



KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

An official
publication of the
New Zealand Free
Kindergarten Union

March 1978



This very moving prayer was sent from Australia for inclusion in the Journal. It seems to me that it applies to parents, not just fathers and to children not just sons.

I consider it one of the most impressive pieces of writing I have ever read. It is my pleasure to share it with our readers.

Patricia M. Lockhart,
Editor.

"BUILD ME A SON, O LORD"

MacArthur's Prayer

"Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

"Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee—and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

"Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail.

"Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seems to master other men, one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

"And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humour, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom and the meekness of true strength.

"Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, 'I have not lived in vain.'"

The New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union

is a body which consists of and co-ordinates kindergarten associations throughout New Zealand working in the interests of kindergarten.

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The promised articles on the history of an older kindergarten and "Where Are We Going?" have not come to hand. We are blaming the closure of New Zealand during January for their non-appearance!

Look for them and the following in the July Journal:

A look at the O.E.C.D. Conference at Massey University.

More about I.Y.C.

An interview with the newly appointed Director of Early Childhood Education.

A further article by Marie Bell, a British Council Award winner.

The last essay in the Jubilee Year Competition—Dr David Barney by W. N. Payne.

Your contributions.

Articles in this and other Journals are the work, thoughts and ideas of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Union.

A CHALLENGE

"You can interrupt the improving of a road and 10 years later go on with it about where you left off, but if you interrupt decent care for children and 10 years later begin again to feel responsible for them, you can by no means begin where you left off. You find them irreparably grown up, and grown up wrong.

RETIREMENT

With the recent retirement of Miss Margaret Just the kindergarten movement has lost an outstanding teacher, tutor, friend, and colleague.

Following other appointments Miss Just held the position of Head Teacher at the Helen Deem Centre for Pre-School Education in Dunedin from its opening in November 1953 until the end of 1977.

Her work load in that position comprised a great deal of administration and also lecturing to the many groups who visited the Centre either on a regular or irregular basis.

These groups comprised Karitane and Plunket nurses, Kindergarten teacher trainees, medical students, Home science students and Secondary school pupils still trying to decide on their future career. Many of those pupils who decided on Kindergarten teaching did so after sympathetic and knowledgeable discussions with Miss Just.

Parents were welcomed with a smile and warm greeting and Miss Just always made time for a reassuring word with an anxious parent.

Every function held by either the Parents' Club or Kindergarten Committee was supported by way of donation of time, money and goods.

During the years 1968-72 Miss Just was President of the New Zealand Kindergarten Teachers' Association. At this time a great deal of careful thought and negotiation went into the preparation and presentation of a successful salary claim. A great deal of credit for the success must go to the President of the day.

At a farewell dinner in Dunedin in November tributes were paid to Miss Just by the President of the Union and By Dr Neil Begg who as Medical Director to the Plunket Society had worked with Miss Just over many years.

The Union thanks Miss Just for a lifetime of dedicated service to the kindergarten movement and wishes her a long and happy retirement.

LUNCHEON TO MARK THE RETIREMENT OF MRS HELEN DOWNER

After 27 years of dedicated service to the kindergarten movement, a luncheon was held at the end of July 1977, to mark the occasion of the retirement of Mrs Helen Downer.

Mrs Downer had been President of the Rotorua and Bay of Plenty Associations since their inception in 1950 and from 1957 to 1966 she was also President of the N. Z. Free Kindergarten Union. She was awarded the M.B.E. in 1961 for active and devoted service to the kindergarten movement and in 1954 a kindergarten in Rotorua was named after her.

These achievements were acknowledged and praised by Mr Toms, President of the Bay of Plenty Association who commended Mrs Downer for the efficient way in which she had run the Association and for her close contact and involvement with staff. Mrs Lockhart, President of the N. Z. Free Kindergarten Union said her first impression of Mrs Downer at the Dunedin 75th Jubilee Conference in 1964 was of a President with a fantastic control of proceedings. She also mentioned she was well aware of the tremendous work Mrs Downer had done for her association. Miss Christison, Officer for Pre-School Education spoke about the "three faces of Helen Downer".

Her public face which was her ability to chair a meeting in a controlled way, her fairness and directness. Her personal face when people can discuss things with her and receive comradeship. Then there is her third face, one of sympathy and understanding in times of bereavement, loneliness and ill-health. On behalf of the newly formed Tauranga Regional Free Kindergarten Association, Mrs Blow, President, thanked Mrs Downer for the tremendous assistance she had given her and wished her well in her retirement.

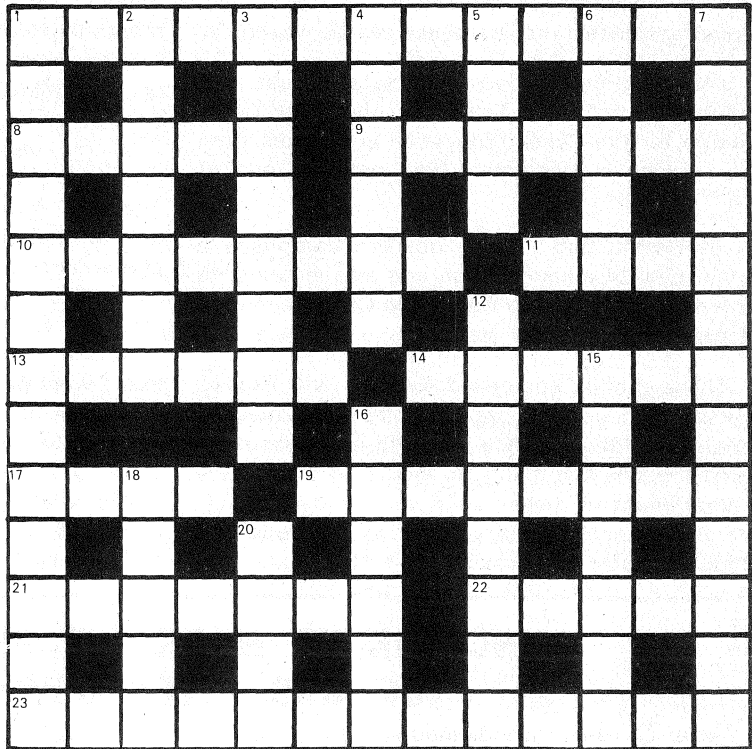
Accepting the gift of a colour television set, Mrs Downer thanked everyone for the gift and said she would treasure everything that had been said. She also thanked everybody for their loyal support and friendship. The years given to the movement were rewarding and stimulating and she had no regrets. In closing, Mrs Downer wished the kindergarten movement great success in the future.

Mr Toms stressed that this was not an occasion to farewell Mrs Downer as the Bay of Plenty Association would be calling upon her for advice and guidance in the future, but as an appreciation for the years of dedicated service.

A CROSSWORD

Across

1. This garden is not for flowers (1, 12).
8. "They have their . . . and their entrances" Shakespeare (5).
9. Well knit and may be for powder (7).
10. Of roads or vessels (8).
11. Some people might lead with this (4).
13. Put into channels (6).
14. Alkaline fertiliser made from utensil and tree (6).
17. First thing on the waiting list (4).
19. May be 15 down or unexpected (8).
21. French light (7).
22. The beginning (5).
23. When visiting Bedhouin you must do this (4, 2, 3, 4).



Down

1. Both are found in a triangle (4, 3, 6).
2. Stupid (7).
3. The sandy waste is left by the editor (8).
4. May be pertaining to colour (6).
5. Mary rearranged the land forces (4).
6. Something they try to do in 1 across (5).
7. Could be in the greatest (3, 2, 3, 5).

12. A bald man might have this if he lost his nightcap (4, 4).
15. Good for kindergarten children and keeping doctors away (2, 5).
16. The best there is (6).
18. American kids might have one (5).
20. Mountain animal yet I have not seen one (4).

Contributed by a Timaru reader.

Solution on Page 16

THE FOUR BONES THAT MAKE UP A CLUB

There are the Wishbones who spend all their time wishing someone would do all the work.

There are the Jawbones who do a lot of talking, but very little else.

There are the Knucklebones who knock everything everyone else tries to do or suggest.

Then there are the Backbones who get their backs under the load and get the job done.

What kind of member are you?

Another Entry in the Jubilee Competition

Mrs Helen Downer BA MBE

Janet M. Elliott, 1977

To provide a service for the growing numbers of pre-school children in the town and the opportunity for employment in their home district for girls whom she had taught at the Rotorua High School and whom she had encouraged to train for kindergarten teaching, in November 1950 Mrs Downer convened a public meeting to establish a free kindergarten in Rotorua. At that meeting she was elected president of the newly-formed Rotorua Free Kindergarten Association. Within three months the first kindergarten in the Bay of Plenty was established, and three years later it was operating in a permanent building which now has her name.

Mrs Downer attended her first Union Conference in 1951, when she was elected to a sub-committee set up to redraft the Union Constitution. This gave her an early insight into the scope of the movement and the opportunity to express the views of non-training associations. The following year she was elected as a non-training member of the Executive, on which she gave continuous and distinguished service until she did not seek re-election in 1966.

In 1956, she worked with Mrs K. B. McCreanor in the preparation of the Kindergarten Handbook, and took over the editing and supervision of the printing of the booklet and its subsequent reprints in 1961 and 1964. In the days when the shortage of teachers hampered the growth of kindergartens, Miss I. M. Jamieson and Mrs Downer were appointed by the executive as a publicity committee, in an effort to recruit students.

While Mrs Downer would not wish to take full credit for the Union's achievements during her term as president, her wise leadership and dedication to her office undoubtedly stimulated progress and development in pre-school education. She was the first non-training president, and like all previous holders of the position, the service she gave called for considerable financial sacrifice, for, although travelling expenses were met, it was not until 1960 that the Union was in the position to approve a hospitality allowance of 20 pounds per annum.

On her election as president at the 1957 Conference in Hastings, Mr C. E. Beeby, then Director of Education, the guest speaker, threw out a

challenge to associations to amalgamate into district associations to avoid fragmentation of control and to overcome problems created by rapid growth. The idea was enthusiastically received by some, while others viewed the proposal with suspicion and even hostility. Mrs Downer accepted the challenge, and during 1957/58 travelled to make contact with 60 associations to explain the implications of amalgamation. Through her efforts, membership of the Union fell from 78 to 67, thereby bringing greater stability and strength to the movement.

Few people today will remember when the pooling scheme was completed during the Conference, by a committee set up to receive and pay out money during sessions. Upon her election to president, Mrs Downer recommended that, in view of the time taken to administer the scheme, it should be handled by the Union office and be subject to audit. Her recommendation was endorsed by the honorary auditor who said that all payments to and from the pool should be made by cheque.

Union files from 1957 to 1966 reveal that Mrs Downer became deeply involved with the building programme. 1958 saw the gradual development, from the period of consolidation begun in 1956, to the policy of controlled expansion of new kindergartens. Although some associations were apt to be irked by what appeared to be frustrating delay, the record of those nine years is more than impressive, a total of 74 new kindergartens, in spite of a further halt in 1962/63, caused by a shortage of trained teachers. This was not the fully story. During the same period, 39 new buildings were erected to replace temporary premises and four buildings were purchased by the Department of Education and remodelled for use for kindergarten teachers in training.

1958, too, saw the first real steps towards a national system of training and a more equal sharing of the costs of administration, but it was not until the next year that any actual contribution to these costs was made by associations outside the training areas. It was first merely a token payment of 10 pounds per recognised kindergarten. The first equal sharing did not take place until 1962, when discussions which Mrs

Downer had with the Department of Education led to approval of a pilot scheme whereby associations might transfer control of the kindergarten teachers' colleges to Regional Boards of Management and Education Committees might be replaced by Boards of Studies. Later regulations were gazetted to effect the change.

Training Centre members of the executive were, at that time, nominated by their associations, but because of the new pattern of meeting the cost of training, Mrs Downer recommended an elected executive, as there is at the present time.

From 1965/68, Mrs Downer was a member of the Board of Studies of the Auckland Kindergarten Association, and has had continuous attendance at Ward meetings. She has also been a member of the District Pre-School Committee for the South Auckland Area since its inception until 1976.

In December 1959, the Kindergarten Regulations were gazetted, and in the same year, believing that the higher the qualifications for entry to any profession, the greater the number of applicants, at the request of the executive Mrs Downer had discussions with the Department of Education on the advisability of making School Certificate the minimum qualification for entry to kindergarten teacher training. Although some fears were expressed concerning the effect raising the qualification would have on recruitment, they have not been realised.

As early as 1965 Mrs Downer raised the question with the Department of a three-year training course for kindergarten teachers. Her concern for stability in staffing and longer service from teachers led her to give strong support to the introduction of a bond to bring kindergarten teaching into line with other services.

Accompanied by Mrs Herbert Batten, in July 1959, Mrs Downer made submissions in Auckland, on behalf of the Union, to the Consultative Committee on Infant Pre-School Health Services. In July 1961, in conjunction with the Christchurch Association, she made submissions to the Commission on Education, on behalf of the Union, urging that the national system of education be extended to embody the free kindergarten system and that this be given recognition in the Education Act; that kindergarten teacher training be extended to cover the age range of 3 to 7+, that the Minister of Education assume full responsibility for kindergarten teacher training and that a

regional educational authority organise and administer all kindergarten activities. Already some progress has been made towards these goals, and it may well be that, in the present re-organisation of education, other matters raised at that time will receive attention.

In 1960, discussions were held with the Federation of Play Centres on the possibility of moving towards a New Zealand Pre-School Association and the holding of a Pre-School Convention. No doubt the seeds were sown at that precise moment for the holding of the very successful New Zealand Early Childhood Care and Development Convention held in Christchurch in 1975.

Following correspondence between the then World President and Mrs Downer, the Union became a constituent member of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education. She ably represented New Zealand at the OMEP Conference held in Bonn in 1971 and the Union at two Australian Pre-School Association Conferences, one in Hobart in 1961 and the other in Brisbane in 1964.

In 1962, at Wanganui, Mrs Downer's opening remarks to conference, and later, in an annual meeting, her casting vote, ensured that the word "Free" remained in the title of the Union. I quote from her opening address:

"Are we sincere when we say that we aim to provide an extension and complement of the home; that the early formative years are the most important in a child's life and that attendance at a kindergarten will give an important social and educational experience to little children. Which children? All children? Or just those whose parents make a satisfactory cash contribution.

"If we delete this difficult word, what will we use in its place? Public kindergartens? Government kindergartens? Or just kindergartens? Then how will they be distinguished from private kindergartens registered under the Child Care Centre Regulations? It is not a matter for pride that it is specifically stated in those regulations that free kindergartens are outside their scope? If the general public does not understand what a free kindergarten is, ours is the task to explain."

Ten years later, in Auckland, it was her impassioned address to the Conference that led the meeting to reverse an earlier decision to replace the historic title "Union" with the meaningless name "Kindergartens Incorporated".

An important anniversary was celebrated in 1964, when Dunedin reached the 75th year of its

service to the movement. To commemorate the occasion, Mrs Downer compiled and edited the booklet "Seventy-five Years of Free Kindergartens in New Zealand" . . . no mean task, and often discouraging through the dilatory response of some associations to requests for their history. The book, which provides the only complete history of the movement, now has a place in all public libraries in New Zealand.

In 1970, on behalf of the Bay of Plenty Association, Mrs Downer prepared submissions to the Committee of Inquiry into Pre-School Education on the subject of Supervising Head Teachers, which were adopted by the Union. With other presidents of associations with 10 or more recognised kindergartens, she was invited by Miss Ingram to accompany her to the Minister, to press for the appointment of these teachers. Approaches have not yet met with the success they deserve, but they have at least led to an improved advisory service.

Mrs Downer has always shown a keen interest in the welfare of teachers, and was responsible for the preparation of a course of lectures on kindergarten administration for students. She was an early advocate of country sections, realising that the experience gained would prove invaluable to those appointed to small associations.

While president, she established cordial relations with the New Zealand Free Kindergarten Teachers' Association, and was quick to appreciate the value of, and to provide the opportunity for, Principals' Meetings, particularly when they were working upon a uniform syllabus.

Before finalising appointments to the Bay of Plenty Association, she makes a practice of interviewing students at the College, to provide information on the Association and the localities of its kindergartens. Her door is always open, and many teachers have cause to remember with gratitude her tolerant understanding and sympathetic advice on their professional and personal problems.

While being interviewed on radio, addressing many meetings, service clubs and women's

organisations, Mrs Downer has grasped the opportunity to publicise the kindergarten movement and to bring before the community the needs of pre-school children. As a result, there is a greater awareness of the value of pre-school education, and greater support to hasten the establishment of kindergartens.

In recognition of her service to pre-school education, Mrs Downer was awarded the MBE in 1961 and Honorary Life Membership of the Union was conferred upon her at the 1967 Conference held in Napier.

When paying tribute to Mrs Downer on the occasion of her retirement at the Westport Conference in 1966, Miss L. M. C. Ingram said:

"Mrs Downer is a natural leader, with all the attributes it requires to be successful. The most important of these, I would say, is an unruffled exterior. This has covered, at times, an inner anxiety as to how a point might turn or proceed, but at all times she has been master of the situation.

"I have served on the executive for the whole of the nine years that Mrs Downer has been our president and I have come to know her very well. She has never left anything to chance . . . by that I mean she has always come well prepared; to the Conference table; she has put the same thought into executive meetings; and what is most important of all for the growth and standing of kindergarten education, she has been an excellent negotiator on the movement's behalf with members of the Department and the Minister . . . this I know, for I have accompanied her, as have many other members of the executive, on numerous occasions. We have always had the utmost faith in her ability to represent us in a dignified and reasoned manner, and we have cause to be grateful for the long service she has been prepared to give."

Twenty-six years after the first public meeting was called to establish a kindergarten in Rotorua, Mrs Downer is still at the helm of a vigorous and expanding association . . . a tribute, indeed, to her dedication to the kindergarten movement.

CONGRATULATIONS

The N.Z.F.K.U. extends warmest congratulations to Mr N. G. Leckie the newly appointed Director of Early Childhood Education with the Department of Education.

An interview with Mr Leckie will appear in the July Journal.

INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Another Departmental Circular—Not just another sometimes difficult to understand document but to my delight an invitation to attend an Inservice Course at Lopdell House at Titirangi. This was to be an Early Childhood Education National Course, "Integration of Education and Community Services in Early Childhood Education", held from 7-9 June 1977, the Course Director, Mrs Elizabeth Connolly, District Adviser Pre-school Education, Auckland. On reading the programme and list of those attending it seemed to me that there were perhaps others who could contribute and benefit more than me. The selection of personnel to attend such courses is not undertaken haphazardly and I felt in all honesty that I should not accept the invitation without making my very limited knowledge of this field known. However on discussion with Mrs Connolly I was assured my invitation had, like all others, not been issued without due thought.

Although a few of the other participants were acquaintances I knew no one well and arrival at Lopdell House can be rather like arriving at boarding school. After travelling overseas (many years ago) by myself I am a firm believer that this is the best situation in which to be put. You have to make your own contacts and not being 'Tied to a friend', free to participate in anything and everything. This was my first opportunity to mix with Polynesians and learn of their culture. I think everyone was intent on getting to know everyone else and it is without a doubt quite one of the most interesting and rewarding few days I have spent.

The 'Ice' was broken over morning tea and there was no room for 'standoffishness'. Obviously the course would be demanding but fun.

The first working session was very ably chaired by Miss Win Penman, Education Officer for Maori and Island Education. We commenced with a prayer in Tokelauan and I became aware of just how much emphasis was placed on the spiritual aspect of Pacific Island life. This was followed by members from different Island groups telling us of their cultural backgrounds and life. Louisa and Erolini from Samoa; Puroko and Mary from the Cook Islands; Ianeta from Tokalau. No wonder new arrivals from these areas have difficulties in adap-

ting to our New Zealand way of life. Theirs is so different, more informal, simple and unrestricted, but with high principles, families are larger and it is Grandmother who plays a very important part in family life. Religious training and observances are a mainstay. How would the average New Zealander cope with the transition to a foreign and more sophisticated country? The language barrier is but one major hurdle. Put in this position, you too would have difficulties. In every case the Pacific Islanders participating in the course had made the break from their secure and sheltered environment for two reasons only—to provide a better education, and seek better employment opportunities for their families.

During the course we learned of the many services and people involved in the integration of Education and Community Services in E.C.E. Mr Athol Blair from the Department of Education Special Services was Tuesday evening's speaker. He explained in depth the functions of O.E.C.D. and C.E.R.I. This led to information about the Bairds Extended Day Kindergarten in Otara. This project commenced in 1973 with a survey being carried out under the direction of local authorities and M.P.s to determine needs in the Otara area. Approval was given in 1974 for the kindergarten to go ahead on the basis of full Government provision with the Auckland Kindergarten Association accepting the administration, management and control on completion of the building. A plan was designed to the new code, but included provision for sleeping, comprehensive kitchen and laundry facilities. A total of 50 children attend, 20 every morning for a normal kindergarten session and an additional 30 may remain until 3.30 p.m. and are provided with a hot dinner and rest period. A staffing quota of four trained teachers plus assistance in the kitchen.

Wednesday morning commenced with a talk by Dr Thelma Becroft who, after working for 20 years with tribal communities in New Guinea has now returned to work with the Health Department in Auckland, concentrating on family Health clinics, which are run as drop in centres! Mental Health's need of adults is a high priority with emphasis on caring and sharing. The Centres are mainly situated in halls in conjunction with a play group or playcentre. The atmosphere is kept as

informal as possible, a cup of tea always provided and the service is available to all cultures as required. Doctors and Community Nurses are in attendance, but the medical setting is kept as far as possible akin to the environment from which the people using it have come.

This was followed by a very moving and sincere talk by Mrs Rose Hanek, who for the past 18 years has held the position of Head Teacher at the Logan Campbell Kindergarten. Mrs Hanek feels that the working aim of Kindergarten is far broader than children alone, it stretches to parents, grandparents and into the Community. She gave a brief history of the Kindergarten, its present liaison with neighbouring schools, health clinics and plunket nurse; emphasised the flexibility of the programme and the prime importance of language development through listening and learning, music, songs, finger plays, rhymes and the interaction of staff and children. The kindergarten caters for a multicultural society of differing economic and religious groups and particularly for new immigrants with their adjustment problems, also their very valuable contribution to our New Zealand way of life.

Our next speakers represented a group of Community preschool workers, five in the team who had been working together for one year. Each worker has a set area. They aim to make contact by door knocking, introducing families to one another, school play groups, kindergartens, social clubs, etc, and practical help given with transport, shopping, rent, contact with support needs such as doctors and plunket.

Wednesday afternoon commenced with Mrs Alison Leonard telling up about her work as Co-ordinator of the Nga Tapuwai Community College Child Care Centre. This is a pre-school situated in the College grounds under the auspices of child-care. It caters for children nine months to five years,—a free play programme with set times for morning tea and lunch. Mrs Leonard and her assistant are employed by the College and parents using the service pay a fee. This unit comes under the umbrella of the Home Economics Department and Mrs Leonard visits classes, talking and encouraging the pupils to visit the unit to observe the children and their use of equipment.

Mrs Jill Richards works as an Auckland City Council Co-ordinator in Family Day Care. Briefly this entails finding sympathetic people with suitable homes who would like to provide short or

long-term day care for parental relief. This work entails constant visiting and the settling of necessary financial arrangements.

Mrs Ana Jones is in charge of an Auckland City Council Child Care Centre which has four permanent and three part-time staff, voluntary workers and students from local schools. Seddon High School are responsible for meals two days a week; Queen Victoria Girls College go in after school to help with music; Auckland Girls' Grammar are involved with art work; Henderson High School make manipulative equipment. The building was financed 1/3 by Government and 2/3 by the Auckland City Council. A mixture of people of many different cultures use the Centre and as each new family arrives they write a greeting (for all to see) in their own language.

Thursday morning group visits encompassed the Mount Albert Baptist Day Care Centre, Gladstone Road School Play Group, Onehunga Preschool Group, Nga Tapuwai College Child Care Centre, Auckland Day Care Centre, Logan Campbell Kindergarten. I accepted an invitation to visit Bairds Extended Day Kindergarten then on to a second kindergarten built to the new code, situated in the grounds of the Otara School.

Later in the day Mrs Puroku Hall explained her association with the Pacific Island Church Preschool in Tokoroa. This group operates in the church hall two mornings each week. Although there is a very informal atmosphere the routine must make the children feel secure. Funds are met by the very strong parental involvement.

Mrs Iris Pater continued, with her involvement in the Tokoroa Aimsfield Playcentre. This is a small group which has been operating for a year, again relying solely on parental and community support.

The Otago Pre-school Project is something entirely different. This was outlined by Miss Marjory Gibson and the talk illustrated by an excellent set of coloured slides. The project was established as part of the third phase of the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Child Development Study headed by Phil Silva, Research Psychologist. It is financed by the Department of Education as part of a collaborative exercise with the University of Otago. This project aims to develop improved techniques for the early identification of children who are likely to be educationally handicapped and to develop effective education programmes for pre-school children identified as educationally handicapped.

Finally we broke into district groups to discuss "where do we go from here" and after a lot of discussion report back. This is a question being asked all over the country. While we can boast of our wide range and choice of pre-school services, are these services flexible and readily available to all who wish to use them? Are they catering for the needs of every culture? Are we smug and self satisfied by achievements to date? Do we expect Government 'handouts' to cover all the costs and are we making an honest attempt to welcome all cultures? Is there room for improvement? What are we as individuals or organisations doing to ensure these come about? Indeed, food for thought.

As with all courses informal discussion is an integral part. This course was no exception. Our attempts to learn greetings in Cook Island, Tokelauan, Nuiean, Samoan and Maori helped the atmosphere of the course and provided much hilarity. We also learnt simple songs such as Oma Rapeti—these haunted me for weeks. Mrs Iris Pate was never without her guitar and wherever a group gathered music was spontaneous. Our last evening—a social one—was devoted to Polynesian rhythmical movement, songs, humour, an odd glass of wine and plenty of discussion. I was grateful to Iris, Puroku and Louisa for their invitation to join them in a bed time cup of tea which turned into a three hour discussion! I learnt so much more about their lives, their concern for their peoples' integration into our way of life, how much their culture could enrich ours and, all to often our total lack of understanding. It is people such as Iris, Puroku and Louisa to whom we should listen and whose guidance we should accept,—there are many hundreds like them in New Zealand.

Two of the songs sung at the course.

OMA RAPETI (Run Rabbit)

Oma Rapeti
Oma Rapeti
Oma Oma Oma
Oma Rapeti
Oma Rapeti
Oma Oma Oma
Pao Pao Pao te pu ate Pakeha
Oma Rapeti
Oma Rapeti
Oma Oma Oma

FAREWELL SONG

Farewell dear friends
Farewell dear friends
Thank you for the fellowship
Best wishes to you, from us all
God be with each one of us.

Maori

Haere mai ra,
Haere mai ra,
Tena ra koutou katoa
E nga iwi, hei tonu ra
Tena ra koutou katoa

Cook Island

Kia ora ana
Kia ora ana
No'o ake koutou
Koutou Katoa, te tangi
No'o ake kotou.

Samoan

Tofa soifua, Tofa soifua
la manuia le malaga
la te outou, uma lava
Tofa soifua, Tofa

Nuiean

Fakalofa atu, fakalofa atu,
Kia mutolu, oti
Kia mavehe, mo e monuina
O a mutolu

Mary Collier



15th OMEP WORLD CONFERENCE

Marie Bell

Periodically New Zealand membership of OMEP (Organisation Mondiale d'Education Prescolaire) is discussed. When I had the good fortune to attend the 15th OMEP Conference in Warsaw in August 1977, I tried to assess what New Zealanders could gain from membership and what they could offer. This New Zealander was very much enriched by the whole experience.

Unsophisticated as I was in the art of travelling on business outside the country, I found the experience of sudden departure, world air travel with its service and efficiency, and precipitate arrival into a new world of language and culture so exhilarating that fatigue hardly registered. I reached the Forum Intercontinental Hotel, the location for registration, after 44 hours of travel or waiting at airports, to find my room had been re-allocated as I was late because of the Heathrow work-to-rule. I sat amid a large group of people busily engaged in renewing or initiating acquaintances while a university student rang around to find me substitute accommodation. She achieved this at last at the Polonia, a hotel less modern than the Forum but quite adequate, except that it provided no meals.

After breakfast next morning at a cafe round the corner, I went with Wendy Lee, the other New Zealand representative to the official opening. A new experience was the use of earphones for the translation of speeches, and inability to communicate with most of those around.

The World President, Dr Margaret Devine, in her opening address stressed the enormity of the challenge of improving pre-school education throughout the world. She quoted examples such as the fact that more than 2½ billion children are without a safe water supply, yet water-related diseases are the greatest killers of the very young and that one in five of the world's children suffer from hunger-related malnutrition. Globally teachers of young children have little training and equipment and programmes rarely cater for the needs of pre-schoolers, who can often be found in huge groups, passively engaged in meaningless rote learning. Dr Devine urged delegates to reflect their will and determination in their recommendations. On the stage were council delegates and leading government officials. After Dr

Devine's speech a group of beautiful little boys and girls burst from the wings clutching bunches of flowers which they distributed to the large gathering of important people. Speeches continued all day. Through all ran the thread of intense pain and sorrow at the fate of two million Polish children killed in the war. August is a particularly sad month in Poland because it commemorates the agony of the 1944 uprising in which so many young people expressed their desperate defiance against the occupation. In every street candles flickered and wreaths were piled high, telling their story of intense sadness. These memories obviously reinforced the feeling very obvious among the Polish people I met, that children are precious, childhood is important, and only the best is good enough.

The main emphasis of the Conference made me feel very much at home. The need for family and community involvement in the education of young children was a major theme. The importance of play was stressed. As the word "play" was translated as "games" by the interpreters I found this very confusing at first. Polish leaders appear to share the faith of some of our educationists that pre-school education is the key to social equality and justice. Testament to the importance of the occasion was the number of leading male officials who spoke from the stage, emphasising and re-emphasising the above points, and illustrating with personal anecdotes. As in New Zealand women are the practitioners involved with the children.

Although the opening speakers emphasised that participation and fostering of friendship were major goals of the conference, there was no social occasion which involved all members although the numbers, approximately 500, were small. Social events included only one or two representatives from each country and were very formal. The discussion groups which were called debates were a repetition of the plenary sessions, except that we sat at tables, facing each other, earphones glued to our ears, looking, but not communicating, trying to focus in on the concepts which were often shrouded in unfamiliar idioms.

This experience gave me valuable insight into one of our major challenges in Early Childhood Education, the provision of opportunities for participation by immigrant women. How frustrating and exhausting it is to be unable to communicate! I felt very grateful to those who took the time and trouble to explain, and equally hostile to those who appeared uncaring or exclusive. It was equally difficult when I aired my very basic French. People were so interested to know about New Zealand they tested my vocabulary to the limit and I got to the point of wishing they would leave me in peace. How would you reply in French to "Do you have servant problems?" or "What is life like in New Zealand? I learned to appreciate the value of the companionable, supportive, undemanding inclusion which some of our guides were able to provide.

One of the dominant features of the Warsaw landscape is the Palace of Culture, a huge gift from the U.S.S.R., so massive that its tip disappeared into the clouds of morning and evening mist. Conference members entered it to view an exhibition of child art, an entertainment by a group of young singers and dancers, and a number of films about and for children. The film which most impressed me was simply called "The Cow". A British film without words it showed a pre-school child in a field building up a number of impressions as he minutely observed, touched, smelt, and listened to the animal. It seemed to me that students could profitably make similar films or videos and gain much by the exercise.

During the week there was a pleasing balance of practical and theoretical activities. We went in buses to several pre-schools which reminded me very much of the post-war English nursery schools. Beauty of environment was a strong emphasis with trees, gardens, pictures, displays, flower arrangements, and polished parquet floors much in evidence. The children, who were mainly in the 4-6 age group, were very orderly and organised and art and sedentary puzzle-type activities were featured. This could have been considered the easiest way to cope with visitors and was probably in no way a fair picture of the usual programme. There appeared to be much consideration for neatness, orderliness and politeness, and the children were obviously greatly valued. Very well dressed dolls, beautiful table games and child-size furniture must have accounted for a large share of the money allocation.

Parent participation, much stressed in the

papers at the conference, appeared to be limited to teacher advice and meetings outside per-school hours. In one kindergarten parents returning from work to collect their children, went into a special room from where they phoned the nursery staff who then sent the children down. It was considered unhygienic to allow parents into the classrooms. There was much talk about prevention in regard to behaviour and learning difficulties. All the pre-schools I saw either had female psychologists on the staff or readily available.

Opinion on daycare seemed to be very divided. The policy-makers who spoke at the opening session all stressed the importance of the family and its tremendous influence. Our guides who had families were using grandmothers or were spending time at home with their children, and were very critical of day nurseries. We were told by the guides we got to know well that apartments in the cities are so small that most of their contemporaries were having very small families and that family planning facilities were very helpful and readily available. Therefore the average time spent at home raising children was short. I gathered that there was a big and as yet unsatisfied demand not only because women work, but also because families feel they need support in child rearing. It was hard to get a true picture of the adequacy of provision. Between 1945 and 1976 the number of pre-school centres rose from 843 to 24,700, that 45 percent of children under seven now receive pre-school education, and that a major effort is being made to provide for all six year olds, 10 percent of whom are not in pre-school.

I gained immeasurably from the experience of comparing my own community so relatively small, sheltered, and affluent, with that of a much larger country struggling back from near destruction and still working against great odds to preserve its identity. It stimulated much reconsideration of our goals, principles, and practices. I would support future moves to send women engaged in Early Childhood Education overseas, not only to OMEP, but also to other world conferences. We need to see the small world of home, family and community, to which we have traditionally confined our attention, in the broader terms of a world made smaller by air travel and improved communication. We can gain new perspectives. We can also contribute some expertise, particularly in regard to parent and community partnership.

NEW IDEAS PAGE

SAND—A VERSATILE MEDIA FOR LEARNING

What do the words sand play conjure up for you? Do you think nostalgically back to balmy days on a hot beach having a family picnic? Can you smell the perfume of yellow lupins, sun burn oil, seaweed and feel the grittiness of sand, clinging to your wet skin, or in your sandwiches! Can you remember the pleasure of making footprints in smooth sand cleaned by the tide, jumping from a high bank, digging enormous holes that you could practically disappear in or modelling large castles, moats, tunnels, ramps, or mountains? Can you capture the feeling of space so vast it could be overwhelming to a small child? Or do you think of a small oblong concrete plot, with a shallow layer of sand, some buckets, spades and metal toys, sometimes not in very good condition and the sun beating down relentlessly on the surrounding hard seal of a playground?

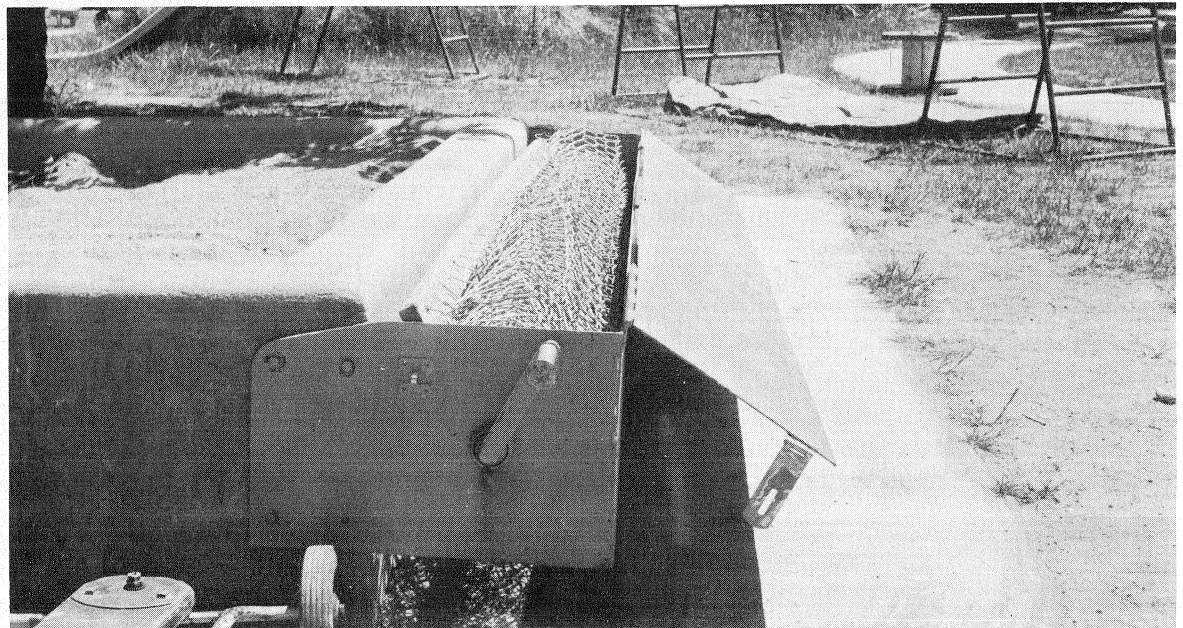
All sandplay cannot take place at the beach but sand areas can be made more imaginative, and stimulating by being aware of three essential provisions. These are: The presence of informed adults, an interesting area of sand and first class equipment.

ADULT INTERACTION

The first and most important provision is the presence of informed caring adults, who see the

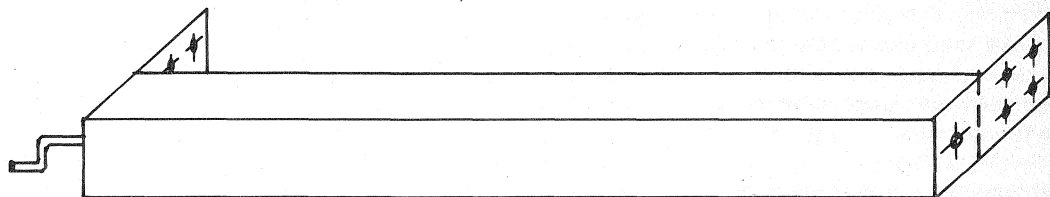
sandpit not as a pastime, not just as a fun time place but as an area when the child can discover many essential facts, not only about his environment but about himself. 'The teacher or adult plays an essential part in this discovery approach, she sparks off interest and curiosity, she plans a sequence of stages through which the child strives towards the ultimate goal of abstract ideas. By sharing the child's exploration adventures, her well stocked and mature mind stirs the child's mind. Her active participation in what the child is doing helps to sustain and channel his/her efforts, so that his/her learning has depth and direction.' So says Alice Yardley in her book 'Structure in Early Learning' (1). She goes on to point out many of the discoveries a child can make, discoveries that are the early stages of mathematical and scientific concepts. Sensory exploration acquaints children with the grittiness and sifting qualities of sand. It can be pushed, or blown about, patted or scattered. Sometimes it gives way easily, at others it is solidly resistant.

Children need the help of the adult in crystallising their experiences and finding words to express their ideas, and such words as rough, smooth, hard, soft, spray, shift etc. will acquire fresh meaning.



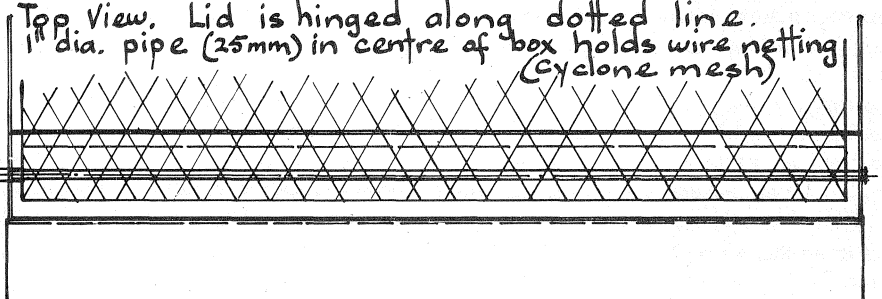
SAND PIT COVER

1. Cover bolts onto end of Sand-pit with Dyna-Bolts. cover is made from $\frac{1}{8}$ " (3mm) steel.

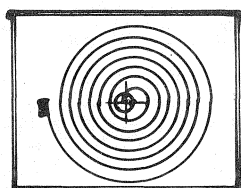


2. Top View. Lid is hinged along dotted line. 1" dia. pipe (25mm) in centre of box holds wire netting (cyclone mesh)

Removable handle



- 3.



Nail a 2"x1" (50x25) board onto the end of the wire-netting. In the evening lift lid and pull wire-netting back by holding the board.

In the morning lift lid and wind back with the removable handle. Lid remains closed throughout day.

Advantages:-

1. No lifting of covers by Teachers at all.
2. No problem of storage of covers.
3. Easily wound up, and when lid is closed children can safely sit on it.
4. Little or no maintenance.

There are many kinds of sand and different grades vary widely in both texture and colour. Silver sand from the river, golden sand from certain beaches, iron sand from the west coast beaches (great fun to explore with paper and a magnet) and the whole range of different coloured sands available in New Zealand to enrich the environment of the young child.

These experiences are only made possible by the intervention of the adult, in providing the material and being present to extend the activity.

AREA OF SAND

The second essential for good sand play is naturally a large sand area or better still two areas linked by a path. The shape is not as important as the size and depth of sand (2½ to 3 feet at least). In a study I undertook in 1973 (2), I observed 24 different 4-year-old girls each over a period of two hours (at different Kindergartens) and found that not one of these girls played in a sand area!

The challenge to discover why this was so encouraged me to undertake a further study, this time of 'rejection incidents in the sand area'. I guessed that the highly active often aggressive play of the boys discouraged girls from playing in the area, this was borne out but there were other factors influencing the girls choice as well, such as teachers expectations for girls, girls own ex-

pectations for themselves, girls clothing and preference for indoor activities (3).

The two smallest sand areas in my study accounted for one third of the rejection incidents recorded, that is, where boys took some action against girls. At two of the largest sand areas there were no rejection incidents which seems significant.

Details of surrounds, covers and drainage in sand areas can be found in *Sand—Its Purposes and Pleasures* (4).

FIRST CLASS EQUIPMENT

The third essential to ensure optimum learning experiences in the sand area, is first class equipment. This does not necessarily have to be expensive, but it should always be in good condition and there should be an adequate supply for the size of the area and the numbers of children who may wish to play there. If there is a shortage of equipment children direct their energy against others (5). Many of the incidents I noted in my study were caused by too few spades of good quality being available or competition to play with one or two metal earth moving pieces of equipment that were particularly large or attractive.

A wide variety of equipment can add to the exciting possibilities for dramatic and role play. Sieves (can be made from large fruit tins with nail holes punched in the bottom), colanders, funnels,



measuring cups, plastic bags (not large enough to go over a head), squares of heavy polythene, weights and scales, strongly constructed bowls, wooden spoons, strong plastic jugs, sand rollers, wood for bridges, sand rakes or combs, pine cones, peeled willow logs (about 1ft long X 3" diameter), scallop shells, flat river stones and large pumice stones are all interesting accessories. Off cuts of plumbers PVC piping, straights, curves, elbows and T joints, make fascinating drainage and water systems. A diggorator, a wooden imitation of an earth moving machine that requires skilful handling is a worthwhile extra.

Pulleys and hooks make an interesting addition to the sand area. The pulley can be mounted on a post either attached to a platform or set in a cable reel beside the sandpit. A large plastic down pipe can be attached to the platform with brackets, so dry sand may be poured either through a large funnel or directly into the pipe and returned to the sandpit. Small concrete mixers available from hardware stores, are excellent for role play.

All muscles of the body are used in this versatile activity of sand play. Larger muscles in the pushing, pulling, digging, stacking, carrying, reaching, sweeping, stretching and finer muscles in the delicate placing of a flower or a flag on top of a high mound, in the poking of a finger or scooping with a hand to make a tunnel in a damp mound.

Motor skill is required in moving between other children's 'sandworks', in digging without throwing sand on a neighbour and when this does happen, social skills are required or can be learned from the alert adult, to avoid a confrontation.

This article can only touch on some of the exciting learning possibilities for children in the sand area. Dry sand requires a separate article but this topic is well covered in 'Structure in Early Learning'.

Special provision should be made for children who are handicapped or bedridden, to play with sand, as all children benefit from experience with this versatile media.

Alice Yardley says 'it could never be said' that 'the child of six has learned all he can about sand' or 'has grown out of it.' Man goes on learning about the natural materials which he uses throughout the whole of his life (1).

(1) Structure in Early Learning—Alice Yardley, 1974. Evans Brothers Ltd, London.

(2) 'Sex role development in young children'. E. N. Connelly, 1973.
(3) 'A Study of rejection incidents in sand or block areas', 1974. Available, E. N. Connelly.
(4) 'Sand—its purposes and pleasures'—Auckland Pre-school Advisers, Department of Education, Private Bag, Newmarket.
(5) 'Setting the stage for learning' (22min Black and White) 1966. National Film Library Catalogue No. B 3803.

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QUOTE

The aim of education should be to teach us how to think, not what to think.

Congratulations to Mrs Bronwyn King of Te Aroha who won the 'Proverb' competition. Her entry will appear in the July journal.

Solution to Crossword on Page 4

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|----|
| 1A | K | 2I | N | 3D | E | 4R | G | 5A | R | 6T | E | 7N |
| P | | D | | E | | A | | R | | E | | O |
| 8E | X | I | T | S | | 9C | O | M | P | A | C | T |
| X | | O | | E | | I | | Y | | C | | I |
| 10A | R | T | E | R | I | A | L | | 11C | H | I | N |
| N | | I | | T | | L | | 12C | | | | T |
| 13D | U | C | T | E | D | | 14P | O | T | 15A | S | H |
| A | | | | | D | | 16F | | L | | N | E |
| 17N | A | 18M | E | | 19W | I | N | D | F | A | L | L |
| G | | O | | 20Y | | N | | P | | P | | E |
| 21L | U | M | I | E | R | E | | 22A | L | P | H | A |
| E | | M | | T | | S | | T | | L | | S |
| 23S | T | A | Y | I | N | T | H | E | T | E | N | T |