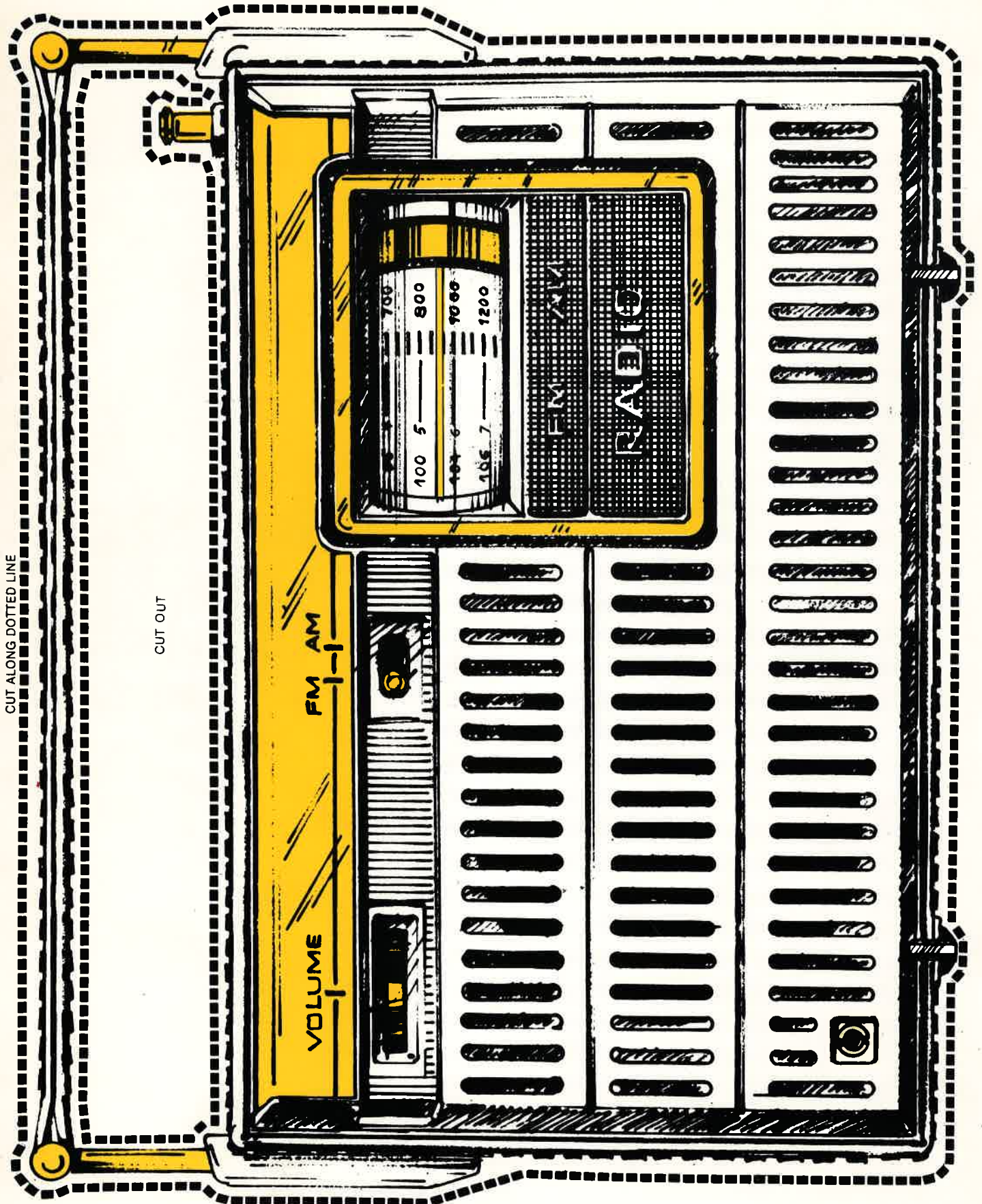


# Teachers & Writers

Magazine

Volume 10, No. 2



---

# Teachers & Writers

Magazine

Volume 10, No. 2

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Nature Program for Blind Children by Janet Nickelsburg	2
Bilingual Poetry-in-the-Schools by Julia Alvarez	6
Radio in the Attic by Joan Lopate	12
"The Club" by Judy Tatti	17
The Making of a Radio Play: "The Three Sisters Who Went to War" by Phillip Lopate	24
Some Radio Plays by Kids	34
Equipment Needed for a School Radio Station by Daniel Mack	44
Dalton and Michael on the Air by Meredith Sue Willis	45
Correction	46
Contributors' Notes	47

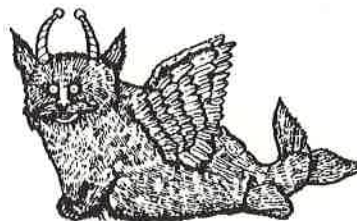
This publication is available in microfilm from: University  
Microfilm International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI  
48106.

---

Miguel Ortiz  
editor

Adalberto Ortiz  
art editor

Joe Cohen  
Cynthia Green  
Mary Graves  
copy editors



winter '79  
Copyright © 1979  
by Teachers & Writers Collaborative, Inc.

---

# A Nature Program for Blind Children

by Janet Nickelsburg

One summer I was engaged to teach nature study in a camp for blind children. To a large extent nature study is dependent upon the use of one's eyes and because blind children live in a tactile and auditory world it was up to me to translate the visible into what would be comprehensible to them. I had, therefore, to explain the world about them in their terms. Blind children I had been told differ little in development from children without handicaps. I was to find this for the most part true excepting for their somewhat heightened emotionalism.

There were in my group five children: Jim and Arthur, age eight and totally blind from birth; Alice, a charming ten-year old who had fairly recently lost her vision as a result of measles; Andrew, age nine; and Sylvia. These last two were brother and sister, both congenitally semi-blind. This mix of children would have presented difficulties for any group, the age span being too great for a cohesive team. The two little boys were reaching out for all sorts of information, asking many questions. They also had a short interest span, while Sylvia, in the throes of pre-adolescence, was absorbed in problems concerning her hair, her nails and above all, boys. She had no use for the boys in our group, her brother Andrew particularly. He, on the other hand, was a born leader, eager to help the totally blind and deriving a great deal of satisfaction from his self-appointed role of docent. Alice, the ten-year old, clung perpetually to my hand, begging to be fondled and caring not a whit for what nature had to offer. Jim dominated poor Arthur, who was apparently the product of intensive home training, which had robbed him of all initiative. He was shy, fearsome and prone to silent tears and stifled sobs. Though Jim could not see the tears, he sensed Arthur's unhappiness as he himself suffered greatly from frustration. He took out his helplessness

ness with his fists by pounding on anyone within reach.

With this group we set out one morning bound for a tall Douglas fir I had selected as our first object for nature study. I had chosen this tree because its trunk was bare of needles and branches for about three or four feet above the ground. As we stood next to the tree I asked the children to tell me something about the trunk. The trunk? What was a trunk? We'd have to find out. I instructed Andrew to hug the trunk in front of him. His arms were not long enough to close around it so I suggested to Alice that she take Andrew's hand and see if their outstretched arms would meet around the trunk. Alice, however, refused to leave the safety of my hand, so I asked for volunteers and finally had to persuade Arthur, the most bid-dable, to help Andrew measure the girth of the trunk. Together the boys' arms encircled the trunk.

"That's how big the trunk is around," I explained, expressing my pleasure at the measurement the boys had produced. However, only two of them had achieved a somewhat nebulous idea of girth. I prevailed upon Alice and Sylvia to embrace the tree. That left only Jim who jeered at the idea of "hugging a tree."

Next I suggested that the children feel the bark. "The bark," I explained, "is the covering of the trunk." The children's fingers explored the surface, Andrew telling the others that the bark was rough. The children added their own statements saying that it had holes and deep places. In the meantime Jim had succeeded in breaking off a sharp splinter with which he was jabbing first Alice and then Sylvia. After Jim had been relieved of his weapon, I instructed the children to reach up and pick off some of the needle leaves. "These needles," I explained, "are different from the leaves that grow on other trees."

By this time the children had lost interest in this first nature project. I had hoped to give them some idea of the height of the tree, but I was afraid to allow them to climb it, because there were no footholds within reach. In lieu I had planned to have them measure out on the ground a line commensurate with the tree's height. However, I questioned the workability of this project and abandoned it after an unsuccessful trial. We continued the study of other trees later. The children became increasingly interested as they compared one tree with another and learned to recognize and name several varieties.

As a follow-up of the tree project I taught the children how to make plaster casts of leaves, bark or cones. These plaques were a sort of tactile picture. They could later be taken home as a memento of summer at camp.

To make a plaque the children, with some help, smoothed the malleable plasticene into a small paper plate and then pressed an object they wanted to reproduce into the surface. When an impression had been made, the object was removed and plaster of Paris was poured on the plasticene. By embedding a paper clip at the edge of the plaster while it is still soft, the plaque is provided with a hanger. Once the plaster has set, the plasticene is peeled off and can be reused a number of times. When the paper plate is torn away the plaque is released.

The children made many plaques with varying success. Jim's, always completed in a hurry, were more a record of his thumb than of the objects he had placed in the soft clay. He seldom had the patience to smooth them out thoroughly. Alice's pleas for help resulted in her plaques being mostly made by me. Only Sylvia's creations bore a resemblance to the objects she had used to make them.

Our next adventure was with a frog I had captured in the brook. The children, excepting only Alice, touched it gingerly with a forefinger. After they had all done so, Andrew asked if he could hold it. I had already pointed out the frog's long, powerful hind legs. So I told Andrew to keep a fast hold on those legs or the frog would hop away. Andrew soon found this out for himself, and the session with that frog was over. But not with all frogs! Later we had the opportunity to continue with our exploration of a frog's anatomy. This time Andrew held the frog more firmly, and we were able to pass it around. Everyone held it firmly.

The brook beckoned us next. I suggested they take off their shoes and stockings and dabble their feet in the water. The unexpected cold elicited screams of excitement as they repeatedly dunked their toes. This resulted in Jim's quick discovery of a splashing game. In order to quell the other children's protests, I interposed a question: "In which direction is the water of the stream moving?" "Was it moving?" Andrew asked. "How do you know?" I held his hand erect in the stream and asked him which side the water was pressing against. The other children wanted to find out too, so with Andrew's assistance and at the expense of somewhat dampened clothes they were able to feel the pressure from upstream.

As we were leaving the brook, Sylvia's foot dislodged a large rock which hit the water, splashing nearly all the children. They wondered why the splash was so much more extensive than Jim's had been. Whereupon we experimented with various sized rocks and learned that large rocks made bigger splashes than small ones.

During the month of August in the Santa Cruz Mountains hazel nuts are ripe. The shrubs grow along the trails and open roads. After I had located these plants, I placed the children's

hands on the soft, furry leaves so that they could feel for the nuts in their leafy envelopes. These they stripped off to reveal the smooth nuts which they cracked open with a rock. The kernel is sweet and ready to eat.

Thus we found another sense to use in the outdoors.

We picked wild thimbleberries. They seemed to drop magically into our hands. They tasted delicious too. Huckleberries, though, are sour and had to be brought back to camp to be sweetened before they were truly palatable. Blackberries grow on vines and had to be felt for gingerly to prevent being scratched by the thorns. Moreover the berries were sometimes disappointingly sour, because the blind child was unable to distinguish between green and ripe black ones.

We carried a bucket and brought back the berries that had not been instantly devoured. These we proudly exhibited as trophies of our hike and ate with our dessert at the next meal.

Near a cool, shady spot we found miners' lettuce. We ran our fingers around the orbicular leaf, plucked off the tiny flower at its center, washed the leaf in the creek and munched on it. We even offered the cook a bunch of these leaves and asked to have them as salad for dinner, for they provide a delicious variation from the usual garden-grown lettuce.

The sense of smell can also help us to locate objects in our environment. The damp smell of the creek banks sends us a warning that water is near. We sense something to eat when the odor rises from the crushed narrow leaves of the wild onions, which we added to our miners' lettuce salad.

Unfortunately many beautiful wild flowers are not fragrant, but we discovered some that are. The California golden poppy has a not altogether pleasant smell, and there are many others that can send aromatic messages to blind children. In the late

summer the open fields are covered with yellow tarweed with its very pungent odor. Mountain misery with its fern-like leaves proclaims its presence by its strong aroma. Yarrow, all the salvias including the sages and mints are aromatic. The large shrub named by early California settlers the good herb, yerba buena, is another which the children can identify by odor.

The sounds of a summer day in the Santa Cruz Mountains are made up of the lazy hum of insects, the songs of birds punctuated and partly obliterated by man made noises, the heavy trucks on the roads and the airplanes flying overhead.

As for the insects, I often placed on the back of the children's hands a ladybird beetle or a large waterbeetle picked out of the creek. "It tickles" they would tell me. When one of these insects spread its wings and took off, we discussed the anatomy of all insects. A butterfly, they discovered, also had wings, large and fragile, easily torn unless carefully handled.

Live birds not being available, I had prepared a substitute. I obtained from the California Academy of Sciences some bird skins not up to standard for their collections. I received a number of "stuffed" birds among which were a sparrow with its thick, seed-eating bill, a shrike with its predator's hook at the end of its beak and a red-winged blackbird with its general utility bill. Thus we had samples of several types of bills which determine the eating habits of their owners. This led to the children's discussing their own eating habits and the function of their own incisors, canines and molars.

It was not possible to open out the wings of our specimens, but I had also brought several wings spread open. On these the children could feel the strong flight feathers covered at their bases, both above and beneath, by three rows of short covert fea-

thers. By holding the wings at arms length while running, the children were able to feel the resistance of the feathers against the wind.

A box of feathers yielded more experiences. We riffled the flight feathers between our fingers, separating the barbs and later smoothing them back into place. The children also found in the collection of feathers the delicately curved ones that follow the outline of the birds' bodies, and the downy ones without central shaft that serve to keep the bird warm. The children enjoyed running the soft feathers over their faces and tickling one another too.

While one could not expect experiences such as these to give children a picture of a bird in flight, they helped to clarify the concept of a bird. The children soon learned to differentiate the calls of the different birds they heard around them, the robins from the crows, the nuthatches from the chickadees, the soft coos of the doves from the trills of the house finches.

There are some experiences not related to nature study that a nature counselor is called upon to explain to a blind child. One day Jim tripped over a water pipe lying above ground. Furious at the unexpected obstacle he started to belabor me. I asked him if he knew what it was that had tripped him.

"No!" he answered, so I placed his hand on the pipe and told him to get down on his knees.

"That's the pipe," I explained, "that carries water from a tank up the hill to the kitchen."

"What's a tank and where is it?" he asked.

So we set off, he crawling in the dust, his hands sliding along the pipe. We arrived at the tank on the hill where he found the place where the pipe issued from the tank. Then with his hands he gave the tank a good, careful going over. After a bit it occurred to him to ask how the water

got into the tank, so we resumed our search and found the intake from a small damned creek farther up the hill. This project took us more than an hour to complete. Though not really nature study it put Jim in direct touch with how, in the city, he was able to turn on his faucet and have water run out.

As for my group and the other children I came to know at camp, I had a very different reaction to them upon our first meeting than when I came to know them better.

It seemed to me at first that blind children differed from normal children in their greater awareness of others. In their relationships they exhibited a gentleness and in their own helplessness sensed the helplessness of other blind children. At other times they seemed to be very cruel. Always they were reaching out with extended hands to determine what lay about them. If it was a counselor their hands touched, they were less confident than if it was a peer. In any case, they quickly became aware of the presence of people; they seemed to have developed an acute sense of hearing to answer their need. While they welcomed the sound of other people's voices they were themselves frequently silent, as though moping. Strangely enough, the blind children smile with pleasure just as do seeing children, which makes me wonder who taught them the meaning of a smile, for smiling is learned, I have always thought, by imitation. I noted also that though the lips of blind children smile, their eyes do not. And we must convey our smiles to them by the tone of our voices.

The blind, like other children, enjoy running and moving rapidly. Open space was precious to them, and they soon sensed the dimension of the playfield and ran happily across it. They did not often fall, less often, I think, than would have been the case for a seeing child. When they

bumped into obstacles they were surprised but were usually unharmed. They quickly oriented themselves by the sound of voices, which enabled them to go where they desired.

Several weeks later I was struck by the tremendous frustration of some of these blind children. They felt they must have what they wanted—or else! They used bad language, struck out, spat. They threw themselves on the ground as though like Antaeus, they might receive renewed strength from contact with the earth.

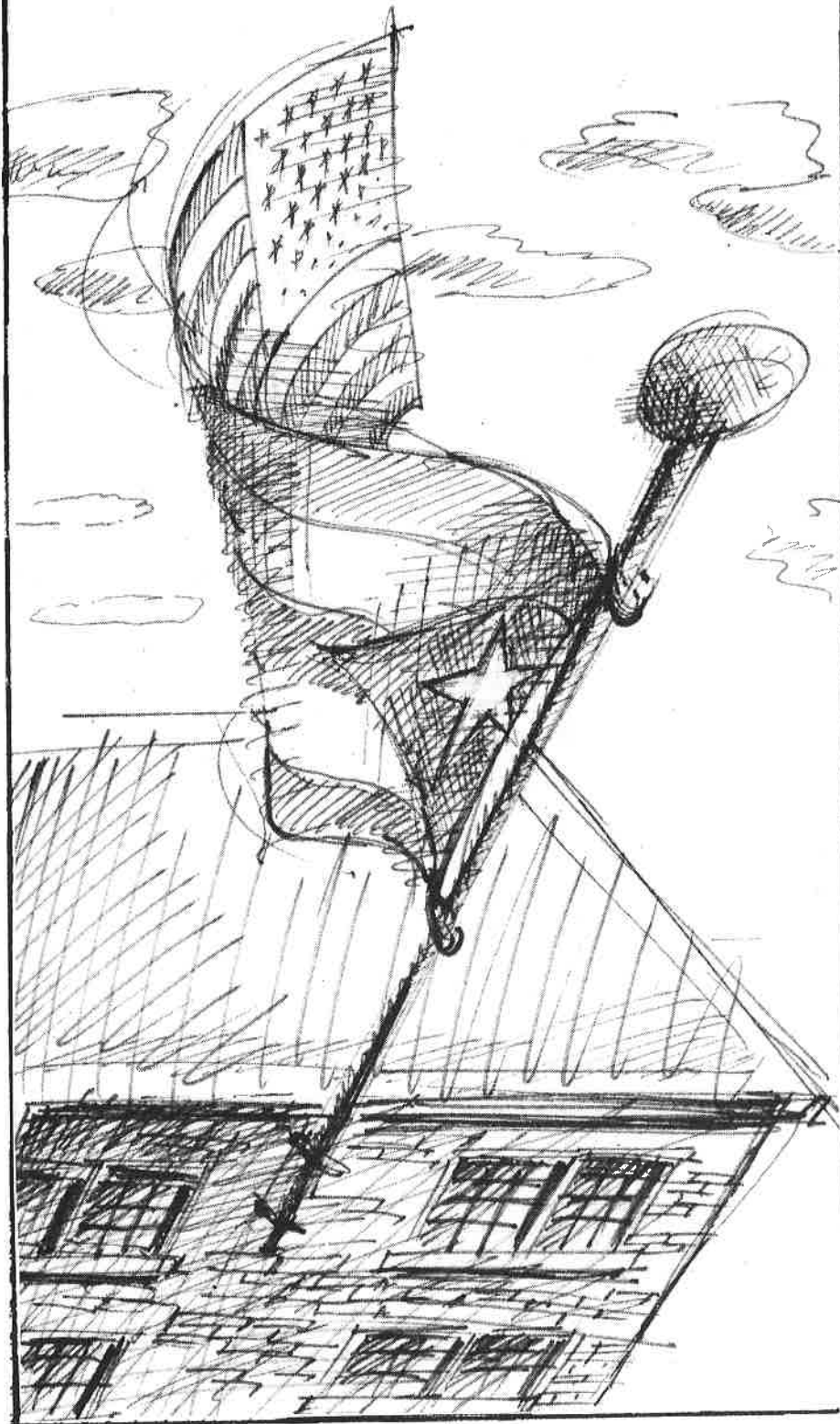
I noticed a curious habit of some of these children: they raise their eyes to look directly at the sun. I wondered whether they enjoyed the direct warmth, or whether some light does penetrate to the brain notwithstanding their useless eyes.

I was assigned at meals to a table at which were seated several youngsters with more than visual problems. Jim was one of these who despite all I could do had the habit of reaching out in all directions, even into other children's plates. His fingerprints were on the cube of butter before I could move it away from him, and he would roar with frustration when curbed. Arthur, also one of my group, was afraid of doing anything wrong and suffered sorely from timidity. It was almost impossible to reassure him. I finally came to the conclusion that the discipline exerted by his parents had been aimed not at making him happy but more acceptable to normal people. He was a charming child. I pitied him more than I did Jim, who at least had the freedom to express his desires.

Later Sylvia was moved to a table with older children. Alice had gone home with her parents on visitors' day. That left me the three little boys from whom I learned much, not only about the blind but also about seeing children. □

# Bilingual Poetry-in-the-Schools

by Julia Alvarez



I used to sing a bilingual song as a child in Santo Domingo:

*Pollito: chicken,*  
*Gallina: hen,*  
*Lapiz, pencil,*  
*Pluma: pen.*

The song was obviously mechanical (like singing your multiplication tables), but I couldn't get enough of it. What delighted me most was the idea that I had two names for the same thing. It's difficult to explain the excitement of this to someone who has not grown up in two languages—I suppose you could compare it to that small surprise of seeing twins.

In the bilingual Poetry-in-the-Schools program I just completed in an elementary school in Wilmington, Delaware, I tried to convey to the children this same sense of language wealth that comes from being a Spanish-American. Too often in these bilingual programs or programs for "special groups," we tend to focus on what is underprivileged in the kids, what has been left out, what they do not have that they must get: we must bring them up to grade level; we must make them confident and dominant in one language; or, Ay Dios, we must make them proud of who they are. Such a philosophy assumes that they aren't already proud, or if they aren't, confirms that they need to be made proud. I am not minimizing the very real difficulties, gaps, insecurities these children have endured. But why always approach them at the sorest, bleakest place in their experience? My goal during a four-week residency at Mary C. I. Williams Elementary School was to explore as a Spanish-American myself and with the kids in the classroom what special insights into language, rhythm, imagination, experience we had as products of two cultures. And, of course, we had to have fun!

But how to approach this goal.? Would I merely do a translation of the poetry program as I had given it in English: Kenneth Koch a la San Juan? I tried it in my first, combined 4th-5th grade bilingual class. Speaking in Spanish and shifting (as they do) into English whenever they didn't understand something in one lan-

gauge or the other, I asked them what they wished for. Silence. I read them wishing poems by kids in English (I translated as I went along for the benefit of those who were Spanish dominant) and they laughed and poked fun at the wishes:

I wish the sky was a great big bathtub... "Ah, man," one of the kids broke out, "What you gotta have another bathtub for? That's stupid!" Obviously these poems were not ringing true to these inner city kids. "Well," I countered, "What do you wish for?" He piped right up, "I wish I were in Puerto Rico!" The whole class clapped and yelled, "Si, si!" After two years giving poetry programs, I was cagey enough to know I could turn this outbreak to poetry by asking them to wish for things that were in Puerto Rico then. But it was precisely this "translation" of the program into this new situation that I wanted to avoid. I knew the class of mostly Puerto Rican children had responded so vehemently to what the student said because there was a homesickness, a nostalgia there that I could remember feeling for years when I first came to this country. Wishing for what was missing was paralyzing—so much was lost—but pointing out differences between then and now seemed to lead the way to some insights on the differences between the two places. Comparison rather than whine. So we started a game I christened: "Aqui no hay...pero aqui si hay" (Here there isn't...but there is) which turned into a vengeful and gleeful listing of grievances: no mangos, yucas, merengues, Reyes Magos. The American "replacements" were bleak:

*Aqui no hay mangos como soles  
pero si hay frutas plasticas  
y safacones.*

*(There are no mangos here like  
suns  
but plastic fruit  
and trash cans)*

I pointed out that there were mangos in the supermarkets and they defended their choice by saying mangos from supermarkets weren't the same as mangos from "mercados." I asked why and for awhile, they gave me the

easy answer that will never do for poetry: they just *are* different. Then, little Wanda thought out the reason I'll just give in translation: "In Puerto Rico, the mangos look grown." This was poetry, Ole!

We spent the next half hour sitting in a circle on the floor talking about what we missed about our native countries. Then—these incredible "teaching aids"—it started to snow and the kids raced to the window to watch. It struck me that we had been concentrating on the awful replacements and losses, but had not mentioned the startling new things we had never encountered before: snow for one! I made my own comparison: Before we had eaten "frio-frio" (shredded ice with syrup), but now we could eat "la nieve fria" (cold snow). They smiled knowingly; I asked them to tell me all the things they had first seen, felt, heard, tasted, touched in this country. I could hardly hear their answers—there were so many stories to tell they kept interrupting each other!

I wanted to show a class in action before I plunged into some of the insights I had working in this bilingual poetry program. I think these insights might help someone working with a cross-cultural group, not so much because they are startling, but because so little has been written about such programs. I know I would have welcomed any suggestions or ideas when I began the program in Delaware.

My goal, as I mentioned, was to concentrate on the unique vision of a bilingual, bicultural child. One of these assets can be seen in the exercise described above: these children have a wealth of images and experiences from—not one—but two cultures. Because they have lived in two cultures and two languages, they have that uncanny insight of the rootless. One of the writing ideas they enjoyed came to me through Whitman—that wanderer who wrote down the sights and smells and sounds of America. I pointed out to the children that they too were "experts," had traveled and seen a lot more than most children their age. I had them become "gypsy poets" and jot down interesting, sad, tiny events, people, sounds, smells that had captivated them on their

travels. One of the advantages of working with a bilingual group is that poems from both languages can be used in the original—Whitman in English, Lorca in Spanish (poems from *Poet in New York* were good in this exercise). Of course, the Spanish dominant students had problems with the English poems and vice versa. So I always supplied a translation or, with their help, translated the poem on the board. The students enjoyed these on-the-spot translations—like a class collaboration without the pressure to think up something and with the pleasure of "getting two poems out of one," the old loaves and fishes miracle! These translation exercises and the excitement they created gave me the idea of a charades game that could later be turned into a writing idea. I copied down words they gave me on pieces of paper: the English word on one side, the Spanish on the other. After filling a bag with wonderful and zany words, we each picked a paper and acted out the word we got in silence; whoever guessed tried to give the word in both languages. This led to a discussion on how words changed from one language to another—how at first it had been so strange to say "cup" instead of "vaso," "house" and not "casa." We wrote poems then about that first encounter with a new word in a new language: What did you think when you first heard "star"? Did you have any inkling it was an "estrella"? What did you see, smell, hear in the new sound? One of my English dominant students wrote about his encounter with the word "ola":

*If I didn't know  
what an "ola" was,  
I'd think it was a star.  
I'd think it was smoke  
in the house  
or a heavy blue coat  
to go out.*

Raul Rivera  
2nd grade

Not only do these students have two cultures and two languages to make poems out of, they also can bring these together in interesting combinations. Many contrast poems came out of describing an experience



in one country and language and the same experience in the new country and language: Pascuas in Puerto Rico versus Christmas in Delaware; something that happened in school; watching someone comb their hair in either country. For those who didn't want to use two languages or "couldn't remember" anything from Puerto Rico, I asked them to write in one language something they had seen or

smelled or touched at home that was different from the same experience in a totally American environment.

I tried as often as possible to use Spanish poets and give the children a sense of the incredible literary wealth of their native culture. They felt so excited to discover that very famous poets had come from their own countries. Neruda's odes were immediate favorites and the students all wrote

odes with a facility I had not encountered in my English classes. (Are Latins, because they come from more underdeveloped countries, much closer to the essence of objects since they have less machines to divorce them from the processes that bring them into close contact with these objects?) Guillen's *Great Zoo* poems were an excellent stimulus for their own caged or personified abstractions:

---

*Los Celos*

*Los celos son mellizas.  
Una tiene una muñeca  
y la otra no tiene nada.  
Una tiene celos  
y la otra no.*

*Jealousies*

*Jealousies are identical twins.  
One has a doll  
the other has nothing.  
One is jealous  
and the other one no.*

Daisy Rodriguez  
3rd grade

*La Soledad*

*La Soledad  
es  
una flor  
que  
crece por todo el mundo  
y  
nadie  
la ve.*

*Solitude*

*Solitude  
is  
a flower  
that grows all over the world  
and  
nobody  
sees  
it.*

Lissette  
5th grade

*El Amor*

*El Amor  
es  
un niño colorado.*

*Love*

*Love  
is  
a red boy.*

Jose M.  
1st grade

*Pez,  
tu estás en el agua,  
Pez.  
Nadando,  
Pez,  
en el agua.  
Soy yo,  
Pez.  
Juega,  
Pez,  
en el agua.  
Soy yo, Pez, una mariposa.*

*Fish,  
you are in the water,  
Fish.  
Swimming,  
Fish,  
in the water.  
It's me,  
Fish.  
Play,  
Fish,  
in the water.*

*It's me, Fish, a butterfly.*

Julio Rosa  
2nd grade

*Oda A La Naranja*

*Naranja,  
tu pareces una sortija de oro,  
pero a ti te comemos  
hasta que no queda nada  
menos la cascara y las semillas.  
Pero de esas semillas  
salen tus hijos,  
crecen como tu  
pero tambien nos los comemos.  
Naranja,  
no vale tener hijos  
si van a morir  
en mi boca.*

*Ode to the Orange*

*Orange,  
you look like a gold ring,  
but we eat you up  
until there's nothing left  
but skin and seeds.  
Your sons grow  
from those seeds,  
they look like you  
and we eat them too.  
Orange,  
it's not worth having kids  
if they're going to die  
in my mouth.*

Lissette Rivera  
Sonia Roman  
Jose Rodriguez  
5th and 6th grades

*El Silencio*

*El Silencio  
es  
una aráñita  
tejiendo  
alas.*

*Cuando  
termine,  
sube  
a  
las nubes.*

*Silence*

*Silence  
is  
a little spider  
knitting  
wings.*

*When  
she's done,  
she rises  
to  
the clouds.*

Angel  
2nd grade

*La Muerte*

*La muerte es un camión  
cargado de silencio  
que va al hospital.  
El doctor lo esta guiando.*

*Death*

*Death is a truck  
loaded with silence  
going to the hospital.  
The doctor is driving it.*

Javier  
2nd grade

*Oda A Los Labios*

*Labios,  
tu pareces una maquina de  
besos.  
Los enamorados te usan  
mucho...  
y las madres y los padres  
también  
cuando los hijos se van de  
su lado.  
Me ayudas a hablar  
a leer  
a rezar.*

*Labios,  
por fin  
encontrastes otros labios  
en la cara  
de una muchacha.*

*Ode to Lips*

*Lips,  
you're a kissing machine.  
Lovers use you alot...  
and mothers and fathers as well  
when their children leave their  
side.*

*You help me to talk  
to read  
to pray.*

*Lips,  
at last  
you've found other lips  
on the face  
of a girl.*

Jose Rodriguez  
6th grade

*What I Remember*

*I left Puerto Rico  
when I was a year old.  
I used to call my mother,  
"Mami."  
I used to go all around the  
house  
playing with my ball.  
I used to smell coffee, rich  
like mountain grown.  
My mother used to put me on  
hot sand  
without shoes  
and my feet got so hot  
that I had to learn how to walk.*

Angel Rivera  
3rd grade

*Puerto Rico*

*Si volara a Puerto Rico  
me iría al mar  
a bañarme en el agua salada.  
Si volara a Puerto Rico  
me iría a los montes  
a trabajar en la tierra.  
Si volara a Puerto Rico  
me tiraría al sol  
para sacarme el frío  
de mi cuerpo.*

*Puerto Rico*

*If I flew to Puerto Rico  
I'd go to the sea  
and bathe in salt water.  
If I flew to Puerto Rico  
I'd go to the woods  
to work on the earth.  
If I flew to Puerto Rico  
I'd throw myself in the sun  
to take out the cold  
in my bones.*

Luis Olivera  
6th grade

*Cuando El Viento*

*Cuando el viento sopla  
los árboles bailan.*

*Cuando el viento sopla  
mi corazón me late.*

*Cuando el viento sopla  
los pajaritos se vuelven papeles,  
bailan,  
y los siente el viento de mi alma.*

*When The Wind*

*When the wind blows  
the trees dance.*

*When the wind blows  
my heart beats.*

*When the wind blows  
the birds become papers,  
they dance,  
in the wind from my soul.*

Angel Manuel  
5th grade

*Cuando Yo Era Chiquita*

*Mi mamá se fue al doctor  
cuando yo nací.*

*Y despues cuando vino  
a ver,  
ya yo tenia un año.*

*Donde mi abuela  
nadie me estaba velando,  
yo—como no sabia nada—  
me estaba comiendo la tierra.*

*When I Was Little*

*My mother went to the doctor  
when I was born.*

*And before she  
knew it,  
I was one year old.*

*At my grandmother's  
no one was watching me  
and since I didn't know  
any better*

*I was eating earth.*

Daisy Rodriguez  
3rd grade

*Sonidos*

*Estoy en mi cama.*

*Oigo  
a mi mamá bajando  
por las escaleras.*

*Oigo  
un carro guiando solo.*

*Oigo  
una mujer caminando por  
la acera.*

*Ella está hablando con  
las piedras,  
diciendole que se acuéstén.*

*Es tarde.*

*Oigo un gato  
que llora con hambre.*

*Oigo  
el corazón haciendo ruido  
como si alguien me estuviera  
dando en el pecho.*

*Sounds*

*I'm in bed.*

*I hear  
my mother going  
downstairs.*

*I hear  
a car driving itself.*

*I hear  
a woman walking on the  
sidewalk.*

*She's talking to the stones,  
telling them to sleep.*

*It's late.*

*I hear a cat  
crying with hunger.*

*I hear  
my heart make noises  
as if someone were  
beating on my chest.*

Rafael Lopez  
3rd grade

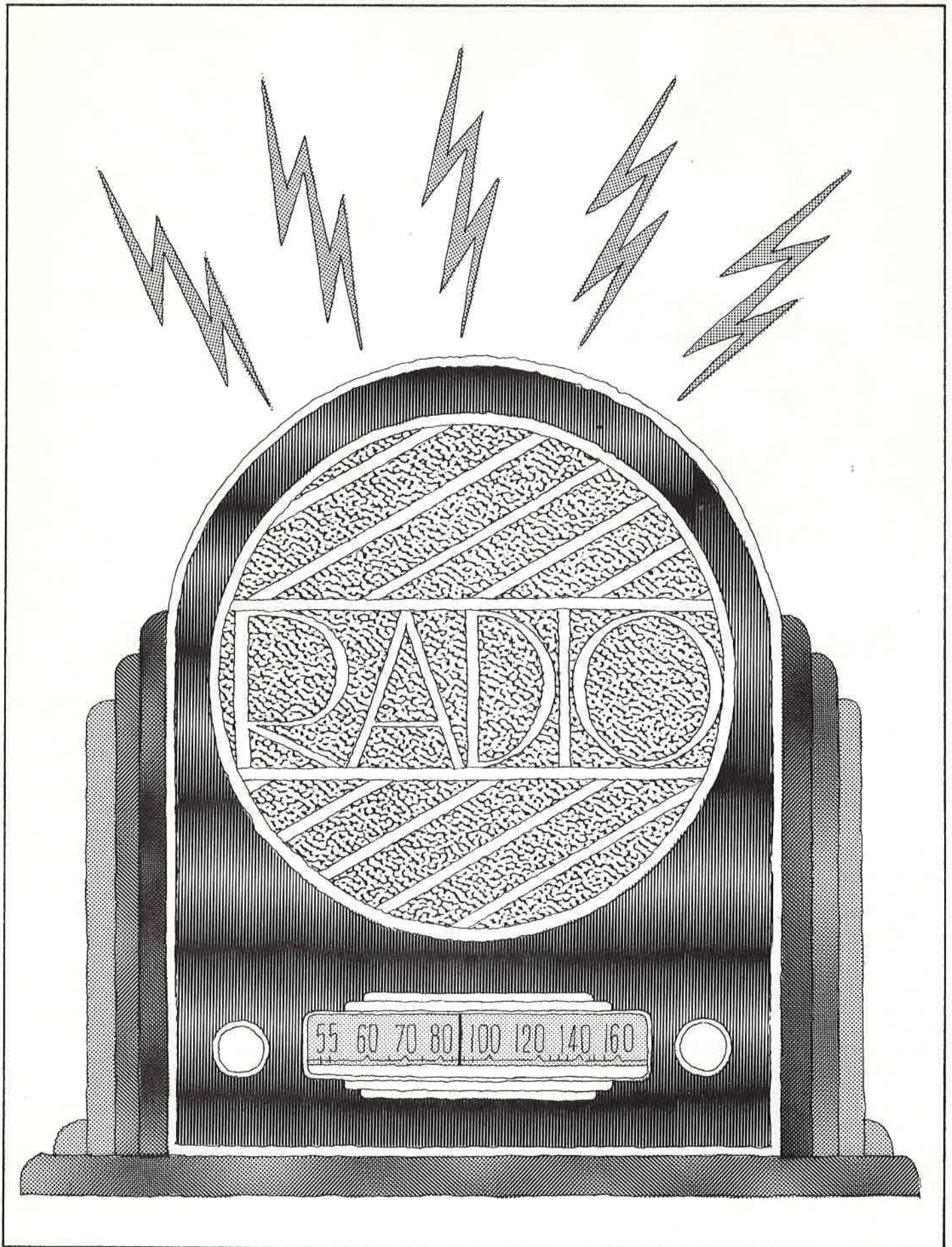
*El Prisionero*

*Estuve 99 años  
en una jaula  
por matar un perro.  
Y le alcé la voz  
a los policias.  
Por poco me colgaron.  
Desde ese tiempo  
me acostumbre a ver  
barrillas negras.  
Mañana cuando salga  
me van hacer falta  
esas cebras que me tenian  
preso.*

*The Prisoner*

*For ninety-nine years  
I lived behind bars  
for killing a dog.  
I raised my voice  
at the cops.  
They almost hung me.  
Since that time  
I got used  
to black stripes.  
Tomorrow when they set  
me free  
I'm going to miss  
these zebras that imprisoned  
me.*

Jose Rodriguez  
6th grade





# Radio in the Attic

by Joan Lopate

I was initiated into the Teachers and Writers Radio Project at PS 75 three weeks before the '77 Christmas holiday break. We had our first official meeting in the dusty attic room intended for the radio station, among the old animal cages and discarded stage scenery. I thought it strange that this good-sized, well-lit and windowed room in the school with a raised stage area at one end, had only been used as a storage closet. It was off the beaten track, unknown to many teachers, and its quiet separateness would make it ideal for a radio station. A couple of carpets had been haphazardly strewn about and there, in an alcove, almost camouflaged, was a cluster of audio equipment.

The head of the '75 writing team (and my brother) Phillip Lopate, had

anticipated a need for a "station manager" who would develop and supervise the new facility, creating and executing the laws concerning the use of the equipment and room. Up till then, the artists were coming into school a few hours a week, working on their radio projects, sometimes competing for equipment, and then disappearing. There was as yet no one to watch over the place, making sure people were responsible. A clean-up detail had to be devised, the materials had to be inventoried and organized, and the space made amenable and efficient. And the kids who came up, whether working with an artist or on their own, needed to know that somebody would be up there most days to talk to and plan with. As a volunteer I would give as much time as I could

spare (I had another part-time job which paid the bills) to be that continuous presence, the den mother to brood over the station, and make it accessible and comprehensible to people. I am a painter and hadn't any technical experience with radio or as an adult functioning in an elementary school, but I had a real itch to learn. For years I had been fascinated by the creative teaching methods and the resulting products which came out of the Teachers and Writers programs, especially at PS 75. I never pictured myself teaching such a foreign medium, but I considered this odd opportunity a good test of my resourcefulness and my real feelings about kids and schools.

Paul McIssac, the WBAI-FM producer who was part of the original Children's Radio Project proposal and who had been doing children's programs on WBAI, was present, and so was Dan Mack, the technical consultant who had set up the PS 75 broadcast system. The wiring had been laid; it could already function technically; but we didn't know what we wanted to transmit over it. We spoke about the current capabilities of the station and its production potentials. Two concepts of the layout of the space were considered; one involved separating the broadcast (stage) area from the rest of the room (planned for recording, editing, rehearsal and performance) by a moveable wall. The other more simply relied on careful scheduling for use of the entire space. (This subject eventually resolved itself when it appeared that there wasn't the money or manpower to make the wall. But a beautiful hand-printed-by-kids curtain was later donated so we could alter the space for live performances.)

The very afternoon of that first meeting, we scavenged some old carpets from the seedy Paris Hotel across the street, and commandeered a whole class to help us carry them up to the station. These dubious remnants served to "deaden" the room for better quality recording and broadcasting sound. The various colors and patterns had an unforeseen and happy decorative effect, and the room already seemed cozier.

I spent the first two weeks in my eagle's nest organizing and cleaning. I drew up diagrams of the "system" and how to use it, and labeled and ar-

ranged the connecting cables along a wall conveniently outfitted with hooks. I took the time to really familiarize myself with the equipment, enlisting the help and support of Dan Mack, and, once satisfied that I could use it, began training my first set of engineers. Larne, Jamal, and Elizabeth came on recommendation from Mr. Tempel's 5-6 class and were exceptionally interested and capable kids. They picked up the techniques rapidly but kept getting in each other's way, each one wanting to do it all. There were times when I wanted to tie Jamal into his seat in front of the tape recorder so he'd stop running around giving his own independent cues to actors, and haranguing us with his opinions, however good-humored.

Larne, very serious and astute at twelve years old, builds Heath Kits, and claims he "knows a lot about electronics." I assigned him control of the "mixing console," a Bogen amplifier which was the brain of the whole system. There were volume level controls for three microphones, and controls for record turntable, radio receiver, and tape recorder, all "patched" into the Bogen. Larne was learning the difficult task of coordinating the volume levels from, at most, three sources, one of which (mike) had three level controls itself. He was expected to receive and give cues to performers/announcers and to Jamal, on tape recorder and turntable. (Elizabeth, disenchanted with technology, opted for the glamor of an acting role.)

One of our first plays was a complicated dramatic production with musical "intro" and "outro" on record, and live dialogue interspersed with taped sound effects. Poor Larne had to go from fading out the music subtly, to turning up the mikes rapidly, and then bringing in the effects on cue. This proved too much for him and we decided to edit (cut and splice) the sound effects into the tape after the dialog scenes were recorded.

It was a five minute play with Phillip with some 3rd-4th grade kids. The acting became quite polished, since they got to rehearse over and over as we worked out technical problems with each take. It took hours to record this short and simple piece, but it was worth all the sweating and insults from the actors, because we were discovering how to operate the

system more efficiently. Hereafter, the adult supervising would be responsible for giving everyone cues and, where possible, many sound effects would be created spontaneously by the players to simplify production. (The latter device proved very successful, since kids have a large repertoire of sound effects!)

Meanwhile, Sue Willis was working with another group, teaching them editing of audio tapes with some material which she could now transfer from cassette onto reel-to-reel tape recorder. We were building a stockpile of material and we began to think seriously about broadcasting.

It was decided that we would have our debut broadcast the day before the holiday break. That left little more than a week to organize material and to notify the school of our intentions. I distributed fliers announcing the event to the classrooms, taking this opportunity to introduce myself to everyone and to tell them about the station. The idea of the broadcast perplexed many people and I was often asked if the program would be "picked up" on the PA system. No, I said, they must have their own AM radios, even transistors, in the classroom to hear us, just like commercial radio. Could we be heard all over New York? No, only in PS 75!

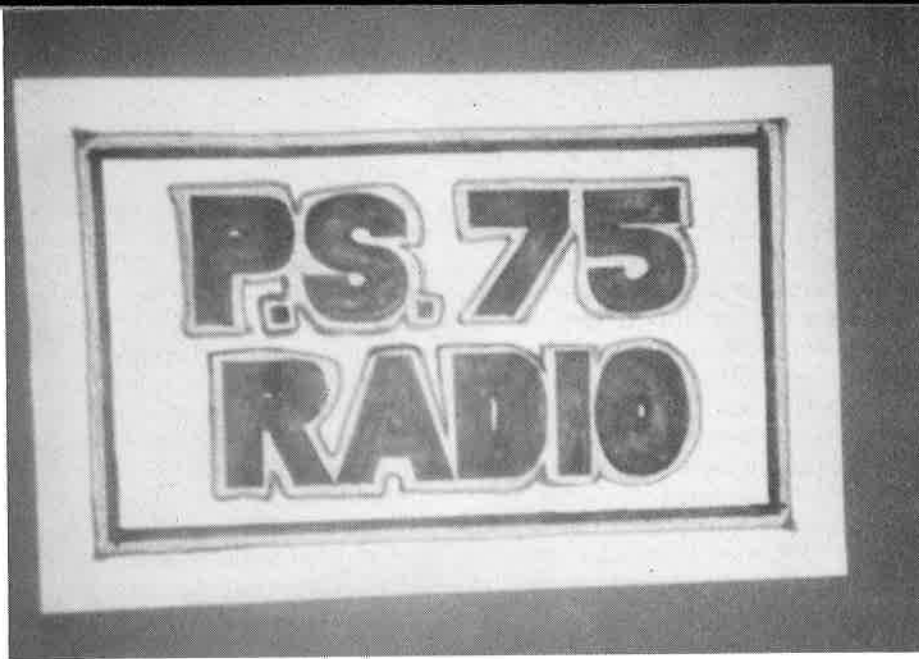
We wanted to gear our programming to Christmas and to offer a service to the school, plus demonstrate the new station's capabilities. We planned a short promotional program for the morning, to introduce the new station, with bits of recorded and live items. The afternoon would be devoted to music for classroom Christmas parties, with live deejays announcing their favorite records. Sue had already collected some kids who wanted to be deejays.

Dawn, Kim, Flexman and "Mean Green" Carlton were Title I kids who liked music and laid claims to extensive record collections. We sat around the round table in the station discussing what announcers on music shows do. These kids had obviously spent a lot of time hearing radio but hadn't really listened. I reminded them that besides announcing the names of the tunes and the artists, deejays also give the time, station ID, weather, news, commercials, dedications, etc.... Then I took out a mike and handed it to one of them. It was nervously pushed back at me. One after the other, these

kids who had seemed outspoken froze in front of a mike which wasn't even hooked up. Clearly they were embarrassed in the presence of one another. Only "Mean Green" Carlton had a radio persona worked out, with all the jive talk and deejay cliches one could live without. But even he seemed strapped for *real* things to say, stuff that informs people, nice things, filler, so that the engineer would have the time to take the record off the turntable and put on another one. I worried about long confused silences and muffled anxieties going out over the air. We really didn't have the time to rehearse until they got the feel of it, so I told them to go home and get their records in order, write up two copies of their playlist (one for the engineer and one for them), and bring it in the next day. When I saw them again, I had prepared sets of "cue cards" with fillers, snatches of copy for them to refer to in case they went blank on the air, stuff like "This is your deejay...", "The time now is...", "Everyone up here in the Penthouse wishes you a very Merry Christmas..." etc. When we finally went on the air, the kids knew how to use these cue cards and did so repeatedly. They even improvised Christmas caroling without any prompting. Without the other deejays around to judge them, they loosened up a lot, relishing their power of autonomy and the sensation that people were listening to them at that very instant.

The morning program went off successfully too. I had edited together some short plays produced by Phillip and Sue, a public affairs piece about the cafeteria food by Paul McIssac's kids, and a "commercial" for a film reviews program produced by Pedro, the resident-video/film artist. This was coordinated by a script read by a pair of live announcers. Each recorded piece was separated from the other by white leader tape so Jamal had only to play back the tape on cue and "pause" when the announcer was speaking. We also played an Abbot and Costello comedy skit from an album. T&W administrators came to observe and their cameras flashed, making us all feel like stars at a preview.

During the broadcast, we were getting frequent visits from all over the school with reports of poor sound quality and signal instability. These problems were attributable to the fre-



quency band of our transmitter which was too near a powerful commercial station's band and to inadequate radios in the classrooms. After the holidays a new crystal was installed which would transmit at a better location on the radio dial, and cut down on any interference from fluorescent lighting fixtures. Another antenna was laid on the roof, extending the signal range to the whole school. Finally, a good table radio was purchased to lend to deprived classes.

The next time we broadcast, we offered a full-day's assortment of news/sports reports, musical-comedy variety, and a formal debate. Phillip scouted the classrooms observing reactions to the programs. He saw that most attention was given to life/spoken items, especially performances by kids, but recorded music made them think they had tuned into a commercial station and so they played with the radio dial, trying to find us. An exception was the classic radio drama, "The Lone Ranger," with the exciting "William Tell Overture." Segments that went on too long (15 minutes) lost many listeners. At the end of the day, we realized that a full day of programming was too much for the engineers, and it was unrealistic to hope that classes could give much of the day to listening, even if it was only once a week.

Fortunately we hadn't wasted a lot more time and nervous energy before we stumbled upon a solution that probably would have been obvious to an experienced elementary school radio programmer (does such a job exist?). That was to have a short segment of broadcasting each day, at a

regularly-scheduled time, with a different producer responsible for each day. This took the onus off classes to listen to long broadcast days, and the pressure off engineers and producers. In this way we were also able to get more people involved as engineers. The whole system worked admirably, almost eliminating the traffic problems we had before when we ushered people in and out for segued (back-to-back) programs. We had no trouble at all filling half-hour program slots. On days that we had nothing "live" to offer, we could draw dramatic selections from our ever-growing collection of tapes and records of the "Golden Age of Radio." Naturally we offered much live programming, many with educational and informational content, such as the Bi-Lingual Show, The Learning Abilities Program, Art & Leisure Notices for Kids, presentation of classroom research projects, and informal discussions about popular subjects relevant to kids. Karen Hubert used this last format on her show, moderating some terrific talks about teachers, pets, family relationships, love, sex, marriage, and growing up.

Our public affairs specialist, Paul McIsaac, began a serial "Slavery in America." Part "You Were There," part "Roots," this semi-improvised dramatization of the slavery experience was broadcast live with fifteen or so third and fourth graders. On this occasion I observed the "one-hand-held-mike" style production, which was very effective in following the kids' jittery or dramatic physical movements. Previously we had used multiple miking, either standing or

suspended from the ceiling. This stationery mike set-up limited a speaker's movement (although it insured more controllable sound levels, while cutting down on extraneous noise). Eventually, we relied more and more on the one hand-held mike system, especially useful in our "round-table" discussions, to insure speaking in turn.

Meanwhile, we were conscientiously making airchecks (recordings) of shows we considered valuable, for the sake of a record and for re-airing in the future. These were done on cassette.

One time, in the middle of a juicy panel discussion of a controversial Judy Blume book kids are reading, called *Forever*, our electrical power failed. Fatalist that I am, I assumed that the station had overloaded the school wiring and blown itself out. Phillip, who had just asked a sixth-grader about the sexual passages in the book, ran out saying "Don't worry, I'll fix it." He returned almost immediately with some kids and informed us that half of the school was temporarily short-circuited (having nothing to do with the radio station). While we debated whether to sit and wait for the juice to come back on or to adjourn until after lunch, I handed a cassette recorder and mike to Ernesto and told him to go out into the school and "get the story." He knew just what to do. Fifteen minutes later we were back on the air, and the discussion resumed, its former heat undiminished. At the end of the book talk, we aired an "up-to-the-minute" report by Ernesto on the "PS 75 Blackout '78," with interviews with security staff and students. The station once again demonstrated its application as an immediate and accessible medium of communication in the school. We were all delighted with the way we exploited a crisis situation, just like the professional media!

At the Writing Team's regular weekly meeting, we discussed the need for a standard list of procedures so that engineers and adult supervisors could "turn on" the station each day before broadcast. Up to this point we were relying on a series of instructions and diagrams pinned up on the walls. Although these visual cues were helpful, they presented haphazard fragments of the regular procedures sometimes leaving out essential steps. Sue composed the "Engineers' Checklist," which was easy

to interpret and gave our engineers a sense of professionalism, as they seemed to enjoy checking the boxes as each step in the process was carried out. (Needless to say, the adults were as dependent on the checklist as any of the engineers.)

Meanwhile, I continued my efforts to make the station more intimate, comfortable and appealing. I had located an old couch, hung some posters donated by kids, and directed a monumental fabric wall design project with some of Ms. Lowy's 3-4 graders. A number of regulars came up at any time to see what was happening, and I could never make out what excuses those kids gave their teachers, but nobody ever complained so I assumed it was okay. I would often be able to make immediate use of this resource of kid-power, giving them tasks and errands to do, or start working with them spontaneously if the studio was free. This is how I got some wonderful improvisational drama one afternoon with some 5-6 graders. Alice had done improv at camp and Kim was an adept improviser by nature. Jimmy was just eager to be in on whatever was up. I thought up a situation to start them off—a girl is going out on her first date and she's breaking the news to her parents. All three instantly agreed on roles and a conflict to spice up the action: father thinks that daughter is too young while mother doesn't. A loud and violent argument ensued that was so engrossing for the three that they kept forgetting the mike and physically acting out their parts. The result was truly exciting, the dialogue perfect, the acting absolutely convincing. We aired the recording of this improv and followed it by a discussion of the characterizations created, the technique of improvisation, and feelings about real parents' responsibility.

Our broadcasts were becoming almost routine by the time we offered classrooms deals on radios. The principal, Mr. Mercado, had had the idea. He had seen a good and inexpensive radio at Korvettes and told Phil that he was prepared to put up half the price for each class that could raise the rest. A class cake sale or bazaar was all that was needed. Only a few classes actually took advantage of the offer, however. In fact, even though each staff member was informed about our programming weekly, we were aware that hardly more than two





or three classes listened each day. The fact of poor listenership forced a re-assessment of the goals of the project: does the value to the project's participants compensate for the failure to reach a wide audience?

It was easy to see the benefits of the radio project on those kids directly involved in it. The radio was a very graspable medium, and immediate and relevant to those interested. For the self-motivated kids, those who wanted to write or perform, they had a ready-made outlet for their creativity, and they could have complete control over their projects, from conception through production. The kids with academic and motivational problems would happily agree to write, read aloud, create spontaneously, control "complex" technical equipment, and organize projects and see them through to completion. And naturally there were the benefits of cooperation in joint concerns. Was it so important that there be an avid listening audience?

We strongly maintained the answer was yes. It has been proven time and again that nothing motivates creativity in children quite as efficiently as the reward of affirmation by a real audience. The radio station's transmitter was ultimately the most important piece of equipment in the station, simply by its power to evoke creativity with the promise of ultimate or immediate broadcast. Our school listenership had to be incited.

In hopes of sparking that audience and an even broader one, namely parents, we appealed to our original mentors and supporters, WBAI-FM. We were fortunate to secure a regular weekly half-hour show at an evening prime-time slot for citywide broadcasts. We also resurrected an idea which had been suggested earlier on—converting the Writing Room to a listening room during the daytime WPS 75 broadcasts. While the show was preparing to be broadcast, one of us would scout around for interested listeners, going into classrooms with direct appeals. We also changed the time of broadcasting from A.M. to P.M., the afternoon being a looser part of the school day.

We considered creating programming that would be "sure" ways of building an audience, like quiz shows or contests. It seemed easy simply to ask listeners with questions about the subject being discussed or the feature

of the program to come up to the station and ask, sort of a "walk up" instead of "phone up." This seemed to work quite well and gave many kids who had never visited the station a chance to see it in an active state and participate instantaneously.

In the second week of June, the radio station and the video closet on the third floor were plundered. Most of the equipment in the station was taken, although the recorded tapes were fortunately not touched. Only the transmitter, the old turntable and the microphones were left. We were crushed, devastated. The kids were more upset than we were. But in a way, it was a convenient way to end the project. Things had started to wind up by this time, summer vacation being so near, the weather so nice, and most programs had been completed. There was only one thing still planned for the station. That was a visit to City Hall and an interview with Mayor Koch by Mrs. Selig's 5-6 class.

Mrs. Selig had been invited to participate in the radio project since its inception. She promised she would, but only in a serious and important way, so that her students would be assured of listeners. She and her class had written to the Mayor, asking him to join them for a question and answer session. He accepted and a month was spent in the careful drafting of questions and their memorization. We rehearsed in the station, and I got to play mayor. (I tried to answer everything out of both sides of my mouth.) A special Saturday morning time slot was promised for airing the recording of the event on WBAI.

The big day arrived. I collected my recording gear and followed the class out into the street. We were all excited, the girls, well-scrubbed in dresses, some of the boys in suits or double knits. They clutched worn scraps of paper with their questions to be able to rehearse up till the last minute. On the subway, walking down Chambers Street, on the steps of City Hall as we waited to be admitted, they repeated their parts like automata. We were ushered into the Blue Room, decked out with chandeliers, flags and a podium, but still intimate. My job was easy because I could plug our tape recorder into the system installed in the room for that purpose. Kids spoke in hushed, excited tones, twisting in their seats from time to

time, to catch the Mayor's entrance.

At last he arrived. Everyone rose as though he were a judge. The kids broke into spontaneous cheers and applause and whispered to each other how much Koch looked like Frank Purdue. When we got underway, the Mayor was surprised at the formality and preparedness of the group, each kid standing in turn and asking rather tough questions. I thought his answers bore a resemblance to mine when I acted mayor, but naturally he wasn't challenged as much. After the session, and another standing ovation, we were treated to a tour of the upstairs museum. We left for home feeling rather proud of the good show put on by all, and with many more Koch fans than we started with.

It just might be that radio will never mean again what it once did. Since the advent of TV, kids don't identify radio with a maximum attention medium. For most kids, radio means music. They sing along to familiar tunes and mentally blank out all the verbiage, or switch to other stations for more music when news or interviews are on. So, at the very least, the radio project changed some kids' concept of radio as a medium, demonstrating the range of its potential.

My own role became clearer as the year went on. At the beginning, I wondered what I was really there for. I seemed to be providing technical assistance for a field in which I had no technical background. But the technical problems were surmountable. The real challenge was defining my position in relation to the kids and the teachers and the other artists. One of the ultimate compensations was that I had complete creative run at the station, and I was able to use it to follow my own inclinations and work with kids in supporting their interests. For instance, I coordinated an ambitious series of programs on Space Science and the origins of the universe. Also, the opportunity to collaborate with other Teachers & Writers artists who relied upon me not only technically but creatively was gratifying. The station became a hub of activity at all times, and was felt by everyone to have been a success. The WPS 75 project showed me that what is needed to make such local radio stations work is not necessarily sophisticated equipment of technical know-how, but people who will care, be there, and follow-through. □

# “The Club”

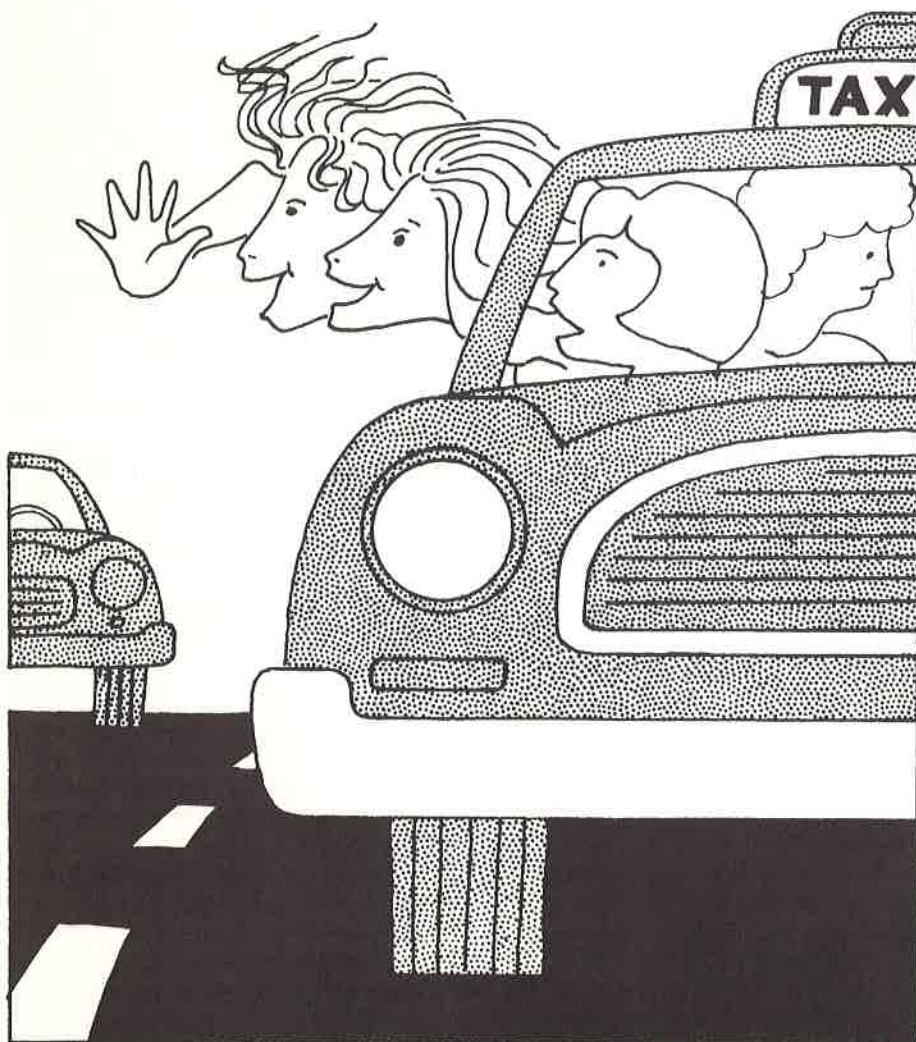
by Judi Tatti

All the cabs going uptown on 8th Avenue were on the right side of the street. It was easier for me to wave a cab over to the left side rather than haul the girls across. As I waved a checker, the light turned red, I turned to check the girls. The five of them were lined up near the curb, arm-in-arm, swaying, bouncing and singing: “I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream.” We were on our way to an ice cream parlor to celebrate the broadcast of their radio play.

The girls piled into a cab, told the driver they had just been on the radio and offered to sign autographs for him. Something had peaked in them. They were proud of their play, of themselves as a group. Proud of what they had achieved together. Their excitement and energy flooded in all directions. They rolled down the windows and screamed to the other cabs, cars and busses, “We’re stars.”

I got involved in the radio project at P.S. 75 through doing some research for Phillip Lopate. The research acquainted me with the Teachers & Writers Collaborative and stimulated in me a lot of thinking and excitement about teaching. I was in the second year of a two year graduate program in creative writing, and I was taking courses in education; I realized I didn’t want a whole year to go by without teaching. I mentioned to Phillip that I was looking for a teaching situation where I could volunteer a couple of days a week to teach writing. He suggested P.S. 75 where they would be setting up a closed circuit radio station in the school where the kids would be able to broadcast their writing. In November I began working with a group of girls from Mr. Brennan’s 5-6 class who were interested in writing stories and poems for the radio project.

After doing a number of writing exercises using the tape recorder to make the girls more aware of how language is used when you’re just listening to it, when it’s being broadcast over the radio, I decided that a play would best lend itself to a group writing project. I began with a drama exercise I had used in the past when I taught remedial writing to eighth- and ninth-graders. The exercise had been successful in getting the students comfortable with using their own language in writing, and also in teaching them characterization. The exercise



was to get up and improvise scenes and then sit down and continue writing the scene or a stream of consciousness about their character from the language they used in the improvisation. When I did this with these 5-6's an interesting thing started happening that didn't happen with the older kids. The older kids used their own language in the improvs and drew from their own experiences. When the ten year olds got up and did it they would parody adult behavior and use pseudo-sophisticated adult jargon. One girl used a British accent. I was intrigued, but I wasn't sure how to cut through this—how to get them to be themselves. I had asked Phillip earlier if he would come in and observe what I was doing from time to time. He came and observed the second class of improvs the girls did. I told Phillip what I was doing—about trying to get them to understand the concept of characterization through acting and then apply it to their writing. He explained that I was proceeding in too fragmented and tedious a fashion: I had to show them the whole picture earlier on. I couldn't isolate the idea of characterization from action, and from that slowly take them into the process of writing a play. They had to know where they were going.

We began the next class by discussing what the play would be about. I asked them to stay with something that they knew happened to girls their age. They decided that the play would be about a club: an anti-pollution, girls-lib club. Then we tried to figure out what would take place in the club that would cause a conflict. They discussed the different things people do in clubs, then one girl came up with an idea for a conflict; one girl would want her friend to join the club and the rest of the club members wouldn't want anyone new in the club. Ayesha decided that she would be the girl who wanted her friend Wendy to join, and Joannie decided that she would

be the girl who was most against Wendy joining. Laura took on the role of the mediator, trying to be understanding of Joannie's argument and Ayesha's and trying to get everybody to see both sides. Abby at first took Ayesha's side, but then decided that it was more important for her character to be the bossiest member and to see that the meetings didn't get out of order. She would yell above everyone's voice if the arguments got too heated, or if things started to get too confusing. Abby didn't really take either person's side, she went back and forth—sometimes agreeing with Joannie, sometimes agreeing with Ayesha, but she made sure she always had the last word in any discussions.

After the girls decided what roles their characters would take in the club, they then got up and improvised the first club meeting where Ayesha brings up the idea of Wendy joining.

They were using their own language and acting like themselves—like ten years olds, they weren't imitating adults. They were creating some very good dialogue, on their feet, as they were moving through the improvs. I put a tape recorder on to catch the dialogue so they could build on it and use it in writing the scene.

After the first improvisation it was obvious to Joannie and everyone else that she had to have a good reason for why she didn't want Ayesha's friend Wendy in the club. She just couldn't keep responding to Ayesha's asking "Why not?" with "because, because, because" and give no reasons. Joannie thought about it for a while and then came up with the idea: "I know, because Wendy's mother and my mother are friends and I'm afraid Wendy is gonna tell my mother about everything we do in the club and I'll get in trouble."

They re-improvised the scene with Joannie using this as her reason. Ayesha's reply to it was "You're lying. Wendy's not like that." So then it be-

came obvious to Joannie that she had to say why she thought Wendy would tattle. She came up with the story: "Once when my baby brother was bothering me, I hit him, and I told Wendy not to say anything to her mother because I'd get in trouble for it, and she said she wouldn't but she did and I got punished for a whole month."

Joannie's argument was sound, she won everyone's sympathy but Ayesha's.

They enjoyed acting out their roles in the improvs and coming up with lines for their characters, but when the improvs were over they didn't want to sit down and write about what they had just created in the acting. Transforming this exercise into a piece of writing was going against the grain of what they had just done. When I had tried to move the acting to writing with the eighth- and ninth-graders it was successful but this group didn't understand why they had to stop everything they were doing and narrow it down to printed words on the page. Why couldn't they just keep acting? That was fun. Why couldn't they just keep doing that?

I used the tape recorder to catch the lines of dialogue the girls were creating during the improvisations. And also, I would write down parts of a scene as the girls were discussing it. One girl would tell me what her character would say, then another girl would react to it and tell me to write down her reaction. This became a method I used a lot, and I think it was very important for them to see me, right in the moment, writing down their dialogue and making it part of the play.

I would go home and listen to the tapes of the improvisations and bring in typed copies of the scenes. I edited out the lines that were redundant and that stopped the action of the play. I told them that I was doing this and explained to them why, and they had

no objections to it. They just wanted to get on with more improvising and more scenes. So the writing they were doing was coming from the improvised scenes that I was transcribing and from the dialogue they were telling me to write down as they were thinking it up. I didn't change any of their dialogue, but sometimes I did re-order it so that the scene moved more dramatically.

Many of the lessons would start with the group reading through a type-written copy of the last scene they improvised or dictated to me, and they'd take off from there and continue writing more.

At one point the group agreed that the next scene should be about Joannie in her room by herself, so Joannie went off and wrote a monologue for herself and brought it back as the next scene. A couple of weeks later, Laura said she thought the monologue should be longer, so Joannie and Laura rewrote the monologue together while the other girls worked on rewriting old scenes or discussing and/or writing new ones.

For myself, the part of the process of creative writing that makes it art is deciding what you leave in and what you take out. In this situation I was making those decisions for the girls. So I had to ask myself, what was I teaching them? Was I really teaching them how to write a play? I had a stack of different versions of improvised scenes that I had transcribed from the tapes and a stack of different pieces of dialogue they had had me write down. I decided that they should see how much they actually put into writing this play. It was one thing for me to tell them that I went home and reorganized the material for them, but if they saw all the different pieces that went into making up their clean typed copies they would understand better what my part was in it and also see how many different ideas they had come up with and how many stages they had gone

through. So I started the next lesson by handing each of them a typed, clean copy of scenes one through six and also showed them the different versions that got us there and all the different fragments of dialogue that had somehow come together to make some sense in the play. Then we continued writing more scenes for the play.

I realized that the question of whether or not I was teaching them creative writing or art was irrelevant; the fact that they were excited about, and involved in this project together was the most important thing that was happening.

The roles that they chose for their characters as members of the club were dramatized versions of their own feelings about their membership in the group. While they were learning how to work out the group dynamics for the club in the play, they were also learning about and working out their own personal feelings about being a member of this small writing group. So much of the story and dialogue was growing out of a situation that was very immediate to their own interpersonal development. This parallel of roles gave the play and the dialogue a simple, uncluttered documentary quality.

Midway through writing the play I found out that it would be aired on WBAI radio. So we started recording the scenes of the play that were completed. After the girls listened to the recording of the first scene, their criticism of it was, "It sounds like it's being read off a paper—it needs to sound more like people talking to each other—like a conversation." They were right. Each line their characters spoke was being delivered in the same tone, with the same amount of energy. There wasn't any variety in emotion or mood. This was a problem I had come up against in my own acting and a pretty common problem I noticed other actors having.

But how could I explain the process

of acting to them without bogging them down? I decided to try having them draw their lines of dialogue as they listened to the scenes being played back on the tape recorder. If they sensed a variation in emotion they would see it and feel it in the drawings.

I told them to listen to the recording of the first scene again and, each time they heard their character speak, they should show what was being expressed in the line by using a color and kinesthetic shape. The color and shape could change from line to line or stay the same, depending on how they perceived the emotional content of the language changing. This worked. They were able to isolate each line and to think about what specifically needed to be communicated through the words they were saying.

Then I replayed the first scene for them again and asked them to draw how their character felt about each of the different characters in the scenes, even when their character wasn't talking. I wanted them to get a sense of how a scene is made up of many different verbal and non-verbal interactions between people. The girls placed each character in a different place on the page, then listened to the tape and showed through colored lines and shapes how each character's dialogue had an effect on the other characters. The drawings showed a back and forth, constant flow of energy between the characters in the scenes.

After doing this with each scene the girls re-recorded the scenes. Each line in the scenes was more expressively communicated, and there was a distinct emotional development in each of their characters from the beginning to the end in each of the scenes.

Once all the scenes were recorded to everyone's satisfaction, the tape was edited and then aired over the school's radio station and WBAI. There was a very good response from WBAI's audience. □

# The Club

## SCENE 1

*(Doorbell rings)*

DEBBY: Who is it?  
AISA: It's me Aisa.  
DEBBY: What's the secret word?  
AISA: Scoobernachi  
*(Debby opens door)*  
AISA: Debby you have a nice house. Which room is the meeting gonna be in?  
DEBBY: In the living room, let's go inside everybody's there.  
EVERYBODY: Hi Aisa!  
AISA: Hi, I'm sorry I'm late, Mr. Brennan gave us lots and lots of homework.  
LAURA: That's okay.  
AISA: I saw my friend Wendy after the club meeting last week, I know her since kindergarten. I told her about the club and she wants to be in it.  
DEBBY: Now the whole world's gonna know.  
BETH: I don't want anybody else in the club.  
ELSIE: Why don't we hear about Wendy first.  
AISA: At least there are some smart people in this club.  
DEBBY: Shut up and go ahead.  
BETH: Come on you guys let's have a pillow fight.  
ELSIE: Come on Beth let's listen to her.  
DEBBY: I vote NO.  
AISA: Give me one good reason why.  
BETH: Hey Debby you wanta come out to lunch with me tomorrow?  
DEBBY: Yeah, I'd really like to.  
ELSIE: Come on, listen to what Aisa has to say. I heard Wendy's nice.  
BETH: Aisa doesn't say anything exciting.  
ELSIE: She does too Beth.  
AISA: We're all gonna meet her.  
ALL: WE ARE?  
AISA: Yeah, I'm gonna bring her here.  
DEBBY: She can't come unless we say she can, unless we vote on it first.  
AISA: Okay, let's vote. How many want Wendy to come?  
*(Only Aisa and Elsie raise their hands)*  
DEBBY: Two against two.  
AISA: Why don't you want her in the club. Give me a good reason?  
DEBBY: Because the club is called The Four Muskateers and we would have to change the name.  
AISA: So we could change it to The Five Muskateers.  
DEBBY: Anyway, I don't want anyone else in the club. And remember that time you had a fight with Wendy and you said you didn't like her anymore.  
AISA: I never said that... Beth do you have a

good reason why Wendy shouldn't be in the club?  
BETH: I have the perfect reason but it's for me to know and for you to find out.  
AISA: If this is the Four Muskateers—All for one and one for all. Then why would one keep a secret from all?  
BETH: Because it's a personal secret.  
AISA: How can it be a personal secret if it involves the club?  
DEBBY: We all agreed in the beginning that there would be no secrets so why have secrets now.  
ELSIE: I don't care one way or another if Wendy's in the club but she sure is causing a lot of problems.  
AISA: If I don't hear no good reasons, then I don't know why I can't bring her here.  
DEBBY: If you can have your friend Wendy in the club then I can have my friend Anna.  
BETH: You know how much I hate Anna! That greedy brat!  
DEBBY: Well, you have a secret and if you don't spit it out we'll have Anna in the club.  
BETH: And still, if I don't tell the secret what will you do to me?  
AISA: Well first of all Debby you can't make the decisions who to throw out and who to put in and you know we all hate Anna.  
ELSIE: Now we're talking about Anna, we should get back to talking about Wendy.  
BETH: Yeah, it sure is WINDY.  
*(Everybody moans about the bad joke.)*  
DEBBY: I can't stand stupid people.  
BETH: I can't stand smart people.  
ELSIE: Now you guys are carrying on a personal argument.  
BETH: All of you act like I'm not a part of this club. Debby, you're the one who's always bossy and tries to change the subject. And Aisa you think you're the president of the club. And last, but not least...Elsie, you think you're so perfect. I'm getting out of this stupid club!  
*(Beth runs out)*  
AISA: I'm really glad she's gone. Boy she sure is stupid sometimes.  
DEBBY: She didn't have to get all snotty like.  
ELSIE: She always makes jokes that aren't funny.  
AISA: You know she never takes anything seriously.  
ELSIE: But you know something Debby and Aisa, I kind of feel sorry for her, don't you?  
DEBBY: Well not really. She acts so stupid and when we told her to stop she didn't.  
ELSIE: She just isn't good enough for our club is that what you're saying?  
DEBBY: No. I didn't mean that. All I meant was that she is acting too stupid. Elsie, besides, you said bad things too. Don't forget that.  
AISA: Let's get on with our club meeting. Just because she left we don't have to end the meeting.

# ON THE AIR



**DEBBY:** *Why do we need her? All she does is play jokes and act like a fool.*

## SCENE 2

**BETH:** *Why can't I be like everyone else? They're right about me, I can't even make a good remark. I'm going to get even with them. I'll join the other club. I'll tell them all of their plans. I hate myself. I'll never speak to them again as long as I live... I don't have any friends now. I'm the dumbest, craziest, weirdest person who ever lived. I'm going to run away forever. I'm really glad they kicked me out. I was going to quit anyway. I hate them.*

*But why am I saying this? After all, I am trying to save them from Wendy? So what am I saying? I'm not the craziest, dumbest, weirdest person whoever lived. As a matter of fact I think I'm the nicest. But now I don't care what happens to them. They kicked me out and I'm gonna hate them for the rest of my life.*

## SCENE 3

**ELSIE:** *(Knocks on door)*  
**BETH:** *Who is it?*  
**ELSIE:** *It's me, Elsie.*  
**BETH:** *Go away. I don't wanta be bothered.*  
**ELSIE:** *Come on, please let me in, I wanta talk to you about something.*  
**BETH:** *I don't wanta be bothered by Miss Perfect.*  
**ELSIE:** *Come on, please. I have some pizza.*  
**BETH:** *Let me see. Put it near the peek hole. Okay but don't make any smart remarks and no funny stuff.*  
*(While eating pizza)*  
**ELSIE:** *You know we have a science subject to do and I need a partner.*  
**BETH:** *I don't wanta be a partner of any X-friend.*  
**ELSIE:** *But you're not my X-friend. I like you very much.*  
**BETH:** *But you're my X-friend cause you're so mean to me.*  
**ELSIE:** *Well listen, why did you keep going off the subject in the club meeting... Is it something about Wendy?*  
**BETH:** *Well, I can't tell you cause it's something personal.*  
**ELSIE:** *I'm your friend and you can tell me personal things and I won't tell anybody else.*  
**BETH:** *How can I be sure I can trust you?*  
**ELSIE:** *Come on you can trust me, I never told anybody your secrets.*  
**BETH:** *I never told you any secrets.*  
**ELSIE:** *Oh yes you did, remember when you told me about your boyfriend Joey.*  
**BETH:** *Well, okay, but you can't tell anybody... I'm afraid that if Wendy's in the club.*

*She might tell her mother about all the bad things we do and Wendy's mother will tell my mother. Like the time I hit my baby brother cause I was really mad at him and Wendy was there and I told Wendy to please not tell my mother and she told my mother and I got punished for a whole month.*

**ELSIE:** *But you should have told us in the club meeting then we would have known the facts.*

**BETH:** *But Aisa would never believe it.*

**ELSIE:** *But in our next club meeting tell her.*

**BETH:** *But I'm not in the club.*

**ELSIE:** *Don't worry, you can come to the meeting with me. We're suppose to have another club meeting tomorrow. Don't worry. Just don't worry.*

#### SCENE 4

*(The next day at the club meeting)*

**DEBBY:** *I wonder where Elsie is?*

**AISA:** *Don't worry she'll be here.*

*(Beth and Elsie walk in)*

**DEBBY:** *What are you doing here Beth—Miss Name Caller.*

**ELSIE:** *Now be quiet, Beth has to make a very important announcement.*

**DEBBY:** *What is it? You wanta go to Burger King?*

**ELSIE:** *Please be quiet.*

**BETH:** *The reason why I was interrupting is because I know Wendy for a long, long time and I'm scared Wendy may go and tell her mother everything that we do and her mother will tell my mother and I'll get in trouble.*

**AISA:** *Oh that's a lie. You're just trying to get back into the club.*

**DEBBY:** *Maybe Beth's right.*

**AISA:** *Well since everybody believes this story I'll speak to Wendy about her telling all the secrets to her mother.*

**DEBBY:** *Well, why don't you get together with Wendy after this club meeting and we will talk about it tomorrow with Wendy in the club meeting.*

#### SCENE 5

*(In Aisa's house after the club meeting, Aisa calls up Wendy)*

**AISA:** *Hello Wendy?*

**WENDY:** *Hi Aisa. Did you find out if I can be in the club or not?*

**AISA:** *Well not exactly, but there's something very important I must talk to you about.*

**WENDY:** *What is it?*

**AISA:** *Last week we had to kick Beth out of the club, I think you know her.*

**WENDY:** *Yeah I do.*

**AISA:** *Today we spoke to Beth about what happened between you and her and she thinks what happened between you and her is gonna happen between you and the club.*

**WENDY:**

**AISA:**

*I promise it won't happen again.*

*We can't be sure that you're telling the truth so I'll take you to our next club meeting and we'll all talk about it.*

**WENDY:**

*When is it?*

**AISA:**

*Tomorrow. Meet me in front of my building at 4 o'clock.*

**WENDY:**

*Okay—goodbye.*

#### SCENE 6

*(Next day in front of Aisa's building)*

*(Buzzer rings, voice is heard over intercom)*

**MOTHER:** *Who is it?*

**WENDY:** *Is Aisa ready?*

**MOTHER:** *Yeah. She'll be right down.*

*(Sound of door opening and closing)*

**WENDY:** *You ready to go now?*

**AISA:** *Sure, come on.*

**WENDY:** *Where's the meeting gonna be held?*

**AISA:** *Elsie's house, don't worry she's a nice girl.*

**WENDY:** *Is Beth gonna be there?*

**AISA:** *Yeah Beth's gonna be there. This whole thing has to get straightened out.*

**WENDY:** *Aisa, you know I'm sort of scared.*

**AISA:** *Don't worry. There ain't gonna be no fighting.*

#### SCENE 7

*(They arrive at Elsie's house)*

*(Bell rings)*

**ELSIE:** *Who is it?*

**AISA:** *Aisa and Wendy.*

*(Elsie opens door)*

**ELSIE:** *So, you're Wendy right?*

**WENDY:** *Yeah, right.*

**ELSIE:** *Let's go inside, that's where everybody is. (They all walk inside)*

**ELSIE:** *Before we see whether you're gonna be in the club we have a problem we wanta clear up. You see Beth said that you told on her about hitting her brother.*

**WENDY:** *Yeah, but I had a reason.*

**ELSIE:** *Never mind the reason, just are you sorry for it?*

**WENDY:** *Yes.*

**BETH:** *But I still don't believe you.*

**AISA:** *Believe her, at least she says sorry.*

**ELSIE:** *Well, do you believe her Beth?*

**BETH:** *No.*

**DEBBY:** *She has to promise not to blab.*

**WENDY:** *I'm running out on you, you don't believe me. I hate you all. You don't even trust me.*

**DEBBY:** *Wait a minute Wendy. Don't run out on us. We can talk it over.*

**WENDY:** *Your club is so stupid that I think I'll start my own club. I'm getting out of here!*

SCENE 8

*(There is a heavy silence in the room)*

**ELSIE:** *Why don't we talk about who is mad at who, because it's so quiet here it's driving me crazy.*

**BETH:** *I'm mad at Aisa because she's such a double crossing idiot and I'm mad at Wendy for making such a big hassel. We were such a nice club in the beginning and then Aisa wanted Wendy in the club and then everything went kaboom.*

**AISA:** *But this club is a club for all kids to join, not just us.*

**DEBBY:** *That's true, Aisa's right. It is a club for all kids to join.*

*I don't get this. First Wendy wants to be in the club and is happy, and then Beth*

*tells her side of the story—Wendy becomes embarrassed and doesn't want to be in the club anymore—?*

*I think we should just drop it and all be friends. I think Wendy has learned something from this.*

SCENE 9

*(Wendy and Aisa are back)*

**AISA:** *Me and Wendy are back.*

**DEBBY:** *We thought it over Wendy and you can be in the club if you want.*

**WENDY:** *I want to be in the club, I really do.*

**BETH:** *But that doesn't solve my problem.*

**ELSIE:** *It does Beth, we all learned something these past few days.*

**AISA:** *Well that solves our problem! I guess Wendy is in the club now.*



Mother-Ella

age-72

The Mother has a jacket She brought when she had the first baby now its all full of patches. She needs two canes for walking. She has glasses for reading because she is getting blind. She loves her children. She dreads that when her children die that will die at an old age like her.

Mother



# The Making of a Radio Play: “The Three Sisters Who Went to War”

by Phillip Lopate

oldest sister - Little Red age-14

She has reddish hair. She likes jumping rope. She hasn't married yet. She has a little voice. She just wears dresses. She wears glasses. She is not strong at all. She still wants to live with her mother and is nervous. She hates boys.

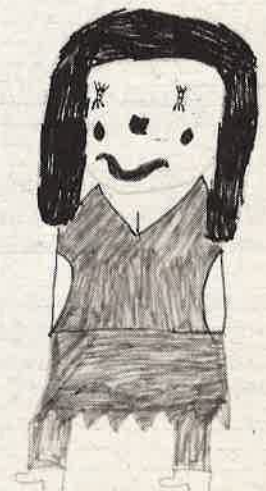
oldest sister



Middle Sister (named Quiet) age-20

She has long light brown hair. She wears anything like pants, dresses, different kind of tops. She wears alot of makeup on her face. She wears high heeled shoes. She is a little fat on her sides. her husband is a vet doctor. She is not that strong and very quiet. She doesn't talk alot. She is five feet four.

Middle sister



This is the story of how "The Three Sisters Who Went To War" got written, revised, produced and put on the air. Its significance is that, for once, the stages of development were so clearly and classically marked that they indicate a possible alternative model for working with children in radio theatre.

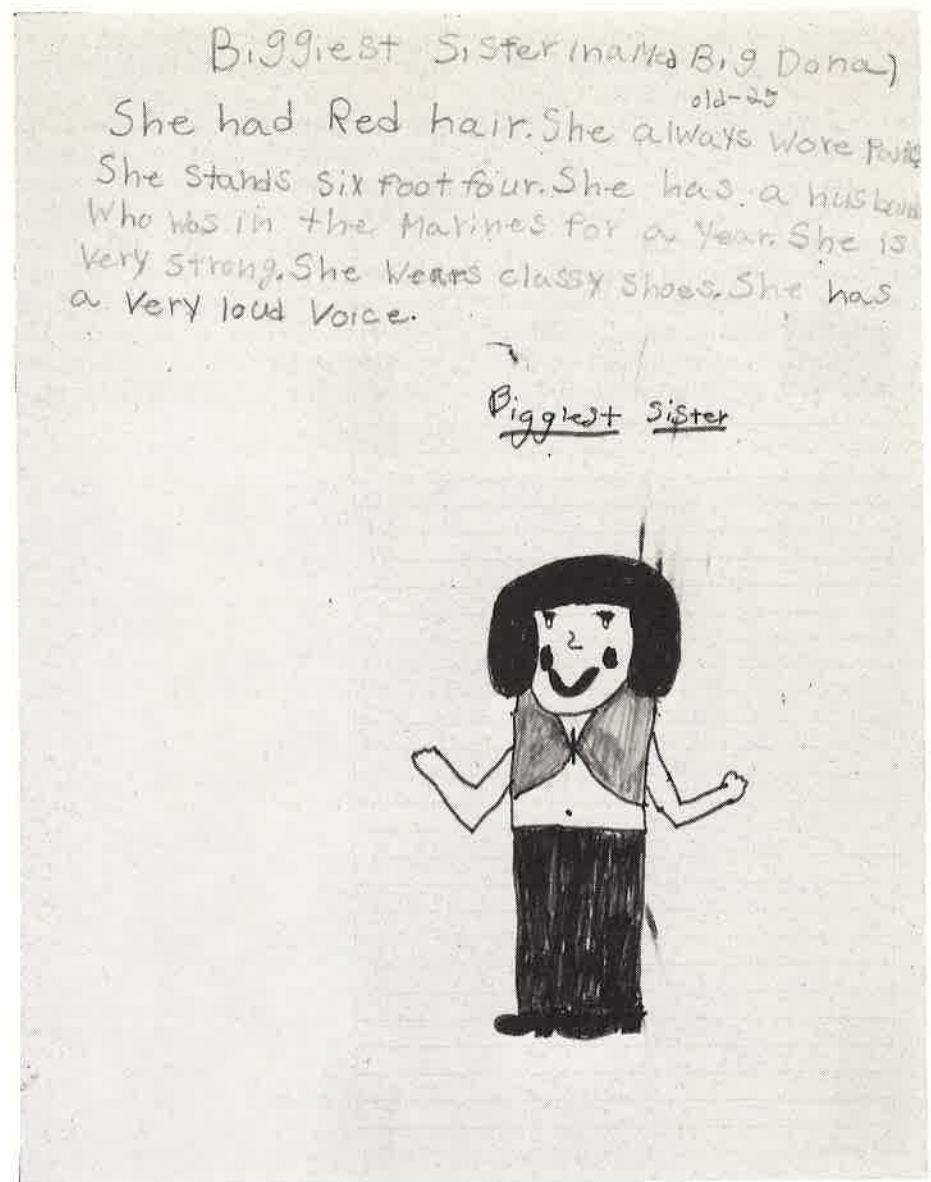
Most children's radio plays begin with a group improvisation and get winnowed down. This one started with a single child, and a piece of writing.

Melissa had worked with me the year before, and wanted to do something "like a film" again, but confessed that she had no ideas. Melissa is a perky, intelligent, neatly-dressed, middle-class child in the fifth grade, small for her age, and slightly unpopular with her classmates. She seemed to have become more anxious and isolated over the summer, and my heart went out to her. I knew I wanted to find some way to work with her. I suggested that she try writing a story. I left her in the room alone. Twenty minutes later she was done; the story was a paragraph long.

### THE THREE SISTERS

*Once upon a time there lived three sisters and their Mother. One day their Mother said "there is going to be a big war on and we don't have any money to take the three of us away." The sisters said "Mother do not worry we will join the army. We signed up already." Their Mother pleaded for them not to go but it was no use that night they left. They each got a different badge. The oldest was a general the middle sister was a nurse and the littlest was a spy! They fought and fought until at last the war was over they one! They ran back home to tell their Mother the great news—but when they got there the house was blown up to little pieces. They went to the grave yard and saw their Mothers grave they were so sad that they buried the money right near the grave.*

I liked this story because of its potential. Skeletal as it was in terms of narrative or physical detail, it contained a complete narrative arc. It seemed to hold a lot of life. It had war, death, the family, guilt for aban-



doning one's mother, it had everything.

I cast about for a way to get Melissa to extend it. But the story, as she said, and as I agreed, was finished. So I asked her to draw for homework a picture of each of the sisters and the mother and to write a description about them alongside it. She went home and did the sketches and brought them in the next week, not too sure of what I had meant by character descriptions. Her captions were long on fashion and short on psychology. Nevertheless, it was through this exercise that she came up with the names of her three sisters—Big Donna, Quiet Pep and Little Red—and with some of their attributes which were to stick to them throughout.

I was still fishing for ways to extend the work and give it a longer life-

span. I had to remain one step ahead of Melissa. It occurred to me that the next thing for her to do would be to write up the story as a drama. Then, when Paul McIsaac of WBAI-FM (an audience-sponsored Pacifica station) told me he would be willing to present on the air several tapes made by children working with Teachers & Writers Collaborative—and that he needed material—I realized that this war story would make an excellent auditory experience.

Melissa was docilely amenable to the experiment. I explained to her the form in which plays were written, with speakers' names and colons and stage directions. At first I let her visualize because I thought it would help her get into the scene (notice the house is described in her first paragraph), but as we progressed I made

clear the distinction that on radio nothing can be seen. Everything must be heard. All points must be delivered in aural code. This limitation amused and challenged her; she took to it right away.

Melissa would come in week after week with a new scene she had written at home; we would talk about it, and then she would start on the next one. Sometimes she would write at one end of the table while I sat silently reading at the other. At other times I would be busy with different children and

would merely put her in a corner where she would work alone. I loved the concentration she brought to her task, which by no means was typical of her other schoolwork. The script was starting to flesh out into zany, idiosyncratic incidents that I would not have associated ordinarily with so well-mannered a little girl. I was especially pleased with Melissa's character range. In her own life, she was at a difficult stage of deciding whether to go back into childishness and gain attention that way, or on to

young adulthood; and the opportunity to think out so many levels of behavior—from the bratty Little Red through her more mature sisters to the ancient Mother Brick—was a good one for her.

At last the script was finished. Melissa had thought she would never come to the end of it; now she was skipping around the halls so self-assured and proud. We celebrated by taking the next week off; and in the interim I typed it up.

## THE THREE SISTERS WHO GO TO WAR

### Scene 1

*They are in the house. The house is a dark blue with white windows and a pink door. There are six rooms in the house: the bedrooms, the dining room and the living room.*

*They are all sitting in the living room. The oldest daughter, Donna, is sitting on the couch with the littlest sister, Little Red. The middle sister, Quiet Pep, is sitting in an armchair. The mother is sitting on the rocker.*

**Mother:** *Dears I have something very important to tell you. We are going to have a war and there isn't any money to get us out of here.*

**Little Red:** *Oh mother! How terrible. What is the war about?*

**Mother:** *Well the Harmonicas came to our village and demanded money. (Sigh) But we wouldn't give it to them and so they are going to fight us.*

**Big Donna:** *Ma! I am going to join the army because I'm strong enough to fight.*

**Quiet Pep:** *Then I am because I do whatever my sisters do.*

**Little Red:** *Then I am because I like to copy my sisters.*

**Mother:** *(Startled) Wha... What I never heard such a thing! You go to your rooms all of you! Go! Go! (She weeps while the sisters go to their room.)*

**Mother:** *I must stop them. I must think of something to do! (She goes back to her knitting.)*

### Scene 2

**Big Donna:** *I know we all love our mother very much and want to help her as best as we can. But I have the courage to go into the army and fight!*

**Quiet Pep:** *Well we must try to get out of here before Mother puts an end to what we want to do.*

**Little Red:** *Well we could tie my jump ropes together and climb out the window so Mother won't see us.*

**Quiet Pep:** *Hey I think that's an excellent idea. Let's do it tonight! (And so the sisters set out on a long journey to join the army.)*

### Scene 3

*They are on a dirt road. In the afternoon.*

**Little Red:** *Look, a sign! It might help us to figure out a way to go.*

**Big Donna:** *I'll read it. It says "Fort Dancer—Two miles."*

**Quiet Pep:** *Wow that's all? Come on let's go we should get there in one hour!*

**Little Red:** *Oh! My God look at all those dying bodies on the road. Men, women and children!*

**Quiet Pep:** *I took nurse aid in high school. I'll try to help them.*

**Big Donna:** *I'll get your kit from your jacket.*

**Little Red:** *(ugh) Look at all that blood on the bodies, it looks awful. (Surprised) Look that man moved his head!*

**Quiet Pep:** *I better see if he knows any information about what happened here.*

*(She walks over to the man. He has red hair, his clothes are ripped, his face has scratches and he is 29.)*

**Wounded Man:** *Wh—Who are you? Get aw-away from-m-me.*

**Quiet Pep:** *We won't hurt you. Just lie down quietly. I'll fix you up in no time.*

**Little Red:** *He's the only one that's alive here. Mister, what is your name?*

**Wounded Man:** *My name is Peter Mantill. I am a lieutenant in Fort Dancer. I got shot coming here. What are you doing here?*

**Big Donna:** *We want to enlist in the army. We will take you there with us. Pep, help me carry him to the fort. And Red, you carry the doctor's kit.*

### Scene 4

*At the Fort.*

**Big Donna:** *General, are there any more girls in the army?*

**General Leftfoot:** *Yes there are four bunks of them and they're all your ages so get to work! Now Donna you are big and strong, you can fight in the army if you want to.*

**Big Donna:** *I do I do I'd love to join the army but my sisters have to have jobs too you know.*

**General:** *Yes I know. Now let's see... Pep you are nice and quiet, do you hate blood?*

**Quiet Pep:** *I love blood!*

**General:** *Then you can be a nurse. Is that all right?*

**Quiet Pep:** *Thanks I always wanted to be a nurse.*

**General:** *Let's see, how old are you, Red?*

**Little Red:** *Sixteen, sir. Do I fit in?*

**General:** *Yes you'd be a perfect spy. Do you like that?*

*Little Red:* Yes I do thank you!  
*General:* O.K. Go to work all of you. You will find your jobs are in the Fort Mail Office. Good luck.

Scene 5

*They are asleep in bed and suddenly the alarm bell rings. So the three sisters get dressed and go to see what they should do.*

*Big Donna:* Look the harmonicas are coming. I'll see you two, I have to get my gun and bullets.

*Quiet Pep:* I'll see you Red I have to get my Doctor's Kit.

*Little Red:* While they are fighting I better go and spy on the harmonicas and see what they are up to.

*Little Red crept up to the harmonica's fort.*

*Little Red:* (Thinking) If I dress myself as a widow no one will know who I am and I could go to the general of the harmonicas.

*So Little Red goes to Fort Harmonica to see what they are up to.*

*Guard 1:* Who goes there?

*Little Red:* I am a poor widow who has some news for the general.

*Guard 2:* You may pass.

*Little Red:* Thank you very much. Which way is it to the general?

*Guard 1:* It's to your left and you will see a big cabin. That's the general's house. (She walks in.)

Scene 6—War Scene

*Ahhhh—eheheheh no no I'm too young to die! He got him. No no no no help! Crash bang boom screaming crying eheheheh no help. Got me. I'm down to my last cigar. Bye young world, I'll see you all down there soooooon. More screaming and crying. More booms and machine guns. A bomb drops and let us have alot of screaming and crying and smashing crushing to others, and praying. Suddenly Silence there is no more fighting everyone goes to their bunk.*

Scene 7

*Quiet Pep:* (Talking to another nurse) Look at all these poor wounded men. They all look gruesome.

*Nurse:* Well that's how it is blood blood blood all over the place.

*Suddenly the lights go out.*

*Quiet Pep:* What happened! Where did all the lights go!

*Nurse:* Hurry bend over the patients and cover the rest with blankets. When the lights go out that means there are enemy airplanes in the sky coming toward us!

*Sounds of airplanes....*

*Quiet Pep:* I don't hear them any more. They're all gone! Whew. Nurse, let's go back to taking care of these patients. There are more of them coming.

*Sounds of ammunition.*

*Big Donna:* (Thinking) Wow! I hit him right in the chest.

*Wow! Just missed me better be more careful ha ha got you. You big bully. Uh-oh now more bullets. They're full to the brim. Wow! can't hit the sergeant on the other side. Got him!!! Wow look Bill they're going away. Oh! I wish Mother was here to help us. What about Little Red? What if she gets caught and they kill her? Mother would soften things up and Wow! hit him straight through the head. Little Red might say too much and they, Mom would say what to do so we wouldn't get lonesome.*

*Bill:* You did it. You're our hero.

Scene 8

*Going home.*

*Big Donna:* Look at the medal I got. I can't believe the war is over and we're going home to Mother Weeeee—

*Quiet Pep:* Yeh! Look at the medal I got for nursing. I can't wait to go to Mother safe and sound.

*Little Red:* I can't wait to show Mother the medal I got for spying. Hey a car! let's hitch a ride.

*Quiet Pep:* Mister can you take us to Virginia please?

*Man:* O.K.

*Car noises.*

*Quiet Pep:* You can let us off here. Thank you.

*Little Red:* I don't see the house do you?

*Big Donna:* No I don't. There is only grass there. Pep are you thinking what I am (sniff) thinking.

*Quiet Pep:* Yes Mother's at the grave yard. Let's see.

Scene 9

*At the grave yard.*

*Quiet Pep:* I do not believe that Mommy is dead.

*Little Red:* Me neither. I think Mommy sniff sniff is alive and just as well as we are. She just moved.

*Big Donna:* I love Mommy and all but if there is no house I just have the feeling that Mommy is here somewhere.

*Quiet Pep:* Look the gravedigger. Let's ask him if he has heard of Mother being around here. Excuse me but have you heard of anybody being buried here recently?

*Digger:* Yes, Martha Flew, Don Bellow and Ella Brick. That's all I can remember.

*Big Donna:* Did you say Ella Brick?

*Digger:* Yes.

*Little Red:* That's my mother! When is she being buried?

*Digger:* Right now. You better hurry.

*Little Red:* Mommy Mommy Mommyyyyyy.

*Preacher:* What... What's all this about?

*Little Red:* That's my Mommy Wahhhh.

*Preacher:* Come on little girl you have to give her the flowers.

*Little Red:* Do I Pep do I have to give Mommy flowers?

*Quiet Pep:* Sniff — You do. Goodbye Mom.

THE END

—by Melissa

Casting began right after that. For a child who has enemies and few friends, casting a play that she herself has written can be a heady kingpin experience. At first Melissa was like a kid let loose in a toy store with fifty dollars; she wanted the most for her money. She chose, interestingly enough, not those children who were friendliest to her, but two girls who had the respect of the entire class and herself, Rebekkah and Anne. Aside from their social entree, it may well have been that she chose them solely with an eye to the good of the play. Both could be counted on for fun and responsible seriousness. Rebekkah was a thorough professional—a real “Teachers & Writers kid”—who had acted in plays, written stories and drawn comic books. Anne, who had also been a veteran of T & W workshops, I found more lethargic and resistant, though it was she who in the end introduced many of the best dramatic solutions.

We sat around and read through Melissa’s script several times. I was disappointed in the non-committal attitude of Rebekkah and Anne. They would do the project, sure, but they were not too enthusiastic about the script. Most of their energy seemed to be going into the sound effects around dialogues: Rebekkah’s dog bark, Anne’s ghostly owl. Melissa watched her older, larger classmates with nervous giggles.

I began to realize that, for the two girls who had come in rather late in the game, Melissa’s script was a dead *fait accompli*: they had not shared in our excitement of its growth. They felt like puppets reading her lines. (Not to mention the fact that they were not about to compliment a younger classmate too openly.) The lifeless way they mouthed the lines was also an example of a phenomenon I had witnessed dismayingly often in children’s theatricals: the tighter and more polished the script, the deadlier it played. It almost seemed one was better off with a sloppy patchwork text that could be finalized at the last rehearsal, but that would keep the juices flowing, than one where all the words were set and the children repeated them again and again like sleepwalkers. From Anne’s and Rebekkah’s point of view, the sound effects *were* the only opportunities for them to express their ideas (they obviously had not yet acquired

the actor’s ideal of submergence in the text!).

Paul McIssac of WBAI visited one of our rehearsals, and told me in private that the play was “drowning in sound effects.” I had never done a radio play before, so I was grateful for his advice. I had no idea how many sound effects were “too many.” But once I thought about it, it was clear that the reason for our over-abundance of barks, groans and sirens was that Rebekkah and Anne were pushing themselves into the script and, to some extent, sabotaging it.

The next week I tried an experiment: I told them to forget about the script and to improvise “off the text,” so that they could find a way of saying the dialogue more in their own language. A tape recorder was set up to record the improvisation.

They went through the entire play, standing it on its head, satirizing, giggling, subverting the sentimental scenes. It was a long-overdue release. Some of their ideas were hilarious, and cracked me up. Others seemed silly; I winced.

“We want it to be funny!”

“We want it to be a comedy,” said Anne.

They had stumbled on a style for the piece, mixing pathos, seriousness, word-puns and a sprinkling of “sick humor.” But it was not only Mad Magazine caricature that they added to Melissa’s charming-naive script. They also threw in fights and personality conflicts between the three sisters, which helped to sharpen characterizations and, in some cases, transform them. Rebekkah bent the part she was assigned to her personality, and Quiet Pep was suddenly not so quiet any more.

The most interesting part of this development was that the playwright offered no resistance to the changed direction her piece was taking. In fact Melissa seemed delighted. Whenever it was a question of choosing between the old version of a scene and the group’s new version, she would always be the first and loudest to say, “Yeah, let’s do it this way. I like it better than the old way,” I had more of a protective attitude toward her original script than she did. Whether it was because she was bowing to peer pressure, or trying to ingratiate herself, or undervaluing her own ideas, or genuinely liking the new ones bet-

ter, or all of the above, it’s difficult to say. I only know that the new course we took, which was to write an entirely revised version of “The Three Sisters Who Go To War,” would have been much more unpleasant if Melissa had put up a fuss or been cranky in the least.

She had taken for herself the youngest of the roles, Little Red, which reduced her again to a childish status. It might have been hard for her strategically to switch from playing the juvenile member of the family to being a playwright-lobbyist. In scene-writing discussions she was often the quietest member, and seemed entranced at the suggestions Rebekkah and Anne kept throwing out by the minute. Was she feeling flattered or proud that the material she had written was so alive that it was capable of being transformed in seemingly any direction? Or was it that she had “shot her load,” and was content to take a back seat to the other two?

Her only demand was that she insisted on playing the role of the mother as well as Little Red. With a remarkably creaky voice she had perfected, she had no trouble getting the role, and thus occupied both poles of the generational spectrum, which gave her a great satisfaction.

A week after the first improvisation, I had played the tape back for them. Rather than try to stitch together a script by transcribing all the good bits, I asked them to keep in mind what parts they liked and to work them into a new script which would combine the best of the old one with the best of the new ideas. They would tell me what they wanted to happen in the scene, and I would take dictation. Eventually we forgot about the tape recorder. It wasn’t necessary to go back to the original improv, because ideas were always plentiful. We established a routine of talking out a scene—no longer improvising it straight through and then going back, but batting it out line by line, much the way that gag conferences operate in Hollywood. Someone would throw out a line of dialogue, someone would offer another one; one suggestion would be criticized and the other voted for, and on to the next passage. It was amazing to be able to bypass the whole ragged-improvisation stage and get right down to group script-

writing. It was also hard mental work. Some weeks Anne didn't want to leave her classroom to work on the play; other times Melissa was too giggly to concentrate. Or dependable

Rebekkah was suddenly, surprisingly listless. Or I was in a bad mood. Then there were holidays, school field trips, flu epidemics. With all the epidemics, it took more than two

months (six months from the time Melissa had written her paragraph story) before we had a revised, playable new script.

## THE STORY OF THREE SISTERS WHO GO TO WAR

*The three sisters are sitting around the living room with their elderly mother. The youngest, Little Red, who is ten and cranky, is playing checkers with the middle sister, Quiet Pep, who is eighteen. The oldest sister, Big Donna, is twenty-four, strong and more mature. Their mother is trying to read the newspaper.*

*Quiet Pep: You're cheating, dummy!*  
*Little Red: No I'm not, stupid. Why are you always bothering me?*  
*Quiet Pep: Because you're always bothering me. You want to make a bet? Come here, Donna. Isn't it true, Donna, that you're not allowed to jump over two spaces?*  
*Big Donna: Yeah. Of course!*  
*Quiet Pep: See, stupid Little Red?*  
*Little Red: Well I wouldn't talk, fatty!*  
*Mother: Don't tell me you're fighting again. Please, I'm trying to read the newspaper.*  
*Big Donna: They're not fighting, they're just kidding.*  
*Little Red: Yes we are fighting, stupid—rrr—(Quiet Pep covers her mouth.) Rrr—let go of my mouth! Mommyyyy!*  
*Quiet Pep: Oh I'm not playing any more. Forget it. You cheat.*  
*Mother: Hmmm....Oh look at this article. Oh God! I'm going to have to break the news to the children.*  
*Big Donna: What's the matter mom? What are you talking about?*  
*Mother: Donna, get the other kids and bring them here.*

*(Sitting down noises)*

*Quiet Pep: Yeah? What do you want, ma?*  
*Mother: There's going to be a war....*  
*Little Red: What's it about?*  
*Mother: The other night some men from the Harmonicas broke into our village and threatened to fight us if we didn't give them some money. And now there's going to be a war because we won't pay the ransom.*  
*Quiet Pep: So—let them blow their own whistle.*  
*Mother: If only we could run away before the war comes here! But you know I have a bad heart and the doctor says I can't travel.*  
*Big Donna: Mom, I can join the army because I know I can fight.*  
*Quiet Pep: Then I'm going too. Because I want to go with Donna.*  
*Little Red: Then I want to go too because I copy whatever my sisters do!*  
*Mother: What?! What are you talking about? Where did you get such ideas in your head? I won't permit any of you to go to war and get killed! If I wanted you to get killed I'd send you to the butchers'.*  
*Quiet Pep: What was that, ma?*  
*Mother: Nothing. Now go to your rooms, all of you! You are giving me a terrible headache.*

*Little Red: But why? We didn't do nothing bad.*  
*Quiet Pep: Oh come on, let's go.*  
*(They start to leave. Walking upstairs noises.)*  
*Mother: Uh—Donna! Come here for a minute. I want to talk to you alone.*  
*Donna: Sure Mom. Yes?*  
*Mother: You're setting a bad example for the smaller ones. Look what they want to do—they want to copy you. I'd expected it from them but not from you! I'm surprised! What came over you? I thought you were more mature than that.*  
*Big Donna: But mom, don't you think you're being unfair about this? I'm 24 years old. I can handle myself. And even if I do join the army, it would be okay if they came, because I'd take care of them.*  
*Mother: I am not letting those two children out of my house. I have to be firm about this. They could get hurt.*  
*Big Donna: Oh mom, you're such a worry-wart. If you had a son, I bet you would let him go.*  
*Mother: I would not let any of my children go!*  
*Big Donna: But mom, if I go into the army I'm helping my country. Think of it that way.*  
*Mother: Think of your life! Your country or not, you are not leaving this house. End of discussion. Period.*

*(Music. End of scene.)*

## SCENE TWO: In the girls' room.

*Quiet Pep: Why don't you get out of here, Little Red?*  
*Little Red: It's my room, you can't tell me to get out of it!*  
*Big Donna: Listen you two, I'm really serious about joining the army. We have to get to the point and figure this situation out. How are we going to get out of this house without Mother seeing us?*  
*Quiet Pep: We should go out the window.*  
*Little Red: I have a good idea! We can tie my jumpropes together and lower them down.*  
*Quiet Pep: Good idea! For once in your life you thought of something, Little Red.*  
*(Night noises. Hoot owl. Crickets.)*  
*Little Red: Are we going now?*  
*Donna: Shh! Shut up, Little Red!*  
*Quiet Pep: Come on be careful! Don't drop that rope or we can't escape—*  
*Little Red: Help! I don't think I can make it to the bottom.*  
*Quiet Pep: Shut up, dummy.*  
*Big Donna: Just jump! It's only a couple of feet away.*  
*Little Red: Ouch! My behind.*  
*Big Donna: Let's get the horses ready from the stable.*  
*(Riding away noises)*

**SCENE THREE: On the road**

**Little Red:** *Where are we? I think we're in the middle of nowhere.*

**Big Donna:** *Wait, I see a sign. It says... "Fort Dancer—2 miles."*

**Quiet Pep:** *Well come on! We should be there soon.*

**Little Red:** *Oh my God! Look at all those bodies on the road. (Groaning sounds) All that blood on their bodies. It looks awful.*

**Quiet Pep:** *Look at that kid with the mustache. He moved!*

**Big Donna:** *We better see if he knows anything about what happened here.*

**Wounded Man:** *Wha... who are you. Get aw-way from meeee.*

**Quiet Pep:** *Maybe we can help him. Little Red, you go get my doctor's kit.*

**Little Red:** *Oh goodie, we're going to play doctor!*

**Big Donna:** *Pardon me sir, but... who are you? Are you a Harmonica?*

**Wounded Man:** *No, I'm a Dancer. My name is Peter Mantell. I'm a lieutenant at Fort Dancer. Ohhh...*

**Quiet Pep:** *What happened here?*

**Wounded Man:** *We were out on a bivouac and we got ambushed...*

**Big Donna:** *What's a bivouac?*

**Quiet Pep:** *That's when you go out whacking beaver.*

**Wounded Man:** *Oh no, get away from me!*

**Big Donna:** *Shh! Let him answer. What's a bivouac?*

**Wounded Man:** *Oh it's... when you go out and camp in the field. All right?! Now can you help me?*

**Quiet Pep:** *All right, you take his head, I'll take his arms.*

**Little Red:** *I'll take his jacket, that's heavy enough.*

**Quiet Pep:** *And bring the medicine kit.*

**Wounded Man:** *Ohhhh.... Do you have to move me so much? I'm falling apart.*

**Little Red:** *Hey, here's his leg. You dropped his leg!*

**Quiet Pep:** *We'll pick it up. We'll put it on when we get there.*

**Wounded Man:** *Oh boy....*

**Little Red:** *Hey these pills are good!*

**Quiet Pep:** *What pills?*

**Little Red:** *The ones... that were in your doctor's bag. He-he!*

**Quiet Pep:** *(Slaps her) Little Red, you naughty girl!*

**Little Red:** *Aw-aw-wahhhh.*

*(Horse noises; riding away)*

**SCENE FOUR: At the Fort**

**Wounded Man:** *(Groans) When are we going to get there?*

**Big Donna:** *We're here! I see something.*

**Little Red:** *Well I don't. Oh I see it, I see it! There's Fort Dancer. And they're all dancing!*

*(Trumpet)*

**Wounded Man:** *There's General Leftfoot.*

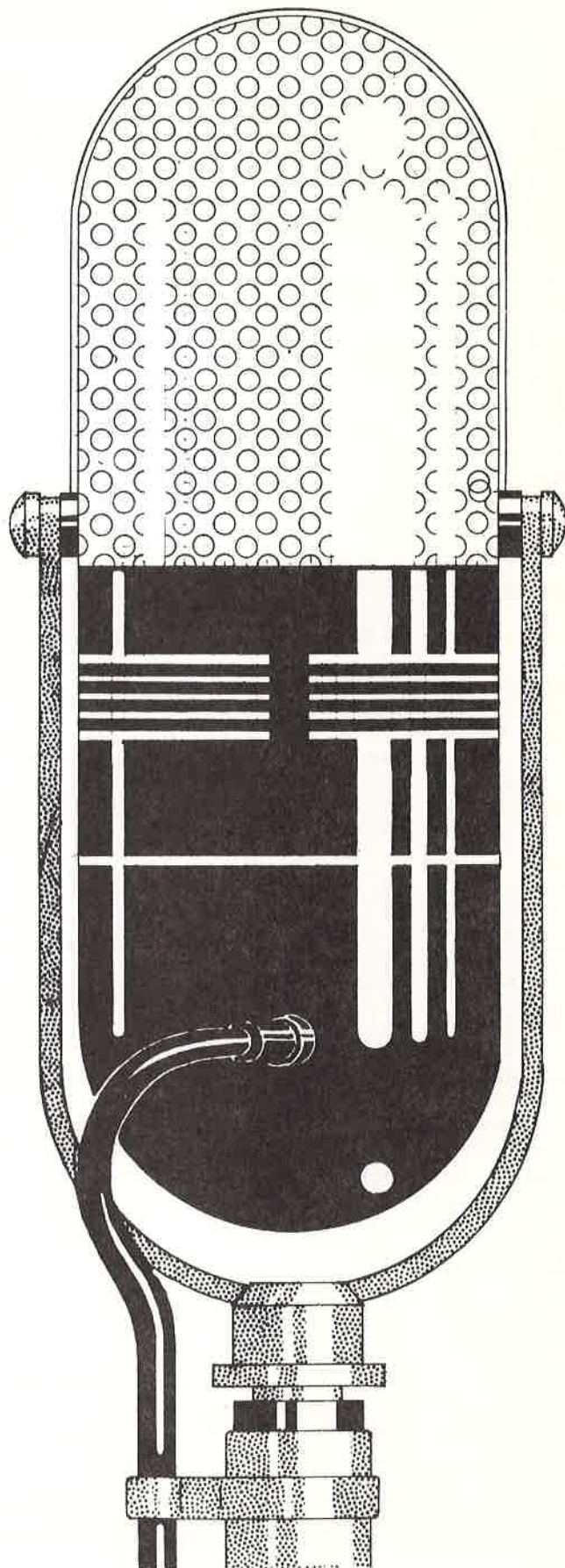
**General Leftfoot:** *Right. Left. Right. Left. Attention! (Sings)*

*Right left attention  
Right left attention  
You stand left  
And you stand right  
And I'll go sit down on my butt.*

*(Sits: oof!) Arnold, take over while I talk to these strangers. Yes? What would you like?*

**Quiet Pep:** *This man needs to go to the maternity—I mean the infirmary.*

**Wounded Man:** *Uhh...! And don't forget my leg!*



(He's taken away)

General Leftfoot: All right let's get up to b--, I mean down to business, or whatever.

Big Donna: General, we want to enlist in the army.

General Leftfoot: Yes, well...

Little Red: Excuse me, General. Are there any other girls in the army?

General Leftfoot: Oh, sure.

Quiet Pep: Are there any boys in the army?

General Leftfoot: Uh yes, but I'm sorry to say there are separate bunks.

Little Red: Can we have some food? We're very hungry.

General Leftfoot: At the dining room. Meanwhile you'll find your jobs in a sock on your plate. It's going to come as your second course.

Pep, Donna: Okay. Let's go.

#### SCENE FIVE: In the Bunk

Little Red: Oh, I'm so tired.

Quiet Pep: Well, let's go to sleep now.

Big Donna: Yeah, we need our rest.

Little Red: I can't find my stuffed animal!

Quiet Pep: Oh come on. Just go to sleep without it.

Little Red: But I don't wa-ant tooo.

Big Donna: Come on, cuddle up with your pillow!

Little Red: But I don't want to. The last time I did that I dreamt I was eating a gigantic marshmallow, and when I woke up my pillow was gone. I don't wanta I don't wanta I don't wa...

(Snores. Everybody is asleep. Then: Air raid alarm.)

Soldier: Air raid! Air raid! It's the Harmonicas!

(Far away harmonica sound)

Big Donna: I gotta get my gun! I gotta get my bullets! Where's my bullets?

Quiet Pep: Wake up, Little Red.

Little Red: Where's my underwear?

Quiet Pep: Where's my toothbrush?

Big Donna: Let's go, before they attack us!

#### SCENE SIX: At the Harmonicas

Narrator: Little Red goes to the Harmonica castle to spy on the King of the Harmonicas.

Little Red: The guards! I'd better pretend I'm a lost child.

Guard: Who goes there?

Little Red: It's a little girl.

Guard: Well what do you want here?

Little Red: I'm a lost child. My father got killed when he was fighting the Dancers.

Guard: Oh you poor little girl. Let me take you inside and you can meet the King.

(Inside the Palace)

Guard: Announcing—the lost child. King. King! I repeat: announcing the lost child. See, he's a little hard of hearing.

King: Hello?

Little Red: I think I want to go home.

King: Why did you come here?

Little Red: I was lost. Say, what are you going to do to the Dancers?

King: We're going to kill them.

Little Red: How?

King: We're going to—bivouac them.

Little Red: What's a bivouac?

King: It's when...when...oh never mind! We're going to surround them and—

Little Red: Where?

King: We'll surround them at the hill above their Fort.

Little Red: How?

King: We're going to use our new secret weapon, our Harmonipoon.

Little Red: And how does that work?

King: Well have you ever heard of a harpoon or a hairpin? Well it's exactly the opposite.

Little Red: Thanks a lot. Well I have to go. Time for my morning nap.

Guard: Wait! You're going in the wrong direction!

Little Red: Byebye.

Guard: After her!

King: Oh forget about her. She's only a lost child.

#### SCENE SEVEN: In the Infirmary

Quiet Pep: (Talking to another nurse) Look at all these poor wounded men. They all look so gruesome.

Nurse: Well that's how it is, blood blood blood all over the place.

Quiet Pep: What happened? Why did all the lights go out!?

Nurse: Hurry, bend over the patients and cover the rest with blankets. When the lights go out that means there are enemy airplanes in the sky coming toward us!

(Sounds of airplanes, louder, then fading out.)

Quiet Pep: I don't hear them any more. They're all gone. Whew! Nurse, let's go back to taking care of these patients. There are more of them coming.

#### SCENE EIGHT: In the trenches

(Battle noises. Machine guns, screams, dogs.)

Big Donna: Boy I never thought that war would be so tough. I'm tired!

Soldier: Well, that's the way it goes.

Big Donna: I'm getting so tired of shooting! My hand hurts. And the noise!

Soldier: Why don't you put on my earmuffs? Here. It'll make it quieter.

Big Donna: Ah, that sounds much better. I never realized that war was so hard. I wonder how my mother's doing.

(P-choong!)

Soldier: That bullet, it sideswiped you. Are you all right? Are you bleeding?

Big Donna: Just a little, but I'm okay.

Soldier: I'm so hungry. I think I'll take out my kennel rations.

Big Donna: Eeough! You get kennel rations? We get Alpo. I wish I could just have some good solid food.

Soldier: You know what I'd love? I'd like a peanut butter and jelly pie!

Big Donna: I wish for the most enormous peach, with whipped cream on top. (Gunfire) I got one of those dumb Harmonicas.

Soldier: There's only around 15 of their men left. They're hiding behind their dead soldiers. They're using them as shields.

Big Donna: I'm going to try to get their Corporal so they'll all give up.



**Soldier:** You'll never make it. He's protected by all their other people.  
**Big Donna:** Oh yeah? You just watch me. (Shoots machine gun.) I got him! Right through the head.  
**Soldier:** Hallelujah! The war is over!  
**Everyone:** Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
 (Music: "The Hallelujah Chorus")

**SCENE NINE: Going Home**

**Narrator:** The three sisters are on their way home.  
**Little Red:** Oh, we've been walking for miles. Can't we hitch a ride?  
**Quiet Pep:** Here comes a car. Put out your thumbs. (Noise of car stopping.) Good. He stopped. Where to, children?  
**Driver:** Where to, children?  
**Big Donna:** We're going on to Dancerville.  
**Driver:** Git in, I'm goin' all the way.  
**Little Red:** Thanks a lot, sir.

(Driving along sounds.)

**Little Red:** By the way, are you a Harmonica?  
**Driver:** No ma'am. Are you?  
**Big Donna:** Nope. We just won the war. Look at this medal I got.  
**Quiet Pep:** And me too.  
**Little Red:** And me—and me!  
**Quiet Pep:** Be quiet.  
**Little Red:** When are we going to get there? How many more miles?  
**Driver:** Oh, we got about three. We'll be there real soon, little one.

**SCENE TEN: Home**

(Music: "When Johnny Come Marching Home Again." Strong and cheerful-sounding. Car stops.)  
**Driver:** Wup. Here we are.  
**Little Red:** Thank you mister. Let's go see Mommy!  
 (Sounds of walking steps. Lonely bird calls. Owl.)  
**Quiet Pep:** Where's the house? This is where the house used to be, right at the edge of the road.  
**Big Donna:** Uh oh. I have a feeling something's wrong here.  
**Little Red:** There's nothing but rocks. I'm scared!... Mom!  
**Quiet Pep:** Mom, mom, we're back.

**Big Donna:** Let's go look for Mom. Maybe she went to Aunt Pauline's house.  
**Little Red:** Yeah, but where's our house? That doesn't make any sense.

(Sad music this time: "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again")

**Little Red:** Oh no, I hate going to Aunt Pauline's house! We have to always go through the graveyard first.

**Big Donna:** It's the only way to see Mommy again.  
**Little Red:** But what if she's not there?  
**Quiet Pep:** Let's ask the gravedigger if he's seen her. Pardon me, sir, but have you seen Ella Brick?

**Gravedigger:** Well, describe her.  
**Little Red:** She's very pretty and she's old.  
**Quiet Pep:** Wait a second, I have a picture of her in my wallet. Here's Cousin George, Cousin Hairy, Aunt Pauline... Ah, there she is!

**Gravedigger:** This looks like...uh, wait a moment. Let me look at my list of names....

**Little Red:** What are you looking for!?  
**Gravedigger:** Um...let me explain. There was an explosion on Cornpine Street Road. Let's see who was in it. Edith Bunker, Meathead Bunker, Elsie the Cow, Mary Poppins and um, well, sorry, one more name here. Ella Brick.

**Quiet Pep:** You mean mu-mu-mommy?  
**Little Red:** Are you sure? (Crying)  
**Big Donna:** I knew it. I knew it. We shouldn't have gone. It's all my fault.

**Quiet Pep:** She's dead.  
**Big Donna:** Where is she? Can we see her?  
**Gravedigger:** Right this way.

**Little Red:** I'm going to go and pick some wildflowers, to put on her grave.

**Narrator:** While the sun went down, they prayed for their mother.

**Little Red:** I still can't believe that Mommy's dead.  
**Quiet Pep:** Goodbye, mom.

(Medieval music under mother's voice.)

**Mother:** You shouldn't have gone. You see what's happened? You shouldn't have gone...(trails off) shouldn't have gone.....

THE END

—by Anne  
 Rebekka  
 Melissa

Whether the second version is better than the first, or vice versa, is beside the point. Obviously some people will prefer certain sections of the first or the second. The point is that they are *different*; and each had a right to be born and crystallize. The only operative difference is that the children enjoyed play-acting the second more than the first (as children usually will choose the more comic script), and therefore the second got to be on the air.

We rehearsed it for several weeks, working out shadings of expression,

vocal characterizations and dialectal accents. It was then that Rebekkah came up with her masterful Swedish accent for the soldier in Scene 8. Anne, who played the King in Scene 6, developed a slow-motion moronic voice. Since everyone was doubling and tripling on parts, I was given the roles of the announcer, the wounded soldier Peter Mantell, and the Okie driver who picks up the hitchhiking sisters. Even so, we had too many minor roles, and the need for another cast-member became evident. I wanted someone with a dif-

ferent timbre—a boy—and the girls were dead-set against the idea. In the end, though, they did a sudden turn-about and invited a very attractive black boy named Richard to join the cast. He proved very adaptable, and lent his gravelly voice to the gravedigger, the guard, and General Left-foot.

It was time to arrange for a recording date at the radio station. I asked the children when they thought they would be ready, and they begged for a few more weeks. Up until the last week they were making small changes

in the script, cutting lines of dialogue that didn't work and trying out sound effects. They kept changing the title, from "The Story of the Three Sisters Who Go To War" to "The Three Sisters Who Went to War" to plain old "The Three Sisters." I told them there was already a Chekhov play by that name... "So?!" For a moment it seemed like it might be a good idea; it might add another level to the play, for those adults who would appreciate the quote. But then I thought, nah, let's leave Chekhov out of this.

Having booked studio time, we went to WBAI and found an engineer ready to help us. He recommended that we record all our dialogue scenes together, and edit them, and then add the sound effects next time we came. That was the way it was done in the big leagues, so that was the way we would do it.

Dave, the engineer, grouped us around the mikes. He gave an intriguing lecture about the need to create three-dimensional sound, telling the children (and me) that the radio listener not only picks up voices but the position where the voice is coming from. Thus, if one actor were playing two different parts, the listener would subconsciously perceive them as one person, unless the actor moved to another mike, since the voices were coming from the same spot—something we had never thought of in all our sitdown rehearsing! It took awhile to coordinate our lateral passes. Some scenes went through four takes, but most of them were done in one or two, since we were so pressed for time. Time is such a valuable commodity in a radio station that we were conscious all the while of the need to hurry. Fortunately, the children were well-rehearsed. They loosened up gradually, then listened

back to their takes, and chose the one they liked. A few days later, with their recommendations in hand, I edited the tape at WBAI.

The final mixing session several weeks later was even more frantic. It involved cueing up scores of tapes and records at once. Dave, the engineer, explained to the children that they could make their vocal sound effects (like Richard's imitation of dum-dum bullets) or they could use pre-recorded sound effects as the professionals did. I said nothing, wanting the children to make up their minds. In a way, I would have preferred some of their homemade effects to some of the canned. But the children's eyes grew wide when they heard of pre-recorded crickets, horses' hooves, helicopters, battle-grounds, car door slams.... They un-animously decided to go with the professional sounds.

For four hours they watched the engineer go crazy, running from dial to dial, just missing fades, groaning, reaching for perfection, redoing the segues. He couldn't find a "Hallelujah Chorus" in the record library so he substituted the climax of the *1812 Overture*, which gave the production a martial Russian turn. I would vacillate between urging him to accept an imperfection, because we only had one more hour of studio time, and agreeing that it should be done over. Perfection was clearly a luxury when we had to get the tape finished in time for broadcasting the next day!

The children got the full experience of watching the incredible pressure under which broadcasting media people operate. Impassive as usual when adults are flipping out, they took their sandwiches out of their lunch bags and started trading: one-half a soda for a Twinkie. It was out of their

hands, and they knew it.

The next day, "The Three Sisters Who Went To War" was aired on Paul McIsaac's Saturday morning show. Melissa was there to answer questions, and from the call-ins and audience response it was clear that people liked the show. Perhaps McIsaac got carried away a little when he said, in the silence that followed the end of the tape, "My God, it's like *War and Peace!*" It wasn't that good, but it was fun.

To recapitulate the basic procedure: 1) a short narrative piece is written by a child; 2) sketches and word-descriptions are elicited to beef up characterizations; 3) the narrative is written in play form; 4) the play is cast, and the actors are asked for their input; 5) the cast improvises, according to the plot, but in their own language; 6) tape recorders may be used to give incentive for the improvisation; 7) the improvisation is codified into a new script, scene by scene; 8) group writing replaces improvisation, with one person taking dictation for the group; 9) the actors rehearse; 10) they record their dialogue (at a studio, or in the school with a decent tape recorder); 11) the dialogue scenes are edited; 12) mixing of sound effects, music and dialogues; 13) on the air.

This method of zigzagging from improvisation to script and back again is particularly useful. It teaches children the practical value of the written word, as a record of spontaneous procedures and a way of preserving the best ideas. But it then also encourages a pragmatically, creative, testing, un-sacrosanct attitude toward the text, by allowing for scripts to be torn apart in places, as real artists do with their own material, and revised until the participants are satisfied. □

**THE NIGHT CREEPERS**  
by Vanessa Petronio

- MOTHER:** (in a surprised voice)  
Aren't you asleep yet? It's twelve o'clock midnight!
- KATY:** But I'm not sleepy.
- MOTHER:** Well, get to sleep anyway. You have school tomorrow.
- KATY:** Alright, alright.  
(Mother leaves. We hear the door shut. The clock strikes midnight.)
- KATY:** Mother was right! It is twelve o'clock midnight! The bewitching hour! Yuk!  
(A door creaks and lots of footsteps are heard)
- KATY:** Oh! Who are you? What are you doing in here?  
(Witch-type laughter is heard.)
- KATY:** Stop it! You're scaring me! Get...get...ou...ou...out!  
(More disgusting laughter. Then suddenly it stops)
- KATY:** Mommy, mommy!  
(The Night Creepers say all together:)  
Don't call your mother!  
Don't call your mother...or else!
- KATY:** Or else what?
- NIGHT CREEPERS:** We'll take away all your toys.
- KATY:** Oh, don't. I won't call my mother. Why are you here? What do you want?
- NIGHT CREEPERS:** Answers, answers, all we want is answers!
- KATY:** What kind of answers?  
(The Night Creepers argue)  
(1) Me first!  
(2) No, me!  
(3) I was here first!  
(4) Okay, if you're going to be so picky, go ahead. Geez!
- SPELLING CREEPER:** I am the spelling creeper. You will have to spell...Massachusetts.
- KATY:** M-E...
- SPELLING CREEPER:** Wrong!
- KATY:** M-A?
- SPELLING CREEPER:** Keep going.
- KATY:** M-A-S-S...uh...A...C-H-U...S-E-T-TS. Whew, I did it.
- MATH CREEPER:** I am the math creeper. What's 5 plus 6?
- KATY:** Oh that's easy. 11.
- MATH CREEPER:** Easy, huh? Well, what's 4 times 8?
- KATY:** Oh, no! Times. I hate times.
- MATH CREEPER:** Get on with it.
- KATY:** Uh...uh... 475?
- MATH CREEPER:** My golly, are you strange!
- KATY:** Okay, 32.
- MATH CREEPER:** Darn it! I didn't think you'd know that one.
- SCIENCE CREEPER:** Let me through. It's my turn. I am the science creeper. I would like to know...is a frog a reptile or amphibian?
- KATY:** An amphibian.
- SCIENCE CREEPER:** What a smart child. We've got to trick her with something hard. Reeeeeeeeee hard. I've got it!  
(There is a loud pounding on the window)
- NIGHT CREEPERS:** Oh, no. Don't open that window. It's the Sand People! We hate those little Sand People.
- KATY:** It's my window. I can do anything I want to.  
(Katy opens the window)  
(The sand people make squeaking sounds)
- SAND PEOPLE:** We're the Sand People. Haven't you heard of us?
- NIGHT CREEPERS:** We have. Let's beat it, boys.  
(We hear footsteps as the Night Creeps leave)
- KATY:** Sand People...I've never heard of you.
- SAND PEOPLE:** Look into our eyes.
- KATY:** OOOO. I can't. They're too bright. They make me feel so... tired... tired....tired. ZZZZZZ.
- SAND PEOPLE:** Let's cover her up. She's asleep now.  
(More snoring sounds, then an alarm clock rings and Mother comes in)
- MOTHER:** Wake up, Katy. Time to go to school.
- KATY:** I'm exhausted.
- MOTHER:** I told you not to go to sleep so late.
- KATY:** No, it was all those Night Creepers and Sand People....
- MOTHER:** What are you talking about? What Night Creepers? You must have been dreaming.
- KATY:** Oh, never mind. You wouldn't understand, Mom.
- MOTHER:** Come on now, wash up before breakfast.
- KATY:** Okay, I'll be there in a minute. But I sure could use some more sleep.



### A PLAY FOR THE RADIO

*Emma the Heroine of our story is standing outside the little cottage. It's a fresh spring day, flowers are beginning to bloom and the clothes on the clothesline are blowing in the breeze.*

EMMA: Mmmm smells nice, like the first day of spring daddy.  
 DAD: It is the first day of spring Emma.  
 EMMA: Oh!  
 DAD: I'm going in now.  
 EMMA: Oh.  
 DAD: (To himself) What a wishy washy character. (Clip Clop Clip Clop Clip Clop Clip Clop)  
 EMMA: Hark I hear horses.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Aha it is Emma Dogood the notorious dogooder. I shall take her away.  
 EMMA: You will never get away with this. Wild horses couldn't drag me. Snidly Snootly you dastardly, greasy villain.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Oh no, Emma? Here Betsy.  
 EMMA: Who's Betsy?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: My wild horse.  
 EMMA: Oh!  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Now I will take you away with me.  
 EMMA: Oh!  
 ARCH VILLAIN: What a wishy washy character.  
 EMMA: Help! Help! I want my mommy.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: I arranged that haha

EMMA: Where are my parents?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: In the bathroom  
 EMMA: You arranged that?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Yes  
 EMMA: Oh!

2 hours later

EMMA: Whatever are you going to do with me?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: I'm thinking I'm thinking.  
 EMMA: Well, will you hurry up and decide.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: O.K.

Silence

ARCH VILLAIN: By the way where did you get a name like Dogood  
 EMMA: Well...it all started 24 years ago at...  
 ARCH VILLAIN: What have I got myself into?!  
 EMMA: and then she went to blah blah  
 ARCH VILLAIN: ZZZZZZZZZZ Wheeze snore zzzzz  
 EMMA: Do you have a mirror?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Yes. Why?  
 EMMA: Because I want to look at my beautiful flowing hair, my rose petal complexion, my sunken pool blue eyes...  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Shut up all ready. I'll go get it.  
 EMMA: My ruby lips, pearl teeth long thick eyelashes.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: You can have it in a minute. first I want to admire MY slick black hair muscular arms wicked looking handle bar mustache.  
 EMMA: Have you decided what to do with me yet?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Hmmm Well I could always tie you to the railroad track.  
 EMMA: No no anything but that!  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Why?  
 EMMA: I dont want to get my hands dirty.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Oh! BROTHER! oh!

2 more hours later

EMMA: Well here I am my full 18 years are about to end for 18 years I've brought joy to the world and now its about to end.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Oh brother  
 EMMA: Ah world how will you survive without me?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Emma I think we'll make it (Clip Clip Clip Clip Clip)  
 EMMA: Who is that?  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Harold Hithere the forest ranger.  
 EMMA: Sigh! the one with the dreamy blue eyes and the blond curls.  
 ARCH VILLAIN: Yep  
 HAROLD: Hello there Emma I the Wonderful Harold Hithere pride of the forest rangers am here to rescue you.  
 EMMA: Ahhhhhhhh  
 ARCH VILLAIN: You can have her Harold bye bye  
 EMMA: Will you take me home Harold  
 HAROLD: Yes but dont touch my suit  
 EMMA: Shurre  
 ARCH VILLAIN: They Deserve each other and so our heroine rides of into the sunset.

## THE DARK AND LONELY MAN

a radio play

by Elizabeth, Indra, Judith and Mylan

### SCENE ONE

*(The telephone rings)*

MISS JOYCE: Hello, may I help you? This is the Kalish residence.

KAREN: Hello, may I speak to Lizzy please.

MISS JOYCE: Lizzy—telephone.

LIZZY: Hello?

KAREN: This is Karen.

LIZZY: Oh hi Karen.

KAREN: Can I come over? I'm kind of lonely.

LIZZY: Yeah, sure.

KAREN: Okay, I'll be over in a second.

*(Doorbell rings)*

MISS JOYCE: Lizzy, Karen has arrived.

LIZZY: Okay, Miss Joyce, I'll be downstairs right away.

*(Footsteps running downstairs.)*

Hi, Karen, let's go up to my room.

*(Steps going upstairs. Door closes.)*

Well, what do you want to do?

KAREN: Let's watch the T.V.

LIZZY: Okay.

*(Organ music for a soap opera.)*

KAREN: Too bad, we missed the beginning. Oh I love this program: it's about the mother who rejects her child.

LIZZY: I don't want to see it.

KAREN: Oh come on, it's real good.

LIZZY: I don't wanna see it!

KAREN: Why not?

LIZZY: Because, it's too upsetting to me.

*(Turns off the television.)*

KAREN: What's upsetting you? It can't hurt you, it's only a TV show.

LIZZY: I know that but it reminds me of somebody.

KAREN: Who?

LIZZY: Me and my mother. You see, she always goes to parties and meetings, but she never goes anywhere with me. She neglects me, you know what I mean?

KAREN: Yes I guess so. But she's probably not neglecting you.

LIZZY: Karen, you don't understand! You see, look, you have probably been here a dozen times and every time you come my mother is too busy or she's not here.

KAREN: Is your mother home right now?

LIZZY: No, just me and Miss Joyce, the maid—she's the one who cooks my meals and feeds me. She seems like my mother sometimes.

KAREN: Well you have a maid! You have a mansion! You have your own room and everything.

LIZZY: But that's not what counts. So what if I have my own room, I don't have—love.

KAREN: I've got this crummy two-room apartment, you've got this mansion, and

LIZZY: you're complaining about being neglected. But in those two rooms you've got your mother to help you whenever you need it. And also, on top of that, she cares for you!

KAREN: Yeah, but your mother cares for you too, you know that. Every mother cares for her children. I think you're being kind of silly about this. You're exaggerating.

LIZZY: Look, Karen, you don't understand my life, you're not me. Try to understand. I come home from school every day and say "Hi Mom" and all she does is say, "Go away. I'm reading," or "I'm busy" or something like that. Actually, I just don't really care for her, because she doesn't care for me. I wouldn't care if she got hit by a car. It would only put me in a better position.

KAREN: Lizzy, you're being really ridiculous. If your mother got hit by a car, are you crazy? Of course you'd be upset.

LIZZY: How can you tell whether I like my mother or not?

KAREN: Well, listen, I've got to go now. And stop thinking these crazy things!

### SCENE TWO

LIZZY: Joyce, I'm going upstairs to listen to some new records.

MISS JOYCE: I'm baking a cake now.  
*(Someone fiddling with door; breaks in.)*

LIZZY: Joyce, is that my mom?

MISS JOYCE: I don't know Lizzy. Don't bother me, I'll be in the kitchen.  
*(Footsteps)*

DARK MAN: Lizzy it is time.

LIZZY: Who are you?

DARK MAN: Lizzy you must come now.

LIZZY: *(thinking)* Oh God, what I will do?! I know: I'll run up to the bathroom and lock the door.

LIZZY: *(Footsteps chase each other—door slams.)*  
*(thinking)* Oh no, suppose he breaks in. He's so horrible! I don't want his yucky hands against me.  
*(Front door opening)*

MOTHER: Lizzy, Lizzy, I'm home.

LIZZY: Oh no, my mother! What's going to happen to her? *(Sounds of a struggle. Mother screams, hand put over her mouth.)*

DARK MAN: Come now, we must go quickly.  
*(Door slams, running feet)*

MISS JOYCE: Lizzy, your mother's gone!

LIZZY: Joyce.... What are we going to do?

MISS JOYCE: Quick, I'll go call the police.  
*(Music: End of scene)*

### SCENE THREE

POLICEMAN: What did he look like?

LIZZY: Well, Officer, he was big and ugly and he was dark all over.



**LIZZY:** *But Karen, it is night!*  
**KAREN:** *So then let's go now.*  
**LIZZY:** *Okay. Let's see, we'll have to stop at your house and pick up your sleeping bag...*  
**KAREN:** *Okay. Let's go.*  
**LIZZY:** *Wait a minute, I have to get my stuff too, all right?*  
**KAREN:** *Yeah, sure.*

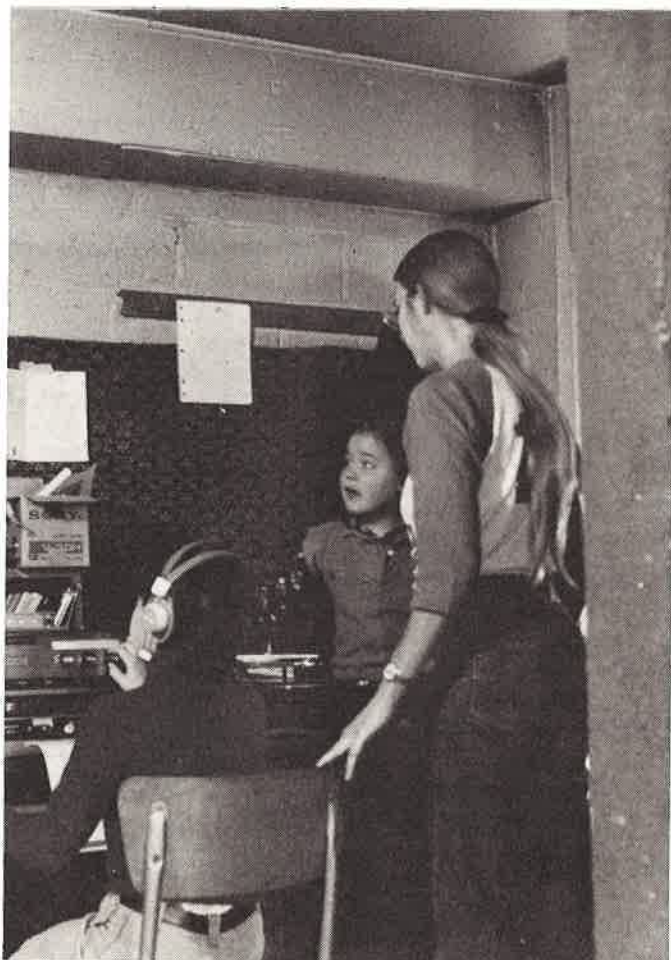
#### SCENE FIVE

**NARRATOR:** *Later on that night.  
 (Crickets, owls, night sounds in the woods.)*  
**KAREN:** *Hey, here's a good place. Let's put up our tent.*  
**LIZZY:** *Let's go a little further in the woods.*  
**KAREN:** *All right.  
 (Trotting horses, crunching leaves.)*  
**LIZZY:** *What about here?*  
**KAREN:** *Okay, this is a good place.*  
**LIZZY:** *Well, let's get to work. I'll put up the tent and you build a fire.*  
**KAREN:** *Let's go hiking tomorrow and leave our horses here.*  
**LIZZY:** *Karen, will you stop worrying about tomorrow and start building a fire? I'm getting hungry!*  
**KAREN:** *All right, all right.*  
**LIZZY:** *Good. We can have the hamburgers we*

**POLICEMAN:** *That's not good enough, Lizzie. If you want us to catch this man you have to give us a better description.*  
**MISS JOYCE:** *Well I saw him too. I think he was wearing some kind of mask because I saw some blond hair sticking out of the back of his head.*  
**LIZZY:** *Now I remember. He had a scar on his left hand like from a burn.*  
**POLICEMAN:** *We let a man named Paul Bark out of jail last week. He had a scar the way you described it.*  
**MISS JOYCE:** *What was he being held for?*  
**POLICEMAN:** *A bank robbery.*  
**LIZZY:** *Phew! I thought he was a killer!!*  
**POLICEMAN:** *You never can tell though.*  
**LIZZY:** *This is my mother you're talking about. Are you trying to scare me?!!*  
**POLICEMAN:** *No, not at all. Well we better be going. Tell me if something comes up. Also if you get a ransom note call me.*  
**LIZZY:** *Wait! I don't have your number.*  
**POLICEMAN:** *Here's my card. Just ask for Sergeant Murphy.*  
**LIZZY:** *I hope you find her.*

#### SCENE FOUR

**KAREN:** *Lizzy, I got this great idea.*  
**LIZZY:** *What is it now?*  
**KAREN:** *Let's go on a camping trip on your horses.*  
**LIZZY:** *I don't think that's a good idea.*  
**KAREN:** *Oh come on, it will be really fun.*  
**LIZZY:** *Karen, I don't think that's a good idea, because you know that the police are still looking for my mother and I don't think Ms. Joyce would like to be left alone.*  
**KAREN:** *So say that you're sleeping over at my house for a couple of nights.*  
**LIZZY:** *Okay. I suppose...but I still don't like the idea. Anyway, when are we going to go?*  
**KAREN:** *Let's go tonight.*



brought and tomorrow we can have hot dogs.

(Sound of crackling fire)

KAREN: Umm. That was a good meal.  
LIZZY: Let's go to the brook and wash our plates off for breakfast tomorrow.

KAREN: Okay.

LIZZY: Oh look at the beaver! Oh isn't he cute, I just adore beavers. (Walking, gravel sounds.) Karen, I want to talk to you about me and my mother. You know the last time we talked—

KAREN: Oh come on, do we have to talk about it on our camping trip?

LIZZY: Karen will you let me finish please?

KAREN: Okay, if you want to talk, talk.

LIZZY: Karen, I'm scared. Suppose she's dead. Maybe I was wrong about those things I said. I really do miss my mother, after all. I do love her.

KAREN: Don't worry, she's probably fine. You got the ransom note that she's all right.

LIZZY: Okay. Let's go back to the tent to get some sleep.

KAREN: Hey look, there's a light!

LIZZY: Forget it. We'll investigate it tomorrow.

KAREN: Oh come on, Lizzy. Please?

LIZZY: All right, but if we're going to do it let's sneak up quietly.

(Walking; tripping sound.)

KAREN: Ouch! (Clapping over the mouth sound)

LIZZY: (whispers) Be quiet! Do you want them to hear us?

KAREN: Who?

LIZZY: I don't know.

NARRATOR: Is this THE END? Who's in that cabin they see? Is Lizzy's mother DEAD? CAN IT BE TRUE? These questions and many more will be answered in the next scene of "The Dark and Lonely Man."

## SCENE SIX

(Music: Beginning of Beethoven's 5th Symphony; fades out)

MOTHER: Why did you kidnap me!?!?

MAN: Because I wanted your herd of cows!

MOTHER: That doesn't sound very likely to me. I don't believe you!

MAN: Why?

MOTHER: Because I just don't believe you!!!

MAN: Okay Okay I'll tell you the truth! (Pause) I kidnapped you because, well, I'm lonely.  
MOTHER: Well you could have made friends without kidnapping me.

MAN: Sure, that's easy for you to say. I bet you've never been in jail in your life!

MOTHER: That's not true. I was arrested once for disturbing the peace.

MAN: You—you did? How?

MOTHER: I was demonstrating against Irving Anker.

MAN: Who's he?

MOTHER: He was the president of the Board of

Education.

MAN: How long were you in jail?

MOTHER: For two hours.

MAN: Two hours, that's all? I was in jail ten years!

MOTHER: But that's not my point. Lots of people have been in jail one time or another. And it has affected our lives. For instance my mother hasn't talked to me since the demonstration. But I've gone on like it hasn't even happened.

MAN: Yeah, but you've been in jail for just protesting—not like me for kidnapping and bank robbery.

MOTHER: Why should that make a difference?

MAN: Because you were bailed out. I wasn't. I bet you weren't even in the cage.

MOTHER: I was too in the cage! And even if I got bailed out I was still in jail.

MAN: Well in my book the cage is not jail. Jail is... well, jail is—Jail.

MOTHER: Well, you're out of jail now. And what you need is a well-paying job to keep you out of trouble.

MAN: A job! A job—you must be crazy. They look at your background. Do you know what background is? It's past past Past!!!

MOTHER: You could be my butler.

MAN: You really are a little crazy! But I'll take the job. On one condition...

MOTHER: What's that?

MAN: I won't have to face your daughter.

MOTHER: Well she won't know it's you. You had a mask on.

MAN: That won't work.

MOTHER: Then you'll just have to face her or go to jail.

MAN: Oh well I'll take the job.

MOTHER: We'll start back tomorrow.  
(Outside. Forest noises)

KAREN: Lizzy, did you hear that? The man that kidnapped your mother is going to be your butler!

LIZZY: Oh no, he isn't.

KAREN: You can't argue with your mother, she's your mother.

LIZZY: Let's not worry about that now, let's worry about how to get my mother out of there! Oh Karen, suppose he sees us? What will he do?

MAN: I hear somebody out there. I better get my shotgun out.

MOTHER: No, wait, you agreed to get out of crime.

MAN: Oh boy, why did I have to kidnap her?

MOTHER: Hey, that looks like Lizzy and Karen!

MAN: Oh no, more trouble.

LIZZY: Karen, I have to go in there. If my mother's going to die, I want to die with her!

KAREN: All right, but I think I'll wait out here.  
(Door opens)

MOTHER: Lizzy!

LIZZY: Oh mom, I'm so glad you're safe, and that human beast who kidnapped you is



- going to jail.
- MOTHER:** Lizzy, he is not going to jail.
- LIZZY:** What do you mean, he isn't going to jail?
- MOTHER:** He's our new butler.
- LIZZY:** You expect me to live in our mansion with him!
- MOTHER:** Yes I do. I'm the mother and what I say goes.
- LIZZY:** Mother please don't talk to me that way. I didn't do anything wrong. Besides, do you think it's fun to be yelled at all the time?
- MOTHER:** Well look at you! You're yelling right now.
- LIZZY:** But at least I don't do it all the time.
- MOTHER:** Well I don't do it all the time either.
- LIZZY:** How could you? You mostly don't pay any attention to me. You never talk to me. Face it, Ma, you don't care about me. You hate me!
- MOTHER:** No I do not, Lizzy!
- LIZZY:** Well look at Karen and her mother. They get along perfectly.
- MOTHER:** We're not Karen and her mother. We're us, and you should stop comparing us.
- LIZZY:** Oh dammit, Mom! All I get from you is nothing.  
(Walks out and slams the door.)
- MAN:** You guys are ridiculous, fighting over something silly like this.
- MOTHER:** I think it's good, because we're finally getting to communicate how we feel.
- LIZZY:** (from outside) Mama I hate you! I hate you!
- MOTHER:** All right, hate me if you want to. But I will never hate you.
- LIZZY:** Ha!
- MAN:** You call this communicating? Are you go-
- ing to let her walk away? You should at least go outside and talk to her.
- MOTHER:** Oh butt out.
- KAREN:** (Outside sounds) Some camping trip! Lizzie, if you're going to start arguing like this, you might as well talk it over in the same room.
- LIZZY:** Why are you blaming me? It's not my fault, it's my stupid idiot mother.
- KAREN:** Lizzie, why don't you make up with your mother.
- LIZZY:** All right, I'll make up with her, but that's not going to do any good.
- KAREN:** I think you should at least try.  
(Both re-enter cottage.)
- LIZZY:** I'm sorry, Mom.
- MOTHER:** Well I'm sorry too, Lizzie. I guess I was acting kind of stubborn.
- LIZZY:** You were.
- KAREN:** Shut up, Lizzie. You're just going to start this whole thing all over.
- LIZZY:** Mom...I have something to say. I'm sorry. I really said some awful things about you that weren't true.
- MOTHER:** You should be sorry. Talking behind my back!
- MAN:** Stop! You're blowing it.
- LIZZY:** Well, it wasn't all my fault, you know.
- MOTHER:** I know. I'm sorry. I thought some pretty mean things about you, too, but I guess I was wrong.
- MAN:** What a touching ending.
- KAREN:** Oh brother! Is this the end? Is it all over?
- EVERYBODY:** Yes!  
(Music)

The End



**RADIO PROGRAM**  
Feb. 15

**SONG:** "Tiyende Pamodzi"  
(M. Burns)  
**GREETINGS:** Hujambo...Muoyo webe...  
(Brennan) Sibona...Bonjour... Kayfak  
...E ku aro.....Ola.....  
Akuaba....Kayfaki...  
HELLO!  
(Thom): UPFUKILE!  
LC: And Hello, everybody! You  
just heard greetings from all  
over Africa. What was that  
last one?

**GREETINGS**  
(Thom): UPFUKILE!  
LC: Upfukile! That's one way  
you might be greeted in  
Mozambique. Upfukile  
means "Are you awake?"  
So wake up now or you'll  
miss some great things. A  
number of classes at P.S. 75  
have been making a special  
study of Africa during the  
last few weeks and they are  
going to share some things  
with you now. At the begin-  
ning you heard Mr. Burns'  
class singing "Tiyende Pa-  
modzi", a song from Zam-  
bia that means "Let's All  
Go Together". Africans  
talk a lot about doing things  
together, even though their  
ways of living may be very  
different. You saw in the  
greetings given by Mr.  
Brennan's class and Ms.  
Thom's class that they have  
many different languages,  
including some you know...

**WHISTLE:**  
LC: .....  
There's another greeting!  
Someone is telling you  
Hello in whistle talk..

**WHISTLE:**  
LC: .....  
Whistle talk, which is a lit-  
tle like drum language, is  
another way to say things in  
Africa. In fact whistle talk  
is used in other parts of the  
world to send messages.

LC: I want to warn you that our  
program may be inter-  
rupted at any minute. Some  
reporters from Mrs. Selig's  
class and Mr. Burns' class  
are out looking for news.  
There's a rumor that there  
are some Africans right  
here at P.S. 75...

**GONG GONG:**  
LC: .....  
There it is..the news gong!

**BURNS:** The Chief of the Africa  
News Bureau is on the line:  
Mr. Michael Burns. It's all  
yours, Chief.  
We have several important  
stories here. First for the  
local news. The search for  
Africans at P.S. 75 has  
turned up some interesting  
information. Susan Schach-  
ter, what have you found  
out?  
**SUSAN SCHACHTER:** There is a mystery person at  
P.S. 75.....(tells about  
Stella Dennis).....  
**BURNS:** Thank you, Susan.  
**GONG GONG:** .....  
**BURNS:** Another late bulletin. Jeff  
Gutman is rushing into the  
studio now. What do you  
have for us, Jeff?  
**JEFF:** There's another African  
teacher at P.S. 75. His  
name is Kumi Dwamena....  
(tells about Kumi's names,  
etc.)  
**BURNS:** Tha... (interrupted by Gong  
Gong)  
**GONG GONG:** .....  
**BURNS:** Another one? It seems P.S.  
75 has been invaded by  
Africans. Jennie Hiraga,  
what's your story?  
**JENNIE:** Yes, there is another  
teacher here from Africa...  
only this one is something  
of a mystery. They say she's  
white and has an American  
name. But she also has an  
African name and was born  
in Zaire. Have you seen  
anyone around here named  
Mbombo?  
**BURNS:** Mbombo? Who is  
Mbombo?  
LC: Mbombo! Well, I have to  
confess. I am Mbombo,  
though most people know  
me here by another name.  
Right now why don't you  
just call me Mbombo?  
**JENNIE:** All right, Mbombo, I would  
like to ask you some ques-  
tions.  
LC: What would you like to  
know?  
**JENNIE:** Some of our classes have  
been studying poetry. We'd  
like to know if they have  
poetry in Africa?  
LC: Oh yes, all kinds. Some-  
times people sit in a group  
and make up poems or  
songs together.  
**JENNIE:** How is that?

LC: One of the classes here at P.S. 75 tried it after they heard a poem I gave them from Zaire. It was written by a friend of mine, a woman called Madiya Nzujji. I'll say the poem first in Tshiluba, one of the Zaire languages:

*Kanumonayi mwetu  
mundela  
Mudi mulaale ngandu  
pa mayi  
Mudi mulaale nguyvu  
mu bisense  
ne mbowa  
utwa madjunda*

JENNIE: What does that mean?  
LC: She's talking about where she lives, in Zaire. In fact the poem reminds me of where I was born, near the Zaire River. Listen to Mrs. Takagi's class recite this poem, or part of it, in English, in African style:

*Come see where I was born  
How the crocodile  
sleeps in the waters  
How the hippopotamus  
stalks in the swamp  
How loudly the buffalo  
claims his rights.*

*Come see where I was born  
There where the hawk  
soars in the air  
Where the leopard  
likes to fight  
Where the lion allows  
no one near him.*

LC: Now the students are going to recite as a group some poems they made up, African style, to talk about some other places. First, some places you know...

POETRY (Takagi) (Group 1)  
Come see where I live  
.....  
.....  
.....

(Group 2)  
Come see where I live  
.....  
.....  
.....

LC: Now the opening line will be "Come see my roots". Several children will read their own poems about places where they were born, or from where their

ancestors came. See if you can guess the places. Stefan Sage...

STEFAN: Come see my roots.....  
(France)

LC: Karina Berg  
KARINA: Come see my roots.....  
(Canada)

LC: Renee McDonald  
RENEE: Come see my roots.....  
(Africa)

LC: Jonathan Berger  
JONATHAN: Come see my roots.....  
(Russia)

LC: Those are all different places, but did you know that all of us have roots in Africa? According to old bones that have been discovered, the very first people lived in Africa. I wish we had time for more poems, but you can read these in a book that Mrs. Takagi's class is preparing.

GONG GONG: .....  
LC: There's the News Chief again. Over to you, Mike!

BURNS: (News from reporters in Burns class. The last item about the two South African sisters, Thandi\_\_\_\_\_ and Pindele\_\_\_\_\_.

REPORTER: (Burns cl.)  
LC: We asked Pindele if she would come and talk on our show and here she is.

LC: Welcome, Pindile! I'm glad you came, because I would especially like to ask you something. It's about that T-shirt I saw your sister wearing the other day...it must have been your sister Thandi. I recognized some words on the shirt that come from a very important song from South Africa. What is the name of the song?

PINDELE: Nkosi Sikelele.  
LC: Nkosi...how do you say that click?

PINDELE: Nkosi Sikelele.  
LC: Nk.o.. I can't do it very well. Can any of you say that click like Pindele?

ALL (trying)  
LC: Nk- Pindele, how do you do it? Show us.

PINDELE: (Explains)...All Try.  
LC: How was that?  
PINDILE: Not bad but....  
LC: Well, we'll have to get you

to teach us better. Now how about the meaning of those words, Nkosi Sikelele Afrika. What does that say?

PINDELE:  
LC:

God bless Africa.  
And do they sing that song in South Africa?

PINDELE:

No, because it is a black people's song and the white government does not allow it. They are unfair to the black people and are afraid the song will bring the people together to fight for their rights.

LC:

Yes, they banned Nkosi Sikelele in South Africa, but today it is sung all over Africa and in other parts of the world. South Africans outside the country sing it like a freedom hymn. Two countries, Zambia and Tanzania, adopted the music for their own national anthems. Here are some children from Tanzania singing the prayer for Africa in Swahili:

MUSIC:  
(Recording)  
LC:

... (Mungu ibariki, Afrika)  
Mrs. Karasik's class has been making a study of African proverbs and then they started also making up some of their own. See if you can tell which ones come from Africa and which ones are original. Several of these are about food, because that's one of the special subjects Class 324 has been studying. Let's hear the proverbs now:

#### PROVERBS

(Names announced)

JASON SHERMAN:

Hunger is felt by a slave and hunger is felt by a king.

DEAN MARTINEZ:

The frog wanted to be as big as the elephant and he burst!

BRUNO BLUMENFELD: If you feast a lot others may not.

HOLLY PIKOWSKY:

He who never decides never makes progress.

He who uses an eraser makes a mistake.

You can always look backward and correct your mistakes.

DAWN GABRIELLINI:

One who eats must be grateful

One who starves must be sorry.

DANIELE HICKMAN:

He who does not help other people in need will not get help when he is in need.

TANIA ROGERS:

Three heads are better than one.

LC:

We interrupt now for a soap commercial.  
(Savon OMO)

MUSIC:

GONG GONG:

LC:

.....  
The News Chief again!  
Over to you, Mike....

BURNS:

(News stories from Burns reporters)

Now we have some roving reporters who have been scouting the West Side for Africa news. Felicia Kornbluh and Kim Burzon, where are you?

FELICIA:

We're standing here between 74th and 75th St. on Broadway, at the Afrikulture store.... (describes store, etc. then turns over mike to Kim...)

KIM:

I'm here at Kalpana Indian Groceries on Broadway between 94th and 95th.... (Tells about African foods)

KIM?FELICIA:

(Story on Surroundings?)  
Back to you, Mr. Burns!

BURNS:

LC:

(Signs off)  
Before we end our show, Mrs. Dworman's class, in Rm. 303 would like to describe an African scene with an old drum chant. The chant is sung by the people as they watch the chief drinking wine that is brought to him.... or to her. The wine drinking is a special ceremony, first using imported liquor or foreign wine, and then the real African palm wine. Some wine must be poured on the ground in honor of the ancestors.

POETRY:

(Dworman)

(Drumming and clapping)  
Chief, they are bringing it  
They are bringing it.  
They are bringing it to you.  
Chief you are about  
to drink imported  
liquor.

Chief pour some on  
the ground.

He is sipping it slowly  
and gradually.

He is sipping it  
in little draughts.

Chief they are bringing you

cool and refreshing  
 drink.  
 They are bringing  
 you palmwine.  
 He has got it.  
 He is drinking it.  
 He has got it.  
 He is drinking it.  
 He is sipping it in  
 little draughts.  
 He is sipping it slowly  
 and gradually...  
 The residue remains.  
 It is poured out.  
 Well done, Gracious one,  
 well done!

LC:

Class 303 is also learning  
 some other poems, written  
 by modern writers in  
 Africa. Leopold Senghor,  
 president of Senegal, has  
 had his poems published in  
 languages all over the  
 world. Another interna-  
 tionally known African  
 poet, Birago Diop, is a  
 veterinarian and writes in  
 his spare time....

Langston Hughes, an  
 American poet whose  
 ancestors came from  
 Africa, got a lot of his in-  
 spiration from Africa.  
 Here's one of his poems  
 that talks about two famous  
 rivers in Africa—the Nile  
 and the Congo. Even  
 though Langston Hughes  
 had not yet actually trav-  
 elled to Africa when he  
 wrote this, he knew the  
 rivers—the ones in Africa  
 and another in Asia—  
 because he had been there  
 in his imagination. Alice  
 Brover is going to read  
 "The Negro Speaks of  
 Rivers".

POEM  
 (Alice Brover)

I've known rivers  
 I've known rivers ancient  
 as the world and  
 older than the flow of  
 human blood in  
 human veins.  
 My soul has grown deep  
 like the rivers.  
 I bathed in the Euphrates  
 when dawns  
 were young  
 I built my hut near  
 the Congo and  
 it lulled me  
 to sleep.  
 I looked upon the Nile

MUSIC:  
 (Thom)  
 LC:

MUSIC:  
 (Thom)  
 LC:

MUSIC:  
 (Thom)

and raised the  
 pyramids above it.  
 I heard the singing  
 of the Mississippi  
 when Abe Lincoln  
 went to New Orleans,  
 and I've seen its  
 muddy bosom turn  
 all golden in  
 the sunset.  
 I've known rivers:  
 Ancient, dusky rivers.  
 My soul has grown deep  
 like the rivers.

..... (Dmitri and Gregory)  
 Ms. Thom's class, in Room  
 118, has been busy doing all  
 kinds of things related to  
 Africa. This was the group  
 that woke you up at the be-  
 ginning with the Mozambi-  
 que greeting: UPFUKILE!  
 Now Dmitri Shapiro and  
 Gregory Fox are playing  
 some music they worked  
 out with shells. The singing  
 is by children in Zaire and  
 Dmitri and Gregory are  
 beating out the rhythm on  
 shells or calabashes from  
 Colombia, South America.

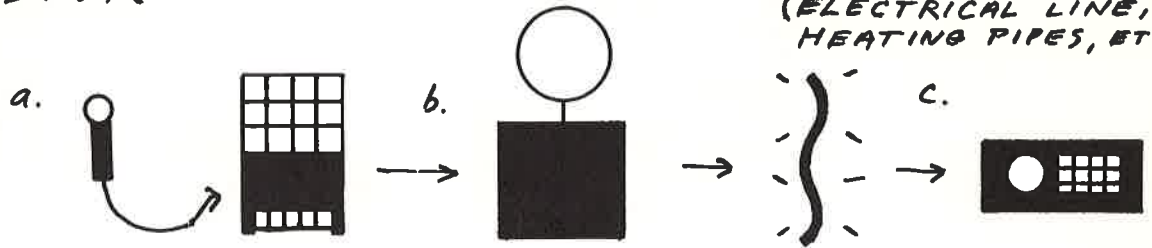
..... (Dmitri and Gregory)  
 Well, we've run out of time,  
 but keep your eyes and ears  
 open for other things that  
 are happening. The classes  
 working with Ms. Gibson  
 are making some fantastic  
 things, many of them say-  
 ing, through art, what  
 we've talked about here:  
 especially how we all need  
 to work together, even  
 though we may be dif-  
 ferent. All over the school  
 you will see pictures of im-  
 portant black leaders in  
 Africa and America; our  
 Africa newspaper, which  
 will be out before too long,  
 will carry some stories  
 about them. Meanwhile, if  
 you know of any Africans  
 in the school that we have  
 missed or have other news,  
 speak to one of our re-  
 porters or call Mbombo at  
 station P.S. 75. Kwaheri...  
 Au revoir... Washala bimpe  
 ...Goodbye!

.....  
 END

# Equipment Needed for a School Radio Station

BASIC IDEA: AUDIO SOURCE → TRANSMITTER → CONDUCTING METAL GRID (ELECTRICAL LINE, HEATING PIPES, ETC.)

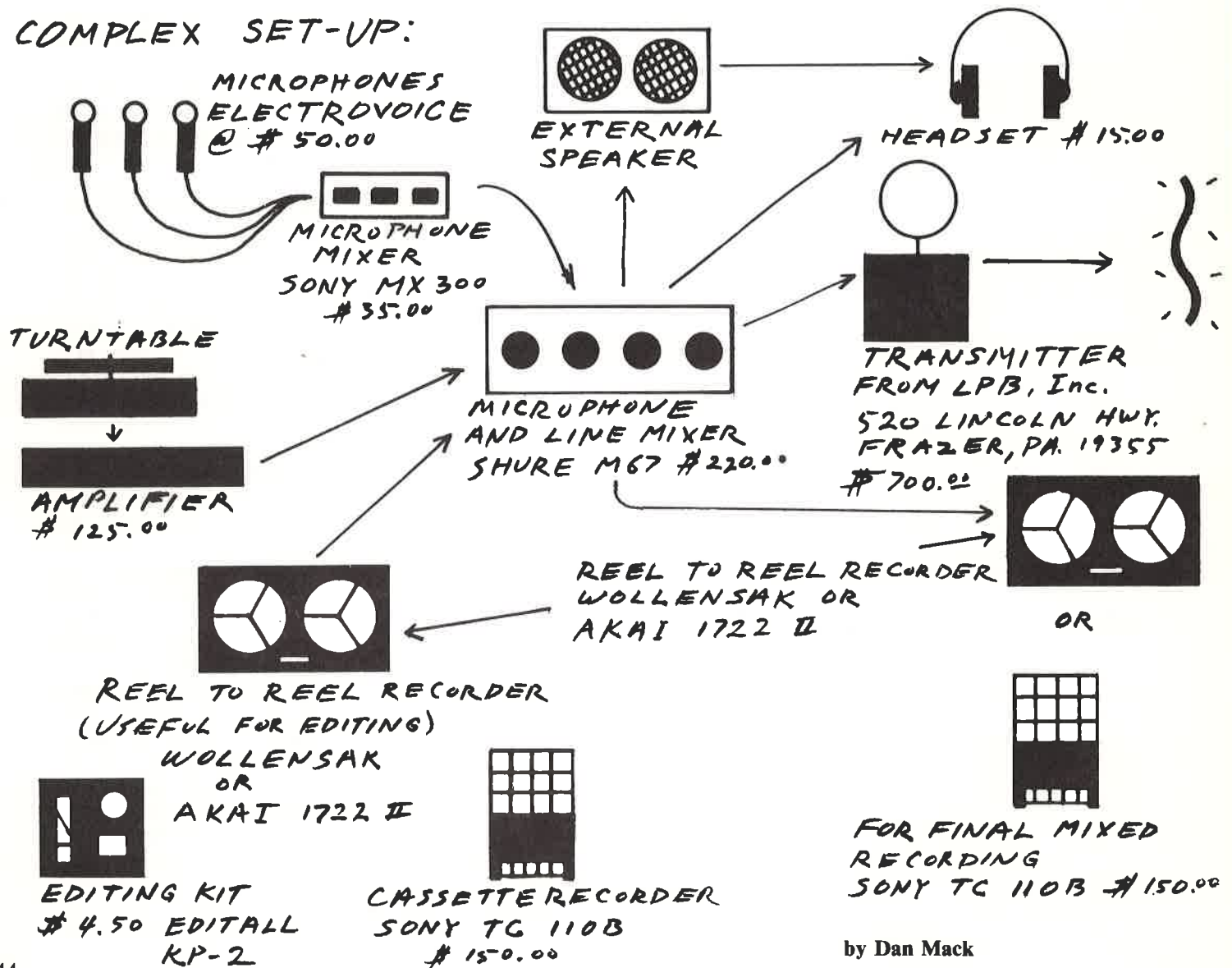
SIMPLE SET-UP:



TAPES ARE MADE WITH A MICROPHONE AND CASSETTE RECORDER AND THEN PLAYED INTO THE TRANSMITTER WHICH THEN "BROADCASTS" THEM TO THE SCHOOL VIA THE ELECTRICAL LINES OR HEATING PIPES AND THE TAPES ARE PICKED UP ON AM RADIO IN THE VARIOUS CLASSROOMS

\* AN ENGINEER WITH EXPERIENCE IN "CARRIER CURRENT RADIO" IS AN ESSENTIAL.

COMPLEX SET-UP:



# Dalton and Michael on the Air

by Meredith Sue Willis



There is something special about children going "on the air LIVE" on radio. I have taken them to WBAI to read their own stories and poems; I have had them there for panel discussions; and once a group even shared in the listener-sponsored radio station's fund raising efforts: "Please send money! Don't let this station die!" Every time there is a moment of realization that this is real; this is something that adults do. *We are being taken seriously, and people are listening to what we say.*

Dalton and Michael and their group made a tape of a drama they had written, and we all went to the radio station to hear the tape aired and to talk about it with members of the listening audience who call on the telephone. The studios are sealed off from the rest of the station, but there are windows of double-thick, sound-proof glass, and we can see producer Paul McIsaac talking, although we don't hear him. The red "on the air" sign is lit. The boys whisper: "Is he on the air? Right now? Right now you could turn on the radio and hear that man talking? *Right now?*"

They are awed by the importance of the moment. Paul puts on a record and comes bursting out through the heavy doors to usher us in to the desk-style seats with built-in microphones. We put on earphones while Paul plugs us in, rewinds tapes, whirls dials. He gives us hints about how far our mouths should be from the microphones and explains that we will be responding to live phone calls. Dalton looks dazed; Michael is repeating over and over: "Don't explode your P's, just don't explode your P's."

The music ends; the red sign lights up again; and Paul begins to talk, introducing us. Dalton catches my eye and elaborately mouths, "Can they hear us now?" Paul asks questions: How did you come to write this play? Why did you choose this topic? Michael is very formal and serious: "We did a cop drama because we think children can learn from it not to do bad things." "Yeah," says Dalton, "and I'm going to be a policeman when I grow up." Their sense of responsibility now that they are speaking to the unseen thousands of impressionable people out there astounds me. They seem to have forgotten how they love to imitate the sound of a machine gun, how they delight in keeling over and practicing dying. This is the first they ever told me of the redeeming social value of their cops and robbers shoot-outs.

We listen to our tape and discuss a little of what the boys


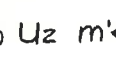
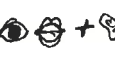

have learned about radio production, and then they begin to take live phone calls. A teenage boy calls and gives a lengthy congratulations. A little girl calls and reads a poem about a kitten. I find all this youthful good behavior stifling, but it occurs to me that for their first experience on radio, Michael, Dalton, and the callers are determined to be acceptable by adult standards. I am waiting for some of the adults who had called in a couple of weeks earlier when I was on the air with Paul without the boys. Those callers were disturbed by the idea of violence being meaningful to children. But perhaps Michael has already satisfied these people with his remarks about how good cop dramas are for children's morality.

Dalton begins to relax. He stares at the ceiling and plays with the mike wires. When he pulls out a package of potato chips and begins to pass them around, I begin to glare. Just then a young caller says, "I think your program is wonderful, and more children should have the opportunity to do what those boys..." "Hey!" Dalton sits up straight. "Hey, that's my sister! Is that you? This is me, Dalton!" Michael leans forward. "You mean your *family* can call? Mom, hey Mom, if you're listening, call up right now!" The power seems to crackle in his voice. His mother calls at once, and even though she tries to keep her comments on the topic, Michael makes his own direction: "Is everybody listening? Where are they sitting?" Now he grasps the idea of his whole family gathered around the radio listening to his words. The reality of this new form of communication hits the boys as they realize the stature it gives them. They begin to sit taller. Out there who knows that they are small and young. Their voices reach for miles, and their mothers, fathers, and sisters, not to mention strangers, are listening.

When the program is over, the boys take to the street with giant steps, looking around at all the people as though they expected to be asked for autographs. I know the feeling: you've been on the air, surely one of those people heard you. That feeling of being a celebrity is exhilarating. But the boys recovered quickly, and within days they were writing another script. Their whole class at school, in fact, was writing scripts. Michael and Dalton had tasted the pleasure and the power in this particular kind of effort: working together to create a play and then producing it for a listening audience. We were all ready to move on, to discover the next step. □

# Correction

The test which appeared in "Helping Students to Test and Diagnose Their Own Reading" (Vol. 10, No. 1) contained several unintentional errors. The test below is the correct test.

2. As I am reading this, am I looking carefully at what I'm reading or am I being careless?
3. Do I just keep on along going if sense no make it?
4. Did I read questions 2 and 3 without asking myself any questions?
5. Am I taking the trouble to accurately decipher the sounds carried by the orthography of this sentence?
6. Do I know the precise juncture at which it makes sense for me to consult a dictionary for questions 5 and 6?
7. Did I try to read question 5 at the same speed as I first read question 2?
8.  Uz m'  +  + understand
9. If I read word by word  
is it easy for me to  
get the meaning and make sense  
out of what I read?
10. Can I group the words in any way I  
happen to put them and still understand?
11. DO I NEED TO EMPHASIZE EACH  
WORD THE SAME AMOUNT?
12. Do I need to try varying the melody and expres-  
sion of the phrases if they don't to my ear a  
meaning bring?
13. Can I make what is dark or cloudy clear with-  
out making a picture in my mind?
14.  page on There can \_\_\_\_\_  
anything I this do \_\_\_\_\_?  
page I this without \_\_\_\_\_?
15. Have I taken the time it takes to fully under-  
stand this test?

# Plugs



## New from AWP

For creative writing teachers...

CREATIVE WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM, An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Resources (K-12)  
...compiled by NCTE in cooperation with AWP. Concise annotated bibliography with 700 titles of articles, books and research on teaching creative writing. 118 pps., \$5.50. Order from AWP or ERIC, National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Still available from AWP...

THE 1978 CATALOGUE OF COLLEGE WRITING PROGRAMS  
...describes faculty, requirements and general course outlines for 189 undergraduate, 103 graduate and 13 "special" programs in the U.S. and Canada. Important resource for students and advisors. 17 pps., \$3.00.

ORDER BOOKS FROM: ASSOCIATED WRITING PROGRAMS, c/o English, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23508

VERMONT CHILDREN'S MAGAZINE publishes poems, stories and artwork by children. To submit work or obtain copies write to: Vermont Children's Magazine, P.O. Box 941, Burlington, Vt. 05401.

---

# Contributors' Notes

JULIA ALVAREZ participated for two years in the Poets-in-the-Schools program in Kentucky. In North Carolina she conducted workshops for the elderly in creative writing. She has taught freshman English at California State University, Fresno, and conducted bilingual poetry workshops in Wilmington, Delaware. Her poems have appeared in many small magazines. She has also done numerous translations of Latin American poets.

JOAN LOPATE holds a degree in studio art from Hunter College and paints, draws, makes ceramic sculpture and does photography. She earns her living as a commercial designer and photographer.

PHILLIP LOPATE is the author of two collections of poetry, *The Daily Round* and *The Eyes Don't Always Want to Stay Open* (SUN Press). His prose has appeared in *The Paris Review*, *The American Review* and *The Best American Short Stories of 1974*. He works for Teachers & Writers Collaborative. A book about his teaching experiences, *Being With Children* (published by Doubleday), is now available from Teachers & Writers.

JANET NICKELSBURG was born in San Francisco in 1893. She is the author of *California from the Mountains to the Sea* (Coward McCann), *The Nature Program at Camp* (Burgess), *Stargazing* (Burgess), *Field Trips* (Burgess) and *Ecology, Niche, Habitats and Food Chain* (Lippincott).

JUDY TATTI has an MFA in creative writing from Columbia University. She has taught theater arts to students from elementary school up through college. She currently teaches playwriting to eighth graders at Joan of Arc Junior High School, Manhattan. She also teaches writing at Montclair State College and Upsala College in New Jersey.

MEREDITH SUE WILLIS spent twenty years in West Virginia and has now completed another ten in New York. Her fiction has appeared in publications such as *Story Quarterly*, *The Little Magazine*, *Commentary* and *Mademoiselle*. Her novel, *A Space Apart*, will be published by Scribner in the spring of '79.

---

# Staff

---

Director	Steven Schrader
Associate Director	Nancy Larson
Publications Director	Miguel Ortiz
P.S. 75 Project Coordinator	Phillip Lopate
Administrative Assistants	Joe Cohen Mary Graves Cheryl Trobiani

---

## WRITERS AND ARTISTS IN THE 1979 PROGRAM

Dan Cheifetz	Sylvia Sandoval
Barbara Donish	Bob Sievert
Bill Kough	Linda Voorsanger
Phillip Lopate	Ali Wadud
Richard Perry	Kate Wenner
Pedro Rivera	Sue Willis
Barbara Siegel	Alan Ziegler

---

## ADVISORY BOARD

Jonathan Baumbach	Phillip Lopate
Benjamin DeMott	Ron Padgett
Leonard Fleischer	Alfred Prettyman
Norm Fruchter	David Rogers
Nat Hentoff	Muriel Rukeyser
Florence Howe	Robert Silvers
Herb Kohl	Eliot Wigginton
Paul Lauter	Zelda Wirtschafter

---

Our printer is Philmark Lithographics, New York, N. Y.

Teachers & Writers Collaborative's basic program is supported in part by public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, our publication by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., a Federal Agency.

Our program is also receiving funding from Title 1 District 3-Manhattan, District 5-Manhattan, District 6-Manhattan, Lynbrook School District, L.I., Sol Bloom Foundation, RCA Inc., Exxon Inc., Helena Rubinstein Foundation, and from the many subscribers to this Magazine.



# Teachers & Writers Publications

**THE WHOLE WORD CATALOGUE** (72 pages) is a practical collection of assignments for stimulating student writing, designed for both elementary and secondary students. Activities designed as catalysts for classroom exercises include: personal writing, collective novels, diagram stories, fables, spoofs and parodies, and language games. It also contains an annotated bibliography.

**THE WHOLE WORD CATALOGUE 2** edited by Bill Zavatsky and Ron Padgett (350 pages). A completely new collection of writing and art ideas for the elementary, secondary, and college classroom. Deepens and widens the educational ground broken by our underground best seller, the first *Whole Word Catalogue*.

**IMAGINARY WORLDS** (110 pages) originated from Richard Murphy's desire to find themes of sufficient breadth and interest to allow sustained, independent writing by students. Children invented their own Utopias of time and place, invented their own religions, new ways of fighting wars, different schools. They produced a great deal of extraordinary writing, much of it reprinted in the book.

**A DAY DREAM I HAD AT NIGHT** (120 pages) is a collection of oral literature from children who were not learning to read well or write competently or feel any real sense of satisfaction in school. The author, Roger Landrum, working in collaboration with two elementary school teachers, made class readers out of the children's own work.

**FIVE TALES OF ADVENTURE** (119 pages) is a new collection of short novels written by children at a Manhattan elementary school. The stories cover a wide range of styles and interests—a family mystery, an urban satire, a Himalayan adventure, a sci-fi spoof, and a tale of murder and retribution.

**TEACHING AND WRITING POPULAR FICTION: HORROR, ADVENTURE, MYSTERY AND ROMANCE IN THE AMERICAN CLASSROOM** by Karen Hubert (236 pages). A new step-by-step guide on using the different literary genres to help students to write, based on the author's intensive workshops conducted for Teachers & Writers in elementary and secondary schools. Ms. Hubert explores the psychological necessities of each genre and discusses the various ways of tailoring each one to individual students. Includes hundreds of "recipes" to be used as story starters, with an anthology of student work to show the exciting results possible.

**JUST WRITING** by Bill Bernhardt. A book of exercises designed to make the reader aware of all the necessary steps in the writing process. This book can be used as a do-it-yourself writing course. It is also an invaluable resource for writing teachers.

**TO DEFEND A FORM** by Ardis Kimzey. Tells the inside story of administering a poets-in-the-schools program. It is full of helpful procedures that will insure a smoothly running program. The book also contains many classroom tested ideas to launch kids into poetry writing and an extensive bibliography of poetry anthologies and related material indispensable to anyone who teaches poetry.

**BEING WITH CHILDREN**, a book by Phillip Lopate, whose articles have appeared regularly in our magazine, is based on his work as project coordinator for Teachers & Writers Collaborative at P.S. 75 in Manhattan. Herb Kohl writes: "There is no other book that I know that combines the personal and the practical so well..." *Being With Children* is published by Doubleday at \$7.95. It is available through Teachers & Writers Collaborative for \$4.00 Paperback \$1.95.

**VERMONT DIARY** (180 pages) by Marvin Hoffman. A description of an attempt to set up a writing center within a rural elementary school. The book covers a two year period during which the author and several other teachers endeavor to build a unified curriculum based on a language arts approach.

**THE POETRY CONNECTION** by Nina Nyhart and Kinereth Gensler. This is a collection of adult and children's poetry with strategies to get students writing, an invaluable aid in the planning and execution of any poetry lesson.

**TEACHERS & WRITERS Magazine**, issued three times a year, draws together the experience and ideas of the writers and other artists who conduct T & W workshops in schools and community groups. A typical issue contains excerpts from the detailed work diaries and articles of the artists, along with the works of the students and outside contributions.

- The Whole Word Catalogue 2 @ \$6.95
  - The Whole Word Catalogue @ \$4.00
  - Teaching & Writing Popular Fiction @ \$4.00
  - Being With Children @ \$4.00     \$1.95 (Paper)
  - Five Tales of Adventure @ \$3.00 (10 copies or more @ \$2.00)
  - Imaginary Worlds @ \$3.00
  - A Day Dream I Had at Night @ \$3.00
  - Just Writing @ \$4.00
  - To Defend a Form @ \$4.00
  - Vermont Diary @ \$4.00
  - The Poetry Connection @ \$4.00
  - Subscription(s) to **T&W Newsletter**, three issues \$5.00, six issues \$9.00, nine issues \$12.00
- Back issues: \$2.00:
- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 5, No. 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 6, No. 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 8, No. 2  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 5, No. 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 6, No. 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 8, No. 3  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 6, No. 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 8, No. 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> Vol. 10, No. 1 |

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Teachers & Writers Collaborative, and send to:

Teachers & Writers  
84 Fifth Avenue  
New York City 10011

TOTAL  
ENCLOSED  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE POETRY CONNECTION**

### **An Anthology of Contemporary Poems With Ideas to Stimulate Children's Writing**

by Nina Nyhart and Kinereth Gensler

216 pages, \$4.00 paperback

**Everything you need to teach an exciting unit on writing poetry is in this book. The authors, two poets who have taught extensively in the Massachusetts schools, have put together an excellent collection of poetry by contemporary poets and by children. These poems were selected to serve as springboards for the numerous writing assignments the authors suggest. The assignments are presented in a concise way, but they are so full of possibilities that this book will generate new ideas each time you use it.**

