

## A CHILD'S WORLD\*

Mary Beth Anderson

Imagination is like the color red. It brightens anything dull in much the same way that red brightens a painting of grays and browns, a woolen plaid, or the scenery in autumn. Imagination is a red spark that can set the mind on fire and bring about revolutionary ideas. Imagination is like the blood that keeps us alive; it is a stream of life whose circulation leads to creativity and the beginnings of dreams. Yet, somehow, the world of imagination belongs to children. Just as the color red seems most appealing when thought of in terms of a new pair of school shoes, a shiny little dump truck, or a big balloon, so does imagination seem to be the freshest when it is fancied by the child.

During my years in high school, I sponsored my own little dancing school to earn my spending money. My students ranged in age from four years to fourteen years, and I devoted three afternoons a week in an attempt to teach them what dancing is all about. One of the most important elements of dance is interpretation and story-telling. Along with being able to perform intricate steps, a dancer must be able to take on any personality or character in order to tell his story. In other words, a dancer must have imagination. Although lack of coordination made learning steps very difficult for my younger students, they shone when it came to interpretation. Delightful as "squishy" marshmallows, they were just as believable as wooden soldiers. They could imagine themselves to be anything from graceful snowflakes to clumsy elephants. In contrast, my older students would take no part in this sort of activity.

An interesting fact to point out is that the age when my students became inhibited coincided with the age when most children find out that there is no Santa Claus, Easter Bunny, or Tooth Fairy. I feel that this has a great deal to do with imagination being pushed aside. I can remember from my own childhood how disillusioning it was to

find out that there was no Santa Claus. I had had such a firm belief in him, and, suddenly, this belief was shattered. It is no wonder that children as they grow older become more inhibited. They are not about to let themselves be fooled again, and, as a result, imagination and make-believe become childish activities, something to out-grow.

Another important factor is that at this same point in the life of a child, approximately the early part of the third grade, very little is done in school to stimulate imagination. Play-doh and much of the fun and games are set aside to tackle seriously the problems of reading, writing, and arithmetic. If any art work is done, it is usually copying a work already completed by the teacher, or coloring mimeographed pages.

I do not mean to say that imagination never survives childhood, because it is obvious that it does. *Grimm's Fairy Tales* and Disneyland are two examples of imagination at its greatest. One does not find many adults with a great deal of imagination, though; and, in adults, it is usually too late to develop this sense. The only solution, I feel, is through the education of the child. "Sesame Street" and new experimental schools are a step in the right direction. Other school systems should follow in their footsteps. Dance classes and arts and crafts classes, such as wood workshops, should be made as important a part of the curriculum as the essential academic courses. With opportunity a child can exercise and maintain that special innate ability to imagine. Only if provided with the proper crayon can a child color his world red.

### A CHILDHOOD MEMORY REVIVED\*

Stan Landfair

Spain has left me with many memories. Most of them, however, are not real. Inspired by pictures, the mind of my older years has created them, taking a single slide or snapshot, inserting itself behind