



Kelly, S.D.U.'s youngest co-ed, is blond and cute. She'll be three by Christmas. Her campus schedule is heavy — fifteen hours a week — but with classes held only from nine to noon, the afternoons are free for other things. Kelly's colleagues range in age from three to five years. The fourteen boys and five girls have an average Intelligence Quotient higher than that of the Senior class of '68, which may go a long way in explaining how this select group managed to escape the agonies of Christmas exams.

"Child geni have invaded our midst," you say. No—you're wrong. The first floor of the Main building is merely the scene of Mrs. MacQuarrie's kindergarten class. The whole program has links with the Psychology Department and holds great promise as a possible training ground for teachers-to-be.

Mrs. Ian G. MacQuarrie is known as "teacher" to Kelly's group. A tall, attractive mother of four, she insists that being the oldest in a family of nine provided wonderful practice for her present task. Full of patience and possessing a fantastic sense of humor, Mrs. MacQuarrie has had two years experience in England and one year in Halifax at this type of work. On coming to P.E.I. last year, she began a kindergarten in her own home in Winsloe in order that her children would have companions with which to play. Moving to S.D.U. has provided her with improved facilities, in addition to completing certain plans developed by the Psychology Department.

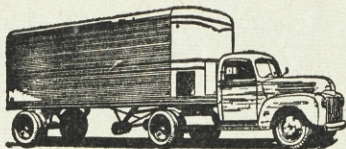
The idea of establishing such a school at S.D.U. first originated with Dr. Owen Sharkey, head of the Psychology Department. He talked it over with Dr. I. G. MacQuarrie of the Biology Department — that's how Dr. Sharkey and Mrs. MacQuarrie met. Dr. Sharkey was interested in a program to prove that the I.Q. of children can be raised. This is the object of the present school, although an observer of the class would quickly conclude that Mrs. MacQuarrie has demonstrated how learning can be fun.



One of the main reasons for setting up this type of program is the increasing evidence to Psychology in recent years that the first five years of a child's life are possibly the most important ones. At this period the child has a tremendous capacity to learn things, and will learn if given the proper opportunity.

It was once believed, and still is by many, that a child was born with a fixed I.Q. which remained static for the rest of a person's life. One was either born smart or stupid; and, one remained that way. Many psychological tests and experiments have shown, however, that a great deal of the I.Q. level depends upon the opportunities the child has had in which to learn in his earlier years. I.Q. is seen as but a measure of what a person has learned in comparison to his peers. If a child has had a very poor chance to learn (which often stems from lack of a loving and/or stimulating environment), it is reasonable to assume that he would learn little, thus scoring lower on an I.Q. test than if circumstances had been otherwise.

Before outlining the nature of Mrs. MacQuarrie's class, it should be pointed out that last year the I.Q.'s of her pre-schoolers came up an average of five points. Even at university level, tests at S.D.U. have shown that the I.Q.'s of students have risen five to ten points over their four year stay at university. There is much evidence, then, that I.Q. depends a great deal upon learning rather than on an inherited capacity with which people are born.



Now let us take a look at what Mrs. MacQuarrie is doing to provide her class with a stimulating environment.

Mrs. MacQuarrie mentions three main objectives to her work. First of all, she hopes to increase the child's comprehension and understanding of things. Secondly, it is felt that the program will increase the child's ability to communicate with people; and, thirdly, it is hoped that the child will learn something of the stability of the immediate environment.

By way of doing this, Mrs. MacQuarrie finds that it is necessary to talk to the children and to do much explaining, both by pictures and by example. She tries to teach the children various concepts; concepts of distance, shapes, sizes, time, number, quantity, etc. They learn about the weather, the days of the week, the months of the year; they learn to paint pictures and to cut out other pictures for designs; they learn the letters of the alphabet and how to print them; they learn new words to add to their growing vocabulary; they learn the concepts of numbers and do simple arithmetic; and, in addition, they learn how to dress themselves and look after their own immediate needs.

"How can this be fun?" I hear you ask. "Why it sounds exactly like the agonizing year I spent in Grade one."

Ah, but there is a major difference . . . these various methods of learning are taught in the form of games. And, the children are never forced

ed into doing things they do not want to do. When they become tired of one game, they turn to another. Mrs. MacQuarrie attempts to interrelate all the various things that the children learn in class. The children are also taught that they must be kind to each other and to play together without quarrelling.



To add to the variety of the classroom, Friday is "toy day" when everyone brings a favourite toy to show and talk about to the class. In addition, two mornings a week find Mr. Ters-teeg conducting music lessons for Kelly and her friends. The university's music director volunteered for the task, which is turning out to be quite a success. The Glee Club should take heed for the pre-schoolers have learned to read and sing the music scale; they also show a keen interest in rhythm and beat of the music.

When asked what type of person is needed for teaching this type of class, Mrs. MacQuarrie replied that the teacher must have a love for children and for working with them. For the most part, she said, the teacher must use her own common sense; but, she added that there are a great number of people whose common sense would need correcting if they were going to take up such a profession. Mrs. MacQuarrie is of the opinion that a great deal can be learned about and from dealing with children, but that this does not necessarily imply that one must raise one's child by the book, as the saying goes.

In conclusion, it can be said that this program is not a vicious experiment upon some lazy mother's children. It is not designed to produce mal-adjusted bookworms or Einsteins for the future. It is at best an attempt to show that, if children are given a stimulating and loving environment, at an age when they have a great desire and capacity to learn, their I.Q.'s can be raised considerably.

As proof of the work which is being carried out in this area, the mothers of the children in these classes have said that they now find their children easier to communicate with and to handle since the toddlers have begun to attend the school. It might also be pointed out that there are many mothers in the area who would like to send their children to these classes; but, as yet, the facilities are not adequate to accommodate them.



What can we expect of these kindergarten children when they reach university level? It is possible that they will be able to pass Math 1; it is possible that they will have a more efficient method of getting additional term papers done in a limited amount of time; it is possible that they will have an ear for some music other than that of Buck Owens. It is also possible that they will be more emotionally secure and stable. For the moment — well, Kelly can count the three candles on this year's birthday cake.