use or for adults to use with children, and, from the very beginning, the student is shown how to transpose - i.e., to play the same tune in each of the different keys - and is encouraged to do so. The 'trick" is so simple that we might well ask, 'Why didn't I think of that?" In addition, *Mrs. Stewart’s Piano Lessons* gives me a good running start on the other two things I was looking for-ways to learn sight-reading and basic harmony.

Now, instead of music looking mysterious, difficult and dull, these books make it look, sensible, exciting, and easy. Not

easy in the sense that I can learn what I want to learn in a few weeks or months. I know it will take much time and effort to do that

But easy in the sense that at every point, I know what I am doing and why I am doing it. My curiosity, my question asking and problem-solving abilities are everywhere fully involved. I can hardly wait to get started on these formal studies (though it may be quite a few years before I have enough time for them). Meanwhile, these book have thrown such a clear and helpful light on music that I find myself knowing more and more things without ever having sat down to 'learn" them.

I am very excited about discovering the Stewart lessons and I strongly recommend them not just for children starting the piano but also for adult beginners. In fact, the lessons might be useful to many adults who already do quite a bit of piano playing; *Mrs. Stewart* might cure any fears of "hard" keys, and in general help the student better understand what he is doing.

STEWART PIANO PRESCHOOL BOOK
and
STEWART PRESCHOOL PIANO - TEACHER INSTRUCTION BOOK
Phyllis Jansma (Fremont, MI: Phyllis Jansma)

This first appeared in GWS 31.

Many readers will be familiar with Books I and II of *Mrs. Stewart's Piano Lessons* as I said when I reviewed them in GWS 21, the book are designed for children to use or for adults to use with children, and from the very beginning the student is shown how to transpose - i.e. to play the same tune in each of the different keys - and is encouraged to do so. Instead of making music look mysterious, difficult, and dull, these books make it look sensible, exciting, and easy - easy in the sense that at every point I know what I am doing and why I am doing it. I am just as enthusiastic today as I was when I first reviewed the books.

The *Preschool Book* is a book of thirteen songs for young children (age four or less) to hear, sing, and play. It precedes Book I of the *Mrs. Stewart's Piano Lessons The Teacher Instruction Book* tells the adult teacher (who need not know how to play the piano her/himself) how to use this book (and by implication the later books) with children. It is full of sensible and helpful suggestions drawn from actual experience. Indeed, I would recommend the *Teacher Instruction Book*

to anyone who is using the later books, whether teaching children or teaching themselves. One particularly wise suggestion is, “Play all over the piano." Another, "Be sure to move on to the second, third, etc., scales *right away*. Do not wait for each to be perfect - keep adding new scales as you practice the old ones. .. ." A very good point. If children never tried to say a new word until they could say all their old words perfectly, they never would learn to speak. Learning is more interesting and exciting and, therefore, more efficient when we are exploring many related things at once.

This insight seems to have been lost or given up in Suzuki music instruction. Instead, Suzuki instruction tells us to make sure that the child does each step perfectly before going on to the next step. This demand for perfection is surprising, since it was precisely from listening to children teach themselves to speak that Dr. Suzuki got his original ideas about how children might best learn music. At any rate, one of the many merits of the Stewart method is that it doesn't make the same mistake.

THE YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO PLAYING THE PIANO

Sidney Harrison
(N Y: Faber and Faber)
This first appeared in GWS 35.

This is not a book about how to play the piano in the sense of the Stewart and Suzuki piano books. Nor is it a collection of pieces and exercises, though here and there Harrison does include a few exercises of his own - examples of the kinds of problem solving exercises that players might and should invent for themselves (as I often do on the cello). For the most part Harrison’s book is aimed at young pianists who play seriously and with some skill. But I must add that I, who don't play the piano at all find the book fascinating - full of insights about studying playing, and performing that would be helpful with any instrument. Beyond that this book makes me more eager and determined than ever to learn (someday) the piano.

These few quotes (I could easily have picked dozens) will give some of the flavor of this useful and delightful book:

... Of course you must know how to persuade and command the piano, but the first thing is to fall in love with it. Then it will persuade and command you, and you will never feel that spending time with your best friend is mere work or duty. For my part I fell in love with the piano at the age of four and have never fallen out of love.

...I seldom practiced with diligence. If I played something over and over again it was for one of two reasons. Either I was

enjoying a second helping of something I enjoyed, or *I was searching for some knack that would make hours of practice unnecessary* If I found the knack I was looking for I played the page again and again in sheer triumph. How clever of me! I had discovered how to play without practicing. Or had I really discovered how to practice)

... Playing by ear is immensely important. So is improvising. We shall come to both later, but let us start with reading. I often think that the best way to learn this would be to find a tune by ear and then write it on paper.

.. If you practice a faster passage slowly.. pretend that it is slow music to be played with a proper respect for every sound. This is often a good approach to speed and power, but it will not work in every case. Every child knows that there is no slow way to hop or jump. An athlete jumping over hurdles... cannot go through the motions slowly. There are some actions that can only be tried - and tried again and again - at speed….

This last statement is very reassuring to me. I am so fed up with hearing musicians say that the way to play faster (my biggest single problem on the cello) is to play everything very slowly. That's only part of the truth. Sure, you play it slowly to learn to do it right but sooner or later you have to try to play it as fast as you can.

In this final quote, Harrison speaks of the life of a concert pianist but his advice would be good for many professional players of any instrument Harrison says:

Amongst all the difficulties, you must never let your piano become a nagging wife or a mere business asset. Your piano is your sweetheart and I hope you stay in love forever...

NEVER TOO LATE

John Holt
(Boston: Holt Associates)
This first appeared in GWS 38.

Never Too Late, a book that might be called the Life story (so far) of a late starter in music, is now back in print in our own 8-1/2" x 11" Pinch penny Press edition. A year or so ago the publishers, without giving me any opportunity to buy them, destroyed the remaining 1500 copies they had in stock. Folks who know about such things tell me that it is a fairly common occurrence in publishing.

Dozens of people have written and said that reading *Never Too Late* inspired and encouraged them to do what they had long wanted but never quite had the courage to do - begin the serious study of music. My oldest such correspondent was a man who, having never played any musical instruments, was in his mid- 70's when he took up the cello. A few years later he was playing, as I was, in an amateur orchestra, and was struggling hard, as I, too, was struggling, to catch maybe half the notes being played; he was finding this one of the most exciting things he had done in his life. Last night a young woman came up to me after the Boston Symphony concert, asked if I was John Holt, and, hearing that I was, said that because of *Never Too Late* she had just started to play the violin; she was studying in a class otherwise entirely made up of children and was having a wonderful time.

You should particularly read this book if you have learned or been taught to think that you are "tone deaf" and therefore, incapable of singing or playing a musical instrument. It is not true. The condition of, as the old saying goes, "Not being able to carry a tune in a bucket" is easily cured, and this book shows how you, with the help of any friend who can carry a tune, can cure your own "tone deafness".

Of all the books I have written, this was perhaps the most fun to write because it deals with what has always been one of the chief pleasures of my life. I hope you enjoy the reading as much as I enjoyed the writing.

FOR CHILDREN, Volume I
and
MIKROKOSMOS Volume I
Bela Bartok
(N Y: Boosey and Hawkes)
This first appeared in GWS 41.

Bela Bartok, who died about 1945, was one of the greatest composers, pianists, and teacher of the first half of this century. Those of you who are familiar with classical music will know much of his work. Any of you who like or are learning to like symphonic music, and don't already know his great (and last) piece, the *concerto for orchestra*, should get to know it.

As a teacher of piano he was distressed as many teachers must be, by the fact that most of the music that is easy enough that beginners can play it is not very interesting for beginners to play, particularly if they have some knowledge of music. Bartok therefore, decided to write a series of pieces for beginning players (children or adults) that would begin with

extremely simple music and gradually become more complicated; these pieces would touch as many of the different parts of piano techniques as possible; and each piece would be musically interesting enough in its own right so that people would really enjoy playing. These two collections were the result of his work. *For Children* is in two volumes, *Mikrokosmos* is in four volumes. There are also recordings of this music.

FOR CHILDREN Record

Bela Bartok
Zoltan Kocsis pianist (N Y: Boosey and Hawkes)

This first appeared in GWS 43.

So many people have ordered the piano score of *For Children* that we have decided to add the recording (a two record set) to our catalog. Dr. Suzuki strongly recommends that people first hear what they will later learn to play. From these records you will hear and learn what Bela Bartok's often charming, sometimes strange little songs sound like before trying to play them.

The songs are performed in the same order that they appear in the book. The pause between each song is long enough so that you can tell when one song ends and another begins but, on the surfaces of the record itself, the bands between one recorded section and the next are narrow, and you may find it hard to know where on the record to put down the stylus (needle) in order to hear a particular song. This should not be much of a problem, however, as you become familiar with the songs, know them by name, and know their location on the record.

The songs are performed by Zoltan Kocsis, a young musician (born in 1952), one of Hungary’s most gifted and famous pianists. At the age of 18, Kocsis won Hungary’s biggest national piano competition, and he has-been active on the concert stage ever since. Since Bartok derived much of his own music from the authentic Hungarian folk music of his county, and since Kocsis is an expert on the music of Bartok, we hear this music performed very much as the composer intended.

Classical record albums produced in Europe (particularly operas) usually have the text written in several different languages, a small bonus added to the beautiful music. This record set includes the Hungarian words of many of the songs, while the brief commentary on the music is written in Hungarian. English, French, German, and Russian.

Chapter 16
ART & MATERIALS

DRAWING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BRAIN

Betty Edwards
(Los Angeles, CA: Tarcher)
This first appeared in GWS 17.

When I was about six or seven I drew yachts and ocean liners with huge funnels and hundreds of tiny portholes, but after the age of eight, I never drew any more. I thought I couldn't I thought (like many people) that to be able to draw things - and above all people so that they looked real - was a mysterious talent that a few were born with; the rest of us did not have the talent and never could get it. People who drew well seemed to me almost superhuman. Then I read this book Betty Edwards, who teacher drawing at California State University at Long Beach, completely convinces me that anyone who will spend a little time and thought on it can learn in an couple of months to draw well, including life-like portraits. Not only does she convince me that it can be done, but also she shows how to do it. She also shows some absolutely astonishing before/after drawings done by her students who began drawing even less well than I do and were able in a month or two to draw portraits that looked like the work of skilled artists.

Over the years I have looked at many books about how to learn to draw, hoping to find one that would explain the mystery. None of them gave me the slightest feeling that I could learn to draw well; no matter how much time I spent on it. But this book explains, in a way that I know to be true, why most of us can't or don't draw well, and then it tells us how we can get past those obstacles.

Perhaps the best way to state the central point of this remarkable book is by quoting something from the delightful chapter on children's drawing:

Say that a ten-year old wants to draw a picture of a cube, perhaps a three dimensional block of wood. Wanting the drawing to look “real," the child tries to draw the cube from an angle that shows two of three planes - not just a straight-on side view that would show only a single plane, and thus would not reveal the true shape of the cube.

To do this, the child must draw the oddly angled shapes just as they appear - that is, just like the image that falls on the retina of the perceiving eye. Those are not square. In fact, the child must suppress knowing that the cube is square and

draw shapes that are “funny." The drawn cube will look like a cube only if it is comprised of oddly angled shapes. Put another way, the child must draw unsquare shapes to draw a square cube. The child must accept this paradox, this illogical process which conflicts with verbal, conceptual knowledge. (Perhaps this is one meaning of Picasso's statement that “Painting is a lie that tell, the truth.")

If verbal knowledge of the cube's real shape overwhelms the student's purely visual perception, incorrect drawing results… Knowing that cubes have square corners, students usually start a drawing of a cube with a square corner. Knowing that a cube rests on a flat surface, students draw straight liner across the bottom. Their errors compound themselves as the drawing proceeds, and the students become more and more confused... [JH: she shows some vivid examples of students' failures to draw a cube.]

On the basis of 'incorrect" drawing such as the cube drawings, students may decide that they “can't" draw." But they can draw.... The dilemma is that previously stored knowledge - which is useful in other contexts - prevents their seeing the thing- as it- is, right there in front of their eyes.

This is the heart of the book. We know so much about how things are shaped, how they "ought" to look, that we cannot see how they are actually shaped as they appear before us. Like the children who draw their 'knowledge" of how cubes are shaped, we draw what Ms. Edwards calls “symbolic" shapes that we have stored in our minds. This stored symbolic knowledge is what Ms. Edwards and many others now call Left-Brain knowledge. What this book teaches us is how to get that symbolic knowledge out of the way so that we can see what is before us and draw what we see. Betty Edwards' book is ingenious and effective at helping us. I have done a few of the exercises in the book: they are fun to do, and they work.

One trick is to look at me object you are drawing as you draw it and not at the paper you are drawing on. Another trick is to copy a drawing upside down (the way forgers copy signatures). In copying an upside-down drawing, nothing looks 'real,' and we cannot use symbolic knowledge. We are forced to copy the shapes as we see them. There are only two of many useful tricks and tips in *Drawing On the Right Side of the Brain.*

This seems to me a most fascinating and important book. Learning to draw well is something that many children, alone or with their parents, would find very interesting and exciting and helpful. Years ago, in my book *How Children Learn*, I wrote about why I thought art and in particular realistic art was an important tool for children to use when seeing exploring, and understanding the world. I now feel this even more strongly. One of the great plagues of our time, not just

in our schools but in any part of our society, is over-abstraction. What we think we know about reality becomes a wall between that reality, and us so that we no longer fully and truthfully see the reality. This can cause us to make some very serious mistakes.

But long run benefits aside, drawing is exciting and satisfying for its own sake - one more source of joy in life and the world. For many people, young and old, this book can be the key that unlocks a great treasure.

ALPHABET ART - THIRTEEN ABC’s FROM AROUND THE WORLD Leonard Fischer (N Y: Four Winds Press)
This first appeared in GWS 37.

This book, itself a work of art, is a set of drawings of thirteen alphabets in use today-Arabic, Cherokee, Chinese (a modern phonetic version), Cyrillic, Eskimo, Gaelic, German, Greek, Hebrew, Japanese (phonetic version), Sanskrit, Thai and Tibetan. The letters of each of these alphabets are in beautiful calligraphy, colored in handsome soft rust with a touch of purple in it. With each alphabet, Mr. Fisher gives a short history of the culture that uses it a well as an illustration showing some aspect of that culture. Every illustration is linked in the same rust-with-purple color and relieved with white. *Alphabet Art* is beautifully laid out and printed, a lovely example of the bookmaker's craft. Children of all ages and adults, too, will find many reasons for being fascinated with this book. A child just learning his own alphabet may be amazed to see all these languages with such completely different letters. Some children may want to trace or copy these letters. Some children may want to invent their own letters. Older children may also be fascinated with the history of there alphabets, may want to know if there are still other alphabets in the world (there are), and may want to find out more about the others. Both younger and older children may be struck, as I am, by the vigor and beauty of the shapes that human beings have invented to represent the sounds of speech. I am sure the book will bring much wonder and pleasure to those who read it

PENTEL WATER COLORS
(Pentel Company, Tuipei Taiwan)
This first appeared in GWS 37.

I've been wanting for some time to add watercolors to our catalog. This is a very nice set for beginners. Tubes (what working artists use) are much better than those flat cakes in metal boxes. Squeeze out a little paint, as you need it, save the rest for next time. (My guess is that for very little children, adults had better do the squeezing - I can't think of anything more fun than to squeeze all the paint out in one big squish.) You will have to be a little careful about not losing

the tops of the tubes, but if you do lose one, you can probably seal the tube just as well with some transparent or masking tape. The tubes fit neatly into a little molded plastic box. The tube of white paint is about half again as big as the others. We assume you can find paintbrushes; if you have trouble, let us know. Kids who get serious about painting will want bigger tubes than these, and perhaps more colors. But this is a good set to start with.

Chapter 17
HOME & GARDEN

GARRETT-WADE CATALOG;
(161 Avenue of Americas, NY, NY, 10013)
This first appeared in GWS 22.

A tool catalog? Why is GWS adding a tool catalog to its book catalog? Well, many of our readers are interested in woodworking and woodworking tools, and this company is famous for having the finest tools in the business. Also, the book has much information about how to use tools, and about woodworking itself.

But the main reason we are adding it to our catalog is that it is such a beautiful book. It is one of the most beautifully designed, printed, and illustrated books I have ever seen. If it were published solely as a book by a regular book publisher, it might well cost many times more. Practically every one of its 128 pages has one or more photographs of tools, and many of the photographs an in color. The tools in the photographs are so carefully and artistically arranged and lighted that this book reminds me of the expensive catalog that great museums print to illustrate collections of their finest treasures – like the catalog of objects from Tutankhamen’s tomb (seen a few years ago by many millions of people).

Indeed, looking through this book is like taking a trip through a very exciting museum on every page we can feel the thought and loving care that have gone into the designing and making of these tools. It’s enough to make you want to take up woodworking just to get a chance to use the tools. Like the Eric Sloane books – that are different in form but have much the same reverence for well made things – I think this catalog will provide a fascinating glimpse into the mysterious and exciting adult’s world.

WORMS EAT MY GARBAGE

Mary Appelhof
(Kalamazoo. MI: Flower Press)
This first appeared in GWS 40.

This book tells how the author uses worms to eat up her organic garbage (as opposed to trash) and how the worms convert that garbage into the most fertile and productive of all growing mediums. Mary Appelhof uses the kind of fast breeding worms, usually called red wigglers or manure worms and she keeps the worms in the moderate sized (4 to 6 square feet) box in her kitchen. This is the best book I have seen about the worms themselves – what kind of critters they are, how they live, mate, breed – and how to raise the worms on the small scale.

There is much to be said for having some of these worms in or near the house, they convert a nuisance into a valuable asset and they are (perhaps along with ants) the most trouble free of all pets or domestic livestock. Put them in a container with enough food make sure their bedding – shredded paper, little bits of cardboard, etc. – is moist enough (they like things pretty wet) and you can forget about them for weeks on end. The children I have observed who have seen the worms after a few ritual cries of “Gross!” and “Yucky” find them fascinating. The worms land themselves very well to all kinds of small scale but genuine science projects, calling for observation, measurement and so on: how fast do they multiply, what sort of thing do they like to eat, how long does it take their eggs to hatch, how long does it take newly hatched worms (not much thicker than threads) to mature, and so on.

Those of you who have read some of the earlier issues of GWS will know that I have been raising worms in a small-enclosed patio outside my basement apartment. The worms are still there, more of them than ever. What they like to eat almost as much as anything in plain old brown corrugated cardboard boxes. They gobble it up, and, as I have said, turn it into the richest imaginable soil; it seems almost too good to be true. People, who want to garden but have bad soil and cannot easily find organic materials to make compost, may find this the easiest way to enrich the soil.

I will slightly amend Mrs. Appelhof’s wise words about worms: It is not always true that they can't stand plastic; I am raising some worms in two plastic yogurt containers and some in a plastic shopping bag. I am seeing them breed and thrive. Also, I have found that the worms much prefer cardboard to leaves: leaves have to be well rotted before worms will eat them, whereas cardboard need be only moist enough for them to eat in short there are many ways to keep and feed these almost miraculously useful little creatures. Reading this clear and informative book is a good way to start.

Chapter 18

GADGETS

STA-TITE PRINTING KIT

Cosco, Inc. 56 Church Street Spring Valley, NY 10977
This first appeared in GWS 36.

This could be called the world's smallest and least expensive printing press. It was designed to be used, not by children, but by adults in offices. I think, however, that it may be something children will enjoy using, and it may make easier and more exciting their first explorations of the world of reading and writing.

Many people, including Glenda Bissex in her wonderful book GNYS AT WRK, have pointed out that most children, if they had a chance, would rather approach the world of reading through the world of writing instead of the other way round. But this very natural approach is hard and unpleasant for most children because of the sheer physical difficulty of making letters, let alone letters to feel proud about.

I have felt for some time that if children had an easy way to make letters, they might, like Paul Bissex, be much more interested in writing as a way of expressing their thoughts. Hence my long-standing interest in typewriters for children. I feel strongly that anyone who can afford the needed $100 or so would be very wise to buy some kind of electric typewriter for his child. (Manual typewriters are too hard for small fingers). And I also agree strongly with what Seymour Papert said in *Mindstorms* and Mario Pagnoni has said in a more recent letter to us - that many or most children would find word processors a great incentive to writing.

At the same time, I have been looking for some thing much less expensive and simpler than a typewriter - a set of letter stamps that even young children could use. Until recently those I had seen seemed much too expensive for most parents, on the order of $ 1 per letter. Then one day I saw an ad in an office supply catalog for these rubber stamps: they looked like what we were looking for.

This kit enables business people to make their own custom designed rubber stamps. In the kit are a number of rubber letters and numerals, plus the basic stamp where the letters and numbers necessary to make a message are inserted. This particular set has four or five each of the letters, both capitals (about I/2" high) and lower case, and two or three of each of the numerals. That should be enough characters to write most of the messages that would fit on the stamp - 4 to 5 lines

of print with about 20 characters per line. I think children would have quite a bit of fun with this. I can imagine using the stamp to send a short message to a child, who would them use the stamp to send a message in return. Or children might use it to send the same message or letter to a number of people - perhaps a Christmas card or other greeting. Readers will no doubt invent their own ways of using these stamp pads. Please let us know what you and your children do with them.

A word of advice and a word of caution: the kit supplies tweezers for inserting and removing letters, but I find the tweezers a little awkward to use; I think most children would find them impossible. Fingers can do the job better. As for caution, the stamp pad provided is a regular office stamp pad using non-washable ink, so take needed care. I have not yet found a stamp pad with washable ink. If you know of any, please let me know. It is possible to buy un-inked pads. We tried using watercolor with one of these, but the letters were much too faint to be interesting. Perhaps washable colors for felt-tipped pens would work better. So far we have not had time to try such an experiment. If any of you try it, or find some other good colors to use in un-inked pads, please let us know. For the time being, I would probably not trust a two year-old with these non-washable ink pads, but I think that a four-year-old could be trusted to use than properly - on paper only. With these minimal controls, I think you and your children may find this a very interesting and helpful tool.

HEARING PROTECTORS

David Clark.
Company 360 Franklin Street Worcester, MA 01615
This first appeared in GWS 39.

These are the gadgets that you see worn by people who work outside at airports. I first bought a pair when I was interested in free schools. Most of these schools were in cramped spaces, and when the children were free (as we thought they should be) to talk as loud as they wanted, the noise was often painful to my ears. It occurred to me that being able to cut down some of the noise might make being in such schools more pleasant for teachers and children. But for various reasons I never pursued the idea.

About four summers ago something set off a loud steady noise in my right ear. Loving music, as I do, I was frightened I might lose a lot of my hearing. I decided I will wear the hearing protectors before going to doctors, thinking that, if I could protect my ear from further loud noise, my ear might cure itself. It did. By this time I had come to enjoy the increased quiet and had grown used to the constant pressure of the protectors around my ears. I had also read that among a primitive tribe of African people who lived an almost noiseless environment, old people, unlike old people almost everywhere, had suffered virtually no loss of hearing. I decided that, except when it was unnecessary of clearly

inappropriate, I would wear the protectors all the time. I have done that. I wear them on city streets, in subways or planes, in the office while typing whenever there is more noise around me than I want to hear. They have made my life much more pleasant. I have had no more hearing problems, and I think my hearing is somewhat better than when I started wearing them. They are one of the most useful tools I have ever owned.

These protectors do not give absolute silence. They reduce the noise level about 30 decibels – you hear almost everything you usually hear without them, even conversation, but the volume is much less, above all, they cut down on the kinds of noises that are most penetrating and painful, like sirens, pile drivers, and screeching wheels on the subway.

What has this to do with GWS readers, most of whom don't live in the city? Just this – of all the painful noises I know by far the most painful, even unbearable, in the loud crying or screaming of babies of young children. You will still hear the screaming through these protectors, but with less intensity so that, instead of being driven half-frantic by the noise, you will be more able to think about how to stop it, or at least be able to endure it. Furthermore, the protectors would be useful for taking naps in a noisy house or for otherwise on unwanted sound – barking dogs, loud music, chain saws, etc. As I say, they have improved my life and might well improve yours. Beyond that, children of all ages find them fascinating.