

HAWTHORN CAMPUS NOTES V

MAY, 1986.

Some Learning Leads to Howlers

There are many different ways of learning and approaches have changed greatly over the years. The following precis of the first chapter of W.W. Sawyer's *Mathematician's Delight* might be of interest to those who were taught by rote.

Students who think they could never learn maths but can learn enough to fool the examiners are like a messenger carrying a message in a language he does not understand. He is full of anxiety and capable of absurd mistakes.

Does the fear of mathematics lie in the subject itself or does it lie in the way it is taught? Not the first obviously, because we all think mathematically when we are making things. Maths has traditionally been taught, not as the actual subject, but as an imitation of maths learning how to solve problems, but without understanding the process. Nearly every subject has its imitation. History has its kings and dates, but no idea of the motive behind it all. Literature has its imitation with stacks of notes of Shakespeare's phrases, and complete destruction of the power to enjoy Shakespeare.

This 'imitation' of subjects is illustrated by one of two students of law who learned by heart long lists of clauses. The other student imagined himself to be a farmer and applied the same clauses to his farm and family. The first student was living in a world of half-meaningless words, while the other one was in a life-like situation.

INCREDIBLE

The first method can lead to incredible howlers. For example, the junior student who had been taught his vowels by rote was asked what the abdomen contained and the answer given was "The abdomen contains the bowels which are A E I O U".

The importance of a real education is not only the impossibility of making howlers, but more importantly the saving of unnecessary strain, and achievement of confidence and security of mind. The real subject is interesting, the imitation dull. All achievements have been made by people who delighted in their work and who felt compelled to work at the subject. So long as a subject is dull you can be sure that you are approaching it from the wrong angle.

THE SYSTEM WORKS !

Brr Brr, Brr Brr - one of three phones in the small front room of an early Victorian house cuts across the talk of the half-dozen people present and Gladys Franklin, who is on telephone duty, stops her task of recording class enrolments to answer it.

"Hawthorn Community Education. Yes, this is U3A Hawthorn. Can I help you?" As she answers a query about classes from a prospective member another phone begins ringing and is answered by the nearest person. It turns out to be a call for the Life Writing Correspondence course so it is down the hall to the back of the cottage to see if Marjorie Atkinson is in. She isn't, a message is recorded for her in the message book.

A man and woman appear at the office door, 'Is this where we come to join U3A?'

After a ten minute talk with one of the volunteers in the office, they pay their \$25 couples joining fee, complete a registration form and leave clutching a Newsletter and other relevant information, saying they will post in their enrolment forms when they have considered what is offering at the different campuses. But, not before two women come in concerned about the location of the Current Affairs course for which they have enrolled. Where exactly is the William Tresise Centre? Can they get there by public transport. Out comes the street directory and careful instructions are given regarding location and transport.

NEW COURSES

Through all this three members are trying to discuss what new courses need to go in the next *Campus Notes* and the Administrator of the Hawthorn Community Centre, Wendy Wallace, comes in to ask if there is anyone who could do some typing for the Learning for the Less Mobile (LLM) group.

In an adjoining room members' addresses and other relevant details are being entered into a computer programme - as soon as this task is finished Gwen Stevenson will no longer have to type each label for the mailing of Newsletters and Campus Notes.

The Computer room is also home for the Alternative Education Resource Group (AERG) a voluntary organisation which is staffed by members and their families! A baby rolls about on the floor and two school age children are busy with crayons and paper as their mothers mail out information and

plan projects for the future. An older woman looks in and enquires 'Isn't the Marine Biology class in here today?' She is directed across the hall to join the other U3A students.

If you've ever wondered how U3A operates, or why the person answering the phone when you ring sounds a little distracted, then perhaps this description of a typical morning at 24 Wakefield Street will give you some idea. Hawthorn Community Education Centre is a true community. In return for accommodation and the back up services of the Administration Officer and Adult Education Office, U3A undertakes to man the telephones and provide a reception service. They also act as a source of volunteer workers for the other organisations, especially LLM and the Life Writing Course. There is no paid staff as such for U3A. Everyone's time there is their contribution to U3A. They come in because they want to see U3A progress and they enjoy it. Sometimes the system does have lapses, such as when a message from a tutor that he or she will be away for two weeks is not passed on to the office. But, by and large, it is working well.

Changes at Wakefield Street

Following Ann Whyte's departure to become Policy and Planning Officer with the Council of Adult Education, her role at the Hawthorn Community Centre has been divided into three - Community Education Officer, Adult Education Officer and Research Officer. So far only the second position has been filled.

Judith Elsworth joined the Centre as Adult Education Office on April 7th and as such will be assisting in U3A's future development. Starting work as a Home Economics teacher Judith went on to do a variety of voluntary work while raising her family. She followed this by becoming a mature-age student at Latrobe University where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree. This led to the post of Project Officer at the Older Peoples' Action Centre, which, like U3A, aims to explode the dependence image of old age; it is, however, more politically orientated than U3A and provides resources for older people who are interested in being more active in the community.

Interest in U3A continues to grow. In the first year of operations 459 people registered as members at the Hawthorn Campus. As was to be expected, several people decided not to renew their membership this year for various good reasons including: going back to work, full time study

elsewhere, moving house, travel, transfer to a more convenient campus or U3A was just not what they were looking for.

At the same time at the beginning of 1986 there was an influx of new members with the result that at the end of April, the Hawthorn Campus had 417 members. It seems the pattern has been similar at other campuses and U3A commences its second year building on a solid core of members for the future. There has been much inter-action between the campuses, especially (because of our geographic situation) between Hawthorn and the City. According to the latest count, 90 Hawthorn members were attending classes in the City and around 60 City members were attending Hawthorn courses. Overall, Hawthorn has 471 enrolments in 46 different courses. It is always of concern when there are waiting lists for subjects, but in most cases they are absorbed by vacancies occurring or a new course starting up. So it is worth putting your name on a waiting list. If there is no course in the subject of your choice, it may be possible to contact other like-minded people through the U3A office (819 8824) and in true U3A style start a study group of your own.

REPORT ON SUMMER SAMPLES 1986

Margaret Drake's controversial '*Animal School*' lecture was based on a fanciful record of a school for animals whose curriculum was so rigid that the animals were made to take part in all sorts of activities such as swimming and climbing, for which some were, by nature, quite unsuited. The rabbit had a nervous breakdown from so much swimming practice, and the duck's webbed feet became worn from running rather than swimming.

While our human schools are not so exaggerated as this, Margaret did bring home to her audience how inadequately the individual bents of students are catered for in our schools at the present time. The lecture covered a wide spectrum of education and the presentation was interesting and amusing.

The *Pensions and Finance* lecture by Harold Fraser, posed a multiplicity of problems as retirement finances vary from person to person, as does the concept of what money should do and what the recipient wants it to do.

The first question discussed was the importance of taking stock of the money that can be expected and expenses that should be taken into consideration. What entitlements would this money bring with it and how best it could be used. Various types of investment were looked at with regard to interest to be gained and how it would affect tax. Harold was

impressed by the in-depth interest that was shown by this large class.

There were fourteen people at Marguerite Stark's demonstration of *Modern Art*. While painting with a large brush and lots of paint, she expounded the techniques and benefits of modern art with clarity and wit.

Marguerite's enthusiasm was infectious and the most sceptical of people in the audience must have realised that there is some rhyme and reason in this type of art and gained some appreciation of the value of it as a means of freeing up the personality.

Acupuncture, convened by Dr Josephine Salomon, is a subject so wide and encompassing philosophical ideas so different from those encountered in western countries that it is difficult to summarise even the basics of it in so small a space.

The technique of acupuncture dates back four or five thousand years. It originated in China and is based on the precept that man is one with the earth and the universe and is consequently affected by them in the same way as they affect each other. At the end of this class Josephine gave a demonstration of acupuncture using one of the students as a model.

U3A Chinese Style

At the first Old Age Conference in China on December 5th last year, it was stated that sixty-one universities and ten schools especially for the aged have opened in twenty-one areas in China since September 1983, the first of these being set up by the Shandong Provincial Red Cross Society in Jinan, capital of Shandong Province.

The Australia China Friendship Society stated that "UNESCO is now contracting with China for convening an international old age conference in Beijing in 1986 to learn from China's experiences".

More than 30,000 cadres, workers and farmers attend these schools which teach not only health-care and psychology, but literature, gardening, cooking and photography, as well as hobbies to prevent boredom.

Most of the universities are founded and managed by retired cadres and funded by donations. Classes meet in a variety of places with teachers hired from formal universities and colleges.

With 800 students, Haidan University is the largest in China and Yu Guanghan, Chairman of the China National Committee on Ageing, said that after their new experiences at school, the students agreed that they shared a feeling of relief from mental depression which came with idleness after retirement.

More About Courses

NUTRITION & HEALTH Convener: Greta Burman

This course is designed to help you distinguish between fact and fiction when it comes to food advertising and miracle diets. Topics include nutrients; how the body makes use of food materials; production of energy and maintenance of body tissues; minerals and vitamins, their function and importance; effects of cooking and processing; misconceptions.

Held weekly on Tuesday mornings at 24 Wakefield Street, the next course will commence early August.

MARINE BIOLOGY Convener: Frances McCallum

Using marine life between the tides as an example of an Eco System, Frances McCallum discusses basic ecology principles and conservation problems. The course includes field excursions.

Weekly on Tuesdays at 24 Wakefield Street, commencing August 19th.

CAR MAINTENANCE Convener: Thalby Reidy-Crofts

From this course you can learn quick and easy maintenance procedures to keep your car in top operating condition. Thalby helps you to understand how your car works and how you can tell when it is not working as it should. You will also learn how to tell your mechanic what is wrong.

Held at Methodist Ladies College weekly, there are five available places for U3A members.

ANTHROPOLOGY Convener: Judy Lee

The second half of this course studies the Australian Aborigine and peasantry throughout the world. Commencing May 30th, the course will run for 10 weeks and new enrolments will be accepted.

Held weekly on Friday mornings at 24 Wakefield Street.

ART FOR BEGINNERS

A self-help fun course, with intermittent assistance from Lorna Grover and Marguerite Stark. Tuesday afternoons, John Gardiner High School. Places available.

HERBS Convener: Barbara Balfour

The course will cover the identification of common herbs, how to grow herbs in the garden or in containers, how to preserve them, the culinary use of herbs, crafts from herbs, e.g. pot-pourri and a visit to an established herb garden.

The course will run for 4 or 5 weeks, starting early September.

ECONOMICS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE Convener: George Charles

A discussion group with a non-political slant which will emphasise the natural forces influencing day-to-day living and current affairs. A search for awareness of the economic world about us.

The group will meet every second Thursday, commencing July 24.

FIGURES FOR FUGITIVES Convener: Phyl Hale

Do figures make you either dead tired or want to scream?

A light-hearted, mutual-help group held on Tuesdays to try and fill the gaps left from early schooldays. There are no vacancies.

COMPUTERS Convener: Vic Kennedy

This 5-week introductory course will commence on June 19.

There are no vacancies.

SOCIAL ETHICS Convener: John Balfour

This course will be discussing the ethical implications of biomedical technologies. Subjects will include in vitro fertilisation, surrogate motherhood, terminal patient's right to refuse life prolonging therapies, passive and active euthanasia, quality versus the sanctity of life and other ethical issues. Four sessions, commencing July 16.

GARDENING

A weekly course held at M.L.C. has places for five students.

Would any member interested in assisting the professional gardener conducting this course, please contact the office.

CORRESPONDENCE ART COURSE Convener: Sonya Carrington

Sonya has offered to conduct a course in Art by correspondence.

Would those who are interested, please contact the office.