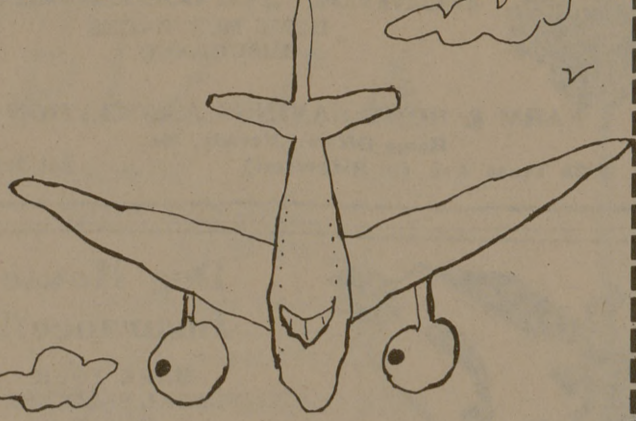


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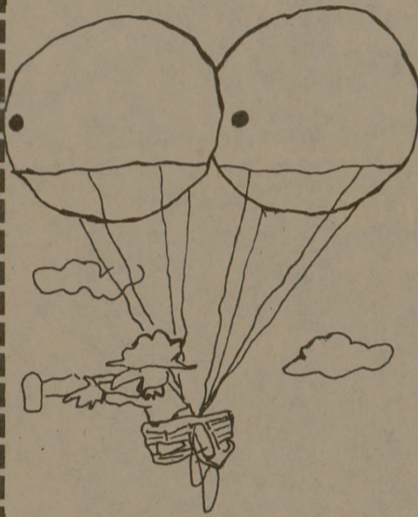
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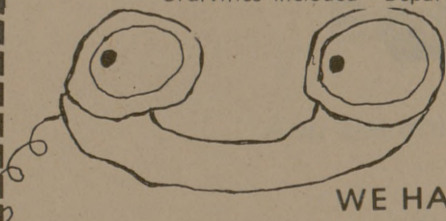
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Specialist Sees Importance of Kindergarten

Five-year-old Max looks up at the big building, with its cold, impersonal, un-homelike stone and glass face.

This is where he starts kindergarten today. He remembers being told it will be lost of fun, that there will be many other boys and girls with whom he can play.

But it is strange to Max. Different from his own comfortable, friendly room at home, his backyard with its familiar toys, and neighborhood friends and their play.

Max feels the queasiness of fear of the new surroundings. He tugs Mom toward the family car back at the curb.

But she firmly guides Max up the walk and through the big school doors, almost too big for a child to manage.

The walk down the high, echoing hall is even more frightening. It is made more so by Mom's unusual silence. Then they enter a big room. Many other youngsters are there, some with tear-stained faces and one or two sniffing openly while a strange lady with a radiant smile kneels and talks softly to them.

Max looks farther. A colorful array of boxes, bright paper, paints, a gurgling aquarium, a cage holding a gerbil and other things catch his eyes. He also sees several kids his age exploring it all with expectant smiles.

Then another mother tugs her five-year-old through the door. One glance, and the newcomer bursts into loud wails.

How will Max react? Many more Texas children his age will soon have the chance to find out. Through legislation signed last week, Texas public schools will provide kindergarten for all children this fall.

All the Maxes, Marias, Sues, and Carloses will get their first impression of school.

A Texas A&M University specialist in early childhood education, Mrs. Mary Bassett, believes it is a vital time in a child's life.

How he later views school, learning and even his home will be affected from that instant on.

Many factors will contribute to Max's initial response. His parents may have talked to him about school. His mother perhaps gave him toys and games that helped him learn to count, recognize letters and grasp simple concepts.

His school room may be beg-

and airy, much like the outdoors where he loves to romp and play and explore.

It may contain many unusual pieces of learning equipment and familiar objects he can use in the process of learning.

It will contain an unusual number of his peers, more than Max has had to contend with socially except for brief, isolated instances.

A very important person will be there — Max's kindergarten teacher. Like his mom and dad and other adults he knows, she—or he—will serve as a model for Max's impressionistic mind.

"The teacher will have some very important qualities," Mrs. Bassett hopes. "She will have a pleasing voice, a sense of humor, patience, kindness and gentleness, rapport with children and parents, stable emotions and physical stamina and energy, among other things."

Just as important, she said, the kindergarten teacher will understand and respect children, understand individual differences and know that Max feels about the world much like adults do, but that he reasons about it differently.

"The kindergarten school isn't the child's home," she observed, "yet we better be 'home-like' in September. And then more 'school-like' in May. Learning is not always easy, so teachers must be warm and accepting of indi-

vidual children."

She teaches her fledgling teachers that kindergarten is a "transition time. Any transition must be smooth to be effective."

Besides the other qualities, the effective kindergarten teacher needs special training, aimed at a different kind of learning the young child experiences.

Mrs. Bassett, who has taught teachers at A&M since 1970, says the child must get the right attitude toward school and learning. Otherwise, first grade and later teachers will have to unlearn the experience.

Many elements in society will contribute to or detract from the proper kindergarten learning environment.

"Children at this age don't learn the same as older children," she explained. They need to manipulate materials, experiment, question, learn to express themselves, gain confidence, begin to learn self-discipline and discover the relation of one thing to another."

"It's not all clean and not all quiet," Mrs. Bassett went on. "It means animals, other people and going places. It takes room, more than later elementary grades, and equipment costs money."

The specialist who plans to return to teaching at the A&M Presbyterian Church Day School said studies show restricting learning space for this age group causes more aggressive behavior,

more excitement and noise, and a less permissive atmosphere. It also leads to less individual guidance and fewer children making personal contact with the teacher.

"It costs more than with older children, because the kindergarten child deals with experiences. Older students deal with ideas put down on paper. Paper doesn't cost as much, yet," she explained.

More adults are needed to teach young children effectively, she added.

Mrs. Bassett has 37 students in a course in art and music for early childhood and 19 in early childhood education. Three are male.

She stressed the importance of men teachers in kindergarten, the model they provide boys and girls.

"The kindergarten teacher be willing to try all sorts of things, curious and not afraid of failure. The teacher must be concerned with control, ranging an environment in the child is safe to do so through which he learns, said.

"We're not as interested in 'up' with a kindergarten as going 'out' and 'in' goal," she added, "is to be the broadest base possible for a child to stand on in later years."



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OPAS Receives Grant From Arts, Humanities Commission

A&M's Opera and Performing Arts Society has been awarded a \$5,000 grant by the Texas Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

The award was announced by Maurice Coast, commission executive director. It supports OPAS' debut season this fall.

Six OPAS performances including the opera, "The Marriage of Figaro," will open the main, 2,500-seat auditorium of the new University Center.

Support for the performances also comes from the Corbett Foundation of Cincinnati, the San Antonio Symphony and Opera Society, the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley and through contributions and guarantees of numerous area residents.

OPA's premier season will also feature Violinist Itzhak Peruman, Dec. 5; Pianist Van Cliburn, Jan. 17; the National Ballet of Washington, Jan. 31; tse Houston Symphony, April 25;

"Figaro" with Norman Treigle, Feb. 27, and Soprano Marisa Galvany, April 9.

OPAS was founded last fall as a functioning committee of the Town Hall Committee of the Memorial Student Center.



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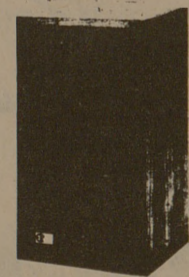
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