



The Observatory

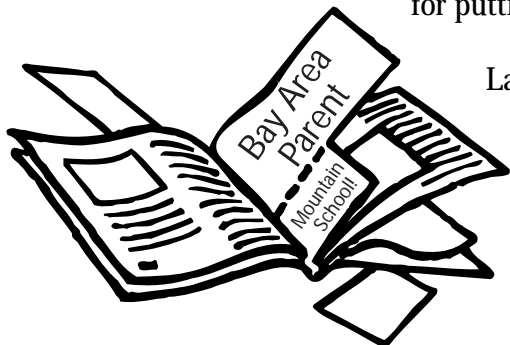
Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation/Nursery School Issue 4, January 2003

Happy New Year ... and Thank You

by Dianne O'Neil, Board President

Welcome to 2003! Holidays are aside – hopefully yours were warm and wonderful with lots of family and friends around you. January seems to bring a lot of activities and upcoming commitments. It seems that calendars are already turning to May, June and onward to schedule something! I found that our holiday was very relaxing and low key – until Monday, January 6th – when I dropped my son off at kindergarten, opened up my agenda and saw ... a lot of blue ink!

In addition to wishing you all a safe and happy 2003, I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the efforts of some of our many, hard-working parents and teachers in Mountain School. For starters, our resource questionnaire came back loaded with many of you offering up your goods, or services or time, and I wanted to tell you that we really, really appreciate that! Thank you! This quality and quantity of mind and generosity helps to get us all through the busy few months ahead of us at Mountain School. Here are just a few more: Thanks to Teacher Karyn for making us a new Mountain School banner for the Holiday Parade in December – it is just beautiful! Thank you to the Shaw family for (among other things) the use of photocopying and office facilities. Grab a copy of the January edition of the Bay Area Parent to see our school's advertisement. Thank you to Eileen Mayes for her generosity, insight and creativity in getting that ad on the page! Thank you to Erika Heckscher (past) and Jane Johnson (future) for the time and commitment to raise funds for our school's accounts of Schoolpop and eScrip. And thanks again to our wonderful teachers who give so much. My daughter's teacher took the time to pen a little note to her over the holidays; thank you Kathy for putting a smile on Gracie's face!



Lastly, I wanted to thank everyone on the school board for volunteering and being such a joy to work with. It is at this time of the year that we begin to work on filling our board positions for next year. We welcome anyone who is

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Lessons for a New Year

by Marie Imai, LGSONS Director

Dear Families,

Welcome to a brand new year in all our lives. My strongest wish is that it may be a year of peace not war. Let's use our Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday to promote non-violence within our families, our community and our government. If you oppose this war, write to Washington now and call your senators so the voices for peace are heard as loudly as the opposition. And don't forget to teach your children about Martin Luther King, Jr. and all the non-violent struggles he led to win more rights for African Americans.

The year 2002 ended in a very special way for me because my mother, Mary, stayed with my husband and me for six weeks. We celebrated her 90th birthday on the day after Thanksgiving with a simple family dinner which included her three children, four grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and lots of in-laws. At 90 years old, she didn't want more "things", so we gave her a scrapbook filled with letters we had all written about her and collected from those who couldn't attend. When I flew home with my mom to Portland last week she carried the scrapbook

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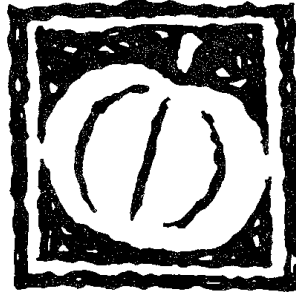
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A Friend Named Hairy

by Jan Eby,
Teacher 3's Class

The 3's class has a friend in the garden. It's "Hairy the Pumpkin" who has been there since November 5th.



Hairy had been a glowing Jack O'Lantern during the class cooking time near Halloween. The next week the children filled him with wet newspapers and dirt and sprinkled wheat berries (seeds) on top of his head and in his eyes, nose and mouth.

They carried him to the garden and watered him well. They have continued to visit, water and watch every week since then. Hairy has done exciting things! At first his seeds sprouted just a little, showing only a short green fluff like hair on top of his head. But week by week his "hair" grew long until we could barely find Hairy because of all his grassy growth. He became squishy and slumped to the ground.

Each week we draw a picture of the way he looks and recently some of the children have been writing stories to go with their pictures.

We would like to share them: *Alyssa Kwong*: "This is Hairy. He has really squished down. He has lots of hair."

Julia Davidson: "Hairy has been smushed to the ground. He has lots of hair and he's very, very funny."

Hannah Mapes: "Hairy looks full of grass. We can barely find him."

Quinlan Daley: "I drew a picture of Hairy."

Sophia Grant-Richards: "Hairy has squished down so we can hardly see him. He has so much hair."

Celine Bellegarda and Alexander Braken-Guelke: "This is Hairy."

Ellie Rizol: "He has earmuffs, eyes, rainbows and an abstract on him."

Kaitlin Weinstein: "Hairy is very silly. He can jump across three rabbits and he hops over three benches, and he eats three nails!"

As you can tell – we are very excited about Hairy. We have even sung a song about him.

*Where oh where is our friend Hairy?
Where oh where is our friend Hairy?
Where oh where is our friend Hairy?
Way down yonder in the garden
patch!* ♪

(Lessons for a New Year, continued)

right with her, fearing it might get lost in her luggage, so I know she loved reading all the special things we remembered and appreciate about her. Her greatest gift to me has always been the knowledge that she loves me just as I am, and always has.

In the last year or so she has lost her sense of direction so that she often turns the wrong way to find her bedroom, then stops, laughs and turns around to try again. Her first reaction to no longer being able to easily operate the washing machine, the tv remote control or most other appliances was to laugh. And though I know she was frustrated, she accepted her changing abilities with such good humor; I was constantly amazed. Now that she has returned home I will especially miss her company, her laugh and the jumbled up silverware drawer that gave mute testimony to her desire to still be helpful. Though at times it seemed our mother-daughter roles were reversed (she went to bed at 7:30 and I at 11:00) she was still modeling a most important lesson for me: Accept what you cannot change with grace and good humor ... and be happy. This will be my New Year's resolution. What is yours?

Love, Marie ∞

Ancient History of Mountain School

THE FARM SCHOOL

by Willys Peck

The following article was written by the husband of our school's founder, Betty Peck. It was originally published in the Observatory in May of 1995.



Without straining the bounds of modesty, I believe I can claim as intimate a knowledge of the beginnings of the Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School as anyone, mainly because I was a not-always-cheerful, but nevertheless admiring participant at its birth.

Call me a species of midhusband if you will, but let me explain: My wife, Betty, a career teacher since 1943, had studied the British infant schools in 1950, before we were married. She later became associated with Bess Bolton of Palo Alto in the operation of a parent-training program involving observation-school principles. After our marriage and the subsequent birth of our son, in December 1952, and daughter, in April 1954, Betty determined that they should have the advantage of this kind of preschool experience. Thus was born the Easterbrook Farm School, named for its benefactors, the late Harold and Louise Easterbrook, who made their property between Austin Way and Bainter Avenue, on the outer fringes of Saratoga, available for the project. In Today's suburbia, such a facility would seem impossible, but this was the Spring of 1956, when there still were orchards here and there, and the term "Valley of Heart's Delight" was not a complete misnomer. At the Farm School, there was a small house that was refitted for school purposes. On the surrounding grounds there were farm animals: pigs, chickens, rabbits and horses. Betty arranged to have a 1920's car brought in as playground equipment, along with a 1928 Cletrac tractor and an old, wooden farm wagon.

The crowning piece of equipment, though, was a maritime cargo net, made of hemp rope. Betty had it rigged in the trees as a massive hammock, where the children could climb and tumble without fear of injury.

Betty not only recruited the teachers for the various age groups, she also recruited the parents and children, and she formulated the program, which included such exotic activities as painting with mud, using artist's easels.

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(Happy New Year, continued)

interested. The benefits are many, including a release from some of the parental obligations, meeting more Mountain School dads and moms, and helping to make the school the unique place that it is. If you are interested in any board position, let Maria Olson or myself know!

Marie Olson (408-374-3595,
miaolson@earthlink.net)

Dianne O'Neil (408-267-3460,
yeuxverts@attbi.com) ☺

March Issue

by Nicole Frees,
Newsletter Chair

Thank you once again to all who contributed to this issue. For the next issue, I'd love to hear from parents on the subject: *Favorite Picnic Locations and Favorite Family Destinations for Spring Vacation.*

If you have material for the next issue of "The Observatory," please e-mail your submissions to me at nfrees@sbcglobal.net. If you do not have e-mail, then you may reach me at 650-961-4016. The deadline for the next issue is: Friday, February 28. Thank you! ☺

Who's Mom is the Cooking Mom?



by Liz Stroh-Coughlin
Former Mountain School Mom

This recipe was reprinted from the "Who's Mom is the Cooking Mom?" cookbook, made as a class project by the 1999-2000 3's Class.

SOFT PRETZELS

Makes 6 large pretzels

Ingredients:

½ cup very warm water
¼ cup honey
1 tablespoon dry yeast
1 ⅓ cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 egg yolk
coarse salt

Supplies:

2 medium mixing bowls
measuring cups and spoons
fork and small dish
cookie sheets
pastry brush

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Measure ½ cup of very warm water into a medium-mixing bowl. Dissolve the honey in the water, then stir in the yeast and let it stand 5 to 6 minutes.

In a separate bowl, mix together flour and salt, then stir it into the yeast mixture.

On a lightly floured surface, knead pretzel dough 3-4 minutes. If the dough gets really tough, let it rest a couple of minutes, then continue.

Divide dough into 6 or more equal pieces and roll each piece between the palms of your hands to make a snake.

Mold your snake like a pretzel or into a letter to spell your name or any other shape the child likes. Place on cookie sheet.

With a fork, beat egg yolk in a small dish. Brush shaped pretzels with beaten egg yolk and sprinkle with salt. Bake 10 minutes or until browned.

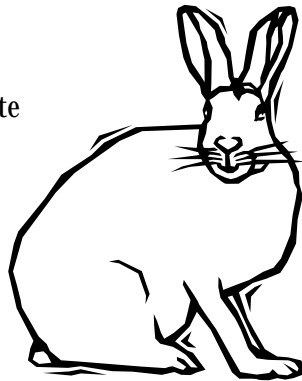
Cooking mom note: You can do this recipe from scratch at the schoolhouse involving the children at every step. It would be best to begin this project soon after you arrive so that it will be done by the regularly scheduled snack time. Be sure to allow extra baking time for the pretzels if they are other than a thin pretzel shape. ☺

The Tale of Cozy the Hare

Jonathan Grant-Richards,
Parent in 3's Class

Once upon a time, there was a little bunny who lived at a little red schoolhouse. She had lots of names, but in this story, we'll call her Cozy. She was a cute bunny with floppy ears and lots of white and black fur. Unfortunately, she was a bit afraid of being around so many people, so the family in charge of animals at the school had to take her back to their home. That family is going to have a newborn baby soon, and Cozy is going to need a new home. Does anyone want to write a happy ending to this story?

If you can adopt our school bunny, please e-mail John at:
little-jon@alumni.north-western.edu ☺



Kids Say the Cutest Things!

Submitted by Jan Eby
Teacher, 3's Class

From Ellie Rizol (3's class)



While admiring the Paper Whites in the school garden recently, Molly (Ellie's mother) said, "Ellie, these Paper Whites are what our flowers will look like. The ones we planted in a pot for the house."

Ellie turned, looked, and pointing said, "Like those paper *wipes!*"

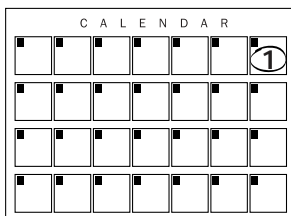
From Julia Davidson (3's class)

Julia to Teacher Jan: "Why did you wear pink today?"

Teacher Jan: "Oh, I just saw it in the closet and thought it would be nice. But I usually wear red, don't I?"

Julia: "Yes, but it's okay. We knew who you were!" ☺

Upcoming Events



Martin Luther King Holiday
Monday, January 20

Applications for 2003-2004
Postmark February 1 to 8

Workday – All 2s Classes
Sunday, February 2

Vacation – No School
February 17 to February 22

Mini Courses Begin
Monday, March 10

School Auction
Saturday, March 22

If you've misplaced your
calendar, you may obtain
another copy on
www.lgsons.com . Just click on
the Calendar link. ☺

Traits Needed to Build and Preserve Self-Esteem

... AND THEIR RELATION TO PLAY

by Teacher Jane Krejci

Teacher in Saturday 3/4/5s and Friday 2's

Teacher Jane wrote this when she worked for BRIO Toy in the 80s and 90s. It was part of the training she did with sales reps and retailers. The importance of play and its tie to self-esteem was the focus. For those who don't know Jane, she was Product Development Manager at BRIO for 12 years. The job enabled her to combine her interest in children, play and design. During those years, she still taught one morning a week to keep in touch with young children and families.

Security

- ⇒ Consistent environment that is physically and psychologically safe
 - ⇒ Freedom within limits, standards and appropriate expectations
- Play flourishes in a safe environment where risk and trial and error are accepted and encouraged.

Identity

- ⇒ Uniqueness and individuality is recognized, accepted
 - ⇒ Acceptance of range of ideas, emotions and attitudes.
- Play responds to and respects the uniqueness of each individual.

Empowerment

- ⇒ Motivation and sense of purpose
 - ⇒ Availability of options and choices, rather than limitations.
 - ⇒ Goals are reached through work and persistence
- Play is a process that involves effort and practice. Mastery and empowerment are results.

Connection

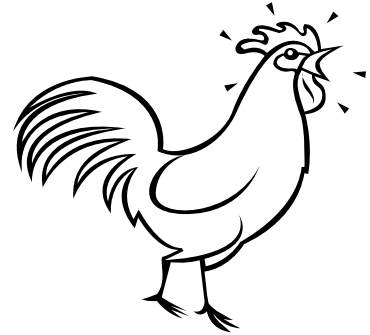
- ⇒ Acceptance, respect and approval from others
 - ⇒ Acknowledgement of contribution of others
 - ⇒ Satisfaction from sharing of interests, skills, interest
- Play often involves interaction, cooperation and sharing.

Competence

- ⇒ Know and develop strength; acknowledge and correct weaknesses
 - ⇒ Take risks; learn from experience
 - ⇒ Make contributions; be responsible
- Play increases competence and confidence. ∞

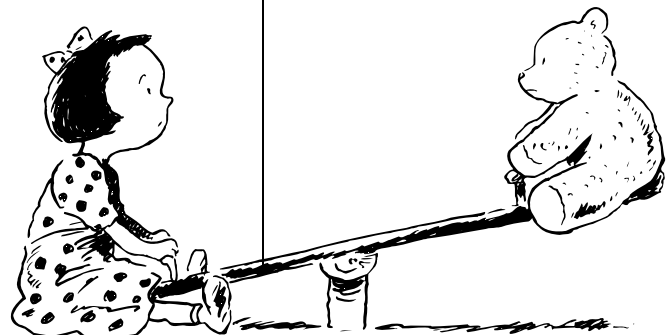
(School History, continued)

Along the way, she had the assistance of a husband who, as a newspaperman, worked nights and had daytimes more or less free. The fact that I also had quite a few carpenter's tools and claimed minimal skill in that field did not go unnoticed. I was frequently – if not constantly – called on for building projects,



such as platforms. As a parent and grandparent, I am proud that two generations of my progeny have been involved in this enterprise.

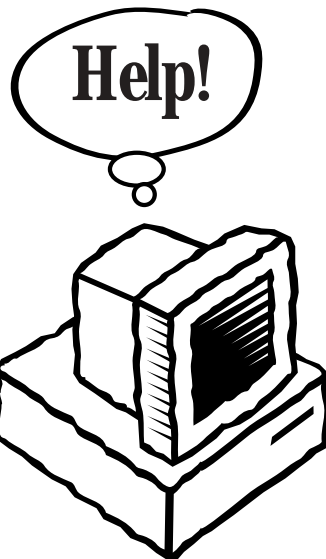
Most of all, though, I'm proud of my wife, who made it all happen. ∞



Web Master Position

First of all, a big "Thank You!" to Steven Cox who has done a wonderful job this past semester of

maintaining our website and keeping our e-mail distribution lists up-to-date.



Unfortunately, we may soon be losing the services of web-master Steve and we need someone to fill his shoes.

If you have the skills needed to maintain a website and are willing to serve our school community in this way, please contact our board chair, Dianne O'Neil (408-267-3460, yeuxverts@attbi.com)

One Hundred Years from now ... it will not matter what your bank account was, the sort of house you lived in, or the kind of car you drove ...

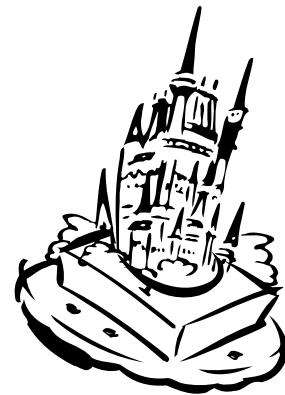
but the world may be different because you were important in the life of a *child*.



Here are some fun rainy-day activities to enjoy with your children.

Cracker Castles

submitted by "Teacher Froggy"
(Carol-Lyn Davis), Saturday 3/4/5s



Any kid who has ever played with his food knows that peanut butter is a perfectly good substitute for mortar – that is, if crackers happen to be the bricks.

Materials Needed:

- Cookie sheet or tray
- Assorted crackers
- Jar of peanut butter and a plastic knife
- Raisins, grapes, chocolate chips, dry cereal, or any other edible decorations.

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(Fun with Froggy, continued)

For neatness' sake, build your castle on a cookie sheet or tray. Set crackers vertically to make walls, gluing them to each other with peanut butter. (If you have trouble erecting the walls, you can also start by spreading a foundation layer of peanut butter and setting the crackers into it.) glue smaller crackers onto larger ones to make doors or window shutters and cement graham crackers in place as a sloped roof. Decorate with raisins, cereal, or anything else you can mortar on with peanut butter.

Rain Painting

This activity, from the If-You-Can't-Beat-'Em-Join-'Em Department, makes the most of rainy weather.

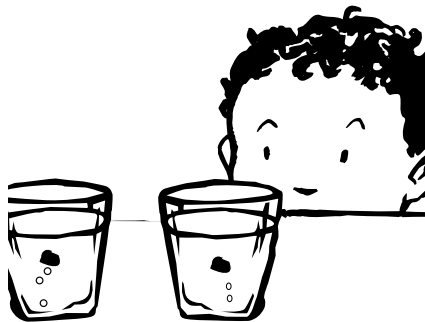


Materials needed:

- Paper plate (uncoated)
- Food coloring
- White crayon

After sprinkling a few drops of food coloring on a paper plate, your child can don her rain gear and walk outdoors with the plate for about a minute. For a batik effect, try drawing a white crayon design on the plate before adding the food coloring.

Raisin Race



To play this intriguing science game, fill two glasses with equal amounts of a clear carbonated beverage, such as mineral water. Try to minimize fizzing when pouring. On cue, each player drops in a raisin, which should sink to the bottom, then rise to the surface as bubbles collect on it. The first raisin to the top wins!

Look for more Fun with Froggy projects in the future issues of the Observatory. ∞

A Hike Worthy of Mountain School

... ESPECIALLY TEACHER MARIE!

by Teacher Jane Krejci
Teacher in Saturday 3/4/5s and Friday 2's

On Christmas day in a small town in Arizona, my husband and I met two hikers with a dream ... and incredible determination and endurance. We invited them to join us for dinner, and we were absolutely fascinated with their story. Thomas (23 years old) and Jurgen (38 years old) are walking 33,000 kilometers from northern Alaska to the southern tip of South America. They started in the Spring of 2001 – and hope to be to the tip of South America in 2005. They are accompanied by their dog “Tok” who is part husky and part border collie. They pull a cart with bicycle wheels to carry their 300 pounds of gear. They hike along the back roads and camp along the way. Following their progress on their web site (www.projekt-horizont.de) would be interesting and educational, especially for your older children. Do check it out! ∞

