



evens are Kingdom residents

# The Peaceable Kingdom teaches life on the lands

By TRICIA PARKER  
Staff Writer

There are those who'd say the people of the Peaceable Kingdom are throwbacks but Director Libbie Winston disagrees.

And if their ideas, like the Kingdom itself, are a little off the beaten track, it's all right because that's the way they like it.

"The air is clean, the water is clean and the food tastes good," she says. "We're not throwbacks, we're throwforwards."

The Peaceable Kingdom is a school and a community found three miles north of Washington-on-the-Brazos. It serves as home base to four full-time staff members and a home to what seems like a dozen large mutts, a coop full of chickens, a rooster named Einstein and, until lunchtime last Sunday, a pig named Junior.

The Kingdom also uses nature as a tool to teach self-sufficiency. What they have they built themselves and what they eat they grow.

"When we need to do something, to build something, we find a way to do it," she says.

So if the dwellings and lifestyle are as rustic as the road, that's the point — they built it themselves.

The Kingdom began as 152 acres of meadows and woods. Everything else, including the communal kitchen, a prize-winning barn, an igloo-shaped solar shower and a stained glass outhouse, the residents later added themselves.

Now, the Kingdom is a hodge-podge of stylistically different buildings splattered at random around the hills and trees and animal pens of the Kingdom.

In the 13 years since the Kingdom was formed, the interests of the staff has been almost as widely scattered. This diversity contributed greatly to the growth of the community.

Once someone was interested in potting so they built a kiln. When a blacksmith was in residence, they built a forge. Now one staff member, Lyndon Felps, is interested in energy conservation so as a result, the farm has a solar greenhouse, hot water heater and a few solar lights.

When I found Libbie she had half a dozen Boy Scout leaders in tow. As she wandered across the overgrown tracks, from time to time she bent and fingered an herb which moments ago I'd trampled as weeds. The scout leaders scribbled madly as she pointed out Shepards Purse (to stop bleeding), Red Clover (to purge the blood), and other edible plants.

We wandered around and

*When I found Libbie she had half a dozen Boy Scout leaders in tow. As she wandered across the overgrown tracks, from time to time she bent and fingered an herb which moments ago I'd trampled as weeds.*

ate pepper grass and buttercups and as the morning lesson came to an end it became apparent that Libbie Winston knows an awful lot about everything.

As a group, we returned to the main house for lunch. The weatherbeaten building, decorated with odds and ends of stained glass, is the oldest part of the farm, and looks it.

The decor is as eclectic as the people themselves. In the plywood bookcase against one wall, the Better Homes Cookbook stands next to Zen Techniques, and an old Spirograph is stacked on stacks of albums. The cheap stereo with good speakers played Emerson, Lake and Palmer in the background.

With lunch on the way, the

communal kitchen was crammed with people. Each one is hurrying to prepare the meal, namely a former pet named Junior.

Libbie took me to the storeroom, it was packed with more full shelves and glass jars than any biology lab. Sticks of cinnamon, bags of spices, nicotine-free cigarettes and a variety of wines (red tomato, honey and jalapeno) completed the collection.

We visited the herb drying room which was like a giant potpourri and by the time we emerged, the "Junior-burgers" were ready and a vast noisy meal began.

Just then a minor pandemonium of squawking chickens and barking dogs broke out outside. Libbie was off, loping across the room. With a shout, the dogs stopped pursuit and Libbie settled unruffled onto the wooden bench to explain.

"Those dogs are borders," she says. "Our dogs don't chase the chickens. The chickens have a way of flying just out of reach that drives them crazy."

Talking to Libbie, you get the feeling she knows because she asked the dogs.

Libbie says the school is a sort of community service.

"People come out here to get a look around," she says. "Sometimes they leave you a donation and sometimes they don't but it doesn't really matter."

What is important, she says, is that people come out to learn.

Libbie says the emphasis of the school changes from time to time but it is always centered on the land. A few years ago, for instance, the community decided it needed a barn.

"The original design was on a paper napkin," she said. "We built it Tom Sawyer-style."

About 40 architects from Houston and the University helped build the art-deco-

see page 12

FACT  
nec  
By RE

At the N  
Faculty Ser  
sworn in, a  
be serving  
Voters  
Thursday,  
five posit  
run-off ele  
With 76  
ing, the res  
• Coll  
Place 1—  
9—J.C. G  
R. Dixon,  
Cartwright  
between J  
Gary E. H  
between C  
ward Fun  
• Colley  
Environm  
Carroll D.  
• Colley  
istration:  
gel, Place  
• Colle  
1—Robe  
Barbara S  
las, J. Palm