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Allyn Travis  
Pilar Ulibarri  
Ulla Wikefeldt  
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Sweden  
USA  
Mexico  
Sweden  
USA

Primary  
Elementary  
Primary  
Primary  
Primary



*Phyllis Pottish-Lewis holds a Bachelor's Degree in Zoology from UCLA and is licensed as a California Medical Technologist. She received her AMI primary diploma from the Montessori Institute of Los Angeles in 1971 and her elementary diploma from the Washington Montessori Institute in 1977. Her teaching experience includes seventeen years at the elementary level as well as five years at the primary level. She also has had two years of experience administering a Montessori school. Ms Pottish-Lewis is a lecturer, an AMI school consultant and the past chair of AMI Elementary Alumni Association. She is presently teaching a class of 9 to 12 year-olds at the Marin Montessori School in California.*

#### **REFLECTIONS ON A PROCESS**

Recently I completed the last of the papers required by the Sponsoring Committee for the Training of Trainers Programme. It was hard work and it took me some time, but it has been an experience that has been extremely beneficial to me in many ways. Thus, it was well worth my time and energy. Those of you who also have completed that process will probably appreciate and understand what I am saying. These words are for those of you participating in the programme who, as yet, have not completed the process, so that you can anticipate the benefits that await you.

Gradually forming in my mind during the writing of each of the papers was an analogy between what I was doing, and what a sculptor, who works in clay, does. The topic was analogous to a crude lump of clay, which initially was nothing discernible, but held within it the potential for a finished piece of art. As I worked on the paper, it began to take a shape, a form, something personal that came from within me and from my understanding of my subject. Little by little, the substance of the paper was refined, and became more recognizable for what it was, much like a sculpture begins perceptibly to assume its final form. Once the basic structure and idea of the paper had taken shape with all of its requisite components, it was time for the finishing touches. I was free to chip away at it, clarifying and refining each of the images, changing this word for that, this expression for another, until it was a product with which I was satisfied and which I could call finished.

I mention this awareness, which spontaneously emerged from the experience of writing the papers, because it was completely serendipitous. I had neither expected, nor anticipated it. But, it was both rewarding and revealing. As we all know, the writing process is an art form, no matter the kind of writing being done, and by engaging in that process, one becomes an artist. As with any process, the more one does, the

better one gets. I can also say that the prospect of writing an article or paper is less daunting to me than it used to be. In fact, because I have learned to enjoy the writing process, I look forward to opportunities to once again express my artistry.

But there was something more important that occurred other than enhancing my taste and appreciation for writing, something I believe crucial and essential to the goal I set myself. The assigned topics to be considered by the candidates in the Training of Trainers Programme, for the elementary level cover all of the major points that pertain to the second plane child, as well as some that draw one's attention to the first plane child. Thus, when I completed the assigned topics, it meant that I had considered again in depth essential aspects of the Montessori philosophy. From working with each detail individually, I had examined the parts of a whole by the completion of the process, and therefore could put those parts together into the complete perspective of Cosmic Education.

This process in which I was engaged was a step beyond merely being presented information or reading it as a passive participant. It meant I had to engage myself as an active agent in the total understanding of the principles that are critical to the task of a Montessori directress. Before approaching a topic, I had to ponder it deeply.

Once I decided the direction and focus of the paper, I conducted further research through Dr. Montessori's books and those of other educators. By more thoroughly delving into books by Dr. Montessori, I not only encountered material and ideas that clarified what I already had been presented, but I discovered in her various writings new clearly-expressed reasons that underlay and supported those things I was trained to do in the classroom. In the search through the writings of educators outside of Montessori the discoveries I made reassured me that this Montessori quest was legitimate and well-founded. The theories and philosophy that have been espoused for nearly a hundred years by Dr. Montessori and those who have followed her lead are now finally being recognized as sound by educators, some of whom still know nothing of the existence of Dr. Montessori and her teachings.

Once I completed the research I could begin the writing. By taking each element of the subject and expressing it in my own words with my own understanding, I had an avenue and opportunity to clearly examine and analyze that element as it related to the whole of the paper. The analysis of each element of which the topic is comprised, and its ultimate synthesis into a cogent, coherent piece, contributed to the development of clear thinking, as well as building a solid grasp of those ideas. Both attributes, clarity of thought and a solid understanding of Montessori principles, would be needed for the day when, as a trainer, I would need to articulate them to others. It is this very process through which AMI Trainers pass and the benefits derived from the passage, that distinguishes them from any others in the world.

I have had the benefit of years of working with children attempting to apply the theories first offered me in the elementary training. I can now take that first-hand experience, which I know bears out the veracity of the philosophy, and weave it into my papers to support and verify those principles, which as a novice I had to take on faith. For the initiate the Montessori theories are abstract ideas, but for those of us who have implemented them successfully with the children, they become concrete realities. They become actual truths. Knowing and understanding this infuses me with the assurance and confidence I need to convey these ideas to others.

As I said at the outset of this article, it has been hard work. But as Dr. Montessori has observed, hard work is essential to life, and is that very thing that we ask of the

children in our charge in order that they might develop those potentials inherent in each of them so one day they can be contributing human beings. It is only through work that potentials can be made actual. By moving through the process designed and set down by the members of the Sponsoring Committee of the Association Montessori Internationale I, too, have been offered an opportunity for the development of my potentials. For the wisdom and insight of those Montessorians who participated in the design of the programme, I am grateful. If the programme asked less of us, it is quite possible that those characteristics needed for undertaking the immense and important work of a trainer would not be completely and sufficiently developed. The Training of Trainers Programme asks of us involved in it only that which will effectively bring our potential to fruition, so that one day we will be prepared adequately to do the job of training future Montessori teachers, and by so doing serve further human society and its enhancement by helping the child.

*Phyllis Pottish-Lewis*

## **CHANGE OF VENUE OF THE AGM**

The Annual General Meeting, scheduled for Saturday April 5, 1997, will commence at the traditional time of 14.00 hrs, but please note that the venue now is:

**'t Nieuwe Kafé, Nieuwe Kerk  
Dam Square  
Amsterdam**

### **AN URGENT MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS!**

If you are planning on attending the Annual General Meeting may we advise you to make your hotel reservation in good time, i.e. by mid-January at the latest!

The Easter holiday period is always an extremely busy time in Amsterdam and all accommodation is fully booked well in advance.

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