



# The Observatory



Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School ~ Issue 1 August 2005

## Celebrating 50 Years

by Lori Lux, Board Chair

Welcome to the 2005-2006 school year and what a special one this is! We mark the 50th anniversary of our school this year. Fifty years of banana slugs, friendships, muddy boots, enlightened parents, bunny hill bottoms, well-rounded kids, and cooking projects. While many things have changed in the past 50 years, it's nice to know that the fundamentals that our school was built on have stayed the test of time.

Have you ever wondered how our school was started, or how long we've been at the schoolhouse on Bear Creek Road? Have we always had morning and afternoon classes, or incorporated cooking into our curriculum? Below is a look back over the past 50 years of LGSONS history, but first some fun facts on 1955.

- A gallon of milk cost 92 cents
- A gallon of gasoline cost 29 cents
- A car was just under \$2,000
- A house cost \$17,500
- The average annual salary was \$5,000
- A postage stamp cost 3 cents
- Our president was Dwight D. Eisenhower
- John F. Kennedy wrote Profiles in Courage while recuperating from back surgery. He won the Pulitzer Prize in history for this effort
- Disneyland opened
- The Mickey Mouse Club first telecast on ABC
- Captain Kangaroo began on CBS
- Volkswagen introduced the Karmann-Ghia coupe, an image car to accompany its plain but reliable "Bugs and Buses"

Our beloved Betty Peck founded "The Farm School" in 1955 on the same principals we value today. The original program consisted of gardening, taking care of animals, playing on an old tractor, using dress-ups on a stage, and cooking. We've added more class time to the original one class per week for the 2's and 3's class, and

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## Children in the Woods

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the beginning of this new school year. I know that all of the teachers are looking forward to meeting the families in their classes and to exploring and playing in the out of doors together. This summer I was given a new book called "Last Child in the Woods, Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" by Richard Louv. It is a very sobering account about the changes in our American way of life which have resulted in all of us having fewer opportunities to be in touch with nature on a daily basis – particularly children. He presents many anecdotes and recent research documenting these changes as well as new evidence about the importance of a child's connection to the natural world and what it means for the healthy development of their senses. He reports that Howard Gardner who developed the theory of multiple intelligences has recently enlarged his list to include an eighth one – naturalist intelligence or nature smarts. Though I was sometimes very discouraged by this book I was also encouraged because of our school's practice of spending so much time outdoors with the children and how these direct experiences with nature contribute to their learning and creativity. There is so much to be gained in the presence of the natural world – a renewal of our spirits, a sense of peace and of excitement, physical skills leading to more independence and

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### LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!

*Do you have something you need to communicate to the entire school? Do you have a story, recipe, poem to share or a book or destination to recommend? This is the place to do it. I'd love to hear from you! The deadline for the next newsletter is Thursday, September 22nd. Please e-mail submissions to [mtnmama@garlic.com](mailto:mtnmama@garlic.com) or call 408-353-9728.*

*Thank you.*

*Sonia Casper*

(Children in the Woods, continued)

particularly the opportunity to rediscover the wonder and mystery of our remarkable world.

This summer I was able to spend a week with my husband and 2 grandchildren near Santiam Pass in central Oregon where I lived as a young child. We had such a wonderful time exploring lava caves and swimming in lakes and in the Deschutes River. I saw the confidence and independence of my grandchildren grow as they learned to negotiate the river and use the floating logs as swimming aids in the lake. Whenever I ask someone else about their summer I hear similar stories about revisiting the special forests and lakes of their childhoods and how their own children loved it so much as well.

So I am very, very happy that this fall we can all experience once again the joys of our Santa Cruz Mountains – the splashing creeks and the amazing water striders who actually walk on water, the slow, slimy banana slugs and the quick lizards and newts. Best of all we can enjoy our natural world even more as we see it freshly through the eyes of young children. Get out your oldest clothes and your boots and be ready for all the precious surprises that can be found hiding in a little dirt, under a rock or floating down the stream.

Love, Marie ☞

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## Fall Family Photos

by Shelley Molenda  
School Photos Coordinator



Saturday, September 24th  
and  
Sunday, October 9th

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to have professional family photos taken and at a very reasonable price. Susan J. Weiland will be taking family photos (by appointment only) in the beautiful outdoor location of Oak Meadow Park. To schedule a sitting please call Susan directly after September 1st at 408-996-1933, Mon.-Fri. 10am – 8pm.

*(Note: There is a \$20 sitting fee with no obligation to buy a package.)*

# Lessons Learned at Mountain School

by Mary Matlack, Administrative Director

Welcome families, old and new, to another year of discovery at Mountain School!

I am writing this letter as the new Administrative Director of LGSONS. For those of you who don't know me, my involvement with LGSONS started back in 1970 when my mother brought me to "Observation Nursery School," as I remember her calling it, as the last of her five children to attend. My parents moved to Saratoga in 1956 and had been directed to the school through the local chamber of commerce. I remember Saratoga Springs and another indoor location – different from our current location - but mostly I remember the friends that my parents made at Nursery School. The friends that my parents made at LGSONS are still their friends today and they are my friends as well.

My mother passed away four years ago and everyday at school as I watch my children, I think of her and know that she watched me in the same way 33 years ago, doing the same things, climbing the same bunny hill and splashing in the same creek. Becoming more involved in the school feels like a natural step for me, and I hope to meet and work with many of you this year.

My son William will be in the 3's class this year after a lovely year in the Friday 2's. He speaks fondly of school and always wants to know when he can go and play trains at the schoolhouse or see his friends. He loved snack time, never wanted to wear his shoes and usually didn't participate last year unless there were trains or food involved. Throughout the year, I watched him, and I learned to appreciate the rhythm of his day. I began to understand the way his body worked and the way his soul was nurtured. Will's extraordinary teachers, Kathy and Jane spoke to him, listened to him and made him laugh. They supported me and assured me when I wasn't so sure. I welcome the new year and a chance to observe Will again, playing, laughing and eating with friends, teachers and parents.

My daughter Clara has finished her time at Mountain School. She has had three wonderful years here and is ready for kindergarten. She, like me, had moments of sadness when school was over. She seemed to realize,

for a fleeting moment, that she wouldn't see her Mountain School friends quite so often. But now as summer draws to a close, she confidently assures her brother that she is no longer at Mountain School and is headed to Kindergarten. Last week while hiking in the rain forests on Vancouver Island, Clara saw a tree root on the trail side that she could scramble over. She looked at me and asked if she could go over it. I nodded and she said under her breath "just like Mountain School". I loved hearing that. I loved knowing that Mountain School has taught her to look at things differently and to do things just because they are there and look fun, even if others aren't doing them. I thank Teacher Marie for showing us how to love the outdoors again and for teaching us how to share that love with a child.

The other day, Clara started a drawing that she said was going to be for her kindergarten teacher. She worked on it very carefully and asked for scissors to cut it out. When she finally showed it to me, she was very proud. "This is for my new teacher. I will say here, "Teacher this is for you, love Clara." I examined her creation. Four children holding hands, linked together, it was strikingly similar to the Mountain School logo. I guess I really don't know what she was thinking when she designed it, but like many things related to parenting, I have my own theory! I believe her little drawing is her version of the Mountain School logo that she is planning to give to her teacher. To me it feels like Clara's way of sharing a bit of herself as she plunges head first into the unknown world of kindergarten. She seems to be saying "Here's what I know about school...what do you know?" I am so grateful that her foundation, her context for school is firmly rooted in play, exploration, nature, friends and loving adults. I know the academics will come all too quickly and I can only hope that our training at Mountain School will allow us to provide a home environment that is full of messy art projects, sprouting gardens, puddle jumping, hiking and most importantly lots and lots of time to play.

As we close the screen door on summer and prepare for the coming school year, I am gently reminded that some of the most important lessons I have learned as a parent have come from my children. With an eye on how our days and lives will change with the scheduled life that awaits, I try to prepare them by talking...always talking

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(Celebrating 50 Years, continued)

two days for the 4's class. On Wednesdays, all classes went on a field trip together.

From 1956-1962 there was a Spanish Specialist that came to the classroom. In 1958, the school became formally known as the "Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School" and began conducting classes at Saratoga Springs when the Easterbrook farm in Saratoga off Quito road was sold.

From 1958 to 1962 LGSONS had a very fluid housing situation. Classes were held at a number of locations - a cabin at Saratoga Springs, a private house on the Saratoga High School property, a private house on the Methodist church parking lot in Los Gatos, an old house at Saratoga Springs which, unfortunately, burned down at the end of 1960 and back to the Methodist church in Los Gatos.

By 1962, the tradition of going to Saratoga Springs in the fall and again in spring had already been established. They would pack up all of their indoor belongings and store them in a garage during the summer months and keep their outdoor equipment in a storage shed at Saratoga Springs. If it rained during this time, the class would meet in someone's home. During these years the school was very heavy on Montessori and Stern materials and had almost no art or painting curriculum.

From 1962 to 1967, the indoor program was held at Daves Avenue Christian Church. During this point a music specialist was hired and the Spanish program was abandoned in favor of music and art while maintaining a focus on Montessori and Stern. As in previous years, there was only one teacher in the classroom, but the

school did add a paid, non-teaching director. In 1962, the first afternoon class was added, a second day for the 4's program.

In the fall of 1967, the indoor site was moved to Camp Swig and the first teacher/director, Ruth Carbone, was hired and stayed in her role for the next six years. During her tenure the indoor location was moved to Echo Mountain on Bear Creek Road and the first assistant teachers were added. She also oversaw the expansion of art, music, special materials, blocks, and everyone's favorite, outdoor play.

In 1970, the first Montessori teacher was added to the 4's class and by 1971 there was a Montessori teacher for both the 3's and 4's classes. Also, all classes now included at least one head teacher and one assistant teacher. 1971 marked the first time that all weekday mornings and afternoons were filled with classes.

LGSONS moved to the Lakeside site, the "little red schoolhouse" in 1973 and added a Special Materials teacher to the 3's and 4's classes. In January of 1977, the Saturday 2's class was added and in 1979 the class offerings were changed dramatically to include three 2's classes, one 3's class one 3/4's class and a 4/5's class. This schedule has remained unchanged until 2005 with the addition of a Saturday 3/4's class.

I applaud all the parents who for 50 years have given their children the gift of Mountain School, the gift of exploration and discovery and also a gift to themselves; one of quality time with their children, one of renewal as we watch the world unfold through the eyes of our children. Welcome back to a new year and the continuation of a truly amazing adventure! ☺

## Endless Adventures

by Jane Krejci, F2's Assistant Teacher

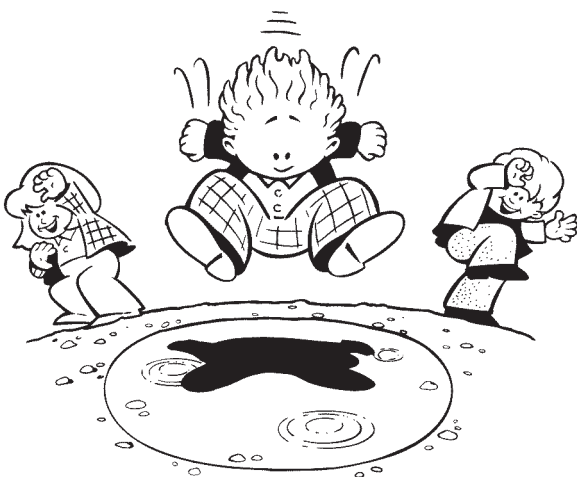
"Peninsula Tales and Trails" by David Weintraub is a terrific guide book to the 25 preserves of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. There are trail maps, introductory descriptions of each preserve, and practical information. The stories are fascinating and give a sense of the history of our beautiful area. You can return to Picchetti, visit Deer Hollow Farm or explore some other place in the valleys, forests or along the ridges. So, put on your hiking boots, grab a bottle of water and explore with your children! ☺

(Lessons Learned at Mountain School, continued)

about what is in store. They listen, for a moment, but then get that glazed over look and go back to their business. After a few days of this, I realize that there is only so much information they can process and really they are content to just plunge into school – taking what comes with an open mind, not too many expectations, meeting new friends, being flexible, sharing toys and most importantly sharing themselves with like-minded, friendly strangers. And we as parents expect them to do this. We encourage them, telling them how much they are going to love it and not to worry, “You’ll see, it’ll be great!”

As I played tag in the park the other day, running hard to catch Clara while trying desperately to banish the thought of all the other things I should be doing, it hit me. I was doing exactly what I “should” be doing. I resolved to take a spoonful of my own medicine and listen to my 3’ tall teachers who have made their lesson very clear. “Let go Mom, enjoy the moment come what may, drop your preconceived notions, free up your schedule, be more flexible, smell the jasmine, touch a banana slug, eat miner’s lettuce, make new friends, share a snack, get dirty, be patient, cover yourself in finger paint and shaving cream, play dress-up, sing songs, listen and most importantly, share your feelings, your joys and your sorrows with friends and family.”

Mountain School for me is a delightfully imperfect place filled with wonder, excitement, challenges and learning. Please join in me in welcoming the 2005-2006 school year and rejoice in diving head first, as our children do, into a year of exploration, discovery, and good old-fashioned fun! ☺



## Mem Fox’s Ten Read-Aloud Commandments

recommended by Jane Krejci, Assistant Teacher F2’s

1. Spend at least ten wildly happy minutes every single day reading aloud.
2. Read at least three stories a day: it may be the same story three times. Children need to hear a thousand stories before they can begin to learn to read.
3. Read aloud with animation. Listen to your own voice and don’t be dull, or flat, or boring. Hang loose and be loud, have fun and laugh a lot.
4. Read with joy and enjoyment: real enjoyment for yourself and great joy for the listeners.
5. Read the stories that the kids love, over and over and over again, and always read in the same ‘tune’ for each book: i.e. with the same intonations on each page, each time.
6. Let children hear lots of language by talking to them constantly about the pictures, or anything else connected to the book; or sing any old song that you can remember; or say nursery rhymes in a bouncy way; or be noisy together doing clapping games.
7. Look for rhyme, rhythm or repetition in books for young children, and make sure the books are really short.
8. Play games with the things that you and the child can see on the page, such as letting kids finish rhymes, and finding the letters that start the child’s name and yours, remembering that it’s never work, it’s always a fabulous game.
9. Never ever teach reading, or get tense around books.
10. Read aloud every day because you just love being with your child, not because it’s the right thing to do. This is as important for fathers as it is for mothers!

Note: For this list and more go to [www.memfox.com](http://www.memfox.com) ☺.

## Becoming More Involved

The Board would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to the 2005-2006 school year. Are you interested in serving our school community in a more active way? A board position is a wonderful way to feel truly involved, make many new friends, and have a lot of fun.

There are a variety of positions still open, with a wide range of responsibilities and time commitments. Our voting board members attend meetings (which are honestly quite enjoyable) on the first Tuesday of every month, while the non-voting members are not required to do so. Some positions are busy on and off throughout the year, while others have one specific task that requires only a short period of time for completion.

Positions available:

### *Animals - Non-Voting Position*

This position is responsible for the care and feeding of the Mt. School animals including:

- Making arrangements for the animals during holidays and vacations. This position is not responsible for taking the animals home for breaks, just finding a home for them by putting up a sign in the parents' room for volunteers and doing the same in the newsletter.
- Buying the food for the animals (before we run out) and doing so as economically as possible. The Purchasing chair can also pick up the chicken food since that comes in 50 pound sacks.
- Getting a schedule from the teachers about which class is going to clean which cage and keeping track to it is done properly. This includes checking the cages when at school and cleaning them then if necessary. Animals chair can volunteer in their class for that job.
- Checking on the chickens each week to see that their watering system works, that they have food, straw for laying, etc.

### *EScript/SchoolPop - Non-Voting Position*

- Promote to the LGSONS community the benefits for the community of individual participation in eScrip and Schoolpop
- Assess new program offerings for relevance/opportu-

nity for success to LGSONS

- Submit newsletter articles providing reminders for families to update subscriptions, insure online purchase through Schoolpop, and promote new, relevant programs
- Act as liaison between individual families and programs as needed
- Provide support to individual families during sign-ups for programs
- Attend Board Meetings as needed/desired

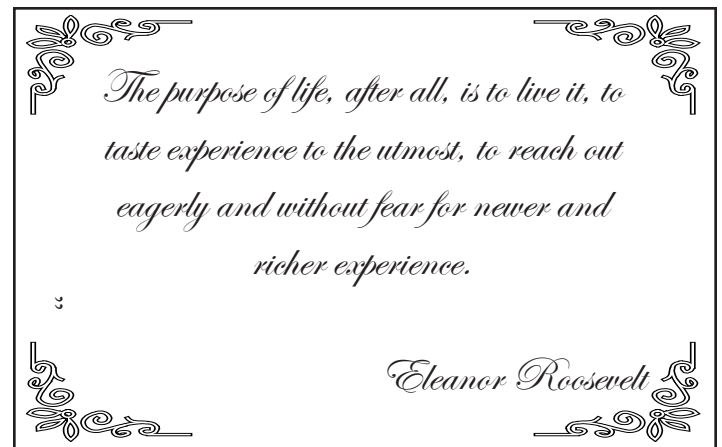
### *Turkey Trot Coordinator - Non-Voting Position:*

Oversees all aspects of the Turkey Trot 5K fund-raiser held in November at Vasona Park. Recruit and manage volunteers responsible for advertising, registration, food, course management, logistics/permits, class contributions/scavenger hunt, prizes/donations and clean-up.

### *Historian - Non-voting Position*

Responsible for managing the school archives, including logistical paperwork of a historical nature. This roll also involves teaching LGSONS families about the history of LGSONS through the newsletter or at events throughout the year. The Historian position will play a very important role in the 2005-2006 school year. With our 50th anniversary this year, the Historian's research efforts on the school time line and alumni contacts will be integral to the planning and implementation of our 50th anniversary celebrations.

If you are interested in learning more about the board, what it does and what positions remain open, please feel free to call or e-mail our Board Chair: Lori Lux (244-9605; lori@luxpr.com). On behalf of all of us on the board, thank you!! ☺



# Sesame-Crusted Salmon Teriyaki

from: "Simply Shrimp, Salmon, and (Fish) Steaks"

by Leslie Glover  
Pendleton



1/2 cup light soy sauce  
1/2 cup mirin  
4 salmon steaks (about 8 oz. each)  
1/2 cup sesame seeds  
coarse sea or kosher salt  
freshly ground black pepper

## Cooking Instructions

In a large plastic bag, combine the soy sauce and mirin. Add the salmon, coating it well with the marinade, and seal the bag. Let the salmon marinate, chilled, for at least 1 hour and up to 6 hours.

Remove the salmon from the bag and discard the marinade. Spread the sesame seeds on a plate and season the salmon with salt and pepper, then coat both sides of each steak with the seeds, patting them on to adhere.

Preheat a grill, or broiler with rack in the top position.

Brush the grill with oil and grill the salmon (or broil it on a rack set in a baking pan) for 6 minutes on each side or until just cooked through.

Serves ~ 4

Note: Works well for any fish steaks, including swordfish, halibut, and tuna. ☞

# Calendar

## SCHOOL BEGINS

*Wednesday, September 7th*

## BOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, September 13th*

*7:30pm at Claudia Yore's home, 17252 Nalor Court, Los Gatos*

Everyone is welcome. Board meetings are usually held on the first Tuesday of each month. Contact Jane Johnson (268-9878 or [jcwjohns@yahoo.com](mailto:jcwjohns@yahoo.com)) for info regarding location and directions.

## FAMILY PHOTOS

*Saturday, September 24th and*

*Sunday, October 9th at Vasona Park*

By appointment only. See page 2 for more information or contact Shelley Molenda, phone 353-3268 or email [s.molenda@worldnet.att.net](mailto:s.molenda@worldnet.att.net).

## WORKDAY FOR 3/4's, Sat. 2's, and Wed. 2's CLASSES

*Sunday, October 2nd (time TBD)*

If you are unable to attend please call Rick Juncker at 267-9553 to make other arrangements.

## ANNUAL FALL PICNIC

*Sunday, October 16th*

Save the date! This is always a fun event and a wonderful way to spend time with friends, new and old, and share Mountain School with the whole family.

## GENERAL MEETING

*Wednesday, October 26th at 7pm*

The keynote speaker will be Janis Keyser, co-author of "Becoming The Parent You Want To Be"



# Founder Spotlight: Betty Peck

by Wendy Grant-Richards, Carpool Coordinator

This summer I had the opportunity to ask Betty Peck, Mountain School founder, a few questions on the fiftieth anniversary of LGSONS.

Wendy: You started Los Gatos Saratoga Observation Nursery School fifty years ago, have your ideas about early childhood education remained the same?

Betty: They have deepened and expanded, my dear. They have also been proven by scientific research about brain development. Children's first need is to be in touch with the earth. Children learn by doing, by playing. Children must have the chance to use their imagination and to imitate the finest of people. They need access to sand, rocks, water and wood to create the world. They are creating the universe. Children do not need store bought or pre-made toys, instead they should be down in the earth, to feel the textures and smell the fragrance of nature. They can then be one with the universe and each other. Children have to climb, to feel higher than us, to be queens and kings. I realized before starting the school that training teachers was more important than teaching, and later that training parents was even more essential.

Wendy: Did you always want to teach?

Betty: I was the oldest of six; I was a teacher long before I knew the world. I had no choice but to teach. My mother was busy running the household, so I was able to take care of my younger siblings. I used to tell them stories; I loved telling them stories and to wonder. My brother says he still quakes about Bluebeard.

Wendy: What were your early years like? Did you go to Kindergarten, or preschool?

Betty: I had such a wonderful childhood. I grew up in the Los Angeles area on a farm, with a half an acre of dahlias. My father adored me, and he retired early. He built us magnificent wooden play structures, like a huge doll house we could walk into. We had swings and acting bars. We even had goats for a while. I had charge of the garden. My grandmother told me stories and read me

poetry. She always told me she "loved me more than tongue can tell". I went to the most wonderful kindergarten, in Southgate. One day my whole class came to my house. The teacher walked and all the students followed behind. My father stopped traffic. My mother had cookies and lemonade for everyone. Play is the most important thing in early childhood.

Wendy: What can parents at Mountain School do to keep their children's childhood magical and full of play?

Betty: Get your children together with people who have the spirit of play, beauty, imagination in their souls. Take them to meet important adults. And, this is terribly hard, but no television, no commercial toys, give them hand-made toys and dolls that are not perfect. You will have to be creative with gifts, but always thankful.

Wendy: I am impressed with your ability to change things, what can we parents do to help our children to be proactive adults, like you?

Betty: You must be proactive yourself. And talk to them about how you are making the world better. Don't ask them to pick up litter, but do it yourself, or better yet, show them how you contact the city and volunteer to start a roadside trash pick-up in your area. Don't worry about what they are doing, work on yourself. Pick up books about important people. It is very important for girls and women to read about other women who have done great things.

Wendy: Where can parents go to get information about why early childhood academics aren't essential?

Betty: Remember what St. Francis said, "Preach always, but seldom with words." Children learn best by imitating adults. You must first be the world before you can read the word. Mathematics is the construction of the world. They will learn it from playing in the woods and the garden. Dr. Kenneth Wesson is a brain researcher and his work proves this. (I, Wendy, found a web site for him at [www.sciencemaster.com/wesson/home.php](http://www.sciencemaster.com/wesson/home.php))

Thank you to Betty Peck for her work, her time, her ideas, her garden and her tea. ☺