
Transitions

Patricia Cairns

~ Remembered by Christine Summerfield

Once upon a time, there lived a woman named Patricia Lei-Anne Cairns. She was born on June 12, 1947, and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. She had many interests and was passionate about music, art, gardening, flowers, and birds. She liked to spend time in nature and go for long walks. She was a seeker in life and wanted to know about life's many mysteries. After graduating from Punahou High School, she fell in love, got married, and moved to Washington state, where she began her Bachelors studies in English. She and her husband soon moved to Colorado, where she continued her studies at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. She completed her degree and began a Teacher Certificate training. It was there that she met a fellow student who seemed to "know more than the professor." This new friend was Eugene Schwartz, a fellow student on the Teacher Certificate program. It was then, at age 21, that she met anthroposophy, biodynamic agriculture, and the teachings of Rudolf Steiner.

This was a destiny moment for Patricia. She then traveled to Mercy College in Detroit for the fiftieth anniversary of Waldorf education in 1969. She took classes in anthroposophical studies and was fully captured by a Swedish teacher named Arne Klingborg, who "brought these teachings to life in full color on the blackboard." This fired her desire to deepen her studies and she and her husband moved to England, where together they completed their Foundation Year at Emerson College.

After this completion, she returned to Hawaii for two years in the early 1970s, but her wanderlust for further study and travel brought her back to Emerson, where she completed her Waldorf teacher training. She then lived in Germany and Switzerland



for many years, studying and traveling all over Europe and the Middle East. She became fluent in German and continually deepened her studies in anthroposophy. Her first Waldorf kindergarten teaching experience was in Kassel, Germany, where she assisted Eva Kudra from 1977-79. There she fell in love with the Waldorf early childhood curriculum, including puppetry, handwork, and singing. She knew that working with young children was to be her vocation in life.

Patricia also had a love for movement and the arts and studied in the eurythmy program at the Goetheanum for two years. It was just outside of Dornach, in Arlesheim, where her son Jeremy was born in 1982. Wanting to raise him in the US, she and her husband settled in Eugene, Oregon, for many years and she delighted in being a mother and a mentor to young kindergarten teachers at the Eugene Waldorf School.

After ten years in the Pacific Northwest, her family moved back to the Colorado Rockies, where she settled in Boulder. It was here where she founded Rosebud Preschool in her little blue cottage on Orchard Lane. She devoted many years of her life teaching and caring for young children and sharing the wisdom of the Waldorf curriculum with families. Her cottage was small, cozy, and full of love—a safe and peaceful haven for children. There were chickens in the back yard, and a big woodpile that stoked the stove in the kitchen. She hosted festivals in all the seasons of the year and was loved by so many.

When her son had grown, the world traveler in her beckoned and she found herself in Hong Kong for two years, teaching in new and emerging Waldorf kindergartens and sharing her love of Steiner's teachings with teachers. Upon her return to the



US, the west coast called her to return to Olympia, Washington, where she happily spent the remaining years of her life in a small cottage surrounded by a lush, green garden. She became friends with many people in that community, including families and teachers at the Olympia Waldorf School. She moved into working with families and founded Stella Rosa, a support organization for parents and educators. She held Parent-Infant and Parent-Toddler classes, and offered sick care for children of working parents. She also continued teaching classes in kinderharp and pentatonic flute and recorder for children and adults. In between, she traveled to mainland China, where she worked as kinderharp teacher and mentor to Waldorf teacher training students.

Throughout her life, Patricia combined her varied passions and wove them into a colorful tapestry weaving together her threads of art, music, travel, language, early childhood, human development and spiritual study. She had a fiery spirit and love of adventure. She traveled to 27 countries! She loved people of all cultures. She devoted her vocational life to serving children and families. After a few years of her journey with cancer, she died peacefully in her home, on July 27, 2017, shortly after her 70th birthday, surrounded by family and friends. One of her final wishes was to have her ashes spread in Boston Harbor on the Puget Sound. She was loved by many and now continues to shine upon her loved ones from her star across the threshold.

Christine Summerfield *specializes in home organization for families. She spent many years working both in the classroom and with parents as a Waldorf early childhood educator.*