
The World Through the Eyes of Children

Bill Crawford's Synanon Journal



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Bill Crawford

NMI Publishers
Tarzana, California

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*To
my wife Sylvia
and children,
Shawn, Rebecca, and Naomi*
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Foreword

From 1970 to 1976, Bill was one of my friends in Synanon. He once referred to me in regard to his writing as his most tolerant critic. What he didn't realize was that, as an old-timer and experienced game player, I feared what he might do to me in a game if I was too critical. *Not true.* Rather than tolerant, my comments reflected the positive feelings I had about the quality of his writing. Very simply, I liked what he had to say and how he said it.

As a member of the Synanon School staff he wrote daily observations of what took place. His narrative accounts were always interesting, frequently amusing, and his viewpoints forceful and challenging. He had the feeling that many adults in the community considered him a "hip liberal." But from my point of view, he was a first-class child advocate. He evidently had the ability to see and feel things through the eyes of a child. Thus the title "The World as Seen Through the Eyes of Children: Bill Crawford's Synanon Journal."

He regularly gave me his "observations" for my comments. When I read them in the 1970s, I was very impressed, and when I

read them again in the year 2004, the last year of his life, I felt exactly the same way; nothing had changed, they still seemed to be as valid as ever.

Bill and I remained in contact after Synanon. Following an extended period of not being in touch, fate seemed to bring us together. In response to a request from a Belgian student who was working on a Master's degree thesis about the Synanon School, I located Bill's observations in a file that hadn't been touched in about 30 years. I called Bill and received permission to give the student a copy of his work. Further discussion led to asking him how he would feel about my publishing the observations as a small book. He was very pleased. He then shocked me by casually stating that he had an incurable illness and did not have long to live—further, that he would be in Los Angeles soon for a goodbye reunion with friends. While in L.A., we spent the better part of two days together. His attitude was so relaxed and positive that I remember thinking what a great role model of how to go about dying. At the reunion, he mentioned that he never felt freer than he did at this time, and that he had no past regrets, and no fears about the future. He was thoroughly enjoying the present.

Finally, we agreed that I would go ahead with the publishing plans and that he would write a preface, but that it might take some time for him to get to it. The next day, I called him at 8:30 a.m. to see about having lunch together and jokingly asked, "Have you completed the preface yet?" To which he replied, "I've been working on it since 5:30 a.m., and I'll have it for you at lunch." He did, and now you will have the pleasure of reading it.

I'm very pleased to be able to unveil Bill Crawford's book at the 50th Anniversary of Synanon. I'm sure that somewhere Bill is smiling.

—*Jerry Newmark*

Preface

During the early 1970s, as part of the Synanon School staff, we were required to write daily “observations” of interactions between children, staff, and each other. My main interest was the building of an indoor playground for toddlers and outdoors for older children. My goal was to create a risk-taking environment so children could test their limits. This often horrified parents and staff alike, but the results met my expectations. I reasoned that children would only attempt what they considered possible. Safety was not always their consideration. Success was measured in exercising their abilities. The playgrounds were remarkably free of injury in spite of some of the challenges they chose. No one was encouraged to try anything beyond their own choice. They learned by watching their peers and experimenting. I was satisfied with the results.

I often chose to see events from the child’s point of view rather than “rightness” or “wrongness.” Just as with the playgrounds, I tried to describe what the child was teaching himself. Often, well-intentioned staff and other adults would interfere and thwart what I considered vital learning experiences. I was branded a “hip

“liberal” for my efforts. I couldn’t deny the accusation. Adults kept finding right and wrong in a child’s actions. I kept observing *what the child was teaching himself*. As with the playgrounds, what they chose to learn was more enduring than anything they were taught and could last a lifetime. To that extent, believe what you are about to read represents a different view of children’s behavior. Now, thirty years later, as I re-read the observations for the first time, I choose not to change anything, other than to correct grammar and syntax here and there.

Years later, as Director of a group home for disenfranchised and delinquent adolescents, I was able to construct an aerial playground using enormous, cargo-loading nets suspended from cottonwood trees. Falling from the highest net (some 40 feet high) would only result in falling to another net below, and beyond that to another lower net and to a third, only five or six feet above the ground. The physical effort was often exhausting and served these teenage children well. An exhausted child no longer channeled energies to misbehavior. Unexpectedly, it served the same purpose for staff, daring enough to climb, swing, and jump on the structure. That was a bonus.

What’s the point of all this? We all seem to have hair-triggered responses when we see a kid “fooling around.” We want to stop things from happening before they happen. That works well crossing a busy street. Necessity overrules compassion. But when we can, how about taking a step back, out of a child’s way, and “observe?” Watch an infant learn to stand and realize your job is not to make it easier. Your job is to take pride in their slightest accomplishment. Children will only do what they feel able to do safely. If the feeling is negative, they will find other ways to solve the problem, assess the risks, then make a decision. Not bad for a 5-year-old, or a 4-year-old, or a 3-year-old, down to the beginning of movement. They all do it.

Now begins the next step, or, more accurately, the first step. We laugh and delight at the effort. Our response encourages more

development. The child controls the agenda. We observe and applaud the effort. If danger lurks in the environment, clean up the environment. It's always an infant's playground. They always find a way to grow, and often it's not our way. We know their way will eventually work, or it will be abandoned for another approach. We can watch ingenuity at work.

Hands off isn't always the best way—obviously. Getting out of the way and watching isn't always possible. However, there are moments in every day when we can step back and ask ourselves, "What is he trying to learn?" Failure is only a stepping-stone to another discovery. We shape his environment. As adults we must learn along the way how to behave in the best interest of the child, recognizing it works best when we can remove ourselves, and the child creates his own laboratory for learning. I try to follow that example through the growing years. It ain't always easy.

As you read through the true stories which follow, see if you can look at them from the child's viewpoint and perhaps find some areas where a change in behavior on our part would be desirable.



Observation 1

Children's Secrets

This morning the As and Bs went for a walk with Nina and me. We walked down the promenade bordering the beach to the stairs, up the stairs to the sidewalk and along the sidewalk back to the Club.

John (6½) is older than all the Bs except Brian F (7½). Charley (5 yrs.-2 mos.) is the youngest. Bs and the As range down to Meagan H (3 yrs.-8 mos.) John has had a series of incidents in the past few weeks including setting fires and being caught stealing incense from Lois H's drawer.

On the walk John tended to drift away from the group, going ahead. Then, instead returning to the group, he combed the beach area parallel to the walk and collected sticks and pieces of wood. He found a plastic bag to hold his collection. The pieces that were too big he carried in his arms. John was intent and selective about what he was doing. He strayed further and further becoming secretive. Once I saw him pick up some small object from the sand, examine it, look around to see if anyone was watching and then put it in his pocket.

He later caught up with the group who told him he couldn't have sticks—they are dangerous. I asked him what they were for.

He said, "So Kent could use them in fire demonstrations." I let him keep them.

When we got to Cactus Park we stopped to play. When we lined up to return to the Club, John said he had lost the sticks.

Although John looks furtive and "sneaky" in activities of this kind, I'm not sure his isn't "normal" behavior. He *is* kind of sneaky. (I found him with another peer in the bathroom stall examining a pocket knife that he tried to hide.) He seems to need secrets and secret places and things. He also lies easily. I'm not sure if the sticks *were* meant for Kent or not. Losing them didn't seem consistent with the trouble he went gathering them.

It later occurred to me that he might have stashed the wood purposely at Cactus Park, perhaps to start a fire there later. (He asked if he could come back after lunch and "look" for them.) Maybe it was matches he found and put in his pocket earlier when he look about furtively. If so, it is better his fire experiments take place on the beach than in the Club. (Better still if they took place in the designated fire area on the beach, of course.)

I don't think we should do much prying into his secrets. It would drive him more into secrecy and maybe more serious acting out such as a real fire or getting into paint thinner or chemicals he shouldn't have.

Adults have secrets and secret hiding places also. Maybe it would help if John saw some of the ways adults hide things. Perhaps we could make some hiding places for him or set up a secret drawer just for him.

I'd like to encourage him to build fires in safer places and show him how adults can have fun with fire. We could invite the fire department to demonstrate the dangers of fire sand how to put them out thus converting the fire experience into fire prevention. We could have John and others spot fire hazards and identify fire exits. Perhaps we could designate him a "junior fire marshal" or a "special private detective" reporting directly to his chief—(an adult) thus changing his negative behavior into a positive, constructive force.

Observation 2

Lateness & Discipline

Danny B came late to P.E. class, not uncommon for him. Even though he was just one minute late, I told him to do five push-ups. He said “no” and started to explain something about not getting up the stairs in time. I told him to do the push ups—I didn’t want any explanations. He repeated “no.”

I told him to leave the group. He said, “All right,” and did so. After five minutes I asked him if he was ready to re-join the group and do his push ups. He said he wasn’t doing any push ups so I told him he’d have to stay on the bench—which he did until the period ended twenty minutes later.

Having once said to do something I was trapped by an outright refusal and forced to deal with the secondary problem—insubordination—instead of the primary problem—lateness. Because it was in front of the whole group it was harder to back down and the secondary problem took on greater dimensions. It seemed important to demonstrate that outright refusal is not acceptable.

Leave more outs when making demands on the children so that the action is always geared to the immediate situation. There is a kind of escalation that occurs when an adult makes a specific demand on a kid and the kid says “no.” All at once everything gets

out of proportion has larger then expected or always desired consequences.

An alternative is to throw these problems to the group by asking, “What do you think we should do about Danny being late again?” or similar questions. Or we could ask Danny what *he* thinks we should do about his persistent tardiness.

Observation 3

The Game

There was much disorganization with the C's and D's today. A few little scuffles and much yelling and arguing. Renee doubled over from a punch in the stomach, delivered by Dianne B. I ignored most of these incidents. Finally, there was a punch and a shove and a slap between Renee and Rachel S. At that point I called them altogether in the middle of Cactus Park for an instant Synanon game.

Instead of the game dealing with any of the "problems" that had come up during the P.E. period, the whole game centered on me, with indictments such as, "You always make all of us wait around just because one of us misbehaves" and, "If you would just leave us alone we'd make our own games and those that didn't want to play could do something else instead of making everyone play the same game" and, "We never get any free play—we always have to do things together." After about 20 minutes, with three attempts to get the game to deal with the punching incidents, we broke the game up and went inside.

I was totally unprepared to have the game suddenly explode on me. After I let them dump on me for about 10 minutes, I thought wrongly that the group would then be willing to move on and deal

with the incidents that had come up during the morning. The indictments caught me by surprise because I felt most of them were invalid, at least for the past two weeks. Nonetheless, I have to examine my own needs to keep them all doing things as a group and not letting them have more free and independent time. Although this came after two days of completely unstructured time when the Staff had gone through Change of Cube Day, and a second day of general cleaning, there still seemed a lot of resentment about having to do things together. I think I should play more games with the kids to get more feedback on my actions, and so they get more feedback on how I feel about their actions.

Observation 4

Four Slaps and A Trip

Nina and I watched the following take place today. Meagan and Rodney got in an argument and Meagan slapped Rodney. It was a light slap, and neither Nina nor I were moved to do anything. Then Rodney slapped Meagan at about the same, intensity. Meagan retaliated with a slightly harder slap and Rodney came back with his harder slap. Up to this point it looks like some kind of duel. Neither kid was backing down and the slaps were escalating. As Meagan gritted her teeth and drew back her hand to really let Rodney have a hard slap, Rodney started to back away.

At this point John S darted in behind Rodney, stuck out his foot and tripped him, causing him to fall backwards hard on his butt. Rodney howled, Meagan missed her slap, and I stepped in and put all three on the ropes. Then Joe S started dancing around and laughing with John S so I sat him down on the ropes too. Later, I asked John why he did that. He replied, that Joey had told him to.

The slapping started out looking like a test of strength and guts—who was going to really slap the other. Given these two kids and their stubbornness I should have known neither would back down and it could only lead to harder and harder slaps. Still, it seemed like an interesting test of courage and worth watching without interfering. When John inserted himself into the situation,

he disrupted what I wanted to watch; i.e. how far these two were going to carry their “war” or. It was partly because he had ruined the experiment that I reacted so rapidly stopping everything and putting all parties on the ropes.

After they were on the ropes, Meagan and Rodney were still mad, so whatever they were doing didn’t seem to have been resolved. John seemed quite satisfied with his behavior because it was “successful” in accomplishing a perfect trip and setting Rodney on his rear end. Joey was like a distant devilish accomplice who whispered temptations in John’s ear.

I could have arranged a physical situation such as wrestling or punching arms that would have substituted for the slapping.

Observation 5

Letting Off Steam

Danny H became increasingly manic this afternoon. He was doing a lot of running around, pushing and bumping other kids, climbing and venting energy. He hooked up with John S and they did some running and carousing together, and then got into some wrestling. Danny was much the better, naturally, and he played with John much like a cat with a mouse. He would best him, and then let him go, but hang on to one foot. When John started to get away, he'd pull him back and do some more wrestling.

I didn't see any reason to stop it. They were both having a pretty good time and there didn't seem to be any animosity. At one point when John started howling I warned them that I didn't care if they wrestled or not, but I didn't want to hear a lot of noise.

From this Danny went on to grab a shoe of John D. John started chasing Danny to get his shoe back and now the (excuse the pun) shoe was on the other foot. John is much faster and stronger than Danny. So as John was catching up to Danny he threw the shoe over the paddle tennis fence into the court.

With this (naturally) John caught up to Danny and threw him down to the sand. After knocking him down, he went off to get his shoe. As he left, Danny got up, found a small rock, ran after John,

and threw the rock at him. At this point, I called Danny over and told him to sit down and “cool off.”

Danny seemed to need to let off a lot of steam. When I tried to talk to him he was nervous and jumpy. He wasn’t angry. When I made him sit on the boardwalk on the beach side of the children’s play area, he managed to turn it into a sort of game. He got some of the boards stored there for Gene’s playground machine and constructed a ramp and a teeter totter balance board to play on. (Very inventive.)

He acted like a machine with a full head of steam and no outlet so I urged him to run the obstacle course in record time with a cinnamon drop as a reward for beating 90 seconds. He did it in 75. Later, inside, I told him I would install the heavy bag on Gene’s apparatus so he could hit it as hard as he wanted to. That seemed to please him.

I think Danny has to be watched for these signs of pent up energy. Hammering and the punching bag seemed to help. However, now he doesn’t have these. We’ve been letting (or having) him run on the beach when he gets nervous as an alternative. Maybe the installation of the heavy bag to punch when he wishes will also help.

Observation 6

The Best Kid in the Group

Eddy A is 7½ years old and a member of the D's. He has a quick and ready grin and a happy sense of humor. He can turn his humor into a poking "rib" when he wants to which sometimes becomes a little taunting.

His usual attitude is "yeah, man" whenever something new is suggested. He doesn't seem reluctant to try anything provided he is reasonably assured he won't come out looking too bad doing it. He is definitely 'one of the boys' and hasn't yet succumbed to the charms of the opposite sex. Very quick, both physically and verbally, he is well coordinated physically and can do most things on the field well. He likes to compete and show off his abilities.

His temper is sudden but seems to die down quickly. Now and then he will get into a fight with someone over some violated principle or another, but for the most part he seems a happy-go-lucky, well-adjusted boy.

He was Kenny W's "best friend" and displayed so much loyalty to his friend that they could hardly play the Synanon game together. Eddy sometimes left the room when the game was on his friend. He is not too fond of playing the game, and his first reaction to having to go to a game is "No, I won't!"

He has a well-developed sense of fair play and speaks out when he thinks some wrong has been done, but he is by no means above throwing a curve to get a little extra something for himself. His mischievous grin almost always gives him away. It seems to say, “You don’t really believe that, do you?” Eddy is a good “helper.” He likes to please adults, but he isn’t fauning (like Martha H, for example), or a sycophant (like Alaina T can be at times.) He genuinely enjoys watching some of the magic that adults can perform and sharing in it.

Observation 7

Reflecting on My Own Bad Behavior

In thinking back over the incident with the C's and D's last Sunday, several mistakes I made are clear. The incident bothered me because I lost my 'cool' and my resolve to attend good behavior. I found myself losing my temper, giving all my attention to bad behavior, and physically hauling Don P around.

First, certain events conspired against me. The stairs from the Lyceum to the Rotunda were blocked off for rug shampooing, so I let that alter my plan which was to line up and go to the courts. Instead, I decided to take them out through the front of the building and go on to Cactus Park. Because of disruptions in the schedule all week, I hadn't met with the C's and D's for a few days so they were not used to getting under control and taking them to a wide open area like the park didn't help. And when we got there, the park was heavy with dew from last night's fog so the grass was really wet. They noticed it and complained but I doggedly went ahead: I had made my decision.

At this point I tried to do something familiar—calisthenics. However, we had never done calisthenics in the park before. The kids didn't even begin to form lines, so I let them do calisthenics from wherever they were standing which contributed to even more

looseness. I abandoned calisthenics as a bad idea after about 5 minutes.

I then lined them up for games, picking their favorite *Press Oh!*, but some kids were soon complaining about the wet grass, so I made another decision: go back through the Club and out to our own beach. This was met with howls. They wanted to play in the hills of Cactus Park and not go back to the beach. Once again, because I'd made a decision I felt compelled to stick with it, even though they were right in asserting that the hills were dry and they could play there without getting their feet wet. I'd decided I'd changed my mind too many times already, so back to the Club we started.

There was much good-natured hiding along the way but order was rapidly slipping away. After finally getting everyone to the sidewalk I discovered Brian had left his shoes in the park. I sent him back and held everyone else on the sidewalk to wait for him. By now it was starting to get cold. Brian just disappeared. After about 10 minutes, I sent Leonard to look for him. The rest of the kids were into a really rotten mood by then.

When Leonard and Brian finally dragged themselves back, looking very pleased for having taken so long, We started out and Leonard and Don P again pushing each other around. On the stairs down to the rotunda, Leonard and Don got into more pushing. This time I yelled at them, told them both to sit down right there and stay there. As I turned my back, Don started grinning at Leonard. At this I roared something, grabbed Don and started headlong down the stairs with him dangling in tow. I wasn't sure where I was going nor what I was going to do with him, but I remember vaguely thinking that this must be terrifying him, flying down the stairs without his glasses on. Maybe, I thought, I can scare him into behaving.

When I got to the doors leading to the beach I sat him down with a thud and a howl and went back to fetch the others who were still on the other stairs waiting. I brought them downstairs with

another roar and stood them all in line just this side of the doors that Don was on the other side of. Here I yelled in outrage at them about how I didn't like the way they were acting and they were all going to just stand there until I was ready to let them go. Don continued to howl on the other side of the door for about 5 minutes.

After about 10 or 15 minutes of silence I began letting them go have free play one or two at a time. There was a multiplication of bad judgements and sticking with them even after it was obvious they were bad. I felt like a real ass hole.

Observation 8

No Surprise

I watched Jessica M do the following from my room on the sixth floor this morning. The whole incident took about 1 minute. She picked up a coffee can with a plastic lid on it and carried it over to the water faucet on the beach near the shower. She then removed the lid, and looking for a place to set it down, chose the chain which is strung under the railing. She gingerly set the lid on the chain. It started to fall. She pulled it back a fraction and it started to fall again. She pulled it back a hair more, and (I'll be damned!), it balanced.

She seemed to take that for granted and showed no particular surprise. Then she lifted the can toward the faucet and the lid fell off. She paused to watch it fall, then went on lifting toward the faucet, holding the can with both hands. When she got the opening of the can around the faucet spigot, she let go of the can to try to turn the water on. It appeared she thought and expected the can to hang suspended in space just under the faucet because she seemed very surprised to see it fall. How could she so carefully and meticulously balance the lid on the chain and then expect the can to hang suspended in mid air?

After that, she went on about something else.

Observation 9

Ignoring Bad Behavior and Attending to Good Behavior

The following was ‘seen’ from my window on the sixth floor. I couldn’t hear anything said, but the whole show was acted out in vivid pantomime, so words were unnecessary.

I was watching Linda S with the BB’s in their 8:00 a.m. calisthenics workout. About 15 minutes had gone by, and she was organizing some obstacle races. While lining up and sending off four girls to run the race, Johnny D came to her, tugged her sleeve, and began talking and pointing toward Danny H, indicating he had hit someone. Apparently it was David B, because now John was pointing at David and demonstrating being struck in the chest where David’s hearing aid amplifier hangs. Both Danny and David were now watching the Diaz pantomime, but hadn’t yet joined in.

Linda, having heard the accusation and now the corroboration, went over to Danny and touched him on the arm to stop him from moving farther away. He reacted by violently jerking his arm away from Linda. This seemed almost to confirm his guilt, like a suspect running away from the scene of a crime. Linda took his arm and turned him toward her for a brief dressing down, which he

agitatedly protested, shaking his head “no” and looking more and more anguished and outraged.

While went on, David and John walked off arm in arm to the race starting point and had a congenial conversation about something or other, paying no concern at all to the dressing down Danny H was getting a few feet away.

From where I sat, several hundred feet away and six stories up, it looked like the enactment of a little play, the object of which was to get the demonstrator occupied doing something through the manipulation of Johnny D. If H hit B, he certainly wasn’t concerned about it, as he was obviously puzzled when Johnny started out his accusation. He seemed to join in when he sensed the object was to “get H in trouble.” He obviously wasn’t at all concerned after the accusations were made and Linda turned her attention toward dealing with them. B looked like he was supporting D in a minor conspiracy against H, who now had an injustice and will undoubtedly find the opportunity to dispel it when the time is right.

Moral: Ignore bad behavior and attend to good behavior.

Sunday, so no P.E. with B.B.s. I got the C’s and D’s together but couldn’t take them down the stairs to the beach because of rug shampooing, so we went to Cactus Park instead—a mistake. First, the ground was so wet from last night’s fog that it got everyone’s feet wet. Second, it was too loose a set up for this group since I had not met with them for a few days. As a result they were disorganized and disorderly. Everyone was running wild, yelling, disappearing, etc. Leonard F was particularly disruptive, urging others to hide or act out. He and Don P kept getting into shoving matches. There was no semblance of order.

After a brief attempt at calisthenics and a try at two games, I took them back through the Club and down to the bench area. On the way, there were a half-dozen loud, disruptive, pushing,

accusing, crying, yelling incidents. particularly with P and F. At that point, I lined them all up in the rotunda, yelled at them, and made them all stand without a sound for about 15 minutes. Then I started letting them go out to the beach, one at a time for free play.

Pieter H disappeared when we were lining up to go to P.E. again today. After I retrieved him from the 2- to 4-year-old area, he started to return to the Club from Cactus Park before we got there. Finally, he managed to elude me again on the way to the beach. He will do just about anything to avoid P.E., although he probably needs it more than just about anybody. I'm going to have to devise a method to insure his coming along.

I worked on the trampoline with 7 Cs and Ds and 10 As and Bs. The As and Bs were much easier to handle. We did quite a bit of calisthenics. I did a lot of rewarding, and they seemed to respond pretty well.

Observation 10

The Dark Ages (The Magnifying Glass)

The other day Debbie S managed to raise a blister on her ankle while playing around with a magnifying glass in the sun. She personally discovered one of the laws of physics. I'm sure she had been told what would happen if she let the sun's rays focus through a magnifying glass on the body, but she went ahead and did it anyway, just like you and I did when we were told the same thing. Or maybe you spared yourself the pain when you saw that you could burn a leaf, a piece of wood, a blanket, or a caterpillar by the same method. I did all of those, and I remember the lessons learned from it much more vividly than all of the high school physics taught me for two semesters later on in life.

The day this happened to Debbie, she came to me and said she couldn't participate in P.E. because, "I have a burn on my ankle, but I can't tell you how I got it." I saw she did indeed have a blister about the size of half a dime, and I excused her. She wouldn't tell me how she got it, however, and I let the matter go.

The next day at our 12:30 staff meeting, Sheila announced that Debbie had burned herself with a magnifying glass and would be going into the Stew and games in the school telling everyone what

a dumb thing she had done. This struck me as being wrong, but I was too dense to understand why at that moment, and we moved on to other business in our meeting.

Later I told Debbie I had heard how she had burned herself and asked her what she thought about it. She said she had done a pretty stupid thing. I asked her what she had learned from what had happened, and she said she had learned that she shouldn't play around with magnifying glasses! I said, "But did you learn anything about why a magnifying glass works that way?" She replied, "It reflects the sun, or something."

I tried to explain about the sun's rays traveling in straight and parallel lines, and the glass accepts many of those rays and bends and converges them into one tiny spot, etc. But it was pretty obvious that by this time she had about all she wanted from magnifying glasses. What she had done was stupid. Worse, what she had done was wrong. If she ever "plays around" with magnifying glasses again, it will have to be in seclusion to avoid being caught.

There's a premise that everyone has to "discover" personally all of the basic laws of the universe that affect our daily lives. Gravity is explored in depth by every infant, along with the laws about liquids, the breaking point of glass and other materials, the sharpness of knives, the noise of everything, etc. If we attempt to stifle discovery of these events, because they are inconvenient or improper or immoral or against the laws of God, we will probably short circuit the act and habit of discovery itself.

When I realized with horror what we had done, I went to Sheila and discussed it. What Debbie had done was discover for herself, painfully, that the sun can be harnessed for tremendous potential power. And she had really learned it at gut level! What a spark this could have ignited in her if she only hadn't had the spark doused by her sudden feeling of shame for having done a "stupid" thing when she realized the extent of her burn. We adults, who somehow manage to turn almost everything into a moral issue when we don't want to think too hard, confirmed her guilt by telling her to

go around and “confess” publicly to every other child in our little universe.

After our conversation, I hope her experience can be usefully converted to promote more inquisitiveness, adventure, and discovery. We made a hero out of Ben Franklin for flying a kite in a thunderstorm. Didn’t the damned fool know he could get killed doing that? I can hear us now, “Ben, if I ever catch you with a kite again . . .”

Observation 11

The Affection Cafeteria

I watched this through the dutch door of one of the infant sleeping rooms.

Rebecca F was on one side, sitting quietly on the floor. In her arms was Naomi, cuddling up to her chest. Rebecca rocked her gently back and forth, saying soft things to her. She looked very contented. On the other side of the room was Sue S, with two infants squealing around her. She was dispensing tickles, tosses into the air, and rough and tumble play. The children she had were getting more and more excited, and their laughs and giggles finally reached the point where Naomi stopped her cuddling, looked over at Sue, crawled over to Rebecca's lap across the floor, and into Sue's arms for a share of the tossing and tickling for herself.

How nice to be able to choose which brand of affection you want. And when another looks more tempting, to go over and try it out for a while. Like sampling in a candy store—only better.

Observation 12

Spontaneous Group in Park

An interesting thing occurred this morning with the As and Bs in Cactus Park. It was a beautiful day. Because there were 16 in the group, and I had them alone, I decided to take them directly to Cactus Park and not attempt any organized group calisthenics. Let them have free play there—roam the hills, etc.

They were all in good shape and humor. We arrived with only the normal complaints about who was first in line, who was “taking cuts,” etc. In the park they seemed to have rather subdued play—no running all over shouting and yelling as they often do, but everyone was enjoying the unusually good weather. Some gathered flowers and feathers for my hat; others gathered huge bouquets of “sour grass” flowers for themselves. It was a pleasant morning.

At about 11:10, I told them I was going to start down toward the other (nearest the Club) end of the park and that when I blew the whistle in about 10 minutes, I wanted them all to come and form up so we could go in for lunch. I walked ahead alone, plopped down at the far end of the park, and called John S over for a chat.

As we sat and chatted, a group began to form about 30 feet away from us, sitting down first on a little doll’s blanket one of the girls had with her, and then just gathering around in a growing circle,

all sitting quietly listening to a story John J was telling. Within about two minutes, nine of the 16 children joined spontaneously in the circle. After I blew the whistle and walked over to the circle, another four came and joined. John finished his ad lib story, I talked to them for a minute about going back, and away we went, with the other three joining up with us.

I wonder why it is so easy sometimes and so hard at other times for this to happen. Staying out of it and letting them do it themselves is part of it, but that doesn't always work. Maybe the good weather and the minimum of demands I made, combined with weeks and months of forcing circles of one kind or another, made it natural that they would form up that way when left to their own devices. Whatever it was, it's like so much else in life: It is best when the occurrence happens easily and naturally. I wonder how to let that happen more often.

Observation 13

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About B.W.'s Tatoos, But Were Afraid to Ask

This morning I was taking a group of kids to Memorial Park on the Synanon city bus. Tobi O, age 7½ sat down in the seat in front of Barbara W, our own tattooed lady. She turned around in her seat and started a conversation with her. I missed the first few minutes, but when I saw what was happening I moved closer so I could record Tobi's questions.

"How did you get those tattoos? Why do you have so many? How'd you get the one down your leg? What do they *do* when they tattoo you? Do they sew it on? How do you get them off? Do they ever wear off? What if you scrubbed for hours—would they come off then? How big is the ship on your back? Geez! I might get me one. Who gave you this one?—pointing. Where was your first one? Second? Third? (Pointing) That's my sign (a crab, I think) What's your sign? When you go out on the beach, I want to look at them all.

"Do you ever wear dresses? I like 'em (the tattoos). Are you ever going to get another tattoo? I like that one (pointing). How much did the big boat on your back cost? (\$150.00) Do you have any that are blue? Yellow? Do they have all the colors in the

world? (No). What ones do you have? How come the yellow doesn't come out very good? (Pointing at some home made tattoos on her fingers); How did you do those? Did you do it when no one was looking?"

[can-dor (kan'dōr) n. honesty in expressing oneself; sincerity]

Observation 14

Dancing

This morning I took the Cs and Ds to the Woodshed because it was too cold and damp to go outside. I had them take their shoes off, and then we went through some sliding, crawling, sitting, walking, running exercises. Then I had all the boys sit against the wall and told the girls they could get out on the floor and do any kind of dance they wanted to do. There were eight girls.

At first, for about a minute, there was individual dancing about, some doing little more than running about, others trying to do some ballet-type dancing. But very quickly, the individual dancing lost its momentum, and the girls drifted together into a circle, all holding hands. From this, they started chanting some version of ring around the rosie which I didn't recognize until they got to "all fall down"—which they all loudly did. After a few rounds of this, they started singing the hora and continued dancing in a group circle. Altogether they stayed in a complete group for about five minutes. From this, they went into partner-fold dancing of some kind, which lasted another three or four minutes, when I had them exchange places with the boys.

It's interesting that they formed into a group so fast and easily. When we wrote our "Best Kid in the Group" papers, the

demonstrators seemed to stress qualities of individuality and independence. The kids seem to be more community ordered and patterned to do things together when left to their own devices.

As a side note, when the boys were told they could dance (a poor choice of language for 7-year-old boys), they did a very individual, stylized form of mock karate fighting, and then started choosing partners for wrestling. Tell a boy to dance, and you end up with a fight. The wrestling itself was almost like a dance, though—slow and deliberate.

Observation 15

Peter's Up & Down Emotion

There are many “nice” qualities about Peter G. He seems “balanced” in the way Gesell talks about, as if he is at a nexus in his life where he’s assimilating all that came at him as learning experience. To quote, “Five, therefore, is a nodal age. For a brief period, the child remains in a phase of balanced adjustment to himself and to his environment. It is as though his problem of development had been solved. But the push of growth and the pressure of cultural demands build up new tensions. He is bent on assimilating the culture because, of course, he is destined to graduate from his 5-year-old-ishness. Peter seems wise, as if he knows that he knows. In turn, that gives him confidence to go ahead. He is generally calm and good-natured, displaying a nice sense of humor.

The thing I wanted to write about, however, is the real and genuine response Peter has to praise of the bestowment of responsibility. I have this knapsack that I carry miscellaneous junk in—rice cakes, balls, marking pens, life savers, jump rope, slide whistle, kazoo—the essentials. Every day I select one kid to wear the knapsack. It is a symbol of extraordinary adult approval to him and others, but Peter’s eagerness seems exceptional. When I slipped the straps over his shoulders, his whole stature took on larger

dimensions. He straightened his back, held his head high and straight, and assumed an attitude of authority—a pride in his uniform such as a new marine might display.

By the same token, though, if Peter is slighted, and it happens often without any apparent reason until you ask him, he collapses in utter defeat. It is the end of the world when Peter suffers a setback. It must be both ecstatic and horrible to ride the roller coaster of a 5½-year-old's emotions.

Observation 16

Letter to Gary M, Re: Children Dining Room

Gary M, Director
Food Services Department
Tomales Bay
Re: Children's Dining Room

Dear Gary,

In the last few days there has been some discussion about changing Sue B's job from maintaining children's Commons to something else. The thrust of this paper is not just to save Sue B's job, but to bring to light the basic concepts I believe should underlie all of our thinking about children's dining. The operative factor for changing her job was to get Sari D, whoever she is, out of the upstairs dining room because she had dissolved her "relationship" with one Norman L, wherever he is.

I don't want to delve *ad nauseum* into this specious reasoning, but I can't resist a comment to express my horror at such near-sighted, expedient, and short-term thinking. Unfortunately, it reflects an attitude about this particular job that I believe needs to be exposed, discussed and, I hope, laid to rest once and for all.

First, there is the question of *who* should be responsible for Commons. Some think it should be in the hands of the school. This

is nonsense. It used to be that way. About a year ago, the school assumed responsibility for most of the support systems that other departments require of the facility. We did our own food service, our own maintenance, our own contracting (we hired Roy P twice), our own office services work, etc. The net result of all this was an inefficient and costly operation that produced an isolated and insulated school. We had more than 65 people working on the staff; we now have about 35, with plans for much less.

In every case, the departments we replaced were better able to do a higher quality job with greater efficiency than we were, at lower cost, and with a multitude of other savings. Serving food—even to children—is clearly a function of Food Service. The argument that we serve to *children* and, therefore, the *school* should operate this dining room is no more valid than the Bridge is a special place for special people who eat there and, therefore, the Director's Office should serve the food and operate it.

There *is*, however, a reason to develop people who can work in the children's dining room. Just as there is a need to put some of our best help in the Bridge dining area. Running Commons takes a special talent and knack. It requires first someone who *wants* to be there; secondly someone who has the sensitivity to handle 60 children aged 3½ to 13 with all of their varieties of special considerations including such things as allergies. The person who does this should be left to develop a career job. They should see the need to be creative in their work and take broader responsibility for the total aspect of dining as a social function; not just a means to force food down throats in the most efficient manner like a little assembly line, or a Nedicks cafeteria. This is a long term job with long term goals.

Personal changes in Commons should be no more frequent than in any other sensitive and critical job. They should be made with a thought to all of the above considerations and not to one expediency on the other of the food service balloon. Sue B may leave a lot to be desired in some aspects of her work, and we should game

her an insist outside of the game that she continue to meet higher and broader standards. She does, however, fulfill some of the other important requirements to do a good job in Commons and should be left develop it.

I hope this has been of some help to you.

Sincerely,
Bill Crawford

c.c. Jim H
Ted D
Rod M
Thad M
Diro's office

Observation 17

Rodney M's 6th Birthday

Rodney M's 6th Birthday (Nina B co-author) with special attention to his physical education and motor perception

Rodney does well on the trampoline. He can fall backward all the way (a significant feat) and is loose and fairly evenly balanced using both sides of his body well, with only a slight degree of "tying up" one side to the other. He is a terrible skater but loves to try ,and he has enough guts to keep on after the most disastrous falls and collisions.

A good leader in dramatic play, Rodney is imaginative. For example, Rodney invented five different ways to move around the circle of tires when I took him aside and got him interested. He enjoys playing Boiler Burst, especially when he is *it* and gets to stand in the middle of the circle and tell the story that culminates in "boiler burst," when everyone must jump from their tire and get to another tire before they are all taken up. He also likes to tease, displaying a sophisticated sense of humor in this game. He'll say, "And then the boiler . . . (pause and a twinkle in the eye) got hot," etc.

Rodney is charming, obstinate, and fair. He is unfortunately unable to fib without it showing in neon lights all over his face. He still doesn't understand why other kids can lie and get away with

it, and he can't—a discouraging state of affairs, I'm sure. He gets up early in good humor, makes his bed well, and dresses himself. He often earns the privilege of crossing over to the Club by himself or with one or two others instead of having to go in the line.

When he gets involved, he often doesn't want to be torn away for such mundane things as going in to lunch and will display a very well developed stubborn streak. Sometimes he will be out and out defiant.

He will always stand up for himself and often defends others, but he is in no way beyond getting another in trouble and standing back and enjoying the consequences.

Despite this ability, he still doesn't seem to understand much about cause and effect as it applies to him. If he snatches a toy out of Russ R's hand, Russ will slug him—every time. This alarms and infuriates him, and the famous Rodney scream will be heard all the way to Ventura County. Often he'll withdraw and stick his lower lip out (after the scream) and wait for a chance to dart in and slug Russ, which results in a retaliatory slug from Russ—every time. He will wait and plot revenge.

He has some good friends, notably Russ R and Charley S, and has some occasional enemies. ("I don't *like* him!") He can be extremely stubborn but always for (his own) good reason, as opposed to Charley, who can be just as stubborn, but it may be impossible to find out why. Rodney will usually tell you what's going on with him—why he is mad; why he won't; etc.

His behavior has improved in every way over the past several months. His ear operation seems to have helped. He hears better. He hasn't asked (as far as I know) about when his father was going to visit for a long time. The first couple of months he was here, that seemed to be a prominent question.

Rodney is one of the boys. He is affectionate. He speaks up to adults when he feels a wrong. He likes stories to be told to him and read to him, and the wilder and more implausible the better. He is always interested and curious about new games. He participates

well (better than most of his peers), and seems eager to learn. He is quite trusting and seems to enjoy every day being where he is. So far as I know, he hasn't had any contact with his grandmother who recently moved in. Rodney is one of the favorites of most adults (including me).

A few weeks ago, while Rodney's group was with me in the court, a resident playing basketball in the next court fell and couldn't get up. There was much excitement: Medical assistance came, a stretcher appeared, a lot of on-lookers gawked, the Santa Monica Police helicopter hovered over the circle looking down on the fallen body, and finally a Santa Monica Police car and two uniformed officers arrived and made their way through our court into the next court to see if they could offer assistance. Through all of this, the group that Rodney was with behaved perfectly! They stayed on their side of the fence, were quiet, kept each other in line, and watched the whole proceeding.

When the officers arrived, it was too much for Rodney. He ran after one of the cops pointing wildly at his gun, and in his inimitable gruff voice demanded, "Hey!"

Observation 18

Initiation Rites to The D.B. Gang

Gene G asked me to take his 16-foot tape measure in from the beach yesterday. It has his name taped on it. I hung it from a pocket on my overalls, and as David B passed by, I “flashed” it—pulled my shirt aside for a second so the tape showed. I do this kind of thing a lot with David because his eyes are so sharp and his perception so fast that a quick flash of any object is almost all he needs to spot it.

This tape was something brand new and unexpected. I’ve never worn a tape around him so he was intrigued and came back and wanted to look under my shirt and take another look. He may have seen it had a name on it and wanted to check that, or he may have recognized it as Gene’s and wanted to confirm it.

When I flashed it again, he saw Gene’s name and cried out, “Gene’s?” I nodded yes. He said, “Did you steal it?” I nodded yes. He said, almost shouting, “All right!!!!” and grinned a message that said I had just been welcomed and accepted into a mafia family that he was part of. I had gone through the initiation rites. The funny thing was that I was secretly pleased and flattered that I belonged for a second. And then I remembered I hadn’t stolen it, and I didn’t really belong.

Observation 19

Making a Bed

Kenny W has a reputation for bad behavior. He's aggressive, angry, and steals anything that isn't nailed down. He lies like a trooper, shoots curves, disrupts classes, and I don't know what else.

Among his many attributes on the plus side of the ledger is one little noticed and which *he* seems to take for granted and doesn't demand recognition for: He makes one of the neatest beds of his whole peer group.

Observation 20

The Garbage Jungle/The Dining Room

Have you ever seen an adult try bussing his dishes and do something like this? He gets the garbage and napkins and plastic cup off his plate into the garbage bag; puts the plate in the dirty dish tray; and then throws his silver ware into the garbage bag instead of the bucket provided. Juliette H has this problem further complicated because she's less than three feet tall and three years old.

The dining room could be one of our most powerful tools for motor/perceptual development in young children, but more often than not, it is a complicated, confusing, inconsistent maze that defies all the rules of a child's logic.

The first feat is to get out of a chair built to accommodate an adult, then reach up over your head to an adult-sized table, and slide your plate off. Then begins a perilous journey across a crowded dining room. You must keep your eyes on the plate carried in your hand—like some offering to the God of Garbage. But when you are three years old, there are many distractions along the 20-foot route. And besides, you still *look* where you step. So the plate tilts, and some things begin to slide off. You see it just in time and tilt it back toward you, but eager young muscles over-respond, and now part of the contents of your plate are

dumped on your chest—a not altogether unpleasant experience, by the way.

At last the familiar clearing in the jungle of legs, table legs, and chairs appears, and the goal is at hand. If you're lucky, there will be the *low* garbage bag holder which is exactly eye level. If not, it'll be the Jolly Grey Giant, and you'll have to reach high over your head, hope you get the plate inside the yawning maw, and trust that gravity works, and whatever was on the plate slides in. If it doesn't, and if you didn't lose the plate in the process, you'll soon find out. That accounts for that quizzical look of expectation as you withdraw the plate and examine it for food.

Then the plate goes on a tray. The silverware goes in a bucket—but which one? The one with blue water in it—sometimes. If it doesn't have blue water, then it must be the bigger of the two buckets because the smaller bucket with clear water is the one with the sponges and rags—usually. The cups are plastic, so they go in the garbage. The bowls are plastic too, but they don't go in the garbage—they go to the tray. And yesterday, the spoons were plastic just like the bowls, but some giant told you not to put the spoons in the bucket and not to put the spoons in the tray. They told you to put the spoons in the *garbage*! An you said "Why?" and the damned fool actually tried to explain it, to nobody's satisfaction.

And what's more, there were *paper* plates. So now you had *plates* in the garbage, spoons and forks in the garbage, plastic cups in the garbage (thank heaven for some consistency), and plastic bowls in the tray. And all the time somebody hovering over you telling you to hurry up and (do you believe THIS one?), "Stop fooling around."

Of course it's not all bad. Juliette is adjusting to a complex and shifting environment. She is making fine discriminations about size, texture, color, shape, and function. She is learning subtle nuances and developing precise motor achievement. She is making

more decisions in these few minutes than in the average hour, and so on.

If we made it *too* easy, all of that could be removed, and she would have to learn it in other activities. On the other hand, the dining room should be a motor perception workshop and busing dishes would be a training/learning experience: Label the garbage bag “GARBAGE”; the silver ware bucket “SPOONS AND FORKS”; make things more her size, etc.

For weeks I’ve been watching how our 2- to 4-year-olds learn how to get a drink from the bench drinking faucet. They climb up on a swinging chain strung between two fence posts and—precari-ously perched like a bird—they reach out into space to turn the spigot and drink. This routine gives mothers and other innocents heart failure for fear they’ll fall.

Izzy C and I designed and he built a three-step platform, so none of what I just described is necessary any more. It’s going to be interesting to see *if* they use it—and if they do, what opportunity there will be for them to learn that fantastic climbing-balancing achievement they were so good at. By enriching their environment, we may have deprived them.

We’ll watch and see.

Observation 21

Quit When Behind in A Race

Charley and Paulette H ran a race to the beach fence and back to see who would get to go first on the trampoline. They were pretty even going out, but Paulette pulled ahead coming back. When Charley said he wasn't going to win, he just quit, and sat down in the sand. This happens frequently, not just with Charley, but with a lot of kids in his age group, and in the group one and two years older.

cc: Al B/Regent
Terri H/School

Observation 22

Resistance to Work

This was my first day of motion. [Ed query: what is “motion”? Is this Synanon jargon? If so, explain.] I generally adopt the attitude that I am going to demand respect and compliance with whatever the jobs or assignments are.

Nina had told me that she found Danny impossible and just couldn’t get him to do anything—a usual condition with him. When I inquired of the wake-up person (David O) where Danny was for his job this morning, he said Danny wouldn’t get up, so I took it upon myself to get him up.

Danny was in his sleeping bag on the floor of 209. When I shook him awake he said, “I won’t get up.” When I reminded him he had to get to work, he said, “No. I won’t go to work.” This was the signal for me to pick up the sleeping bag and dump him out on the floor. Now he was saying louder than ever that he wasn’t going to work, and no one was going to make him, so I accepted the challenge and literally wrestled him out the door, down the stairs, and into the hall of the first floor where I told him to gather all of the sheets in the hall and get them into the laundry cart. (This job had been done earlier, but there were a few sheets in the hall from beds that had been changed later.)

He said “no,” of course, and I left him there. When I came back in 10 minutes, no Danny was to be found. I went back to 209, found the door locked, banged on it, and when I got inside, found Danny back on the floor in his sleeping bag. This time it was a repeat of the earlier incident, but with fewer words. We both knew our parts better, and I wrestled him, cursing down the stairs again, gave him his instructions, and left him.

When last seen, about 7:40 a.m., Danny was kicking a large pile of wet sheets down the stairs toward the laundry cart.

cc: A1 B/Regent
Terri H/School

Observation 23

The Pants Incident (The Cave)

This morning Piro P came to me complaining that Cindy M was wearing a pair of his pants. He was sure they were his, they were the right color, he had just gotten them, they were boys' pants, not girls', and he thought his name was written inside them.

He tried to get Cindy to give them to him, but she refused, and when I came into the Cave, she was sitting in the corner sobbing that they were her pants. I tried talking quietly to her for a minute, asking to see the pants, but she just curled more into a ball and screamed, "No, no, they're mine . . ."

Then I said, "Let's look inside and settle this. We'll see if Piro's name is there." With this she became more and more hysterical, so I just pulled the pants down and off her. There was Piro's name on the pocket.

Cindy was silent. I showed her the name, tossed the pants to Piro, told him to put them away, and left the Cave without saying anything else.

I saw Cindy 15 minutes later. It was as if the whole incident had never taken place.

Observation 24

Disneyland Trip with Grandmother

This is a report of a conversation I had with Jay a few days ago about a trip to Disneyland that his grandmother was planning for him. We all know Jay's grandmother: A woman who can lay more guilt per cubic inch than the best Yiddisher Mama.

The last time I encountered her was a few weeks ago when I drove Jay out to pick up his bicycle from her house. On the way, Jay told me exactly what would happen. She would offer me coffee, tea, milk, cake, cookies, a sandwich, ice cream, dinner, etc, etc. It all came to pass. He knows her like the back of his hand. Better. I'm not sure Jay has noticed the back of his hand yet. Her classic comment a few weeks ago was, "Now that Jay has his bicycle with him, he won't have any reason to come and see me anymore." Jay's response to this remark was a devilishly ingenuous grin. Nothing more.

A few days before the Disneyland trip, I just came right out and asked Jay if he didn't feel like he was being bought off by the lady. I couldn't have kept the question in. It just had to come out. Didn't he have some feeling of being bought?

Jay said, "Are you kidding?!? Two days at DISNEYLAND!!!"

“But Jay,” I said, “Don’t you feel a little like she’s just doing it so she can have you around her? Like when she kept your bike at home all that time so you’d have to go there to ride.”

“Are you out of your mind? This is D-I-S-N-E-Y-L-A-N-D! I just L-O-O-O-O-O-V-E DISNEYLAND. I’d do ANYTHING to go to do Disneyland.”

I didn’t bother to drop a concept on him. “Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.”

How can Emerson compete with Disney?

Observation 25

Dating with Jenny

Jenny H wanted to eat with Paula P again today. She did this yesterday. Because they are in different groups, they go to the dining room at different times, so it's inconvenient to arrange. Now and then I do because they are good friends and seem to have a real thing about eating together. I didn't really realize how much until today, however.

When I said, "Not today," she pouted and said "YES!" When I said no, she said, "Then I won't practice on the balance beam tomorrow." When I said, "I'm sorry, but not today. You got to eat with her yesterday," she waited until I started to walk away and muttered, "Stupid" to me. When I said that wouldn't do any good, she started crying—sobbing, in fact, over and over again, "Mommy, mommy, mommy."

Observation 26

The Prince and the King

Today Piro P did something which he does often. He announced while still in the Caves this AM that he wouldn't be at P.E. this morning because his father was picking him up. As usual, I said he should check it out with Gene, and if all was O.K.—fine.

After he crossed the street and had breakfast, I found him about 8:00 a.m. in the lyceum telling Gene his father was coming to pick him up. Gene said he didn't know anything about it, and Piro should go to P.E. If his father came, he would send for him. As usual, Piro didn't go for this, and started protesting more and more loudly. Finally, he started to wail and dissolved into tears.

At this point I stepped over, took him aside, and told him that we were going down to the beach for roll call, but this morning all the Cs and Ds were going to go back across the street to the Caves to go through all their clothing, and on the way, we would stop by his father's office to check it out.

Piro often tells the same story about being picked up by his father. It seldom pans out; or the time to be picked up is hours later than the time Piro expects. This consoled him enough to get him to come down to the beach. Along the way, he asked me if I knew where his father's office was; if I was sure I knew where it was; that he knew where it was, etc.

After roll call, about 15 minutes later I had all the kids lined up to leave the beach and go over to the Caves. Piro asked again if we were going to see his father. I told him yes, I was going to see his father.

At this point he became very coy and said, "No, I want to call him." I repeated I'd ask him, and in an even more diffident and apprehensive tone, complete with batting eyelashes, he repeated, "No, I want to ask him." I asked why. In almost baby talk, the kind that Danny H indulges in frequently, he said, "Because I'm the Prince—and he's the King. That's why," he said demurely.

The rest of the story is anti-climactic. After this he got out of line and started wailing that he was being teased. When I threatened to leave him behind, he got louder and ranker. The end point—I did leave him behind. When I saw him an hour and a half later he seemed to have forgotten about being picked up by his father. At 4:00 p.m. (six hours later), Tom came by and told Gene he was taking Piro out for a few hours. I didn't find out if he had arranged this with Piro before.

Observation 27

Lover's Quarrel

B came bouncing down the hall with nothing on but an enormous grin, as the saying goes. She went into 106 and climbed in with Rene S, who was also naked. Both were conspiratorially grinning and having a gay old time, excuse the pun. It was Sunday, and the hour was still early so they had quite a long time together. I didn't have any occasion to drop in on them for about 45 minutes, when first one came howling out into the hall, followed, or rather, pursued by the other, who was also indignantly and loudly crying out as she ran.

There was a quick flurry around the corner out of my sight, and then they both fled back into 106, Dianne howling, and Rene crying. Since the noise level didn't show any signs of decreasing, I strolled into 106 to see what was happening.

Both were still naked. Rene had climbed back into her bed, and Dianne was sitting in the middle of the floor. As best I could piece together their explanations, Dianne had torn Rene's Koala bear in retaliation for something Rene had done. God knows what. Since it was late, and they didn't seem to be getting the thing resolved, I sent Dianne back to make her bed and get dressed in her own cave.

It had all the ear marks of a mini-lovers' quarrel.

Observation 28

Saying Fucker is OK

This morning Barney P (4 yrs.—4 mos.) punched Joe S (same age as Lisa). All this happened within one minute. The ensuing yelling, howling, and caterwauling caused me to snatch them all up in one fell swoop and take them upstairs to play a Synanon game. When I scooped Joe S up, he announced, “I hit Lisa too!”

I delivered them all to Lois. A group in the Stew room gathered up some chairs in a small circle, and they began their game. I left to go back to the beach to see what the rest of the Whales were up to.

Fifteen minutes later, they were all back on the beach having a great old time.

Joe S was sitting on the bench grinning like a Cheshire cat, or as Jack H says, a “Chesapeake pat,” so I asked, “What’s up, Joe?” He said, with a big grin, “I played the Synanon game.” He was really proud of himself.

So I said, “How’d the game go Joe? What did you have to say?” “I said fucker, fucker, fucker. That’s what I said. Fucker, fucker, fucker. Lois says I can say fucker up there, and that’s what I’m supposed to do. So I said fucker, that’s what I said.”

What a process . . .

Observation 29

Bigger Than the Discovery of the Cinnamon Red Hot

David B is probably the worst “worker” we have in the morning jobs. This is where I observe his work habits, and I doubt if they are much better at any other time. When he had the job of collecting the sheets thrown out in the hall and delivering them to the laundry cart downstairs, he almost always managed to screw it up. He would skip piles—deliberately. He would fail to get it all the way to the basement, not get it into the cart, go for prolonged rides on the elevator under the guise of taking sheets to the basement. Or he would just run off and do something else, like go eat breakfast. The consensus was that he had arrived at the sheet job because he wouldn’t do any of the other jobs that required more responsibility such as making beds, getting children dressed, etc.

Because he was so abominable at this job, he has now sunk to depths of working in the lounge. In the kids’ eyes, this is the last stop before total welfare. It’s where Danny B would end up. There is no place else to go from here but up to cleaning shutters and washing walls. In reality, the job is much more important to me, but since it occupies such indigent status in the kids’ eyes I, at least, have never succeeded in transmitting what I see as some

rather exciting challenges and opportunities and possibilities to stretch out in such a job.

To get back to David B, a fortuitous event has occurred. Someone has invented a board made up of bulletin board material divided into squares representing caves, and sewing pins (for God's sake) on which hang each of the 80 or so names of each of the children. The idea is to turn each name around as its owner leaves the caves. Since the board is hung over the sink, the children can't reach it so it was up to me to do this onerous chore which *always* ends in every card being turned over—a rather dull and uninformative ending. My first solution was to just lean over the sink for a few minutes and turn all the cards over, trying my damndest to keep the dainty little sewing pins from falling out into the sink and down the drain.

Since David B was lounging on the pillows like a Rajah a few mornings ago, waiting for his 90 minutes of "work" to end as I was turning name cards, I decided to call him over and explain the importance of his sitting in the sink accounting for each child as he or she left the cave to cross the street. The working conditions are not quite ideal, but what the hell. He sensed the challenge, made sure his own name was represented, and took on the job with a fervor and zeal I haven't seen in some time. He hopped into the old sink each time a group was ready to leave and turned cards like an IBM machine.

This morning we had a barrel of collected shoes to distribute, so I added this to David's chores. We made an itemized list, and he proceeded to check off each kid who had shoes in the barrel and give them back to them for return to the cave. It was the accounting and checking off that attracted him and held his attention. He stayed until 7:30 without a complaint two mornings in a row. He actually stood in the lounge now and then, instead of his usual supine position. He also tied shoes, put on socks, and generally took care of business in a good frame of mind. This is unusual.

Tomorrow morning I'm going to have him do both of the above, and, because I can't think of anything more constructive at the moment, ask him to compile an itemized list showing the numerical order of each child leaving the caves—who was first, second, etc. I have a suspicion it will improve his behavior even more. If this works out, it would seem to indicate he needs even greater challenges. Maybe the same system would work for Danny B who has a similar syndrome.

This may be my biggest discovery since the cinnamon red hot. Zounds!

Observation 30

Grant, Leonard & the Backpack

A few days ago a new booby trap was introduced into the environment. A booby trap is a compelling attraction left by an adult that pulls the kids out of their orbit of routine. For instance, the morning after the movie SHAFT played in the crash pad, all the popcorn, candy, potato chips, and soft drinks were left out and the kids passing by on their way to their first P.E. class on the beach couldn't resist going in and looting like a horde from Genghis Khan's marauders.

Grant's father apparently brought a very fine aluminum frame, padded-shoulder backpack to the caves, along with a canteen and another piece of camping equipment. Grant says he gave them to him. Leonard immediately put on his army uniform and helmet and "liberated" it for his own private army. Grant didn't seem to mind too much, but we had discussed Leonard's not bringing his whole army equipment stores over to the school. So, naturally, there was the usual storm of protests when I said no. As the days went on, almost every morning the backpack was a point of dissension, arguments, fights, etc., in the caves—not just with Leonard, but with a lot of kids who wanted to play with it.

My specific objection is not to the backpack as an object, but to the fact that this backpack is expensive and valuable. I don't think

such things should be given as toys. It's a little like giving a Cadillac to a kid who doesn't know how to drive and can only destroy it. I think doing this devalues the things in the minds of children.

I spoke to Gary, who stated that the backpack was intended to be given to the School, and not just to Grant. I told him I planned to place it in with the adult camping equipment, which was agreeable to him. Then I spoke to Grant and made an agreement that I would take that backpack and give him a rather worn rucksack I've located.

I'm not sure that I did the right thing. As for explaining it to Grant, it was one of those conversations that begins with, "I'm not sure you're going to understand this, but . . ."

Observation 31

Inventions

The kids are great at inventing games and even better at naming them. Usually I'll ask them to make up a game and, after they explain it, will ask, what's the name. Right off the top they come up with some gems.

For instance: the Cs and Ds in the court with all the tires spread out were asked to make up games using the tires. They could form any kind of teams they want, pair up, or invent on their own. The games were almost all good and "playable," and the names were graphic: HOT ROLLS; RING AROUND THE TIRE; TANKS UP; DOUGHNUT; CRASH CAR; OSCAR MEYER WEINER; and MOTHER, UNCOVER ME UP.

I also note some of the apparatus that's been invented. A few days ago, Leonard, Piro and Kenny W constructed an incredible coach out of the tire rack Eddie J donated to us from the service station. They were busily pushing it around. From the outside it looked like a pile of rags, old blankets, bricks (to anchor the blankets, a round table top, a wire mesh basket, and on the inside some slipping boards and pillows. It was obviously designed from the inside out, because when I peeked in through the "window" (a hole in the blanket), it was too inviting to pass up. I asked for a ride and climbed in.

Here, all was sumptuous luxury created from the bits of junk described above. I settled in, leaned back like a Persian satrap and was wheeled around to view my subjects. I adjusted the sunroof to permit a little more light to enter, closed the window when I tired of peering out, and was immediately transported into a child's fantasy. Too much.

Today a new creation emerged. We have something that looks like large canvas air mattresses in the beach shack. Jamal, Doug, and Meagan discovered that if one sat on one end of the thing, and another jumped on the other end, the air inside would propel the sitter up into the air.

In no time the game was taken over by the next age group, who started jumping from a height; then the next older group after that, who jumped from a higher height, and finally the oldest kids were leaping from the Galazan and firing light weight kids like Josh Silver six feet up into the air and down to the sand. Fantastic!

Observation 32

Ball Throwing From Roof and Consequences

Dear Bernie,

I've been reflecting on what happened on the beach today. While I was putzing around the beach shack trying to install the bull horn, you told one of the Whales—maybe it was Barney—to stop throwing the ball up on the roof 'cause it would go over the other side. I told you to go ahead and let him throw it. How else was he going to learn how to do that. Then I invoked a bit of reasoning that usually works—I asked if you didn't do the same thing when you were a kid. We all did.

While running my seven miles on the beach, I began thinking about all that and thought I would write you a note about why I did what I did and maybe convert you—partly, at least—to my way of thinking. Here are some of the things that were going on with Barney, or whoever it was. (I'll use Barney 'cause I know he loves to amuse himself by throwing the ball up on the roof.)

For one thing, he was simply practicing the art of throwing in a fairly efficient manner. Throwing is no mean trick, if you stop and think about it. It takes damned near as much sophisticated coordination as learning to say the word "Hello—and *that's* no easy trick if you've never said it much. You have to plant your feet and body

in such a fashion that you maintain balance throughout the act of throwing. If you don't, you throw yourself right on over with the ball. You have to use your vision to pick out a target and feed input into the computer to guide the arm, even while the arm is still cocking itself behind the shoulder. Following through with the forward motion not only requires skill and practice—you don't want to hit your head or clip your air in passing—but it also usually requires sticking out your tongue and biting on it. Especially if you're Barney P. The release of the ball is critical and takes hundreds and thousands of hours of practice, and on and on and on.

Barney had also devised a simple solution to the problem of, "If you throw a ball—you have to go and pick it up." He was throwing it up on a slanted roof, so it always came back to him, saving steps galore. More important though were the lessons in physics that were going on. He had to loft the ball upward in a well-placed trajectory to get the ball over the edge of the roof. From there the ball rolled up the roof out of his sight; he had to determine from the angle of entry to the roof, using the sound of the ball on the phylon as a clue, determine where the ball would come down, and be in the right place to catch it, or have it bounce off his head, or whatever. He was developing some faith in the law of gravity that what goes up comes down. Bucky F would say he was learning about "the angular valving of gravity" with a foreign object. He was learning that a ball can be an extension of his arm and that he can control events with it. And sometimes—just as you told him—he would throw the damned thing all the way over the roof, and all the laws of physics and gravity would be shattered because, once in a while, what goes up doesn't come down.

Too much! If you, or I, or some other innocent were to set out to teach Barney some of these things, we would only fail. They can't be taught. They have to be experienced and assimilated over weeks and months and years of effort. I'm still trying to hit posts with rocks, aren't you?

You and I suffer from the same syndrome. You were a Tribe Leader too long, and I was a Director too long. Our instincts are developed to say “No.” That’s because we were trained on how to raise the Character Disorder. A dope fiend with a malformed character needs a whole lot of loud “No’s” and a judicial few “Yesses,” just to keep it in balance—or off balance, as the case may be.

The trouble is, we aren’t dealing with *mal*-formed characters now—they are *un*-formed characters. *Un*-formed characters (age 4) need a whole lot of yesses and now and then a judicial no; hopefully, with an explanation. You and I have to reverse a lot of our thinking. If a dope fiend threw a ball over the roof, it would be a clear case of property destruction, and we would have license to be a hoodlum about it. And knowing you and me, we would probably take that license.

I learned a helpful rule from reading John Holt. Always try to observe and figure out what it is the child is trying to teach himself. What is he trying to learn? That changes the role of the “teacher” considerably. If you accept the premise that these young children are doing all the learning on their own—and I pretty much do—then the “teacher” has to be someone who watches, thinks about what the kids are doing, and then add new dimensions to increase the possibility of learning.

Barney wants to know about throwing. Or moving an object through space. Or *seeing* gravity. Or making a ball disappear and running out in the alley way on the promenade to see if he can find it. Or he wants to see *you* run out to find it. (Sometimes you have to be the catcher in the rye for these kids.) All of the things that Barney seems to be focusing on right now open up all kinds of possibilities for us to provide fresh new material.

Maybe he could learn a bowling skill—rolling a ball down and knocking something over. (Don’t *buy* games—make them up out of junk from the environment.) Or throwing a hoop into a barrel, or rolling balls or cars or ice cubes or, what the hell, damned near

anything down some kind of inclined plane—an old cardboard box, a board, or a piece of plastic.

The point is, the first step is to stifle that “No!” that rests near the tip of our tongue and say nothing. While we say nothing, we have to do a little figuring about what is the kid trying to learn. A good part of the time the *best* thing to do is nothing. Our interference, even when we think we are introducing the greatest concept since peanut butter, may be nothing more than a distraction from the earnest practice at the learning process that takes place. And then our egos might get bruised.

Think about this one. Can you imagine how mysterious water must be when you don’t know much about it—like at two, or three? You can’t hold the damned stuff in your hand, like just about everything else in your world. It keeps running out between your fingers. It comes in all temperatures—unexpectedly. If you try to carry it in a bowl or dish, it slips out and won’t stay inside. If you spill it on the ground, you can never pick it up again, etc. Now then, when James Johnson discovered the greatest thing of all about water—that he could stick his finger over the nozzle of the drinking fountain and SQUIRT it 5 feet away!—he was ecstatic. No power on earth could stop him from exercising this discovery. This was tantamount to Einstein’s $E=mc^2$ in James’s mind. He laughed and called all his friends over and squirted them and giggled. Man, he had POWER!! He was an inventor! He began practicing making an arc and seeing how high it could go. Then he practiced seeing how far it could go. (Here’s a 3-year-old learning the physics of the trajectory of an object in flight.) He could *see* what was happening because of the nature of that mysterious stuff—water. Unlike a ball, which doesn’t leave a trail showing where it’s been, water *described* the arc. It was fantastic. He could control this stuff 5 and 6 feet away from him with just the tip of one finger. Bernie, *that’s power!* All that other shit, like money, politics, position, is nothing compared to the exultation of that discovery. Dig James at the fountain some time. And dig yourself

too. Like Jim Minot, you might conclude that James is “wasting water”—can you imagine the poverty of *that* kind of thinking?—and get a pipe wrench and turn the fountain off. He *did* that. Not only did he frustrate James, but he denied every kid on the beach a drink of water. God help us.

You wouldn’t do that, I’m sure. But you’ll be tempted to tell James to stop fooling around with the drinking fountain, I’ll bet. In fact, I’ll bet you already have! Others have, and I came pretty close to it myself once. Now I suppose, just like you and me, James will go a little too far with his new found power one of these days and squirt someone like Dibble, or Harold Benjamin, right in the face, and then James will learn something else about the misuse of power or something. I don’t even know what that lesson will be. But in the meantime, we have to protect this fragile learning process from the Jim M’s of the world. That, to my way of thinking, is part of your job.

If you want to get really turned on (if you haven’t already), read about 10 pages—any 10 pages—of John Holt’s “How Children Learn.” I personally like and subscribe to the way he looks at children, and I like the way he writes about what he sees. I think you will, too.

By the way, I don’t think I’ve told you how really glad I am that you are working with young children in the school. As you know, I want to do the same. Or maybe I should say I work with young children in the school, too, no matter what else I might do.

Best regards,
Bill Crawford

c.c. Ted D
Rod M
Linda S
Home Place Review
Terri H

Observation 33

Warning Not To Be Read by Children (Bad Words)

I am instructing our children that there is no such thing as a bad word. I'm laboriously convincing them that this is true and that anyone who is foolish enough to try to tell them otherwise can be dismissed as unworthy of their attention. This has been an agreeable experience for me. I can almost hear the shackles unlocking and dropping from their minds. They are relieved, at least temporarily, of the burden of classifying a whole lexicon of "bad" words.

Before I go any further, yes, I am a hip liberal, but no, I don't think kids should be able to go around saying anything they want to, any place they want to. There is a time and place, etc. And its just possible that it doesn't make a damned bit of difference if very young children (3-7 years) are told there are bad words. But I'm at a loss to see what good it does. And I suspect it does a lot of harm.

At the very least, it imposes an indistinct and arbitrary burden on young minds to determine which words are good and which are bad. At the worst, it interrupts and short-circuits the whole *process* of learning words and language. Acquiring the bloody English language is perplexing enough, especially when you are three

and bursting with the need to express yourself verbally for the first time. When some unwitting demonstrator ,or assistant demonstrator, or trainee adds a moralistic overlay to the whole mess, it's almost too much.

I always get jooky when I hear one of our sages declare *anything* “good” or “bad” to our children. I spent several years trying to demonstrate that a 3-year-old climbing rope ladders to the ceiling and swinging on high trapezes wasn’t unsafe or “bad”. But the usual last-ditch adult objection would be a remark like. “I just don’t think it’s a very good thing for them to do, don’t you?” What the hell do they mean, *good* thing to do. If it’s there, it’s a necessary thing to do; and a thing that *must* be done; and all *want* to do; and must succeed in doing to one degree or another. I’m digressing a little, but if you’ve come this far with me, don’t give up yet. There’s a point here somewhere. I think! Let me explain myself.

Why don’t we say to our kids, over and over, “There are no bad words”? Likewise, there are no bad thoughts. Only bad deeds. A bad deed is pretty easy to come to terms with and define. If it hurts someone, it’s bad. But words aren’t *bad*. Words can hurt and be cruel, and words can also heal and comfort and instruct. But words can’t be bad: My only appeal to higher authority in this is a poster quoting C.E.D. saying, “All words are good words.” Right on, Chuck!

Right now my two 4-year-olds have a whole lexicon of questionable words. “Ann said ‘stupid’ is a bad word. Is stupid a bad word?”

That’s a stupid question to have to ask and, whoever Ann is, should think about the responsibility she has assumed for deciding for some of our young which tools they may or may not use to think with. Words are the tools of thought, aren’t they? And if so, whom are we going to empower to prescribe and proscribe these powerful and most expressive building blocks? Maybe Ann, whoever she is, finds “stupid” a bad word because she secretly suspects she might be a bad word herself?

The questions from the little twerps are endless. “Is vagina a bad word? Penis? Diarrhea? How about poopie diarrhea; rubber butt; or (get this one), fuggle ass-hole?” (I heard one 5-year-old in a game call another an “ass bowl” all through the game. That’s a more descriptive expletive than the adult version). If vagina and penis are bad words, then penises and vaginas must be bad, too. What other conclusion can an undiscriminating mind draw?

While I worked with the 2- to 4-year-olds, I occasionally would let the older group (3 years old) sit in a circle, put on loops, and say all the funny new words they were learning that revolted most adults. It was a very workable system that nearly eliminated inappropriate language on-the-floor. We stopped when some members of the community felt it was presumptive of the game. I recommend it, however, for several reasons.

It eliminates the need to *ever* grant a word as bad. It provides a place to learn how to pronounce and use these new mysterious sounds. (Then a person can be called an ass bowl *or* an ass hole, or both, for that matter.) It gives the kids a chance to have a lot of belly laughs because essentially they say “fart,” etc., because they think “fart” is a funny new sound. And it is, when the sound is so novel and infrequently heard. And finally, it gives adults the grace and convenience of suggesting to children that they save some words for the circle and not to use them on-the-floor. (Whether or not 3-year-old kids should *play* the game is another subject and not one that I’m proposing here—which is not to say I mightn’t propose it some time.)

The kids respected the circle proposition beyond my wildest expectations. “Bad” language on-the-floor almost ceased, where before it had been epidemic and annoying. They had an outlet for their expression, and words—all words—once again could be converted to units in a structure of learning. The *process* of learning didn’t have to be interrupted by some moralistic giant screaming about bad words and all that jazz.

When we present the possibility of the game circle, we don't have to make words bad. The *place* we use some words may just be inappropriate. It is much easier for kids to understand the in-the-game—out-of-the-game dichotomy than the slippery, fluctuating concept of good and bad words. It's more consistent and manageable an idea and one that I know from experience that's acceptable to children—even very young ones who don't yet play the game. It presents an alternative and a possibility of future expression instead of "bad words are bad words, and that's that." Or worse, sometimes the word is bad and sometimes it's not, depending on what was in your mind when you said it. (The Catholic guilt rears its head.)

Kids understand the dichotomy of the game quicker than you think, and probably better than most adults. Rebekah, when she was just barely four, was drinking a cup of milk one day. She told everyone she was drinking a cup of coffee. When someone tried to introduce reality to her, she maintained that, "In-the-game, it was coffee and out-of-the-game, it was milk!" How about that?

Just like in-the-game there is shit and out-of-the-game there is poopie diarrhea. At least the game permits the inevitability of "shit" instead of the Anns of our world trying to make shit a bad word. Shit! That's a bunch of shit, man. What kind of shit is that, anyway? Bull shit, that's what it is. Ho hum.

Bill Crawford

Observation 34

Children WAM Letter from Bill to Ted D

Dear Ted,

You asked me to send my comments on how our children spend their WAM. Here they are.

I know that Gloria Thatch circulated questionnaires to ask each of the children how they in fact spend WAM, plus 15 other related questions. We also have the facts about how much is given out and the rate it is given. Therefore, what I have to write about is mainly subjective.

It seems to me that the Regent's concern about the amount of WAM given children must be motivated by something other than frugality. I can't imagine that the total amount is of prize consideration in a six-million-dollar-a-year company. I must confess that I haven't added it up to see just what the figure is, but I still prefer to move ahead with my assumption intact.

I think the WAM schedule is satisfactory. It might be improved upon by some fine tuning here and there—maybe .35 instead of .50 for ____; .50 for 9-10s; and then back to the published schedule of \$1.00 for 10-11s, and so on. I think it should be easier to get. Why instill the indignity of waiting in line on our young life? Putting it in and getting it out of the bank should be easier, too. As it is now, it requires surmounting a petty obstacle.

I'm not very concerned about any of that, however. I *am* concerned about the implication by Ron Cook that "There is little of which our children are in need." That seems to me to be the least and last reason for giving WAM to children, and this is a point I would like to make most strongly. Piaget—or somebody else—makes a convincing case for "fooling around" as a prerequisite to understanding new tools. "Fooling around," as I recall, is a valuable tool in Synectics. "Fooling around" is nothing much more than *freely* experimenting with a medium—in this case money. It is a necessary preliminary to understanding math through the use of cuisenaro rods. (I can't find that word in my dictionary). It has something to do with helping to physicalize an art that deals in abstract symbols—abstraction to the extreme.

The thought that we should re-examine children's WAM because there is little of which they need seems to be thinking of the most shortsighted and pig-headed sort. WAM, our abstraction of "allowance," is a necessary ingredient for the fooling around with the most powerful symbol civilization has yet developed—money. How the kids spend it should be of exquisite unimportance, except in a detached sort of way. What the hell difference does it make *how* they spend it? Let them fool around with it, especially the kids 9 years and younger.

There are those who equate the evils of money with the evils of candy. Blood Sugar and the Criminal Mind notwithstanding, the candy counter offers the best cuisenare(?)*-type* analog available. It is geared to pennies, nickels, and dimes, and the variety is right up old Plager's alley. Five cents will buy a whole lot of little things, or one or two big things, or something else with a premium (a baseball card?), and something else that has design as its selling point.

How does that compare with the classic Piaget experiment that four ounces of fluid in a tall, thin glass looks like more than four ounces of fluid in a short, squat glass? (It doesn't matter that the experiment was designed for younger children—the phenomenon

persists.) I'd say it tops the Piaget experiment with an endless variety of variables, thanks to Madison Avenue. When we interfere with that process of experiencing, we are interfering with the woof and weave of basic and real education—the kind of education that we can't teach, and the only kind that we know damned well the children will always have. Street education, if you will; experimental education; education by trial and error (the old scientific method); education by doing; education by scoring and getting burnt; education by temptation, and stealing, and playing the game about it.

If anybody thinks our kids should spend their money with better sense and should get less because there is little of which they are in need, let them reflect on the possibility of short-circuiting the very process that will prepare them to carefully, frugally, expertly and, most important of all, to satisfactorily understand and use the medium.

Given all of the above, some additional thoughts about how to enhance these few years of fooling around occur. Money *is* math; banking *is* accounting; the symbol can be traded, stored, hoarded, added, subtracted, etc., and all of these aspects can be taught. I think it would be a horrifying mistake if the endpoint of those teachings were to teach kids how to better spend their bread, get their money's worth, or some such bull shit. It should be taught as additional tools to make the symbol even more powerful—even if it means that the ingestion of candy increases in direct proportion to the skill in money manipulation acquired. The kids will survive that, and they'll learn some lessons in POWER—if that's what money represents. Or BEAUTY—like when Josh Simon saved \$35 and bought one lousy postage stamp that he can't even use to mail a letter. (How's that for waste, misuse, and proving that there is, indeed, little of which our children are in need?)

I'd say that a kid who grows up *saving* his money instead of fooling around with it is a deprived kid, and it doesn't have a damned thing to do with whether there is much that they are in

need of. They're in need of the experience, and that's what we want them to have—as much as they can get. At least that's my opinion, damn it. It seems like such a dumb proposition!

c.c. Rod M/Director of Education
Terri H
Home Place Review File
Tom P/Caliban's Canticle
Miriam C – N'CC

Observation 35

Letter to Rod Re: Questions to Ask

Dear Rod:

One of the items that I collect in my notebook is a whole classification of thoughts listed under the general heading of “discussion.” I’ve had some conversations and games about most of these things, but largely these are unanswered and, in some cases, unanswerable questions. I’d like to see more discussion about these topics and therefore offer the following from my current collection.

1. Swearing by 2- to 5-year-olds and what should we do about it?
2. Should our children have personal possessions, and what constitutes private property? Does it contradict “living in community?”
3. Children will only do what they are physically capable of doing; and, therefore, don’t often hurt themselves—and what if they do? (Crawford’s Law.)
4. What constitutes physical violence with children? At what age? And what’s wrong with it?

5. What constitutes danger for children? Walking four blocks to Penny Liquor? Burying each other up to their necks in the sand? Exploring the crawl holes and attic of the building? Climbing the dirt bank next to the Club?
6. Should 12-year-old boys have *Playboy* pin-ups on their bedroom walls?
7. Should 11-year-old girls with developing breasts have to wear bras?
8. What do we tell 11- and 12-year-old girls about sex? That men might molest and rape them? Watch out!
9. Why do adults have a need to stop kids from doing what teaches them the most, such as using the rodent area, using the trampoline, playing with the drinking fountain, riding bicycles, etc.?
10. How does it affect kids who are brought up in an environment where most of the adults have a built-in veto power to stop whatever they are doing?

This last is really the meat in the coconut. It is essentially what all the other items revolve around. It is the study of bureaucracy at the lowest level. Very few adults have the power, inclination, or courage to say “yes,” and almost any of them can say “no.” It is a reflection of our collective conservative gut and a source of frustration for our kids. Here’s a way it works.

We have a big dirt bank in the vacant lot next door to the Club. Our kids like to play on it. Last year when I came to work in the School, it was forbidden territory—“too dangerous to play on.” My own private theory (Crawford’s Law) states that kids will only do what they are physically capable of doing, and the only ones who would try to climb the bank would be the ones who *could* climb the bank.

At any rate I began insisting that the kids should be able to play in the lot. Part of my reasoning had to do with the feeling that if the kids couldn't climb the bank next to our Club, they would do it anyway some place else. Kids have a need to climb and meet physical challenge. The safer place to climb would be next door to their home which includes a complete medical department, five doctors in residence, hundreds of convenient adults to help in an emergency, vehicles available to rush to the hospital, telephones, etc. Better have them break a leg next to the Club than six blocks away on the palisades.

There was general agreement with my point of view among the School staff, and kids are now able to climb the bank. Then an adult happened by, saw kids climbing on the bank, and ordered them off. The kids came to me, and I sent them back. This episode was repeated over and over again, week after week.

That was more than a year ago. Even now, adults who wander by and see some kids meeting real physical challenge start yelling and raising hell about "you're going to hurt yourself out there," and so on. At last it is pretty much accepted practice that kids can climb on the bank. Early in the game, they marshaled their best defense—ignore adults. Now, after a year, that issue is settled.

It's not climbing on the bank that is at issue here. The issue seems to be that our kids are being raised in an exceptional school and children's community where a few enlightened adults are able to think through cause and effect and remember and reflect on their own childhood. Yet they are surrounded by adults who exercise a kind of "veto" power over much of what they do. We are trying to provide a rich and challenging environment for these kids to grow in. The bureaucratic effect is smothering some of that.

I want to include another example so I can personalize the way this works from a kid's point of view. Often adults can't see the way the world looks through children's eyes, and it's an interesting viewpoint. (I wrote an observation once of what it was like for Juliet Hill—3½ years old and less than 3 feet tall—to thread her

way through the dining room jungle where everything she was supposed to use was literally over her head. It helped (I like to think) to bring about some child-sized dining facilities.)

Imagine that you're Sean T, 12½ years old, and you and two of your cronies want to explore the attic of the building you live in. First, you come to me and I immediately say, "No. Too dangerous," or something to that effect. Now you argue with me and muster all your 12-year-old logic and reason against my 43 years of experience and wisdom, and the best I can come up with is, "See me tomorrow. I want to think about it." A pretty lame answer.

By the next day, I haven't been able to really produce an answer that will honestly justify a "no," so I say, "O.K., be careful, take flashlights, etc.," and away you go only to be met on the steps going to the fourth floor by an adult who stops you, turns you around, and tells you that you have no business going above the main floor of the Club.

I don't think I have to go through every agonizing step along the way, but Sean never made it to the attic that day, or even that week, for that matter. He went to Terri H, who was running the School, got her permission, and never got there. At the attic door, he was spotted by an alert member of Adult Patrol and saved from a fate worse than death. From Terri he went to the Directors' Office for their O.K., and got all the way up into the attic before an adult with exceptional hearing investigated the footsteps and got them the hell out of there. At this juncture, two weeks later, Sean went to the only Regent available to him and told his story.

Al B added his permission to the long list of endorsements, and Sean and his two friends went to the attic—this time confident that they were going to make it. They didn't. They were stopped again; only this time I happened to be there and, by now, I had forgotten they could go up there, and I joined a suspicious and cautious adult in telling them to get the hell out. No wonder kids suspect that all adults are crazy.

The Catholic Church and a lot of private schools solve the problem of interfering adults by keeping the kids they are trying to raise away from the adult community. They isolate and insulate them, but we do the opposite. I think we're right, but God damn, it's hard getting around so many eyes and ears and people that project their own fears and cautiousness onto our kids. It makes the kids jooky and paranoid, and it fosters a disrespect for the adults' decisions.

Somehow the veto power of adults toward our children has got to be modified. We've got to make the community more aware of the problem and how we are raising our children. With our own demonstrators, we've got to work like hell to stop some of the idiotic thinking and inconsistency that we all participate in—that is if we want powerful but respectful and well-mannered kids.

Inconsistency is the common denominator of some of my other topics. What should we do about swearing by 2½-, 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children? It all depends on which demonstrator you ask. There is probably more disagreement on this subject than any other, with the possible exception of matters pertaining to sex. It is a hot issue. We raise our kids in an environment that is rich in language. We may have the most verbally oriented kids in the country. When the Mattel toy people come down to test new toys with our kids, they report this phenomenon. When our 2- to 3-year-olds learn to say "fuck," "shit," etc., they also learn that these are powerful words because adults react to them. They have a ball saying words and watching what happens. There are some demonstrators who have even washed mouths out with soap. For the most part, it is a circus for children with adults performing contortions while the 3-year-old yells "fucker" and watches.

Sometimes they don't get the new language just right. I overheard one kids' game where someone kept calling somebody in the game an ass bowl instead of ass hole. By the time they can play the game, we all have a standard answer—"Save that language for a game"—and I guess that's as good an answer as any. We ought

to get together to decide how we feel about this sometime, and then go with some kind of consistent approach. I don't know what the hell to do, I'll admit to that.

And what about physical violence with kids? What the hell is it? Is it "physical violence" when Becky Sue R pulls Naomi C's hair and knocks her down? They're both 2 years old. Of course not. Or maybe it is. "We don't do that here" has been said to 2-year-olds. What about when they're 3? 4? 5? Physical violence is a particular bugaboo in Synanon. It is the application of an adult standard to children where I don't believe it applies. Again the problem is mainly one of inconsistency among the adults and differentiating between adult canons and children's rules.

There is another strange phenomenon that I've seen occur a lot. A Parkinson's type law could be formulated that states, "If a whole lot of kids want to do something a whole lot, then there must be something inherently wrong with it, and it ought to be stopped." The rodent area in the Lyceum is a good example. It has attracted more kids to it in interesting play than anything else there. Yet it has been threatened more often by more demonstrators that anything else there. "Those kids are always in there fooling around with those damned animals"—or "They're always making a mess"—or "It's inhumane"—is the rationale most often used to make it all disappear.

When the trampoline started breaking spring hooks, the first reaction was to put it off limits until it could get fixed instead of getting it fixed immediately so no play would have to stop. And that was from our P.E. instructor whose got it made because the kids won't stay *off* the trampoline and therefore are teaching *themselves* most of what they have to know.

When little kids wouldn't stop playing around with the water, Jim M turned the drinking faucet off on the beach. The water fountain is one of the most popular and instructive devices for 2- to 4-year-olds we have; but because it gets used so much, and "They keep playing around with it," Mindt's Law dictates we get rid of it.

Turn the damned thing off until they learn how to use it for drinking. That's what it was meant for, right? Besides they were wasting water, and water costs money. Shit.

What constitutes danger for children? Here's another opportunity to project our own fears on our kids. We have the most over-protected kids imaginable, and if allowed to continue they would have ended up totally disabled to even find their way to town and back. Fortunately much of that has been reversed and 7-year-old kids are now able to walk four blocks away to Penny Liquor to spend their WAM. (That's another sensitive subject—how do kids spend their WAM.) Twelve-year-old kids can now actually ride their bicycles where they want or take a city bus wherever it goes; but it wasn't always so.

Some of the older kids took to exploring the building after the matter of getting into the attic was finally settled. They now know more about the crawl ways and trapdoors than the architect who designed the place, but it took constant selling on my part to let this clandestine activity go on with certain selected kids. I even went along with them on a subterranean tour once and marveled at their knowledge and skill. Of course what they were doing was dangerous, but what's wrong with that? They had enough safeguards.

David B is a natural athlete. He does a back flip into the sand off of the 15-foot level of the Galazan structure on the beach. It's a beautiful thing to watch. He does it with exquisite form and style. Sheila Middletown saw him do it one day, got scared, and ordered him to never do it again! (She is the same person who made magnifying glasses a moral issue to Debbie S after Debbie managed to burn herself one sunny day.) I played the game with Sheila, and she reluctantly rescinded her order, but damage done to David B's opinion of her judgment might be considerable. The only conclusion, I can imagine him coming to is that this woman is a fool—and she's *not* a fool. She has much to give and teach him; but when

she projected her own fear on David, I wonder how receptive he can be to the rest of whatever she tries to give him.

I think adults who are willing to work with our children have an obligation to examine themselves more than anyone else in Synanon. If we're not willing to look at all of *our* fears, prejudices, bugaboos, and easy institutional answers, then we should go into another line of work.

I also think we have to examine our needs for power as one motivating force behind working with children. An adult can be powerful among children when he can't be in the other areas of his life, and that can be destructive when unrecognized and unexamined. If we don't know how we really feel about things that children demand to experiment with, then we're in trouble. Sex, swearing, violence, danger, stealing (what the hell is THAT to a 3-year-old?) are all items that we have gut reactions to.

We'd better be damned open about where all of our bugaboos are because children trigger off our guts; and when our guts do the reacting, then we start making children into our images instead of letting them find their own. Christ knows, I don't want my kids growing up like me. Or, do I?

cc: Ted D/Regent/Santa Monica
Thad M/School/Santa Monica
Terri H/School/Tomales Bay
Home Place Review File

Published in a limited edition for the following people:

Chuck Dederich, Sr, – who inspired
Dorothy Garrett – who encouraged
Jerry Newmark – who praises
Al Bauman – who appreciates
Leon Levy – a fellow word lover
Steve and Terry Haberman – who constructively criticize
Miriam Crawford – who is always interested
Marty (man does not live by bread alone) Rubenstein
Karen Holmes – who knows
Sheri McLendon – who would never be an Ann
Carole Goldfedder – who understands
Steve Schiff – who discusses
S.M. School Board (Glenda Simon) – who try

and others who I'll think of in the morning.

Ann Scarano – who is trying
Jerry Burzin – who wants to know more
Liz Missakian – monkeys don't talk