

# Rance Spruill: Finding alternatives in education

**Grassroot News, N.W.**—Remnants of the era of social agencies find themselves fighting extinction against a backdrop of the era of Big Brother. With attention riveted towards traditional educational systems people involved in alternative education can send ripples through the entire spectrum of education with the concern, commitment and accomplishments they show with children who are exiled from the traditional school system. Marva Collins of Illinois recently gained national prominence while Rance Spruill of the Albina Youth Opportunity School has always had grassroot respect.

Spruill, the directory, summarized his program: "A.Y.O.S. is a relaxed, structured environment for kids who have a demonstrated problem dealing with the structure imposed by public school. We have structure here but we don't have a situation where we try to create competition. We're more concerned with kids developing self-confidence so when they leave here their skill level will be built up and they will be able to survive in a public school where that attention is not given. Most of the kids have been going to school, but not as a part of the school. They were just there."

A child will end up at A.Y.O.S. through a confrontation with a teacher or a fight. Spruill concedes

that the fights and confrontations are a big problem. "But the major problem that I concern myself with is kids who have attendance problems. How do you get kids to go to school so they will feel it's a place where they can go do things for themselves. If they aren't at school you can find them at home, walking up and down the street or in somebody's car."

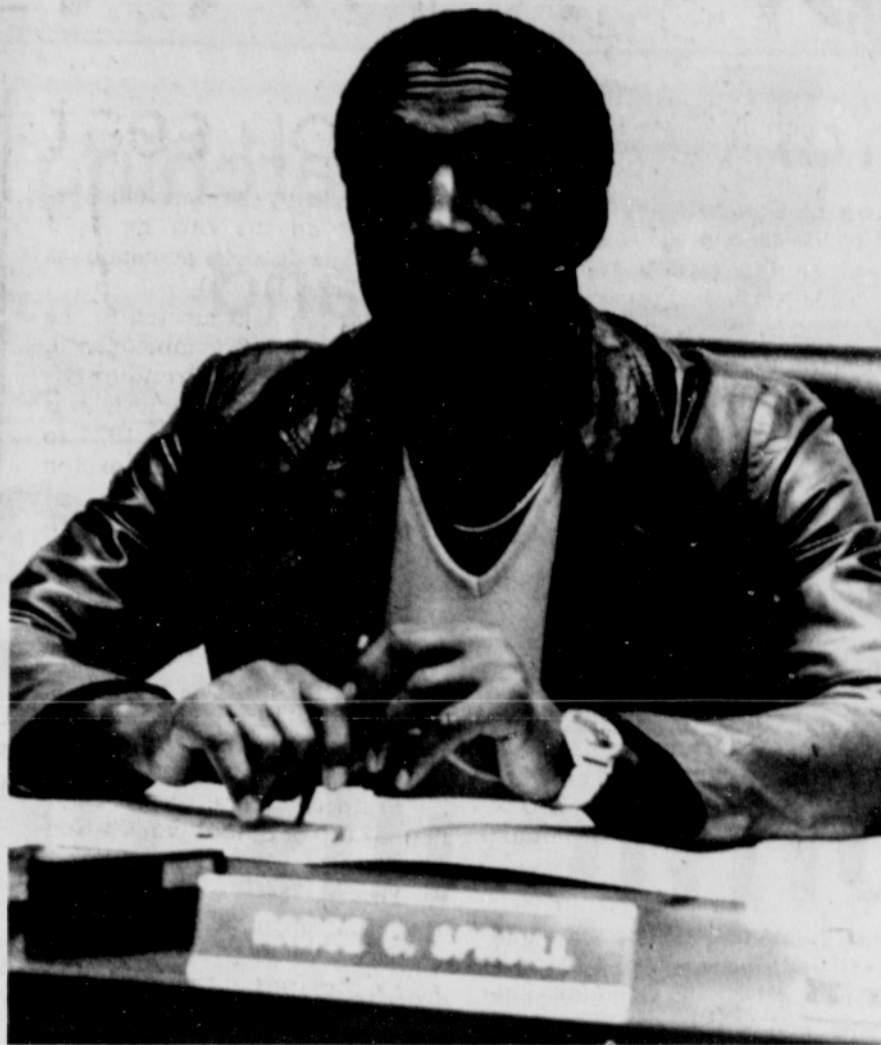
This involvement with kids dates back into the mid-sixties. Does Spruill notice any change with the children of the Vietnam era as compared with the children of today? "The kids of the late '60s and early '70s had a lot more intimate things going for them. They didn't have a lot of options available to them and they attended regularly. Over the years you have so much neighborhood competition that the kids are just program hopping. They will go from wherever to whoever's paying the buck."

The children that come in contact with A.Y.O.S. are considered "bad." "I don't think that children go bad," Spruill explains. "Children are a product of their environment and sometimes you don't have anyone else to hold responsible so you hold that child responsible. Is it a kid's responsibility to feed himself or clothes herself? A lot of kids are out in that situation. They are not necessarily being children. They are adults and by the time they're 15

years old they have gone through things that most 25-year-olds haven't gone through. When they reach young adulthood they have done it all. They have gotten so far out there that they are lost in the shuffle." Spruill summarized this thought by stating that kids just survive from one day to the next. The biggest problem is that kids caught up in this existence are not very flexible.

"Kids have more information available to them today and they will even dare you. If a child decides that he wants to be a rebel and if his parents come down on him too hard they will be accused of child abuse. If he goes to school and acts up the schools can't do anything about it. When they go to the courts most of them live better in the court system than they do at home." Spruill believes that although there's a lot more information surrounding today's children, they are not making the wisest decisions.

Spruill's commitment is refreshing in a time where those who were committed have become disillusioned. "I don't feel that I could have gone anywhere else in this country and gotten this grassroot orientation. I have a real commitment to the community in which I live." For 16 years Spruill has been the Director of the Albina Youth Opportunity School and his commitment shows.



RANCE SPRUILL  
(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

## Performance benefits Dishman

HERERO Designs a visual and performing arts company will host a benefit for the Matt Dishman Community Center located on 77 N.E. Knott on Friday Jan. 15th and Saturday Jan. 16th. The evening's entertainment will be by the HERERO DANZERS.

Tickets are available thru the Matt Dishman Center. Cost of shows are \$3.00 for Adults, \$1.50

Students. Further information contact Sevedious Simington, 282-1460 or Marvin Johnson, 288-9535.

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## PCC provides child care program

The child development center at Portland Community College, Cascade Campus, announces the beginning of flexible hour child care available immediately. "We are offering more flexible scheduling for child care so we can meet a wider range of child care needs for PCC students and for other parents working in the community," says Luz Villalba, head teacher at the child development center.

Previously, only PCC student and staff children enrolled in the on-going preschool program could be

left at the center. Now area parents can leave children ages three to five for full days, morning or afternoon sessions everyday Monday through Friday or some combination of those days.

Several options are available to cover child care costs. Parents may pay for the service on a sliding fee scale or negotiate a work exchange option wherein equal hours of work at the center are exchanged for equal hours of child care. Or they may combine the fee and work op-

tion.

Hot lunches, morning snack and afternoon snack will be furnished for children left full days. Those attending mornings only receive snack and lunch, and children in afternoon sessions only will receive an afternoon snack.

Children enrolled in the winter program must be three years old by January 15. Additional information may be obtained by calling the child development center at PCC, 283-2541.

## Memory organizes community band

On October 16, 1981 the Jazmin Community Marching Band started rehearsals towards their first performance goal, the 1982 Rose Festival. The Band is the first of its kind in the Northwest. Its marching style is based on the Southern high school and collegiate band styles of a Florida A&M or a Grambling. Presently the Jazmin Community Marching Band has fifty members from the North/Northeast communities. The age range is officially 14 to 21 years, but the Band is accepting younger members who still work their way into the major performing group which will eventually number 100 members. Rehearsals are held at Jefferson High School every Thursday evening from 4 pm to 7 pm. Soon the Band will hold a weekend rehearsal to attract youth whose schedules conflict with weekday practice.

Some members have already made sacrifices in their planned fall school schedules to become members of the Band. Some have forfeited being on the football and basketball teams and one member comes all the way from Vancouver, WA in order to participate.

Since moving to the Northwest some twelve years ago from Florida, the Band's director, Thara Memory, has dreamed of a Marching Band in the Northwest of the caliber seen in the South.

A Community Marching Band

has the potential for being an economic asset to all of its residents. Performance and musical scholarship possibilities are the immediate goals of the director for the Band. But Memory looks further than these immediate goals to what the possibilities are for the community as a whole. The Band wants to plan some festivals on a future performance date that will attract bands from all over the country. Performances of this kind are not seen in the Northwest, and for a community to play host to such an event brings recognition and bolsters the good and services arenas of the community. The Band will also be available for half-time performances at high schools, colleges and professional sports events.

The Jazmin Band director and coordinator have been working hand in hand with some of the community's major service organizations. They are hopeful that more residents will want to become involved through donations. All of the band members do not have instruments. The Band is asking that community residents donate instruments that they have in their homes that are not being used to the Band. If a resident wants to make a contribution either of time, money, scholarship, or instrument donation, call the Urban League Northeast Youth Service Center at 288-6708.



Musicians of the marching band being put together by Thara Memory meet on Thursdays at Jefferson High to practice. Bass Clarinet, Ronnie Tolbert; Flute, Adrienne Dixon; Trumpet, Charles Johnson. (photo: Richard J. Brown)

## This New Year

(Continued from page 1 column 6)

It has been suggested that the excessive drinking associated with some New Year's Eve parties is a relic of the deliberate disruption and chaos practiced by primitive peoples at the end of each year.

The din and racket we now think we're making just for fun and celebration—the blowing of party horns, the tooting of car horns, the ringing of bells, the banging of pots and pans and, in some places, the firing of guns—was originally meant to scare away low and evil spirits.

Making a good start in the new

year by resolving to change something or "turning over a new leaf" has been part of New Year's plans for ages. Watching today's New Year's resolutions fall by the wayside as the year progresses doesn't mean it was all for naught.

And to the Babylonians, the public humiliation and subsequent reinstatement of the king meant a new beginning for him, even if it did reduce him to having his nose tweaked and his ears boxed.

The culmination of the festivities, it is thought, was the celebration of new birth with feasts and the restoration of order. Even the ancient

Greeks carried a baby around in a basket as a symbol of the new year long before we ever thought of parading a young one with the year printed on his diaper.

So, this New Year's Eve, as the gray, decrepit man representing the old year staggers out your door and the bright-eyed baby, the new year, bounces in, take a moment to reflect. As you stare into the punch bowl and review the past 365 days, look to the future, too. In a thousand years, others might be staring into a punch bowl, wondering how people celebrated a new year in the 1980s.



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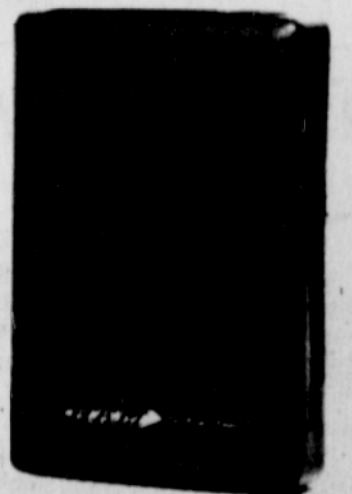
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