

## AERO-GRAMME

The newsletter of the Alternative Education Resource Organization  
417 Roslyn Rd., Roslyn Heights, NY 11577      November, 1989

Dear Friends:

The first two letters that I sent to you were rather frantic, and sent under a lot of time pressure. Now I've got my new MAC SE and a week to organize things and explain in more detail what's going on.

First of all, this letter only goes to about 175 schools and individuals that I know personally.

In one way or another, I've heard from at least fifty of you, some of which I will reprint after this letter. I hope to hear from everyone else.--Jerry Mintz

## AUTRE CHOSE

Since I last wrote, I have met the Autre Chose group in Montreal and traveled with them to Quebec City. While I was there, we visited an alternative school in Beauport called Ecole Marcel Lortie, based on the work of the French educational pioneer Frienet. After returning to New York for a while, I met them when they came into the United States, arranging a visit to the Free School, in Albany. After that, we went to Pennsylvania, where I had found a schoolbus that they could buy for their travels for the next six months. Now I'm back in New York. They will come here in a week or so in order to send three students and one staff member back to France (they will ultimately go to Africa).

I've heard from several schools and individuals which want to host the group, and will put them in touch. They will spend Thanksgiving at Highland School in West Virginia. After they leave New York nine students, age 9-16, and two staff will travel around the US for six months.

## KEE WAY WIN PROJECT

I have recently talked by microwave telephone with Geordi Kakepetum, the Chief of the Kee Way Wins. I expect to be traveling to their reserve in Northern Ontario as soon as the ice freezes on Sandy Lake. To get there I will need to take a train to Sioux Lookout (as far north as you can go in Ontario by train), then I will fly Bearskin Air to Sandy Lake. When I get there, they will come across the Lake (about 20 miles) by ski-mobile to get me. I may be accompanied by Kevin McRae, whom I used to teach table tennis in Vermont. He is now a college graduate and a contractor in the Boston area. I haven't seen him for about seven years. He will cover most of the

cost of our first trip. We expect to be there for a week or so, while we help in the initial organization of the school-community.

Several schools and individuals are raising funds and collecting materials to help with this project. Included among these are Grassroots Free School, in Tallahassee, Greenbriar School, in Texas, Upland Hills School, in Michigan, The Free School, in Albany, New York, Highland School, in West Virginia, The Farm School, in Tennessee, Ron Miller, editor of Holistic Education Review, John Potter of the New School of Northern Virginia, Common Ground Community of Virginia, Lanny Cotler of Curiosity High School, in California, Gene Lehman of LUNO in Oregon, Mary Rothfeld, now of Colorado (formerly of the Arches, AZ), and SWS of Wheatley High School, Westbury Friends School, Friends World College, all of New York. Chris Balch, a former Shaker Mountain School staff member and currently teaching at Lawrence Academy, in Massachusetts, has organized a group at his school called the Native American Relief Movement. They already have pledges of \$500 and many boxes ready to send to Kee Way Win.

As you know the Bay Foundation has established a \$2700 matching grant to aid with this project. I'm hoping that through the work of these groups we will be able to reach this match by January 1st. We need all the help we can get. Thanks to everyone who has contributed or is working on it.

To send books and materials to Kee Way Win (they can also use winter clothing), the address is:

Kee Way Win Band  
c/o Geordi Kakepetum  
Via Favourable Lake Post Office  
Sandy Lake, Ontario  
POV1V0, CANADA

Checks for the matching fund can be sent to me, made out to Shaker Mountain School, at the above address. They are tax deductible. If materials are sent directly to them, I would like a list of them, and approximate value, since some of this could be applied to the match.

#### NELLIE DICK AND THE MODERN SCHOOL

I still have over three hours of super VHS video on Nellie Dick and the Modern School Movement ready to edit, but I have not found the funds of facilities to finish the project. And I have already received requests for the finished video from as far away as England. Does anybody have any ideas about this? I still have the regular VHS video that I made last year (when Nellie was "only" 95), and can make copies of that.

## ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING

Recently I received a call from Dara Backler, a student at Friends World College, here on Long Island. She is a graduate of Harmony School in Indiana, and Steve Boncheck (the Director of Harmony) had suggested that she look me up. She was looking for an internship job in alternative education, and I gave her several possibilities, according to the interest areas that she suggested.

This request reminded me that there still is really no training center for students interested in teaching in alternative schools. For a while I had been considering asking a college or university if they were interested in establishing such a program. So I talked to Don Neilson, the Director of Friends World. They invited me to come to a brainstorming session with some of their staff and students, and now there is a good possibility that such a program will be established. The core of the program would be internships at alternative schools around the country and around the world. This concept is certainly not new to Friends World College, since they have bases in many other locations, including Japan, India, China, Africa, England, Israel, and Costa Rica. If you are interested in getting involved with this idea, let me know.

## CONFERENCES

In the last few months I participated in several conferences.

I was on a panel at the Educational Press Conference at the National Press Bureau in Washington in May. Ron Miller chaired the panel, which was about how children have changed in the last twenty years. Robert Skenes was also on the panel.

In June I attended the National Alternative Education Conference in Orlando, Florida. This consists primarily of public alternative schools, readers of *Changing Schools*. I did a presentation on communication between independent and public alternative schools. About three hundred people attended, and the big news was the creation of a new "International Affiliation of Alternative School Associations and Personnel." While I was there I learned something about being an "educational consultant". I also got to see a preview of Dorothy Fadiman's new TV video on Peninsula School and public alternative schools. But perhaps my most significant meeting was with Dr. Joseph Fernandez, Superintendent of the Dade County School System. He has made major changes in his system, and had a \$980,000,000 bond issue passed to build 50 new schools. When I took him to the airport he asked me if I was interested in helping design one of the schools. After an exchange of communications after I returned to New York, he was suddenly in the local New York news, having been named the next Commissioner of New

York City's school system. The future may bring some interesting possibilities.

In August I went to the 8th Assembly of the Fourth World in Toronto where I got to meet Ivan Illich. This group consists primarily of decentralists. It was at this conference where I connected with the School of Living, and while I was in Toronto I read about the Kee Way Wins Band. I took my niece, Jenifer Goldman, with me on this trip, and we had a nice time at Niagara Falls on the way.

The day after I returned from France, I went to the School of Living board meeting in Virginia. When I returned, I went to the Northeastern Regional Conference on Choice, which was in District 4 in East Harlem, New York. At the conference I was surprised to meet Rita Thrasher, organizer of the National Alternative Education Conference in Orlando, Florida. I also met the United States Commissioner of Education, Dr. Cazavos, and gave him a copy of the Directory of Alternative Schools. After the conference I took Rep. Barbara Dandridge to the train, and had an animated discussion of educational philosophy with her in the cab. She is on the Committee of Education and Labor.

This week I went to the Fourth Annual New England Conference for Democratic Schools, in Warwick, Rhode Island. It was a chance to see the changes that are beginning to effect many schools around the country. In a building adjacent to the conference I visited a public alternative called The Connection, which is for junior high school children who are having school problems. While I was there I realized even more urgently the need to foster communication between ALL alternative schools. Teachers, students, and even administrators are becoming hungry for approaches that work, and seem more open than ever to change. While in Rhode Island I stayed with Peter and Birgita Van Daam and family. As home schoolers they were featured on the cover of John Holt's book, Teach Your Own. At one time Peter was jailed for his home schooling stand. I also talked to Maria Sperduti, who has started the Educational Resource Center to service home school families.

#### THE SCHOOL OF LIVING

I wrote the following article for the School of Living. I am now working on a project for them to help people become more aware of their organization.

Not many people have heard of the School of Living, yet it has been the parent of many significant movements . It is de-centralist in philosophy, and has been low profile during its 55 year history. Nevertheless, spinoffs from this group have been prime movers in the health food, organic farming,

land trust, alternative education, intentional communities, and environmental protection movements.

Its current mailing address is in Cochranville, PA, although its "administration" and governing committees are spread out over several states. In Cochranville lives one of the co-editors of its pioneering publication, The Green Revolution. Her name is Ginny Green, and she lives on one of several pieces of land that is held in trust by the School of Living. Tom Greco is the other co-editor, and current President of the Board.

Ralph Bersodi, the originator of the idea of land trusts, was also the founder of the School of Living. In addition, he is also credited by some as being the father of consumer protection, having published his book, The Advertising Age, in 1925. The School of Living is also credited with being one of the first proponents of the back to the earth movement and environmentalism in general, which has led to the creation of the newer concepts of bioregionalism and permaculture.

The School of living is deliberately devised to be decentralized. Its various committees have almost complete autonomy and new committees keep forming. For example: The recently formed committee on permaculture is an approach to environmental protection which has an eye to the long term needs of man to survive on this planet; Bersodi was an early experimenter in commodity based currency, which has led to current work on alternative currencies; The newly revitalized educational committee is now involved with documenting, coordinating, and promoting new and dramatic changes that are taking place in alternative education, in public and independent community schools, home education, and life-long learning.

Perhaps it is this decentralized and empowering approach which has enabled the school of living to spawn so many significant and relevant movements, while taking very little credit.

At a recent board meeting at an intentional community in Virginia, they decided that it was time to call more attention to the accomplishments of the School of Living, as it prepares its agenda for the seventh decade during which it has existed, the 90's. People who have followed the work of the School of Living have said, "If you want to know what the important new movements will be thirty years from now, find out what the School of Living is saying today."

Current membership, which includes a subscription to the Green Revolution, is \$20 per year. For more information write to:

School of Living

RD 1 Box 185A

Cochranville, PA 19330

#### MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mary Rothfeld tells us that she and her family have moved to Lakewood, Colorado from Tucson (she was involved with the Arches). Along with a contribution for the Kee Way Win Project, she indicated that she could host the French group if they came her way.

Ed Nagel is currently holding the fort in Santa Fe as he tries to sell off a portion of the Santa Fe Community land for use as a trailer park. The new Chairperson of the NCACS recently moderated a mid-year board meeting at Harmony School in Bloomington, Indiana.

Emanuel Pariser of Community School, in Maine, wrote to us with a variety of suggestions for the Kee Way Win Project. He also enclosed a letter for the "Maine Oats for Peace-to raise \$ for Nicaraguan oat supply by raising oats in Maine. Send donations to RR 1 Box 4011C, Camden, ME 04843."

Dr. Elaine Liftin of the Dade County Public Schools sent a note supporting our work and requesting that we "continue to communicate".

Candy and Steve L from the Highland School in West Virginia sent a contribution to the Kee Way Win Project. They will host the Autre Chose group for Thanksgiving.

Gene Lehman of the Learning Unlimited Network of Oregon writes: "I will be happy to share LUNO resources with you in your new endeavors. I am enclosing a PBB Handbook that you could send on to Kee Way Win Community. I will list you and mention this cause in the next LUNOletter."

Phillip Moore of Upland Hills School in Michigan called to offer to host the group from France, then sent material on his school, including a newsletter featuring the "Grand" opening of a new school building.

Joel Weber of Contra Costa School in California write of the narrow escape which they had in saving their school financially after celebrating their 20th anniversary.

In addition to his contribution to the Kee Way Win Project, Ron Miller of the Holistic Education Review has been communicating regularly about a major effort he is involved with to bring together all people working in alternative education. More about that in the future.

Dan Greenberg of Sudbury Valley in Massachusetts writes: "..We are

launching an exchange program with the Hadera Open School in Israel, whereby 8 students and one teacher will spend the entire month of October at Sudbury Valley, and we'll send kids there later this year...We are very excited about it!"

Josh Amundson, a senior at the Farm School in Tennessee, wrote a long letter about his current activities. He is also Vice Chairperson of the NCACS. In part, he says that a most valuable lesson he has learned is that "communication, clear and loving, is absolutely necessary."

Sally Migliore of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education writes, "It sounds like you're very busy with meaningful and challenging projects."

Ken Lebensold heard about us through Education Week. He runs a service in Oakland, California called the Joy of Learning. He sent a donation and wrote that he would, "...like to remain informed about possibilities in alternative education, including whatever newsletter you send..."

Beth Cohen (who knew of Shaker Mountain School) writes from Massachusetts: "I just started working at Penikese Island School, a home on one of the Elizabeth Islands off Cape Cod for boys in trouble with the law. It functions as a semi-self-sufficient farm. Therefore, the kids necessarily begin to connect consequences to their actions: They don't cook, we go hungry. They don't chop wood, we get cold...There is a magic there, a healing force that shows boys pulling off street tough masks and being sweet. There is some pain in it all for me right now because a lot of the guys have trouble figuring out how to deal with a young woman in a position of authority..."

Jan Alovus of Grassroots School in Florida sent us a list of books that they have sent to the Kee Way Wins, mostly about electric power from wind. "I hope they prove useful to them. They weren't doing much in our library--nut much wind here except during hurricanes!"

David Hoffman writes from North Carolina that he has not yet found an alternative school in which to teach, so he is getting his special education certification. He also writes, "I just got back from the Southeastern Regional Conference on Choice...Clearly there was a great diversity of concerns and perceptions surrounding choice. One of the positive notes was the recognition of the need for more alternative programs as well as major restructuring. But as you might imagine, choice is an emotionally charged issue and many people fear resegregation as well as change itself."

Joe Jenkins of Sunflower School in Pennsylvania wrote to say that the

school was "taking a sabbatical" for the year, but to offer space for the French group.

Dr. Alfred Munzert, Chancellor of Hawthorne University in Utah wrote that the school is doing very well. "Our Enrollment here is growing, and we are getting many inquiries from Asian students."

Bob Ferris, founder and principal of New Orleans Free School wrote to invite me to a celebration of the completion of his doctorate from Vanderbilt University. NOFS was a private alternative that Bob started, and it became part of the New Orleans public school system, a very unusual transition. Bob also sends out significant reprints of articles about public alternative schools. Congratulations Dr. Ferris.

Greenbriar in Texas wrote to invite us to their 20th Anniversary party. Later, Dave Ballough called to offer help with the Kee Way Win project, and to find a possible place for a Greenbriar student who wants to spend a year in France.

Beverly Booty and family, formerly of Grassroots Free School, wrote to say that they are making a successful transition to their new home in Sarasota, where Bev is now going to school for training as a massage therapist. Solmar, former GFS student, traveled with us last year from Florida to New York to Tennessee.

Linda Morgan and family, former home schoolers in North Carolina wrote and called to tell of their new home in Rochester, New York. Linda's son, John, traveled with us last year from New York to a conference in Minnesota.

In a phone conversation, John Potter said that he has left Somerset School in Washington to start the New School of Northern Virginia, in Vienna, Virginia. He has fourteen students, elementary through eighth grade so far, with two other staff members. He said he is very pleased with progress so far.

Dr. Liz Rantz, who home schooled her children in Arkansas, wrote to tell us that her family has now moved to Missoula, Montana. She says they are not yet associated with Sussex School, but that her "little one goes to Clark Forks preschool and we're hoping to help them expand to full school." She also offered to host the French group.

No sooner did I type the above, when Bente Winston, of Sussex School, in Missoula, Montana called. She is also interested in hosting the French group. She said that there are now 275 students on the waiting list for her 70 student democratic school. She said she is thinking of helping the parents on the waiting list organize another school, so I put her in touch



with Liz Rantz. She also said that public school officials have been visiting and modeling some of their schools on Sussex. She was also interested in the address of the Frienet School in Quebec, which I gave her.

(FOREIGN COMMUNICATIONS)

Clarise Castello, a former Summerhill student from Germany, now finishing her college degree in the United States, called to request information about colleges in the west coast. She also gave us helpful information for possible fundraising.

Connect, the journal of the Australian alternative schools, did a story on the Pilot School of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in their latest issue. I met the editor, Roger Holdsworth, when he was touring the US last year. It is an important networking journal (12 Brooke St., Northcote 3070 Victoria, Australia).

Clive Baldwin of Lib Ed Magazine in England has written several letters. In the latest he reports on attending a conference at Summerhill. Among others, John Aitkenhead was in attendance. He was a friend of Neill and founded Kilquarity House School nearly 50 years ago! he says, in part, "I was somewhat intrigued by the report in the NCACS newsletter--what on earth has been happening over there?!" He said that he was anticipating a good conference on alternative education on October 28th. Hopefully, we'll get a report soon.

My good friend John Williams writes from Merida, the Yucatan, in Mexico, that his wife, Jean, gave birth to Troy on October 9th. John was the director of the school in San Miguel de Allende, until he returned to the Yucatan to work with the Mayans. After a time in California he will return to finish building his house, "so you can come and settle in and help get a school going!"

As we said in our last letter, Creve Patrice of ANEN in Toulouse, France, is looking for schools in which to make an exchange for a group of 15 children aged 13-15. They would like to come in the spring, for two or three weeks and then host a group for the same amount of time in France. "The students are at "La Prairie" a twenty year old alternative school which houses 500 pupils every year. The school is in Toulouse, a very charming town in the southwest of France, close to the Pyrenean border of Spain, and two hours from the Mediterranean Sea." Contact me in New York for more information, or write Patrice directly at ANEN, 1 Rue des Neffliers, 31400 Toulouse, France.

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