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<b>Fall on Fern Hill</b>			

Fall has come to Fern Hill. The forest floor is carpeted with the bright red and yellow of fallen leaves and the mushrooms are nearly finished for the year. The days are crisp and the nights are cold. The kids were delighted to find flannel sheets on their beds on their beds and pajamas with feet in their drawers.

This has been a month of continued construction. The kitchen has been torn out, the front door moved, windows replaced, and the house sided. This morning, while I sewed fall vests for the boys, Tony and Gabe began construction on the deck. The project we began two years ago which turned into a four story remodel of the whole front of the house! It is good to be finishing this phase of construction. Of course, we still have much to do on the inside... our house goes way beyond “fixer upper”.

It has also been a month of fabulous fall days: you’ll find pictures of a field trip to the Remick Museum in Tamworth, New Hampshire, which was shared with a few other families earlier this month. We spent a Saturday riding our bicycles thirty miles around Newfound Lake. Columbus Day brought a sweet family from church with three little children to spend a joy filled day hiking a trail near our house and enjoying a picnic of pumpkin muffins beneath a big hemlock tree with seven little kids. We blew milkweed seeds all over the forest and collected leaves to make rubbings of and little treasures to draw into nature notebooks.

As I write this we are riding home in the dark from southern New Hampshire where we spent a lovely day celebrating the sixth birthday of our dear friend Rachel. She met us in

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the yard with shining eyes and hair in big curls, falling nearly to her waist that is just the brownish gold of the leaves of the oak tree in her back yard. What happened to the baby girl we met when we moved here? We played leap frog and roasted marshmallows to top off the gourmet chocolate cake. A perfect day for the perfect little girl. We are so blessed to know her and so thankful for this season of life to share with her family. In the few short years we've known them, they've gone from being friends of a friend to family.

As we sat around the campfire with three generations of Klekars and the wonderful Rantala family it occurred to me how very blessed we are. We moved to New England, site unseen, just over five years ago and we didn't know a soul. Now, here we are with wonderful friends who feel like we've known them forever. We're surrounded by wonderful parents who are raising hilariously great kids for our children to share life with. I'm so thankful that God provided Tom and Tracy and their boys. Matthew is a tough little cookie, who laughed over his split lip as he mopped up the blood this afternoon. He fits right in with my boys. He has two brothers, right behind him, who promise to be just as tough and just as much fun. He and Rachel and Hannah were swinging as high as they could in the pitch black dark of the back yard while we adults warmed our feet by the fire not a moment's disagreement among them all day. We are so blessed and thankful for good friends and strong families to help us sow into

the lives of our children for this generation and those to come. It is what we have prayed for over the years, and it is no small thing.

Canadian Thanksgiving passed this month. I forgot to put sugar in the pumpkin pie. Jess and her children kindly ate it without pointing it out. American Thanksgiving is coming. This time of year always causes me to count my blessings. This year what I seem to be counting are the people. There are those I see or talk to daily. The ones who we share life with in a personal way. And then there are the ones who live half a continent away and show up in e-mail or notes in the mail more often than in person. You know who you are. There are too many to list, and if I tried I'd leave someone dear out of the list. Like Paul, I thank God every time I think of you, and I pray for you. I hope that you forgive my many short comings, the most obvious of which is my neglect of correspondence and of telling you how very much I love you.

## A Pinata Birthday

by J.P. Montalvo

OK...it's 10PM on a Tuesday night, do you know what your parents are doing? Well if you were part of the Montalvo clan your parents would be gluing a thousand little strips of streamer to a homemade piñata for your soon-to-be five year olds birthday party.

The adventure began at around 9:30 when I sat down to peruse the sports pages of my hometown team for a while after a very full evening of lawn mowing and other household projects. It was just about when my derrier hit the stool that I heard the Lord whisper,"You need to go help your beautiful bride with the piñata project." Let me share a moment of honesty...this was NOT on my to do list for the balance of the evening.

Thankfully Dad chose to obey and after a short while of work on the piñata I heard that little whisper again from the Lord. Affixing strips of streamers to a piñata for my son was just as spiritual and significant as my talking to my boys about Jesus, teaching them to hammer or whatever conscious things we do as parents to make spiritual deposits into our children. Every act we do can be an act of worship and will make a difference in the lives of our families.

I would challenge parents and especially fathers to examine what you are doing that you deem as menial but the Lord deems as a powerful. Do something small and insignificant in

love for your spouse or your children and watch the Lord plant a spiritual seed in them and you!

By the way, my wife was thrilled, let alone surprised, at my offer to help with the piñata. We got to spend time together and it was actually fun. My son and his friends had a blast whacking the thing open on his birthday. Right now, he won't understand all the love and effort we put into it, but someday I hope he will.



JP and 'Bella

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## Sea Glass

by Stephanie Payton

We spent a glorious week this summer with my sister on the shores of New England. Her home is a place of refuge for me. I am both encouraged and refreshed whenever I spend time there. I get to rise and go to sleep to the sound of the waves crashing against the rocks. My children found it to be “totally awesome”, as well. They were especially enthralled with the mystery of the sea glass. “How does that glass get in the water, anyway, Mom?” They became experts in identifying those pieces that still needed some honing and refining. The most coveted pieces were those that had been shaped the most by the sea.

As always, I left the home by the sea with new vision. God always encounters me there, with a special message to hold in my heart. I think God is easier to hear by the sea. Or maybe I am just a better listener there. The following is the hope He sent home with me this time. Consider it a great privilege, fellow travelers, to be touched by the Maker of all creation. Always.

	Consuming me
I walk along the shore	Cleansing me.
Feet bare	
Heat beating down	Both a moment
Permeating the sand.	And eternity
	Move with the tide
My Beloved,	Here, then gone.
Ever beside me	
Calls my name	Over and over
His whisper felt in the wind.	The tides of time. . . .
	They wash over me
The ocean of His love	Cool. Powerful.
Swirls before me	

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They ebb and flow

Shaping

And with them

Changing the ordinary

I am changed

Into something most precious.

Forever changed.

Would I? Could I?

The “what ifs”

Deny, refuse

The “whys”

The ever-shaping influences

The “if onlys”. . . .

Of my Creator.

Go marching one by one.

Never, unthinkable

And I am undone.

For doing so

Totally

Would forever alter

Unashamedly

What was meant to be.

Undone.

So I walk along the shore

One by one

Feet bare.

As the glass of the sea

For by the sea

He finds the shattered pieces

I hear Him calling me.

Of my soul.

And I am changed.

Honing

## Field Trip Pictures



Jeremiah Wood, Gabe Miller, Jonathan Wood & Faith Mosher make apple fritters



The younger group makes apple cider... the pretty girl in the front, Lulu McDonald



Back row: Kolbe, Faith & Grace Mosher, Rachel Klekar, James McDonald, Gabe Miller, Jonathan Wood

Front Row: Jillian & Lulu McDonald, Sophie Klekar, Elisha Miller, Jillian, Jeremiah & Jordan Wood, Hannah and Ezra Miller.



James McDonald & Gabe Miller press apples for cider



Mr. Wood & James take a break

## Wild's of Creation

### What's the Buzz?-Hymenoptera

by Judy Daley

Often bees go undetected until we've encroached on their territory.

Although their sting can be painful and annoying, for some people it can be deadly. My uncle was one of those less fortunate people. He was a school teacher most of the year and a land surveyor in summer. He had to carry medicine with him all of the time, even into the late fall when he would duck hunt. He had to have a keen sense of his situational awareness. Even though he had severe allergic reaction to bee stings, he still understood the importance of having bees in nature.

This year I have a colony of bumble bees under a bush near my front door. Bumbles make their nest in the ground often using the burrow of a chipmunk or mole. Bumble bees do not pose an immediate threat. I would rank them on the low end of the aggression scale. I come and go through the front door several times a day and have not been attacked as of yet. I am simply aware of their presence and quickly duck if one comes zipping by my head. They are often photographed at close range (an inch or two) as they are collecting pollen from flowers. Wasps and Hornets are more unpredictable. Generally they too are looking for pollen but often get confused by human perfumes, hairspray, and fragrant lotions. During the process of swatting them away they become aggressive and will sometimes attack

with a painful sting.

Most of us are familiar with honey bees and their wax combs. But did you know that the hive is a complex, well-organized community of endless activity? Each bee has a purpose and goes about that purpose with unquenchable determination!

The hive itself is made from an antibacterial substance that the bees make called propolis. They use this substance to sterilize each hexagon-shaped cell/chamber. This is necessary for the nursery and also for keeping the honey safe and clean! Wow!

We know that bees are essential for the pollination of plants and flowers. The products that bees make play a roll in our everyday lives. We use bees wax (for several purposes), royal jelly and eat wonderfully sweet honey. According to a local bee keeper, here in New Hampshire, 95-98% of each hive is made up of female worker bees. They do all the work such as cleaning the hive, foraging for pollen, feeding and cleaning the queen, and making the honey. The hive only contains 3-5 male bees, known as drones, having the prime purpose of mating with the queen. The queen's position in the hive is for nothing more than having babies (laying eggs to be more precise).

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Once the queen is past her age of producing 2,000 eggs per day, she is tossed out of the nest and a new queen will take her place. To raise a new queen, the workers dedicate a cell for growing that special new bee. They keep the selected female in a substance called “royal jelly” where she stays for 7 days. This allows her to grow bigger than the other bees and develop a reproductive system. All the other young bees spend 3 days in the royal jelly before they are removed and raised for the gestation period of 21 days. They take good care of their young to ensure survival of their species.

In late summer the bee population in the nest is at its maximum capacity. This is the time when some of the bees are kicked out by the other bees, which forces them to find a place to make their own separate nest. Time is of the essences as winter is approaching fast. Not all bees have the same level of aggression, but at this time of the year (fall), caution is always the best policy.

Bee-keepers often spray smoke into the hive before extracting the slats filled with honey comb. When the bees smell the smoke they go into a gorging frenzy. They fill and cover themselves with honey to save them from what they think is a pending forest fire about to destroy their hive. Once gorged, they can not sting because they need to be able to bend their tail to inject the stinger.

The local bee keeper states that bees relieve pain and allergies. I need to be convinced

about the part where the bees relieve pain. I’ve been stung a few times over the years and it’s clearly in my “pain” category. However, bee venom contains powerful anti-inflammatory substances such as adolapin and melittin. One hundred times more powerful than hydrocortisone, melittin stimulates the production of cortisol, a natural steroid that also acts as an anti-inflammatory. There are places in the United States where people actually go to be stung by bees “ON PURPOSE” to aid in their ailments of rheumatoid and osteoarthritis, plus tendonitis as well as MS. A combination of bee products like; bee pollen, raw honey, royal jelly and honeybee venom are all part of this natural therapy called; Apitherapy. Apitherapy is known to have been used to treat patients with cancer as well as chronic pain and more.

The bee keeper also explains that eating honey made from local bees from your area, could help reduce your nasal allergies as well. For example; if pollen from the goldenrod plant causes you allergic symptoms, eating honey made from that specific *plant pollen*, will act like an anti-body in your system. It will build up your immune system against that specific type of plant. Mixed wildflower honey, states the bee keeper, can help with numerous plant allergies at the same time. He sells his product in the local stores for that reason alone.

Clearly bees have a big role to play in nature. I, for one, have a deeper understanding of the value of bees, and a heightened respect for the occupation of Bee Keeper!

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## Mail Bag

“If a picture is worth a thousand words... here’s a mouthful!”

DG, Indiana

This was the caption which accompanied this fabulous picture of Michael Gardner, age 11, with his first chipmunk... fresh, from the looks of it! Michael’s Dad is in the business of raising boys who can feed their families... even if it is chipmunk gravy! Yum.



Dear Jen,

I wrote a poem about my pumpkin, it’s silly,  
if you have room, feel free to use it!

JD, New Hampshire

### The secret inside

I placed a pumpkin on my step  
Bright orange robust and round  
Welcome to fall it seemed to say  
Warm days, cool nights abound

As autumn waned  
My pumpkin drooped  
Oh deer, it’s looking ill  
But wait! A squirrel deep inside  
Sits munching seeds till full

Just when I thought its time had past  
The squirrel reminded me  
That fall is more than just a time  
Of nature’s visual beauty

## Teaching The One Room School

by Jennifer Miller-April, 2004

Recently, I've received several requests for help from families schooling more than one child at home. The common concern is something like this: "How can I be everything to everyone? How can I teach letter sounds and square roots at the same time? How do I manage all of the lesson plans for several children and minimize the prep time required? I'm spending hours each week preparing eight to ten sets of lessons per child, for two or three or four children... how do I keep all of the balls in the air?" You get the idea. In beginning to tackle the answer to these questions, let me begin with a little educational history.

Although much can be said of the origins of our current educational system, and its roots, traced through feudal Germany clear back to the Hindu approach to mass schooling to support the caste system. I will, for the sake of space and sanity, discuss only the American system of mass schooling, which began to fall into place in the latter half of the 1800's. Up until the advent of institutional schooling in America, "education" took on one of three forms: home schooling, private tutoring, or the one room community school. Often, in the course of a childhood, more than one method would be employed in the schooling of a young person. It was out of this system (or non-system) of education that such great minds as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin were born.

My grandmother, and her mother before her, taught in several one room schools. I have seen the pictures. She taught clear through the depression, without pay part of the time. Her schools lacked funding, books and basic necessities... and yet the children learned... she had more than fifty students at Starkey School in Michigan, between the ages of five and eighteen... all by herself, when she was only a year or two older than the oldest pupil. And yet, the children learned. My grandmother did not have eight sets of eight lesson plans per day, one for each grade level. She did not work eight times harder than a teacher today who teaches only one, or at most two grades at a time. So, how did she do it? How can you do it, with your two or six instead of fifty?

My grandmother had an advantage that we do not have today. She wasn't steeped in the public school mentality. She herself had attended one room schools, it did not seem odd to her to have twelve year olds sitting beside five year olds and sixteen year olds helping eight year olds. One of the biggest obstacles to home education today can be our preconceived notions of what "school" should look like. I know, as a trained teacher, it was for me. I had to consciously let go of all I had "learned" about education and ask anew, "What does it mean to be educated." If I intended to teach my children at home because I didn't want a public school education

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for them, then why would I seek to replicate that which I was trying to avoid in my living room? I had to set aside John Dewey's ideas about age segregated classrooms, which find their roots in evolutionary theory and secular humanism and begin to think of education in the same light as any other sort of growth: not segmented into little boxes, artificial levels, or grades, but rather as a fluid, ever changing organism in continual motion, along with the development of the child.

Before we consider the practical aspects of teaching several children at different levels all together, let me ask you this? Who says five year olds should be learning letter sounds, digraphs and one syllable words? Who says nine year olds should be learning about the middle ages but that government should be saved for ten year olds? Who says that times tables need to be mastered at age eight, and not before, or after? Who says physics and chemistry are to be saved for high school students and then taught in isolation? The answer? Public school curriculum developers... who try to set national standards which are adhered to by all districts, and most private schools as well. The real question is this: If you are not in the public, or private, system, why should you care? You shouldn't. If your seven year old loves rocks, teach geology. If your four year old can read the basics, buy him real books and get out of his way. If your nine year old is just barely "getting" his times tables, then meet him where he is and provide arenas for him to ex-

perience success rather than feeling left behind. Step outside the box you were raised in.

So, you have two kids, or six. You've been buying an expensive curriculum for each kid and losing your mind trying to teach and keep track of it all. Your heart knows there has to be a better way, but you can't for the life of you see what it is. Here it is: return to the one room school house mentality.

The building blocks of education can be divided into two groups: the three Rs... Reading, Writing & 'Rithmetic... and everything else. The three Rs are skill based and progressive. You have to learn your letter sounds before you can read little words; you have to have a grasp of many little words before you can read a novel. You must make straight and curvy lines with a pencil before you can make letters. You must make letters before you can write words. You must be able to add before you can understand multiplication and subtract before you can understand how to divide. These subjects require a person to begin at the very beginning, and build skill one step at a time.

The "everything else" includes, history, geography, literature, science, art, religious studies, music, physical education, memorization, and life skills. There is no need to compartmentalize these subjects into a specific grade level, or to fragment what you are teaching within a given subject to three different children. For example, there is

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no need to be teaching “neighborhoods” to your five year old, “states and capitals” to your ten year old, “land forms” to your eleven year old, and “Africa” to your fourteen year old. Pick one geography unit for all of the children to study at once and then teach each child what he is ready to learn within that unit. Our family is studying “North America” this year. Hannah, 7, is making a North America Notebook. She writes a one page summary of facts about each of the United States and Canadian provinces. She colors a map of that place, and sometimes a picture of the bird and flower that represent it. While we were in Mexico and Washington D.C., she kept a daily journal about our travels and what she learned to add to it. She is writing to each state asking for further information, and loves the packages coming in the mail each week. We are reading books about various places. Gabriel, 5, gives narrations about the stories we read, and has kept journals on our travels. He looks at maps and finds places we have been or are going. He collects post cards from places he has a personal connection to. Elisha, 3, is learning the state we live in, as well as the states near us, where Grandma and Grandpa live, and the states Daddy flies to. He likes to look at the maps and ask Hannah where the things he points out are. He is learning that some states are warm, and some are colder. Ezra, 1, is learning to ride in the car with a happy heart, and is seeing the world from his backpack, high atop Dad’s shoulders.

In a one room school model, each child will have his own phonics or grammar books and progress at his own rate. Each child will have his own math books and work along at his own level. Each child will practice reading every day, receiving encouragement from the other children on different levels than he is. Science, Geography, History, Art, Music, and almost anything else you want to teach can be done as a group. The principal is simple: Teach to the oldest and let the learning trickle down (a different take on Regan’s economic policy!) Read books geared to your oldest and supplement with books for the younger children. Do projects that can be adapted to include the smallest baby and the most gung-ho teen. Allow older children to learn by teaching. You know well how much YOU learn by preparing lessons for your children, pass on that gift to your older children by allowing them to design activities and lessons for younger siblings. Take a survey of the minds beneath your roof and develop studies based on the interests you uncover. Do your best to “live” the subject matter... travel, eat the foods, build the artifacts, read first hand accounts, narrate together.

Look at your home the way my grandmother looked at her one room school. Look at education as just an extension of the other growth your children are experiencing and nurture it in much the same way. What you will quickly find if you let go of age segregated learning in favor of this more homogenous, natural style of teaching and learn-

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ing is that your children will rise to the occasion. They will love learning together, and teaching one another. The young ones will stretch to show that they can “keep up” with older siblings, who will be trying to learn even more and loving their position of teacher and encourager. The kids will take ownership of their educations, and frequently teach YOU a thing or two about the subject at hand. Instead of some students being higher, or lower, or ahead, or behind, or smarter, or average, all are learning together and growing together.

Quietly, beneath the subject matter, the mess of projects, the joy of story hour, the questions asked and answers searched out together, another type of learning is occurring. Children in a learning environment with people of various ages are learning something else that other children are often missing out on. They are learning to relate socially in a real world setting. When in life do you ever spend 8-10 hrs. a day with 20 others exactly your own age and demographic, except in school? Schools present an artificial social environment, and yet they are held up as being necessary for proper socialization. Children in one room schools, or similar environments, learn to interact with the old and the young. They learn to hold their own intellectually with people of all ages and abilities and they learn to see themselves as parts of a world larger than their own experience.

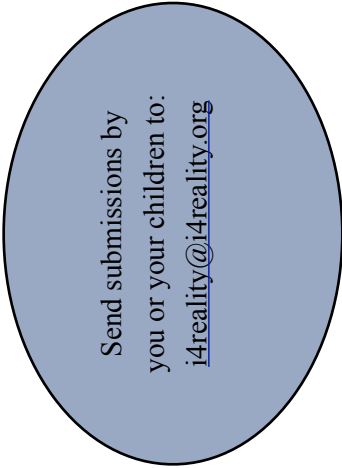
If you are struggling with the many demands of multiple children at different

grade levels and you are overwhelmed with the cost, the planning and the hours required, consider making a change. Simplify your life, and maximize educational experience by learning and growing together.

Post Script: October 2006:

I dug this article out of the archive after a conversation I had with a Mom over the weekend. As I re-read it, I was encouraged to see just how far my own children have come in the past two years as we continue to learn and live education together. Hannah is ten now and swimming through her first Algebra book and Gabe, eight, has FINALLY mastered his times tables. Six year old Elisha's reading improving daily, thanks to much encouragement from his sister and the reading lessons she teaches on the way to music on Thursdays. Ezra, four, will be reading the Bob books by Christmas and is proud of the handful of Latin words he's picked up as Elisha does his flashcards. We're learning Spanish together in the car, as well as working through a class on CD on singing in harmony. If you could hear the inside of my van on the way to the bank, you'd roll over laughing. We haven't mastered it just yet. We're studying the Middle Ages this year and have the huge cardboard castle, half constructed, in the school room to prove it. They're learning the associated countries and continents and jousting like “real knights” with the best of them. Two years further into the One Room School process & I wouldn't change a thing!

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