

# Where youngsters learn to GROW UP

At the Constance Colegrove kindergarten, one energetic little boy was doing things in the grand manner. He was painting with tremendous enthusiasm when our photographer snapped him, and asked his name. "Peter Hillary," was the reply.

"What does your daddy do?"

"He keeps bees."

All the children were busy in one way or another, either indoors or out, with a dedication that only pre-school children can achieve.

The pre-school years are among the most important in a child's life, for they are the years of greatest growth. They are also the most impressionable, and the way a child is handled then can have a far-reaching effect on his later life.

The development of kindergarten education is built around this understanding of child growth and development. Dr. Laura Hooper, emeritus professor of education at the University of Pennsylvania says, "Education is a continuous process and the idea of pre-school

education is to help a child to learn in his own way without missing any experiences."

At kindergarten, a child learns to mix with others of his own age group; things are tailored to his size and he has access, in play, to the world of grown-ups without them interfering and spoiling his world.

So a kindergarten is a world in miniature. Chairs and tables are small; there is a "home" corner with a kitchen, which has a refrigerator, stove, chairs and tables, a bedroom with dolls' beds, and a doll's pram; a "story corner" where they can listen to stories being read or told; a sand pit, water troughs (plastic aprons are worn here) and large painting



Young Peter Hillary (4½) at work on a painting "My daddy keeps bees," he said.

easels, which all help a child to express as well as to enjoy himself.

A group of children around a table were "cooking" with flour and water dough. The table was strewn with flour sifters, oven trays, wooden

spoons and rolling pins. We asked one little girl, busy with a pastry cutter, what the boys were like as cooks.

"Well, I don't know," she said. "I think all the boys are pretty funny cooks."

Equipment need not be expensive or elaborate. Boxes to climb over, large pieces of paper to tear, a jungle gym, tree trunks, sacking, old tyres, and baths all provide a world of learning and excitement.

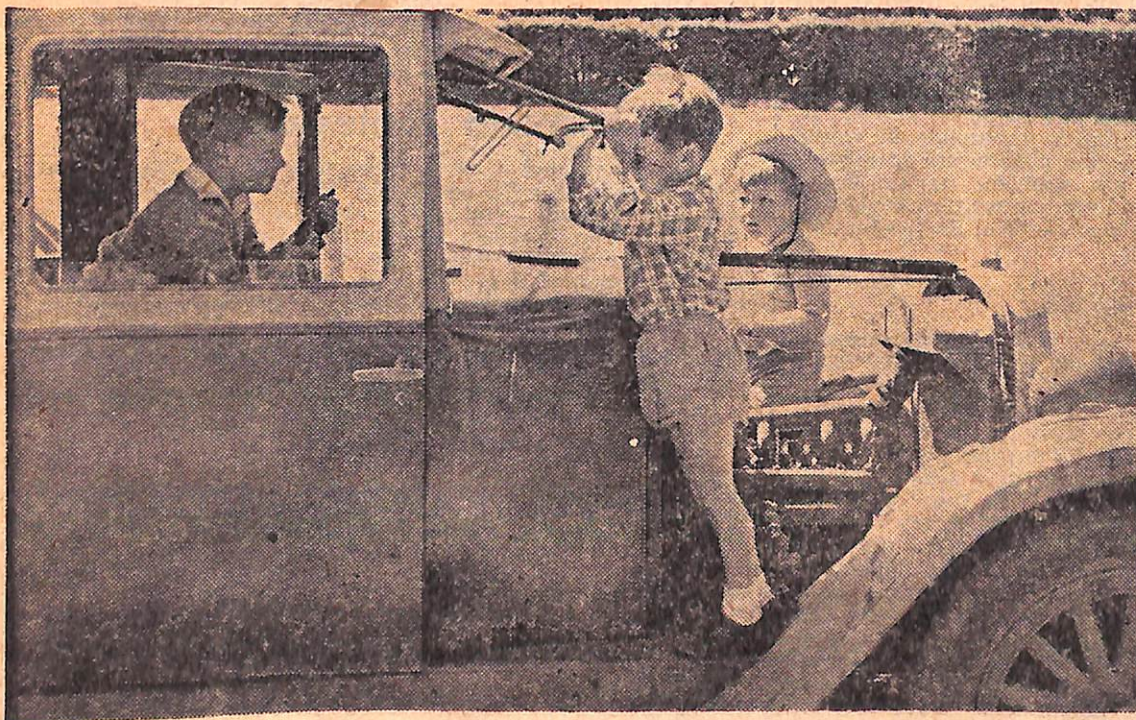
We saw an old car with its deflated tyres set in concrete, which can be "repaired," oiled, watered, greased or driven anywhere the children's imagination might take them.

An old dinghy under the trees takes them on fishing trips, right around the world, over the moon or off to the land of magic carpets and fairy princesses in golden towers.

## Creative dancing

Barefoot, creative dancing has a part in the kindergarten. The children often provide their own rhythm with drums made from barrels and marracas from baking powder tins. They interpret the rhythm of recorded music as completely as possible, and teachers no longer play "walking" or "running" tunes.

Last year, a Colombo Plan student from Thailand visited a kindergarten with a record of her native music. The only illustration she had was a pic-



"Three gallons, and check the tyres? Certainly, sir. Perhaps your windscreen needs a little attention, too." Mark Carroll, Paul Ewen and Guy Menzies, all aged 4, are motoring enthusiasts.

ture of Spanish dancers which she placed on the wall for the children to see.

With the aid of the music and the picture, the children automatically caught the spirit of the dancing and interpreted it in their own way.

### Finding out

Pre-school children are at an age when they are feeling, smelling, touching, tasting—finding out more and more about the world in which they live. They have a remarkably straight eye and the confidence of the fearless. They can hit a nail with a hammer in a way which would make the average do-it-yourself amateur blush for shame.

They also have an eye for design — a straight, flat piece of wood, a cotton reel, a slim upright piece of wood with a triangle of cloth nailed to it becomes a realistic-looking ship.

A necessary part of learning is an interest in nature—so most kindergartens have pets. The Myers Kindergarten in the heart of Auckland city has fish in a small aquarium, budgerigars and a guinea pig; birds in the surrounding trees are watched and there were crabs which the children learnt to handle without receiving nipped fingers.

Dressing-up clothes also are part of play, and a "dressing-up box" contains all manner of garments.



Boys may be funny cooks but twins Donald and Mark Bennett, aged 4 (pictured above), seem to be holding their own with fellow chefs Ruth Worthington (4½) and Lynley Bedford.

The aim of all kindergarten education is to encourage free activity. Within reason, they do what they want, when they want to do it. In this way they come to an activity in their own time. Some children develop faster than others, and by learning at their own pace, they are able to cope more easily. Discipline is easier, too, for they learn to think for

themselves and "problem children" are rare.

Parents are welcome at kindergartens. In fact, Association kindergartens like a mother to come along each morning to take an interest in the activities. When fathers are on shift work, they go along, too.

One or two Saturdays in a

term, a fathers' session is held, when father brings the child to kindergarten and takes part in a morning's activities.

Fathers enjoy these mornings, the children think it grand to have Daddy around, and the kindergarten usually reaps the benefit of greater help in patching and repairing toys as fathers begin to realize just what goes on.

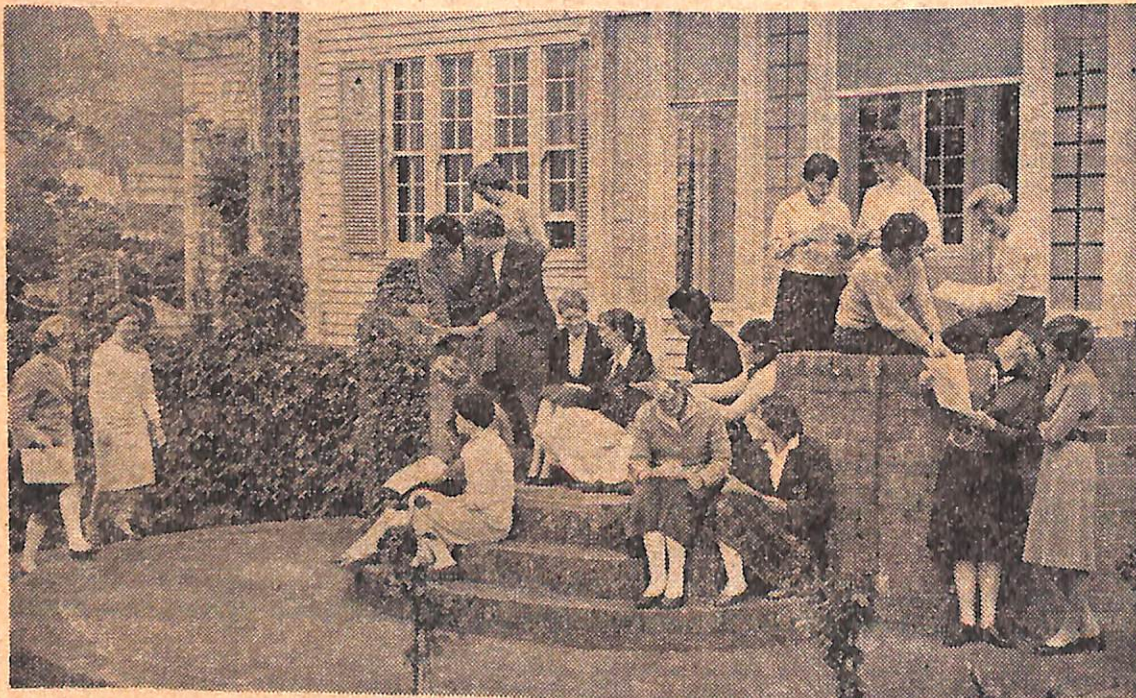
Although kindergartens are, in fact, free, parents are asked to make small contributions towards the maintenance and replacement of equipment and buildings which must be financed by the kindergarten itself.

The first Kindergarten Association was formed in Dunedin in 1889. Today there are 196 kindergartens in this country, and four training colleges for students. A total of 220 grants have been approved for 1960 for students throughout New Zealand.

These grants are not in the form of scholarships or bursaries, but merely an allowance to help with books and other expenses.

New Zealand is the only country which helps to pay expenses for kindergarten students. In Australia, for instance, they have to pay to be trained.

The minimum educational requirement for a student is three years' secondary education, but School Certificate or higher is preferred. Students



Examinations are close, so mid-morning break finds the girls studying or comparing notes on the steps outside the main entrance of the Training College in Auckland.

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