Learning to live: Values and experience in the life of a classroom

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Learning to live: Values and experience in the life of a classroom

Comstock, Mary, Ph.D.
University of New Hampshire, 1990

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LEARNING TO LIVE:
VALUES AND EXPERIENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CLASSROOM

BY

MARY COMSTOCK
B.A. University of Oregon, 1980

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Reading and Writing Instruction

May, 1990
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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DEDICATION

For Ted, *sine qua non.*
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank you for your voices, thank you . . .

William Shakespeare
Coriolanus, II, iii

When, in future years, I look back over the process of writing this dissertation, I will above all remember how fortunate I have been in having so many mentors who are also friends. My committee chair, Jane Hansen, and committee members, Don Graves, Denny Taylor, Susan Franzosa, Burt Feintuch, and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater guided and challenged me. Above all, they trusted me to use my own voice and explore in my own way.

Pete Schiot, Anne Twitchell, and the children in their classroom allowed me to enter their lives. Without their cooperation and generosity, none of this work would have been possible.

When, at times, I found myself disheartened or distressed as one often does in an endeavor such as this, many others were there as well:

Don Murray, of whom I will always be in awe, encouraged me in my writing and helped me to continue along the path I had chosen.

John Carney's suggestion that I explore the literature of "hidden curriculum" proved to be extremely helpful when
I began my analysis.

Sue DuCharme not only made many of the little problems "go away," but also provided clear insights during our various Writing Lab discussions.

My fellow graduate students provided a community from which I drew friendship and intellectual support. On a trip to Colorado Springs, Dan Seger and Dan-Ling Fu took time to read several chapters and ask the tough questions I needed to hear.

Peg Murray, Ann Vibert and Judy Fueyo listened to me patiently when I was frustrated or confused. Our conversations helped me explore and refine my ideas, and restored my good humor.

Mary-Ellen MacMillan was my touchstone, my fellow crusader in the quest. Her diligence, courage, and friendship bolstered me when my spirits flagged.

At home, I found a constant source of encouragement and inspiration in my husband, Ted, and affection and silent understanding from my dog, Angus.

I love you all. Thank you.
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This dissertation addresses the question, "How are the values of the people who comprise a classroom manifested there?" The results of this ethnographic study are reported in descriptive narrative and cover events which took place in a grade five classroom over a period of four and a half months.

The body of the narrative entails events in an experiential learning environment in which the teaching of content area curriculum was accompanied by numerous field trips and other hands-on activities. Moreover, lessons intended to raise the children's awareness of environment, community, ethics and values were also taught.

This study concludes that teachers are bound by their own values and experiences; that unless there is a major shift in a teacher's values, no other change in his or her teaching is truly possible; and that, since what children learn is dependent on their experience and values, we cannot predict which lessons have been learned. For this reason, it is important for teachers to be closely in touch with
children and predicate their teaching on what they learn about the children from the children rather than on a decontextualized curriculum. Further connections are drawn between what is taught in a particular classroom and the socioeconomic population served with specific reference to the classroom portrayed in *Among Schoolchildren* by Tracy Kidder.
INTRODUCTION

Mother Ann Lee (1736-1784), foundress of the Shaker religion, professed that form should be "the best response to the forces calling it into being."\(^1\) Writing my research as narrative is, I feel, my best response to the complexity and contradiction, the richness and emotion evoked in the life of the classroom I observed.

All research methodologies and the forms in which their various findings are reported reflect a stance toward the world. Ethnography and narrative reflect a human experience and a human way of telling. Ethnographic study respects and acknowledges human contexts, both those of the researcher and the researched. Narrative is the most ancient of ways in which humans characterize their contexts and experiences. It is a way of telling without telling, a way which gives power to both writer and reader.

Context of the Researcher

The text, as it stands, reflects my values every bit as much as it does the values of those who were a part of the classroom. They lived their lives, but I selected and sorted, emphasized and ignored, recorded or did not record,

the actions of those lives. I do not mean to say that I did this capriciously; I simply mean that it cannot be helped. The fact that I notice a detail or action at all must mean that hundreds of other details or concurrent actions have been displaced by my focus. Lurking in the background of this narrative are the shadows of all those others that might have been written.

My own educational background, and hence, the lens through which I view classrooms, is varied. I grew up in a mining family and we followed the fortunes of others through a series of small towns in Idaho, Washington, Colorado and Montana. I went to a different school almost every year, and some years attended as many as two or three. Most of these were Catholic and conservative.

I didn't like school, and attendance was not a priority for me. I particularly hated high school, and I skipped school as often as I could and still be awarded credit. At home, I read voraciously and wrote poetry. Accident being more powerful than design, however, I ended up as a high school English teacher for several years. During that time, I learned the power and attraction of teaching: the remaking of one's own educational past through the present experience of students. I attempted to make school more interesting and challenging for my students than it had been for me.

In September of 1987, I began my doctoral studies in Reading and Writing Instruction at the University of New
Hampshire in Durham. I had been attracted to U.N.H. because of Donald Graves and Jane Hansen whose books on reading and writing seemed sensible and helped me connect my own experience as a reader and writer with what I wanted to accomplish in the classroom.

Shortly before I began this study, I read *Among Schoolchildren*, by Tracy Kidder. My feeling at the time was that the classroom Kidder had chosen to highlight, however typical it might be, was not a good example of the best in education. Part of my agenda in writing this dissertation was to show a classroom from which others in the field might learn.

**Context of the Study**

I conducted the study which is the focus of this dissertation in Durham, New Hampshire, a town of approximately 8,500 people. It is one of the oldest towns in northern New England and, while situated only sixty miles north of Boston, it is still surrounded by farms and orchards sectioned off by stone walls perpetually spilling down. The people who mend those walls, as they did in Frost’s time and before, make up part of the population. They are as conservative as the stone walls they rebuild each spring.

Since this is a university town, however, there is that other population. They are the migrants, graduate students
and professors whose children have been educated here and there, buffeted about by the fickle winds of tenure and graduate fellowships. They are liberal; some, it is suspected, are even Marxists.

These groups eye each other with suspicion at community meetings and school functions. They want what is best for their children, but what this is invariably conflicts. And into the middle of this conflict steps the teacher, with his own agenda, his own beliefs about what is best for children.

I heard about Pete Schiot long before I ever met him. He was one of those teachers with a reputation for being innovative, caring and committed. Community members knew who he was. Professors at the U.N.H. Education Department knew who he was.

I became interested in Pete Schiot's classroom because of a number of random conversations he and I had had in the University of New Hampshire Writing Lab during the spring before I was to begin my study for this dissertation. I had been reading books by Robert Coles, The Moral Life of Children and More Than Stories, and Pete had been writing a grant proposal which he hoped would afford him an opportunity to study moral development in children. During the course of these conversations, Pete told me about his classroom and the ways in which he felt the children there had been able to arrive at and express moral philosophies. Pete borrowed my Coles books and we discussed quite
informally the possibility of my studying in his room the following fall.

Summer came and slid slowly by and one day in mid-August, I found a message on my record-a-call from Pete. Was I still thinking about being in his classroom at Oyster River Elementary School in the fall? He'd be very interested in having me. I had been exploring the possibility of doing a poetry study, but, for a variety of reasons, my plans weren't working out. Pete's message came at the right time and, after playing telephone tag for several days, we met and decided to go ahead with a study in his room.

As I got to know Pete, several strands in his life stood out as important contributors to his teaching philosophy. His own experience as a student had been less than satisfying. He described his school years as "... boring. It had nothing to do with me. I guess I just got more interested in things outside of school, things my friends were doing. Things that were going on in life."

When Pete finished high school, he entered the Merchant Marine Academy and spent twelve years at sea. Pete saw the education he received at the academy as "being for something." What he learned, he could apply every day on the ship. Moreover, things that he learned on the ship could also be applied in other aspects of his life.

One day, after Pete left the Merchant Marines, a friend asked him to substitute for him in the classroom. "I guess
I got hooked," Pete told me. "I just decided that this was what I would do." When Pete talked about the teacher training he eventually went through, he generally dismissed its relevance, only mentioning John Dewey's philosophy as having been at all pertinent. "Dewey had it. You've got to experience things to learn," he told me. Pete described himself as a "process teacher," not just in reading and writing, but in all content areas.

It was clear from the beginning that Pete had more than just academics in mind in his teaching, as is clear from this excerpt from Pete's grant proposal:

In her book, The Dialectic of Freedom, Maxine Green states that, "...children who have been provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to pose their own questions, are the ones most likely to learn to learn." I would like to add to this list: And to effect change.

As a humanities educator, I feel I need stronger ways of responding to these young voices that are raising questions about the morality of the world around them. I need to help my students push their thinking beyond mere critical skills, toward the development of moral reasoning and ethical decision-making.

There are many influences at work on children. Some of their reactions are expressed in language, verbal or written; some are stored to be recalled and exemplified in response to challenges I may never know about, compelling them to tell their stories.

**Methodology**

Those who engage in ethnographic study recognize that it is, above all, an endeavor which requires that we act as
human beings more than scientists. Not only are our subjects human, but the researcher has the luxury, and the responsibility, of being human. As Georges and Jones note:

Fieldwork requiring people to study other people at first hand, however, entails much more than merely knowing what to observe and how to record, process, and present it. The fieldworker must explain his or her presence and purpose to others, gain their confidence and cooperation, and develop and maintain mutually acceptable relationships. These requirements create dilemmas, produce confrontations, demand clarifications and compromises, and evoke reflection and introspection that one can neither fully appreciate nor prepare for in advance. Worthwhile projects may fail. Research strategies frequently must be modified or abandoned as researchers and subjects interact.²

Those who write about ethnographic fieldwork do not always agree on methods of data collection; the order in which to proceed; whether or not the researcher should read pertinent literature before, after or during the study; or how one should approach data analysis. My own priorities were simple. I wanted to situate myself in such a way that my presence would not be a hinderance to classroom life, either by too much or too little participation. I wanted members of the classroom to feel comfortable with my presence and my task. I wanted to see the classroom in a variety of ways, through numerous eyes and allow the informants to speak in their various voices.

While my research question underwent a number of permutations, I went into the study with the question, "How are the values of those people who comprise a classroom manifested there?" That was the surface question anyway. My real question, at least for the early weeks of the study, was merely "What have we here?" As time went on, this question became "What seems to be important to the people in this classroom?"

I had begun with some preconceptions of how I would collect data, based on what I had done in the past. I had spent the year before in Mary Ann Wessells' grade five classroom at Stratham Memorial School in Stratham, NH which had been the site of a three year UNH research project. The dynamics of that room were such that it was quite easy to take children into the adjoining library for interviews without disrupting the class or interfering to a great degree with the children's learning responsibilities. Because the children were used to the presence of researchers as well as other visitors on a more or less daily basis, they were used to being observed and interviewed. Mary Ann and I also became close friends and we often went out together after school and on weekends. I usually was able to interview Mary Ann during these times.

This approach was not possible in Pete's classroom. I had asked Pete if he minded if I took individual children out for interviews during the course of the day. Pete had told
me he didn't mind the interviews, but wanted me to conduct them in the classroom as he thought that the other children would benefit from overhearing these conversations. I tried this several times when the children were engaged in small group work, but the classroom noise level was such that my recordings were useless. Also, the children seemed quite reticent about being interviewed with others listening. My data gathering among the children, then, took place as I wandered among their desks and listened to them talk to each other.

Interviewing Pete was also difficult. This was not because Pete was an intentionally trying informant. He was just Pete. I don't know that in the course of my study I ever saw Pete sit still for more than two minutes at a time. I might be in the middle of a question when he would jump up and say, Hey, did I ever show you such and such? And off he'd be hunting down a book or piece of writing or cartoon. Even the day of the Thanksgiving Feast, when I thought I'd have the whole morning for an interview, Pete was up and down, in and out. Pete also had a penchant for non-verbal communication. Sometimes a shrug or toss of the head constituted his answer to a complex question.

Pete was not Mary Ann. These children were not Mary Ann's children. Oyster River Elementary was not Stratham Memorial School. I got the large part of my data at Stratham from interviews. In Pete's room, I found I had to adapt my data
gathering strategies to the situation in which I found myself. My interviews were less frequent, less intrusive and a good deal shorter than they had been in other settings. I learned much more from observation.

I was able, of course, to use some of the interview data, but for the most part, I found I was most successful when I arrived early and turned on my tape recorder. I allowed the recorder to capture most of the words while I used my field notes to document what the recorder could not: weather, descriptions, non-verbal communication, general impressions. I also took photographs and, from time to time, did quick sketches.

During the on-site study (late August to mid-January for approximately twenty hours per week) I did more than collect data. I also sifted through it and hypothesized, more than once waking up in the middle of the night to write down areas for further thought. I also spent long hours talking over the data with colleagues who helped me articulate what I thought I was seeing. An art teacher had once told me, "Keep the whole picture working at once." So, I collected data and at the same time began to reflect on it; made hypotheses and amended them; pondered what I had seen, projected forward to what I might say about it.

I began writing fairly early in the study, attempting to capture some of the freshness of the experience. I thought I had done a rather nice job on my first attempt, but when
I showed it to Pete, his only comment was, "You sure missed a lot." This was a common theme with Pete. Throughout the study, it didn't seem to matter how long I was in the classroom or what I had seen then, whenever I came back, Pete's first comment was, "You should have been here. You sure miss a lot." Just what I was missing wasn't clear. Sometimes Pete would repeat for me an exchange which had taken place between students or describe an event, but often it just came down to, "You sure missed a lot."

I began to wonder about the effect my presence was having on the classroom. After an initial curiosity about my role (which disappeared as soon as I began to launch into an explanation) the children treated me with a good-natured acceptance. I was just some odd adult who occasionally asked them questions. Pete was another story. I found it odd that he rarely mentioned anything that I had seen or heard as important: it was always something I missed that was fascinating or significant. This theme was particularly interesting when I asked Pete about the teaching of reading and writing. When I asked Pete whether the children ever had the opportunity to confer or share their reading and writing with the whole class, he replied, "Oh, we do it all the time, you're just missing it." Even several weeks after the study was over, Pete told me, "You really ought to come back in. You've missed some really neat things." When I asked Pete whether or not he thought my presence in the classroom
had made a difference in what happened there he said no, but I hadn't been there enough. In spite of these reiterations and considerable probing from me, Pete was never able to articulate the importance of what I had missed.

My Writing Process

I have often compared the process of writing ethnographic description to the impossible task of stuffing a feather bed into a pillow case. Writing the text was, in and of itself, my primary form of data analysis. It required that I look through the daunting pile of field notes, transcriptions and analytic memos for themes and patterns, synthesize information and choose details which I felt best represented the life of this classroom. I chose what I felt was important, and what the people in the classroom appeared to think was important. I also attempted to show how time was used; therefore, my narrative shows about half of the time I was in the classroom devoted to field trips and related activities. As I wrote, my writing "found its own meaning" - it was an "act of discovery." Writing was the way in which I explained to myself what it was that I had seen.

One of my chief goals in writing was that the text should be interesting and accessible to readers outside the field of education. I wanted to write something that I thought was true as well as something that Pete, Anne Twitchell (Pete's
teaching intern), and the children thought was true. As Geertz points out, however, "There are a number of pretensions, but they all come down in one way or another to an attempt to get round the un-get-roundable fact that all ethnographic descriptions are homemade, that they are the describer's descriptions, not those of the described."  

The "author-function" (Foucault's term, used by Geertz) is an issue, but I do not think it is a problem as long as readers recognize that in the telling I have attempted to describe what I saw, at the time I saw it, under the conditions that prevailed. My belief that what I saw was in fact important reflects my values every bit as much as Pete's feeling that I was "missing too much" reflects his. What I have written is my account. However true I have attempted to be to the people and the time and the place, the text is always filtered through my experience, values and expectations.

Years ago when I was teaching high school English, I would occasionally ask my students, "What was important about this novel?" or "What was important about this poem?" Now, as I write these words, I am suddenly struck with how much more my process in writing ethnographic narrative resembles a poetic process than it does that of writing fiction. Perhaps this is because life, for me, has always 

resembled a poem more than it has a novel. Fiction grows from creativity, a poem from objectivity.

In fiction, good fiction at any rate, the line of plot and the force of motive are discernible. The omniscient voice of the narrator provides the reader with all those important details of which the characters are unhappily (or happily) unaware. But it can't be that way in research or in life. I cannot provide the motives or the logic for the action I describe: I can only tell you what it seemed to be.

When I write a poem, I don't try to explain. It's an impossible task. I gather the details and arrange them, juxtapose them in ways that reflect the reality I perceive: the rest is up to the reader to make of what she will.

A poem can, of course, be interpreted. The line of a metaphor and all that lies behind it can be traced. The chimera of simile and allusion can be tried in the reader's heart (however much in the background the writer's spirit moans, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all.") A poem can be interpreted. So can the narrative I have written.

This is not to say that interpretation was a simple task. It is in interpretation, I think, that the writer is in the most danger of betraying the trust of her informants. They have opened their lives to scrutiny, not knowing the outcome, but believing no harm will come because of it. The danger is doubled in educational research. Certainly we come
into a site looking for "what is." But all of us in education have very clear ideas about "what ought to be." It is important to be aware of this penchant and try as best we can to prevent our descriptions and interpretations from becoming critiques.

However much I might have either applauded Pete's actions or criticized them, I felt for the purpose of analysis that my best course of action would be to ask myself, as I once asked students, what's important here? If I were going back to the classroom again, what lessons could I take with me from this classroom? If I were going to share what I learned with new teachers, what would I tell them? Other readers will surely find different interpretations, different lessons, and that is as it should be. But I feel quite strongly that the purpose of this kind of educational research is to pass along information which will benefit the field.

***

Pete once told me a story of life on the high seas. "We were sailing off the coast of Spain in a pea soup fog. Thick. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The captain was an old salt. He'd been sailing since the days of schooners. Well, we went to the captain and asked him what to do. Our radar was out and we were off the coast of Spain, but we didn't know how far. He said, 'Use your nose. You'll smell the coast of Spain.' Sure enough, when we
sniffed we could tell the difference when we got close. I never forgot that. Use your nose."

During the four and a half months that I observed in Pete's classroom, I thought of that story frequently. As I watched him cruising among the children as they worked, I often thought, "He's sniffing for the coast of Spain." I joined him in this endeavor, learning better to use all my senses to experience and interpret this small world.
CHAPTER I

ONE DAY

Summer moves into fall in New Hampshire about the middle of August, and, even in the sultry heat, first red can be seen on the edges of swamp maple. The low afternoon sun casts autumn gold on green leaves as the sky turns Maxfield Parrish blue. Soon, along the roads to Stratham and Portsmouth, Epping and Newmarket, farmers will sell apples and pumpkins, cider and beans. At the end of August, all over the nation, teachers begin the ritual of cutting leaves from construction paper, maple, ash, oak and alder, orange, brown, yellow and red. They cover their forlorn cork boards with bright cloth or paper, tack up the leaves, and paper letters which announce: Welcome Back! or Let's Have A Good Year!

Pete Schiot doesn't do this. His fifth grade classroom in Durham, New Hampshire shows little of the cosmetic preparations which occupy so many teachers before the start of school. When I first walked in and turned slowly around, taking in the blank bulletin boards, cardboard boxes of paper, and piles of books and file folders on every flat surface, Pete's student teaching intern, Anne Twitchell, just said laconically, "You should have seen it last week."

Pete has different priorities. The last Friday night
before the start of school, Pete and I sat on his front porch talking about the year to come. We had just left a dinner with the other fifth grade teachers and their interns where Pete had avoided committing himself to weekly meetings which the rest of the group wanted to institute. "You can get meeting-ed to death in education," Pete told me. "Kids come first, not meetings." I knew what he was talking about. Looking back at my own years as a teacher, I remembered spending far too much time on committees and in meetings, talking about what should or might be done rather than taking action.

I asked him about his plans for the year. Pete grinned with a mixture of chagrin and triumph, like a kid who'd been caught in the act of a truly terrific stunt. I began to suspect that if Peter Pan had left Never-Never Land for good and grown up, he would be Pete Schiot. "I think I blew Anne away today when she found out I don't have a curriculum. The kids show up and we see what happens."

"No curriculum?"

"Not in the usual sense. I know we're going to Environmental School. I know we're going to be doing a lot of things. Everything that I teach they do something with. Unless kids use what they've learned, it's not really learned. I've always got 'em doing something. I tell the kids 'Take your time, but run like hell.'"

The first day of school I saw what he meant.
The air was crisp with fall on the Tuesday morning after Labor Day and the halls of Oyster River Elementary School were criss-crossed with the purposeful strides of secretaries delivering last minute memos and teachers headed for the copy machine. Outside the building, small groups of early arriving students clustered, waiting to go in.

In Room 14, Pete and Anne scurried about. With a breathy, "Hi, how you doin'?" Pete rounded the corner of a group of desks and headed for the blackboard, his shirt partially untucked already, picked up a piece of chalk, put it back down and made for his worktable in the middle of the room. There were two teacher desks in the room, but the function of these seemed to be to hold piles of paper and remnants of science projects from other years. Student desks were grouped in threes and fours around the room. In addition to these were two battered easy chairs and, in a corner, an old sofa surrounded by book shelves. I must have looked at a loss, for Pete was soon at my side with a book. "Have you read this?" It was *Pignapped: A Night-time Raid on the UNH Pigpen*. I sat down out of the way in one of the easy chairs and read the tongue-in-cheek account of purloined piglets. I was later to learn that no one stands around and does nothing in Pete's class. By the second week, when Pete would ask the class, "What do you do when you finish your assignment?" they would respond in unison, "Read!"

Meanwhile, Pete and Anne placed name cards on each desk
which had been lettered in bright colored markers by Molly, Pete's fifth grade daughter. All of the new kids were in one group. Reflecting on my own past, in which I attended thirteen schools before I finished high school, this seemed like a great idea. New kids would at least have something in common with each other and not feel as lonely as they might.

Fifteen minutes before the students arrived, Pete told Anne and me that we'd be introducing ourselves to the class. "Think of what you're going to say." Anne laughed, "I've been worrying the past five years what I'm going to say to these kids."

Anne and Pete sat down at the round work table in the center of the room. Pete pulled out a yellow legal pad and began to map out the schedule for the day. "I don't know what order I'm going to do this in," Pete said to himself. "I'm still thinking about it." He continued adding items to the agenda, scratching others out. "I'm going to start Bridge to Terebithia today. If we have extra time, I think I'll do Hurricane Gabrielle today. I'll get a couple of the kids to make a map and they can sign up for where they think it'll hit.

"By the way, be thinking of poems or parts of books we might want to share with the kids, maybe parts that feature a technique they could use in writing or be aware of in reading. You, too, Mary." Anne asked, "What's your time
Pete scratched his short-cropped hair. "Half an hour. That's a good time for you to leave or respond to journals. I don't want you to take much home. Just make a quick response that shows you've read it. I think that's best. You could spend your whole year writing responses." He looked back at his legal pad again, "I don't know what's going to work best 'til we go through a week. I'll mess around with this on the board and see what happens."

Just before the kids arrived, Pete wrote on the board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10</td>
<td>Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Math inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40</td>
<td>Reading Inventory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30</td>
<td>Gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:10</td>
<td>Reading period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:40</td>
<td>Journal write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:55</td>
<td>Clean-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While Pete worked on this schedule, I looked around the room. There were signs, one lettered in felt pen, primary colors, in a child's handwriting:

**Be Nice to Every Body!**

Another, in calligraphy, hung over the door:

A wise old owl sat on an oak,  
The more he saw the less he spoke;  
The less he spoke the more he heard;  
Why aren't we like that wise bird?  
Edward Hersey Richards
I wondered whether and how these statements would be expressed in action here.

Another sign had been lettered by an adult hand:

Most good writing, most REALLY good writing, takes off when somebody is in a position where they don't know what they're going to say next or how they're going to say it. At that point, frequently, they explode into a good expression.

Ken Macrorie

Other than these few signs, the walls were largely bare. Waiting for those good expressions? I wondered, as Pete left for the playground to bring his class in to start the new year.

At 8:49, Pete entered like a latter-day Pied Piper, eating a piece of blueberry bundt cake, kids in tow. He moved through the crowd saying a few words to everybody. The signs of summer were apparent: suntans, broken arms, pink and chartreuse shorts. The children found their places quickly. Some sat quietly, waiting for the action to start. Others started it. Pete came up to Mathew, one of the new children, and said, "There's going to be a fire drill today, sometime in the morning. You're going to be in charge of closing windows and doors. All right?" Mathew nodded seriously, and told the other children near him, "I'm in charge of the room for fire drill."

As the children unpacked their newly purchased notebooks and colored pens from their packs, Pete continued to move
about the room assigning jobs. Some passed out pencils. The table of "new kids" handed composition notebooks to each of the children. This way, I thought to myself, they were out among their new classmates immediately, but in a safe and purposeful role.

Anne moved about, too, chatting with the kids, bending down to their level, finding out what they'd been doing over the summer.

After ten minutes of noisy organization, Pete came to the front of the room and stood quietly with his arms folded. Soon, the room was quiet and all eyes were on him. Then, he addressed the group. "I hope everyone has a good time today. I'm glad you're here. There are only a few rules to remember. The cards on the desks are to help us learn your names and to help you get to know each other." Pete rocked back and forth on his toes and continued, "You know, I was really glad to see that everyone walked in happily today. I didn't hear any negative comments. That's good because I want everyone to try hard to work together here. Now I know you may not be sitting where you'd choose. But don't worry. I'll move you several times during the year, and each day there will be some moving around.

"I told you we didn't have very many rules, and one rule is no gum. I know you all like to chew gum. I even chew it myself from time to time. But not here.

"Now, you can go to the bathroom at any time." Pete
paused and looked slowly around the room. "Just don't abuse it. Now, I know you go for other reasons. The old seventh inning stretch?" He raised one eyebrow and looked around the room. Several children looked down and grinned. "I know. Just don't abuse it.

"The nurse's office is just down the hall. Does anyone know where? That's right, all the way down, first door on the right. If you feel sick, GO!

"There will be homework every night. It won't be worksheets and it will be different every night."

"Even Fridays?!" asked some children in shocked tones which implied that their rights were being violated.

"Yes, every night." No compromises here.

"What kind?" they asked.

"Puzzles, brain teasers. A lot of reading. In fact, you'll be reading for a half hour every night and filling in a reading log every night. At least half an hour of reading." Then the yearly ritual of student testing teacher began.

"Does the reading we do here count for homework?" One asked hopefully.

"No."

"What happens if we don't do it? Do we miss recess?"

"Do you let it pile up?"

"Let's wait and see if it ever happens," Pete replied.

"What if we forget it at home?"
"Let's wait and see if it ever happens," he countered again. "The BIG RULE is, like the sign says, be nice to everybody."

Anne spoke next. As I looked at Anne's almost six foot height and athletic physique, I suspected her student teaching would not be so fraught with stress as that of others. She didn't look like anyone to mess with, even though good humor was apparent in her blue eyes and freckled, strawberry blond complexion. She smiled and told the children. "I chose fifth grade because, well, it's the best." She also told them that she enjoyed swimming and reading. Their eyes lit up. Many of them were on the swim team. When I told them I was from the university and that I hoped to learn about the way teachers taught and students learned their eyes told me that this was definitely dull.

Anne and I moved to the margins of the room as Pete resumed his address. He picked up a sheaf of Xeroxed papers and began to read from them. One essay was called "The Whispering Wind." The other was "Shadows."

The Whispering Wind

The whispering wind brushes my face as I walk down the road.
The air feels clean as I breathe, my breath shows in the cold outdoors.
All the trees sway in the wind and a little tree struggles to keep itself standing up straight.
The puddles from melted snow make ripples as the wind blows strongly.
A couple of big pine trees rock back and forth making a rhythmic motion.
Some of the needles of the pine trees blow off flying in the air and landing, and then they are
whisked off into the next yard.
Dead leaves from autumn blow on top of the left-over snow.
One birch that is really high blows so hard I'm not surprised it's blown away.
The wind is so strong that the clouds drift swiftly, in the colored sky.

Shadows
Looking out from my window I see lots of shadows. One is the mailboxes. It looks like a tall man walking down the road. Also part of the stone wall sticks up and that looks like a crippled man hunched over. Our house has a huge shadow that spreads across the lawn. It looks like a big wall. The tree shadows are long and skinny. I think shadows are really neat.

Pete made no comment about the writing then, but went on, "I know that many of you have very clear ideas about how math ought to be taught and how it oughtn't to be taught. Or how reading should be taught or how it shouldn't be. Let us know why you don't like reading or writing or math and we'll try to help you. We won't get on the phone very often to tell parents that so and so doesn't seem to like reading. None of us like to get in situations where we know we won't do well. Like swimming -- there are some kids in this room I wouldn't want to swim against, no sir. BUT, always give yourself a chance, give it a try, you might surprise yourself.

"As you can see, there are books out on the tables, over there on the couch, and on the shelf. Take a look and choose a book--quick! Take your time, but go as quick as you can!"

As the children scrambled for the book tables, I noticed
Jessica, one of the new children. She could have been an illustration for Pear's Soap, a Victorian line drawing, with a pale oval face framed by light hair. She went right to a book called Appomattox and took it to her seat. I asked her if she liked history. "Yes!" she whispered with her eyes wide and a dimpled smile. Later, she told me that they had just moved to New Hampshire from Alabama. Her father was a physics professor. She loved to read, but in her old school, they didn't read much besides basal readers. I told her that she wouldn't find any basals in this room, or worksheets either. She smiled broadly and whispered confidentially, "I'm going to like this place!"

Pete and Anne circulated, checking what books had been chosen, whispering to the children. "Do you like to read?" Becky, a serious looking girl with straight black hair and freckles, sidled up to Pete whispering, "I can't find a book." He walked to the book table with her. "Don't recommend Sarah Plain and Tall," she told him firmly. "Someone is always recommending it to me. I've tried it and it's dull." Pete said he thought so, too. I silently concurred.

Soon the room was absolutely still. The children were already deep in their books. Pete tiptoed over to me grinning and whispered, "This wasn't supposed to happen. This was supposed to be just a time to choose books." It was 9:15, and we were off schedule already.
I remained in the easy chair next to the group of new children, a great vantage point. I saw Jessica with her *Appomattox* book, tracing battle lines on a map with her finger. Sondra, with long dark hair, eyes like a Siamese cat and a disturbingly mature physique for a fifth grader, was reading a Judy Blume. Mathew's eyes flickered around the room, and Maria frowned and flipped ahead in her book.

Pete sighed as he decided to get back on schedule. He cleared his throat and told them he had a couple of books he wanted to tell them about, *Danny the Champion of the World*, by Roald Dahl and *Bridge to Terebithia* by Katherine Paterson. "I like both of these books and I'm going to start reading *Bridge to Terebithia* to you today. You'll be reading a lot in this class, and you need to know that it's OK to abandon books you've started and don't like. Give them a chance first, but if you still don't like them, don't go on with them. I know that some of you have already read *Bridge to Terebithia*, but it's good to re-read books sometimes."

"Now, it's time for a little exercise. Everybody up. You know how to do jumping jacks? Who can show me?" Several volunteers sprang to action. "Right. Everybody right side first. Good. Now left side. Now both sides. Good. Everybody feel better?" There was panting and laughter as the children slid back into their chairs.

Pete continued, "Miss Twitchell is handing out folders right now for you to put your writing in. And yellow paper."
Always use yellow paper for drafts. You'll find out about white paper at environmental camp. You should use yellow paper until you're ready to publish."

"Now, what do you think we do during writing time?"

"Write!" the class responded. Pete wrote "write" on the board.

"That's right. What do we do if we don't know what to write?"

"Think!" called out a boy from the back. Pete wrote "think" on the board.

"Good. What do we do if we still don't know what to write?"

"Think some more," several said.

"Or get ideas from someone else," another added. Pete wrote "think" again and "get ideas from others."

Pete read two more essays from the previous year. These, I found out later were Nature Notebooks, observational journals that would be kept by all class members. Pete asked, "Have any of you thought of topics yet? Alex has figured out why I'm reading these." Several children nodded and began to write. Jill said, "I want to write on a story I started last year. I was almost half-way through." The writing was accompanied by a fluctuating buzz as Pete and Anne circulated among the children helping them get started. From my chair I leaned toward Jessica. "What are you writing?" I asked. She handed me her paper and watched while
I read. Jessica was writing about the time she sneaked out of the house at dawn to see if, as her mother has told her, the "dew makes the grass pure crystal."

After about fifteen minutes, Pete stopped the class and asked, "Was there anyone the period worked well for?"

The boys at one table said, "Over the summer we thought up all these weird names and now we're going to use them in the story."

Pete wrote "ideas from summer" on the board.

Another said, "When it was quiet, I could think while I was writing." Pete wrote "quiet" on the board.

Then Pete asked, "Was there anyone it didn't work out well for?"

One student said she couldn't get a title and started giggling. Two couldn't get a topic.

Pete wrote these on the board. He stood back and said, "Groups that didn't have any trouble had some ideas and felt that the quiet was helpful. I noticed that some groups were a little noisy." He looked at the groups who had had trouble. They looked down or laughed nervously. "Work on that tomorrow. While you were writing, I got an idea, too. It was about a time when I dammed a stream." Several hands went up as children volunteered similar experiences. This, apparently, was a common practice for ten year olds. Later, as the children filed out to recess, Jessica told me, "When he talked about damming the water, I got another idea. I
have about five ideas now."

Recess was the first time that day that Anne had a chance to ask Pete about what she'd seen going on. Having noticed some interactions that were a bit too spirited, she asked, "Do you do something if you realize you've made a mistake in the seating arrangement the first day?"

Pete pointed to the board at the list of things that had gone right or wrong during writing time. "That's why I did that. I tried to phrase it positively. I try to be positive from day one. Give them the benefit of the doubt at first and a chance to work it out for themselves. We'll see what happens before we step in. Part of teaching is winging it," he went on. "I take so many cues from the kids that it's not always predictable."

Recess flew by, just enough time for a quick chat and a trip to the bathroom. When the kids returned they were out of breath, red in the cheek. Sweaters were off, slung over the shoulder or tied around the waist. The last few surreptitious punches were thrown and confidences whispered as the children fell into their chairs and leaned forward on elbows. The room smelled hotter than before.

Once again, Pete stood at the front of the room, silently waiting for quiet. His eyes slid over the group until the last sound died away. "Now it's time for the math inventory. This is not a test. It's just to give us an idea of what you can do and what you can't. What do you do if you finish
early?"

"Read?"

Pete nodded.

As Pete and Anne handed out the three page math inventory, Jessica leaned over and told me, "I love math. My old teacher in Alabama did, too." Remembering her physics professor father, I asked if she liked to do math at home, too. Again, she grinned, "My dad's teaching me algebra." Picking up her math inventory sheets and scanning them up and down, she whispered confidently, "This is easy." Later, however, she sat frowning. Page three contained problems she hadn't come across before. As Pete cruised by, he leaned over and told her, "N could be any number." Jessica knit her brow, raised one eyebrow and bit her lip for a few seconds. Then she leaned over the paper again and continued with studious concentration.

Some looked around as they worked. Some did everything in order, while others did the ones they knew first and went back to the harder ones. Still others gave up and watched the clock.

"How do you do these stupid fractions?" one muttered to himself.

"Why are there lines on these numbers?" asked another, pointing at fractions.

"I never learned to do these. Do I have to do 'em?"

Anne murmured, "Do what you can."
As the time allotted drew to a close, Pete interrupted, "Would you put your pencils down, please? First and last name on each sheet. One person from each group collect the papers. I see a lot of people who are anguishing over things they don't know. Don't worry. This isn't a test.

"I liked the way you handled this period. Most of you seem to like math. How many of you did math over the summer?" I was amazed to see at least half the hands go up.

Some had played math games. Jessica had worked in a math workbook and did three pages a day. One worked on his own in a workbook because he wanted to learn division better. Another made his own game by adding the time (9:59=9+5+9=23). Sondra showed a game with her fingers to remember the nine times table. Her demonstration was followed by several other tricks students knew about the nine times tables.

Now it was story time. Pete picked up his copy of *Bridge to Terebithia*. Just as he cleared his throat to begin, one child got up and headed out the door to the bathroom. "How many others need to go to the bathroom," he asked. Six hands went up. "All right. Go. We'll wait for you." Pete sat down in the easy chair at the front of the room and waited. The children watched Pete wait. Eight silent minutes later, everyone was ready to begin.

"I like to read and I really like you to listen," he said. "Now I'm going to tell you something that won't make
sense. I like you to listen, but you don't have to. You have
to listen at the beginning. Then, if you still don't like
it, you don't have to listen. One thing I'll ask you to do
is not talk."

Then he began his performance. Pete was a dramatic reader
with a flair for comic voices and sound effects. When he
finished the passage fifteen minutes later, I heard Jessica
tell Maria, "Now that's a book."
CHAPTER II

IN THE FIELD

The day of my next visit to school dawned gray and raw. As I quick stepped up to the door of the school, coatless, my hands making fists in the pockets of my skirt, I heard a voice behind me, "Good morning, Mrs. Comstock!" It was Bryan, one of those remarkable students whose name I remembered after only one day.

"Did you do the math homework?" he asked. Obviously, Bryan suffered from some confusion about my role. I replied that I had not and asked what the homework had been. "Math palindromes," he told me. "They're really neat. See, I did an extra page of them. Do you think Mr. Schiot would like to hand it out?" I was impressed not only by his resourcefulness, but also the sense of collegiality in his relationship with his teacher.

As I looked at his palindromes, I mentioned that I had only been familiar with word palindromes and their popularity in past centuries. I handed Bryan's paper back, stuffed my hands in my pockets again and shivered. It was cold, but this was data.

Bryan, apparently oblivious of the temperature, continued, "I'd like to live in a different time. Like maybe
the 1800's. That'd be neat."

I remembered sharing this feeling when I was Bryan's age. I, too, had been captured by the past. "That's one thing I like about reading," I told him. "Like Laura Ingalls Wilder. You can imagine you're in that time when you're reading."

"Or the 1700's," Bryan added. "Like that book Mr. Schiot gave me yesterday, Spies of the Revolution. That'd be scary, though. Everyone getting killed."

I recalled a book I had read in fifth grade that was an account of a young girl taken captive by Indians. "Yes. I always wonder if I'd be as brave as the people in the book."

Then Bryan surprised me, "You don't see that today. Today you don't have to be brave."

"Is that good or bad?" I asked.

Bryan leaned back against the bike rail and thought. "Good in some ways," he finally replied. "You shouldn't have to do anything you don't want to. But bad, too. I think we need more bravery today." Before I could pursue this statement, some other children rode up on their bikes and the moment was lost. I had something to think about, however. Children as well as teachers brought their philosophies to school.

In Room 14, the children filed in again, and almost as quickly, left for forty-five minutes of music class. Anne and Pete took advantage of this free time and went over insurance cards which the children had turned in the day
before. Pete explained to Anne, "You see it's real important to look over these cards. Don't just turn them in to the office. You see Luke here is on medication. We need to know this. Also check to see if any of them are allergic to bee stings. We'll need to know that for environmental school."

Pete and Anne smiled up at me as I plunked my heavy bag on the floor and joined them. As Ann perused the insurance cards, I showed Pete the letter I was planning to send to the children's parents letting them know I was in the classroom and what I would be doing. I had expected Pete to just nod and say it was all right to hand out. Instead, I saw Pete frown as he read it:

Sept. 5, 1989

Dear Parents,

I am a doctoral student in reading and writing instruction at UNH. I will be basing my dissertation on research I will be conducting in Mr. Schiot's grade five classroom at Oyster River Elementary School.

The focus of my research will be the various values of the teacher and students as they're exhibited in classroom practices and behavior. During my time at Oyster River, I will observe and conduct interviews, but I will not interfere with any regular classroom activities or with learning time.

This is a very exciting time for me and I am expecting to learn a great deal. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. (749-6080)

Sincerely,

Mary Comstock
Pete sighed before he began to speak. It was obvious he didn't want to be too critical or hurt my feelings. "This is good," he began, and then paused. I knew that pause. I've used it myself: there was a "but" coming. "But," he continued, "I have this thing about negativity." Negativity? I thought. What was negative? "This line here, 'During my time at Oyster River, I will observe and conduct interviews, but I will not interfere with any regular classroom activities or with learning time.' I think that needs to be more positive. You need to let them know that you'll be an asset to the room." I wasn't so sure of this. I had always felt as a researcher that I had created as much work for the teacher as I had saved them. Feeling somewhat like an overgrown ten year old, I put the letter back in my file and decided I would go back to the drawing board.

Within the next few moments, I saw another instance of Pete's emphasis on being positive. Anne had finished logging in the homework that had been due the day before. "Only one person didn't do it," she said. "Just Mark. That's pretty good."

"Yeah, that is good. You need to compliment them on the good job they did. Only when you say it, don't say 'only one person didn't do it.' That's negative. Say something like 'we had almost 100% on the homework yesterday.' That's better. And it makes them feel like maybe they could shoot for 100% next time, work as a group. That one person who
didn't do it, he knows. He'll want to be part of the group that did their work."

Pete's and Anne's discussion turned to Mark, the boy who had not turned in homework. Several teachers had warned Pete about Mark. According to them, he was one of the most negative children they had ever come across. "His face is so hard and sad. I don't think I've ever seen him smile," one of them had said.

Anne said, "Look at this," and handed me Mark's reading inventory from yesterday. Instead of answering such questions as "How many books do you own?" and "What makes a good book?" Mark had scribbled and made X's. Then Anne showed me Mark's journal from the first day of school. The writing prompt had been, "How did your day go?" Mark wrote: "it was trash! it was no fun I did not want to sit with the people I am sitting with I couldn't talk to my friends". This diatribe was followed by the following graph:

![Graph Image]
Then Mark wrote: "I don't care what you can do about it or not I had a bad day!" Definitely a challenge. I wondered how Pete would manage to respond to this positively. I flipped the page and saw Pete's response: "Mark - It's too bad you had such a bad day. I am glad to see you are such a good writer. You are very descriptive and your chart made a nice visual presentation of your feelings." This was followed by a smiling cartoon face labeled "Mr. S."

"We'll have to work on him," Pete said. "I noticed, Anne, that you gave him a stroke yesterday. That was good. I can't remember now what it was, but if we can remember to stroke him, and just ignore him when he's negative, I think we'll make some headway. We have to be careful though. Sometimes it looks like one kid is getting special treatment. We don't want that."

When the children returned from music, Pete began to tell them about nature notebooks. Tonight, their homework would be the first entry in this observational journal. "Think of something around your house, or on the way to or from school, that you could observe on a regular basis. The stories I read to you yesterday, "Shadows" and "The Whispering Wind," came from last year's nature notebooks. I think you're really going to find some neat things to observe."

Mathew, one of the new children, raised his hand. "At my uncle's in Wolfeboro there's a spider that has a huge web."
It's like this big," he said stretching his fingers out in a web to indicate the size. "It's black with yellow on it."

"Good observation. You've got a good start."

Other children began to call out descriptions of spiders they had noticed recently. I had been unaware until now that September was spider season in New Hampshire.

Mathew, feeling encouraged, continued, "There was a wasp's nest that I was watching, but I poked it with a stick and got stung. I might watch this owl that's in our backyard instead."

More examples flowed from the class, and Pete finally interrupted, "First we need to talk about getting a notebook. If you already got a notebook, that's fine, but if you haven't, try to get a standard size. Otherwise they get lost in the pile. Does anyone know anyplace that has a sale?"

Again, children were quick to make suggestions. Mark, almost inaudibly, ventured, "You could go to Off-Price," a local bargain emporium.

Pete was quick to reinforce Mark. "Good! Shhhh! Did everyone hear what Mark just said? Say it again, Mark."

"I said you could go to Off-Price." One of the other children muttered, "Yeah, he's a real genius." Pete shot a steely look in his direction, as he continued, "Be thinking about your entry for tonight."

The class went on to its math activity, but as Pete
walked by Mark's desk, I overheard him say, "Mr. Schiot, I saw a great blue heron this summer when we were on vacation. I saw it swallow a whole fish. Its neck bulged out and you could see the fish going down . . ."  

I, too, walked among the desks, but the children soon found I was no help to them in math. They consulted me for other reasons, however. Jessica whispered, "Could I help people when I'm finished?" I told her to ask Miss Twitchell or Mr. Schiot. Jill beckoned to me and showed me a poem which she had just composed, saying, "I wrote this just now while Mr. Schiot was talking. Do you want to read it to the class?" I read the poem to myself:

Walking

She walks with the sun as light as a cloud. She listens to the wind that roars out loud. She looks at the green trees, imagine her hair blowing in the breeze.

When I looked up again, I saw that Jill was staring dreamily out the window, where the day, I suddenly realized, had turned blue and warm. She caught my eye and smiled as she turned back to her math with a shrug.

After lunch, Pete informed the children that in a few minutes, they would be embarking on the first field trip of the year. Where, the children wanted to know. To a field, where else? First, however, there were a few ground rules that needed to be established for all field trips. Pete
reminded the class that the week-long trip to Stone Environmental School was only a few weeks away.

"We don't harm people on a field trip. Keep your hands to yourself. Look at the sign. Let's be kind to everyone. It's your job to let us know if you have allergies. There are a couple of plants that everyone has a reaction to. What are they?"

"Poison ivy!"

"Poison oak!"

"Those are the main ones. How do you spot them?"

Various replies of "three leaves," "shiny leaves" and "Leaves of three, let them be!"

"Leaves of three, let them be," Pete repeated. "Why do we take field trips?"

"To learn."

"To have fun."

"Yup. To learn and to have fun, and if everybody remembers to follow these few rules, I think we're all going to learn something and I think we're all going to have fun. Now, before we get going, Miss Twitchell is going to explain the assignment to you."

Anne held up the dittoed page for the group to see. It was simply the alphabet arranged in two columns. "For this assignment you're going to work in pairs. You can choose your own partner. What I want you to do is while you're in the field, look for something for each letter and fill it
in. But, remember, if you just put down things you can see, you're going to get stuck. So use all of your senses. All 1,2,3,4,5 of them. So you could write down the way something smelled or felt or sounded, too. Everybody understand?"

"Can we work alone?" Mark asked.

"You can," said Anne, "but you'll probably see more with an extra pair of eyes."

Soon, all of us were on the edge of the playground looking down into a mowed field, surrounded by a high, weedy fringe. Pete held up one hand and said, "Remember to always stay in sight of the group. Don't go into the woods. Keep your eyes open. There's a lot there." As the children spread out, I followed at a somewhat slower pace as my heels sank into the moist earth. I hadn't realized that "field work" would be a literal term for my research endeavors. In the future I would dress for all contingencies.

The children wandered along the edge of the field, at first writing down the obvious: grass, dirt, rocks. Several complained dismally that there was "nothing to see." Then, after about ten minutes, the first spider was spotted. Within seconds, everyone was seeing spiders, webs and nests. Mark turned out to be an expert, trailing along beside Pete, calling various natural wonders to his attention. In addition to the now ubiquitous spiders, Mark pointed out jewel weed and showed how its seed pods sprung into coils at the merest touch; cicadas which looked like primeval
beasts in miniature; japanese beetles trapped in spider webs. Mark's manner was by no means effusive; rather, he projected a very serious demeanor and ignored everyone except Pete. It was as if he had decided to accept Pete, for the moment, as a colleague with whom he would share information. His face remained hard and his brows knit. But, to Pete and Anne, this was the start of making headway with Mark.

Back in the classroom, Pete complimented the group on their behavior. "I learned something from everyone," he said. The prompt for the that afternoon's journal was "What did you see or notice?" Mark's read: "I liked watching the spititer eat the Japoneis beetel."
CHAPTER III

STORMY WEATHER

As I talked with Pete and observed his classroom over the ensuing weeks, one thing was clear: in spite of his statement to the contrary, Pete did have a curriculum. It might not have been typical of the scope and sequence upon which so many elementary teachers base their practice, nor even predicated upon general subject area goals (i.e. study of the components of the federal government or the geography of North America). Nonetheless, Pete did have clear aims in mind which he approached in a variety of ways, dependent to a large extent upon the children's interests and apparent needs, and the opportunities for teaching which presented themselves each day.

There were several activities which could be counted on each year in Pete's class (e.g., the week at Stone Environmental School, the trips to York Village and the Urban Forestry Center, etc.) While these were loosely referred to as part of a science or social studies unit, the chief lessons drawn from these activities were more global than particular in nature. That is, Pete was more concerned with processing and connecting information to daily life than memorizing and regurgitating. Pete said to me once, "I
want the kids to be able to open their eyes and look around. See what's out there. I want them to be able to tell me something, not always be me the one who's doing the telling. To find information, use information. Learning it for the ten minutes it takes to do a test doesn't mean anything."

Lessons often went further, however. More often than not, the boundary between academic lessons and "life" lessons was often non-existent, or at least blurred.

An opportunity to use information and connect it to life arose in mid-September as Hurricane Hugo formed off the south east coast of the United States. The weather maps on the morning news had shown Hugo coiled and ready to strike. Our weather was dismal, rainy and foggy. Recess had been held indoors for the second day in a row, and the children were wound as tight as Hugo. As I entered, Pete was discussing Hugo.

"If you listened to Dr. Sheets on the news this morning, he said Hugo seems to be going northwest; however, he did say, we will not be issuing any warnings to the Florida coast until later on this morning. However, if the hurricane is tracking northwest, and you know that north is always at the top of the map, right, you know that?"

Several responded with a bored "Right" or "We got that."

"And south is always at the bottom," he continued, "so west naturally would be here and east would be here. So, if it's northwest it would be like this right? If it continues
on its present course, northwest, it is expected to hit one of the Carolinas, that means North Carolina or South Carolina. This is where you've got to be careful because they say so many things that you don't know what to believe. However, remember Dr. Sheets said, 'we will not issue any warnings to the Florida coast until late this morning.' In other words, what they're saying is it could still come down and hit Florida because it could go northwest, all of a sudden cut due west and hit anywhere from Miami all the way up to the northern tip of Florida. Then after the northern tip of Florida, what state do we hit?"

"Georgia?" ventured one.

"Georgia! Georgia's a big state on the coast. It could hit Georgia. It could hit North Carolina or South Carolina. HOWEVER, they always use the word 'however', it's still too early to tell because there are a lot of miles of ocean. The first thing they say is that it's going northwest and on that present course the first thing it would hit on that course is the Carolina coast. HOWEVER we will be issuing warnings later on this morning if necessary to the Florida coast. HOWEVER it could turn and go north to the Virginia capes or go higher. So in other words, today, they still don't know where it is. So my question would be why didn't they just say they didn't know where it's going? But they don't want to say that because Dr. Sheets is a doctor and he has to issue something. Because that's what he's paid
for. When I read about this I didn't really understand this because it could go this way or it could go that way or it could go that way. It's a much better way of saying 'I don't know where it's gonna go,' I guess. What do you think? Do you think he just didn't dare to say he didn't know where it's going?"

Alex answered, "He didn't want to be like 'I don't know where it's going' because people would say 'hey, look at this guy, he doesn't even know anything.'"

"And he's a doctor, right?" Pete went on. "He's on TV. I don't know."

"I heard we're gonna get rainfall," Dan announced.

"I would think we would!" Pete exclaimed. "When it covers a thousand miles of United States coastline, I would darn well think we would get rain! But then aren't we going to get rain probably sooner or later anyway?"

"I heard, my mother said, there might be another hurricane following this."

"Iris," Pete nodded. "I didn't hear too much about Iris this morning. Evidently it's not considered a major hurricane yet. It's still a tropical storm. It's not a full fledged hurricane yet."

"How do they give them the names and why?" one asked.

Another child volunteered, "It goes girl/boy, girl/boy. It used to be just girls, but the men got mad."

"Somebody says it goes, boy/girl, boy/girl, right? What
was the name of the last one?" Pete asked.

"Gloria," several chimed in.

"OK. We have Gloria, and Hugo, and Iris," Pete said as he wrote the names on the board. "And it goes boy/girl/boy/girl. What do you notice? What do you notice about Gloria, Hugo and Iris? Take a good look. This is a good clue here."

"They're in alphabetical order?"

"They're in alphabetical order," Pete concurred. "So Gloria, Hugo, Iris. What do you think the next one might be?"

"James?"

"Josh?"

"Jennifer?"

"Why could it not be Jennifer?" Pete asked.

"Because it's a girl and Iris is a girl. And it has to be like boy/girl/boy/girl."

"I would think an important thing like that would have to be decided by a doctor, wouldn't you? Like Dr. Sheets. He's from the National Hurricane Headquarters. He's the head of it. He's the number one turkey . . . Whoops! I mean the number one guy."

"I betcha when they get to S they pick that guy's name," one of the boys said.

"Sheets? Yeah, but that's his last name. OK. Here's the way this is going to work. Here's what you're going to do. You're going to pick a town in a state on the Eastern
seaboard, you're going to pick out the longitude and the latitude of that town where you think the hurricane will hit. You're going to find the longitude and the latitude of that town and on a piece of paper we'll give you in a few minutes, you will put you name, the state, the town, the longitude and the latitude and rush it to the Oyster River Hurricane Headquarters just outside and it will be plotted on a map. And we will have a prize for the person who hits it on the head. Or the closest. Now notice that a couple of sharpies in here said something else, 'I'm not going to say now where that hurricane will go.' Pretty smart! Now, what's the northern-most state on the Eastern seaboard?

"Maine."

"Maine." Pete wrote Maine at the top of the board. "What comes after Maine? What's the next state down?"

"Vermont?" one tried.

"No! Massachusetts!" a classmate corrected.

Pete continued, not interfering with the misinformation. "Massachusetts is next, right? Then comes what, Rob? We go from Maine to Massachusetts, what's next?"

"Rhode Island?" Rob said.

"Rhode Island, right?" Pete continued his listing, oblivious of an undertone of quiet protestation. "Where do we go next?"

"New York," another child added confidently.

Pete wrote New York. "Where do we go next?"
"Virginia?"

Pete wrote Virginia.

"What happened to New Hampshire?" John finally asked.

Pete stopped. "What's that?"

"We don't use New Hampshire because it's not on the water," Ken said disdainfully.

"Right," Pete concluded with a grim smile. "New Hampshire's not on the water so we can't hit New Hampshire."

Now the quiet protest began to grow, as several children whispered to each other "There's water!"

"Oh, there's water?" Pete said as if suddenly aware of the undercurrent of doubt.

"There's Great Bay and Little Bay. . ." Bryan's voice trailed off.

"Oh, should we put it on?" Pete asked, his tone implying that it really was all up to them. "But you said it was a bay, you didn't say it was an ocean."

"It's from the ocean. A bay is water from the ocean!" John protested.

"Oh, so we should put it up? Where would we put it?"

"Between Maine and Mass," John said with exasperation.

"Oh, ok. Where'd you just move from?" Pete asked after he had added New Hampshire to the list.

"Littleton, Mass."

Pete folded his arms and stared at the group with disgust. Several silent seconds passed before a few
whispered, "What's wrong?"

Pete's eyes slid over the class. "Twenty-six kids listened to this and sat there going "Duhhhhhh." Several began to laugh and poke each other until they looked up at Pete. They were soon still. A hurricane was about to hit. "What's the matter with you people anyway? You're from New Hampshire, you're natives, and you let him get away with that? He admitted to you he's from western Massachusetts and he still knew that there was ocean-front in this state. And you live here in this state and you still let him get away with it You're excused!"

"I said it, I said New Hampshire," one of them claimed self-righteously.

"I said it after Maine."

"I said it first. I did!"

Pete ignored their protestations. "I am really amazed. This blows me away to think that we have twenty some odd people in this room and you don't even know where you're from. You know, I'm really going to embarrass you now. I had a girl from Japan. She walked through this door one day three years ago, her father dropped her off and said, "Mr. Schiot, this is my daughter. She just came from Japan yesterday. She doesn't speak one word of English." In two weeks time she could speak enough English to make herself understood and she knew every state in the union. And I would be embarrassed at this point to ask you people that.
You should know a little about the area you're from. You don't even know that New Hampshire has MILES of coastline."

Suddenly brave, Bryan piped up, "It has eighteen miles of coastline."

"Why didn't you tell us earlier? How come you let him get away with that?"

"Yeah Bryan, yeah Bryan," his classmates prodded.

"It's safer to say nothing, right?" Pete asked. He scanned the class darkly and continued. "Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts . . ."

The lesson continued, the children charted the longitude and latitude of the spot where they predicted Hugo would hit, they drew a map of the coastline and marked the spot of each prediction with a map pin, but it was clear that the day's lesson had gone beyond geography or meteorology. During lunch Pete said to me, "Can you believe all those kids who just kept quiet? It really bugs me that they're too scared to take a chance. I hope they got the picture."
CHAPTER IV

THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS

The rains continued into the week before the children were to go to Stone Environmental Camp. Tension was high, not only because of excitement at the prospect of a week long trip, but because recess had continued to be held indoors for several days. At the beginning of the week, the children had played chess or read during recess. Now they flipped chess pieces at each other and shouted across the room. Pete felt that some sort of activity was in order.

"Everybody up," he began. "Now I'm going to show you something real hard and you're going to have to move away from the other person. Stretch your arms out and make sure you're not near anybody. There's a type of exercise that people in China do and it's called Tai Chi." Here, the children suddenly decided to be Chinese, noisily attempting their own sing song version of the language.

"This is a little difficult," Pete went on, still unperturbed, "so I'm going to show you. I'll run through it first then I'll let you try it. On this one, you're going to get on one foot and you've got to very slowly--- wait, you don't have to do it now--- you're going to very slowly raise your knee up, you're going to turn your knee out to

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the side, all on one foot—no, don't do it now, I have to show you the correct way to do it. Then you're going to hold it out there... You don't need to do it while I do it. I'll show you and then you can do it. This leg's going to come up in the air like this, you're going to turn,... don't do it now, don't do it now."

In spite of Pete's repeated attempts to demonstrate first, several children insisted on joining him, saying, "I can do that. I do it all the time."

Pete was obviously frustrated. "I said, DON'T DO IT NOW! Just watch. You can try it in a second. You pick your knee up..." Still, the children mimicked his motions. "OK. I want everybody to sit down, because we're not going to do it." The children sat down and looked back at him.

"One of the things I feel very strongly about is when I show you how to do something using your muscles and balance, I don't want to see people get hurt. I feel very strongly about that so if you think it's something that's a joke, then I'm not going to show you how to do it. I wouldn't want to teach you how to do it the wrong way. We'll try it again some day when you're ready for it." Pete's voice was tense but even. The children were silent now.

"We'll go on with science. Next week you will be out on lessons at Environmental School. While you're out on lessons, you're going to have to keep something called field notes. Then, while you're out on a lesson, things like this
will happen. You might be on a walk, and we'll say somebody finds something on the ground and they say 'Oh, my gosh what is that?' and the group leader says, 'Aha you have found a ribbon worm. Let's read about ribbon worms. Here it is: Nemertia worms belong to the phylum nemertia,'" Pete read from the pocket field guide. "'They are a group of soft-bodied, very contractile cylindrical to flattened animals which are unsegmented externally.' Ahhhh... what does that mean?" he asked rhetorically. The children shrugged, somewhat chastened now.

Pete continued. "'The mouth opens into a straight digestive tube which ends in an ANUS at the end or posterior end of the animal.' Do you know anything now?"

At the word "anus," the boys had giggled and elbowed each other, while the girls had looked down or away. None of them responded to Pete's question.

"What do you know now?" Pete persisted. "Just tell me one thing that you learned so far? What do you know? Ken?"

"Not much," Ken answered despondently.

"Now wait a minute. Let me read this sentence again. "The mouth opens up into a straight digestive tube . . ." What does that mean, Ken?"

Ken waited a few seconds. Was this a trick question? "It means the mouth opens up into a straight digestive tube," he finally answered.

"OK, you're right," Pete assured him. "The mouth opens
up into a straight digestive tube... which ends in an anus at the rear end of the animal."

Rob leaned across the aisle to Ken and whispered, "His butt!" Ken giggled and smirked.

"So he's got his mouth probably at one end...," Pete continued.

"And his butt is at the other end!" Rob announced.

"Excuse me, I think we're having a bit of a problem. I can stop this and you can get down some books and sit and do your own work at your own seat. Would you rather do that?"

There was a low undertone of "No," from the children.

"I'm not interested in comments. If you want to make a comment, all you have to do is raise your hand. An anus is the proper word we use when we're discussing such things. If you want to use your own terminology with your buddies, fine. I'm sure you do. I certainly have some of my own. But when we're talking about this in scientific terms, we use the proper terminology. Rob, would you go and sit up there please? Next move will be outside. I'm reading this because you could come across some pretty technical reading at Environmental School, and you're going to have to deal with it. You're going to be expected to learn, to know what this is. Your group leader might be one who shares a lot of scientific knowledge with you and you don't want to waste it. He might read you something like this, and I think
you're capable of handling this kind of information.

"So, there's a mouth at one end and an anus at the other end," Pete continued to read from the book. "'This is a step up from the flat worms which have NO ANUS AT ALL!'"

"No anus at all?" the children whispered to each other, wide-eyed and amazed at such a wonder.

"Nemertians are round with a proboscis, an organ of defense which also captures prey and helps the animal burrow in the sand.' A proboscis, then, is a kind of a nose which, in this case, is an organ of defense. That means he probably uses it for fighting or something, right?" Now the kids were into the lesson, sitting forward and nodding. Pete continued to read the information, now adding expression and emotion as if this were the most exciting passage in the world, "...which also captures prey and helps the animal burrow in the sand, but has nothing to do with the digestive system! That is, it is not the actual mouth of the animal!! The proboscis originates in an opening near the mouth and may be turned inside out!!!

"Weird!" Alex whispered, rapt.

The performance continued. "It is often armed with stout spines and may extend a long way. When handled these worms can break up into several pieces which continue to live independently and can regenerate their own lost parts."

"Oh, that is weird!"

"Does that mean they can put'em back?" Brett asked.
"But that would be awesome!" Ben said.

"Now, as you go out on your nature walks, it's going to be important that you write down what you see, what you notice, what you observe, and what your group leader shares with you, because that's going to be a part of your journal.

"Let me give you another example. This is something that happened to me the other day. I was being real quiet because I didn't want this fisherman to notice me. But, he did notice me and we got into a conversation and he said, 'Would you grab that little bucket of fish there for me?'' In the dialogue that followed, Pete used a Yankee dialect and quavering voice, whistled through the teeth for the old fisherman. "So I went over there and got them and I said, 'Oh, mummy chogs! What are you going to do with these?' And he said, 'Oh! These are the best bait you ever saw in your life. I just wait for the tide to go out, and they're in little pools. I know a lot about mummy chogs because I used to gather them when I was a little kid and I get sick and tired of going down to Great Bay all the time so I did an experiment one day. I took them home and put them in the refrigerator and a week later they were still alive wrapped in a paper cloth.' So I said, 'They will stay alive in an ice box for a week!?' He said, 'Yes! Mummy chogs are one of the few fish that can breathe and regulate their breathing according to the amount of water. So if they're in very little water, which is a wet cloth, they can adapt to that,
too.' And then I started thinking, jesum crow! I've seen mummy chogs all my life, and then when you stop and figure it out it does make sense because mummy chogs live in tidal pools, and what happens in a tidal pool when the tide goes out?"

"The water goes out," Mark said.

"The water goes out," Pete concurred, "so the mummy chogs might just have to lie in the mud for hours. The tide changes every six hours, so it could be up to six hours. Incredible. If I was going to do a journal write on that I would write down exactly what I just told you. What did I learn about mummy chogs?"

"That they can stay alive for a week in the ice box," Steven said.

"They can stay alive for a week in the ice box. What else?"

"They can adapt to stuff..." Mathew said.

"They can adapt to what?" Pete asked.

"The stuff they're in," Mathew said. "The environment."

"Can any other fish do that?" Pete asked.

Several children said "No," somewhat uncertainly.

"NO! In fact, this fisherman says that he thinks that mummy chog is the only fish in the world that can do that. What else did you learn about mummy chogs?"

"That they're in Great Bay?"

"OK. That they live in Great Bay. I've also found them
at Rye Harbor. So what kind of water do they live in?"

"Salt!"

"What else are they in?"

"Fresh water!" Bryan answered. "So that's probably why you can put 'em anywhere. Like if you go fishing in fresh water if you cast it in they won't die, they stay alive."

"I can tell you're a fisherman," Pete said. "So, when you go on your walks, morning, afternoon, and evening, you are going to need to take this field note pad and write in it. And what you're going to do is you're going to see this. You're going to see somebody who has to have theirs out all the time and be writing constantly, and you're going to see somebody else sitting there and it's in their back pocket. It's not that they don't want to write. It's because there are so many things going on there, that they're going to say gee, I can't write about that, I've got to write about this. When the time comes for you to go back and you have nothing in there, and it's empty, you're going to have a difficult time doing your journal write. If you remember some key things, what you learn from this, what you learn from your group leader, what you learn from the guy who's fishing down there, or from someone else, those are the things that are going to give you a good journal write."

"Say your group reader does read about that worm thing you read about, do you have to write about that?" Ken asked.
"Ken, if you said to me right now, I want you to do some writing on the ribbon worm, I'd be in the same boat you're in. I don't remember a lot of that scientific stuff, but I do remember...what do you remember?"

"I remember that there's a tube that goes from his mouth to his ..." Ken paused.

"Anus?" Pete filled in.

"Anus," Ken said in a low voice. "And that it can break off into little pieces and regroup what it broke up."

"Good, go on . . ."

"And I remember that . . ." Ken stalled.

"Help him out . . .what else? Mathew?"

"Another worm, a lower type of worm, doesn't have an . . . anus . . ." Mathew, too, stalled on the word.

"OK, what else?" Pete prompted.

"It has these little like pinchers," Steven added. "Not pinchers, but like a nose thing . . ."

"Oh, OK . . ."

". . . and it's not hooked up to the digestive system and it's used to capture prey."

Pete whistled slowly. "I couldn't remember all of that by myself, but between Ken, Mathew and Steven, we got a lot. If I was in their group what I would do is I'd say OK, and compare what we wrote down and we'd have it. One of the things you might work on in your group is what are the things we think are important? What are the things we want
to remember?"

"So that means when he's reading you could be writing what you heard?" Ken asked.

"Sure, and you don't have to write everything down. I couldn't write everything down. I wouldn't expect you to. But what are the things you think are neat that you want to remember? What's important about going on that trip?"

"Learning," Alex said.

"You got it. Just a couple more quick things. You have an idea of some of the things that would go into the field notes. What are some examples of some of the things we don't want to put in? Sondra?"

Sondra looked up surprised. So far, only the boys had been a part of this conversation. "Well, I guess like 'me and my friend went to the swamp and he wore black knee high boots and I wore short ankle boots'?"

"Sure. I'm going to give you some key words now and you can add others. I want to write about what I see, hear..."

"What I smell, what I feel," Sally added.

"What else?" Pete asked.

"Could you write about what you found?" Rob asked.

"Sure! Found! 'We found this. We thought it was a shark's jaw, but we later found out from a fisherman that it was a seal's jaw and Rob was amazed to find...' Great."

"Taste?"

"Sure, there'll be some things that you will taste. Also
what you learned from your group leader. Anything else you could put in there?"

"What you enjoyed?"

"Sure! Your reactions. Who has a reaction. Who remembers something they've put in their journal that they've reacted to?"

"I remember the day we were blindfolded," Jill said, "I was amazed when I was feeling the building, I thought I was feeling a rock!"

"Do people like to read things like that?" Pete asked.

"Yeah," Alex answered.

"When you go down to the ocean, do you find things?" Mathew asked.

"You sure do! We've found seals down there in the past, we've found wounded animals, one year we found a sea gull that had a plastic six pack holder through his mouth and over his head, and his beak was stuck open."

"Did you help it?" Maria asked.

"One of the kids called the game warden. The game warden came down that night and later he announced that they had captured the sea gull. It took a long time to capture him, but they got him and they had pulled it off. They judged by the amount of time that he had it on that he didn't have much longer to live, so it was a good thing they did get it off. You'll find all kinds of stuff down there...That was a good discussion that you just had. That was really
helpful."

The bell rang, and the kids scurried for coats and backpacks. When the last group had left for the bus, Anne and Pete sat down at the work table, exhausted. "You don't suppose it would rain all week at Environmental School, do you?" Anne asked.

"Don't even think it," Pete replied.
CHAPTER V

THE NAGGING CHAPTER

During the week that the children were gone to Environmental School, I looked back over my notes and listened to tapes that I had made, attempting to find patterns. Instead I found that my focus seemed to wander to a variety of features of this classroom that nagged at me.

For example, in spite of the sign that hung on the wall, "Be nice to everybody," my notes revealed many incidents among the children that could be interpreted as negative. While they acted many roles other than that of student (i.e. class clown, emergent vamp, wise guy), it was evident that their repertoire often included predators and victims.

"Have you ever heard of a 'slam book'?” Sally had asked me one day. I said that I had not and asked her what it was.

"It's a book where you write down stuff about a person, like if you don't like her clothes or her hair or if you don't like her friends you say that."

"What do you do with it?” I asked her.

"Well, when everyone's done writing in it, you give it to her."

I felt sick. "Does that go on here?” I asked.

"Oh, no! We wouldn't do that,” she laughed.

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"Why would it be done?" I asked.

"Well, I guess so that person would know what people thought," she replied with a shrug.

"Even if it hurt her feelings?"

"Oh, I don't think it would. It would just be, you know, information."

"Where did you hear about this?" I asked.

"Oh, I think maybe they're doing it in the other room."

While there was no evidence that such a practice existed in Pete's room, I was concerned by Sally's attitude, her observation that the contents of such a book would be "just information." As I looked down onto the foggy playground at recess that day I wondered, in view of our conversation, if the clusters of students represented friendships or factions.

Another morning when I came into the classroom, Dan had his hands around Ben's neck and was shaking his head back and forth. Alex was kicking Joe, Mark pushing Alex. In the background, Tommy beat a primitive rhythm on his desk with a ruler and a pen. I looked around for Pete and saw him at his table, apparently oblivious to all the action.

The boys' behavior that day was not unusual. Descriptions of sluging and headlocks were scattered throughout my field notes. I wondered about this conduct. When I asked Pete about it, he shrugged and said, "I don't get too concerned about that. A lot of it is good natured stuff. Like, 'Gee
I like you.' The old headlock. A lot of kids do that. Kids are just naturally physical."

Pete took advantage of this propensity as a part of his routine. He had told me in our first interview that one of his priorities was building a community within the classroom that could work and play together. He felt that some of his activities, indoor and outdoor, fostered community spirit. He told me about one game in particular called "Wolves and Sheep" which he described as "non-competitive." On the day the game was played, Pete told the class, "We're going to play 'Wolves and Sheep' today. Everyone except the person who's 'it' is a sheep. Then whoever he tags becomes a wolf, too, until all the sheep are gone. Now you have to physically touch the person to make them into a wolf. Bryan is 'it.' When we get down there, be sure to stay away from other people's games."

Down on the playground, Bryan had counted to ten while his classmates, as well as Pete and Anne, fanned out on the low, grassy field. Bryan, a generally sweet-tempered, thoughtful child, hunched up his back and rubbed his hands together as he surveyed the crowd from the upper playground. "You can't catch me!" several taunted in sing-song voices. Some inched forward, tantalizing him. Bryan stepped slowly down among them, hands behind his back, feigning disinterest. Then he suddenly pivoted and went for Ken, a match in size, but not speed. Ken was soon a wolf. Together
they turned to stalk Steven and the pack grew to three. Then they spread out.

As the numbers of the pack grew it became increasingly difficult to tell who was a wolf and who was not. I was keeping my eye on Mathew, a new comer this year and one who did not appear to fit in well with the group. Soon one of the children came up to him and said in a wheedling tone, "Hey, Mathew! Let's go around the side of the building. They won't find us there." But Mathew, wise to his marginal status, ran in the opposite direction, avoiding capture - for a while.

Running in a pack, the children hunted down the sheep one by one, even Anne who had raced barefoot like a latter day Atalanta. Their numbers grew. "Who's left?" Brett called out. From the edge of the green, Pete taunted, "Nobody's got me yet." And they were after him, circling around and efficiently cutting off all retreat. Ken put his head back and howled and the group came laughing and panting up the hill together.

While the explicit purpose of the game was to build community and to complement what I later learned was a unit on predators, I found myself haunted instead by parallels to Lord of the Flies. Moreover, Pete's description of the game as "non-competitive" did not seem quite accurate. For a sheep, it certainly wasn't. While the players were working toward a shared goal, its achievement might result in a
community of shared identity at the expense of individuality. When we returned to the classroom, there was no discussion of the game's possible implications or connections to the science unit.

After watching that activity, I became more aware in the days that followed of "insiders" and "outsiders" in the classroom. Mathew remained on the periphery of any activity. Mathew had a tendency to share what the children considered to be long, pointless stories and observations. Often he would follow one or two around the room during snack break, trying to tell them what he considered to be interesting facts. Most of the children tolerated or at least ignored his presence for the first several weeks. Soon, however, I noted that more and more of the children would tell him, "Stop following me around! Can't you tell I don't want to listen?"

Mathew drifted on the edge of every activity. His hand was always up, but eventually, Pete stopped calling on him. One day when the children were to work in pairs at their tables I overheard a squabble in Mathew's group. Mathew was looking down and Maria was glaring at the other two people in their foursome. "All right," she snapped, "I'll work with him today. But after this we'll go across and then diagonal. Then you both have to take a turn with him." When I told Pete about this conversation, he said, "Mathew brought it on himself." This comment seemed in keeping with Pete's
hands-off attitude toward whatever problems the children had among themselves. They would learn more by working it out themselves.

Going through Mathew's Nature Notebook, I saw that he had written:

Dear, wolf

I see you in the parks and you soar through the flowers after a mouse you never hurt a single soul but I wish the world would live in peace so nothing hurt anything

your friend
Mathew

The children I talked to did not see their treatment of Mathew as wrong; they felt justified in ostracizing Mathew simply because he was who he was. Similarly, when the students treated Anne with less respect than Pete, their comments showed that their attitude toward her was based solely on her role as teacher intern. She was not the "real" teacher. One day when Pete was absent and the children were noisily disregarding Anne's instructions, I asked them about it. Dan said, "Mr. Schiot's the teacher and he's the boss. We have to be super good or die. But when she's in the room, we take it as, we don't have a boss in the room."

"I think it's because she's called the intern," another added with emphasis. "We should have more respect for her, but she's not the real teacher, so we don't always pay attention."
"It's not like we're really afraid of Mr. Schiot, but we know he could do more to us. He wouldn't but he could. She can't, so, I guess that's why."

I was also surprised by some of the Pete's pedagogical practices. While Pete's classroom was often referred to by himself and others as a "process" classroom, none of the practices which have come to be associated with it (i.e. reading response journals, whole group share, reading/writing response groups) were in evidence, or at least not to the degree that I ever saw them during my regular visits.

While each "process classroom" retains an individualized character, there are some attributes which all seem to hold in common. For instance, teachers typically read and write along with the children on a regular basis. While Pete almost always read old favorites to the children, I never saw him sit down and read while they were reading. I did not see him write with the children or share his writing. Looking back over my notes I could see that Pete rarely revealed anything about himself, even in response to direct questioning; the fact that he did not share his own reading and writing seemed to reinforce this sense of his reticence.

From what I could tell from classroom practice, Pete's philosophy about reading and writing differed depending on whether these activities were being pursued in the language arts realm or in a content area. In language arts, it seemed
that these activities were valuable in and of themselves. The children went to the library each week and were to check out novels only. They kept in their desks and read them silently during reading time. As the children read, Pete and Anne walked among the children, stopping to check their progress. They also did this during writing time. The children were not asked to write about what they read and did not appear to share what they read in any formal, regular way. Their writing typically remained in their folders and there did not appear to be any official time set aside to conference or share writing. Anne was bothered by the way reading and writing were approached in Pete's classroom. In her journal she wrote:

Pete tends to "cruise" during writing and reading periods. I would just as soon model for the kids; read and write. During these times when I stop to write something down or to read through a stack of nature notebooks, Pete is right there to say that "this is the time when you really want to cruise."

I'm not sure which way to go - I clearly see the value in "cruising" - we get a chance to see what the students are working on - what they're not working on. We can provide suggestions and be sounding boards for those who want to share. A highly valuable time. But.

Modeling is important. Especially in reading, I think. If the entire class is sitting, lying down, whatever, and reading, there are no distractions. When Pete and I are up and walking around, talking to kids about their books, we are creating distractions for more than just the one person we're talking with.

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1 Time was allowed for reading and writing on semi-regular basis. That is, during some units when children were involved in intensive group activities, reading and writing periods were postponed for several days at a time.
There was also an undercurrent of dissatisfaction among the children about the irregularity with which reading and writing were scheduled in this classroom and their uncertainty as to whether they were going to get to reading and writing at all on a given day. Some children had come from the more "typical" process classrooms where reading and writing were focal, where time for reading and writing of the students' choice was allowed on a regular daily basis. For other students, free choice in reading and writing and time in which to pursue these activities was a new and popular enterprise. Often I had heard them ask at the beginning of the day, "Are we going to get to write today? We haven't written in four days!" or "Can we read? We never get to read."

While Pete appeared to have a laissez-faire attitude toward reading and writing in language arts, that was definitely not the case in the content areas. In science writing a great deal of emphasis was put on content, synthesis of information, and detailed description. Nature Notebooks were assigned every Wednesday night, but the children were encouraged to explore nature through a variety of genres and topics. The techniques Pete used to elicit good writing in science were grounded in writing process theory. For instance, Pete was concerned that the children become self-critical and capable of self-evaluation. After the first Nature Notebook assignment, Pete told Anne, "Today
we'll see if we can get the kids to arrive at what makes a good Nature Notebook entry. What are the possibilities? Eventually, we'll see if we can get them to read excerpts from their own papers. They maintain their ownership when they read their own papers."

Pete ended up reading several papers to the class himself after having obtained permission from each child to do so. In each case, he asked the children to comment on "what they noticed" about each piece. Afterwards, he thanked those members of the class who made comments, "You stick your neck out when you make a comment. But I think you can all imagine how it feels for a writer when nobody makes a comment. What do you think are some good comments you could make to a writer?"

"You could say it was good or awesome," Joe ventured.

"You could say it details," Jessica said.

Brett added, "I like it when people are specific about what they liked."

Pete nodded. "When you comment, and especially when you quote what the writer said, you confirm what that person has said. I think that's really neat."

The children also wrote about math, particularly fractions, detailing the ways in which they went about solving problems. Often this writing was shared and Pete emphasized through this writing that each individual might have a different problem solving process which demanded the
same respect as any other. There was never just one way.

Although I thought I had entered this project with a relatively objective eye, I realized that my expectations and preconceptions of children, classrooms, and teachers had been alongside me every step of the way. It was because of those expectations and preconceptions, however, that I was able to see where Pete's class was different from other classrooms I had visited. I was learning, along with the children, that there was never "just one way."
CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN

On the Monday the children returned from Stone Environmental School, I stood in Room 14 looking out the bank of windows onto the fog shrouded playground. In the past, the children had stood in segregated clumps of two or three; now they gathered as a group, boys and girls together. As each bus arrived, several more children ran to the group where they appeared to be talking animatedly.

When the bell rang, and the children marched in, teachers up and down the hall greeted them with "Welcome back!" or "Looks like you all survived!" Jessica quietly sidled up to Pete and handed him a huge red apple. Ken had a different sort of trophy: a dead chipmunk in a baggie. It lay on its striped back, paws pointed up. All it lacked was a lily. Accompanied by an entourage of curious classmates, Ken headed straight for Pete and said, "Mr. Schiot, Mr. Schiot, look what I hit with my bike!"

Pete took the baggie from Ken and examined its contents with detachment. "You just hit him with your bike, huh?"

"Yeah. I thought he'd move but he didn't move. He just stood there." Pete's eyebrows shot up and so did Ken's. "I checked its pulse and it's dead."
"What's a chipmunk's pulse supposed to be?" Pete asked. Ken shrugged. "I'll tell you what. Why don't you take it to the nurse's office and ask her if you can put it in her freezer until the end of the day?" Several students wrinkled their noses and made gagging sounds, but Ken nodded seriously and headed out the door, followed by his friends. "It'll only take one of you," Pete reminded them. "Dan was with me," Ken said. "Can he come along?" Pete nodded and things returned to normal. Class began with a silent reading period, and the children quickly and quietly resumed their places in the books they had been reading before they left.

Pete took Jessica aside and asked her if she would be interested in writing a press release for the local paper with a student from the other room about Environmental School. Jessica's eyes went wide open and she nodded her head vigorously: Jessica's mother was a writer. She soon joined Betsy from across the hall and I heard Jessica say, "There are so many ideas popping into my head I don't know what to write first!" I followed them to the library where they had decided to work and took advantage of Jessica's time away from the rest of the group for a short interview. She was new to the district and I felt that her insights about her experiences here would prove interesting. I was right.

I began by asking Jessica how she was liking school so far. I didn't have to ask many other questions. She rambled
on with little prompting from me.

"Well," she commenced, "it isn't as strict, but I think I'm learning just as much. I like that we get reading for homework. Now when I'm reading I can just say, 'It's homework,' and I don't get bothered." Jessica had told me earlier in the year that her little sister enjoyed plaguing her with questions just as she sat down for a good read. Now she could tell her it was "official business."

"What about writing?" I asked. "Did you do writing at your other school like you do here?"

Jessica sighed and rolled her eyes, "We had to do tons of reports. We had textbooks, too. But I think I learn more from going out and looking at spiders than reading in a textbook about them. In a text book you don't really care. You can't see 'em."

While my questions had been about academics, Jessica suddenly surprised me by turning to the social realm, "There's not so much competition here. There's not a way to see who's dumber and who's smarter and I like that. Everyone's even. When there's competition people get into arguments about it and there's not so many arguments here. I know that for a fact because I've been through it."

Jessica continued the brainstorming list for her newspaper article for a few moments and then turned back to me, "We had reading books, too, with lots of questions that were so boring. We could only read stories during free time,
so I took every chance I could get. There was no story writing, just reports. And if we did write a story, it was due! Like even in two or three days. Not like here. And all it was to do was improve our spelling and like verbs. I hated English. In my old school there was so much competition. I had pronouns down. I never wanted to do it again. But the whole class had to do it because a few didn't get it. I don't like to learn things again and again.

"And math was so simple. First grade math. I could do it with my eyes closed. My sister who's seven went to a magnet school, more like this one, but there was such a long list, I couldn't."

"So, you like it here?" I asked, confirming the obvious.

"Yup," she smiled and handed Betsy her list of ideas, dismissing me as she attended to more important business.

I returned to the classroom as silent reading time was ending. Pete stepped to the front of the class holding a copy of Favorite Poems, Old and New. "One of the things many of us had a chance to observe last week," he began, "and the week before through nature notebooks and journal writes is spiders. In fact, Steven said that he used certain types of weights to see actually how much a spider web would hold, and he was amazed to see how much it did hold. Sometimes, when people become experts on something, as you're going to become experts on the marine environment, especially rocky shores and inland tidal zones, you will find an animal that
you choose to follow and get to know really well. Some of you did this at Environmental School. Have any of you heard of Mary Howatt? Mary Howatt, I read someplace, was an expert on spiders and, instead of writing a report on spiders she chose to do something else with her knowledge of spiders that's a little unusual. And as I read you this story, you see if you think she could have been an expert on spiders. Anybody know what the name of this story's going to be? Any ideas?"

"Spiders?" asked Alex.

"Friendly spiders?" asked Sally.

"Nope. This is called 'The Spider and the Fly.'" Pete began to read the poem in a sly voice, "'Won't you come into my parlor?' said the spider to the fly . . . ." When he finished, he asked, "Well, what do you think?"

"She showed she knew a lot about flies," John said.

"She knows a lot about flies? Anything in particular that anybody thought?"

"Well, like the gauzy wings. I don't even know what that means, but..." Steven said.

"Gauzy wings? You know what gauze is."

"Yeah. It's like cloth you could sort of see through..."

"Yeah. You hold it up to the light and see through it. Mathew?"

"I liked how she described the way the web was shaped, like stairs or the pantry or bed and how it would tuck in
by weaving the web over the top of it."

"OK."

"I like how she repeated the words."

"What words?"

"Like 'Oh, no, no.' The things the fly said."

"Anything else? One of the things I'd like you to think about is that, when you become an expert on something, you don't necessarily have to write a report. You don't have to say, 'I'm going to tell you about... a chipmunk.' A chipmunk is very sluggish early in the morning, right?" The children laughed and looked over at Ken.

"That's why I hit it," he said sheepishly.

"Well, you could write a story. There's many different things you could do with it other than write something that's very similar to an encyclopedia. Now, what I'd like to know, after you've had a weekend to think about it, is what you thought of Environmental School?"

"Well, I thought it was really fun," John volunteered, "because on the night walk, even though we got lost, we learned a lot of things. We saw stars and stuff."

"I agree with John," Jill said. "I mean, I found out that even people we didn't get along with in school we got along with when we were lost. I think we learned a lot on that trip."

Mathew commented, "I liked it when Pam, our group leader, kept telling us, 'I know where we are, I know where we are,'
but we got lost and we thought we saw the clearing because there were lights ahead, but we came up at the salt marsh. And the salt marsh was awesome at night."

"When we were lost, like Jill said, I learned how to cooperate with people," Sally added.

"Did that help you get unlost?" Pete asked. "Find your way back, I should have said."

"Yeah," Sally replied, "because Brett and Mathew and I helped each other. It was like every one was cooperating."

"You really did get lost, too, didn't you?" Hands went up and there was a great deal of nodding and self-conscious laughter. "Rob, you don't have your hand up. Do you have anything to say?"

"Well, I didn't really like the salt marsh. When we went there we didn't find anything. It was just like boring."

"No, Mr. Schiot," Becky explained, "we didn't find anything because everything was like hidden because it was raining."

"He said it was boring, he didn't see anything, and you said something really different, Becky. You said 'It was hidden because it was raining.' Who do we believe?" Pete shrugged.

"I think the best part was on the beach," Brett said.

"What in particular did you like about the beach?" Pete asked.

"Well, this city planning thing . . ."
"City planning? What was it about that experience that you liked? We have one person who wasn't there. Could you describe city planning, just a little bit about it?"

"Well," Brett began, "everyone in the group gets a card that says what you are and what you do. Say, Sonya. She was a fish manager. And then we see how the changes in the environment affect that person. First it was salt marshes. Then a bunch of people move in, and after ten years, there's all these golf courses. Like once it was a deserted island and now it's like a new town."

"Did the city bring any changes?" Pete asked.

"Yeah, tons. They took out all the salt marsh."

"They took the salt marsh out? Was that a good thing to have happen?"

Almost as one, the children answered, "No."

"Well, maybe," Brett went on, "because we were all being different people and we all wanted different things. I was an oil man, I owned an oil company, so I didn't want a salt marsh."

"So you could make more money if you got rid of the salt marsh?" Pete asked.

"Yeah."

"I see. Becky?"

"I liked when we went to the beach the first night on the night walk and digging in the sand and finding stuff with our flashlights."
"Our group leader wouldn't let us do that," Tony, "because she said the sea creatures were afraid of big groups, so we went to the woods instead and got lost."

"Miss Twitchell, do you have anything to add?" Pete asked.

"What I think I liked most about the week was not only getting to know everybody in our class a little better. Besides what we learned, and I think I learned as much as you guys about the ocean, the best part for me was just being with everyone. Mr. Schiot, do you have anything?"

"Gee, I liked what other people had to say. I liked the idea of, somebody mentioned, people they didn't get along with when all of a sudden they get into a situation where they're lost, all of a sudden they found that they all worked together to accomplish something. I thought that was really neat. I guess one thing I heard a lot of people say is that despite the fact it was cold, or you got lost, despite the fact it was this or that, you made the best of a situation and I like to see that. I think that's really neat. Some people could say -remember that discussion we had at the beginning of school? The kid goes for a ride and he doesn't see anything. He sees nothing. He gets there and somebody says, well, how was your trip? And he says 'Uhn, boring.' And somebody else will turn right away and say, 'Gee, it was raining, things were hidden.'"

"A lot of you really tried to put your best foot forward"
and get something out of a situation. Sure it was cold, sure it's tough getting up at 5:30 in the morning. But do you realize how many people have ever seen the sun rise? I bet if you went over to UNH right now and you walked through and interviewed all of the college kids, you would find a very, very small minority of people that had ever seen the sunrise. Somebody said to me the other day, how can you read Bridge to Terebithia, how many times have you read it? I said I'd read it an awful lot and I guess I've been to Environmental Camp, I've been going for years. And I love going there, because I love to see the different things that happen to people from going there. For many people, it's the first time they've been for a walk in the woods. For many people it's the first time they've seen the sunrise or maybe gotten lost. And it's a neat experience. Somebody told me once there's an old Indian expression that goes like this, 'You are never lost. It just so happens that sometimes you can't find your tepee.' But you're never lost. You think about that."

"We're going to spend time talking about these things more. This isn't going to end. We're going to do more of this. We're going on field trips. We're going back to the ocean again. But, time to switch gears here. During the weeks preceding our trip to environmental camp, we talked about what goes into a good journal write. We're going to pass back the journal entries that you did last week and I'd
like you to go through them. When you go through them try to think of one entry that is your best. Then, you will tell why you think the piece is best, what you think your strengths are, what you like about it, what you didn't like about it, and what you might change, add or whatever, if you were going to do this again. Is this going to be a difficult task? Yes, it is. Because you're going to be evaluating your own writing.

"If you have trouble thinking about why it's your best piece, think about the strengths. Think about parts that show or give evidence that you've tasted something, felt something, heard something, smelled something, touched something, found something, learned something. Are there any questions? The questions will come as soon as the journals are passed out, right?"

The children turned to their work, flipping through the pages of their journals with perplexed faces. Some traded journals, consulting friends. Others kept to themselves. Soon, the hands went up, and Pete and Anne were occupied, going from desk to desk.

After about twenty minutes, Pete asked the group to stop for a moment. "Did anyone find anything that makes a good journal entry?"

"Facts where they have learned something," Jessica ventured.

"Could you give me an example, Jessica?"
"'Three fourths of the world is water and three percent of that is fresh water,'" Jessica read from her journal.

"How many of you found this assignment was hard?" Two or three children raised their hands. "How many of you found it was easy?" Seven or eight children raised their hands. "How many of you after having written found that you didn't really say exactly, like Jessica said, why you thought it was good. Instead you tended to say things like 'I enjoyed this journal write' or 'I like this one because I had some good facts'?" Most of the hands raised slowly. Pete laughed. "OK. That's perfectly normal and you're in the ball park. It's hard to get specific. It really is. It's hard to do it. And if you had a hard time with this and you raised your hand, you're being honest. I have a difficult time with things like this. If I went through a piece of my writing, and somebody said, 'Pick out the best parts,' I'd have trouble with it, too.

"It's hard to be specific. Last night, I talked to my wife who was over in England and she said to me, 'Wow, I wish you could have been with us for dinner tonight.' And I said, 'Why is that?'" As Pete began to quote his wife, Holly, he spoke slowly, distinctly, and with deliberate relish. "'We had a Perfect English Dinner: Roast beef with Yorkshire pudding, new potatoes, horse radish, trifle, blackberry and apple pie and Bowmer's Cider.' Now, if she'd just said, 'Boy, did we have a good dinner, we had a real
"You wouldn't have known anything," Alex said.

"Yeah. Like, what is an English dinner?" Dan added.

Pete nodded and went on. "So, she went on to say what exactly it was, so bang! You think, that was a typical English dinner. Yorkshire pudding. Now most people wouldn't know what Yorkshire pudding is. Blackberry and apple pie. Most people usually don't have trifle. Bowmer's cider. Things like that. Those are very specific things. This is the type of entry that you want to think about. This is how you can react to something you did. What was a good sentence? Is there anybody in the classroom here, right now, that has one sentence that they wrote that they thought was good?"

Becky raised her hand. "I wrote about gulls and how one kind 'can fly into the wind effortlessly.'"

"One kind can fly into the wind effortlessly. Do you know what kind that was?"

"No. I forgot."

"But you did learn that there's at least one kind of sea gull that can fly into the wind effortlessly. Anybody else?" Only Jill raised her hand. "Oh, and you thought it was an easy assignment. OK, Jill."

"I learned that at least fifty percent of all animals need salt marsh for the beginning of their life."

"So you think that's the best part. Can anyone give me
"My spelling was no good and it would help if I spelled the words right," Sam answered.

"Would it really help you if you wrote them right?" Pete asked.

"Probably," Sam replied.

"How would it help you?"

Brett turned to Sam and asked, "Can you understand it?"

"What are you getting at, Brett?" Pete asked.

"Well," Brett replied, "it doesn't matter if you can understand it. If you're the only one reading it, it's a special kind of writing."

"Sam, this writing is for you. It's not for me and I don't care how you write it. I don't care if your spelling's bad or not. But, if you decide you have a burning, burning, burning desire to put your piece of writing into the Pink Sheet, or when somewhere around mid to late October, we decide we're going to publish, yes, spelling would be important and we could work on that. This writing's for you. This is your writing. You will find that I will not go through your writing with a red pencil. I won't do that. OK, Brett, do you want to read from your journal now?"

Brett read, "'Daniel opened a skate egg case and inside there was a big thing that looked like an eyeball with two dots.'"
"What do you think, Alex, is that clear?" Pete asked.

"Yeah. I want to know what it is. It makes me want to think what it could be."

"He told you what it was, didn't he?"

"He said it was an eyeball . . ." Alex began.

"No, no, read it again, Brett."

"'Daniel opened a skate egg case and inside there was a big thing that looked like an eyeball with two dots.'"

"Oh, a skate egg..."

The trip to Stone Environmental School began a series of field trips, aspects of which wove in and out of the day to day discussions and assignments. The next week, the children shivered along the beach at Rye, observing scallops, sponges and periwinkles for their "faction" reports, an assignment in which the children were asked to weave facts into fiction stories. As the rain beat down and the wind whipped faces red, I asked Pete if perhaps it might not have been better to reschedule the trip. "Oh, no! This will be a terrific way for the kids to experience what the settlers must have gone through when they landed here. This is really the introduction to the social studies unit!"
CHAPTER VII

TIME TRAVELING

On a raw day in the bleak November of New England, it is not difficult to envision the harsh life of the early pilgrims. Because Pete Schiot believed that subject area content should be accessed, as much as possible, through experience and observation, I now sat in the back of the icy one room schoolroom at York Historic Village, dressed in colonial garb, waiting for the children to arrive. Feeling the cold creep into my bones and spirit, I could easily get into character. Each year, Pete brought his class to York, to live for a day as colonial children, in preparation for one of the major events of the year: the Thanksgiving Feast. For Pete, reading about the austere years of early settlers was not enough. He wanted the children in his class to live it.

I had arrived an hour earlier with several mothers, and together we had tied on voluminous skirts, generous aprons and dust caps in preparation for the day. Excitement ran high, as we laughed at ourselves in the mirror and practiced looking stern. The children would visit the school house first, and then proceed to Jefferd's Tavern where they would perform the daily chores of typical colonial children, and
follow the orders of their costumed elders "meekly and with proper courtesy."

Mistress Sewall, an employee of York Historical Society who often doubled as school mistress, strode to the door as we heard the buses arrive and rang the bell, hushing the children with its harsh clangs. The children filed in with self-conscious half smiles, bowing or curtseying awkwardly, murmuring, "Good morning, Mistress." Their homemade costumes showed various degrees of expertise and commitment to the enterprise. Some parents had obviously spent hours making breeches and leather vest or ruffled calico gowns and caps; others appeared to be products of the children's own handiwork, crooked stitches barely holding garments together. They shuffled to their benches and waited expectantly.

The school mistress stood squarely at the front of the room and looked the group over critically. "Good morning, children," she said at last, in a crisp, strident voice.

"Good morning, Mistress!" they chimed.

"I am Mistress Sewall and I will be your school mistress this term. I have been invited to come back by the York County School District Council of Educators. I have been invited back for the sixth time! Do you know why I have been invited back six times?" she asked sternly.

"To teach us?" one child ventured.

"To teach you. But the reason they have invited ME back
so many times, even though I am a woman, is because my students are the most well-behaved and they are the most intelligent students ever to be turned out in York County. Now, I want to make an agreement with you all: I will promise to be of the best disposition and tempers, if you all promise to always do your homework and to be of the best behavior. Do you all promise to do that?"

"Yes, Mistress," they returned soberly.

"Good. Now the first thing we must do in my classroom is that all gentlemen must take off their caps and put them down by their sides." There was a general scurrying to comply. "Now, there should be no idle chatter while Mistress is talking and if you do find that you have the need to share something with the class, you will raise you hand first. I will call on you. Then you will stand up. Do you agree to do that?"

"Yes, Mistress," they chanted compliantly, prepared, at least for today, to find diversion in discipline.

"Now I will assign seats. Do I have any young ladies who were born in January or February? All right, January and February, you will come to the front row, and you two will stand aside for just a moment." Tapping loudly with pointer as she indicated seats, the children arranged themselves according to the month of their birth, boys on one side of the room and girls on the other. "Now, does anyone know why we have sat like this? Because youngest students must sit
in the front. Those students might have been five, six, seven years old. And all of the oldest students would have sat in the back. They could have been as old as twenty or thirty years old! Imagine that! Now, there are a few rules and regulations we need to go over. I want to make sure that you all understand how you are to act in my classroom. One thing you must understand is you are not blamed and your parents are not blamed if you are mischievous, unruly and do not show proper respect to your elders, whether you are in this classroom or whether you are out in the community. I AM BLAMED! Now, how many times have I been invited to come back here?"

"Six, Mistress."

"That is right. Your reputations that preceded you were true! You are the most intelligent students! I do hope you're the most well-behaved as well! Now, the reason why I have come back here six times, and why I will continue to come back here until I am old and gray and can no longer teach is because all of my students have been intelligent and very well behaved. Now, I will be standing at this door every morning at eight o'clock to ring the bell, rain or shine. You will be here and in your assigned seat no later that eight o five. Do you all understand?"

"Yes, Mistress." There were no smirks or sidelong looks now. The children appeared to have been captured by the time unfolding around them.
"Do you all agree to do that?"
"Yes, Mistress."

"Good. You will also always do your homework. We will practice penmanship for an hour every morning. There will never be an excuse for any of you not to do your homework at night. It is unacceptable for you not to do your homework. You will also be responsible for keeping the ink wells full. It is also your responsibility to make sure that this floor is kept swept clean, BUT not only the floor. I do not want to see cobwebs hanging from my ceiling. You also in the dead of the winter, when there is a foot or more of snow on the ground, should shovel a pathway from this front door of the school house over to the back where the outhouse is. My temper would not be good if I had to spend the day with cold, wet feet because one of you forgot to shovel a path and I had to go out to the outhouse to relieve myself and got my feet wet."

Amazingly, even this allusion to bathroom matters failed to elicit any joking from the children. "Do any of you like cold, wet feet?" she continued.

"No, Mistress."

"Good. Then we understand each other. Now, do you all agree to always behave and to always do your homework?

"Yes, Mistress."

"You will follow all my rules and regulations?"

"Yes, Mistress."
"JUST IN CASE you need to know, this is only for your information, I will tell you now what I might have to do to punish you if you did not follow all of my direction. Now, I cannot remember when the last time was I had to punish a child, and I don't believe I'll have to punish any of you because you are all the most well behaved students I've ever had. Is that not true?"

"Yes, Mistress." They leaned forward to listen now, eager to hear about the punishments.

"But, just in case . . . If my temper happened to be good that day, I might only make you stand in the corner. Probably that would not be the case. If you misbehaved, I might make you come up here to the front of the classroom, bend over, put your hands flat on the floor, and stand there for a very long time. But not only would I do that, I would also ask you questions and I would expect you to answer those questions while you were standing in that position. This is a personal favorite of mine: I might bring you over to the knot hole here in the wall and have you stick your nose in that knot hole and have you stand there for a very long time. I might have you go out to the out house and have you stand in the out house for a very long time. And you may only come out of the out house if one of your classmates had to relieve themselves. I don't think any of you would like to do that, would you?" The children sat wide-eyed, not responding. "Would you?" she repeated threateningly.
"No, Mistress," they answered loudly.

"It is your responsibility to make sure that this wood box is kept full. I will always have this biggest and heaviest piece of wood in the wood box. This piece of wood will never be burned. Do you all know why?"

"Why, Mistress?" they asked in worried tones, far removed from the chirpiness of their earlier rejoinders.

"Because, if one of you misbehaves and I feel the need to punish you, I will make you come up to the front of the class, hold this piece of wood out very straight in your arms, and stand there for a very long time. Trust me! You would not want to do this, because this piece of wood is very heavy. Now, I don't believe we'll have to use any of these punishments, do you?"

"No, Mistress!"

"So, we'll just put them right out of our minds. We won't think of them again this term...Unless, of course you misbehave. Then I might have to use them. Now, we are going to do a little bit of reading aloud, but before we do that, I do believe we should all make our proper manners to me, and introduce yourselves to me one at a time. Ladies! Please pay attention! We'll stand one at a time. You will say, "Good day, Mistress" and curtsey ever so deeply to show your respect. Then you will say, "My name is . . ." and you will tell me your name. Gentlemen, you will do the same, only you will BOW ever so deeply to show your respect. The deeper the
curtsey and the deeper the bow, the more I can tell that you respect me. And I do appreciate respect! So why don't we start right here? You may stand."

"Good morning, Mistress. My name is Bathsheba."

"Good day, Bathsheba."

"Good morning, Mistress. My name is Philosophia."

"Good day, Philosophia."

One after the other, the children curtseyed or bowed, introducing themselves with the colonial names they had chosen earlier in the week. Bathsheba and Philosophia were followed by Abigail, Narcissa, Zera, Suzannah, Byron, Freeborn, Azra, and Harlem. Then it was time to read.

"Everyone please turn to page eleven. If you do not have a book of your own, you will have to share and I should not hear any idle chatter! We will stand one at a time and we will recite. You will read from the primer. You will pay attention to whose turn it is and where we are. It is not my responsibility to make sure that you all follow along. Now we will start right here with the young gentleman. You will please stand. 'In Adam's fall . . . '" she began.

"In Adam's fall, we sinned all."

"A life to mend, God's book attend."

"A cat doth play, and after slay."

The children's voices rose and fell softly in the dim school room, faltering through the unfamiliar text with its woodcut illustrations and odd typeface.
"A dog will bite the thief at night."
"An Eagle's flight is out of sight."
"The idle fool is whipped at school."

Several children glanced around the room, counting ahead to their passage.

"As runs the glass, Man's life doth pass."
"Xerxes the great did die, and so must you and I."

"Very good," Mistress Sewall commended them. "Now, how many spellers do I have in here?" Jessica's hand shot quickly along with Brett's and Jane's. "And those of you who did not raise your hand, maybe I can convince you to be good spellers by the end of the term. Young ladies, line up against this wall. Young gentlemen, against this wall. Please keep your slates at your desk. I do not want to hear any idle chatter. Please LISTEN TO ME. The winner of the spelling bee will be awarded this shell. This shell came from Captain Tucker's ship, and you will all meet Captain Tucker today. Captain Tucker travels back and forth to the West Indies bringing many fine things to us here in America. I want you to ask Captain Tucker about the West Indies when you meet him and thank him for this prize that he has given to us, so that I might reward one of you when the spelling bee is over. Now, here are the rules of the spelling bee. You will listen. I will not need to repeat the rules. I...don't...expect! Now, I will give you a word. You will step forward, you will repeat the word so that we both know
you have understood the word I have given you. You will then spell the word. Then you will repeat the word one more time. If you spell it correctly, you may continue to play. If you do not spell it correctly, I will ask you to please sit down. We will try to do this as quietly as we possibly can, because you will want to hear me. Now, we'll start over here with the young ladies. The first word is gingerbread. . ."

And so the time passed, the prize was awarded and the school day done. The school mistress's exhortations followed them as they curtseyed and bowed out the door, and scurried through the penetrating rain across the yard and into Jefferd's Tavern where their chores for the day would begin.

At the door of the tavern, the children were met by Pete and another costumed docent who ushered them into the kitchen where they were greeted with the smell of wood smoke and a warm red glow from the newly kindled fire. Groups of children would take turns cooking lunch at the huge fireplace, while others spun or carded wool, or talked with Captain Tucker about his sea voyages.

The children were divided into three groups of nine, and I followed the first group up a narrow winding staircase to the weaving room. Along the way, they reached up to touch the rafters of the low ceiling.

The weaving room held a large loom, a spinning wheel, baskets of wool, carding combs, and a variety of benches and stools. The weaving mistress, an older, gray haired lady,
was met with their "Good days" and greeted them in turn, "Good day, children. Now, you know what this room is called, correct?"

"The weaving room."

"Does anyone know what we do up here?"

"We weave."

"What is the purpose of that? Does anyone know?"

"Making clothes."

"Very good. Where do you get your clothes today, in 1989? Not as a colonial child, but in modern times?"

"Malls, and stores and stuff."

"Where do they come from before that?"

"A factory?"

"A factory. Yes. Did they have factories in the colonial times?"

"No."

"No, not at all. Where did they get their clothes?"

Jessica volunteered, "The people usually made their own clothes out of sheep wool."

"Very good! That's right. Exactly. And we have a whole bunch of lovely sheep's wool right here. I want you all to take a little piece." The basket of brown merino wool passed from hand to hand. "How does it feel?"

"Soft," said one.

"It smells!" ventured another. "It smells like sheep!"

"It smells like sheep," the weaving mistress agreed.
"Now, were all their clothes brown?"

"No."

"And how did they make them different colors? Does anyone know?"

"They dyed the sheep wool."

"Does anyone know what they used to dye it?"

"Berries?" asked Bryan.

"Berries were probably the major thing. Does anybody have any other ideas?" The children and the weaving mistress continued their discussion, moving from varieties of dying methods to the actual implements in the room. Their first task was carding the tangled brown wool into smooth puffy balls that could be spun into yarn.

"This is a job that children often had to help their parents. Especially this time of year, the fall. They'd shear the sheep, they'd bring the wool in, and you would have to sit for several hours a couple days a week, carding the wool. These are combs, they have very sharp points. You have to be careful of them. This is what we do," she told them, running the combs against each other through the wool. She handed out several pairs of carding combs, and soon, the room was filled with the sounds of children sighing and groaning over a task that proved to be more difficult than it looked. Some thought they were finished, only to have knots, dirt and stickers pointed out to them. Soon, what was a lark, became work. Brows knit, hands became oily and
smelly. Occasionally, a slip would result in a yelp of pain as the stiff combs grated knuckles. They were only too anxious to give over the combs to classmates who had been waiting to use them, and switch to the more innocent looking, but equally vexing, drop spindle.

Downstairs in the tap room, Captain Tucker, decked out in his red and blue uniform, demonstrated loading a blunderbuss.

"Where's my powder horn? You see, the flint is going to hit this piece of steel, and when it hits, you get a spark!" Several children who had been leaning in jumped back at the crackle and spark with a breathy "WOW!"

"The sparks," he continued, "go all over the place, but some of them go in this little pan. The loading procedure is, first prime the pan with a little powder -- we'll make believe-- and there's a little hole drilled in the pan and the flame is going to zip right through there. This is a muzzle loader, so we'll add some powder through the muzzle. Now, I'll take a musket ball and drop it in there, shove in the charge with the ramrod, then bring it back to full cock, and click. This goes Poof! It flames up and zips through the little hole I told you about, not much bigger than the thickness of a needle, and ignites the powder in the barrel and then the charge goes off. Then you have to reload. It takes about fifteen seconds to load it again. If you got four shots off in a minute, you were lucky."
Next he showed a cat-o'-nine-tails. "It didn't take too much to get a lashing on board ship. Fighting, brawling, surliness. And here's what we call a mutiny pistol. It's three barreled. If your crew tried to rush you, you could at least even the odds."

Captain Tucker told the children that he had served in the Revolutionary War. "After the War, I came back to York and I married a local girl and I became a merchant. I inherited her father's share in a warehouse on the York River. We were developing trade with the West Indies, importing goods. Can you think of anything we might have imported?"

"Fruit?"

"Yes, fruit. Limes and lemons. Things that could withstand a long voyage. It would take several weeks, maybe a month, so I could not have imported perishable items, like bananas. Anything else?"

"Salt?"

"Yes, sea salt."

"Sugar?"

"Yes, brown sugar, and very rarely, white sugar. White sugar was for the well to do, because it needed extra refining. How about molasses? Molasses came in a cask like this. It comes from sugar cane. Pressed out, boiled down. It's very thick. It's used in cooking. And also we get a liquor from molasses. Does anyone know?"
"Whiskey?"

"No."

"Rum."

"Yes, rum. It was made into rum in rum houses. We had rum houses right here in New England. In Boston, in Portland. This is rum right here. The real McCoy. They take the molasses and dilute it with water to make a sugar water, and then they add yeast . . ." The children gathered around as the captain turned to his sea chest and began to pull out interesting objects for their inspection.

From the kitchen came the sound of clanking pots and the smell of soup and baking cornbread. The kitchen docent was saying, "If you've finished chopping all the vegetables you're going to need, it's your job to sweep up and put the peelings into the slops bucket here. We don't want mice! I see that some of you have never cleaned a table off! Put it in the slops bucket. We'll use that for compost. Take a cloth and wipe it," she continued wearily, "and shake it outside. We're going to have to eat in this room and we can't have a dirty table. There's a broom in the corner. Sweep it right out the door."

Becky came up with an apron full of soggy herbs from the garden, "Here's some more parsley."

"Did we get everything that we wanted? Did we get sage? I see. Now we're going to make dumplings to go into the soup."
Catching sight of me apparently unoccupied, the docent handed me a recipe for dumplings, and turned to a group arguing about how much cinnamon should go into the apple crisp. As I looked about the crowded room (the kitchen was the only room in which a fire was lit today) the scene resembled the Sorcerer's Apprentice episode from "Fantasia." Children scurried here and there with brooms and slop buckets, for once taking a frenzied delight in being ordered about by their elders, yes mistress-ing and no mistress-ing right and left. They wiped the table onto the floor that had just been swept. More sweepers fell in. A line of expectant children stood in front of me, awaiting commands.

As we gathered our ingredients, the docent kept up a steady banter about the kitchen for the instruction of the new group. "...We bank the fire at night to keep it from going out. We keep the coals hot over night by piling ashes on top of them for insulation. Then in the morning you can uncover it and have a bed of red hot coals to start off with. If your fire goes completely out what are you going to do?"

"Freeze!" came the quick response.

"That's right. You won't be able to cook or stay warm. You have to get your tinder box and try to get your fire going, or go to a neighbor and try to borrow some coals. A lot of what we do here depends on being able to keep a fire going."
Bending over, she pulled a dutch oven from the ashes with specially shaped tongs and took an apple crisp from it. "We'll need another dessert, I think," she said meditatively. "We only have two so far, which is not nearly enough for this hungry horde." Soon she was organizing another group to make a peach cobbler.

The dumpling group took turns stirring the sticky mixture of flour, soured milk, egg and baking powder. As we dropped the dumplings into the chicken soup, they all looked skeptical. As soon as we finished this task, we were set to gathering cutlery, dishes and linen for the tables. The children were still captured by the events taking place around them, still caught up in their roles. Several times the chaperoning mothers exclaimed over such unbridled enthusiasm for tasks for which they would have nothing but scorn at home.

By the time the tables were set, it was time to eat. Adults were served first and the first hint of mutiny became apparent. "I'm so hungry," one of them told me. "I can't believe we missed snack break!" Soon corn bread, soup, cider, and desserts disappeared as the children ate in near silence. Only the dumplings remained in a sorry pile at the bottom of the kettle.

After lunch, the group was quickly organized into clean up groups. Again, a flurry of activity, but this time interspersed with a few mock sword fights with the brooms.
and flicking of crumbs at the unwary. It was 12:30 and many of the children had reached the end of their docility. The rains came down even more heavily, and confined to quarters, the children sat in rows at the long tables, writing in their journals, pulling at the uncomfortable parts of their costumes, and waiting for the buses to arrive.
"We had a little problem in here yesterday while I was out of the room," Pete told me on the morning of the class's field trip to the Urban Forestry Center. "Anne was sharing some of the kids' writing and when she got to Jill's, I guess some of them gave Jill a pretty hard time. I'm going to have to do something about that this morning. She took a risk here, and I don't want to have it ruined because of a few jerks." He handed me Jill's poem:

The Sunshine

You are my sunshine, you make me grow, you make me feel good about myself. You are my friend. I constantly see you almost every day. You cheer me up when I am down. The only thing I do is ride, soar through the sky. I'm just a cloud. There are a million more just like me, but you are the sunshine of my life. There's only one of you. It seems, though, you don't know what I am feeling. You don't see me. I'm not there. I'm not with you. The moon is. The moon is your lover. The moon loves you, too. I wish, ohh yes, I do wish that I was the moon.

I could see that any reference to sex, however veiled, would undoubtedly give rise to the teasing and tormenting for which this age group is famed. I wondered how Pete would
handle the situation.

After the children arrived and the expectations for the field trip had been outlined, Pete said, "I have a question for you. What do you think safe writing is?"

"It's like when you check all your spellings so you don't get anything wrong?"

"Or if you write what you know, what you're sure of?"

Pete repeated the question, "What's safe writing?"

Brett answered, "Instead of like what Jill wrote with the sun, you write like 'Johnny went to the store and bought a loaf of bread.' Like that?"

Pete grimaced and paced back and forth. "Yep. Stay away from emotions, man. They're pretty dangerous." He paused. "But what do you like to read when you read published authors?"

One of the girls whispered, "Emotions."

"What about Bridge to Terebithia?" Pete asked. "Where would that book be without emotions? I'm going to read you something that will blow you away. This was written by one of the very best soccer players in the middle school. He came up to me and asked if he could write as a girl, and I said, 'Sure--- give it a whirl.'" Then Pete read the boy's story, a series of diary entries in the voice of a young immigrant girl on her way to America. The entries told of hope, fear, and death. When Pete was finished the children were quiet.
"What do you think about that?" he asked.

"It used emotions and feelings," Brett said.

"He took a risk, didn't he? Try sticking your neck out, because today you're going to meet someone who will blow your mind. Here's a man with no handicaps. But you're going to think he has big handicaps because he can't move. He dares to do things you don't dare to do.

"He was one of the best football players I ever saw. No doubt he'd be playing for the N.F.L. But, in spite of everything, I think you're going to end up at the end of the day wondering what a handicap really is. Is it physical, or is it the way you look at things? O.K. The cars are here, so let's load up."

The Urban Forestry Center is located in Panaway, the site of one of the first settlements in New Hampshire in about 1650. At the Urban Forestry Center, both history and natural science can be studied through nature walks in the salt marsh or by touring the Stone Farm, one of the few remaining original farms in the area. There is also a graveyard where tourists can do stone rubbings.

When we arrived, Dwight Hamsley was already in the parking lot waiting for us in his wheel chair. Aside from his obvious physical handicap, Dwight fulfilled the stereotypic image of the college athlete, well-muscled and blond. Pete and Dwight, old friends, chatted sociably as Pete wheeled Dwight's chair up the path to the multi-purpose
area of the Center. The children hung back, eying Dwight with unusual reserve. Once inside, the children sat along long tables and pulled out their pencils and notebooks as Pete prepared to start Dwight's slide show.

Dwight wheeled around to face them and say a few words before the show began. "Welcome to the Urban Forestry Center. I'm Dwight Hamsley, otherwise known as the Birdman of Rye. I'd like to invite you to learn about early settlers in this area right here who came here in clipper ships. After I show you a few slides, we'll walk down into that marsh area where the settlers landed. Try to put yourself back in the 1600's, make believe you just got off a boat and when you get into the marsh we'll look for a place to put our settlement, keeping in mind what we'll need to build our little house.

"The marsh is the greatest ecosystem in the world in the production of plants, animals, sea animals, sea birds. Hopefully, we'll be able to see some of those animals when we get down there.

"You know, when I was four years old I came out of my house with a lollipop and I heard Caw Caw." Here, Dwight paused and rendered a surprisingly real imitation of a crow. Startled, the children looked around, then laughed self-consciously. Dwight went on. "There was a group of noisy crows in our elm tree. I took the lollipop out of my mouth and I held it up to the crows and I said, 'Anyone up there
hungry?' Just like that, one of the birds flew down, came over to me, and took the lollipop out of my hand. Ever since that time, I've really loved birds. I've fed the birds out of my hand. I put birdseed in my hand and just stood next to the bird feeder real still and quiet. The birds would land on my hands. It's really neat to be accepted by birds, to feel them land on your hands. They're so light and all you feel is their little feet.

"When I was in fourth or fifth grade, your kids' age, my older brother had a BB gun, and you know how kids like to be hunters, especially boys? Well, I borrowed his BB gun, and I thought it was empty. Famous last words, right? My sister walked across the path and I said, 'Freeze or I'll shoot!' She said, 'No way.' Well, I thought it was empty so I pulled the trigger, and a BB came out and I hit her in the leg. She screamed bloody murder. My dad broke the gun and said, 'Get up to your room.' A little while after that he brought me a camera, and he said, 'Here, with this you can shoot all you want. If you get good enough pictures you can have them published.' When I went to the University of New Hampshire several years ago I worked on the newspaper and I've had different pictures of mine published, as well as art work. They hang in a lot of nursing homes and hospitals now. So if you know anyone who's a hunter, especially kids, give them a camera and let them shoot all they want. That way they won't hurt anything, and they'll get some good
pictures. I'm going to show you some of the pictures that I've done."

Pete started the slide projector. "You'll see some of these things out in the marsh," Dwight explained. Dwight's show began with a slide of the earth from space. "You all know where this is. This is where we live. There is no place that we can see with any of our long telescopes that is as beautiful as this. Earth is the gem of the heavens. We are the stewards of the earth. We have to take care of the earth. We can pollute it or we can take care of it, and make it grow like a beautiful garden. You've heard of pollutants and acid rain? Do you know that at least half of the world does not have good drinking water? Half the world! We go to our faucets today and flick on the water and we don't even think about the precious resource that is just trickling down the drain, gallons and gallons and gallons. People are dying because they don't have water, so there's a lot that we have to do to take care of this beautiful pearl in the sky."

Next came a slide of gulls silhouetted against the sun and sea. "I never knew how to do a sea gull cry until one time I rowed out to the Isles of Shoals in a boat equipped for handicapped people. It took me two hours. I met an old woman there who had lived on the Isles for years. I was talking to her about bird calls, and I told her I could never figure out how to do sea gulls and she said, 'It's
easy, sea gulls say come here, come here, come here.' Early each morning they scan the shores. They're the beach janitor. A necessary part of the ecosystem.

As Dwight showed a slide of sunshine on water he talked about the exploitation of sea life, adding, "Remember this when you grow up." At a picture of a clipper ship, he said, "Can you imagine leaving everything behind except what you could put in one bag, and starting from scratch? Try to remember that when you go out to the marsh because that's what all our forbears did." As Dwight talked, the children took notes quietly. Occasionally, they appeared to be so caught up in the narrative, that their pencils would stop and they would lean into the story, then suddenly rouse themselves to the task at hand and continue writing.

"When I was hurt, I was in the hospital with a man who could paint by holding a brush in his teeth. I said, 'Boy, I wish I could paint.' And he said, 'If you wanted to you could. You just have to try and try.' So I started painting. There are no handicaps in the heart or the mind of one who has faith. If you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed you can move mountains. This is one of my paintings." Dwight showed a delicate water color of humming birds hovering around a stalk of pink hollyhock.

"We have four seasons in New England. Winter, spring, summer and fall. And each season overlaps into the next. Today we have a beautiful Indian summer day. All the leaves
fall and leave a quilted blanket on the ground, which becomes fertilizer. It's a great system."

We heard more about leaves and counting rings on trees; how birds eat seed and plant them as they fly along, fertilizing at the same time. Then a picture taken right outside. "Here's our garden when we first settled here eight years ago. After I got hurt, this is what got me strong again. I planted a garden with the help of a friend."

The pictures went on, as did the monologue, "We can really help birds out by planting thistle, sunflowers, berry bushes . . . I sat in this apple tree real still. Humming birds buzzing around. I could almost reach out and touch them, that's how close they were. . . The thing that made me successful in getting close to the birds was love. If a dog has its ears back and growls, you know not to go near it, but if it wags its tail and its mouth is open smiling you know it's ok to go near and pet it. So every time I went to take pictures, I'd wag my tail and smile. They could sense it was going to be OK . . . Butterflies are flower angels. They go from one flower to the other pollinating. That's how flowers reproduce . . . Birds are tree surgeons. Without birds we wouldn't have trees. It's real important to take care of the birds in the winter time, put seeds out. When we put in developments, and cut down trees, we eliminate their food source, so we have to supply them. We go to the super market and get our food. We have to remember
to pick up some seed for them . . . Blue herons, glossy ibises, white egrets: I watched them dance from one end of the marsh to the other." When the projector stopped, the children sat quietly fixated.

"We're going to go out in the marsh now like pioneers. We're going to travel back to the 1600's, you just got off the clipper ship. Now, be quiet, put your antennas up, wag your tail and smile."

Accompanied by Beauty, the Golden Retriever, Pete wheeled Dwight down the circuitous path to the marsh. There, Dwight pointed out aspects of the terrain and the favorite haunts of animals he was familiar with, and told stories about his years at the Center. The children still wrote, many of them holding their field notes against a friend's back for support. Overhead, the occasional jet from Pease Airforce Base swept by.

At lunch, on the lawn in front of the Center, Beauty waited patiently for handouts. Pete and Dwight visited. The children, quick eaters, explored the herb garden or stood with arms outstretched under the bird feeders, hoping, they told me, for birds to land on their hands as they did on Dwight's. After touring the farmhouse, the children did stone rubbings in the graveyard or walked the paths through the marsh with parent volunteers.

When everyone had found their way back, Dwight showed a film he had helped make about his life at the Center. "I
tried to have it put on public television," he told us with a shrug, "but they said it 'wasn't appropriate for their viewing audience.' It's called 'I'd Rather Be Dancing' and you'll see me dance in it." The film began with a shot of Dwight wheeling himself along the path to the marsh where we had been earlier in the day. He looked across it to see elegant water birds stepping gracefully towards him. Suddenly they became women who danced toward him, draped in classical white costumes. They pulled him from his chair, and in a long shot a stand in, dressed like Dwight leapt and danced with them. They fade and Dwight is left to wheel himself back along the path.

Dwight had said earlier in the day, "There are no handicaps in the heart or the mind of one who has faith." The implication of the film was that the heart and mind were also the habitat of strength and imagination, endowments which enabled even a man in wheelchair to dance. The children wrote quietly throughout the film and I wondered which lessons they would take with them from that day. As we were leaving to go back to the cars, I heard one of them comment quietly comment to another, "I guess it might not've really been him dancing."
CHAPTER IX

LEARNING TO LIVE

Shortly before Thanksgiving, the children from Pete's class gathered next door in Chris Lynes' third grade classroom. In an attempt to partially bridge the time gap between the York Village experience and the present, six grandparents had been invited to tell the children from several classrooms what Thanksgiving had been like in "the old days." Dressed in formal grandparent attire, scarves and brooches, jackets and ties, two men and four women sat side by side in the front of the crowded room.

As the grandparents, with their clipped Yankee accents seldom heard now, recounted "the way it was," we heard about how the children in one family had had a tradition of weighing themselves before and after dinner. Another told us, "We didn't have turkey, we had chicken, usually about four of them. There were so many children in our family we needed a lot of drumsticks." One elderly lady, from what she described as a "comfortable family --- we had help," told of the annual visit from the dressmaker who would make clothes for the holidays for the whole family, while another man told how his father traditionally took his children on a walk through the poorest section of town where they
delivered Thanksgiving baskets to immigrant families.

"A big treat we had on Thanksgiving was ice cream," one of the grandfathers told us. "If we had snow, we'd use that instead of ice. If not, we'd break up some ice from the pond. We didn't have electricity on the farm, everything was done by hand, even turning the ice cream crank by hand. But I had lots of brothers, so we had a system worked out. We'd all take our turns."

"Fresh fruit was a treat," another said. "And celery was rare. We usually only had celery on Thanksgiving or Christmas."

"It was a lot colder then than it is now," another added, "so when we got up on Thanksgiving morning, it was our hope that the ice was thick enough to skate on. We had two shallow ponds on our property and one was called the goose bowl, because my grandfather kept geese and they liked to go down there to swim. Well, we couldn't go skating till we'd done the chores. That's what we did first thing on Thanksgiving was feed the cows and the horses and the chickens and the pigs. We gave them a little extra on Thanksgiving. We thought they should have a feast, too."

Some children leaned forward, resting their chins on their fists; others took notes, their eyes wide with the realization that these things, feeding livestock, having clothes made, cranking ice cream by hand, had occurred "in our times," not just in the dim and distant past.
Five days later, these same grandparents were to join other senior citizens, parents, school board and community members for the Thanksgiving feast prepared by the children. Each parent volunteer was assigned a group of children and a recipe to prepare in the morning. At noon, we would all assemble at the Catholic Center to share a meal and watch various class presentations.

The day of the feast was ushered in with a cold front and gale force winds. I was to go to Pete's house and watch as he roasted turkeys over an open pit. When I looked out the window that morning and saw the ominous swaying of trees in the dim light I thought, "Looks like these pilgrims will need an oven for those turkeys." When I got to Pete's, however, I found that I had underestimated his determination.

I pulled into the driveway at the same time as Mrs. Davidson with her carload of kids who were anxious to see the goings on here. "My power's out at home anyway," she informed me. "If it doesn't come on pretty soon, there's not going to be any biscuits." We walked to the back of the house, shivering against the forty mile an hour wind and the first few flakes of snow. In the back yard we saw Pete, stirring the fire with a long stick. Two turkeys, tied with an intricate series of loops and knots hung from a pole supported by two forked saplings. The scent of hickory and
apple wood mingled with that of the turkey.

"Hey, guys, I want you to try something," he called as he came toward us. Grabbing a deli package from the edge of the deck, Pete cut several pieces of smoked herring and handed them around. The children sniffed suspiciously, some making faces and handing theirs back, others tasting a tiny, tiny bit. Dan ate his and asked for more. "A real sailor," Pete told him. "You'd get plenty of this on a sea voyage."

"I've been up all night with these birds," Pete told me after the group left. "I checked them every hour on the hour. We used to do this on the school grounds, so I used to have the whole group gathered round. It's different this year, though. What with insurance, we couldn't really afford to have it at the school anymore, but I'm not sure I'm any happier when groups come by the house. There's always a risk."

We went into the house where the power had also been off for some time. I kept my coat on. Pete gave me some coffee from a thermos saying, "When I was in the Merchant Marine, I always liked to keep watch on a day like this. The captain thought I was crazy!" I kept my opinion to myself. Every few minutes Pete ran back outside to pour water on the coals, sending clouds of smoke around the turkeys and himself. I opted to sit indoors and watch from a warmer vantage point.

Because many culinary activities had been temporarily suspended with the power outage, several other groups
dropped by to sniff the air and watch the turkeys spin above the pit, as the ashen sky spit tiny flakes. As the various children stood hunched together, they looked about themselves surreptitiously. This was where Mr. Schiot lived, not, after all, at the school.

My job, when the power finally came back on, was to stir the chowder, apparently one of Pete's specialties. "It's easy to make," Pete told me. "Just saute some lobster and scallops in butter, add some sherry and pepper. Put in your chicken stock and cream with lots of butter and more sherry and heat it slow all day."

I asked Pete how he felt about the enormous effort put into coordinating today's activities. "This Thanksgiving Feast is really more a community thing than just for school. It brings a lot of people together. Another town might be cynical about it, but here I had thirteen parents that helped. You wouldn't see that in a lot of other places. That's what makes the effort worthwhile."

Later, at the Catholic Center, I saw that community gathered. Senior citizens, towns people and friends of the school, Dwight Hamsley among them, were now seated at long cafeteria tables along side the children, most of them in the same costumes they had worn to York Village. Parents, most of whom I now recognized from the field trips, and teachers went up and down the aisles carrying trays, serving
turkey, soup, biscuits, muffins. A jug of cider made from apples one group of children had taken to a press that day sat at each table.

The priest from the Catholic Center offered non-denominational blessing, giving thanks to the "spirit of creation." Then cameras snapped and video cameras whirred. Jean Robbins, the principal at Oyster River, floated among the tables, offering corn bread, pouring soup. Pete carved and carved and carved. On the table near the turkey stood Pete’s pot of chowder, adult fare, offered in small paper cups.

The children finished eating quickly, their elders less so. Maple candy molded in the shape of leaves and hearts was passed from table to table by one of the mothers. "We went to the Sugar Shack and made them ourselves," she told me. "It was a blast!"

Now it was time for the presentations. The children were allowed to leave their seats and sit at the front on the floor. Under a basketball hoop, between two doors with garish green exit signs, against a cinder block wall, the saga of the first Thanksgiving was acted out by small pilgrims and Indians from the third grade. The fourth grade presented skits which they had written about Thanksgiving themes. Last, Pete's class read the accounts they had written during the last several weeks, factual and fictional, about York Village, the sea coast and the Urban
Forestry Center. Grandparents leaned forward in their seats to hear the soft voices, a school board member leaned back in his chair and observed with folded arms and narrowed eyes, small children watched their big brothers and sisters in awe. This was part of what it had all been for.

* * *

Two and a half months later, on a sunny day in February, I visited the classroom again. I had not been there for several weeks. Anne had now taken over for her weeks of teaching, and Pete was not in evidence. The children looked taller than when I had last seen them. When I arrived, it was recess. Several of the girls were in the corner by the sofa playing with baseball cards. Joe hopped about the room on new crutches. Jessica was perched on a desk top, working a complex math problem at the board.

I learned that for the last several weeks, the class had been growing more and more intent on their involvement in the National Investment Challenge which they had begun in early November. The last time I was in the room, the children in Pete's class were ranked 1,534 out of 6,108 participants, most of whom were college graduates. The curricular purpose for the activity was to reinforce the children's skills with fractions, but Pete had noted in the past that when they became involved a corporation's progress or lack thereof, the children were able to calculate profits and losses with amazing rapidity and understanding. In some
cases, the children had also bought or sold stocks after investigating the various corporations' ethics, particularly where animal testing was concerned.

This year, a new twist was added as Donald Trump rose further in fame and popularity, a number of boys had read the book *Trump*, and to some extent he had become a folk hero, much to the chagrin of some other members of the group. Part of the conversation when I came into the room that day had centered on Bryan's defection from the group, informally labelled "Trumsketeers" now. Becky, an early and vocal critic of Trump and the "Trumsketeers" smiled victoriously and congratulated Bryan on his return to his senses.

Anne's intern supervisor had arrived to observe a math lesson, so I deposited myself in my old corner and watched. Anne was in her element. She was obviously the teacher in this classroom now. After the lesson, Anne let me take over for a while. Writing my perceptions of their classroom over the last month, I had been wondering what had been important to the children about the first term of school. I asked them to think back over that time period to tell me what they remembered or thought they had learned. Hands went up immediately. All of the children's comments were tied to the field trips.

"I learned that even colonial children were allowed to drink beer," Bryan said. "I think that's why we're taller
today: the alcohol stunted their growth then. They've found out since then that alcohol stunts your growth."

Alex grinned as he remembered his experience churning butter in the kitchen at Old York Village. "I learned a little song. 'Come, butter, come. Come, butter, come,'" he chanted in a low monotone. "All I remember about York Village is kneeling there cranking that butter!"

"How did you feel, after all those hours, to see the butter disappear so quickly at lunch?" I asked him.

Alex shrugged and replied, "I felt like I did something that made everybody happy. Everybody liked the butter. It was gone in two minutes. It was funny though that nobody complained about the food they helped to make themselves."

The children were vociferous in their general agreement here, several adding comments to the effect that food "you cook yourself" tastes better. Jessica said, "We didn't waste the food we worked for."

"Everything was used," Becky put in. "Like the scraps for the compost. We put it out in the herb garden, and it was a beautiful garden."

"I look around at everything now," Ken said, "and when I hear somebody complain about not having enough stuff I think back to York Village. They didn't have much. It makes you think that what you have is a lot. What you have is pretty good." Others nodded their heads.

"At Environmental School I learned about endangered
species," Ben commented.

Bryan raised his hand. "Back to what Ken said, being thankful. That's nice. Also what Ben said about endangered species. I heard the other day that the bald eagle is starting to come back to some cities. It was on the endangered list and now they're thinking about taking it off."

Brett returned to the previous subject, "Everyone had to work in colonial times, even the little kids."

"I learned about how clothes were made from wool," Jill said. "All the different steps."

The children continued to raise their hands and add to the list of facts about the colonial times:

"I learned that kids were seated by ages in school."

"I learned how they used red and green lights on the ships."

"I learned how on a ship they had to pee out a hole in the side of the ship. Also the punishments on a ship."

"I learned that the children had to carry wood with them to school for the fire and there was one big piece of wood that was the biggest that nobody could burn because they saved it for a punishment. You had to hold it."

"I learned about the ovens and how to use them."

"On ships they had a whip called a cat of nine tails they used for punishment."

"I learned about how in school there could be students
up to thirty years old."

When everybody had been called on them, I said, "So far nobody's mentioned the Urban Forestry Center. What did you learn about there?" Immediately there was an undercurrent of the children's voices saying, "Dwight."

Dan said, "I remember Dwight. He had a handicap but he could do anything. It's like you shouldn't give up. And like if you want a toy and don't get it and you think it's not fair, you learn that it's really nothing."

Tommy nodded. "He teaches you not to give up."

Dan continued, "He thought his life was ruined, but he found out he had other talents. Handicapped people learn to use other senses. He told us that handicaps are in the mind."

"Yeah," Sonya agreed. "A handicap is in the mind. I liked how he keeps in touch with birds. He talks to birds. He wanted to paint so he learned to paint with the brush in his teeth. You hear people say something like 'I can't draw,' but that's not true. You really can do whatever you want."

"He really loved nature," Brett added.

When the children were finished, I played part of my tape recording of their morning at Old York Village. They were rapt, mouthing the words as the tape played. "That's my voice!" they whispered.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

We hear our own voices, but we never know quite how others hear them; and if we speak at all, it must be, as Geertz has said, to say "something of ourselves to ourselves." Others may listen, but what they hear, what they understand of what they hear, we may never truly know. This is the dilemma of teaching and learning.

If education, as Geertz and others have said, represents a distillation of culture, that it is a metaphor by means of which a culture represents to itself what is valuable about itself, it must also be that teachers as they teach, in the way they teach, are explaining to themselves something of what is valuable about themselves. What students hear, however, what they accept and reject, and how they interpret, depends on the place to which life has led them. If what we see depends on where we're standing, what we learn depends on where we've been.

While it was my intention that each reader should be able to determine for him or herself what was important in this study, there are three major implications here which I feel are of particular importance to educators. First, we teach according to our values and experience. Second, it follows,
therefore, that unless there is a major shift in a teacher's values no other change in his or her teaching is truly possible. Third, we can never predict what lessons will be learned: curriculum and the influences upon it may be hidden not only from our students, but from ourselves as teachers. It is important, therefore, to be closely in touch with students and predicate what will be taught next based on where they appear to be, where they say they are, not where a scope and sequence or specific curriculum expects them to be.

Newkirk summarizes the importance of teacher experience and values succinctly:

[for most teachers] decisions about how to teach and what to teach are rooted in personal philosophies about teaching, and these in turn are often rooted in our own experience as learners. Our philosophies may be only thinly disguised autobiographies, and we try to recreate for our students the best of our own education pasts.¹

Pete found his own school experience dull and unrelated to his life. Now, when he teaches, he attempts to make learning exciting and relevant. The teachers from whom he learned most were not typical teachers in typical classrooms: they were a fisherman with a bucket of mummy chogs, a handicapped poet/visionary, and a sea captain who gauged the perils of a rocky coast by using his nose. Pete brings these teachers with him and within him whenever he

enters the classroom.

When Pete was in education school, he identified with the works of John Dewey, whose teachings resonated with what Pete had already found to be true in his own educational life. Pete knew that he had learned by experience and by connecting past experience to new ventures, so it is this aspect of Dewey's work that he incorporates into his teaching. He offers his students the opportunity learn through experience. History texts cannot duplicate the experience of cooking over an open fire or churning butter to a tedious tune. A math text doesn't stir the blood like a sojourn into the stock market. A science text cannot convey the "awesome" atmosphere of a salt marsh at night.

Because Pete is who he is, some aspects of what he teaches are more successful than others. There is no denying the importance of the experiential learning in his classroom. Because of it, the children appear to have a real sense of colonial life, what it means to observe and take field notes, why groups are important. However, while Pete refers to himself as a "process" teacher, he has, of course, only adopted those aspects of reading and writing process which are in accordance with his own experience and values. Reading and writing as a means of extending and working through educational experiences are extremely important in this classroom. Where reading and writing are not connected to these purposes, they appear to be less so.
As indicated earlier, reading and writing during language arts time appeared to be of minor importance in comparison with their applications in content areas. During language arts, there appeared to be no deadlines and little record keeping aside from a weekly reading log which the children fill in themselves and anecdotal notes that Pete kept in his plan book. During the weeks I was there, the children shared their writing with me individually, but I never saw an instance where a piece was shared with the class either for the purposes of publication or getting feedback from the group.

Quite the opposite was true in content area writing. Expectations were clear, deadlines set, progress checked and papers published. Nature notebook assignments were regular and each week their contents were typically shared and discussed. Journal entries often seemed to involve analysis of math strategies. These were also shared and discussed.

Reading in the content area seemed most often to be informational sheets about specific forms of animal life, ecosystems and historic periods. Some historical novels were assigned from time to time. While Pete often read aloud to the class from literature, there was little discussion of what had been read unless it could be tied to content areas. For example, there was no discussion of the book, *The Bridge to Terebithia*; however, when Pete read a descriptive excerpt
from a piece by Sarah Orne Jewett, he asked, "Was there anything in here that might make a good Nature Notebook entry?"

This is not surprising if we believe that how a teacher teaches is indeed inextricably tied to what he values. In talking to Pete, I found him to be a fountain of information in math, science and social studies. He appeared to be less comfortable talking about writing and literature. He allowed time for reading and writing outside the content area, but his effort went into their application in the content areas where they seemed to become another aspect of the initial experience. Writing, and to a lesser extent, reading, in the content areas became the tools by which experiences were extended. In and of themselves, in language arts, they were primarily unmined territory.

But Pete attempts to teach more than content. He wants to teach what he terms "moral lessons" as well, and he does this in large part by setting up experiences where such learning might take place. To some extent, Pete sets up the experience and then stands back from it, especially the field trips, and lets the children draw what they will from them. He's just one more student along for the ride. For instance, before we went to the Urban Forestry Center, Pete talked about taking risks and thinking about what it means to be handicapped. Later, he let the experience speak for itself. Year after year he's seen the children come away
from the Urban Forestry Center wondering more about the nature of courage and handicaps than that of birds and beasts. He's seen them find the value in being lost at Environmental School and in having to make do with what they have. Through the Stock Market Challenge, he's seen them object vociferously to the excesses of greed.

Pete also stresses the importance of students expressing their opinions and of taking emotional risks. He wants them to keep their eyes open and use their senses. He wants to work together.

These are intended lessons. But other lessons, quite unintentional lessons, are also taught and learned. In other years, students questioned the "profit at any price" mentality of the stock market. This year, a nationwide fascination with an entrepreneur spawned "Trumpsketeers." A game intended to illustrate lives of predators and prey replicated itself in classroom dynamics.

Further, for every quality which Pete commended, its opposite, by implication, was somehow constrained. Tobin, et al., note much the same thing in their cross-cultural study of pre-school:

American children enjoy great freedom to express their opinions and feelings, but conversely, they are much less free than children in China or Japan to remain silent, and hide their feelings. Speech in American pre-schools, then, is constrained differently, not less, than in China and Japan (Newkirk, 1989). It could be argued that in a culture such as the United States, where children are encouraged and expected to verbalize their feelings, talk about feelings, and perhaps even feelings themselves, will inevitably be
more conventional and socially constrained than in a culture such as China, where children are not exposed to public discourse about feelings, or in a culture such as Japan, where teachers stay largely outside the world of children's discourse. ²

Hence, implicitly, if speaking up was a value in Pete's room, then being reticent was not. If taking emotional risks in writing brought praise, writing "safely" brought censure. If keeping one's eyes open and using one's senses to observe the exterior world was emphasized, introspection was de-emphasized. If working in a group and for the group was important, working in solitude for oneself was not. While the overt curriculum emphasized that there was always more than one way to solve a problem or express an idea, the covert curriculum encouraged a more limited way of behaving. We hear our voices, but we do not know how others hear them.

Because of this uncertainty, it is important for teachers to be among students, to talk with them, to allow argument and to listen. Moreover, it is important to consider not only how our words may be interpreted, but how they may be misinterpreted. Language, as Rosenthal notes, is, at best, an unreliable medium by which to convey meaning:

Even when we think we're choosing our words with care and giving them precise meanings, they can mean much more (or less) than we think; and when we use them carelessly, without thinking, they can still carry thoughts. These thoughts we're not aware of, these meanings we don't intend, can then carry us into

certain beliefs and behavior -- whether or not we notice where we're going.  

So, if some lessons go astray even in a classroom such as this, where the teacher does talk to students and listen to them, where he "cruises" in search of the misinterpretations and misconceptions, what of the classroom where the teacher never leaves her post at the front of the room? What of the teacher who protests as did Twain's, "I taught it three times and they never learned it"?

It must also be true that the curriculum itself, however it is conceived or codified, is always itself conveyed and interpreted through a dialectic at best, or lost in the cross-purposes of miscommunication, at worst. And those who would attempt to change education by mere adjustment to curriculum or methodology must be aware that such modifications are always subject to transmutation. Unless new curricula and methodology dovetail in some way with the values of those who teach and those who learn, any attempted change will bring only cosmetic and short-term results. Unless what is taught is presented in such a way that the values and experiences of children are taken into account, it becomes mere content to be memorized, regurgitated and forgotten. Maxine Green states:

The last reason I want to offer for paying a new kind of attention to children's lived lives has to do with

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our current recognition that much of what passes for learning represents a mastery of terminology, not a becoming different, not an entering the conceptual order, or the great "conversation." We cannot know this if we do not listen to children, talk with children, play with children, even dance with children. And I doubt if we ourselves can change it if we ourselves lose touch with the ground.4

For me, the chief merit of Pete Schiot's classroom is that there is an overlapping of learning and teaching because there is an attempt on the part of the teacher to maintain a conversation. The transmission of learning is two way. Children are consulted as valuable sources of information. Pete recognizes that they arrive in his classroom knowing something, having had experiences, believing in something. They are not empty receptacles waiting to be filled.

This is not the case in many American classrooms, particularly one classroom which has gained a good deal of popular attention of late, that of Christine Zajac in Tracy Kidder's Among Schoolchildren. The values which underlie what happens in that classroom are quite different. Mrs. Zajac's classes are ability grouped; that is, the children in various groups have a fair picture by the time they reach the fifth grade of what life holds in store for them. Little wonder that those who view the future as one menial job after another, at best, or a trip on the welfare cycle, at

worst, do not buy into the lessons at hand: it simply
doesn't matter if they do them or not.

Christine Zajac's overt curriculum was a common one:

Chris carried in her mind a fifth-grade curriculum
guide. It conformed roughly to the twenty-year-old
official guide, which she kept in her desk and never
consulted anymore. If she could help it, her students
would not leave this room in June without improving
their penmanship and spelling, without acquiring some
new skills in math, reading, and writing, and without
discovering some American history and science.9

Barring accident, this curriculum would have little to
do with the needs, experiences and interests of the
children. There is no mention of critical thinking skills
or of relating curriculum to experience. The emphasis is on
the product of learning rather than the process. When Mrs.
Zajac did explore ways of reaching her curricular goals,
reading, for example The Art of Teaching Writing by Lucy
Calkins, she did so "with a marking pencil in hand,
underlining tips that seemed most useful."6 Because she read
with an eye toward "tips" rather than the shift in teaching
philosophy which that book represents, the changes in her
curriculum were merely cosmetic. Spelling, vocabulary and
"skills" were still taught outside the context of reading
and writing.

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3 Kidder, Tracy. Among Schoolchildren. Boston: Houghton
Mifflin Company. 1989. 27.

6 Kidder. 12.
Unlike Pete Schiot, Christine Zajac appears to ignore "where the children are" in favor of where the curriculum says they ought to be. Consider the following passage:

Chris sighed, got up, and walked over to Clarence.
He turned his face away as she approached.
Chris sat in a child's chair and, resting her chin on her hand, leaned her face close to Clarence's.
He turned his farther away.
"What's the problem?"
He didn't answer. His eyelashes began to flutter.
"Do you understand the work in fifth grade?"
He didn't answer.
"I hear you're a very smart boy. Don't you want to have a good year? Don't you want to take your work home and tell your mom, 'Look what I did'?"
The fluorescent lights in the ceiling were pale and bright. One was flickering. Tears came rolling out of Clarence's eyes. They streaked his brown cheeks.
Chris gazed at him, and in a while said, "Okay, I'll make a deal with you. You go home and do your work, and come in tomorrow with all your work done, and I'll pretend these two days never happened. We'll have a new Clarence tomorrow. Okay?"

It is clear here that, however well intentioned Mrs. Zajac was, she was not interested in who Clarence was, what experiences had made him who he was. Success was dependent on his becoming a "new Clarence," fitting her definition, not his. Moreover, whatever changes might take place in Clarence as a result of such gentle browbeating, those changes were not for Clarence; they were for Mrs. Zajac or for Clarence's mom.

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Kidder. 10-11.
According to Kidder, Mrs. Zajac "managed an average of thirty disciplinary incidents during each six hour day."\(^8\)

In Pete Schiot's class, an average day might see two to three. This is perhaps because Pete holds a less rigid notion of what constitutes appropriate behavior; it might also be because the children are more engaged in their learning than they appeared to be in Mrs. Zajac's class. Both classrooms have their share of disruptions, but in Mrs. Zajac's room they appear to grow out of rebellion, and in Pete's from exuberance.

It is a curious thing that two such different fifth grades, representing two such different values systems can exist in the same country, even the same region of the same country. While the two schools are in adjoining states, they are in actuality worlds apart. The children in Christine Zajac's room in Holyoke, Massachusetts represent a different population than exists in Durham, New Hampshire. In Christine Zajac's room, "there were twenty children. About half were Puerto Rican. Almost two-thirds of the twenty needed the forms to obtain free lunches."\(^9\) Holyoke is an industrial town of tenements and factories, sparsely dotted with middle class neighborhoods. Durham is an enclave of intellectuals. It is primarily white and middle class. The

\(^8\) Kidder. 33.
\(^9\) Kidder. 6.
probable destinies of all of these children are evident as they walk home from school, either past a university or a factory.

If some of those who write about hidden curriculum are correct, then the discrepancy lies in the demographics. It is all right for the children of middle class intellectuals to enjoy a curriculum of possibilities, but it is a dangerous thing for the children of the lower class, many of whom are immigrants, or at least first generation. For them the curriculum of following instructions, accepting ideas without question, and jumping through hoops to achieve what little success such behavior promises is the only possibility. Christine Zajac can only teach as her values and experience permit her. She is wed to Holyoke, where she was born, raised, and went to school. Her life and her teaching are bounded by its entrenched neighborhoods and mores. And if her well-intentioned proddings fail, perhaps something else has succeeded: the individuality of the child who says, "I will be who I am." In this success, of course, is the specter of failure.

All teachers want the children they teach to succeed and prosper. If we would change the lives of children, we must do it with their cooperation. We must listen to what they say. We must try to perceive what they hear us saying. In every classroom the values and experiences of the teacher and the children form a complex web which is difficult, if
not impossible to interpret. Sometimes these values are in accord with each other; at other times they clash. Sometimes they are overt; at other times they are hidden. Sometimes what is intended is comprehended clearly; at other times another meaning entirely is perceived. Perhaps all we can ever do is keep our ears tuned to our own voices, and be aware that we are always sailing just off the coast of Spain.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX

SELECTED REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:
HIDDEN CURRICULUM

The literature which affected my thinking as I approached, conducted, and concluded this study has been wide ranging. While it is impossible for me to cite (or even perhaps be aware of) all of the reading which influenced me, among the most important was certainly the literature of "hidden" curriculum. This area of research illustrates the various ways in which schooling appears to be a dominant means by which values and beliefs are conveyed to children in preparation for their adult roles in society.

Schools have for some time been concerned with more than education in this country. As Khleif points out,

...education as a discipline was cut off from the intellectual tradition of the university essentially in 1911 when the so-called Committee of Nine, composed mainly of vocational school principals, stressed the objectives of education were not to be high-brow or intellectual, that is, concerned with the cultivation of the mind in the humanistic tradition, but practical, that is, concerned with vocational training and "citizenship." ... It should be remembered that at the turn of the century the country was flooded with poverty-stricken immigrants who came in large groups and necessitated a redefinition of the old settlers and raised educational issues. Educators at that time found a new function - the civilizing of immigrants. Thus, schools gave emphasis to practical arts and to what was called "citizenship" or "Americanization" but
which meant "civilizing."  

Schools, historically then, have been a means by which society transforms low-status "newcomers" into "useful" members of society by engendering in them the qualities valued by the status quo. Khleif further notes that "competition and achievement continue to be zealously institutionalized in the school, and that those who transmit cultural values [teachers] are themselves paragons of middle-class virtues." Schools, according to Khleif, are "guardians of the national character. Teachers train children in terms of an ideal client, a person suited to what the dominant group in a society likes to see produced."  

Similarly, Berger refers to schools as "churches for drilling children in the religion of democracy. The perceptual sphere of children is narrowed down to focus only on the history, that is, the official mythology of a particular society and a particular social class."  

Robert Dreeben also argues that education plays a key role in inculcating values, especially the social norms of

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2 Khleif. p. 149.
3 Khleif. 151.
independence and achievement. In schools, implicit and explicit value is placed on these qualities in response to stated and tacit expectations:

A constellation of classroom characteristics, teacher actions, and pupil actions shape experiences in which the norm of independence is learned. In addition to the fact that school children are removed from persons with whom they have already formed strong relationships of dependency, the sheer size of a classroom assemblage limits each pupil's claim to personal contact with the teacher, and more so at the secondary level than at the elementary. . . . Classrooms are organized around a set of core activities in which a teacher assigns tasks to pupils and evaluates and compares the quality of their work. In the course of time, students differentiate themselves according to how well they perform a variety of tasks, most of which require the use of symbolic skills. Achievement standards are not limited in applicability to the classroom nor is their content restricted to the cognitive areas.5

Like others, Dreeben contends that because the content of implicit messages is not limited to cognitive areas, that the transmission of these values has as much to do with children's future roles as adults as it does with school success.

Henry carries this argument further (and more cynically). In Henry's opinion, hidden curriculum in American schools centers on the deprecation of other forms of political economy in order to suggest the superiority of our own; the

innate goodness of consumption in order to bolster the GNP; the justice of all wars fought by the United States in order to justify its sundry bellicose actions; and, most importantly, a carefully taught stupidity which is necessary in order to maintain tradition. Hence, the balance of society's over-burdened apple cart rests on the notion that the populace must be neither too stupid nor too intelligent. According to Henry,

Common controversies in education revolve not so much around what students should know and how they should learn, but how stupid we can permit them to be without wrecking the country or the world . . . In our culture, nobody can be taught to think, for example, where private enterprise, war or the gross national product might be threatened.  

Henry further argues that schools must also serve occupational systems which are tightly linked with the economic system and gross national product. Thus, the question that schools prompt students to ask is "What job can I get?" rather than "What am I doing with my life?" Henry suggests that teachers, while in a vulnerable position, must look for chinks in the armor of the educational system and subversively introduce enlightenment.

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An important question to ask in the study of "hidden" curriculum is "Hidden from whom?" For some teachers, the virtues rewarded by schools (punctuality, docility, industry) have become so conventional as to be accepted without argument or thought. In this case the curriculum is not only hidden from the students but from the teacher as well. In other cases, the teacher (or educational system) may have a hidden agenda of which they are well aware, but wish for a variety of reasons to conceal.

According to Basil Bernstein,

The basic difference between visible and invisible pedagogies is in the manner in which criteria are transmitted and the degree of specificity of the criteria. The more implicit the manner of transmission and the more diffuse the criteria, the more invisible the pedagogy; the more specific the criteria, the more explicit the manner of their transmission, the more visible the pedagogy.7

One problem with the various labels associated with "hidden curriculum" ("covert curriculum", "what schooling does to people", "by-products of schooling", or "non-academic outcomes of schooling") is, as Jane Martin8 points out, that rather than clarifying the issue, they make it more obscure.


8 Martin, Jane R. "What Should We Do with a Hidden Curriculum When We Find One?" Curriculum Inquiry. 6:2 (1976) 135-152.
That is, such labeling is explicitly aimed at schools, not taking into account the effects of the various "life curricula" with which children arrive at school. Martin continues:

[These labels] do no harm if we realize that they refer to one particular class of hidden curricula, namely, the hidden curricula of schools. We must not, however, let them dominate our thinking lest they blind us to the hidden curricula lurking in other habitats.

These labels mislead in another way, too, for they give the impression that everything an educational setting does to people belongs to its hidden curriculum. But while hidden curriculum is not necessarily tied to schools and schooling, it is always and everywhere tied to learning.9

The chief question asked by Martin is, "What should we do with a hidden curriculum when we find one?" Her answers (do nothing, change our practices, abolish the hidden curriculum, or embrace it) revolve around the notion that the intents and outcomes of such a curriculum can be determined to be desireable or not. It is also important to determine "Desireable for whom or for what purposes?" For, as Martin asks, "If the larger society remains as it is, will schools be allowed to foster values and attitudes counter to those of surrounding institutions?"10 Martin does not define what she means by society. It would seem that current

9 Martin. 136.

10 Martin. 148.
diversity would promote certain hidden curricula in some settings (a University community, for example) but not in others (an inner city school). Martin concludes that when a hidden curriculum is found, the best solution is "... to show it to those destined to be its recipients."\footnote{Martin. 148.}

Martin's questions are, at least peripherally, related to some of the criticisms of hidden curriculum theorists. Giroux and Apple recognize the existence of hidden curricula, but reject the related notion of determinism. Apple argues that "schools are not 'merely' institutions of reproduction, institutions where the overt and covert knowledge that is taught inexorably molds students into passive beings who are able and eager to fit into an unequal society ... student reinterpretation, at best only partial acceptance, and often outright rejection of planned and unplanned meanings of school, are more likely."\footnote{Apple, Michael W. Ideology and Curriculum. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. (1979) 14.}

This criticism is echoed by Mickelson:

... social reproduction theories are theoretically flawed because they do not allow for human agency and fail to account for resistance, rebellion, and contradiction in the contested terrain of schools. They assume a direct correspondence between the needs of the capitalist economy and school practices and outcomes. ... The heart of this criticism is that hidden-curriculum and reproduction theories fail to include a conception of the school as a site of cultural production and reproduction which nevertheless contains elements of contradiction,
resistance, and autonomy.¹³

This insight was quite important to me as I began to look at my data from a hidden curriculum standpoint. For, while the hidden curriculum in schools could obviously lead to the reproduction of currently accepted values and conditions, students' reactions, interpretations, and rejections of that curriculum, were just as likely to lead to a transformation of the status quo. It could further be argued that any teacher's rejection of the values and conditions of the status quo could easily result in his or her conveying a curriculum designed to call those values and conditions into question. It was this realization which led me to see the importance of individual agendas, interpretations, and misunderstandings in the dynamics of the classroom which is the focus of this study.

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