



A Non-Profit Corporation Founded in 1973 756 Cherryvale Rd., Boulder, Colorado 80303 (303) 494-4112 April/May 2002
Disclaimer: Views expressed in this newsletter are provided for informational purposes and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Our School.

Inside this issue...
"From the Chair" p. 1
"Reflections" by Jim and Yvonne p. 2
Calendar p. 3

From the Chair

Fundraiser: The Fundraiser is part of the past...already. At the March Board meeting, we read reports and listened to observations, comments and recommendations from the committee chairs. With this information, the Board can evaluate and make decisions on what we need to preserve, modify or change for the next fundraiser in 2003. If necessary, refinements may be made in the future.

Our responsibility to the school, at the event and afterwards, is to ask questions and listen to a variety of people that are "veterans" or new to our fund raiser. This helps us to get a sense of their satisfaction and any suggestions for improvement. Of course, this information is shared with the Board as well. At our April 17 semi-annual meeting (remember, this is required for at least one member of each Our School family), a full report of findings, recommendations and a final financial revenue will be discussed, so all will be fully informed.

So far, the general impression is that it was an *enormous* success. Attendees felt the Gatehouse site was elegant and warm. They also found the food delicious and its presentation exquisite. The items available for bidding must have pleased the audience, because the bidding went well. Despite the fact that it was a new facility for us, generally things went smoothly. We need to improve the sound system, seek more kitchen help, and review the placement of various stations. This was to be expected, and the Board gave some suggestions for the fundraiser Steering Committee.

We would like to find a stronger word than *thank you*. It's always amazing every year to see the cooperation, dedication, creativity and quality standards from parents and teachers resulting in such a successful event.

Some participants gave extra time to make it work, the training committees were well attended, and parents followed through with their responsibilities the day of the event. A majority of Our School's membership respected the deadlines for turning in paperwork and items, as they realized delays meant more work and stress for the committee. The items parents solicited from the business community were diverse and ranged from affordable to high-end. The personal donations were original and appealing to bidders, as always. It was an amazing evening: *Congratulations to all and many, many thanks!*

The Board (which includes the teachers) also *gives many thanks* for the financial donations from members, alumni and friends for various needs, such as hollow blocks for the school program.

Semi-annual meeting: (Wed., April 17, 7-9 p.m.) This meeting is required for at least one member of each family. The Agenda will cover the 2002-2003 *Executive Board* election. From that input and discussion, the Election Committee will present a slate Board approval. The Board will in turn present the slate for a vote by the whole membership at the meeting. We'll also have a final assessment of the fundraiser. The second part of the semi-annual meeting will be devoted to a **discussion on Child Advocacy Revisited.**

Session meetings: The upcoming session meetings will be the last meetings of the year. Bring your comments and questions so we can assess the year 2002 with you and discuss expectations for 2003. As the seminar on Examination of Literacy and Reading was cancelled (due to various meetings, involvement with the fundraiser, and because many parents were out of town), the Executive Committee decided that this topic would be covered at these session meetings. Of course, we will discuss what is appropriate and what is meaningful for children in **each** of these sessions (*see Calendar for dates and times*).

Orientation Meeting: (Thu., May 9, 7-9 p.m.) This meeting is especially directed for new families and families with new siblings in the school. However, it's **open to anyone else who is interested**. The agenda includes:

1. Clarifying items in the orientation packet (various health forms and state regulations, program policies, and articles to help better orient families into the school program).
2. Answering questions, especially about parents' expectations for themselves and their children for the coming year.
3. **Socializing!**

Summer session: Applications are still available. Please **register now**. There is no priority status. It is open to new and returning children, as well as those that will go to elementary school in the fall. New and returning children attend the session in which they are assigned for the fall. Those leaving for elementary school attend the afternoon session. There is no co-opping required unless a parent wishes to do so. The summer session dates are:

2-day a.m. & 4-day p.m. sessions:
Thu., July 18—Thu., August 8

3-day a.m. session:
Fri., July 19—Fri., August 9

Thank you: Thanks to the families that occasionally bring fruit, bread or muffins, etc., for snacks. It is a nice change from the routine, and gives a little help to the food budget.

Also, thanks to the family that on occasion brings strong paper, cardboard and end paper rolls. These are good additions for collage, painting and book making.

Lastly, thanks to the father that shovels the path, and to the other father that promptly and generously attends to the school's plumbing needs.

Membership: We still have **one opening in the 3-day a.m. session and several in the 4-day p.m. session**. Please tell your friends and acquaintances. Refer them to the Open Houses and/or tell them to call the school. Thanks!

(The open house schedule is in the Calendar section of this newsletter and is posted online at: www.ourschoolpreschool.org.)

Teacher's Reflections

by Jim Heaney and Yvonne Mayer

David Hawkins

Professor David Hawkins recently died. It is an enormous loss for those, like us, who listened to him, read him, studied with him, worked with him. It is a great loss to his family and to us, as personal friends. We want to write a few words about David to help you know him, as together with his wife, Frances, he was our mentor, our soundboard, and our intellectual stimulation in all subject matter. We could visit at any time, even share food, just have a pleasant time: we were always welcome.

David Hawkins died very peacefully, a reflection of his peaceful life. His passing brought much sorrow around the world, especially England, Italy and tropical Africa, not just in the States and Indian Reservations. His academic contribution to the world of abstract mathematics and science was immense, as we all know. However what we want to stress here is that his contribution to the thinking and practice of preschool and elementary teachers was equally immense, across the country and abroad. Here in our

community, it was Head Start and the now defunct subsidized elementary Follow Through program, which brought excitement for learning to "economically disadvantaged" children.

With his collaborator wife Frances, an excellent preschool/elementary professional—who also wrote books about the practice of teaching and subject matter—he formed a team whereby theory and practice meshed together. In his last work, The Roots of Literacy (University Press of Colorado), David Hawkins wrote:

"... We have been collaborators, in one way or another, and much of my writing owes a major debt to her insights about learning and teaching. We have worked together for many years through our teachers' center in Boulder, in tropical Africa, in England and Italy.

My strongest impulse is always to theorize, hers to look at the scatter—sometimes the wide scattering—of ways in which children actually do learn."

Remember the Mountain View Center for Environmental Education on the CU campus? Over 20 years ago, its stimulating and profound investigations into subject matter and its meshing with practice attracted teachers and students locally and from other states. Fortunate are the teachers that attended the many workshops and discussions about the practice of teaching. Many of these teachers have, in turn, become mentors for a younger generation.

David staffed the Center with exceptional teachers. Their backgrounds and education were diverse; hence, their perspectives on subject matter varied. All had, like David, an intense curiosity in things around them that people typically take for granted or think unimportant to observe. A drop of water on a leaf, a soap bubble in the sink, the sound of the "slinky toy" through a

stethoscope, to cite a few examples simple enough but with the possibility for profound scientific investigation.

He knew, with his wife, Frances, to open our minds, to examine and reexamine the conventional teaching ways we had been accustomed to, and to let us enter into a world of infinite experiential inquiries. David did not see himself as a “Master Teacher.” He was much too modest for that! His child-like delight and genuine love affair with subject matter was contagious. And when a student uttered that “Ha!” of discovery and understanding, David’s lips would curl up in that wistful smile of his. His eyes would shine like blue crystals, silently sharing that moment with the student, for he respectfully regarded the student as his own teacher.

At first contact, his vast knowledge and accomplishments intimidated us. But once we got involved in David’s workshops and seminars, the usual expectation of the intellectual hierarchy of student versus teacher vanished. An egalitarian and triangular relationship evolved as he described in the chapter “*I, Thou, It*” of his book, The Informed Vision:

“The teacher and the student were bonded together through their curiosity, interest and the engagement of discovery and understanding. This experiential process of exploration into the nature of the material at hand would lead them to test their findings, risk formulating theories and relationships with other things. Discussion would become animated, students saw more need to go further and deeper in their process of exploration, investigation and testing, to reinforce, expand or correct the students’ assumptions. Curiosity and striving for understanding became infinite.”

David gave us a thirst for knowledge for its own sake. He made us desire to read John Dewey, Alfred Whitehead, William James, George Herbert Mead, and Tolstoy, to give just a few recent historical examples. Not textbooks, but writers whose thinking about education, learning and teaching would lead us to reflect not just on the subject matter but on our own former mythical practices as teachers.

Mountain View also published a quarterly magazine, *Outlook*, with the late Tony Kallet as its editor. Tony and David encouraged not just the staff but teachers around the country to write articles of their own as he believed the experiences of good teaching were invaluable to disseminate.

There was nothing “professorial” or dictatorial about his interaction with students, children and colleagues, no frivolous questions or investigations. As a matter of fact, David wrote extensively in many of his works on the needs of equality and diversity for a socially healthy education and for a just society. He believed, wrote and lived for equality of educational opportunities. Thus, he wrote “the discovery of talents and interests can always be part of the teacher’s duty and delight. But that art of teaching also includes, at best, a far richer discernment of possibilities and limitations.” In his view, the IQ test in particular (and many other tests as well) “offers no guidance for work among the rich diversity each group of children can reveal and profit by.”

For those who have missed the opportunity to make his acquaintance, we recommend reading his articles and books. It will be a great adventure into the mind of a profound thinker, theoretician and teacher.

For all those of us who have known David Hawkins, the professor and extraordinary mentor, and David, the private, warm, serious listener and questioner, with his delightful child-like humor and insatiable curiosity, his passing is a loss no words can express.

Still, David Hawkins will be with us forever, an unforgettable star in the universe that spread its “ashes” through space to become the raw material for the next generation of stars.

Calendar

Semi-Annual Meeting

Wed. April 17, 7-9 p.m.

Open Houses

April 13 & 27, 10 a.m.-noon

May 4 & 18, 10 a.m.-noon

Session Meetings

2-day session, Tue, April 23

4-day session, Mon., May 13

3-day session, Mon., May 20

All session meetings are 7-9 p.m.

Orientation Meeting

(for new parents and returning parents with new children)

Thu., May 9, 7-9 p.m.

Board Meetings

Tue., April 30, 7 p.m.

Tue., May 28, 7 p.m.

School Picnic

(for retiring, returning and new families and children)

Sun., June 2, 4-7 p.m., at

Cottonwood Park in Louisville

from The Oakland Tribune

David Hawkins dies at age 88, historian of Manhattan Project

A UC philosopher who became the official historian of the experiment that produced the atomic bomb died of natural causes on Feb. 24 in Boulder Colorado. He was 88.

Hawkins was teaching philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1943 when his friend J. Robert Oppenheimer invited him to join the Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico. Oppenheimer was director of the Manhattan Project, the top-secret military experiment that produced the world's first atomic explosion.

Hawkins was Oppenheimer's troubleshooter, whose duties included inventing reasons to keep the project's many young physicists from being drafted. As the program's historian, he came to know the brilliant Edward Teller and other members of Oppenheimer's team. But Hawkins was so disturbed by the prospect of nuclear warfare that he refused to witness the project's culminating moment: the test blast that lighted the sky over a New Mexico mesa in 1945.

Born in El Paso, Texas, Hawkins was raised in La Luz, N.M. His father was William Ashton Hawkins, a lawyer who gained prominence for his work on water law.

David Hawkins spent his youth roaming the desert on horseback and later in a Model A Ford pickup, hunting for minerals, rattlesnakes and adventure. His intimate knowledge of the terrain would be pivotal decades later when scientists were searching for a site for the first atomic blast.

He studied philosophy at Stanford University, graduating in 1934. Over the next six years he earned a master's degree from Stanford and a doctorate from UC Berkeley. While completing his thesis on mathematical probability at Berkeley, he met Oppenheimer, then a physics professor. They discovered that they had at least two common passions: New Mexico and leftist politics.

Oppenheimer had toured northern New Mexico on horseback before entering Harvard, a trip that took him to the Los Alamos Boys Ranch, later chosen as the site for his laboratory. He and Hawkins helped organize a teachers union, an activity that would cost both of them their security clearances during the communist-hunting 1950s.

Hawkins joined the UC Berkeley faculty in 1941, the year that President Roosevelt secretly established the Manhattan Project to beat Germany in the race to build an atomic bomb. Oppenheimer by then was scarcely seen on campus. By 1942 he was director of the Manhattan Project, recruiting the best minds in physics for his new research center in Los Alamos.

He phoned Hawkins in 1943. "We need you," he said, barely audible because of a bad connection.

Hawkins' wife, Frances, was a longtime pacifist who opposed the building of the bomb. Hawkins, however, did not hesitate to answer his friend's call. "I knew it would be history," he said years later. "And I wanted to be on the inside of history, not the outside." He left Los Alamos after finishing his history of the project.

In 1947 Hawkins joined the University of Colorado, where he taught philosophy and physical sciences and developed a strong interest in improving science education. He and his wife, a leader in early childhood education, founded the Mountain View Center for Environmental Education, which for many years provided advanced training for elementary and preschool teachers.

Hawkins is survived by his wife; a daughter, Julie Peck; and two grandsons.

"David certainly realized the danger of what they had created at Los Alamos, and that people needed to be educated in science for its values but also for its dangers," said University of Colorado political science professor Jim Scarritt.

Hawkins was described by colleagues as a modest man of immodest intellect. In 1981 he won a \$300,000 MacArthur Foundation prize, more commonly called a "genius grant." He hated the term.

"He laughed at the notion of it being a 'genius grant,' because he couldn't be a genius," said Polly Donald, a longtime friend and Boulder educator. "He was very humble."