

Raphael House

celebrating 25 years

1979 - 2004

CHRONICLE 7 - 7 MAY 2004

Steiner's Art of Education: a first year student remembers

I remember riding down on my father's bike on the cross bar, my first day, the first year the kindergarten opened. I was not very happy at all. I cried my eyes out - I didn't want to go and play with these unknown people!

There was a sandpit at High Street. We had some lessons in a church across the road. I remember playing marbles outside.

Later up at Raphael House in Belmont there was - St Johns, big bonfires, tracks through the bush, the stream, singing carols, hot chocolate - and walking through the gorse above.

Iain Trousdall was my teacher for classes 1-4. Then we had Peter Butchers. There were trips and long tramps, up the Tararua's, up north. Wonderful!

I remember being sent out of eurhythmy classes for laughing too much. I think that's a great reason!

I had a good time there up to class seven. I did enjoy my time there.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON



The school bus dropping off students at Belmont.

Circa 1984



Teachers, parents and children making angels for the Toyfair in the woodwork room (now the remedial room).

Circa 1985/6

Photos by JoAnna Eikenbroek

Steiner's Art of Education from High Street to Belmont: a teacher remembers

The simplicity and richness on the valley floor - like a new child - was a very blessed beginning. Whatever we needed came: children, devoted parents, teachers.

Raphael House stood for a new cultural impulse: Steiner's Art of education for these children. At this time. In this place.

We felt entrusted to separate from the European mantle the threads appropriate for us. To cut the coat according to our cloth we had first to weave our own and it had to be warm and strong enough to stand the test of time. As Francis Edmunds told us, 'remember you are the preparers of the preparers'.

With each child and every class study, the spirit of Raphael House seemed to strengthen; similarly with the festivals. The first College of Teachers determined that the Christian festivals would be celebrated rather than the purely seasonal. Inwardly we created the outer corresponding experience of cosmos and nature. We wanted the children to participate with meaning and purpose.

Experienced teachers from all over the globe came with welcome regularity to give us lectures and workshops. Francis Edmunds, Audrey McAllen, Edwin Ayre, Coen van Houten, Christl and Carl Hoffmann to name a few.

By the time our five year High Street lease expired in December 1983, we had the new class 1,2,3 building and prefabs ready up top.

The kindergarten moved into its present home in late January, 1984. The entire contents of the old High St house were deposited on the stage. Over three days (and most of the nights), the space metamorphosed into a kindergarten. Simultaneously and miraculously Jill Gunn with her daughters, Jamey and Katie, created a whole family of dolls for the occasion; Dorothy Martin with sons Andrew and Gareth, cleaned and polished; and (the late) Brian Enting with daughter Stella, revived the paintwork to a healthy kindergarten pink.

With the availability of 'Hiwiroa' in Pomare Rd, and my home in Atahu Grove being used for four specialist classes, we had just enough teaching spaces until 1986 when for the first time the whole school would be accommodated on one site.

What about the empty house and garden in High Street? Thinking 'we can't leave all this to the developer's bulldozer' I organized a closure. Then we carefully removed our Raphael House signs and with gratitude, closed the doors for the last time.

Later I dug up the roses and we planted them at the front door on each side of the foundation stone.

GAYLENE DENFORD-WOOD
APRIL 2004



The late Gert Christeller and Trudi Schladitz lifting down the High Street sign.

Photo by Gaylene Denford-Wood