THE OAK GROVE NEWSLETTER

A publication of the Oak Grove School of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America Summer 1993

Our 1993 Graduates

ALEX SMITH is the first student to graduate from Oak Grove after having been enrolled here consistently since he was five years old. Next year, Alex will be at U.C. San Diego which he selected because of its location, serious academic atmosphere, and their wide choice of majors. At the present time Alex says he feels "academiced out" after his intense preparations for the Advanced Placement calculus exam which he took in May. He is ready to go on to university, although he says he will miss everyone. "I grew up here," Alex says.

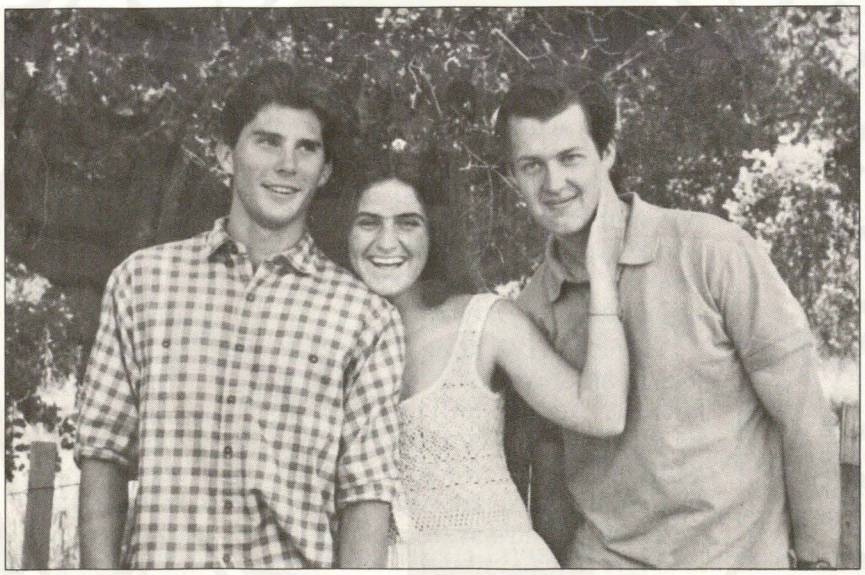

PHOTO BY REBEKAH ALTMAN

The Class of 1993: Alex Smith, Shayna Breslin, and John Schneider.

When asked to describe his experience at Oak Grove, he summed it up as "long and beneficial." Alex states that he particularly enjoyed the sports program, especially since the school joined the California Interscholastic Federation. He likes the fact that everyone has the choice of joining any team they wish to be on and all members get to play.

Alex commented further on the special opportunities that Oak Grove has to offer, "You get to know a really diverse group of students – even those you wouldn't ordinarily think you had anything in common with. We learn to be together because we're a small group."

SHAYNA BRESLIN has spent her senior year with us after having attended Santa Monica and Ventura High Schools. Shayna was attracted to the small size, the educational philosophy and the vegetarianism when she visited. Since being here she has enjoyed the feeling of community that is open to trying different things and is supportive and understanding. She feels that Oak Grove is a place where it is safe to explore aspects of yourself without the fear of being judged and that this happens because both the students and the teachers want this to occur.

Her interests are many and varied. She describes herself as a storyteller and indeed her ancestors come from a Celtic tribe where her family's crest incorporates a bard. She has been an enthusiastic participant in Guy Webster's photography class and in the future would perhaps like to become a photo journalist. Next year she will attend Ventura College where her father, David, is a librarian and promises to help her set up an interesting program.

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LAST DAY OF SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Everyone is welcome –
Grandparents, friends, neighbors!

June 17: 7:30 pm - High School graduation

June 18: 10:30 am - All School Assembly
Oak Grove Pavilion: Student Presentations
and Junior High Graduation

12:00 noon - All School Picnic –
Bring a picnic lunch and a healthful
dessert to share!

...continued from front page

"I hope that others can benefit from Oak Grove as much as I have – where it was possible to have time to learn about myself."

A familiar sight in the early morning as he pedals his bicycle along Ojai Avenue, JOHN SCHNEIDER moved to Ojai from Reston, Virginia with his parents to enter 8th grade at Oak Grove in 1988. John recalls his pleasant surprise at being one of 10 or 12 students in a class after being one of thirty in his former school. He has especially enjoyed the freedom to develop relationships with teachers that this small ratio affords.

As an editor of the Oak Grove Newsletter, John has attended many Oak Grove events taking notes and shooting photos. He has spent many late nights editing and doing computer layout after patiently dogging us for our overdue articles. Besides being the school's computer pro, John has been an avid participant in Guy Webster's photography class.

Interested in furthering his education at a Krishnamurti school, John has chosen to attend Brockwood Park in England next year.■

– Mary Lou Sorem, High School Director

The right kind of education is concerned with individual freedom, which alone can bring true cooperation with the whole, with the many; but this freedom is not achieved through the pursuit of one's own aggrandizement and success. Freedom comes with self-knowledge, when the mind goes above and beyond the hindances it has created for itself through craving its own security.

– J. Krishnamurti
from *Education and the Significance of Life*

Homelessness and Society's Woes

Peter Marin, a Santa Barbara activist and advocate for the homeless, came to talk to the high school on April 22, and again that evening to the parents and anyone who wished to join him. Marin has written for *Harpers, The Nation, The Saturday Review*, and *Mother Jones*, and is currently writing a book entitled *Margins*.

Marin lived among the homeless in an effort to narrow the gap between himself and the people he works with. He spoke to us from his experience about the friends he made and their struggle with the welfare system, shelters, and city laws aimed to keep them out of public areas.

The conditions of the shelters are terrible, and the people who stay there are not treated like prideful and self-governing adults, but like infants, milking anyone for all they can get, shameless and sorry. The shelters are worse sometimes than the streets because, as Marin described, one gets used to a certain kind of freedom living outside of society's normal rules.

Before I heard Mr. Marin talk, I didn't know much about welfare, or how it works, but I assumed it could pretty much support a person, whether single or in a family, until he or she attained some means of better income.

I learned quickly how wrong I was. People get dependent on welfare and stop even trying to find a job, and there are so many catches and tricks that it seems undeniably impossible to survive on welfare while tying to succeed anywhere else.

I suddenly realized that it is ridiculous and inhumane to even suggest someone to do so, and yet thousands are forced to. Children are born into the system and must live their lives supported by its meager aid, while women have more children for the sole purpose of receiving the extra benefits.

In his strong but not aggressive manner, Mr. Marin explained the obvious insanity of the government's efforts to rid communities of this "burden."What I will remember is how he named the silliness in going to "experts" to ask about the homeless condition.

He encouraged us to make contact with actual people living on the streets, cautiously, of course, but to try to be willing to listen to and learn about the toil of living outside of culture's respect; feared, hated, resented, or ignored by the majority of the population, and to try to understand their way of life that is so far from anything most of us can imagine.■

– Rebekah Altman, High School Junior

This newsletter is published on a quarterly basis by Oak Grove School of the Krishnamurti Foundation of America. Its purpose is to be a vehicle for school/parent communication, and a source of information about the events and activities of special interest to the school community.

A special Newsletter Box is located in the Main House for your suggestions, submissions, and ideas.

Editorial staff: Mary Lou Sorem and Karen Hesli, Directors

Production: The Schneiders

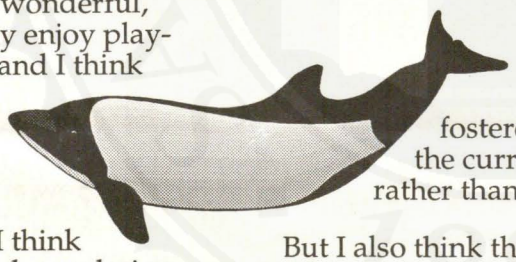
Gabriel Arquilevich: Fostering a Sense of the Unexpected

Gabriel Arquilevich received a B.A. in English with an emphasis in poetry from Johnston College for Independent Learning at Redlands. He then attended graduate school at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst where he received an MFA in poetry.

For the last three years he has been the homeroom teacher for the sixth grade level at Oak Grove School. Interviewer John Christianson is the lower school staff naturalist. This interview is the fifth in a series of staff interviews.

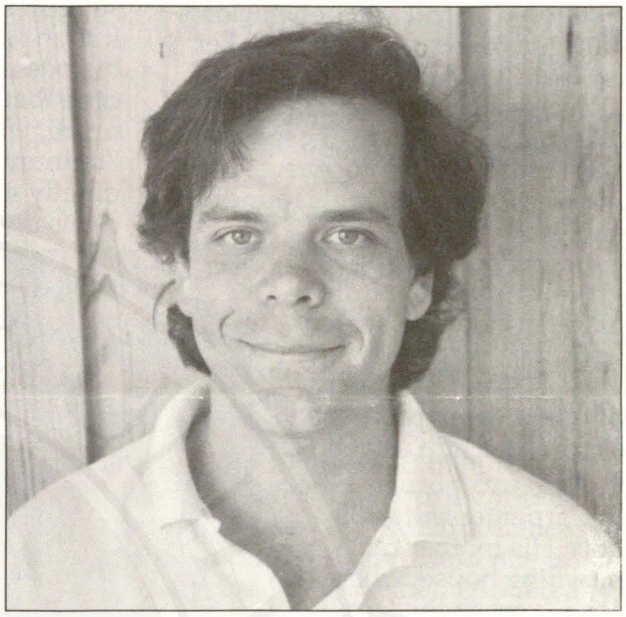
John Christianson: You seem to really enjoy teaching sixth grade. Could you say a little bit about why you like teaching at this level?

Gabriel Arquilevich: At this age, students are really open to learning, and they're really good mirrors. If you're just feeding them things out of textbooks, they will quickly let you know by their body language and by what they say that it's boring to them. On the other hand if you're actually interested in something, and you present it in such a way that's exciting to them, then the classroom atmosphere is wonderful, a playground. I really enjoy playing and having fun, and I think this is a serious concern of sixth grade. They teach you a lot about having fun.



At the same time I think they're looking at and wondering about personal space and respect – sort of feeling out and navigating that. And I think that while they want to be crazy, many of them also want a sense of order and need a sense of safety. I really enjoy the affection that many of these kids are open to and their willingness to show it.

One of the things that I truly love – a fringe benefit beyond compare – is that going back to teaching elementary school here and having the freedom to develop the curriculum with a lot of creativity, has reignited my love for learning and introduced me to subjects that I might not have discovered if I had gone on to teach only literature and writing. Here at Oak Grove, I've become interested in astronomy and history, and different aspects of science that I never thought I would either enjoy or understand. I have a much wider sense of knowledge, of appreciation for learning. I've become much more curious and the kids have helped me to do that.



Gabriel Arquilevich

In a school that emphasizes the wholeness of living, what part do you see curriculum playing in your classroom?

I think there's a real danger if the endeavor to have a good curriculum is used to keep yourself and the students busy, to avoid or eclipse the more difficult and immediate things.

The affection, curiosity and vulnerability should be fostered through the curriculum rather than stifled by it.

But I also think there needs to be something that allows you to fall apart. Not in the sense of becoming a mess, but fall apart like, "What's keeping this thing together?" I think a lot of the time our whole concept of what it means to have a "together classroom" or to be a "together person" is the very thing that sets off a lot of strain and stress.

There's a lot of research coming out now pointing to humor as very beneficial to human physiology. How do you see the role of humor in teaching?

Funny you should ask. I guess if humor, laughter, is a natural part of your life or personality, then it belongs in the classroom. But also, as a teacher, I want to show many sides of myself, and encourage students to do the same. It seems very simple but difficult at the same time: you just want to be yourself, you don't want to pretend.

I also think it's very important to have a sense of the unexpected, the spontaneous. And this is where a lot of the humor and fun comes alive – because it's not *your* fun! But if a sense of order becomes a sense of control, then this kind of liveliness won't be accessible.

Krishnamurti suggested that the love of learning is something that an educator would want to awaken and help to nourish in the student. What role do you see Krishnamurti and his teachings playing in this school for you?

I once heard Larry Johnson, the high school science teacher, say that if he had six months to live he would want to be doing exactly what he is doing now.

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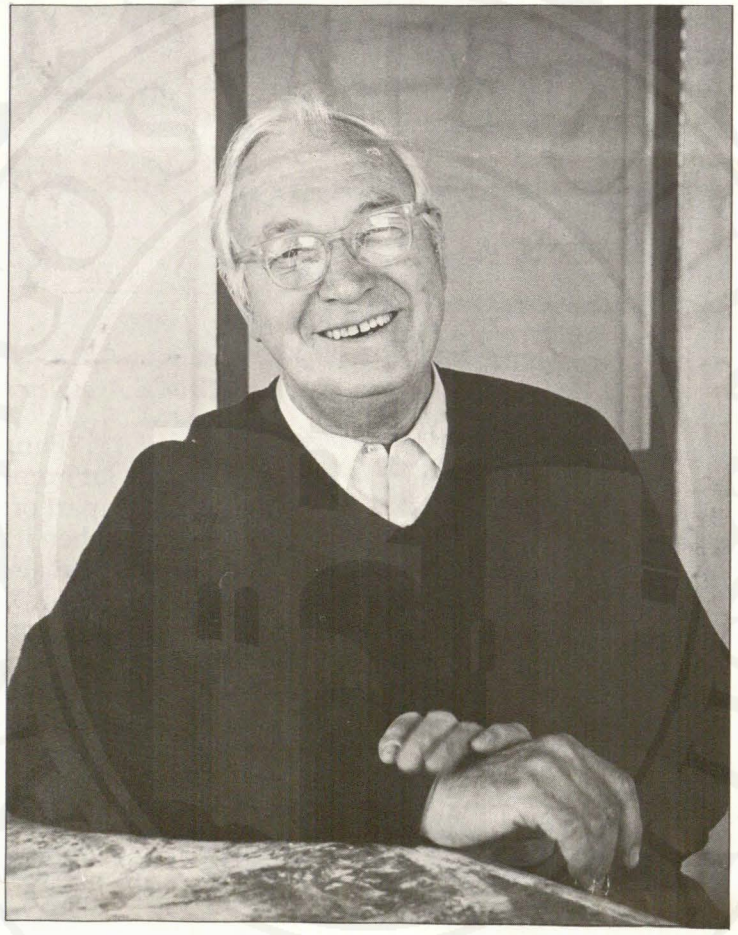
Alan Hooker Remembrance

OAK GROVE SCHOOL LOST a devoted friend and benefactor with the passing of Alan Hooker on April 14. Alan and his wife Helen have been active in the life of the school since its inception, and contributed time, energy, and material resources to its founding and growth. His wise counsel and perceptive insights into the nature of the mind were shared with staff members, parents and students, many of whom were privileged to consider him a friend.

Alan was born in 1902 in Carpentersville, Illinois. His mother ran a boarding house, where each evening the family would dine in conviviality with people from all walks of life. Alan credited his love of the art of dining to these early suppers, listening to conversation from a variety of philosophical, religious, and political view points.

Alan studied chemistry at Beloit College and, at the height of the Roaring Twenties, left school to tour as a pianist with a jazz band. The band played up and down the Eastern Seaboard, throughout the Midwest, and toured in Europe. In the 1960's, when many disaffected young people turned to Alan for advice, he regaled them with stories of his "life on the road," and its influence on his following a lifetime journey that was unconventional, creative, and full of joy.

Alan enjoyed food and had a natural interest in cooking and baking. In the 1930's he supported himself by baking pies for a bakery in Columbus, and eventually became the manager. He developed an interest in Theosophy and was very active as a Theosophical lecturer. But Theosophy did not provide the answers Alan sought. Following the example of Indian ascetic, Alan gave away all his possessions. It was during this time that Alan first met Krishnamurti, who encouraged him to "renounce his renunciation" and quietly investigate the workings of his own mind. Alan took Krishnamurti's advice seriously.



He retreated to a cabin in the Ohio woods and began a process of self-inquiry which transformed his life. He married Helen in 1946 and moved to Ojai in 1949. The couple began growing food and cooking for the people who gathered in the Ojai Valley for Krishnamurti's talks each year.

At the suggestion of friends, Alan and Helen opened a boarding house and restaurant in an old ranch house in Miners Oaks, near the Oak Grove where Krishnamurti spoke. The early days were full of financial and personal struggles. In the late 1950's the restaurant closed because the vegetarian menu did not attract enough patrons to pay the bills. To re-open, Alan and Helen changed the menu, borrowed $5000.00, and moved their living quarters into one room in the restaurant to save housing expenses. Helen was hostess and waitress and Alan was the chef. They grew much of what they served, and ordered what they didn't grow from local suppliers. They baked all their own bread, and offered seating in a beautiful shaded garden decorated with sculptures and fountains.

The Ranch House soon attracted diners from miles away and acquired a national reputation for excellence. The restaurant recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary, and has won virtually every food and wine industry award. It continues to provide a dining experience that is a delightful reflection of the creative personalities of its founders. Alan often recounted that the Ranch House simply grew and had its own life, just like the roses in its garden.

Although Alan garnered prosperity and fame through his restaurant and cookbooks, he will be remembered by friends for his compassion. His personal guidance and support was instrumental in transforming the lives of many. He and Helen were active in the Krishnamurti Foundation since its inception, and traveled to England in 1969 to set up the kitchen at Brockwood Park. Alan was an International Trustee of the Foundation from 1980-1989 and

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To all connected to Oak Grove School,

Recently, I took a friend new to Ojai to the Oak Grove School Rummage Sale, and then took a walk around the campus. I have two daughters who attended the school from early childhood and graduated from high school there. My friend wondered about the value of attending such a school. From my reply, she reflected that the school meant a great deal to me.

Shortly thereafter, our daughters came home from college for their quarter breaks. Since their return to college, I have been pondering on Krishnamurti's philosophy and on Oak Grove School more than usual.

Moving to Ojai to send our children to the school and raise our family nurtured by the Krishnamurti vision of education may have been one of the most important decisions we made. The education my daughters got there went beyond the classroom. It involved a profoundly responsible way of living life as individuals, as a family, and of course as a school interacting with others and our planet.

The high school was and is young. Other schools may have had different opportunities, sports and socially, for example. Nevertheless, we are grateful that our children remained at and graduated from Oak Grove School.

At Oak Grove, the academic, artistic, and physical needs seemed balanced and solid, yet open and creative. The staff seemed exceptionally grounded, truly caring and dedicated. In general, our daughters' choice of friends, the way they have attended to their relationships, responsibilities, and 'sorting things out' show strong maturity. They have retained a refreshing innocence, without being ignorant of the world they live in. The "umbrella of goodness,"as Krishnamurti called it, under which they were educated has made them more grounded in how to face the often confusing and inconsistent world of today.

The high school especially could benefit significantly from increased enrollment. Connecting students who are open to the type education that is available at the high school is not an easy task. We are here because of an Oak Grove School teacher, who many years ago shared with me about the school and Krishnamurti. May we all be attuned to sharing with others about the school and Krishnamurti's educational philosophy and do so when the opportunity comes our way.

Thank you Oak Grove School and all who are responsible for its beginnings and continued growth.

Sincerely,

Naomi Mori

ALAN HOOKER REMEMBRANCE

...continued from page 4

was deeply committed to the schools and their intent. He took a personal interest in the lives of Oak Grove students, and provided direct scholarship assistance to local families. He enjoyed attending school plays and performances in the Pavilion, and enjoyed being kept abreast of school news by staff, students, and parents who visited him regularly.

Alan's profound insight into the nature of thought was shared with visitors of every age and nationality. Through gentle conversation, Alan helped one realize that there exists an awareness beyond psychological time and the process of thought. Often during these conversations, a radiant silence would fill the room, and one understood that one had entered a presence that was beyond words, beyond thought, and beyond time. For many, Alan was an example of the life that is possible when ambition, fear, envy and greed are investigated and left behind – a life of creativity, compassion, generosity, and love.■

– Holly Mitchem, a parent of two Oak Grove students. She began a lifelong friendship with Alan and Helen Hooker after meeting them for tea in Sanaan, Switzerland, in 1973.

Students try out the school library's new computer, purchased with funds from Book Fairs and Bohm Memorial donations. With CD-ROM capability, the world of information is truly at their fingertips.

GABRIEL ARQUILEVICH INTERVIEW

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It's that spirit, the deep feeling that there is the possibility here for something really new to take place, beyond anything we can plan or project. The degree to which I can actually feel that kind of vastness is the degree to which Krishnamurti has impacted my life.

When I look at another person and really see myself, see my pain and joy, see how difficult it is to be a human being, then I guess I feel true to myself. I think that the relationship we have to each other, the way we look on each other, is vital; it is the telling thing in the school.

"...the relationship we have to each other, the way we look on each other, is vital; it is the telling thing in the school."

It is sometimes questioned, "Are these kids being prepared for the 'real' world?" I think there's a possibility of fostering something in ourselves that would meet the "real" world with confidence and care, something that can't be so easily shaken. But it's very difficult to approach; it requires a lot of energy.

I guess one of the hard things about approaching this, and why I tend to avoid it, is that in light of something that touches me deeply, the contrast to my everyday life can be humbling and sad, really sad. I mean the moments that I really feel love are also the moments I realize that mostly I don't. It can be a beautiful, painful experience.

You've had an ongoing class assignment that I find very interesting. You ask students to sit by themselves for a certain amount of time. Why do you request that, and what comes of it?

I ask them to sit quietly for five to ten minutes, or to watch the stars come out. We're so wired and stimulated, it's amazing how hard it is to sit quietly, to stop doing things. So I like to offer them a gentle way to notice how our minds keep rattling on; and hopefully, to discover how nice is to stop the wheels churning. I think it's invaluable.

You did a video project last year with your class. It seemed like the children really got excited about it, and were very engaged in the project.

We were studying the Westward Movement in American history. Along the way the idea came to make a movie. It excited the kids because video is a medium so prevalent in their lives. Anyway, the project was a monster. One of the wonderful things about this school is that you can do something highly experimental, learning as you go. The kids created their own costumes, wrote the script, and saw how it takes two hours to get ten minutes of filming done!

Gabriel, I've observed that although you generally have a light, comical tone with your students, you nevertheless require serious attention to their studies – a combination that seems to work.

Sometimes it does. Kids love to learn if they really love what they're learning. Then you can ask a lot of them, you can challenge them. I don't mean that in the sense of scholastic achievement; but that their studies, what they produce and look into, the way they speak with each other, the way they work together, should be done with care. If they know you care about them – care that schoolwork interests them, care that it answers to something deep in them – then it's not really a matter of too much or too little work. ■

– John Christianson with Gabriel Arquilevich

The Educational Travel Fund program, funded by Trustee Friedrich Grohe, is alive and well. It's purpose is to promote an exchange of ideas, maintain relationships between the schools, and share educational experiences.

Last June, High School French & P.E. teacher Jeff Otterbein, math teacher Darcy Gray, and Group B homeroom teacher Carole Sylvester-Gray visited Brockwood Park in England for two weeks.

Theresa Bulla-Richards, Oak Grove's Junior High teacher, visited Brockwood Park during Spring Break in early April.

This summer, Gabriel Arquilevich, our sixth grade teacher will visit various Krishnamurti schools in India.

Last September, The School's physics teacher, Ananth, visited Oak Grove with his wife, Divya, from Madras, India. In addition, Brockwood's Michel O'Leary and Colin Foster visited us while on vacation in the United States in early February.

Recently we had two more Indian visitors, including Prema from The School in Madras, and Kusum from Rajghat.

– Carole Sylvester-Gray, Group B homeroom

A Big Thank You To Our Parent Volunteers!

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS:
Rachel Altman, Publicity
Ted Moore, Chair of the School Board
Bob Smith, Finance Committee
Leone Webster, Parent Steering Committee

VOLUNTEER TEACHERS:
Adrienne Muller, music for Group A-I
Greg Nava, Spanish for Groups B and C
Dora Hartman, Spanish for Groups A-I, G & JH-N
Ted Moore, HS Senior speech tutorial
John Steel, Math Club for Middle School
Peter Strauss, JH public speaking and HS drama coach
Guy Webster, HS photography class

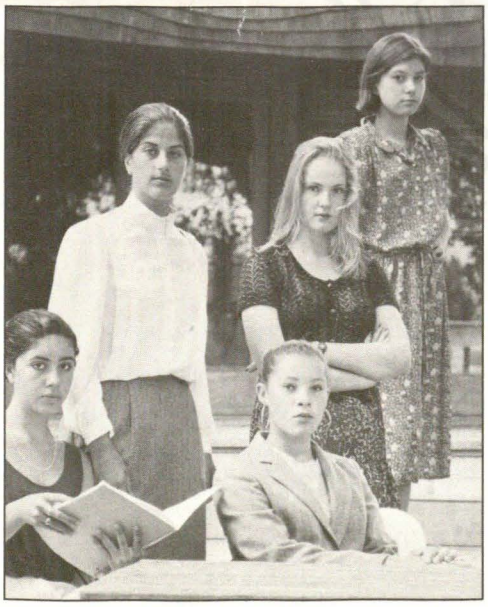
HELP IN A VARIETY OF WAYS:
Linda Gillespie and Janet Asiain, office help
Linda Kelsey, school cookbook editor
Becky Lowe, Book Fair & Recycled Treasures chair
Naomi Mori, Alumni coordinator
Irmgard Muller, K Gathering lunches
Bette Schneider, newsletter support
Posy and Bob Smith, use of their pool for P.E.
Colleen Steel, Book Fair
Leone Webster, lunch program organization
Caitlin Andrews and Sasha Wolfe, kitchen help

LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS:
Marilyn Wallace
Linda Salsedo
Sasha Wolfe

And to all of the homeroom volunteers: field trip drivers, room reps, cookie bakers, carpool drivers, camping gear lenders, Steering Committee reps, Recycled Treasures room reps – we appreciate all that you have done.■

TWELVE ANGRY JURORS

Oak Grove Players under the direction of Lena Frederick staged an intense performance of *Twelve Angry Jurors* this spring, capturing the complex emotional interrelationships of people facing the need for consensus on a decision of consequence. The production's closeness in time to the retrial of Rodney King's arresting officers added a "reality" dimension.



The play was adapted from *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose, in which the jurors deliberate the fate of an 18-year-old boy accused of murdering his father with a switchblade. Oak Grove students Auri Berg, Hannah Bingham, Mary Borgeson, Aja Bulla-Richards, Rowan Frederick, Chloe Gladstone, Aimee Kelley, Gina Loring, Sarah Rupp, Allyson Solorzano, and Caitlin Torokvei were joined by Happy Valley student Dylan Rice-Leary in enacting the distinct personalities of the twelve jurors. Robyn Nisbet played the role of the guard, and parent Karen Collins provided the judge's voice.

As tension mounts in the jury's review of the crime each character expresses the most dominant qualities in his/her personality. According to the play-goers, the students conveyed these qualities with amazingly realistic effect. Thanks again to Lena Frederick for drawing out the dramatic abilities of the students to create a compelling performance.■

– Sara Cloud,
Oak Grove office manager

The school recently received word that Gysberta Broekema, known as Bep to her friends, died in April, 1992. A long time friend of the school and KFA, Gysberta left a $100,000 gift to both Oak Grove School and Brockwood Park in England. Bep began an early search for a deeper meaning in life and regarded Krishnamurti as one of her greatest teachers.

Born in the Netherlands, Bep made her home in Cordova, Alaska where a circle of close friends became a part of her chosen family. She worked at Cordova Community Hospital and became an Emergency Medical Technician after retiring in 1990. Music, kayaking, gardening, hiking and weaving were a few of the activities she enjoyed.

Parent Fundraiser Nets $33,000!

We've done it again! Thanks to the tireless efforts of parents, staff, and friends of the school, the 1993 Recycled Treasures Auction Party and Rummage Sale on March 19 and 20 netted over $33,000 for Oak Grove's scholarship program.

The Friday evening auction party exceeded all expectations. It began with a delicious Spanish *tapas* bar of Tortilla Española, beans, asparagus, specialty breads and cheeses, brownies, and fresh strawberries. Parent auctioneers sparked the lively bidding for over 100 auction items including pottery by Beatrice Wood and art by Peter Shire, custom-built treehouses and a theatre weekend in New York. Dancing to the music of the "crazy Russian folk 'n' roll" band, Limpopo brought the party to a close.

Enough rummage was collected by Oak Grove parents and friends to burst the seams of Chaparral Auditorium. Early "first dibs" shopping on Friday afternoon made but a small dent in the heap, and on Saturday hundreds of local shoppers sifted through the treasures. One woman remarked, "I bought a whole new wardrobe for my daughter!" In the boutique, new Patagonia clothing and Guatemalan apparel were hot items.

We would like to thank the following people: Committee chairs Krista Bakula & Anne Bemel, Leone Webster, Patricia Gladstone, Jake Ainsworth & Warren Wheeler, Debbie Court, Ellen Hall, Carolyn Moore & Anna Thomas, Irmgard Muller, Michael Muller, Colleen Steel & Marion Power, Sharon Seiders, Kathy Yee, Anna Auric & Dennis Mitchem, the room reps, and everyone who gave time and energy to make Recycled Treasures 1993 a big success. It is a pleasure to see the Oak Grove parents and friends come together on a project that benefits the school and the larger community of Ojai.■

– Becky Lowe
Chair, Recycled Treasures

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