

way on a conscious level. The material for traffic education is merely one of the means to aid the child in his conscious conquest of the environment. Actually, children who live in big cities soon feel the need for orientation in the chaotic world in which they have to live and towards which their young minds spontaneously turn, thirsting for knowledge.

Let us therefore pave the way for the advancing consciousness of the child. This is the Montessorian principle which must be kept in mind when preparing new cultural mater-

ial in the wake of the child's interest as it evolves along with his environment. Dr. Montessori, guided by scientific interest and the profound faith she had placed in the child as the revelation of spiritual values inherent to human nature, truly made the child her teacher and following his revealing needs, opened a new road in education. And this road we must continue to follow, illuminated by her experience, but even more, by her spirit.

M. T. Marchetti

\* \* \*

Amongst the numerous newspaper clippings we receive at Headquarters, we chose this, because we thought it might amuse our readers.

## JOHN PATRICK'S SCHOOLDAYS

(THEY START AT THE RIPE OLD AGE OF 14 MONTHS...)

By RAY MOSELEY

ROME (UPI) - My wife stood at the door, clutching our son's hand, and made her announcement: "This morning John Patrick is going to school". Hastily I rolled out of bed. This time she had gone too far. "But he's

only 14 months old", I protested. "Whoever heard of a kid of 14 months going to school? What can he learn? He doesn't even know how to talk. He isn't even trained..."

But they were out the door. John Patrick's schooldays had begun. I suddenly felt very old.

---

\*) The Daily American Rome 7-1-1970

## PUZZLED

For weeks I puzzled over what he could be doing in school. My wife could only murmur something about climbing stepladders. But she really did not know. The teachers, it seemed, would not let her in the room.

## I DECIDED TO FIND OUT ON MY OWN

The school is a Montessori nursery, tucked away in the corner of a palace in old Rome, and it is one of the most unusual schools in Europe.

Sixty-three years ago a remarkable Italian woman named Maria Montessori founded the first of these schools in a roman slum, and they are now spread all over the world.

## REVOLUTIONIZED

In her time, she revolutionized the education of pre-school age children. Laying the groundwork for Dr. Benjamin Spock and other child experts, she had discovered that each child, from birth, has an internal mechanism that guides him, and he can only be suffocated in his development if parents or other adults do not allow him to function as his "inner guide" dictates.

The Montessori discovery has become commonplace now. But the idea of a nursery for very young infants is still revolutionary in educational circles. Experts from all over Europe come to Rome to see it.

"Even traditional Montessori teachers still

tend to raise an eyebrow and wonder what we can possibly teach children of this age", says Mrs. Liliana Barchiesi, the director.

There are 20 children in the school, the youngest a boy of 11 months. The only qualification is that they first know how to walk.

I was astonished when I walked into the schoolroom to find babies totally and happily absorbed in the process of learning.

## CONSTRUCTING

One infant sat on the floor, constructing a farm. A little girl was busy at a tiny ironing board. A diaperage boy walked over to a little dressing table, picked up a comb and began an awkward attempt to comb his hair.

Another bent over a specially built toy, concentrating hard on dropping discs with holes in the center onto a metal rod - an evidently fascinating exercise.

"The hand is the agent of the brain", said Mrs. Barchiesi. "Here they are learning to put the hand to work".

The Montessori system is not as simple as it looks. For one thing, all the tasks the children perform have been carefully worked out and tested over the years.

"If we give a child something that is too difficult for his level, he becomes frustrated", said Mrs. Barchiesi. "If it's too easy, he's bored".

The guiding principle is to give children freedom to do whatever interests them in a

specially prepared environment.

## SUBVERSIVE

I discovered the school was once considered subversive. Fascist Dictator Benito Mussolini, who thought children should be taught to carry rifles from age four, closed the Montessori schools and jailed one or two teachers.

Maria Montessori went in exile to India.

But this school alone remained open throughout the Fascist era. It had been started in 1919 by Dr. Adele Costa-Gnocchi, one of Maria Montessori's closest collaborators in Italy, and its location behind the high walls

of the old palazzo safeguarded it from Fascist police.

One person close to Dr. Costa-Gnocchi during this time, and who often visited the school after the war, was Msgr. Giovanni Battista Montini. He is now Pope Paul VI.

In 1949 Dr. Costa-Gnocchi began the teaching of children under three years of age that radically changed the character of the school.

"We ran into a lot of opposition and pressures", recalls Mrs. Barchiesi, who took over after Dr. Costa-Gnocchi's death. "Women told us we were out to ruin children who were too young to leave their mothers and go to school".

There are still people who feel that way about the Montessori nursery. But their number is shrinking.

\* \* \*

## *Centenary Celebrations in 1970*

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI 31/8, 1870 - 31/8, 1970

Time passes so quickly and the thirty-first of August, 1970, the date on which, exactly a hundred years ago, Maria Montessori was born in Chiaravalle, Italy, is already very near.

In many countries throughout the world the centenary of her birth has already been celebrated; in others, celebrations are still to

take place.

To give an idea of how widely spread is her fame, we publish hereunder a list of those countries where, in one way or another, the memory of Maria Montessori has been or will be commemorated, in many cases in different parts of one country.