

Education

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After 17 years of work, school founder is leaving

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SANTA CRUZ — At Gateway School, the halls are empty. Last week the children sang songs in honor of the departure of their school's founder and director:

Hurrah for Hannelore

She always fills the shoes of four-a or more-a

It was Herbig's idea to have a school

Herbig's idea to teach

Herbig's idea to move it on

That left us in the breach.

Now Hannelore Herbig sits alone in silence. The stacked books and chairs will be brought out again for school session in the fall, but Herbig will be in Hawaii doing other things: relaxing, traveling, and pursuing her hobby, anthropology.

Until Herbig boards the plane early this week, she remains the tireless administrator. With pride she sits behind her desk for a final time, talking about herself and the school to which she dedicated 17 years of her life.

"The original concept was that in order to give individual attention to allow growth on a personal level, the classes had to be small. I wanted to create a safe, nurturing, and stimulating learning environment because a child that feels safe and happy and has a good self-opinion equals a successful learner," she says looking at a 1887 John Lubbock saying on her wall. It reads: "The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn."

dents. Small and private also meant flexibility of management (no district or board supervision). Herbig relied on community resources to slacken the shoestring budget. Classes could make weekly field trips to the library in a van, and speakers from the University of California at Santa Cruz and the community were solicited.

Parents and teachers also played a great role in the development of Gateway, according to Herbig. "I worked with parents to follow up on their suggestions, and I didn't check lesson plans every Monday like they do in public schools. The teachers worked hard and were allowed to be creative," she says. "But a good team needs a strong leader — so I made the final decisions."

In 1979, Herbig gave up ownership and Gateway became a non-profit corporation with a board of directors. As principal, Herbig involved herself in all aspects of the school. She made a point of standing at the door and greeting students individually each morning. She also went into the classrooms to create special projects or to conduct cultural celebrations every week.

"Just being around the children with my accent and background made them think about people in other countries and how we all go to school and work and are the same," she says.

Herbig has developed three basic rules for Gateway which also have a foreign flair: You cannot hurt your-

self because you are the most important person in your life; you cannot hurt someone else, because the other person has equal rights; and you must treat property with respect. The rules derive from the European "Theory of Logical Consequence," which says that everyone is powerful and chooses to have harmony or reaps the consequences of his action. "We have no judgment or punishment, but if a child abuses materials, he knows that he will have to put them away," says Herbig.

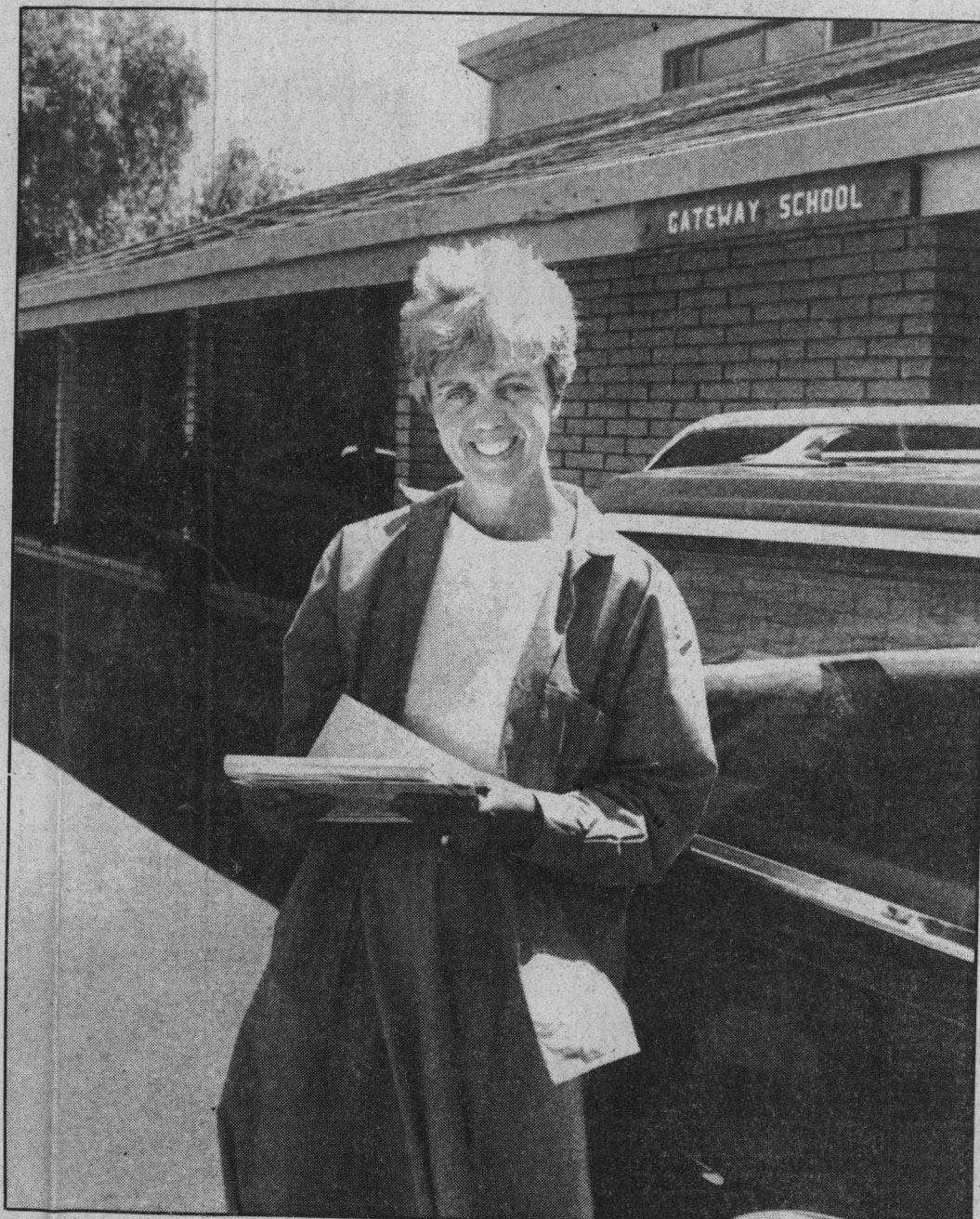
A collection of goodbye drawings from students indicates that they will miss their principal very much. "Hope you can live without us, it will be hard for us, without you," says one message next to a stick-figure of Herbig surfing a big blue wave under an orange and yellow pinwheel sun.

Gateway will survive without their founder. A new principal has been chosen and they have a five-year plan calling for expansion to 250 students and consolidation of all programs into one building.

As for Herbig and her astronomer husband who is retiring from UCSC after 38 years, saying goodbye is difficult.

"It's like leaving a baby — you don't want anything to happen to it," she says.

Herbig has no plans to start another school. "But I know that I'll always be involved in education somehow," she says. "We'll just see what develops."



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— Hannelore Herbig

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When she moved here from West Germany with her husband in 1968 Herbig had no plans of opening a school. Her command of the language was shaky and her foreign degree in education was largely unrecognized. But she found Santa Cruz to be less bureaucratic and more flexible than Germany: a perfect environment in which to realize her educational vision.

"My motivation was that growing up in Germany, I missed a child-oriented education. But it did give me high standards for academics and quality of life. There everyone said 'it can't be done' — here I saw the opportunity to make it happen by starting out small."

For Herbig, starting small meant volunteering at Gault kindergarten, then going door-to-door looking for an inexpensive schoolroom. Though her school would offer no religious teachings, she ended up at churches because they charged reasonable rent.

Gateway School started in 1970 at Trinity Presbyterian Church as a kindergarten program. Every year, a grade was added and now 230 children attend preschool through seventh grade at three Gateway sites. Waiting lists to get in are long, though a semester costs \$2,700 per child.

"Gateway is different because most schools are started by a group of people with a particular philosophy or by an organization," Herbig says. "In this case it was one person who began it and stayed for years."

Herbig names three things about herself which made her capable of starting the school: a creative, open mind; a lot of energy; and a strong desire to set up the best possible learning environment for children.

"I regained strength when I saw children really having a good time in school," says Herbig, who has no children of her own. "Or when a museum guide said, 'What children are these, they ask so many good questions!'"

Starting small also meant staying small for Herbig. "You have to keep the family atmosphere," she says. Classes have no more than 15 stu-