

Eva Kudar

— Nancy Blanning



Eva Helene Kudar, a long-time Waldorf early childhood pioneer from Germany, passed into the spiritual world on September 29, 2016, Michaelmas Day. She is fondly and gratefully remembered by colleagues who benefited from her example and mentorship in Thirty-

five years of teaching in Hawaii, the Sacramento Waldorf School, and in her own home program as well.

Colleagues who knew her at the Sacramento Waldorf School and during her time as a WECAN board member have shared vignettes in memory of her. These give a picture of this remarkably courageous, strong, and warm guide and companion to young children who knew their true nature so well.

Nancy Poer remembers—

Eva was strong, brave and true; a splendid, tall, strong German woman with a mighty handshake, open arms; a gentle, modulated voice that she never raised with the children. Her powerful presence and integrity kept them flocked around her. She suffered great deprivation during World War II as her struggling, schoolteacher mother had to put her in an orphanage for a few years. Then for three years she was in a Waldorf school—until the Nazis closed it—and that made all the difference. There were daring escapes from the Russians (see Joan Almon's tribute, below) and she barely missed being killed with 300,000 others when Dresden was fire bombed.

She looked like a singer in a Wagnerian opera—and indeed she was trained as such—but most of all she gave to so many children a wonderful example of high, human qualities for them to imitate in their most formative years.

She was clear, decisive, gentle, just, compassionate, understanding, joyful, cheerful, positive, reverent, steadfast, and courageous. She was a spirit warrior for Michael for our time. Blessings on your journey, dear Eva.

Joan Almon remembers—

Eva shared that at the end of the war, when she was about eighteen, she was living in what would become East Germany. She was riding her bike down a road as the Russian tanks came rolling into the country. In panic she dropped her bike in the road and stood or hid at the side of the road. The first tank rolled to a halt—along with all the rest—the hatch opened and a head popped out asking whose bike it was and to move it at once. She did so but realized this was her last chance to leave the eastern part of Germany.

She was a tall, strapping girl with long blonde braids and wondered how to escape. She reasoned that there would be Russian soldiers at the border with western Germany but that they would probably be fresh, new recruits, not hardened soldiers. They would be looking for documents but would not understand German. So what documents did she have with official German stamps on them? Ah! She had the paper the milkman stamped every week. She took one small backpack of things with her and her milk document and rode her bike to the border as if this was just a jaunt across for a few hours. The Russians let her through and she remained in the West, eventually moving to the U.S.

On another occasion she was sitting in while I taught a session at Rudolf Steiner College. I was going to demonstrate something with a large ball of yarn. I stood in front of the students looking for the loose end of the yarn so I could pull off a stretch but simply could not find it. It was taking quite a while and was slightly embarrassing, so I handed it to Eva and asked for her help. With enormous calmness she looked at the ball and within seconds pulled out the end.

Everyone laughed to see how easy she made it seem.

Both of these memories point to a quality I always admired greatly in Eva—her calm steadiness. I can imagine being a child in her kindergarten and feeling totally secure. She exuded warmth but enormous calm and presence.

From Janet Kellman—

A door opened and there stood Eva Kudar warmly welcoming me into her kindergarten classroom at the Sacramento Waldorf School in 1975. I honestly don't remember any specific incidents from this visit except for a single major one: from the depth of my being everything about what I was experiencing in her kindergarten resounded with a mighty YES! I was thirty years old and had, for many of those years, worked with young children. I felt my own "sense" for who children were and what was supportive to them, but I was always disappointed by the approaches I found in the world. I was keen on searching for what felt true to me. From the day of my visit with Eva and the children, I passionately devoted my professional and personal life to Waldorf early childhood education: helping to found Live Oak Waldorf School, teaching in the kindergarten and later the preschool there, as well as founding the early childhood training at Rudolf Steiner College and teaching there for many years.

Now, forty-two years later, as I ponder my meeting with Eva, I search for the word to describe it. Was it fortuitous, defined as "happening by chance?" Eva was certainly not a "by chance" kind of person. She was

filled with calm and firm intention. Was she aware that our meeting was auspicious: "a favorable meeting promising success?" I don't know. At the time I certainly was not aware of what that open door and her welcoming gesture meant for my life. But then, I found the term heaven-sent, which is defined as "someone or something that arrives, usually unexpectedly, at a time when it is most useful; a blessing in disguise." Clearly, this most aptly describes what happened between us that day. Eva is a being who genuinely met me at a most significant moment in my destiny. My gratitude for Eva runs deep. She has inspired a significant life question: "What is my gesture when someone knocks at my door?"

From Barbara Klocek—

Eva was a beloved kindergarten teacher for many years at Sacramento Waldorf School. She also was a teacher of teachers through Rudolf Steiner College. It was here I first met Eva. I was impressed with her warmth and her dignity. With enthusiasm she shared her knowledge and experience with the hopeful students. Soon, I was able to spend some time in her classroom. She led the children in a lively circle. Afterwards I was struck by the quiet peacefulness of the children as they became engaged in deep play. She was like a deep note of calm and reverence, which the class reflected. I rarely saw her hurry but she led with purpose and patience.

Her strong, peaceful presence in the classroom has inspired me for many, many years. ♦