

In Celebration of the Life on Earth of David Mitchell

Let the wind blow through you and it will not blow you down — Lakota saying

Having difficulty in finding words to describe David Mitchell, who worked lifelong with language and the crafting of words, is an enormous paradox. The paradox heightens the challenge of managing the feelings that rise up in remembering and picturing a human being with a spirit so powerful, so vast in vision.

David and I first met in 1987. Later, I felt very lucky to stay in his home for the three summers of my teacher training at Antioch University New England. I learned as much from late-night talks with David and his wife, Anniken, as ever I did in class. I learned, too, of a way of relationship, partnership - maybe it is accurate to say "artnership" - of two powerful, gifted people who laughed at human foibles, especially their own, and insisted on clear and high standards from each other and from the world.

For me, David embodied the purpose and the work of the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA). His work as the initiator and chair of AWSNA Publications inspired lasting gratitude in me as a teacher. Until about 1999, my eighth year of teaching, I read almost every book AWSNA Publications produced. Then it became too much. David laid hands on all he could to get into print for the world - for teachers most especially - to better understand the significance and purpose of Waldorf Education. In all, he oversaw the publication of over 300 books and monographs.

It was a shock to both of us, in a way, when I was appointed to the position I now hold as "leader for outreach and development of AWSNA" with overall responsibility for publications. The upstart Waldorf teacher had, in effect, become David's supervisor. It took David and me two years to work through what our relationship as professionals in this new circumstance would be and become. But together we forged an understanding, first between us and then among our colleagues in

By **Patrice Maynard**,
Association of
Waldorf Schools
in North America
- AWSNA) (from
Renewal vol 21
no 2 2012)



Waldorf schools and beyond, of the magnificent body of work that David made available to the English-speaking world.

David not only published books. He was a one-man research centre for Anthroposophy and Waldorf Education. Questions of all kinds came to him from around the world, and he took the time to answer each no matter who the questioner was. One could find David in the ancient stacks of the Rudolf Steiner Library, searching for hours without a break, pondering conundrums and discussing them energetically, all to find the answer to a question or to follow a line of research he knew would be useful. Clearinghouse, teacher, scientist, translator, recogniser, direction setter - he was all these in a single individual.

Some years ago, I attempted to write a poem to David and about him. The poem failed. It turned out to be a not-very-good, unfinished poem. However, through the effort of writing it, I realised a truth for me that brought to my heart a gesture of appreciation and admiration that this man so deserved.

Through the poem I came to see David as embodying the nature of the winds. Mighty, gentle, forming things in its path, sometimes terrible in its ferociousness and always kind in its ultimate motives - cleansing, pruning, refreshing, carrying seeds, bearing the breath of the Earth, ringing chimes, and lofting the birds of the air, like thoughts, thousands of miles beyond where they could ever go without him.

The experience of trusting and being formed by David, as by the wind - this won't end with David's new journey. Like the wind, it will go on without end.◆



David Mitchell, China, 2009