



**THE**  
**ROEPER**  
**SCHOOL**

**2018/2019**

CELEBRATING  
THE CENTENARY OF  
**ANNEMARIE**  
**ROEPER**

*Annemarie*



On a visit in 1995, Annemarie sat outside Hill House with some of the Roeper staffers whose children attended the school: Lori Zinser; me, and Jarie Ruddy.

From my very first Annemarie encounter in 1988 to my last visit with her at her home in Oakland, California, I remained awestruck by her remarkable intellect, endless curiosity and exacting focus on the health and well-being of the whole person.

We spoke often about a myriad of school and community matters, and yet she consistently and immediately inquired about how I was feeling and to seek specific updates on my kids and my husband before we proceeded with the “business at hand.” Annemarie knew that whatever might follow in our discourse, it would be inextricably linked to what was occurring in the rest of my life.

Annemarie constantly articulated a commitment to justice and to making the world a better place, but she never dismissed the importance of the individual in that calculus.

This commemorative calendar issue — a centenary celebration of what would have been Annemarie Bondy Roeper’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday year — is a remarkable convergence of gifts!

Special thanks to Rosalie Lake and Dianne O’Connor (both longtime colleagues of Annemarie’s and alumni parents), Historian Marcia Ruff, alumna Lori Lutz ’75, and Art Director Bonnie Schemm for their great vision and thoughtfulness, and to Kari Papadopoulos, Carolyn Borman, Loree Kelly, Tiffany Hadjantoni and Emily Wine for their important contributions and support.

At your end, once this calendar has been marked with the pace of your busy days, I encourage you to place it among your other Roeper keepsakes!

Yours,

Denita Banks-Sims  
Director of Development & Publications

I first met Annemarie Roeper in 2011 just before I was offered the headship at The Roeper School. The School's Board Chair at the time, Steve Milbeck, shared with me that the final step in the hiring process was a conversation with the founder. Having gone through dozens of interviews with students, teachers, parents, alums, board members, and friends of the community, this last interview filled me with the greatest sense of anticipation. After all, her name was on the School and I would be carrying forward Annemarie and George's legacy.

When it came time for the phone call, I anticipated a conversation that might last 30 to 45 minutes. After all, she was 93, and this was the last step in a very long and careful process. When Annemarie answered the phone, I could hear in her voice a vibrance, an excitement, and a level of clarity that made clear to me that I was going to enjoy the conversation that was to come. Annemarie was curious. She wanted to know about my family, the search process, my thoughts on history, education, neuro-science, and psychology. We talked about religion, humanism, our mutual roots in Hamburg, Germany. We discussed writing, the books we were reading, and the book she was writing.

That phone conversation that was, in my mind, supposed to last 45 minutes, lasted close to three hours — and it probably could have gone longer. What started as an interview became a fast friendship. A week later, when I signed the contract to become Head of School, my first action was to book plane tickets to Oakland to go and visit Annemarie in person.

One hundred years is a marker, a milestone, a time in human history to stop and take notice. The legacy that Annemarie Roeper has left is rich and filled with thousands of individual stories of human growth, enrichment, actualization, and friendship. Students and parents learned countless lessons on child development, and have continued to live their lives through Annemarie and George's Philosophy. These humanists gave birth to an idea that became our School, and in this year of Annemarie's Centenary it is only fitting for us to pause and remember the gift she gave us and the influence she had on the landscape of education.

I hope the photos and quotations in this calendar will serve as a reminder of the impact this wonderful woman had on our lives, and that you can see in her smile the deep and genuine friendships she developed with each of us.



David H. Feldman  
Head of School







*We don't look at the school as an island unto itself; we see it in relation to what goes on around it and the times in which we live. One must draw the consequences for education and for children from the state of the world.*

BACKSTORY: Annemarie and George came to the U.S. in 1939 after having grown up in an idyllically progressive school, but also after having experienced the shocking transformation of Germany under Hitler. In the U.S., they were taken aback by racial segregation and anti-Semitism. As educators, they saw these issues and other social concerns as critical subjects for students to ponder and study.





BACKSTORY: Annemarie's appreciation for the value of diversity was deep and multi-faceted. In her vision of school as a world in miniature," every person is known and valued as a unique individual connected to every other individual in a web of dynamic interdependence.

Annemarie is seen here with civil rights icon Rosa Parks, who was honored at the 1993 Roeper Gala.

*In order to become truly human, we must accept and understand and incorporate the similarities among all human beings, and realize that one of the basic similarities must be the ability to accept our differences.*





*In order to believe in justice,  
the child must be raised with justice.  
In order to trust others,  
he must be trusted.  
He must be expected to understand,  
not only to obey.*

BACKSTORY: Justice, equity and fairness were central values for Annemarie, but they weren't just principles for resolving conflicts or distributing opportunities. As a psychologically oriented educator, Annemarie saw justice and equity as qualities of human relationship, manifested in respect, attention and appreciation.

This photo was taken as part of a *Look Magazine* profile of the school in March 1964.



*The concept of interdependence says that we can only survive if we understand that we depend on each other.*



BACKSTORY: One value of interdependence is access to the ideas and observations of others.

Annemarie and George structured the school so that everyone's ideas could be heard and incorporated to some degree.

When the school celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it held its first all-alumni reunion in June 2002.

Taking advantage of all the voices that were gathered, a symposium was held to solicit ideas on Roeper's past, present and future.





*It became painfully clear to me that the traditional approach — children in rows of desks and the teacher at the front lecturing at children — simply was not right for children. The only choice I had was to not continue doing this.*

BACKSTORY: Annemarie was only 23 years old when she came to Detroit, but she already had visionary ideas about education. Throughout her years at Roeper, she tried new ideas, all in service to her vision of a school in which adults and children feel safe and able to discover themselves and form a community.



*Children need their dreams  
before they need their skills.*



*The participatory approach was based on the principle that everyone who would be affected by a decision would have the opportunity to be involved in the process which led to the final decision.*



BACKSTORY: As Headmistress, Annemarie had a signature class called "What Would You Do?" This was a Stage III elective in which students gathered to describe problems occurring in the stage and collectively develop solutions. When she returned for a visit in 1991, a group of students joined her to hold a session of the problem-solving class.





*Initiating intellectual development means developing capabilities young children already have in regard to joy of discovery, to thinking things through, to advance ideas, to find solutions.*

BACKSTORY: Annemarie's profound belief in the innate wisdom of children led her to develop an educational model that helps children learn to trust themselves, their insights and their capabilities.



*The Mill House at Marienau*

*Every part of the environment  
contributes to the learning milieu.  
Living with nature and beauty is a  
constant reminder of the rhythm  
of life and global interdependence.*



**BACKSTORY:** Annemarie's childhood instilled an unshakeable appreciation for nature. She roamed Marienau's 300 acres of woods and streams by herself and with friends. At the first opportunity, she and George moved their Detroit school out into the country, so their students could have the same opportunities to daydream and restore their souls in a natural setting.





*Sometimes one needs to be a leader,  
sometimes a follower,  
and sometimes a collaborator,  
depending on which role  
accomplishes the goal  
of making the situation  
or community better.*



BACKSTORY: Gifted adults haven't received the same amount of study as gifted children, but Annemarie was one of the first voices in the field to comment on the arc of a gifted person. She herself exemplified the consistency of one's giftedness across a lifetime. Here she is at ages 14 and 90, still alight with curiosity and eagerness to engage.

*People don't stop being gifted when they graduate, when they fall in love, when they pick a job, when they have children or when they are confronted with the problems of the world. They bring to this all the qualities that identified them as being gifted, and all the qualities that identified them as human beings.*





*Our children are challenging us to have the courage to create basic change. I challenge you not to let them down. It is my belief, as theirs, that we must help them change the world. This will ask much of us, but I truly believe this is their moment, and if we have the courage, it will be ours.*





*Built into (our) philosophy are both constancy and change. Its inherent goals remain constant while the implementation may change as times and life require.*

BACKSTORY: George and Annemarie experienced unexpected changes in their lives. Made refugees as young adults, they built successful lives in a new country. Comfortable with the knowledge that change, and sometimes awful change, is inevitable, they kept their optimism through their commitment to humanism — their belief that human beings, interacting with honesty, respect, and an open mind, can weather anything.



## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ANNEMARIE ROEPER

Had Annemarie's life developed the way she expected, she'd have been a child psychoanalyst. History altered her path dramatically, so she brought her curiosity and convictions about the interior life of children to the field of education. In her 40 years at The Roeper School and her subsequent research, writing and consulting, Annemarie was an enduring advocate for an education that supports our need to be individuals while insisting on our intimate and inescapable interdependence with all other beings.



Annemarie Martha Bondy was born in Vienna on August 27, 1918. She grew up in the progressive schools started by her parents, Max and Gertrud Bondy, and met her future husband as a very young girl when George Roeper, who was eight years older, arrived as a student at the school in 1924. In

1937, the Nazis forced her parents, who were Jewish by heritage, to sell the school under the Nuremberg Laws that forbade Jews from educating Aryans. The family fled first to Switzerland and then to the United States in 1939. George fled with them, as he was under orders to be shot on sight for having helped the Bondys obtain papers to leave.

Two weeks after arriving in the United States, the young couple married — something they were barred from doing in Germany since George wasn't Jewish. They married at City Hall in New York City on April 20, 1939, wearing a wool tuxedo and silk gown they'd brought from Europe for the occasion. At first, George and Annemarie helped the Bondys establish the Windsor Mountain School, which operated in Lenox, Massachusetts, until 1975. Then, in 1941, Annemarie and George came to Detroit by invitation of two local psychoanalysts, Richard and Editha Sterba, to direct a psychoanalytically oriented nursery school and establish a grade school.

The school grew vigorously. After only five years, it was so popular George and Annemarie were able to purchase a large estate in Bloomfield Hills as a permanent home for the school. At the same time they started their own family:



Tom, born in 1943; Peter, born in 1946 on the day after they closed on the property in Bloomfield Hills; and Karen, born in 1949 while the family still lived on the second floor of Hill House.

In 1956, the Roepers became concerned about the Cold War-driven interest in identifying gifted children. They felt that little was known about the emotional needs of the gifted and that new programs that were springing up might damage the potential of gifted children. After consulting with scholars in gifted education, they converted the school in 1956 to one that was exclusively devoted to gifted education. Today the school is the oldest independent school in the United States serving gifted students.

As a prominent educator, Annemarie was invited to consult with Joan Ganz Cooney on the development of *Sesame Street* in 1965. For many years, Annemarie taught undergraduate and graduate courses in gifted education at Oakland University, in addition to serving as Headmistress at Roeper. In 1978, she and George founded the *Roeper Review*, a peer-reviewed scholarly quarterly of gifted education that is still published by the school.

Annemarie never completed any higher education beyond high school. In 1937 she was the youngest person ever accepted by Sigmund and Anna Freud to study child psychoanalysis with them. The German invasion of Austria in March 1938 prevented her from beginning her studies. She fled on the last train to cross the Austrian frontier before the Germans invaded. In 1978, Eastern Michigan University awarded her and George honorary doctorates.

Annemarie retired from Roeper in 1980 at the age of 61, one year after George retired at the age of 68. The couple moved to California in 1983, where they remained connected to the school and continued to speak, write and consult. George passed away on August 24, 1992, in Oakland, California. Annemarie passed away on May 11, 2012, in Oakland, California.

Over her career, Annemarie published more than 100 articles and book chapters, three scholarly books (*The "I" of the Beholder: A Guided Journey to the Essence of a Child*; *My Life Experiences with Children: Selected Writings and Speeches*; and *Educating Children for Life: The Modern Learning Community*), four children's books, a meditation on aging called *Beyond Old Age*, and a memoir of growing up at her parents' school called *Marienau: A Daughter's Reflections*. She also developed the Annemarie Roeper Method of Qualitative Assessment to provide a more holistic understanding of a child's abilities and personality.

In 1999, Annemarie received the first President's Award from NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) for a lifetime of distinguished service to the field. In 2003, she was given the Humanitarian Award by the International Center for Psycho-Social Trauma for a lifetime in service to victims of trauma, in particular her work establishing the importance of a sense of safety to a child's development. In 2008, Annemarie was the first person to be interviewed for NAGC's "Portraits in Gifted Education: The Legacy Series."

Annemarie had a passion throughout her life for children and their right to grow according to their unique needs. In her words, "Humanity has made two promises to its children. The first is to prepare a world which accepts them and provides them with opportunities to live, grow, and create in safety. The other is to help them develop their whole beings to the fullest in every respect. Education is the vehicle through which we try to keep these promises."

