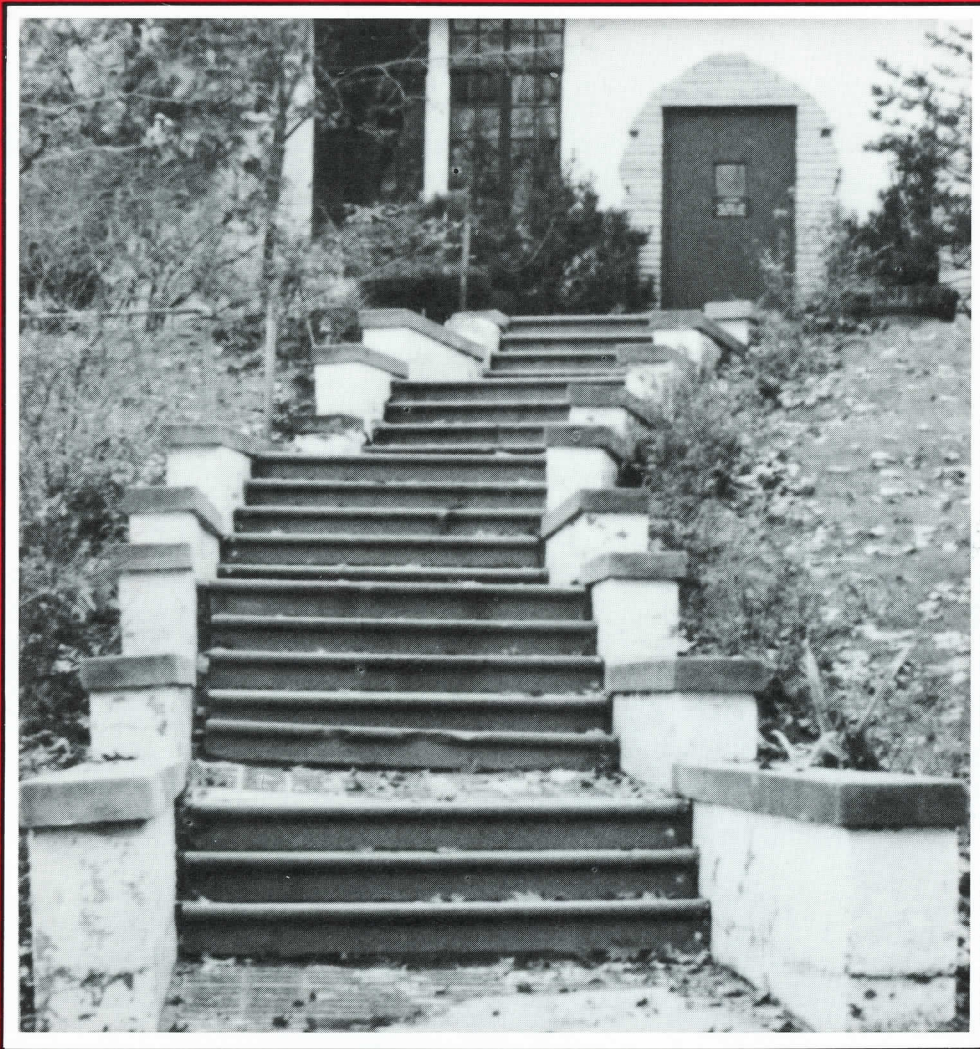


Alumni News

ROEPER

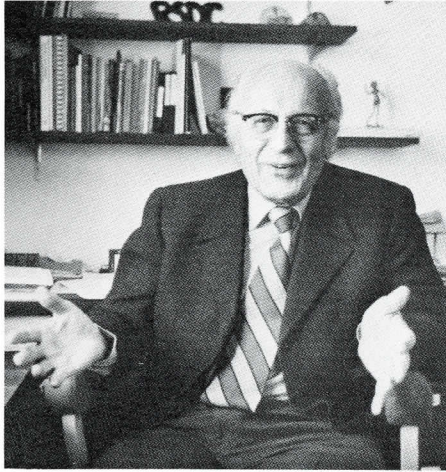
CITY & COUNTRY SCHOOL



SPRING

1985

The History of Roeper City & Country School (Part II)



George Roeper
founder



Annemarie Roeper
founder

The year 1946 was probably one of the most significant ones in our lives. Our son Peter was born and we moved to the Bloomfield Hills campus. We had purchased the property with the financial help of a number of friends. In looking back over the years, we are amazed at how strongly we remember our feelings of those days and how conscious we were that we had created a permanent framework for ourselves, our family, and our work. It was from this point on that we really had to prove our commitment to our philosophy.

Before we moved, we had 80 children in the nursery through elementary grades and not enough space. We had no playground. So we loaded the kids every school day in George's and Bob Wayne's cars, and drove to the playgrounds of Northwestern High School in Detroit. Henrika Van Riper, Bernie Cohen and Henry Reye and others may remember these times. On the new campus, however, we could play baseball. George was so ignorant of American sports teams that he asked the kids the puzzling question, "Did the Tigers beat the Lions?" The kids could only respond with stunned looks, recognizing the ignorance and stupidity of their headmaster.

Before the move we had looked intensely for new quarters for our school, and were anxious to get the nursery and elementary grades together again on one campus which would also allow for future expansion. We felt that our school kids, being city-dwellers, should get exposure to nature and a country environment. For this reason we looked for a place in the suburbs. We found it in Bloomfield Hills and called it a city and country school. We had no money to buy anything. With the help of friends and parents and the sale of our own house on LaSalle, we scraped together \$15,000 to make the down payment. The balance was mortgaged. With the help of our first school custodian, Sam Diamond, we loaded our furniture on a new bus and moved to Bloomfield Hills in the summer of 1946.

The move to Bloomfield Hills was the real beginning, and we were somewhat frightened by it. Our lives would now begin to unfold in a somewhat predictable manner. It was also exhilarating. We had cheated Hitler out of our deaths and had the opportunity for a fruitful life, helping children live and grow in a happy, harmonious atmosphere. The

most exciting thing was having this environment for our children to grow up as happy and stimulated as we ourselves had been, and to be protected from the enormous disappointment we had experienced in Germany.

It was a lovely piece of property. The big house was set on top of the hill overlooking the rolling land. No houses were near in those days—just green, rolling hills and a stream. We saw ducks on our little pond, watched birds, and squirrels, and even spotted an occasional deer. The place was lovely in all seasons and we soon believed it was really home. The natural beauty became an integral part of the lives of many people—adults and children. Our daughter Karen was born in 1949 and we had a contest among the students to determine her name.

In the fall of 1946, we started school with about 90 kids. Our family lived in four rooms on the second floor of what is now the main building on the Bloomfield Hills campus. Sam and Lois Diamond lived with us too; he drove the only school bus and cleaned the building in the evening. Lois cooked and kept house for us. We still think of them often. Hattie Wyatt also lived with us in the beginning. She became an assistant in the nursery school and her twin sister Lucy became the dietitian. Soon after we moved, Mariann Hoag arrived fresh from college and took over the office; and not long after that Sally Booth became a teacher in the nursery school. These relationships remained with us all of our lives. They became part of the basic fiber and atmosphere of the School, each adding something unique. Many others whom we mention later also made unique contributions, adding to the School and our personal lives as well. Much as we loved the physical setting and still do, the children and adults constitute the real, although invisible, buildings of the School and of living

In the beginning we had only 5½ acres of school grounds (now there are 12 acres): enough to play baseball, climb trees, pick wild raspberries and sled down the hill. George occasionally substituted for Sam in driving the bus (at that time bus drivers were not yet required to have special licenses). George always drove the bus when the children went to the Cranbrook Museum or recreational areas.

The School gained a good reputation

(continued on next page)

The Roepers (Part II)

which was evidenced by the parents' loyalty and confidence in our work. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the School in 1951, we were presented with a scroll on which the following was written:

"In this celebration of the tenth anniversary, we, the parents have a special—if not paramount interest. This is because we have entrusted our children to George and Annemarie Roeper. We did this with the fullest confidence that they would not only educate them, but that in the process, they would allow that unfolding of personality which is the very essence of happiness and well-being throughout life.

. . . in a real sense the school is an extension of the boundries of our homes; and we have come to appreciate that there is that happy combination of teacher, child, and parent

which builds the foundation of lasting ting security . . .

Thus the Roepers and their school have become identified with the worthiest aims of education."

These worthiest aims covered "humanism," which is still the guiding goal of the School. By humanism we meant believing in justice rather than power; having respect for the kids, their feelings, and their opinions; and trying to understand them. None of our teachers would have said, "You should always believe the teacher in a confrontation with a student accused of lying, because the teacher is an adult, better educated, and more mature."

There is so much more to be said about the philosophy of the School. Maybe it will be done in the next *Alumni News*.

George & Annemarie Roeper