

WATERFORD COUNTRY

SCHOOL:

THE EARLY YEARS

Remembrances Of

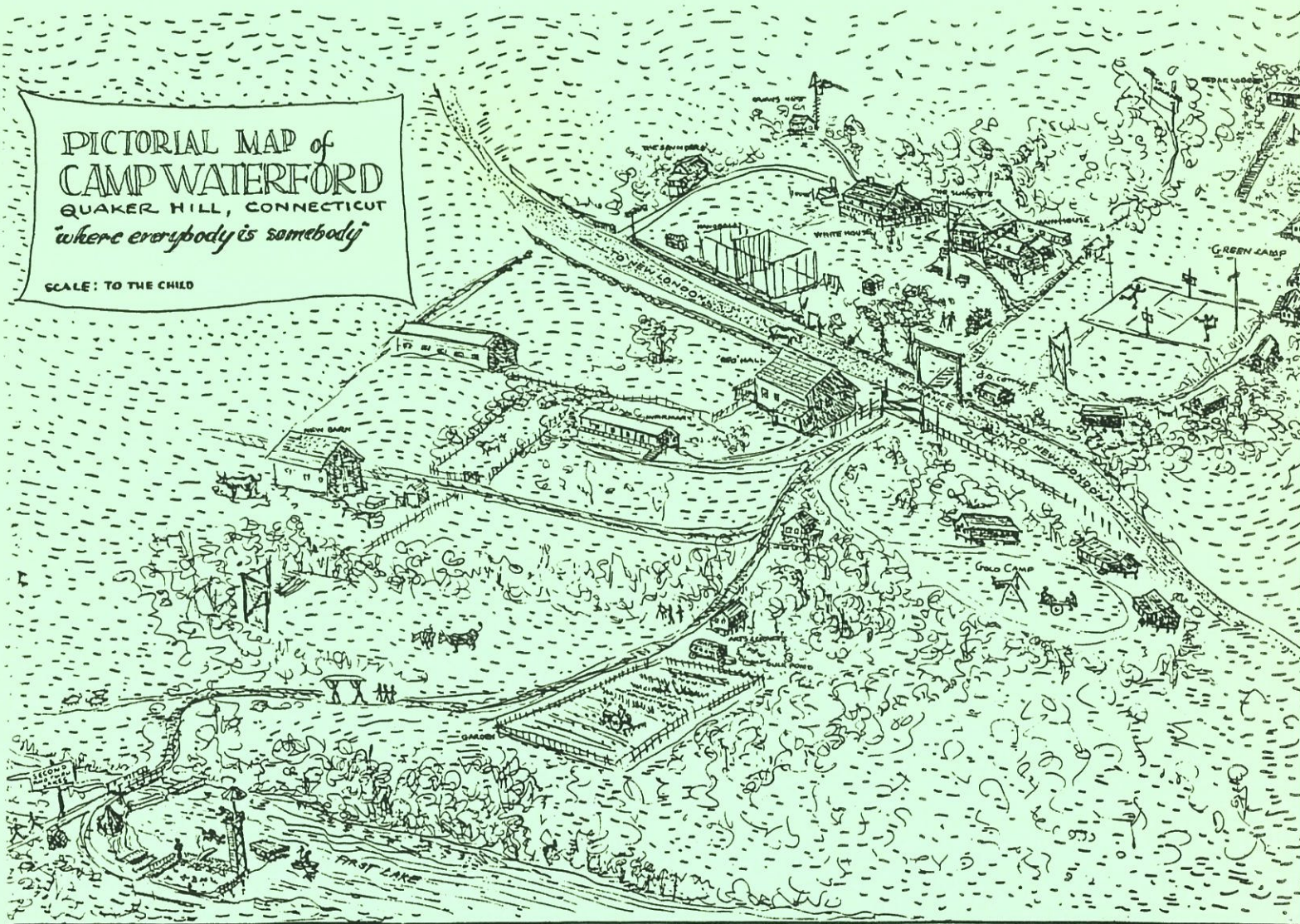
Herbert Thomas Schacht

Director of Waterford Country School

from 1946-1981



All artwork is taken from the newsletter of Camp Waterford, printed circa 1957



WATERFORD COUNTRY SCHOOL: THE EARLY YEARS

Remembrances Of

Herbert Thomas Schacht

Director of WCS from 1946-1981

The early history of the Waterford Country School is inseparable from the history of my family. I was born in 1922 and grew up in a home that was also a private school – a home school, started the year I was born. This school, started by my mother, Ettie Thomas Schacht, was the beginning of Waterford Country School.

ETTIE AND HENRY

Ettie was an immigrant child, who had escaped to the United States from the genocidal pogroms of Russia at the turn of the century. Her parents faked her birth certificate, so she was able to attend the New York Teachers Training School at a very young age. In 1909, at age 16, she began teaching in the New York Public School System. She worked at P.S. 20, on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, supervising a playground during the summer and teaching during the regular school year. The children of P.S. 20 were mostly immigrants, recent arrivals from Europe who had come through Ellis Island with very few possessions. Many families struggled to eke out a meager existence by selling wares from pushcarts. Education was a way out of the ghetto, and many P.S. 20 students worked hard, eventually becoming important men and women of America. Among Ettie's students were the composers George and Ira Gershwin and Irving Caesar, actors Paul Muni and Edward G. Robinson, a future president of the New York City Board of Education, and Senator Jacob Javits.

At P.S. 20, Ettie developed a reputation as being an exceptionally creative and effective teacher. She was assigned to teach children with special needs. Some were special because they were gifted. Others were special because they were blind, or had had polio or other physical problems. Many of these children also did not speak English. To teach these children, Ettie was forced to innovate, to create unorthodox methods that would be applied to teaching both gifted and handicapped learners.

She developed an approach to teaching that emphasized communication and learning through all the senses. For example, she might read aloud to the class about a subject such as plants. Then the students would bring to class examples of plants that they could smell, taste, touch, hear, and see. A flower might have perfume and color, a mint stem had flavor and odor, poison ivy had a distinctive shape and texture, and a dry oak leaf made a crackling sound. Finally, the students would use their new knowledge to do something creative, such as write a poem about a beautiful tree. Ettie also took a wholistic approach to education. She believed that learning required a proper lifestyle, so she emphasized nutrition, physical activity, creative arts, and work activities focused around real life experiences. Ettie also did not give up. She accepted children, encouraged them, and persisted until she and they got results.

My father, Henry, was also a teacher. He graduated from Cornell University in 1908, majoring in dramatic arts and education. Henry worked in the theatre and was a featured character actor in a number of Hollywood, Broadway, and stock productions. But he didn't get paid

regularly, so he did his acting when he could and worked as a teacher to make a living. Henry taught physical education, civics, and languages in the "blackboard jungles" of Brooklyn's Red Hook and Green Point neighborhoods. To maintain order in the classroom, he appointed student lieutenants who checked other students' knives and weapons in a box at the classroom door. Only in this way could they get down to the business of learning. When Henry retired after 20 years, students killed the teacher who replaced him.

In these early years, from 1909 through the early 1920's, Waterford Country School did not exist, even in imagination. But, these early experiences of Ettie and Henry did set the stage for programs developed at Waterford. For many years, Waterford's program was unique in that many normal and handicapped children were educated side-by-side, just as Ettie had done in P.S. 20. Likewise, Henry's willingness to work with angry delinquent youth, rather than simply expel them from school, was also mirrored in later Waterford programs.

Ettie and Henry married in 1913 and had three children. Their first born, Rita, was a healthy child. However, the next two children were sickly. Babette was disabled as a child from rheumatic heart disease and died at 20 from complications of a strep throat just one year before penicillin became available. I was the youngest child, and I developed severe asthma as an infant. The first ten years of my life were spent fighting to breathe.

Ettie had to give up her public school position to stay home and care for her two sick children. But she did not give up teaching. She and Henry started a little day school in our home at 1482 Union Street in Brooklyn. Henry continued his public school teaching and acting to support our family and the fledgling school; he worked at night and on weekends to help with school administration and other needs. Ettie's reputation as an exceptional teacher brought the students. Parents of bright children brought them to Ettie, who would help them achieve two years of academic work in one year. Some parents also brought retarded and mentally handicapped children. At that time, parents of handicapped children had limited options -- they could hide their children at home or they could send them to asylums in the country, which were little more than human warehouses. These parents had heard that Ettie had taught children with special needs in the public schools. What the parents did not know was that these had been children with physical rather than mental handicaps.

A SPECIAL PROGRAM: THE HOME SCHOOL

Nevertheless, Ettie accepted some of these mentally handicapped children in her home school. She developed a special program for these children that operated in the same building as the program for bright and gifted children. This was unheard of. There was little public awareness about special needs children at the time. Some people thought that developmental disabilities were contagious or dangerous. Our neighbors became outraged when they began to see severely handicapped and often physically disfigured children getting out of vehicles and disappearing into our home. The neighbors tried to shut down Ettie's school by making complaints to every conceivable authority. In her first year of operation, Ettie was taken to court 17 times. She won every time by convincing the judge that she was benefitting the children, their parents, and society.

The school on Union Street grew quickly. Ettie hired a staff of teachers and trained them in her methods. She also began to operate not just a day school, but also a boarding school. Two parents of handicapped children essentially "gave" them to Ettie. These children were raised in my family as my brother and sister. I also attended my parents' school as a student.

Ettie's school was a year-round operation. But, air-conditioning was non-existent and life in the hot Brooklyn summer was unbearable. The children simply couldn't concentrate on academic activities. In 1925 Ettie and Henry leased the estate of theatre magnate Marcus Loew

in Far Rockway, New York, to be a summer camp. The estate had spacious grounds, a swimming pool, its own theatre, and it was near the ocean. The houses were large enough to accommodate all the children and staff.

THE MOVE TO BUCKINGHAM ROAD

By 1926 the school was too large for our home.

Ettie and Henry bought two large buildings on Buckingham Road in Brooklyn, one of which had a certificate of occupancy as a boarding home for 60 children. Ettie moved her school to this new location and her mother, Rose, continued to surprise the Union Street building for a few years. The first day that we were on Buckingham Road, our next door neighbor (who later became a friend) walked over and declared: "If you have one black, one Jew, or one Catholic child, the neighbors will close you down the way they closed down the place they just got rid of". Ettie not only had black, Jewish, and Catholic children, but many of them were visibly handicapped. Because she had begun a boarding school, many of the children were also present 24 hours a day, seven days per week, instead of just during school hours. A neighborhood war began.



The neighbors called upon all the regulatory and licensing agencies -- the building department, fire department, health department, and so on. Ettie was extremely careful to operate with good health, safety, fire prevention, and professional practices. Inspectors came regularly, intending to close the school based on reports by the neighbors. Ettie would give them a tour and show them the work the children were doing, and the inspectors would leave, convinced that the school was not the abomination that had been reported to them. But then, inevitably, a new round of inspectors would be sent.

Although the neighbors did not succeed in closing the school, they did find a technicality in the law that created some problems. The certificate of occupancy for the main building specified that it was for a boarding home, not a school. Therefore, while children could legally sleep, eat, and play inside the building, they could not be educated inside the building.

In response, Ettie and Henry began a program modeled after the open-air schools of Switzerland. Classes held outside in good weather, and on covered porches during inclement weather, all year long, complied with the technical prohibition against holding classes inside the building. Ettie and Henry made the best of this situation, turning a problem into a virtue by marketing their program as a "Culture and Health School". The open-air was said to provide health benefits. This situation prevailed for many years until the people in power retired or died. It was not until the 1940's that the city gave permission to hold classes inside the buildings.

A START IN CONNECTICUT: THE NEW SUMMER CAMP

By 1929 the summer program had outgrown the Loew estate in Far Rockaway. Ettie and Henry found a new place that seemed ideal -- the Josephson Farm in Waterford, Connecticut. There were over 500 acres of beautiful farmland, two very large old farmhouses (one built in 1760, the other in 1870), a dairy barn, hay fields, a lovely stream called Hunts Brook and a magnificent 98 acre tract, most of which was a lake. Ettie and Henry bought the property in partnership with Dora (Ettie's sister) and her husband William (Henry's brother), who gave their house in Flushing, Long Island, as a down payment. During the great depression, Dora and William chose to give up their interest in the property, which was purchased by Ettie and Henry over a

long period of time.

Money was scarce in 1929, and everything was done as economically as possible, the main resources being sweat and improvisation. When summer camp opened in Waterford, sixty children would travel by night boat from New York City to New London, Connecticut. At the dock they boarded hay trucks for the drive to Camp Cuheca (The Culture and Health Camp). Accommodations were primitive. Most of the children and staff lived in army tents. Drinking water came from a hand pump on a dug well. Our toilets were primitive. Electricity was supplied by a Delco generator and battery system that supplied 32 volts, when it worked. We cooked on a wood and coal stove. To keep the operation in the black, Henry would travel from New York to pay the staff in cash – and then he would win most of the payroll back in late-night card games. No one knew that he had a photographic memory and could remember every card played in a hand, calculating his odds as he went along.

The camp program followed Ettie's philosophy that learning was best accomplished around real life experiences. There was play time, campfires, singing, hayrides, and hikes. But there was also work – cooking and cleaning, growing our food on the farm, fixing old buildings and constructing new ones, blocking up the brook to make a swimming hole. Although we still had two programs, one for normal children and one for children with special needs, we all lived together like one family.



Unfortunately, the kinds of problems that Ettie and Henry had experienced in New York with neighbors and public officials were destined to continue in Connecticut. Although the program was nonsectarian, and although most of the children were from a religiously and ethnically diverse group of middle class families, we were labeled "rich Jewish New Yorkers" who operated a camp for "rich Jewish children". The children and staff were sometimes discriminated against in their contacts with people in nearby communities. Some public officials went out of their way to use rules and regulations as a disguise for harassment.

A YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM: "CUHECA COUNTRY SCHOOL"

In 1939 my sister Babette died. She was buried in Waterford, in the old cemetery on the school grounds. Ettie lost heart, overwhelmed with grief. She had no energy for the Connecticut operation and the summer camp was shut down. However, there had always been a dream of building a year-round school in Connecticut. In 1940 we began to winterize the summer camp, intending to develop a year round program to complement the Culture and Health School in New York. We insulated the walls and roof of the old farm buildings, and installed a used coal and wood-fired ship's boiler, piping, and radiators to provide heat. Interior plumbing was winterproofed.

In 1942 the year-round "Cuheca Country School" for children with special needs was opened in Waterford. Ettie and Henry remained in New York, hiring directors to run the Connecticut program. Three directors came, and left, over the next four years. The conditions were too primitive, the demands of maintaining old buildings and a working farm were overwhelming, and the children's needs were endless. One director was able to find enough money to buy a building downstate and open his own school.

MY START IN HUMAN SERVICES

By 1946 Ettie and Henry were desperate to find someone who could run the Connecticut operation, while they continued the Culture and Health School. In February, 1946 I had come home from three years service in the Army as a medical soldier. Although I was ill, I agreed to go to the country for a few months to help out in emergencies. In May 1946 I went to Connecticut to help out temporarily until my parents could find another director. I didn't know this was to be the beginning of over 40 years of service to children.

I didn't plan to stay in Waterford more than a few months. Having watched my parents struggle and sacrifice, I never intended to do this kind of work. I was going to be an adventurer, traveling the world over. I certainly did not want to be a teacher. I hated school. Because of my childhood asthma, I never attended public school until age 11, when I took an exam and was admitted to a public high school. I graduated at age 15 and went immediately to college, too young, at the University of Connecticut, where I studied animal husbandry.

But a new director never appeared, and I stayed the winter. Life at the Cuheca Country School in 1946 was simple. There were six severely handicapped children who could do more than we, or they, initially expected. They helped in the kitchen, on the grounds, in the barn milking the cows, gathering eggs, carrying wood for the furnace. Through our common necessity, the children's lives became useful. Need produced effort, and effort produced growth.

The children also had some schoolwork. To be warm, the teacher would conduct class in the kitchen if necessary. Education focused on the practical aspects of life, personal grooming and hygiene, social interaction and survival skills, and work training. Some of the children learned to read and write, including a few with tested IQ's less than 50 ("profoundly retarded" by ordinary clinical judgment). Mixed in with the learning activities was a lot of fun. We lived together as a family in relative rural isolation. We didn't leave the children. If we wanted happiness, we had to make it for ourselves.



1947 BRINGS MAJOR CHANGES

In 1947 Ettie retired and everything was re-organized. My sister Rita's husband, Bo Saunders, had been discharged as a Major from the U.S. Air Corps. He and Rita became the directors of the New York School. Renamed the Buckingham School, it became exclusively a day facility, while the Cuheca Country School in Waterford assumed the boarding school program. I remained in Waterford to direct the school there, which was to be a 10-month operation from September through June.

The summer camp was also re-opened at that time, renamed Camp Waterford, to serve children from both Buckingham and Cuheca, as well as those who only wanted a summer camp experience. We intended to continue dual programs, integrated when possible. One program was for normal children and one for those with special needs. None of us were professionals, so we tried to obtain information from the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and elsewhere about how to operate such an arrangement. But we could locate no information.

Finding ourselves in uncharted waters, we improvised, using Ettie's educational philosophy as our guide (although formally retired, she had remained on as a very active advisor). This philosophy held that happiness came from achievement. Achievement helped children to feel important, and the best way to be important was to do useful things for others. In every program, more able children helped less able ones. The camp motto, which remains to this day, became "Where Everybody Is Somebody".

In 1951, Bo Saunders was recalled to active military duty to serve in the Korean War. He was badly injured in a parachute jump when his chute did not open completely. He retired from the military as a Lt. Colonel and never returned to the school or camp. Rita and I continued the operation, she in New York at Buckingham and I in Connecticut. In the summer she came to Connecticut and we operated the camp jointly. Without Bo it was not possible to operate two camp programs, so the program for normal children was dropped, leaving only one program for children with special needs. In 1951 my salary was \$200 per month and remained at that level for a number of years. In 1951 I also married the school nurse. We made our home on the school grounds, 50 feet from the main building, and six of our seven children began life there, until with a gift from my father I was able to build my present home in 1964.

BECOMING PART OF THE COMMUNITY: THE CHANGE TO "WATERFORD COUNTRY SCHOOL"

The undercurrent of discrimination that Henry and Ettie had faced in the 1930's and early 1940's was still present. The Cuheca Country School was the butt of community jokes, snidely referred to as the "Cu-cuckoo School". We decided to win community acceptance by fighting fire with friendship. The Cuheca Country School was renamed the Waterford Country School. The students, with staff guidance and support, volunteered as helpers in the community whenever possible. The school opened its land for free recreational use by area organizations, including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, public schools, churches, and other non-profit organizations. I became active in community affairs, serving as a member or officer in dozens of local and state organizations, always as a representative of the Waterford Country School. We operated so quietly that our next door neighbors did not know what we were doing. We wanted to be beyond criticism, so everything was done literally by the book. Decisions were made only after referring to fire codes, building codes, health codes, education department rules and so on. The friendship campaign was successful. I am often surprised by people who stop me in the street now to reminisce about meaningful experiences that they shared with me in connection with the early days of the Waterford Country School. Today there is no evidence of that early discrimination.

Through all these years, the cost of services to children was borne entirely by parents. The laws which now help parents of handicapped children pay for special education would not be enacted for more than two decades. Usually the father's income would support the family and the mother would go to work to pay for the child's expenses to attend the school or camp. In 1946 it cost \$75.00 per month for a child to stay at the Cuheca Country School. For that sum, the child received 24 hour care, education and treatment. The only additional charges were for laundry and personal medical bills, which were reimbursed at cost. Fees at Waterford Country School were never high. We lived as simply as possible, scrounging, fixing, growing our own food whenever possible. Most of the staff lived on campus, often in housing that they helped to build. But, gradually, as the cost of living increased, it became more difficult for parents to bear the cost of their child's care.

PUBLIC FUNDING BECOMES A RESOURCE

Then, in 1956 a twist of fate changed the future of Waterford. A social worker from Ohio

stopped to visit us. She was on her way to pick up a 12 year old Ohio girl who was being discharged from a Massachusetts school because of sexual acting-out. The social worker offered what for us was a new arrangement. If we would accept this child, the costs would be paid for with public funds by a welfare department. So we accepted her, saying to ourselves, "What could be so hard about caring for a healthy 12 year old who only chases men?"

Since the normal program had been discontinued years earlier, we had no other bright healthy children in the program. Everyone else was severely handicapped. What were we going to do with this child? Following Ettie's philosophy, we made her a teacher's helper. She helped a boy with severe cerebral palsy who couldn't walk, talk, dress, feed or toilet himself. He, in turn, responded with affection. The girl discovered that she didn't have to go to bed with someone to win their approval and she blossomed.

Within a year, the Cuyahoga County (Ohio) Welfare Department sent us 12 more children. Then other counties and juvenile courts in Ohio also began referring children, and then Massachusetts, New York State, and Illinois. Our part-time psychologist, Dr. Arthur Glickstein, was seeing the children in therapy and told us that if we were looking for the sickest, most incorrigible children in America we had found them. We did not refuse admission - children were accepted on a first-come, first-served basis as space permitted. The children's records were so bad that we locked them in our files immediately. Even our own staff were not permitted to read the records, lest the information prejudice them. Social workers would fly the children to Hartford. We would meet the airplane and then drive the children to the school on back roads, through the woods, so that they had no idea where they were. Chronic runaways believed they were in deep wilderness and were afraid to run. This strategy bought us time to establish relationships before they took off.

A REAL CHALLENGE

These children were a real challenge. It was not an accident that their home states had shipped them far away. The school's roof would go up and down, the walls would go in and out, and there were many days when we would all collapse from exhaustion. Occasionally a child might make a suicide attempt. We would hospitalize him or her, and then bring them back. If a child ran away, I or a child care worker would run after the child, catch up, and then just stay with them. Many hours and miles later the child would stop, usually sit on a rock or a log, and talk about his/her problems. Eventually, without coercion, (s)he would return to the school. On one occasion two boys, nine and ten years old, stole a State Police detective's brand new station wagon and drove it 90 miles per hour on Route 95, well into Rhode Island with troopers in pursuit. The nine year old passenger was shouting out the window, "yah, yah, yah copper, you can't catch us". They wrecked the car and were captured, but we didn't kick them out.

In those days there was no such thing as kicking a child out. We made a radical and complete commitment to each child. They had to leave us with their heads high, better able to meet life on its terms than when they came. We learned that the children would be our teachers, showing us what they needed if only we could look and listen. If we could ride out the storm and meet each child's needs as best we could identify them, then eventually most children would begin to trust us and would change. Some children responded so well that we never saw the kind of terrible behavior that was documented in their records.

A PLACE TO BELONG

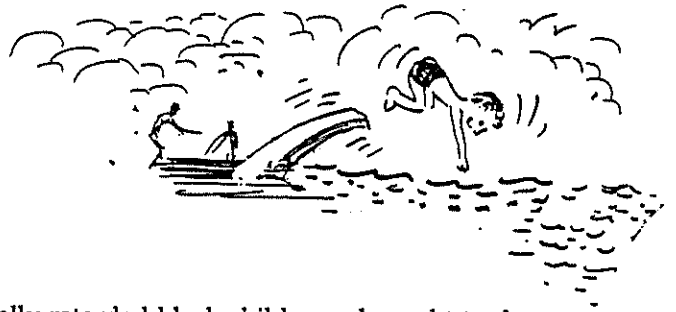
While we were accepting these emotionally disturbed and delinquent children, we also continued to enroll our traditional population of children with severe developmental

disabilities such as autism, retardation, and cerebral palsy. We found that if we composed groups and activities carefully, the more capable youngsters could help the less capable, and everybody benefited. The program worked when the more capable had time to work, attend class, and have fun with their peers, while the disabled could have relief from the amateur do-gooders who might try too hard. For many of the emotionally disturbed and delinquent children, helping another child who was obviously handicapped the first opportunity they had ever had to be useful to another human being. We were treating children who had been labeled as incorrigible, who in other settings were locked up, given drugs, or put in physical restraints. At Waterford there were no locked doors, drugs were given only for therapeutic purposes, and if it was necessary to restrain a child it was done by a human being holding them, not by straps of canvas and leather.

I believe that what enabled these youngsters to function in our open setting was how we treated them. We lived with them and shared their daily lives. We treated them as human beings and respected their basic needs, including the need for an education for life. We gave them a place to belong. We gave them a childhood.

CHILDREN'S STORIES

The following four stories are true and illustrate the kinds of children Waterford has historically helped. Identifying details have been disguised to protect confidentiality.



Luther

In the late 40's Luther, a small five year old mentally retarded black child, was brought to the Buckingham School by his loving father because of his concern about his sons behavior that was often completely out of his control. He was an angry child who often reacted impulsively and with explosive temper tantrums that usually required physical restraint.

Ettie, a consultant to the Buckingham School at the time, volunteered to work with him on a one-to-one basis. She planned and structured his day so that his very short attention span was not overwhelmed by unrealistic expectations. Together they moved from activity to activity according to Luther's tolerance level. Ettie's teaching was innovative, creative, and structured. It established an environment that encouraged bonding between this acting-out child and Ettie, his first teacher.

Luther eventually became a student in a class with other students. During the summer he went to Camp Waterford where he was challenged with new children, adults, and activities, eventually adapting to camp life, which he enjoyed for many summers. Over a number of years, this out of control child slowly developed inner control and became socialized.

He is now over 40 years old. He lives in his own apartment in New York City. He has held a job for over 14 years as a messenger in a large corporation. He attends recreational activities sponsored by a Parents Association. He has a bank account with sizable savings. He dates a woman who has been his friend for many years.

Luther has telephoned me every six to eight weeks for the past 20 years. He has traveled from New York to Connecticut to visit and has stayed overnight with me and my family. In 1987 during one of his telephone calls, I informed him that Ettie had died. His spontaneous response was to break out into song, "The Lords Prayer". This five year old out-of-control child had come a long way.

Girard

Girard was 15 years old. He was locked up in a Juvenile Courts Detention facility in a midwestern state. His problem was that a new stepmother didn't get along with him, and had told her new husband to choose Girard or her, and the husband chose her. Girard would brood over this situation and then explode with anger which was the reason for his detention.

He came to Waterford. Intelligent, strong, handsome, athletic, he saw coming to Waterford as punishment. The presence of developmentally disabled children and youth reflected negatively on his already damaged ego. He would frequently fly into a rage and break something including his fist a number times when he punched walls. It didn't take much provocation for Girard to fight other students or staff.

It was obvious that he would not accept Waterford, but the Ohio psychologist had no other options for him. The doctor authorized us to create any program that might be acceptable and helpful to Girard.



Girard liked our two maintenance men at the school. They were brothers, combat veterans of the 2nd World War. They could do plumbing, electrical and refrigeration work, carpentry, fix cars, and anything else that was needed.

I sat down with Girard and negotiated a horse trade. Girard could work with Jim and Dan. He would buy his own tools with an allowance that he would earn. He would have time off to go to town, alone, to spend his money. He could smoke in their presence and in town. In exchange he would not fight or break the furniture. He would go to class one hour a day with Aunt Hermine, an elderly teacher, with standards from the Victorian Age. If he was out of control, he could take a walk, see our psychologist, psychiatrist or me, or punch a tree.

Girard stayed. The plan worked. About three years later Girard returned to Ohio. He found work in industry. His experience and training with Jim and Dan served him well. He took advantage of every training opportunity offered by the companies that he worked for. He moved up corporate ladders and became a specialist in production management. Vice Presidencies were the highest that he could go without a graduate college degree, although in time he became a trainer for industry. He developed a computerized program for quality control of production that was so good that Fortune 500 Corporations wanted to buy it. He wanted to lease the the methodology and software and started his own business to do that.

During all these years he has kept in touch. Every so often he is a guest in our home while he discusses some personal matter with Hazel, Emily or me, while he recharges his batteries with a Connecticut vacation. His success has been temporarily curtailed by injuries that he suffered from a car that crashed into his car causing him to suffer neurological damage resulting in poor coordination and memory lapses. He is going through extensive rehabilitation and retraining. He continues to keep in touch. We are still part of his family.



Evelyn

Evelyn was 13 years old. She was intelligent, physically attractive, apparently healthy except for petit mal seizures. Her concerned and loving parents had brought her to Waterford because she was falling behind in school and was exhibiting negativistic behaviors. She was referred and her expenses were paid for by New York State.

Evelyn responded to a program designed to meet her individual needs. Two years later she had done so well that plans were being made for Evelyn to return to her home and community.

Evelyn became anemic and started to lose weight. She was examined by Dr. Tytla, who ordered extensive laboratory and other tests to help identify the cause of her health problem. One Saturday night Evelyn complained of a severe headache. She was taken to see Dr. Tytla who did a complete physical and neurological exam and could not find the cause of the headache. Evelyn was sent back to school with her doctors order that she sleep in the infirmary under staff supervision. She was scheduled the following Monday to see her neurologist at the clinic for convulsive disorders at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. At midnight Evelyn had a convulsion which lasted a short time. The doctor was called. She ordered medication that was on hand because of Evelyn's petit mal epilepsy and indicated that she would see Evelyn on Sunday if she was needed. Six o'clock Sunday morning Evelyn had another convulsion and stopped breathing. Emily and I, who lived in a house 50 feet away, were called and we came running. I applied mouth to mouth resuscitation until a mechanical resuscitator was attached to her which provided oxygen under intermittent pressure. Dr. Tytla was called and in less than ten minutes she was at Evelyn's side.

We called an ambulance while Dr. Tytla notified the hospital emergency room to be prepared for Evelyn. A neurosurgeon, an anesthesiologist, a laboratory technician, a portable x-ray machine and technician, cardio pulmonary equipment and other staff were waiting before 8:00 a.m. Sunday morning for Evelyn who arrived in minutes.

I telephoned Evelyn's parents and learned that they had already left their New York home to visit. Emily, a registered nurse, went to the hospital to offer her help, while I remained at the school to wait for Evelyn's family.

They arrived late morning. Together we went to the Lawrence Memorial Hospital and were shown into a treatment room where Evelyn was being examined by specialists. As we walked into the room, Dr. Cooper was on the bed performing Cardio-Pulmonary resuscitation, Evelyn's heart had stopped beating.

Machines were connected, an x-ray was taken of Evelyn's skull and a short time later Dr. Cooper came to see Evelyn's parents holding a still wet x-ray. He showed them a picture with a large tumor, the size of a lemon, in the right frontal section of her brain. He asked for and received permission to immediately operate with poor prognosis. Hours later he came from surgery to inform Evelyn's parents that he had removed the tumor and that Evelyn was in the Recovery Room with two nurses specializing her. Emily's offer to help had been accepted.

Evelyn remained in a coma for weeks. The doctors, nurses and staff were wonderful. It was as if they had Sleeping Beauty in their midst. You could sense the caring and prayers that surrounded Evelyn. Her family found a place to live nearby and stayed with Evelyn day and night. One day, several weeks later, Dr. Cooper informed Evelyn's parents that the tumor had grown back and that the bone flap was being displaced. The advice of the medical specialists was to let Evelyn die in peace. Ettie, who was present at the time, advised the family, "While there is life, there is hope". The parents asked Dr. Cooper to operate again,

improved. Richard, an autistic child, had become involved with the world around him.

Today he lives in a group home with other special needs adults. He does contract work for pay in a work experience center. He travels by bus, train and airplane without supervision. He has made friends in the community. He telephones me and others often and four to six times a year he arranges for a long weekend visit with my family. Although he still exhibits some of the manifestations of his illness, he is a kind, gentle, considerate person who tries to please others while he squeezes every ounce of participation in life that is possible for him to enjoy.

A NEW PATH

In 1965, another twist of fate again changed Waterford's future course. A path through Connecticut's beauracracy eventually lead me to the Connecticut State

Welfare Department's representative, Mr. Frank Murphy. Mr. Murphy said to me, "I am intrigued by what your school is doing. Why don't you invite me to visit"? In those days, licensing was a privilege rather than a requirement. He came, visited for a day, and said, "I'd like to do a study, and if you are willing to meet our standards, we will license you and we will send you publicly supported Connecticut children". Up to that time we had no publicly supported children from Connecticut, our own state, although we had many from other States.



Frank Murphy spent six months going up and down the street, talking with the neighbors, public school teachers and administrators, the town fathers, police, business people, clergy and others. He learned about the car that was stolen, a youngster who had run away and ended up in somebody's kitchen, a child who had blown up a toilet with a firecracker in a student bathroom at the junior high school, and other stories. At the end of six months of investigation, he wrote a report.

Here was a school that had a main building that was built in 1760. Everything was old and makeshift. We didn't have much money. But Frank Murphy's report stated in very simple language that the Waterford Country School had the finest program for disadvantaged and special needs children in the State of Connecticut. He licensed us, and state social workers began to refer Connecticut children to Waterford. Within one year we had 300 Connecticut children on a waiting list to come to our agency, youngsters in desperate need of help.

The price of licensing by the Connecticut Department of Welfare turned out to be very high. The state required that we change our criteria for admission of children. We could no longer accept the very retarded or the character disordered children and youth from out of state. The children who were with us could stay, but not past 21 years of age. Many of the retarded and multiply-handicapped, who had been with us for many years, had to find other places to go to. The youngsters from out of state could come, providing that they met Connecticut requirements. These states that had been paying very little for the care of their children did not want to meet the requirements. Slowly we became an agency that exclusively served children from the State of Connecticut. When Frank Murphy retired from State Service, he joined The Waterford Country School staff as an internal consultant for quality control and stayed for six years.

By 1977 all of our children were publicly supported. They were referred to Waterford by The Connecticut State Department of Children and Youth Services and/or by the school systems of any of 169 cities or towns in Connecticut. Whenever we could we gave priority for admission to children from Southeastern Connecticut. Removing children from traumatic environments and

which he did. Evelyn survived the surgery. Many more weeks of coma followed. A consultant from the Neurology Department of Yale Medical School told the family that Evelyn would awaken, she would be unable to see, walk or talk. She would need to go to a Rehabilitation Hospital where she would recover, although she might have some disability. I accompanied Evelyn, who was transported by the Cohanzie Fire Company Volunteer Ambulance Service from Lawrence Memorial Hospital, to the Rehabilitation unit of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City where she remained for many months.

As predicted by the neurological consultant, Evelyn regained her sight, ability to talk and walk and she returned to the Country School. About a year later, because Waterford's population was changing, a decision was made to transition Evelyn to another program. We helped her family to find another school for her, which they did.

Several years later Emily and I visited Evelyn at her new school's summer camp, where we found her happily participating in a dancing activity.

The tumor, which almost took Evelyn's life, was a blind tumor that had been slowly growing since her early years. It was the cause of the petit mal seizures which contributed to the negativist behavior which brought Evelyn to the Waterford Country School. The prognosis of this condition was slow growth until about 15 years of age when the tumor usually caused death.

In Evelyn's case the Good Lord with many Disciples helped her through this amazing part of her life. To our knowledge, she is still alive and well.

Richard

Richard was a teenager who was autistic. For two years he regularly visited a psychiatrist for therapy at a child guidance clinic, and for two years during these sessions he was mute. His psychiatrist recommended residential treatment. Richard came to the Waterford Country School.

At Waterford Country School, he was assigned to live in the older boys unit. His program included activities in a craft shop, on the farm, in practical training and work assignments with a group. He accompanied older boys on trips and other recreational activities. Although physically present he was mute throughout.

One evening at supper, the other students at his table decided to take matters into their own hands. Food was served in large bowls, family-style. When the bowls were to be passed to Richard, the boys passed him by and the bowl or platter continued around the table until it was empty. The last bowl of food had just by passed Richard, when he slammed his fist down on the table and demanded in a loud voice, "Dammit pass the food" and from that time he was verbal.

Communication improved relationships. Relationships helped him to participate in the world around him. Although he would frequently turn within there were more and more occasions when Richard remained in contact with others. He also began to make friends with a few students and staff. On occasion when teased or imposed upon, he would react with anger in a child-like explosive tantrum. Offending students usually got the message. Richard had demands and complaints and always found someone to ventilate his fear, anger, frustration upon. It was not unusual at 6:00 a.m. to have him banging on my door. He demanded help and received it. Slowly his ability to interact with others, to participate in activities with his peers

relationships to a community of caring people was a major improvement in their lives.

RESTRUCTURING FOR THE FUTURE

The idea of incorporating the school for non-profit had been under discussion among the founding family members for many years. However, a series of family events in the mid and late 1960's prompted us to move ahead with this plan. Henry had died unexpectedly in 1964 following complications from routine surgery. Rita was diagnosed with a cancer that eventually took her life, and Ettie's advanced age made it impossible for her to continue the New York operation alone. The Buckingham School was sold in 1968, and in 1969 Rita, Ettie and I moved forward to incorporate Waterford Country School as a non-profit organization, donating our ownership to the new corporation. In 1969 Waterford Country School, Inc., was formed as a non-profit organization and today operates under the leadership of a community based Board of Trustees.

The rest of the story is modern history, and will be told in a future installment.

