

## Ungraded elementary school in Sugarloaf - A real alternative

"Those who love their own children and the children about them, and who are therefore in earnest, will see to it that a right school is started somewhere."

J. Krishnamurti

by Corinne T. Dick

There's a school in Conyngham Valley that is probably unlike any other school that has existed here before. It's a school where children are allowed to be themselves, where they can explore their interests as completely as they wish, where they aren't forced to study things they are not interested in, where they can talk and laugh all day, where they have fun while they learn.

The school began as the dream of a few parents who did not want to see their children's natural curiosity, talents, and personality stifled and regimented in overcrowded classrooms with overworked teachers. Ideas became actions; licenses were obtained, teachers were hired, meetings were held, and on September 15, 1971 the new school opened its doors to the overwhelming enrollment of three little boys!

Disappointment over the small initial enrollment soon faded as one by one children were taken out of the crowded public school classes and brought to the new school. Currently the school has nine students, four girls and five boys. Not bad considering the total number the school can accommodate this year is ten. With two teachers in the classroom there is certainly no lack of individual attention. On holidays and after 3 p.m. (the school's hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.) the classroom population jumps considerably as children from public school drop by to see what's going on.

The philosophy upon which the school is based is not as new as many people believe. Forty years ago A.S. Neill began his world famous "Summerhill School" in England with the belief that children are basically good and will grow into happy, well rounded adults if they are allowed to make their own decisions and govern themselves. The phenomenal success of Summerhill and its students resulted in the establishment of thousands of independent schools throughout the world where the curriculum is geared to the individual child's interests rather than the traditional

approach where the child is molded to fit a pre-established curriculum. [Now, throughout the United States, public school administrations are becoming aware of the success of this new method of education and many formerly traditional public schools have now adopted the new philosophy.]

In recent years many variations of Neill's basic philosophy have emerged. John Holt, in his books "How Children Learn" and "How Children Fail" establishes the basically simple concept that children learn easier and faster if they are allowed to explore their environment at their own rates without the burdensome explanations offered by well meaning adults. The "open-classroom" method of education puts this philosophy into action by providing an atmosphere where learning materials are freely accessible and available for exploration. Children learn by doing things rather than by being given lectures on how things work.

The new school in Conyngham Valley employs a conglomerate of the many progressive systems of education. It is similar to Summerhill in that there are several "work periods" during the day during which the basic subjects of reading, arithmetic, spelling and writing are taught. A child attends these work periods only if he wishes to learn. Each child works at his own rate and his own ability level regardless of age. If he chooses not to attend a work period, he may do whatever else he wishes as long as he does not disturb those who are working.

There is a similarity to John Holt's philosophy in that the children are not forced to do anything. The motivation to learn anything comes from within the child, not from any externally applied force. The room is set up as an "open classroom" and between the work periods the children may experiment freely with the microscope, magnets, music, paints and other equipment. Learning under these circumstances is a pleasure rather than a drudgery.

There is a similarity to



Neill's and Holt's theories at the new school in Sugarloaf, but the school is not bound to any one man's ideas. As the students, teachers, and parents have grown and learned together, there have been many changes in the way the school is run. It is this flexibility to accommodate new ideas that has held the school together through the many trials. But at the core of the school is the unchanging belief that children are PEOPLE and deserve respect and love for their individual differences.

Some parents and teachers may think that there would be nothing but vandalism, playing, and fighting if children are allowed such freedom. The school does have rules that prohibit dangerous behavior and damaging other people's property. As far as their own books and equipment, the children know that it belongs to them and that they are the ones who will suffer if it is destroyed. When several bicycles were broken at the beginning of the year they were not replaced and the children soon began urging one another to be more careful with the remaining precious few. A single reprimand from a child's friend will accomplish much more than a lengthy lecture from an adult.

Of course, when the school year began and the children learned that they would not be forced to work, much time was spent at playing. Playing is necessary. It is the child's way of learning about himself and how to get along with others. After a few months of play, however, the

children actually began to ask for work. Now there is usually close to full attendance at the work periods. Those children who would rather play are being pressured by their friends, not the teachers, to get down to work and learn something.

The first year of the new school's operation has been rough at times. There were many problems to be ironed out at first, but the success of the school and the happiness of the children is a living testament to the belief that children are people.

Next year the school will be moving from Kiddie Kampus Nursery School to a brand new building in Sugarloaf. There will be room for thirty-five children. This year's students who have grown and learned so much about themselves and the limitations of their freedom will be a fantastic core from whom the new students will learn.

Registration is now open for Sept. 72. For more information call 788-3313. The school will be licensed to the 6th grade and we are encouraging people with special talents to volunteer some time in teaching our children. This is a non-profit organization and we are looking forward to making this a true community effort.

We would like to see some of the student body at Highacres take an interest in this, many of the young people in the Valley have given freely of their time. It is a way of "getting involved" and being able to see some "real" results.

## ACHTUNG, STUDENTEN!

# You need not be language majors to participate in Penn State's study abroad programs!

Nearly 200 students are studying in foreign countries this term, the largest such group in the 11-year history of the Foreign Studies Programs.

The following paragraphs contain pertinent information to make all students aware of Penn State's Study Abroad programs, which are sponsored by the Office of Foreign Studies, 211-212 Engineering C, University Park. (This information is a reprint from Dr. Dagobert DeLevie's discussion of the matter at a meeting held in February, from the literature that he gave to all who were present, and from an article that appeared in the March 30, 1972 issue of the Penn State Intercom.)

The University's study abroad programs, which are open to students of all colleges in the University, enable students to enrich their on-campus studies through an academic experience and crosscultural contacts in a foreign country. (Especially encouraged to participate are students majoring in Political science, sociology, art history and languages.)

In order to meet the needs of students with different language backgrounds, Penn State study programs have been established in the University of Strasbourg (France), Cologne (Germany), Salamanca (Spain), Rome (Italy), and San Jose (Costa Rica). The University has entered into a cooperative relationship with these above-mentioned universities to establish general studies programs involving courses of study in the humanities and in the social sciences developed especially for Penn State juniors to provide elective credit in these areas. These courses are taught by foreign professors in the foreign language (except in Rome, where instruction is conducted in English) and focus upon pertinent aspects of the history and the social, political, economic, and educational systems of the host country. All students will be required to include foreign language instruction in their study programs.

In addition, specialized programs, for graduate students in some cases and undergraduates in others, are being carried out in fine arts in London; art history in Venice; architecture in several European cities; mass communications in Manchester, England; teacher training in Durham, England; and practice teaching in selected schools in the Panama Canal Zone, Mexico, Chile, and Brazil.

Exchange programs are in effect with the University of Cologne - since the program was instituted more than 80 Cologne students have studied at Penn State - and the college at Durham, England. This year five men and three women from Durham are attending Penn State for a full year.

For the first time, there is also a limited faculty exchange underway; Dr. Edward Keynes, assistant professor of political science at Penn State, is visiting professor at the University of Cologne.

Dr. Dagobert deLevie, director of the Office of Foreign Studies, indicates the possibility of expansion of the program in the near future involving increased course offerings from Cologne and other European universities and a possible social studies curriculum exchange with an African university.

No transfer of credit is necessary since students remain registered at the Pennsylvania State University.

UNIVERSITIES OF COLOGNE, SALAMANCA, and STRASBOURG.

Duration: 14 weeks beginning with spring term; a 4-week intensive language course followed by 10 weeks of course work in various subjects conducted entirely in the foreign language. Credit: 12 credits can be earned. Costs: The one-term Penn State tuition will cover instructional fees for the entire 14-week program. Program participants will be charged \$320 for room and board for the 10-week term. Besides, they will be charged \$128, i.e. \$32 per week, for the four extra weeks. Additional expenses are round trip travel and a fee of \$35. Course Requirements: Selectees must have at least 15 credits in the foreign language or the equivalent, and must have completed History 19 and 3 credits in Political science, preferably Pl. Sc. 20 or 14. In addition, art history 110 is required of those who apply for study in Strasbourg or Salamanca.

UNIVERSIDAD de COSTA RICA in SAN JOSE. Penn State has established a cooperative relationship in San Jose, offering courses of study developed especially for Penn State students. The curriculum includes courses in the social sciences and in the Spanish language. Taught by Costa Rican professors in the Spanish language, the courses will focus upon pertinent aspects of contemporary Latin America. Duration: 10 weeks (winter term). Credit: 9 credits can be earned. Course requirements: In addition to at least 3 credits in Spanish beyond the intermediate level or the equivalent, selectees must have completed, prior to departure, at least 3 credits in political science, preferably Pl. Sc. 14. History 23 is strongly recommended.

UNIVERSITY OF ROME. Duration: 10 weeks (spring term) of academic instruction (conducted in English) coinciding with the regular Penn State spring term. Credit: 10 credits, taught by Italian professors, in Italian, art history, and in additional course work yet to be determined. Course requirements: 8 credits in Italian and art history 110. Costs for both San Jose and Rome. The costs of the 10 week study will be approximately the same as the costs of a term at Penn State, with the addition of round-trip travel and a program fee of \$35.

Round-trip to your destination: \$250-\$270.

In Europe a Penn State faculty member will be responsible for supervision and administration of the programs. He will be assisted by a resident coordinator who is responsible for course arrangements, housing, library and seminar facilities, social functions and field trips.

Living arrangements: Every effort will be made to avoid the isolation of Penn State students as a separate group. Direct contact with local people and their culture will be an important phase of the study programs. It is planned that students will reside in private homes and in University dormitories. Homes will be carefully selected, in order to provide satisfactory living arrangements. In Rome, however it is planned that students will reside in a carefully selected pensions or boarding house. Parents and students should be aware, however, that there will not be the same type of supervision of the living arrangements which is available at the University Park campus. Students will be responsible for the arrangement of their person and conduct to a much greater extent than is customary at Penn State.

SELECTION OF STUDENTS: (a) students should have an all-University average of at least 2.50, must be in good standing, and must show evidence of maturity, stability, self-discipline, and strong academic motivation, (b) final selection will be made by the Director of the Office of Foreign Studies and the Committee on Foreign Studies, in consultation with the student's academic adviser, (c) applications will be accepted and considered from students during their sophomore year, but no later than May 1 prior to the year of departure.

To date from our campus, Joseph Matteo is taking advantage of the Rome program; Bernice Cerasaro was accepted for the Salamanca program but then declined. Other Highacres students who have announced an interest are: Mel Mundie (Manchester); Charles Fox (Durham); Pat Tierney, Vivian Belletti, and Clayton Bott (Rome).

For applications and further information contact Mr. Pierucci in M-208.

## Letter to the Editor

Editor Collegian Newspaper  
Hazleton Campus  
PSU

Dear Sir:

It is very seldom the strains of the Alma Mater are heard on this campus. In fact, my first experience with it was the night of the awards banquet, Thursday, May 13. I wonder how many students have heard it, and of those how many pay any kind of attention to the words. So often we recite or sing something without weighing the meaning of what we are saying. This song is supposed to represent us as members of the University, and yet hardly anyone knows what they are or are not saying about themselves when they sing it.

The reason for this letter is to get the Alma Mater out where everyone can see it. In the third verse of this song are two references which may not be quite appropriate for all the members of the University. The first is the phrase "...shapeless in the hands of God..." This line is not harsh or demanding, and yet, we must ask ourselves if it has a place in representing the students of Penn State. Many people, including alumni, say Yes. But what of the minority that may say No? Are they to be ignored? And what of the separation of Church and State? Does this law apply here? Should we bar the minority from feeling a part of the University because of their religious feelings? That is a question that has to be explored personally.

The second many will not feel is as serious. I disagree. There are in this third verse two references to boyhood and manhood. "We stood at boyhood's gate..." and "...turned us into men, into men..." I for one feel slighted by this in some intangible way. I feel this may have been appropriate when women were barred from equal educational rights, but now that women contribute so much to the University and the world, I feel these remaining barriers should be removed. Look at some of the major organizations on campus, and in many key positions and as loyal members you will find the women of Highacres as active as any this year. Why then should we wait for our University life to turn us into men. I would prefer to remain a woman, and be judged according to my abilities and not have anyone try to "raise" me to the standards of University men. I'm not sure which direction I'd be travelling.

I am not suggesting tampering with this rather beautiful song. I am advocating a little thought on the part of students, faculty, and administration. If I have angered or amused you then you have thought about what I have said, and that was my purpose.

Very seriously,  
Ms. tricia fisher

## The Brown Bag

has gone freakin' RAGS crazy!  
We just brought in a stash of recycled threads at mind-binding prices



Pictured: French officer long coats at \$15.00

You can get into some Rags jeans, flaired or straight-legged, felt hats, or day tripper truckin' packs at \$2.00 each.

You'll also find: Denim jackets at \$5.00  
Overall bib skirts at \$6.00  
13-button Naval jeans at \$6.00  
Velvet midi dresses at \$20.00

Recycle your mind  
for any season at

The Brown Bag 121 W. Broad St., Hazleton, Pa.

Get Your Free...  
**PENN STATE**  
Check  
Book  
Cover

when you open a  
**THRIFTY**  
CHECK  
ACCOUNT

at the  
**Miners Bank**  
NO MINIMUM BALANCE