

Raphael House

celebrating 25 years

1979 - 2004

CHRONICLE NO. 3 - 19 March 2004



Gerald Richardson: The three of us

AS TOLD TO JILL HEMMING

The three of us, Paul Denford, Trudi Schladitz & myself, worked together. When we met, Paul and I were both 20 and I was in my first year at Victoria University.

We could have done anything along Rudolf Steiner lines: market garden, biodynamic centre, arts centre. I was involved in making design work.

Why did it become a school? Two pivotal things tipped the balance.

I went down to Christchurch, and I was flabbergasted that they had started a school with less, in every way, than we had.

Also for me, I had a child. There was no school and I was a school teacher.

That's a fundamental difference in this school. It was a teacher initiative, not a parent initiative.

We started sending out waves: asking people to help us; designing and making and selling craftwork, toys and furniture; having public talks. The list of

children didn't stop growing.

As a gesture of loyalty and goodwill to those pioneering parents, Paul took a composite group of classes 1-3.

After 6 months, in January 1980 I took the first pure class-one -only. I stayed with that class for 7 years, and after that I was the specialist woodwork and music teacher for 3 years.

NEXT WEEK: LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE

"The Evening Post," Tuesday, October 28, 1980

Starting a new school



Raphael House teacher Mr Gerald Richardson takes time off his Labour Day labours to give pupil Vivian Therkluson a barrow ride during a sod-turning working bee of parents, pupils and friends at the 3ha (eight-acre) site of the new school at Belmont. Builders will move onto the site, alongside a bush reserve in Matuhi St, to begin the \$105,000 first stage of a five-year project towards a full Rudolf Steiner school – New Zealand's fourth – from kindergarten to class 12 (equivalent to form seven).

The school, known as Raphael House and based on the Steiner artistic approach to education, is already functioning up to class four in a renovated cottage in High St, Lower Hutt.

It opened with a foundation roll of 12 in the second term last year and has already outgrown its premises.

The Steiner schools grow with the pupils and each year a new class is added. In order to meet demand the first stage of the project – designed as the kindergarten – will initially house the primary classes to allow the existing kindergarten to expand at Raphael House.

The Belmont block to open next year will include two large classrooms, designed to double as a stage plus a smaller classroom.

The school has net assets of about \$50,000 – representing over two years of fund-raising efforts plus contributions. Another \$50,000 has been

pledged over the next five years from parents and friends. On the strength of these pledges the school was able to raise a \$65,000 bank loan to start the first stage.

However, with a projected total school estimate of over \$1,000,000 the bulk of the fund-raising is just beginning, with parents and friends facing another long run of raffles, garage sales, market days, etc.

The Rudolf Steiner method follows that of the Austrian philosopher of the same name. Sometimes called "education towards freedom" the emphasis is on educating the "will, and heart" of the child, not just the mind. Music, fantasy and creativity feature prominently in the curriculum.