

# First Day of Kindergarten... Start of a New Life

By Len Klempnauer

One sociology theory claims there are three climatic occurrences in the story of man that can never be duplicated—birth, puberty, death.

Perhaps we can add another, maybe it's not exactly in the same category, but no one can deny that the first day of school is not climatic in nature.

From that time until at least 13 years later, the learning process becomes one directed by a person educated in the art of imparting knowledge to another instead of learning resulting from environment.

What happens? How is learning

that initial day thrust onto the shoulders of 5-year-olds?

We observed Mary Jo Gleason's first kindergarten class at Westlake school a week ago Monday to find out the answers to these questions.

Most of the children were brought to school by their mothers, a few walked, some rode the bus. But by 9 a.m., Miss Gleason was ready to begin her first class.

Only two of the 22 children showed great shyness, and their mothers remained for awhile.

Arranging her children about a circle in the middle of the floor, Miss Gleason began her instruction by singing a song "Good Morning" and then hav-

ing them sing along with her again.

"I don't want to sing; I don't like to sing," interrupted one boy.

The teacher said it was all right if he didn't wish to join the group but he must do so later.

The learning process had started.

Each child was called by his first name to come up before Miss Gleason where she took a paper acorn with his name from a simulated tree and pinned it on him.

The name becomes recognizable to the child, to his playmates; strangers begin to call each other by their first name.

The two children whose mothers remained weren't called before the rest of the class. Miss

Gleason walked over to them to pin on the acorns. They were not yet inside the group.

At 9:15 a.m., the teacher read a poem done to the accompaniment of raised hands. The two "outsiders" hesitated, then slowly but not quite completely, began to join their classmates.

Numbers were presented to the children in the form of another poem—the first squirrel did this, the second did that. Fingers were raised with the each ordinal number called.

Later:

"This is a calendar. It tells the month, the date and the day of the week. This is September. Today is September 5," said Miss Gleason.

The cardinal numbers are being learned.

The children were told what games they have, where the toys are. They were released from the circle and allowed to play. Before class began, none of the children played together. Now two or three began sharing their playthings.

One boy was reluctant. She told him he would be her helper.

The classroom was extremely quiet. Most of the children are still timid towards each other.

"In a week they'll be real noisy," said Miss Gleason.

Ten minutes later the play time is over, a small bell is tinkled.

"We must clean up now," said the teacher.

The toys were put away. She

has some children help others who are taking longer.

Two more things are being learned: sharing in work, as well as play, and cleaning up after the play or work is done. Back to the circle.

"I'm going to show you the rest of the school, where our nice principal is, and where the first grade is. That's where you'll go next year," Miss Gleason said.

She had them form a column of twos, not merely by saying get in two lines.

"Joey, pick a friend to walk with."

And so on it goes until each has a partner.

Fifteen minutes later the tour

was over and the children returned to their circle.

Recess time. But first safety rules are taught: not "You can't have two on the slide at one time" but "Jimmy, what would happen if two children were on the slide at once?"

"Someone might get hurt."

"Yes, and we don't want any of our friends to hurt themselves."

Outside, the old standby, "Farmer-in-the-Dell."

Again, names of each child were called; they're already developing friendships.

When recess was over, the children come back to the circle.

More songs are sung using hand movements and leg movements.

The milk arrived. Each child was called separately to Miss Gleason's desk for a carton of milk. When all were seated, a prayer of thanks followed.

A rest break was next, the children lying on their mats.

Then another play period was held outside, this time each was on his own but balls began to bounce from one to another, two boys together climbed into a box, girls skipped together.

The children went back inside to hear a story, and afterwards Miss Gleason told them what a nice time she has had, and what a nice time they all will have tomorrow. Gleeefully, they all agree.

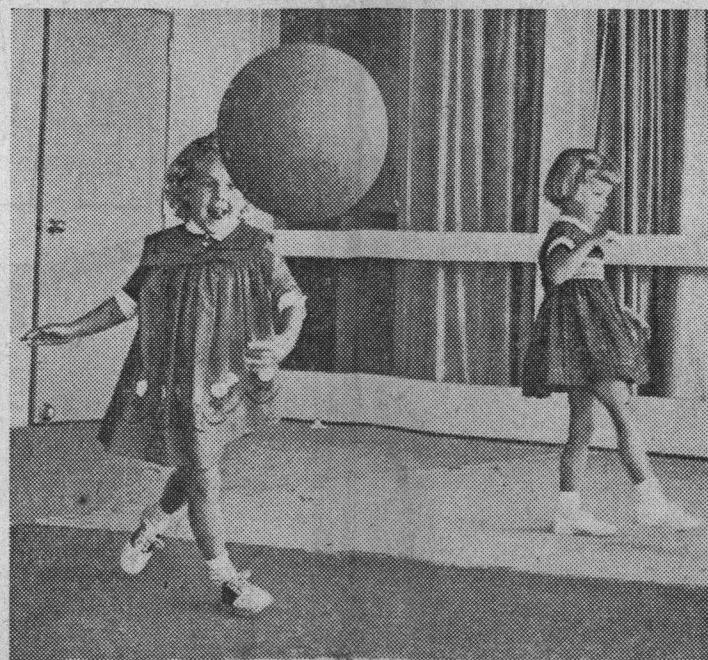
Everything is old hat from that day on.



"This is Mr. Tony Vomvolakis, the crossing guard," Miss Gleason tells Freddie Rodkey, Scott Jernstrom, Tommy Poston and Cindi Grossman.



Sleepyhead Ann Lindblad . . . at rest with the world.



Recess, the all-time favorite, enjoyed by Jill Goldman, bouncing ball, and Ann Lindblad, playing hop-



Storytime . . . Listening attentively to Gleason are, front row, Jane Wileman, Barbara Hackbarth, Chris Franklin, Tommy Poston; second row, Gilbert Caiocca, Erik Anderson, Freddie Rodkey, Suzie Rittenhouse; third row, Joey Burdick, Mike Panattoni, Scott Jernstrom.



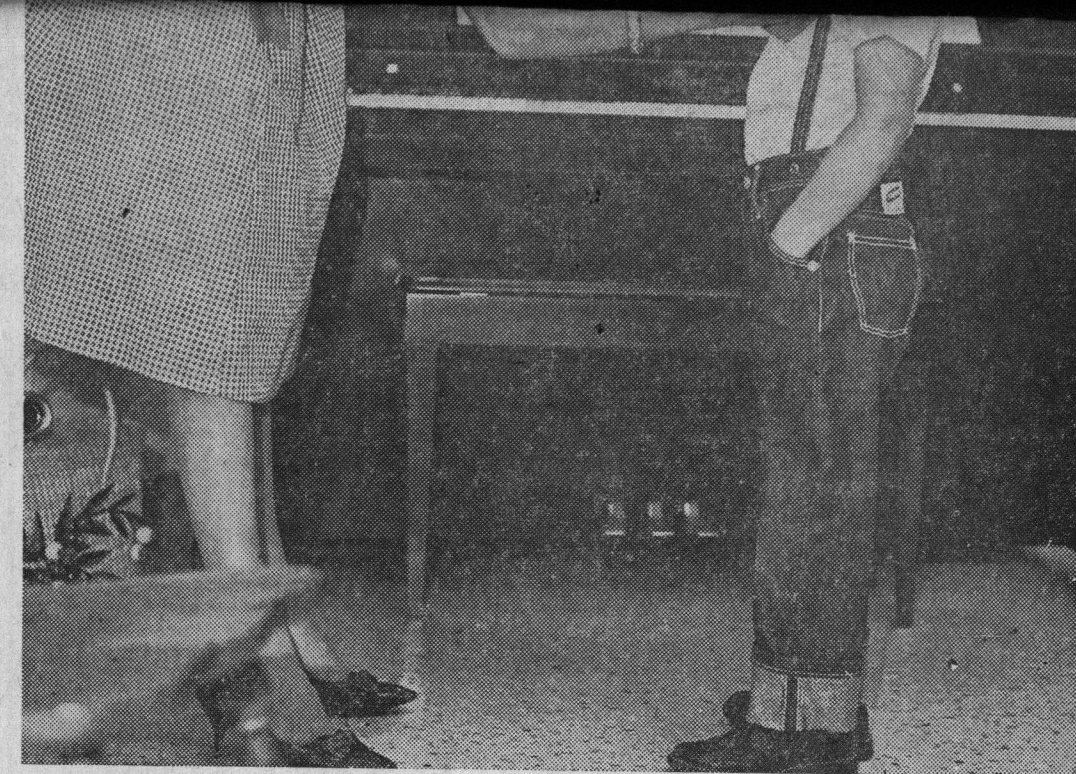




"I'm scared, Mama," indicates Renee to her mother, Mrs. Fred Woodward. Miss Gleason watches; pupil David Bissell is undisturbed.



The tender trap — at a tender age. Boy, Scott Jernstrom, meets girl, Barbara Hackbarth. Freddie Rodkey, right rear, is interested.



David Bissell gets his paper "acorn" name tag pinned on by Miss Gleason.



"Good morning, children. I'm Miss Gleason"



The Perennial kindergarten nap.