

At Markham Montessori School

Learning through experience

By Ted Wilcox
MARKHAM — The Montessori School in Markham was the answer for both of Diane Baron's pre-public school-age children.

Mrs. Baron, of South Street, Stouffville, told The Tribune that her little girl went in "very shy" and came out "with all the confidence in the world."

Her son, meanwhile, not yet four-years old, was "the undisciplined type." Now, she reports, he is "learning to pick up at home."

The reason for such successes as that, in the view of Donald Greenow, founder of the school in Markham could be summed up in this Montessori motto: "Help me to do it by myself."

"A child in a Montessori school learns through their own experience," said Mr. Greenow. "We speak of the classroom as a 'prepared environment' which facilitates children to learn...The teacher becomes more of a helpful guide than a teacher."

The Markham Montessori School's single classroom, on Highway 7 just east of McCowan Road, is

illustrative of what he is talking about.

One part of the classroom is marked "practical life." There, using special equipment,



Don Greenow

the child learns to pour, to fold, to polish, to button. He "improves co-ordination, develops habits of neatness and gains satisfaction from a job well done," said Mr. Greenow.

Mr. Greenow himself is a former vice-president in a publishing firm. He left his job in 1971, took a year's Montessori teaching course, and opened the school in Markham in 1972.

Today, the school, a registered non-profit organization, operates purely through the fees paid by parents. "There are no subsidies or grants," said Mr. Greenow.

The cost to a parent for a half-day schedule for his child is \$550. "We rent space in this building, pay two teachers, buy supplies and pay insurance, and that's it, we break even," he said.

The director of the

school this year will be Michelle Brennan, who has had 11 years nursery school experience. Besides being administrator, Mr. Greenow will act as the other teacher.

The emphasis in Montessori education is on learning rather than teaching, Mr. Greenow explained. "Learning is something one has to do for himself...The learning mechanism is something that is there from the very beginning."

"Children discover the way things are," he went on. "The ideal classroom tries to bring in a piece of the real world."

Inside the classroom are plants, a fish tank, special tonal bells for teaching sound distinctions, red and white rods that teach a child the concept of number by experience, and sand-paper letters so the child can both feel and see as he learns.

A variety of other special equipment is included as well, much of it developed by Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor, educator, anthropologist and psychologist who lived from 1870 to 1952.

After graduating as Italy's first woman doctor, according to Mr. Greenow, "she found herself by accident working with slum children and the mentally defective. She got drawn into this and spent the rest of her life working with children, with an emphasis on education."

Her teaching method,

which she preferred to call an "approach", developed from her experience in working with children. "The Montessori method was created by children, as she saw their needs and developed special equipment for use in the classroom."

Another important principle in Montessori education is that "it is a comprehensive rather than a narrow view of education," Mr. Greenow said. "We try to avoid teaching subjects in isolation...and to teach them as being connected to one another."

Another concept is that "there is no separation by age" and a child proceeds at his own pace, he said. The school in Markham takes youngsters from two and a half to six and a half years old.

Furthermore "movement is stressed ('a child's hands are the tools of his education'), said Mr. Greenow, "and we are not a competitive system."

He explained: "Learning is not by competing but by co-operating with each other. And right there you lose some parents as they

are all geared up to competition."

Mr. Greenow took pains to explain that "we're not saying we're better, but different" from other types of education. "A parent has to decide for themselves...We're not a miracle: not the last word on education."

When asked if a parent could pursue Montessorian concepts at home, Mr. Greenow answered an emphatic yes. "A great deal can be done at home...Some of the special equipment we use could be made at home."

Most important, however, is the parent's attitude, he stressed. A child should be viewed as a "person" and a useful member of the family, not as a possession or an object, Mr. Greenow said.

"Let your child help do the dishes or the laundry...Share the normal household tasks with him," he advised. "It doesn't require money, but patience."

One concern of parents is that after going to Montessori school, their children will have problems adjusting to public school.

Not so, says Mr. Greenow. "I have tried to keep in touch with former pupils," he said. "They're happy; they made the change-over easily...They have such a good, secure foundation that they are not nervous and have a feeling of security that enables them to get more out of public school."

For those parents interested, there is a Montessori school for the next age grouping, through junior high age, located on Bayview Avenue, and is called the Toronto Montessori School.



Adam Snider, of Unionville here tries out walking the balance beam at the Markham Montessori School during the past school year. The school is for youngsters between the ages of two and a half and six and a half.



Linda Milne, 16, of Markham clears one of the jumps at the Junior International Horse Show held in Thornhill last weekend. Linda captured third place in the team event. Annegret Lamure



Norman Brown has his hands full trying to control his rambunctious raccoon, Winnie, who has been living with the Browns for about two months, is not above giving Norman a nip in the neck when she gets overexcited. Annegret Lamure



Amid the roar and stink of over 100 karts Leslie McCann of Scarborough is having a quiet little snooze in the pits beside the track. She is watched over by the family dog, Zigmund. Annegret Lamure



Mario Petti is carefully shaving the tires of his Birel kart in preparation for a race in the 100 cc class. Mario comes by his interest naturally, his father owns the Goodwood Kartways. Standing by is Hugh Sinclair, on the right.

Housing minister distorted findings, MPP accuses

TORONTO — Ontario Housing Minister John Rhodes was accused last week of ignoring findings of Ombudsman Arthur Maloney that poor planning and confusion had occurred in assembling the land for the North Pickering project.

MPP James Renwick (NDP, Riverdale), chairman of the select legislative committee investigating Mr.

Maloney's report, also said the main issue was not "whether X misled Y", but the atmosphere of uncertainty surrounding the buying of land prior to expropriation.

Mr. Renwick also said that Mr. Rhodes, criticizing Mr. Maloney's report at a July 7 press conference, had had a strong impact on the legislative committee. He asked why Mr. Rhodes

had not given Mr. Maloney similar information a month before, since he knew then the main thrust of the report.

Mr. Rhodes had said at that press conference that the Ombudsman's staff had omitted crucial information and made factual errors in drawing up their report. He presented an additional 94-page rebuttal to the report, before the committee last week.

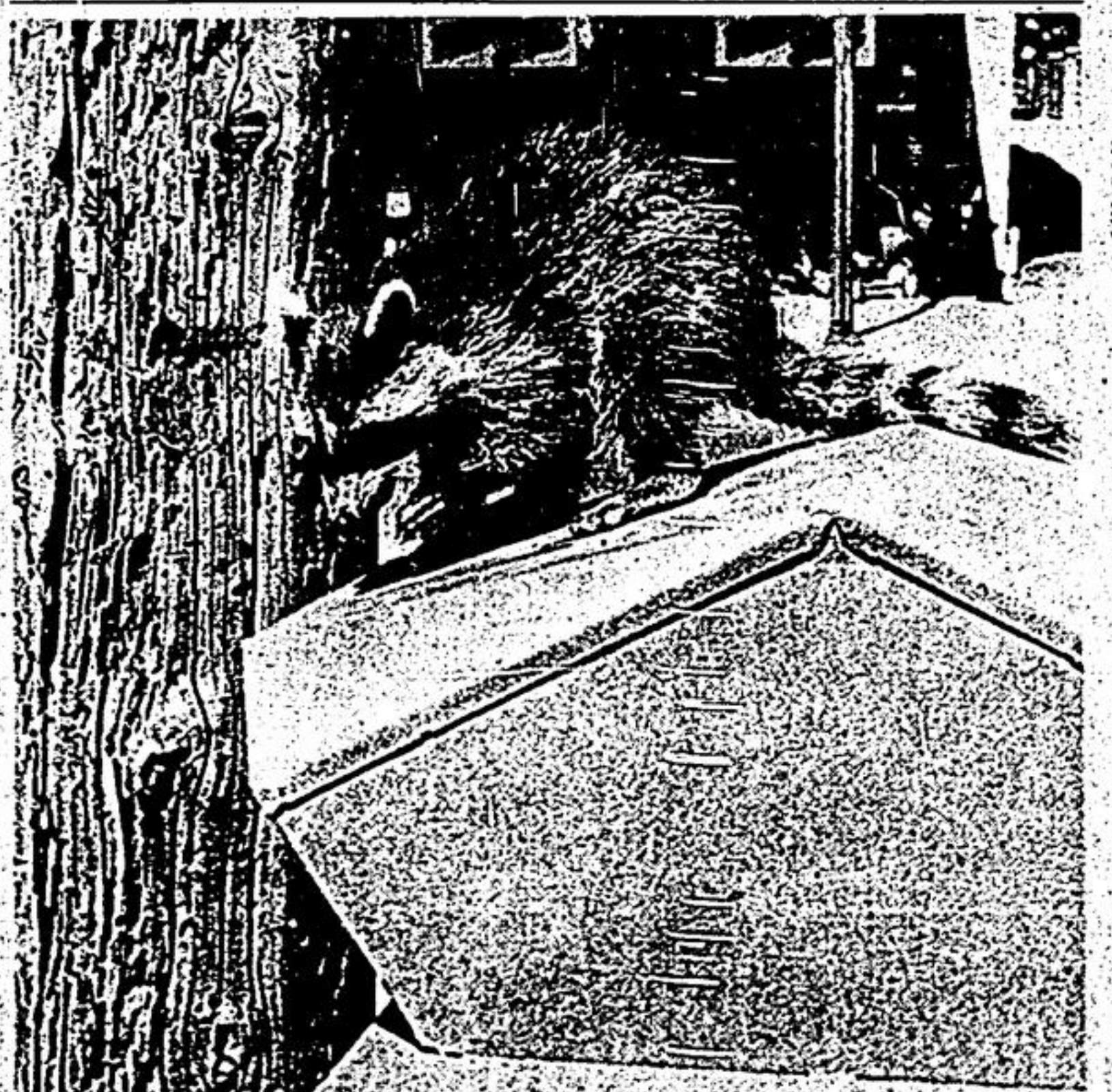
Mr. Rhodes insisted that the committee should investigate only the specific charges made by the ombudsman that 44 landowners were misled by government agents. He said he could not answer for the way the Government has handled land planning from the beginning, since he was not in the Cabinet when the North Pickering Project was announced March 1, 1972.

It is possible that at least five Ontario Cabinet ministers responsible for housing over the last five years could be called before the committee in order to delve into past land planning.

Open house for museum ignored

GREENWOOD — Greenwood residents were worried about increased traffic, and streets clogged with cars as they viewed the ambitious plans.

The plans were extremely well presented, according to Pickering Councillor Jack Anderson. He also said that although one building is now on the new site, the Pickering Museum will not move to its new home until 1978.



It is rather unusual to see a raccoon checking out the offerings in a trash bin on Main St., but Winnie, a pet raccoon owned by Norman Brown, can't wait to get in there.

A raccoon can be loveable yet mischievous, owner finds

By Annegret Lamure
STOUFFVILLE — Most parents tend to be something less than enthusiastic when their children bring home a new pet, but not Martin M. Brown. He was absolutely delighted when his eighteen-year-old son Norman came home with a young raccoon.

Even when it became apparent that the animal named Winnie was bent on taking the house apart bit by bit, his enthusiasm wasn't dimmed.

"I've wanted a raccoon all my life," said Mr. Brown, and then added regretfully, "Of course when I got one, my wife didn't like it."

Not that he blames her too much. Apparently little Winnie has the bad habit of chewing the braid trimming on the couch.

"You know how they grab something and then run with it," explained Mr. Brown, "the braid was chaintitched, but the raccoon didn't care."

Winnie doesn't just restrict herself to unravelling couches either; it turns out. She also has a passion for unpacking garbage, tearing apart piles of newspapers, and biting the necks of unsuspecting family members.

"Oh, they're marvellous little pets," said Mr. Brown, explaining that the raccoon was really a very friendly little fellow. "She only bites for something to do," he said.

Winnie thrives on a variety of foods, but the mainstay of her diet is dry dog food. Since

raccoons have no salivary glands, she dips every chunk in her water dish. The patting, underwater motions that accompany this ritual serve a useful purpose in the wild — they dislodge stones on the bottom and expose crayfish to the sensitive probing paws.

The raccoon enjoys fishing for candy as well, recounts Mr. Brown, who is in the habit of treating Winnie to a sweet every once in a while. "I'd put the candy in my shirt pocket, and the next time I wore that same shirt she'd go right for it," he said proudly.

Mr. Brown admits that Winnie, like all raccoons, is nosy. "They get into everything, you have to watch them all the time," he said. Because of her mischievous nature, Winnie is supposed to be living outside, in a six foot pen with a nestbox and all the comforts, but in actual practice, she resides in the house as one of the family. The raccoon follows Norman all around town during the day, and sleeps curled up beside him on the pillow at night. That is, she did until a few days ago. At the moment, Winnie belongs to a friend of Norman's.

"I'm kind of mad that he gave it away," said Mr. Brown, pointing out that this is the third time that the rather demanding pet has been placed with someone else. "But I expect her back shortly," said Mr. Brown. He sounded oddly happy.

For Claremont secondary plan consultant hired

CLAREMONT — "There is a lot more groundwork to be done," said Pickering Councillor Jack Anderson when speaking about the terms of reference regarding a secondary plan for Claremont.

In view of this, Pickering council has decided to hire a consultant to study various criteria.

One of the considerations is population growth. Claremont could end up with a population in the area of 1000-1200 people, a huge jump from the present 150 odd residents.

If a subdivision is allowed in, the developer would have to provide a community water

system, since the water table would drop and residents wells would go dry, according to Mr. Anderson.

Truck ban passed

WHITEVALE — Regional council recently approved a bylaw banning all heavy truck traffic from Whitevale's main street.

All heavy trucks, except those making deliveries in the area, will no longer be allowed to use the 5th concession between Brock Rd. and Altona Rd.

Truckers can use the Brock Rd. to get to Hwy. 2, according to Pickering Councillor Jack Anderson.