

WESTERN PA. HOME SCHOOLERS.

A Network for Sharing Local
Information about Homeschooling

Late Fall, 1985
Editors - Susan +
Howard Richman

Newsletter
14

JOHN HOLT -- 1923-1985... THOUGHTS FROM SUSAN RICHMAN

As many of you have heard by now, John Holt, editor of GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING, and one of homeschooling's greatest friends, died on Saturday, September 14, 1985, after a recurrence of cancer. He died peacefully in his sleep, at his Boston home. In his last weeks, he was lovingly cared for by many close friends, both children and adults.

I count John Holt as a personal friend and mentor, someone who has changed the course of my life, and I ache at this loss. The several times my children and I were with him are special memories. John had hoped to visit with us here at our farm this summer, but his illness swiftly became much too severe. He has always been very encouraging of my writing and homeschooling work, always ready to appreciate everyone's contribution to his work. His voice will be sorely missed now.

We were grateful to be able to attend John's Memorial Service, held October 5th in Boston. The Quincy Unitarian Church was filled with people whose lives John had touched-- old friends and colleagues, homeschooling families with scores of children, the staff of GWS. Many who could not come sent on letters to be read at the service telling of their close friendships with John, and the special kindness and insight of this man that made him so loved by so many. Several of those who shared John's last days spoke. Lila Berg, an educator and children's author from England and long time friend, told how David Chickering, cellist with the Chicago Symphony, came and played cello for John right in the hospital, and then later at John's home, playing as often as John wanted, playing cello until John died. John had taught himself to play cello very well as an adult, and hearing the instrument he loved so much being played for him must have been a great comfort. And music, so important in John's life, filled the memorial service, too. Children played harp, recorder, piano, violin, cello, and several adults who John had directly inspired and encouraged to take up music also played. (I limped through a Bach Minuet in Gm. I never would have begun playing piano if it had not been for John Holt, and it seemed the least thank you I could give.) Shortly before his death John had asked that the 1st Movement of the Anton Bruckner 9th Symphony be played at the service. I think all of us could truly feel John's spirit with us then-- I have rarely been so moved by a piece of music, and I hope that the GWS office will soon offer this beautiful recording through their bookstore so that more of you can share in it. The closing of the service was especially fitting-- a chorus of homeschooled children led everyone in singing the Shaker folksong, "Simple Gifts".

The next issue of GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING will be a tribute to John Holt. I'm sure many of the very moving words spoken at the Memorial Service will be included. Also if any of you have personal memories to share of what John Holt's work and caring and vision has meant in your life, do send them on to GWS, 729 Boylston St., Boston MA 02116.

(Continued next page →)

SCHOOL DISTRICTS
COOPERATING WITH
HOMESCHOOLING
FAMILIES IN
WESTERN PA.

ALTOONA
APOLLO-RIDGE
ARMSTRONG
BEAVER
CONNEAUT LAKE
CRAWFORD CENTRAL
GRESSON
FAIRVIEW
FOX CHAPEL
HIGHLANDS
JEFFERSON-MORGAN
HOPEWELL
KANE

KISKI
LATROBE
MILLCREEK
MT. LEBANON
MT. PLEASANT
MT. UNION
NORTH ALLEGHENY
NORTH HILLS
PENN CREST
PITTSBURGH
QUAKER VALLEY
REDBANK VALLEY
SHALER
SOUTH BUTLER
WOUTH WEST BUTLER
SLIPPERY ROCK
TITUSVILLE
TRINITY
WEST JEFFERSON HILLS
WOODLAND HILLS
YOUGH

Western PA Homeschooler's
Masthead lettered
by Jesse Richman (8)

Subscription for one
year, \$ 6.00, 4 iss.-es.

Editors - Susan + Howard
Richman

R.D.2

Kittanning PA
16201

phone. 412-783-6512

(Thoughts on John Holt, continued)

John Holt's death has made me think many times of a special chapter in John Steinbeck's masterpiece, EAST OF EDEN. Steinbeck is pondering the real questions we all ask at the end of a man's life, the most important being, "was he loved or was he hated? Is his death felt as a loss or does a kind of joy come of it?" The passage goes on, "I remember clearly the deaths of three men... There was a third man, who perhaps made many errors in performance but whose effective life was devoted to making men brave and dignified and good in a time when they were poor and frightened and when ugly forces were loose in the world to utilize their fears. This man was hated by the few. When he died the people burst into tears in the streets and their minds wailed, 'What can we do now? How can we go on without him?'" John Holt's life was so clearly directed towards good, and his death has been felt as such a personal loss to so many of us. ~~Many of us have been asking, too, how can we go on without him. Our best way~~ now of showing and extending our love and gratefulness is to carry on John's work and hopes. To not let that spirit die.

The work at GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING and Holt Associates will be ably carried on by Donna Richoux and all the GWS staff, with the support of all of us who have been helped so much by John Holt's work. John often wrote that in the homeschooling movement, ALL of us are leaders. It's not an idea that even appeals to mere followers, as this route takes great courage. So I hope we will all lead on, into a better world for all our children and ourselves.

If any of you wish you could know more about John Holt's life, I urge you to read his musical autobiography, NEVER TOO LATE, available from Holt Associates in Boston. As all of John's books, this one is written very personally-- you will feel you are hearing him directly talk to you, reminiscing about his childhood, sharing his musical hopes and strivings. If the book moves you as it did me you'll soon find yourself bringing more music into your life, hopefully even learning to play a new instrument as an adult. This, too, would be furthering John Holt's work.

LISTING OF BOOKS BY JOHN HOLT, AVAILABLE FROM HOLT ASSOCIATES, 729 BOYLSTON ST., BOSTON, MA 02116

HOW CHILDREN FAIL, 1964, REVISED 1982

HOW CHILDREN LEARN, 1967, REVISED 1983

THE UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOL, 1969

FREEDOM AND BEYOND, 1972

ESCAPE FROM CHILDHOOD, 1974

NEVER TOO LATE, 1978

TEACH YOUR OWN, 1981

Do send for a catalogue from John Holt's Book and Music store. It's full of wonderful books, for both children and adults, as well as art materials, selected learning tools, musical instruments and suzuki music books, many fine tapes and recordings. Lots here to help out ALL of your family with homeschooling. All materials are first reviewed in GROWING WITHOUT SCHOOLING, published 6 times a year.

HOMESCHOOLING CALENDAR:

HARRISBURG HOMESCHOOLING RALLY-- MONDAY, NOV. 18, 1985

Come to support our bill, HB 1478.

Buses are being chartered-- ride with us!

More information inside newsletter, ~~next~~ page 5 ←

HOMESCHOOLER'S ARTS FESTIVAL-- TUESDAY, DEC. 3, 1985

10:00 a.m. until the afternoon. Bring lunch

WHERE: The Latinette's, near Apollo, PA.

Go 7 miles north of Apollo Bridge, make a right where Rt. 56 makes a left at Shady Plain, first house on left.

Phone: 412-478-4032

BRING: Some art work you've done at home, to share and display. If you can, bring materials to help others create something!

HOMESCHOOLER'S COMPUTER FAIR-- no date set yet, but get your thoughts going on this one! More info next newsletter. Share how your family uses a personal computer-- programming, software you like, computer art you've done, see different computers and printers, and talk with others.