

Polestar

Fresh Perspectives on Education

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As We See It

Exam Fever

LOUISE MARSH studied music at Peterhouse College, Cambridge and last year became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. Last month she took up an organ scholarship at Westminster Abbey, London. She also plays the flute and sings.

HAVING JUST EXPERIENCED finals, the icy memories of 'panic attacks' remain with me still. At times I thought I would not get through it. It was too much, in too little time; a huge mountain to climb. There is a serious disease which sometimes affects rock climbers: in contemplation of a sheer drop they are rendered paralysed, the only cure being to take one step. This sensation is not uncommon amongst students. One friend of mine, six months before finals, was frequently compelled to lie on the floor, immobilised with fear.

This intensity of stress may appear disproportionate to the job in hand and yet, at that moment in time, nothing in life is clear. There is a black hole of doubt on the other side of graduation and the whole of one's future seems to hang upon a few exam papers. The pressures may include relationships, trouble at home, finding a job, deciding a career, personal problems and a feeling of isolation, being in debt and being temporarily homeless.

The pressure of achieving success is very powerful and not only confined to academic pursuits. A desire for social success and popularity is, I believe, one of the main contributing factors towards alcohol abuse among students. Many colleges have an unofficial initiation ritual where on the first night the men in particular are forced to saturate themselves with alcohol to the point of vomiting. This simple, but revolting ceremony seems to foreshadow the many nights that will be spent in voluntary 'enjoyment' of the same thing.

Although student life takes place against a background of drink, drugs, crudeness, sex and even suicide, this image does not resemble my overriding impression in the least. The atmosphere in college, I felt, was one of comradeship, humour, experiment, respect - and gossip!

Before I went to university I had a kind of belief that I would be exempt from the torments of student life. I had a wonderful home life and a strong faith, so therefore I could just go about helping friends with

their crises.

In reality, however, nothing could have been further from the truth! At times it seemed as if the world was going to collapse! Yet I was lucky in having some very good friendships and we shared a real sense of understanding that we were all in it together. My chaplains were a great source of support, often just because of this confidentiality. Even my tutor was a friend. I felt a genuine concern in him for all his students. Occasionally when I asked an obvious question, unfortunately disclosing my ignorance, he would just sit back and laugh! I was very grateful for this.

Even in that period of stress which I have outlined above, I never felt alone. In the week before my exams a 'good fairy' left bar of chocolate at my door every day (sometimes twice!) and I was sent so many flowers that it could have been my funeral!

I wouldn't go back to university now, because I feel I am a different person from the one I was three years ago, but I wouldn't exchange those three years for anything.

Tony Hazell



Louise Marsh



Gabra Drgova

A Czech Evaluation

GABRA DRGOVÁ comes from the Czech Republic. She is 22 and is studying at a college of education, majoring in English and Music.

The World: It is not an easy world to live in. People are only interested in themselves. The environment is also not in a very good state. Everyone talks about it but not very much is being done. With all the conflicts in the world, you feel that you should be thinking all the time about those who suffer and it makes it difficult to get on with your own life.

Education: I think the Czech education is very good. I have spoken with some Western young people and I was amazed at what they did not know. They seemed not to

continued overleaf

Theme of this number

The Voice of the Young

know about simple things in geography for example. On the other hand because of the Communist regime, we are poor in languages and that is a handicap for us in the world. We have all learnt Russian for two years, but now everyone is turning to English. I wouldn't like to do away with Russian entirely, because Russia is still an important country.

I feel too that Czech students are lacking in self-confidence. We should know what we are good at and what we know and be ready to present it.

My Country: I hope my country will continue on the way that it is going. I was sad to see the split of the country (into Czech republic and Slovakia) because part of my family live in Slovakia. But we have to overcome that and not look back.

Many people from the West are coming to our country, trying to help us, which is good. But we seem to take everything without thinking. We are turning now from the large Russian influence to that of America. We need to pick out what is good. We should also learn from the mistakes of the Western world.



Ian Kiaer

Hunger and Hopes

IAN KIAER is a student at the Slade School of Art, London University.

IT IS DIFFICULT not to make unsatisfactory generalisations when talking about my generation or indeed any other. Yet if I were to attempt to persuade some of my fellow students of Martin Luther King's belief that "the individual has not yet started living until he has been raised above the narrow confines of his own individual concerns to the broader concerns of the whole of humanity" they would probably question what I meant by 'living'.

Society has changed enormously since the death of Dr. King. We have left the 1960's idealism far behind and we are now coming to terms with the materialism of the last decade. Through media advertising the message one is constantly given is: we must experience whatever they have to sell. Life is to be led always by bettering one's last 'experience': more excitement, more pace. So in the light of this to try to explain what Dr. King meant by 'living' is daunting, maybe even unrealistic.

All I can say is that I share with my friends the same fears and insecurities that tend to visit one after the latest diversion. Everyone needs to have a role in life, to belong. The question is where one finds

that identity. To be dependent on other people only leads to disappointment and suffering and it's obvious that the government cannot provide it. Yet the notion that everyone can have a 'vocation', a calling from God, is for many no longer an option, even though the hunger remains. Maybe answering that hunger is what Dr King meant by 'living'. If so, we should not dismiss so quickly what governed his life.

Hard Decisions

MAGDALENA KAPLANOVA is a midwife from Prague in the Czech Republic.

Born in Prague as the sixth of my brave and generous parents' ten children, I spent my childhood in a very loving, fighting, peaceful, arguing, courageous, caring, open and Christian environment. After completing grammar school and Nursing/Midwifery college, I became a midwife. I worked for four years in a maternity clinic in Prague.

After the most important revolutionary year of 1989, I left for the Netherlands in order to work with a peace organisation called Interchurch Peace Council. I spent twenty months there. My time in Holland showed me new horizons that had been invisible behind the iron curtain of communist dictatorship. In 1992 I went to Ghana and worked for a year in a rural hospital. I enjoyed this time most of all.

Coming from my communist uniform culture and a family who were in the opposition is great fun. I see it as a privilege which has taught me a lot. I don't deny that I enjoy the democratic changes, but I am happy to have experienced both. There was a permanent dialogue in my country between different people and their consciences. Being for the regime meant collaboration for a prize and loss of any moral standards. Being against meant being persecuted. Every day thousands of people in my country were confronted by the question, "How can I make my life and the life of other people more truthful, purposeful, fulfilling, happy and better, even if it means self-sacrifice? Am I able to make this decision?" This question never can be out of date.



Magdalena Kaplanova

Here is the News

GEERT-WILLEM OVERDIJKINK is a radio journalist from Rotterdam, Netherlands:

I ENJOY my job reading the news on Rotterdam radio. This is a regional station and we provide three daily news magazine programmes and short (three minute) newscasts. As a counterweight to the inevitably negative nature of much of the news, we try to give some human interest and finish with a positive item. We also try to follow up such stories.

I would like to see a happier country. I'm particularly worried about the effects of cut-backs resulting from the recession.

Our radio station encourages people to care about their city. Recently the inhabitants of a very run-down street, tired of waiting for the authorities to act, clubbed together and cleaned the whole place up. We gave them publicity and backed them. Their example has been followed by other self-help street committees.

I'm proud of our city. It has a population of 600,000 and contains the world's biggest port. It bugs me, though, that it's also a great centre for trafficking in narcotics. We are visited by many 'drug tourists'. I'm not in favour of legalising 'soft' drugs.

The world is getting too crowded and I think its population should be limited. Contrary to expectations, a recent opinion poll in Holland, taking a large sample of young people, produced a big majority in favour of marriage, rather than cohabitation. I agree with them.

A Russian View

MIKHAIL TEREPTYEV is a university student from Nizhny Novgorod, Russia:

I haven't travelled a lot and I don't know much about Europe. My encounters have destroyed all the stereotypes previously held in my mind. Take English people, for example: there's a general belief in Russia that they are cold fish - very unapproachable, very reticent and always wearing ties and silk hats! Now I'm meeting a lot of young people who like to have fun. I think the differences between us have been artificially created. We've discovered a common humanity.

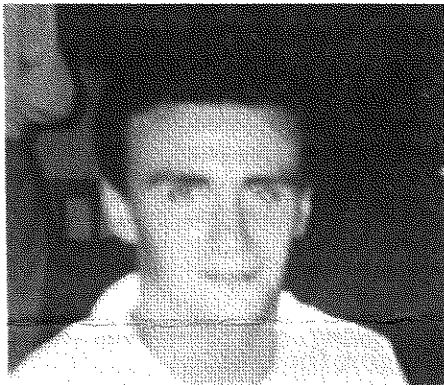
Education: As regards my country, I would be supported by a lot of other students in expressing the wish that our education could be more practically orientated. When a teacher wishes to emphasise some point, he usually says, "Learn this item because you'll get a good mark in the exam for it." I've had ten years at school and three years at university, but never yet have I heard a teacher say, "Learn this point because you will need it in your future life."

Too much emphasis is laid on academic

aspects. The result is that we don't have enough of the skills and the applied knowledge for our future work and this affects our potential as employees. Our education should be more purposeful and relevant to a person's career.

The Church: It's fashionable again in Russia today to go to church. The Christian religion is a great ideal, but the people who believe in it should live out the moral standards of their faith. I don't like hypocrisy.

Money: Today, our young people are very concerned about making money. You can understand those who have been poor, who know what it is to have no money whatsoever. When you can't go, say, to a pub with a girl friend and cannot buy her anything, it's humiliating. There's a great longing towards material needs. It's difficult to be honest and unselfish when you are poor. A lot of people just want to make money. It can be understood, but I realise only too well that it is a false ideal.



Mikhail Terentyev



Jenny Carpenter

Interdependence

JENNY CARPENTER graduated two years ago from Cambridge with a BA in Social Anthropology. Since then she has been a resident careworker and co-administrator at a reception centre for Vietnamese refugees entering Britain under the Home Office 'Vietnam 2000' programme.

KAHHIL GIBRAN wrote "A single leaf turns not yellow but with the silent knowledge of the whole tree".

We lose sight often of our basic

relatedness to the people all around us. However, it is our ability to respond to each other's needs and recognise the resources across the different groupings of society that is the basis of community.

It is the basis of an ethic of redistribution, too. We should take up the fashion for recycling and push the principles of redistribution beyond material goods to the point where profit is put back into society and not seen as an end in itself. It is a basic fact that if one person has more than they need then they have it at the expense of another.

GERMANY

Through Pain to Gain

BORN IN A VILLAGE near Hanover, Germany, Anja Beckmann is a young interpreter and teacher of English in Stuttgart. "What we lack in politics is true leadership. Politicians like Brandt and Schmidt in the Seventies were true statesmen. They were trying to do something for their country, right or wrong. Now we only have career politicians, out to get as many votes as possible in the next election.

"The reunification of the two Germanies has presented many problems. The restructuring of the controlled economy towards a free market is taking much longer than people expected. Chancellor Kohl made promises that he has not kept and people are very disillusioned and disappointed. The 40-to-60 year-old age group is finding it particularly hard because they have to get used to a new way of thinking and working. Nobody really wants them any more. Employers want the young go-getting people."

Among the vast majority of the population is an attitude of total non-commitment. "Maybe you care about your family, but not about the society you live in. Everybody strives for his or her individual happiness. You want to be rich and famous, you want to get something out of life, out of society, but you don't want to give anything back."

Anja explained that her generation was neither deprived nor over-shadowed by the Nazi past. "Of course we do need spiritual guidance, but we are not aware of it. We have one enemy and that is the media. The media could be our ally by promoting other values. You know all about the manipulation of the media. The message goes to the subconscious. 'You need certain items for material security . . . in order to be happy'. To reverse that trend is very difficult. You would have to go to church or some other organisation and learn that in giving

something to other people you receive something back.

Change of Attitude

"After I graduated from college I was trying to find a job. How could I get the most out of everything? When you are with a company, you don't ask what can I give this company? What can I give to these people? But you ask what can I get from them? Then after a few years you don't need them any more and you turn to new goals."

But Anja Beckmann clearly had changed her attitude. She does now care about society. She does have different values. How did it happen? "Well," she replied, "it's really hard to find the cause. Four years ago my sister died. I was very very much attached to her. She was thirty-three years old. She was a teacher of English and religious education, a bright, intelligent person whom I respected very much. Now when I think about her, what really counts, what really matters, was her gentleness, her honesty and her wonderful personality.

"This is what life is all about. It's not money, it's not 'the choreography', it's not the clothes. Life does not always mean winning. I have gained more from losing. I have wonderful parents. They not only taught me values, they also set examples and I do admire them for that."

Anja agreed that the feeling that you 'belong', that you have a family, is very important. It is something that many young people do not have at the moment, because they do not get on with their parents, or they have left home for one reason or another, or their homes have broken up.

"Here again," she said, "the key word is 'commitment'. There is so much non-commitment in society. A lot of people want the advantages of living together, but not on a permanent basis. They say 'OK we'll live together and whenever we feel it doesn't work out right for me I'll leave you.' Due to our wealth now, we have so many choices. In the Fifties it was a necessity to be committed to your family. A wife had to stay at home. Now she can afford to divorce or separate and live singly."

Anja Beckmann will soon be leaving Germany with her fiancé to live in Singapore. She is not sure what she will do, but she definitely wants to work and is eager to get to know and to be involved with the peoples of south-east Asia.

Eastern Europe

We would like to thank all our readers who responded to our appeal to send *Polestar* to people in Eastern Europe. At the time of going to press we have received £108.55

Why We Need Our Own School

Ann Rignall

"MANCHESTER HAS BEEN failing our children" explained Mrs Al-Wandawi, the Head Teacher of the Islamic Girls' School in Chorlton, Manchester. This school, which began three years ago, now has 108 girls in classes up to the fourth year of secondary school.

She continued to tell me what had led up to the establishment of this school. "Our children are British, but they also have another identity, just as many other British people have — the Scots, Welsh, Irish, Poles and so on. Their other identities are recognised and accepted. Unfortunately the needs of the Muslims are not answered by the education authorities."

She went on to describe the ridicule and lack of understanding that the children felt. She had experienced it herself. "Islam is more than just a religion. It is a way of life. It is not just something that you do on Friday by going to the mosque. It affects every day of our life."

The breakdown of discipline in many schools also worried Muslim parents. "They like their children to be disciplined, respectful and to act with dignity. A teacher to a Muslim is very important because she not only passes on academic knowledge but is someone to guide you in your behaviour, your morality and your life. The teacher will set a standard by which a child will initially model his life. We do not like our children to be where the other children are being disrespectful to adults. Muslim parents want their children to have values, to be appreciative, to respect other people, to treat people with dignity. They are not getting these things."

Ridicule Affects Work

The ridicule and name-calling which the Muslim children suffered also affected their work. "Trying to work and compete in an environment where people are behaving negatively towards you destroys something in the child. Children suffer emotional and psychological damage because they feel they are out there alone and don't have support from anyone."

So the parents wanted to redress this and to give their children education in a Muslim environment, where they will have support and teachers who are sympathetic and will understand what they are going through.

I asked whether the girls had any difficulty in mixing with people of the other communities when they had been educated separately. "Although Muslims have a common identity," replied Mrs Al-Wandawi, "they are from different walks of life, different socio-economic



Science at the Islamic Girls' School

backgrounds, different languages and different countries.

"Nor are the children confined to the school. They have a life and friends outside. They do the normal things that children do and they mix with them."

Negative Portrayal of Islam

I asked about their contacts with other schools in the area. They attempt to do this

through sports and inviting people to their school and asking to visit others. However, she felt that their best contacts were with the other independent schools. "We have the feeling that the education authorities are not keen on us; they try to put up barriers and stop us mixing with the wider community. It seems as if they are trying to isolate us. They have not said this, but this is what we feel."

The school follows the national curriculum, so that girls who leave the school can fit into the system wherever they go. However, Islamic studies are a very important part of the curriculum.

She went on to talk about the negative ways in which Islam is portrayed not only in the schools but in the media. The media want to put fear in the hearts of people, suspicion and hatred. People always see the picture of terrorism when they think of Islam.

"They do not think about it as surrendering yourself to the one Creator, the Creator of the whole universe. They don't think of Islam as worshipping one God and following his prophet or as praying.

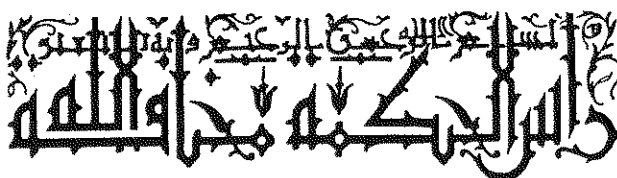
"Our children are subject to this, too, without knowing the truth. That is the way of indoctrinating our children. You don't force them to turn away, but you give them a picture they will hate so much that they will hate Islam and not want to have anything to do with it. In that way you are destroying Islam."

Bridging the Divide

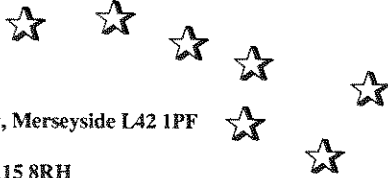
She spoke with much feeling about this and I asked if this was happening to the children. "Yes," she said. "The wider society is calling them. Many of their parents are just ordinary people with little learning. They are unable to speak with their children. The people who have learning and education are the teachers, but their view of Islam is to destroy it. It is an unwritten agenda."

I was sad that the Muslims felt such a persecuted and embattled community, as I was sure that this was not what the majority of the British people wanted. We agreed that much of this attitude was due to ignorance. "Centuries of ignorance," said Mrs Al-Wandawi. "It is all to do with ignorance and history: how history has portrayed the Muslims and this is what has stuck in people's minds. The book has to be re-written. The whole truth will never be told, but at least let us have some of the truth."

I asked her how she felt we could bridge this divide. "By having more understanding and more open hearts and minds to learn. We are British citizens. We chose to live here. We want to remain here and to follow our faith. We have got to have an on-going dialogue; to foster good understanding relations. We might find that we have a lot in common."



"The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God"



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This paper is produced by teachers and is designed for educationalists, parents and all who have the needs of young people at heart. Its contributors hold different political and religious viewpoints, but all are convinced of the need to reaffirm a moral and spiritual basis to learning and teaching. Those who write, edit and distribute it do so without pay. Printing and other costs are met from subscriptions and from gifts, often sacrificial, from readers.

EDITORIAL

Making Dreams Come True

The older generation are often at a loss to know what young people think and to understand them. This is why *Polestar* has given a chance for some young people to speak for themselves.

Several points emerge. The first is their concern for our world. Their generation is going to have to clear up the mess past generations have made. Have they been adequately equipped to do this?

One factor is that we in the highly developed, industrialised countries need to start to use the world's resources more frugally, with more regard to renewal and conservation, and more equitably, having more regard for the rest of the world. "We must live more simply so that others may simply live."

It will take an unselfish spirit on the part of the ordinary person and the political will to take needed measures from those in leadership. The younger generation are often in the vanguard of publicising and campaigning for the environment and they will need to continue in the years ahead when they come into positions of influence.

Our young contributors are also worried about the materialism around them and the part that the media has in promoting this. But for many of us it is really a love-hate relationship. We may object to some of the actions of the media but still love the things that the media give us and indulge in a life-style that is materialistic.

A Satisfying Idea

Although some say that the age of idealism is dead, it still remains a hallmark of young people. They have dreams for the future and have not developed that deadly pall of cynicism which kills a crusading spirit stone dead. Yet this does not have to happen to each generation in turn. They can be helped to make some of their dreams a reality.

This is what education should be about. It should equip our young people to live in the world of the future, which will be very different from the world in which most of us have lived. However, we also need to prepare them to make their dreams realities - to become peace-makers, to safeguard the world's resources and to redistribute them more evenly. Above all we need to help them find an idea in their hearts which will satisfy all their longings, and demand their full commitment.

Future Numbers

December-January: Creating Trust and Peace

February-March: Attitudes to Work

All material to the Editor by 26th October and 21st December respectively

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A Lesson in Faith and Friendship

Sue Corcoran

EVERYWHERE I GO these days people are discussing: "How do I get the right education for my children?" However, I think the question most on my mind is not how my children get the best academic education they need, but how they are going to be prepared to be citizens of the twenty-first century.

The most important thing they need to learn is how to live with diversity. My children have what I consider a great advantage. As white children in the city of Richmond, they have the chance to be the minority in the city schools. I believe that this opportunity, no matter where they go in life, is going to make them much more sensitive, much more aware and much more inclusive wherever they find minorities.

Recently at my eldest son's school, the children arrived early in the morning and found large, racist graffiti on the outside of the building. During that day in the school there was tremendous fear and anger and considerable violence.

When my son came home he told about the frightening day that he had lived through and then he told me two things. "I know that the reason that nobody was seriously hurt and why nothing went seriously wrong was because in my first lesson I really prayed. I know that's why nothing more serious happened."

And then he said, "A boy in my class, an African American, who I didn't particularly consider my friend, came to me and said 'I will escort you from classroom to classroom to make sure that nothing happens to you today.'" Out of what was quite a difficult situation, my son had been given two lessons: one in faith and one in friendship. To me that is extremely important.

continued on page 7

Teenage Pregnancy: True Protection

Frances McAll

WE ARE CONFRONTED by two projects which hit us in the middle of this century. One was the campaign for sexual freedom at any age; one 'expert' claiming that sex play should start at three years of age. The other, with its printed agenda for anyone to see, was promoted by the International Planned Parent Federation along with the Population Control Council. Their aim is not only to keep numbers of people down, but also to introduce selection of those most suitable to be born. From these sprang family planning to prevent unwanted pregnancies, an apparently harmless and sensible idea.

The methods to achieve these ends included contraception and, should this fail, abortion. Family Planning clinics sprang up. The abortion law was radically altered; the idea being that finally when public opinion was favourable, if pregnancy occurred it could be terminated on demand and abortion made statutory in certain cases.

However, in spite of all precautions and government insistence on sex education in schools, teen-age pregnancies have mushroomed. In this country they now constitute a third of all recorded pregnancies and are the highest in Europe. Just under 33,000 of these ended in abortion in 1992, over 3,000 of them being girls under sixteen.

Certainly the law allows sexual intercourse at sixteen, an age many consider far too young, but it is clear that even at that age, girls are not expecting or wishing to become pregnant. As for those below the age of consent the force of the law is such that, as one fifteen-year-old insisted, "If I want a closer relationship with my boyfriend the law has got nothing to do with it!" So why do so many fall through the net?

Afraid to Tell

Sadly there is no such thing as 'safe sex'. It was never intended to be 'safe'. Intelligent people seem to have forgotten that sexual intercourse was originally designed for procreation. It is only we among the animals who have turned it into a dangerous toy where the unwanted young have to be destroyed or live probably deprived lives. Contraceptive methods often fail because either condoms are unreliable, intrauterine devices too difficult to insert in the very young, boys being likely to misuse a condom or not bother at all, girls forgetting to take the Pill or too afraid to ask for advice.

In this 'liberalised' age, children are still afraid apparently of their parents' reactions. In a recent survey, 64% said they would be afraid to tell their parents if they found they were pregnant. One girl I know ran away from home rather than face them. Then there is the fear that if they went to their GP, he or she would not respect confidentiality and would 'Tell on them'.

Teenagers for whom sexual intercourse is the accepted thing are

likely to have more than one partner, so face not only the risk of pregnancy and probably abortion, but also the hazards of sexually transmitted diseases with their sequels of chronic ill-health and possible future infertility. A specialist in these conditions told me that there had been a 'deluge' of them in recent years.

If pregnancy goes ahead and a child is born, the girl may make a good mother. However, she does so at a great price. The relationship which resulted in pregnancy is unlikely to be a stable one, so she may well find herself deserted by the father and face insecurity and, along with responsibility for the child, maybe endless wrangling over maintenance.

All this involves loss of freedom to enjoy adolescence with its varied activities, friendships and choice of career. When finally an adult stable relationship is formed, even today's girl has been known to admit that her precocious excursions into sex 'spoil things a bit'.

Teachers and doctors are well used to being told that they should not impose their moral values on pupils or patients. In fact it is impossible not to reveal our attitudes by the way we talk and act. Many of us must feel that our children are not being best served by the norms of modern society. The cost of sexual freedom is clearly too high.

One of the greatest blessings of democracy is supposed to be the right to choose. Is it therefore not our right and our duty to present children with an alternative? I happen to be of a generation which, though sorely lacking in the freedom to discuss such things, made it abundantly clear that sexual intercourse was a subsidiary part of an ongoing marriage commitment.

I had the added privilege of being brought up in a Christian home where this was considered to be the Creator's loving ideal for us with children growing up in the

warmth and security of a two-parent family. I certainly feel profoundly grateful for the freedom it gave me to explore so many other areas of life and to enjoy so many friendships without fear of sexual exploitation. As one of my daughters remarked when a teenager, "It is such a relief to be treated as a person and not just a toy to be played with."

Has the time come for us to stand up to the over-powerful sex lobby and fearlessly proclaim the enormous advantages of chastity (an almost forgotten word) and the quality which inspires it; purity: the delight of being free to love someone without demand, or fear of demand? What is the best and therefore the right way for our children?

Dr McAll is a retired general practitioner and also a mother and grandmother.

BOOK REVIEW

Qualities in Demand The Virtues Guide:

A Handbook for Parents by Linda and Dan Popov and John Kavelin.

"Being a parent is the most complex and important activity on the planet ... unfortunately children don't come with instruction manuals" says the introduction to this Guide. It outlines the flexibility of the programme, the authority of the parents, discipline, the spiritual nature of children, language, choices and setting boundaries, with real down-to-earth examples of how to use the Guide in your family.

It is divided into fifty-two virtues, one for every week of the year, each with its four pages devoted to 'Description', 'Why Practice', 'How to practice' and 'Signs of Success'. All are simply described and imaginatively illustrated with situations requiring exercise of the virtue. The authors distilled timeless human virtues from the world's major religions.

There are five key principles:

- The parent is the first educator of the child.
- Children are born with great natural qualities that can develop into positive or negative traits, depending on how they are educated in their early years.
- Each child's unique gifts can only develop through education.
- Spiritual growth occurs as children learn to make responsible choices.
- Self-esteem is a natural outcome of spiritual behaviour.

continued on page 7

Faith & Friendship

(cont'd)

The weekend after this incident, an emergency meeting of parents was called. I was a little anxious about going, because I thought that I was going to find people who were angry, who were blaming, who were trying to see how to get their child out of this situation into something better. So I went rather reluctantly.

However I found a group of parents who were concerned, but they said, "How have we failed to teach our children a better response in this situation? What can we do now to take this ugly situation and really get involved with our children in making a difference and helping them to find a different way to deal with this?"

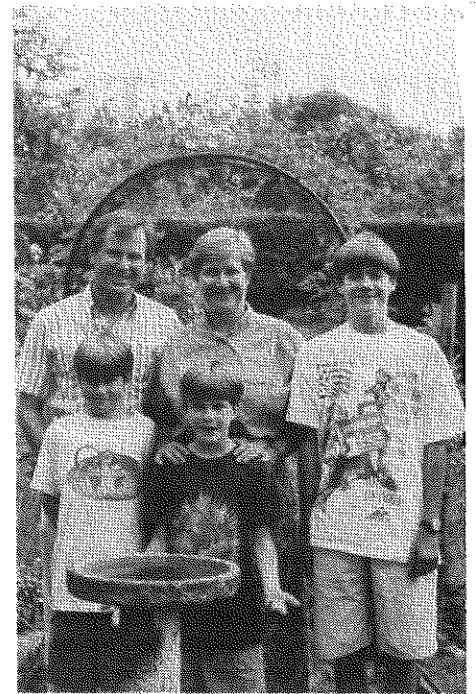
Many of the parents who may have been activists for social concerns in the Sixties had got caught up now with materialism and with paying the mortgage.

It was a shock for them to realise that they had not been involved with their children and doing things with them.

That weekend lots of the children made posters on the theme that 'friends come in all colours'. These wonderful posters were put up all over the school before Monday morning. And on that morning there were masses of parents who came to the school, not in anger or frustration, but simply to say to the children, "We're here to support you. We know the difficulties you face, but let's find a way forward."

When it was suggested that the trouble-makers should be rounded up and expelled, some of the parents said "No, don't do that, because when we work through this with the children in the school, they won't be there and they won't learn and they will never find a different way."

So what was a very negative situation turned into a very positive one. My son will carry all these lessons into the future and into the next century. To me that is what real education is all about.



Sue Corcoran lives with her husband and their three sons in Richmond, Virginia.

Review (cont'd)

The authors are well qualified academically and practically in psychology and psychotherapy and have two grown-up children. They say "This book is our family's way of making a contribution to the world."

The world seems to be accepting it, as a network of parents, teachers, community and church leaders endorse the project and give seminars and workshops on its use. It is currently available in twenty countries and six languages.

Chris Harvey



More details can be obtained from: The Virtues Project, 192 Sun Eagle Drive, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 1E5, CANADA

Canadian Readers

Please note that there is a new agent to whom subscriptions should be sent:

Mr Chris Harvey, Western Sunset Farm, RR#2, Bluffton, Alberta TOC OMO, CANADA.

V I R T U E O F T H E W E E K

Caring

What is Caring?

Caring is giving love and attention to people and things that matter to you. You can show you care about someone by saying and doing things that help them. Caring about something you are doing means giving it your very best.

When you care for someone, you give of attention to...

Pay homage to God...and be good to your parents and relatives, the orphans and the needy and the neighbours who are your relatives, and the neighbours who are strangers, and the friend by your side, the traveller and your servants and subordinates.

Al-Qur'an, 4:36

THE VIRTUES GUIDE

Why Practice Caring?

Caring makes the world a better place to live in. Caring people make others feel less pain, less hurt, or... Without caring, nothing and no one matters. Everyone is alone. If someone is hurt or sick, no one will help unless they can make some money or take advantage of a need, people would...

How Do You Practice It?

When you feel love and concern for others, look for ways to show your interest in them. Ask them questions about how they are... "What do you think and feel, like... You are doing a chore for you...

Signs of Success

Congratulations! You are practicing Caring when...

- Love others and yourself.
- Let people know that what they say is important to you by looking at them and listening closely.
- Handle things carefully.
- Protect and nurture anything placed in your care, particularly pets.
- Pay close attention to what you need and get it if possible.
- Treat your body with respect.
- Work with enthusiasm and...

Keep trying! practice who...

- Act as if you don't matter to you.
- Ignore other people.
- Give less than your best.
- Treat things carelessly.
- Ignore your own needs.
- Let things placed in your care harm themselves (even pets).

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Some sample pages from the handbook

"I Like This Class Best"

Barbara Grove

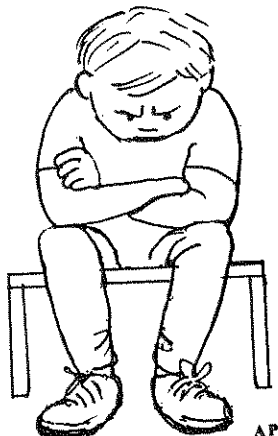
SOME YEARS AGO I was asked by our church to take a small class of boys for religious education classes at the local Opportunity School. This was a school for children who had learning difficulties and other problems. My class consisted of boys from nine to sixteen years old. I also taught two classes at the local primary school.

One day I had the thought that I should write a play with lots of parts and get children from all the three classes to be involved. I asked the Opportunity School class to be the stage crew. However, one boy, a big, badly co-ordinated child called Ian, said his parents would not let him come because they did not believe in God and never went to church.

All the children were keen and came to practices and a concert was to be arranged at the church to which they could invite their parents.

When I arrived at my next lesson at the Opportunity School, I found the boys were very restless. They told me that Ian had run away and that a teacher had gone after him.

As they were obviously worried, I suggested we prayed together that God would look after Ian and bring him safely back. They settled down then and I began the class. However, before long the door opened and Ian was pushed roughly into the class-



AP

room by the teacher and told to stay there. He sat on the top of the desk: a big ball of rebellion.

I told him that the boys had prayed that he would be safe, which seemed to surprise him. I then asked him if he would like to tell us what the trouble was. He said that his mother had just bought a new carpet for the dining-room and his Dad had told him to be careful not to spill anything. Ian said that this made him very angry because his Dad was always telling him to be careful.

During the meal he spilt his milk and it went all over the new carpet. His Dad was angry and sent him to his room. Ian climbed out of the window and because he was so mad went down to the local hardware shop and threw a brick through the window. The police found him and took him home. His dad was so furious that he locked him in his room. That was why he ran away again as soon as he got to school. Also he said that his Mum had told him that the window would cost two hundred dollars!

I suggested to Ian that we should all be quiet and think of any way in which we could help. After a few minutes I was surprised to find that nearly all the boys had a thought.

One boy suggested to Ian that he got a job at the Golf Club on a Saturday, where they paid good money and he would soon be able to pay for the window. "That's no good," said Ian. "Mum won't let me work for money at the weekend." Another boy had the thought that Ian could work for the hardware man without any money until he had paid for the window. Ian seemed to feel the concern the boys were showing him and said "I like this class best in the whole school!"

My thought was to ask him if he had spilt his milk on purpose. Ian hung his head and said "Yes. I get so mad at Dad when he keeps telling me to be careful." So I suggested that this was one thing he needed to put right. "Yes," said Ian. "I had the thought

I should say sorry to my Dad."

Part of the Stage Crew

The next day I called on his mother and she told me that she did not know what to do with Ian. He was so big and clumsy and could not seem to do anything except bake biscuits. So she let him bake one day a week but he kept eating the biscuits and was getting so fat.

I asked her if Ian had said anything when he came home from school the day before. She replied, "Yes, he did. He told his Dad that he was sorry and not to pay him any more allowance until the window was paid for. But," she continued, "there's no need for him to do that as the window is insured."

I told her that Ian had had that thought when all the class were quiet and that I felt it was Ian's way of making it right. So would she let him do it? I also told her about the play and that Ian's class were to be the stage crew. I asked her if she would reconsider letting Ian be part of that, as I felt the other boys were a good influence on him. She agreed and when she heard about the supper after the play, she said that Ian could bake biscuits for that as then he wouldn't eat any.

Lots of parents came to the concert. Ian came, too, with his biscuits and his parents. The stage crew did a great job with no noise, a fact I pointed out to all present. It indicated how well those boys could do a job. I asked the boys afterwards if Ian had been able to help. They told me that they had all agreed that Ian would pick up each chair and another boy would put it down.



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