



The Observatory

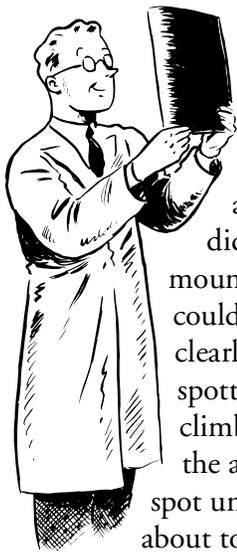
Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ☽ Issue 5, March 2004

Scientific Method in Action

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

March is an exciting month at Mountain School. The long awaited auction is almost here. There are six very interesting minicourses to choose from; the baby chicks delight everyone with their too-fleeting soft and fluffy stage; and the suddenness of Spring entices us all outside to have our snacks in the garden and luxuriate in the bunches and bunches of daffodils and narcissus blooming everywhere. The children of the 4/5s have grown up so much and by now they know exactly how they want to spend their days at school. I love the way their imaginations guide their play – as pirates, princesses and even dogs. And their curiosity is alive and growing, too, with lots of hypotheses about all the interesting phenomena we encounter.



Last Monday our class spent the afternoon hiking at the Russian Ridge Open Space Preserve located at the intersection of Skyline Boulevard and Alpine Road. Just above the parking lot the children found the remnants of an animal skeleton – an entire backbone and rib cage! What was it? How did it die? Was it killed by dinosaurs? Or wolves? Or a mountain lion? We can only feel our own ribs but we could see and feel the structure of that animal's bones so clearly without the flesh obscuring the design. After spotting a pond turtle sunning herself at Alpine Lake we climbed a huge rock and slid down its face, investigated the acorn grinding rocks and traveled on to our snack spot under a wonderful grove of oaks. But just as we were about to leave the trail another observant child noticed a second skeleton just like the first. This time the skull was close by with the antlers attached with even a little fur remaining. Someone else spotted the leg bones, one with a hoof! It was the most complete skeleton I've ever seen in the wild.

When the children studied their maps on the day after the hike, Jacob wanted to know which tree he had climbed so he could place himself correctly on the map. When we looked at the globe another day some-

(Continued on page 3)

What a Difference Two Years Make

by Jane Krecji, Teacher Friday 2's

I have the privilege every Friday afternoon of watching the children in the 4/5s class arrive (while Kathy and I are cleaning up from the morning 2s class). I see them running up the hill – sometimes by themselves, sometimes hand in hand with a carpool partner. They easily fling their packs off their back and into a cubby. They eagerly enter the schoolhouse. Some check out the “offerings” for the day; others go right to an area or activity they already had in mind. They engage in activities and with their peers with such confidence and enthusiasm.

It strikes me that just two (or maybe three) years ago, these same children were walking up the hill clutching their lunch box with one hand and holding tightly to mom or dad with the other. They enter the schoolhouse curious, but often tentatively. Their world is expanding – there is so much to take in. It is just the beginning of their school adventure.

It really is thrilling to witness this tremendous growth in confidence and competence over a relatively short period. I am grateful! ☽

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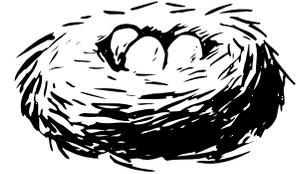
Thank you for the letters, book reviews, and creative contributions to this issue. The newsletter deadline for the final issue of this school year is Monday, April 19. Submissions may be e-mailed to: nfrees@sbcglobal.net.

A Wonder Walk

by Jane Krecji, Teacher Friday 2's

Go to a favorite park (e.g. Sanborn or Vasona) and take a "Wonder Walk" with your child. Ask your child to close his eyes, take his hand and start your walk.

☞ Stop beneath a tree (e.g. a sycamore or oak) and have your child tilt his head back and then open his eyes. Are the leaves fluttering? Is there sunshine dancing on the leaves?



☞ With eyes closed and hand in hand, lead your child to a creek. Stop and listen. What can your child hear? Have your child open her eyes and see.

☞ Continue your walk. Find a tree or bush or flower with a distinct scent. Lead your child to it and smell it. Have your child describe the scent. Does it smell like anything else you know?

☞ Try something with texture (e.g. a madrone tree). What does it feel like – rough, smooth? Look at it. Compare it with the "feel" of bark on other trees.

The possibilities are endless! Try reversing roles and letting your child lead you on this sensory walk. Children can also do this with a friend. This is a great activity for awakening the senses, creating trust, instilling reverence, and adding mystery and fun to an outdoor experience.



(Scientific Method, continued)

one asked “where is our red schoolhouse?” Four and five year olds are still concrete thinkers but they’re very interested in beginning to organize and understand their world. Practically everything we do at school has some scientific aspect – cooking is measuring, transforming by heat, comparing, counting. Painting is color mixing and experimenting with all kinds of applicators to see what will happen if All the potions we make with vinegar, baking soda, cornstarch, salt, ice, alka seltzer rockets, flour, water and clay involve changes in physical properties both expected and unexpected. Scientific investigation continues when a child (or adult) has almost unlimited opportunity to explore and manipulate all sorts of concrete materials, and that is what happens everyday at nursery school. Marbles, magnets, blocks, tubes, bubbles, water, mud and sand offer ways to learn about our earth. Count the number of times a day that you can pose the questions: “what will happen if...?”; or “why do you think that happened?”; As you enjoy your child’s creative answers, he/she is learning to observe, make predictions, experiment and evaluate. And this is the basis of the scientific method of thinking. Just think how much fun we will have rediscovering the world through the eyes of our children.

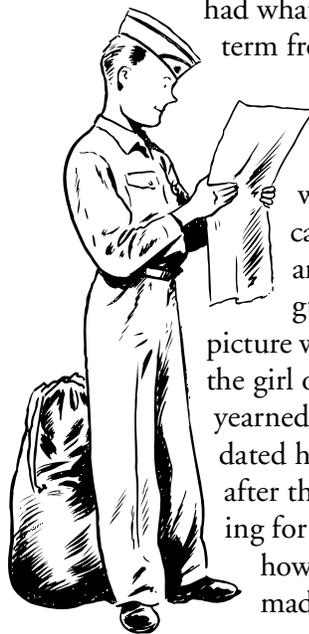
Love,
Marie ☺

Marriage S.O.S.

by Willys Peck

Having been wedded for 52 years and counting, I claim some expertise in explaining the elements of the marital institution that are embodied in the acronym S.O.S.. That, of course, is the international distress signal, but there is no connection. The first “S” stands for *selection*, which is the basis of all marriage. Somebody has to choose, and, ideally, the choosing is mutual. I consider myself fortunate in this regard because of the passage of time. There simply was no rush. It was almost ten years from the time in high school when I really got interested in girls until I met my future wife, and then the event hardly produced a chemical reaction. That interval included almost three years in the Army during World War II, when my contact with girls was mainly through letter-writing. You can tell a lot about a person from their letters.

I should note that, for me, this was the age of innocence. Holding hands, or dancing cheek-to-cheek, was a big deal. I was 20 years old before I ever kissed a girl good night. But that didn’t mean I lacked a network of female correspondents. When I was overseas, I had what I considered the “Big Three,” borrowing the term from the dominant Allied figures, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. My Big Three comprised girls who had especially impressed me and with whom I wanted to spend time, if the opportunity ever came. One girl’s name was painted on my rifle, another girl’s picture was taped to the machine-gun mount on our half-track, and another girl’s picture was in a shirt pocket next to my heart. Of these, the girl on the machine-gun mount was the one I yearned for most. I had known her in high school, dated her a few times and, as time went on, especially after the war, I saw in her all the qualities I was looking for in a wife. The feeling was far from mutual, however. We had some good times together but she made it very plain in her conduct that she didn’t want to get serious. No way. What she did do, though, was to introduce me to a schoolteacher with whom she shared an apartment. Looking back, I think she may have been trying to divert my attention; self-defense, if you will. If that was so, the ploy worked. I started calling on this other girl and as the acquaintanceship ripened, I realized that she really was the one with the qualities I had been looking for. It took about a year for this realization to reach the point of proposing marriage. It took another year from my proposal until there was acceptance, a move made possible by my purchase of a house in Saratoga. My subsequent wife had stoutly maintained that she would



(Continued on page 4)

(Marriage S.O.S., continued)

never marry a man without a house. Incidentally, this was at a time – 1951 – when Joe Six-pack could afford a house in Saratoga. In February 1952, we returned from our two-day honeymoon, cut short by lack of funds, to our very own house where we remain to this day.

The “O” in S.O.S. stands for *obliging*, a trait summed up in my two-word mantra, “yes, dear.” I know this suggests a doormat approach to marriage, but it isn’t that way in actuality. It simply makes sense to be accommodating when it comes to reasonable requests, rather than trying to look for some kind of excuse for resistance.

The second “S” represents *space*, which is important not only in the physical sense but also in the intellectual and emotional concept. Everyone needs his or her space. My wife and I each have our special interests, to which we devote a good deal of time. Hers is early-childhood education, and she has become a recognized authority in the field. Her book, *Kindergarten Education – Freeing Children’s Creative Potential*, has just been published. She is also in demand as a speaker and consultant. My bag is local and regional history, and I’m on several boards and committees having to do with this. Also, I never throw anything away, and I maintain what I charitably call an archive. Then there’s my interest in railroads and aviation history, so we’re talking real space. Putting all these elements together results in a need for space in its various concepts, and I like to think that my wife and I are real space travelers. Space, however, does not preclude closeness, and we’re never without that. In keeping with the “O” part of the acronym, I’m obliging my wife by including here a birthday “poem” I wrote for her several years ago, titled “Toast to a Liberated Wife”.

*To that womanhood without which there is no manhood
To that independence without which there is no belonging
To that love without which there is no mystery
May that mystery never be solved.*

So, my message today is, send out that SOS!

Thus A Child Learns

submitted by Mary Matlack,
Clara in 3’s Class

*The following was part of our
Mountain School brochure many
years ago.*

Thus a child learns: by wiggling skills through his fingers and toes into himself; by soaking up habits and attitudes of those around him; by pushing and pulling his own world.

Thus a child learns: more through trial than error, more through pleasure than pain, more through experience than suggestion, more through suggestion than direction.

Thus a child learns: through affection, through love, through patience, through understanding, through belonging, through doing, through being.

Day by day the child comes to know a little bit of what you know; to think a little bit of what you think; to understand your understanding. That which you dream and believe are in truth, becomes the child.

As you perceive dully or clearly; as you think fuzzily or sharply; as you believe foolishly or wisely; as you dream drably or goldenly; as you bear false witness or tell the truth – thus a child learns.

*Frederick J. Moffitt Chief, Bureau
of Instructional Supervision New
York State Department of
Education ∞*

Letter to the Editor

by Debbie Willheim,
Mountain School Alumna

My children both attended Mountain School. My son Andrew is now in college, and my daughter Janie, is now in the fifth grade. When I happened upon the LGSONS website, I was delighted to read the January 2004 newsletter. It was great fun to see the many names (Marie, Jane, Betty, Cici and Claudia) that I recognize, and to read that many of our most dear Mountain School memories are ongoing now-a-days in the school.

As I have just received my elementary teaching credential, I was especially pleased to read the articles about supporting our children's early education through social, emotional and developmentally-appropriate activities instead of turning them off with worksheets and phonic-style reading drills. Currently I'm working as a substitute teacher in the Los Gatos School District, and a volunteer in Eileen Perkins' and Lee Hemstreet's Kindergarten class (mentioned in last issue's "Letter from First Grade" article). In some unexpected way while subbing, I often discover that the most creative thinkers in the class attended the LGSONS. At that moment, we have a common bond!

I recall Marie once saying, "I don't care if they learn their ABCs in pre-school, but I do care if they learn how to hike!" My daughter, Janie, did hike in pre-school (and she was easily reading through chapter books
(Continued on page 6)

Spring Minicourses are Here!

by Lisa Bailey, Programs Coordinator

Sign up for one or more of the minicourses for this Spring. Sign up sheets are in the parents room at the schoolhouse. We are kicking off the minicourses with our wonderful Teachers Jane and Amy presenting *Children and Art* on March 17th.

We have scheduled on March 31st, Dr. Jerrold Shapiro presenting to all our parents on *Parenting as a Team: How mothers/fathers parent differently and together*. He is a professor in the Department of Counseling Psychology at Santa Clara University and a licensed clinical psychologist. He has been a guest on Oprah Winfrey, CBS morning show and KGO.

We have an exciting presentation on *Kids Nutrition* on April 1st to learn about a balanced diet, food allergies to how much fat is enough? Find tips on incorporating healthy foods into our children's diet.



Dr. Brian Winkler is back on Tuesday March 23rd to help us weary couples to get back on the road to *Good Communication...* giving us tips and ways to stay solid in a relationship. Join Brian and other couples in an interactive discussion.

What would spring minicourses be without a class to help you with your culmination project? I've put together a minicourse on March 25th to work on your *Memory Books* or to start your culmination project at Picture Passion in Campbell. It is a brand new scrap-booking store and they are ready to help you put together the best papers and stickers to express your moments with your child at our beloved red schoolhouse. Guidance will be available or you can crop till you drop! We can only accommodate up to 13 people, but I do have an additional date on Saturday, April 3rd if we have overflow or if you want to join us again to scrapbook.

Lastly, we have booked Jeanne Dominguez, our veteran *Quilting Bee* to help you put together a cuddle quilt or pillow case this evening on March 24th. Remember to pick up your material list of what to bring that evening so you can start and possibly finish your project that evening. We look forward to feedback on all the minicourses for the future. Look for the feedback surveys in the parents room!



Contact me if you have further questions! Lisa Bailey (354-5735). ∞

(Letter to the Editor, continued)

in Kindergarten). The summer after Janie completed the 4/5s class with Marie, we hiked the Na Pali Coast Trail on Kauai. She kept up with her teenage siblings and father while I lagged behind.



On the trail, we ran into John and Julie Ferguson who had been in the Saturday 2's class with our son Andrew over ten years before! We run into various other LGSONS friends on the soccer field or in Indian Princesses, and we'll no doubt reconnect with others while Janie's attending Fisher. One thing that she annually requests is to revisit the little red schoolhouse (usually with one of her Mountain School pals) to recall once again just how special a place it really is. ☺

From Mountain School to Junior High

REFLECTION ON THE PREPARATION OF A DEVELOPMENTAL PRESCHOOL

by Jordan Scott (Age 14),
Daughter of Teacher Joan Scott

What I remember of preschool was finger painting, dressing up, playing magical games with my other three- and four-year-old friends, and most of all being allowed to explore the wonderful world of my imagination. I was never forced to try to read or write. My kindergarten teacher put no pressure on me to learn to read; I was taught letters of the alphabet, but most of all was encouraged to play and be a child. In first grade, reading began to be taught. I was not by any means the first kid to read in my class, and I was not an avid reader in the beginning of first grade. Yet I was read to, and before I could even actually read I had a strong love of books. I told my first grade teacher that when I learned to read, she would never see my nose out of a book; and I kept my promise.

I wasn't actually reading on my own very well until about second grade; then it all came together. Since the fifth grade I have made honor role every quarter, excelling in English. By the sixth grade my spelling was at a tenth-grade level, and on the standardized tests I always scored in the high nineties for all reading, writing and vocabulary sections. Not only am I doing very well in the eighth grade, but I love to read. Anything and everything I get my hands on... I am often reading the same book as my mother. I strongly believe that even though I didn't go to an academic preschool, it didn't affect me negatively. I never once felt behind any of my classmates in reading. This next fall I am trying to get into honors English, a class which promises twice as many novels to read as the regular English class, and I can't wait! ☺

Crowded House

by Jan Murray, Long Term Planning Board Member

LGSONS hosted an Open House for interested families on Sunday February 29th. Nearly 50 families attended. Everyone, young and old, seemed to be enjoying themselves. Teacher Marie and Teacher Karyn hosted the event, providing several art projects and science projects – as well as introductions to the rats and chickens – to many fascinated children. Sonia Casper, our new Information Chair, was hard at work in the kitchen, helping dozens of children make mini pizzas.

We would like to thank Michael Balain of La Maison du Croissant (303 N. Santa Cruz Avenue) for his generous donation of delicious croissants. We would also like to thank all of the Mountain School families who posted flyers and spread the news about the Open House. It was a wonderful example of what our community can accomplish – and how much fun we have – when we all pull together. ☺

Book Reviews

ABOVE ALL BE KIND

(by Zoe Weil, *Raising a Humane Child in Challenging Times*)

submitted by Teacher Jane Krecji

I recently read this book and found it inspiring, challenging and practical. It is definitely worth reading. The author first identifies ten qualities for living a humane life: 1. Willingness to choose and change. 2. Kindness 3. Compassion 4. Honesty and Trustworthiness 5. Generosity 6. Courage 7. Perseverance, Self-discipline and Restraint 8. Humor and Playfulness 9. Wisdom 10. Integrity.

The author then discusses four tools or elements to achieve this kind of life: 1. Providing Information 2. Teaching Critical Thinking 3. Instilling the Three Rs: Reverence – is an emotion; Respect – is an attitude; Responsibility – is an act 4. Offering Positive Choices.

I particularly like tool number three for our preschoolers – instilling the Three Rs. Reverence is an emotion; Respect is an attitude; and Responsibility is an act (action). She stresses the importance of getting out into nature to learn reverence, respect and responsibility. She has specific ideas and exercises for different ages.

Another important part of the book is an examination of choices we make regarding how we live our lives – everything from food to clothes to cars to free time

(facts and resources included). She talks about the power of advertising and the media – and challenges us to determine, “what is a need and what is a want?”

There are questionnaires that help the reader identify: what he/she currently does; what he/she wants to learn and do; what steps he/she will take.

“Your Life is Your Message”
(Mahatma Gandhi)

What message are we giving our children by the way we are living our lives?

ROXABOXEN

by Alice McLerran

Illustrated by Barbara Cooney

Jan Murray, mother of James in Friday 2’s class, recommends this picture and story book (for ages 3 to 8).

Roxaboxen celebrates the imagination of children who, no matter the time or place, can create whole worlds out of what they



find around them – here, rocks and boxes, cacti and sand. Marian and her friends find a “special place” in the desert where in time-honored fashion, they play the games that will prepare them for their grown-up lives. They make houses, drive pretend cars, bake bread, ride stick ponies,

fight their wars and bury their dead.

With its gently rolling terrain, blossoming ocotillos and cacti, and vast skies of ever-changing hues, Cooney’s desert is a wondrous and beautiful place. The doll-like children in their knickers and sailor dresses emphasize the timelessness of this place where “seasons changed, and the years went by but Roxaboxen was always there.”

KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION

Freeing Children’s Creative

Potential (written by Mountain School founder, Betty Peck)

Using vivid case studies from her own experience, and research from Froebel and other early years pioneers, Betty Peck demonstrates how a holistic, loving approach to pre-school education opens the door to:

- ☞ enabling creativity, awareness, wonder and discovery;
- ☞ meeting the spiritual and physical growth needs of young children;
- ☞ storytelling, movement, ring time and play;
- ☞ celebrating festivals and the seasonal round;
- ☞ creating play gardens to discover nature’s secrets;
- ☞ involving families and communities.

Sound interesting? You can read more about this recently-released book on the publisher’s website:

www.hawthornpress.com. ☞

eScrip Information that Could Change Your Life

(OK, NOT REALLY, BUT PLEASE READ THIS)

by Jane Johnson, eScrip & Schoolpop Coordinator

Spammers Bothering You?

Don't stand for it! You can ensure that you stop receiving unwanted communication from SchoolPop by reading to the bottom of the e-mail received and choosing the option "If you no longer want to receive these messages...". SchoolPop is committed to ensuring you are able to support your school without feeling intruded upon.

If you haven't yet signed up, or had cancelled, feeling you were receiving too many SchoolPop e-mails, you can choose to "opt out" during the online registration process so that you don't experience this. You'll still remain enrolled in the program, raising behind-the-scenes money for the school, without experiencing unwanted e-mails.

Thank You, Teacher Jane!

Jane Krejci was kind enough to put together a list of quality toy manufacturers who provide infant, toddler and preschool children with open-play-oriented toys and supplies. I've forwarded this list to the president of SchoolPop who was very interested in our feedback about the Learn & Earn program. Hopefully this will help ensure the products they offer in the future are geared more towards communities like ours in which we want

our children to learn by interacting. And, then we have a win-win, with the ability to purchase things we truly want at a good price while generating funding for our school.

Updates

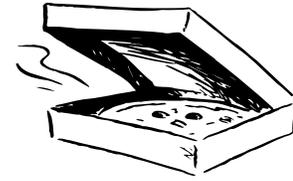
eScrip continues to be our greatest support of ongoing behind-the-scenes fundraising. Whole Foods, Safeway and Lunardis are the merchants from which we're seeing the highest rebates, with Whole Foods in the #1 spot. Thanks to all of us (there were 65 of us active during this period) for frequenting these stores and others in the eScrip program! September brought in \$262.56 for the school, October \$246.95, November \$430.44 and December \$243.87. Looks like Thanksgiving really helped!

Schoolpop currently generates lower fundraising dollars due to its "non-staple" item focus. However, you can increase our fundraising by going through www.schoolpop.com to ensure whatever online store you're purchasing through credits back to our school. Last quarter, there were only 11 of us purchasing (seems awfully slim for the holidays!) with \$41.09 credited back to the school. Imagine what we could do with more of us purchasing!

New Credit/Debit Cards

Make sure you add/edit your card information with both eScrip and Schoolpop anytime you change your account number or acquire new cards. That way, we won't miss fundraising opportunities that don't cost us a thing! ♪

Pizza Crust with Sauce



submitted by Jan Murray,
Mother to James in Friday 2's

Crust Ingredients:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup whole milk
- 2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- olive oil to brush the dough
- shortening for cookie sheet

Simple Sauce for Kids:

- few Tablespoons tomato sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon of olive oil
- pinch of dried basil

Instructions: 1. Stir hard in small bowl with wooden spoon until dough leaves side of bowl (if dough seems dry, add 1 to 2 tablespoons milk) 2. Sprinkle a clean surface (such as a kitchen counter or bread board) with flour. Put dough on surface. Roll ball of dough around 3 or 4 times. Knead dough quickly and lightly by folding pressing and turning. Repeat 10 times. Cover dough with bowl and let stand 15 minutes. 3. Heat oven to 425F. 4. Grease cookie sheet with shortening. 5. Roll or pat dough into 12-inch circle on lightly floured surface. (In class, we cut out mini pizza circles.) Put dough on cookie sheet. 6. Brush dough lightly, using pastry brush, with olive oil. 7. Top pizza with sauce, cheese, or any of your favorites. 8. Bake 15 to 20 minutes. ♪

Borrowed from Betty Crocker's Best of Baking