

The Interesting History of Carlmont Parent's Nursery School

The Ohlone Indian tribe lived in Belmont, and much of the SF Bay Area, before the Europeans arrived. "In the Ohlone tribe, wealth was not measured in the amount of possessions someone owned, but what you could share with others," per the City of Belmont webpage. **So, CPNS families are honoring the Ohlone land and tradition with our amazing and "alive" co-operative spirit.**



This is the Belle Monte Swimming Pool in the 1920s.

The back parking lot at CPNS is where this pool once was.

Since CPNS is still play-based, we are honoring the spirit of these people who seem to be having a great time swimming!



Belle Monte Pool in the 1930s



CPNS today where the pool once was, 2008



Belle Monte County Club, 1920s



Belle Monte Pool, same walkways are used today to ride bikes at CPNS

During the Belle Monti Country Club days, these same walk ways were used to get to the pool and to sunbathe near, today they are used by many preschoolers to ride tricycles and be pulled in wagons. In the summer, they are run on to get in the blow up pool and through the sprinklers.

So, not much has changed!



Fun in the rain, 4pm class 2008

NOW and THEN at CPNS probably the best compliment that any school can

experience is to have previous students decide to bring their own children back. Almost every year we have a CPNS alumni return with their own child. Leland Paige is a current alumni/parent.



Leland at 3 1/2 and his mom at CPNS

Michelle Beckham interviewed Leland for the December, 2007 Alumni Newsletter, she wrote "When it came to choosing a nursery school for his 3½ year old son, Leland Paige didn't have to do much research. Leland is a CPNS alum, as are his two sisters Jessica and Amanda Urioste. Now 33 years old, Leland doesn't remember too much of his time at CPNS. He remembers CPNS with its wide open halls and numerous play rooms. But what he recalls most is that he loved to spend the entire class playing outside with the old pedal cars.... And it seems his son Victor is following in his father's footsteps, always outside riding the steel-frame tricycles."

ROMANCE STARTED AT CPNS: Erin and Michael Pont, now married 6 years, actually met at CPNS in 1978 when they were both 3 year old students in Teacher Barbara and Jean's class. They ended up getting married 18 years later! Erin says she remembers playing "house" in the little house with Michael and using pine needles as their spaghetti dinners. Apparently some CPNS mothers stayed in touch through their "mother pluckers" group, which was made up of guitar playing moms. Then, when they were both in kindergarten, Michael's family moved to New Jersey, before he moved, Michael actually proposed marriage to Erin. Sadly Michael's mom passed away, but he still sent a Christmas card to Erin's mom every Christmas (she was the only mom from the "mother's pluckers" that he did this with. In 1996, they reunited and actually participated in a CPNS class reunion on the campus. In 2003 they married and now live in Austin, Texas with their son Owen (age 4) and Ema (age 3). Erin shared, "Michael and I always pick up where we left off."

Sarah Pederson, a former CPNS parent and alumni herself (seen in the plaid jumper) shares the following, "I do vividly remember making pudding with hand mixers and getting to lick the beaters and our fingers after! We were even in the newspaper (maybe that's why I remember it!)."





Sarah Pederson's two children attended CPNS; here (below) is a picture of her daughter Ellie (in the orange shirt) on former Teacher Kim's lap with Natalie, at Arata's Pumpkin Farm in Half Moon Bay/ 2005-3am class field trip. That was a great field trip. Many of us parents got completely disoriented in the hay-maze and started to panic. We had to remain cool for the kids, Teacher Kim was Very pregnant with Eric at the time, and we all just kept walking around the maze in circles.

Finally Rosie's mom, Trish was brave enough for all of us to hoist her up the wall to the top; she re-oriented us

and got the group out! It was a memorable day indeed!



Since the Beginning

CPNS was officially incorporated in 1961, today (5/08) we serve 64 students and 62 families.

CPNS has always been a **play-based preschool**.

Today the child is encouraged to guide the course of their own day: whether it is outdoor play, having a snack *whenever* they're hungry, playing in the block room, creating something wonderful at the creation station or listening/making music in the music room. All of these doors are always open to each child, during the classes at CPNS.

Play guides each child's daily learning at CPNS.



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Our founding mother is the very well-known Lilian Gonshaw-Katz. The Impact of Lilian G. Katz on Early Childhood Education, according to a paper by the

Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting, <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu>, reads:

"In 1961, she founded the Carlmont Parents Nursery School in San Carlos close to their home, where Miriam (her youngest child) spent her nursery school years. Lilian worked one morning each week at the co-op and continued until Miriam entered kindergarten. Her work at these co-ops sparked her interest in early childhood education. Lilian Katz has demonstrated leadership in the field of early childhood education in the United States and around the world. Lilian has authored more than 150 publications, including articles, chapters, and books about early childhood education, teacher education, child development, and parenting.. She is the recipient of numerous honors, including two Fulbright Awards. Lillian Katz's scholarly work in such areas as the distinctions between mothering and teaching, parenting preschoolers, children's social development, teacher growth and development, dispositions as a goal of education, the differences between self-esteem and narcissism, mixed-age grouping, and the Project Approach have substantially enriched the knowledge base of our field. Few others of her generation have contributed so much to the development of the field of early childhood education." - Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting-

<http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu> **April, 2008: "In researching the history of CPNS, I contacted Ms. Katz and asked her to share some of her thoughts in regard to starting CPNS. She was thrilled to hear it was still successfully running. I thanked her, on behalf of all CPNS families, for her initiative in starting this wonderful place for our children." -Sarah Eggen-Thornhill.** In response to my questions, Lilian shared, "As to the motivation for founding Carlmont, it was a time of increasing suburban living for young families. My eldest son had been in a cooperative nursery school at Visitation Valley Community Center just south of the Cow



Sam Lahey & Bill Schneider, 1969

Palace in San Francisco, where we lived. We moved to Belmont when he was ready for Kindergarten (at Cipriani School) and our four-year-old attended the Parent Child Study Center parent cooperative in San Mateo. A very good co-op at the time. But it seemed to me at the time that we needed one in our own area and I got together with a few parents in the San Carlos and Belmont neighborhood to found Carlmont, and in no time we were off and running!"

In regard to what the school philosophy was when it originated, Lillian answered, "I doubt whether we had any kind of formal philosophy at that time. Certainly there was no pressure to start preschoolers on academic instruction at that time. **The emphases were on play, creativity and social-emotional development. I still think they are central to the mission of preschools!**" CPNS originated in started

in San Carlos, which is how the name Carlmont came to be. Lillian also shared, "As I recall, we had just one class of 3 and 4 year olds. Yes, fathers were involved. My late husband was among several who helped with the out-door area and some plumbing problems. I was president of the nursery school during its first year, I believe. I had also been president of the San Mateo Parents Nursery School earlier. After my youngest went in to Kindergarten, also at Cipriani, I took a post as a teacher at Redwood Parents' Nursery School in Redwood City for a few years. I then decided that the field of nursery education was so rich and interesting that I went back to school, finished my BA and then----it's a long story --- accidentally became a PhD student at Stanford University in the field of early development and education. We came to Illinois as soon as I finished my PhD - in 1968 - and I have been at the University of Illinois ever since. I retired from the professorship in 1999, but have not yet retired from professing!!! I am still working at the University as co-director of the Clearinghouse on Early Education and Parenting. But I am not sure that my career matters here. **I do certainly owe it greatly to my experience as a co-op parent.**"



Teacher Jean in 1967 teaching music

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Our current Director Nancy Rahimi describes CPNS's philosophy and history as follows: "Carlmont Parents Nursery School has been supporting young families in our community by providing parent education and play based



preschool classes for over forty years. In 1961, partnered with Sequoia Adult School, Carlmont Parents Nursery School opened its doors to its first students in a small area of the First Congregational Church on the corner of Elm Street and Arroyo Avenue in San Carlos. In 1970, the school moved to its current location, 751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont where it has continued to guide parents and children as they grow through new phases in their lives. Teachers have changed, playgrounds have changed, Directors have changed, and even the location has changed, but our values and philosophy has remained the same. CPNS is the place where friends meet, a safe place where parents and children learn and grow together, a place where individuals are valued for their uniqueness, and children are encouraged to be children.

Patrice Holbrook, a CPNS Parent shares, "I'll never forget the time **Teacher Nancy MacDuckston** dissected a fish for the 4pm class when my oldest, Adam, was at preschool. She had the kids put on medical face masks and gloves. All the kids were mesmerized by the demonstration. I've never since seen a preschool teacher dissect a fish. Teacher Nancy M. also used to buy flowers for the planter boxes around the big



tree. She would have the kids help her to plant them. They loved to be a part of beautifying



Teacher Nancy Mac Duckston... listening, 1991

their school. Teacher Nancy M. always used t the guitar during sharing time in the 4pm class. The kids would so look forward to sharing their special items when Teacher Nancy play her guitar and sang."

Teacher Shelley Jones started teaching in 2007 as the 3am class teacher following four years as a participating family and serving 3 of those years on the CPNS board. Teacher Shelley shares, "I feel that I bring insights and activities surrounding the topic of Nature and the Environment to the curriculum, as those are my areas of interest and



expertise (the worm composting bin, releasing ladybugs, hatching and growing silkworm caterpillars annually). I also feel that I have the most interest in providing multiple sensory experiences daily for the students in addition to the sand and play dough available everyday. I trained as Music for Minors Docent and bring my knowledge of music, movement and folk songs to my class. Having a background in English language teaching, I bring a passion for language development to the class as well, always providing experiences to enrich the children's language through soliciting and transcribing their stories, telling stories, finger, singing songs, reading poetry to them and helping them come up with interesting and appropriate words for situations."

Teacher Leslie Marx shares, "I taught the 2 day a week class, for 8 years. I got the idea for show & tell during circle time from Teacher Kay...she is my model/mentor in terms of preschool. Now I do the show and tell at the end in 4pm because many of the kids come from the far more structured, need to follow along for the most part, PreK and so I want to allow them movement, song and dance at their 1st group time. "



Teacher Leslie's 4pm class -Christmas Tree Farm, 2008



Teacher Jean's class-Christmas Tree Farm, 1970

"Teacher Kay, my now 19 and 17 year olds, first teacher at CPNS would have circle time in the middle of the day at 10. I did that too, allowing the kids to get adjusted to the space via playing." -T. Leslie.



Figure 1: Teacher Kay in 1991



Figure 2: Teacher Leslie as a CPNS parent with dtr. Jenna in 1991

Teacher Leslie does Special Time with the kids at some point during the class. I know that my daughter Josette really looks forward to it, and often speaks about that being the best part of her day. Teacher Leslie shared, "Special Time evolved because we wanted to offer the parents a bit more to entice them to join the afternoon class. I had taught rotating Pre-K curriculum (science/math, group cooperative games, social/emotional/fine motor) at both Bunker Hill and Millbrae so I found it easy to lead small group activities. These are optional, but kids almost always want to join in. This week we are estimating how many frogs and jewels we have, counting the play cars, and adding play dough...kids work in groups of 5-6 kids, dividing the counters evenly/fairly, trading, and then playing using their imagination, and socializing..... "Good use of our great outdoor space has always been a mainstay at CPNS...as is free-play with free choice for the bulk of any CPNS class (for the kids that is!)."

Retired Teacher Kathy Breaux responds, "What do I remember about CPNS? It had an excellent reputation the entire time I was at Little Hands and then at Little Wonders. I had taught with Nancy Mac Duckston at Little Hands so I was especially interested in CPNS. It was very sad for me to come to work there under the circumstances that I did...Nancy's tragic disappearance. Once I was there, I was even more impressed with how well the school was managed, how it was



Figure 3: T. Kathy teaching Pre-K in 2004, grandson Daylin to her right on floor, holding Joe Watson

laid out physically and how involved and attached the children and parents were. I knew it was where I wanted Mailey and Daylin (her grandchildren) to be. I had not planned to teach as well as direct but am so glad I did volunteer to take on the pre-k...those were three great years for me. I LOVED the interactions with the charming, intelligent and creative four year olds. I looked forward to going to class!"

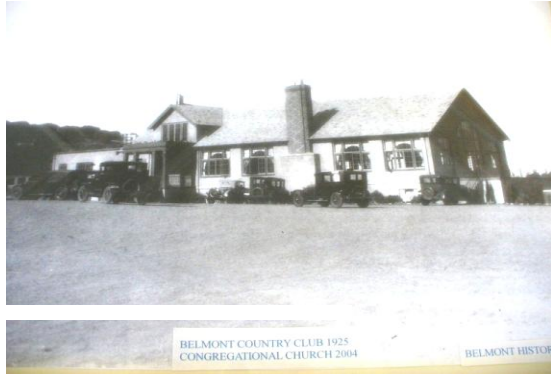
Some other interesting historical tidbits that have made CPNS special:

- **Mary Firme, a co-op parent and board member**, spearheaded the compost/ recycle program at CPNS, with the support of the church membership in 2002. Ever since this was started the students have learned the importance of saving the earth by disposing properly of their own garbage. They know to put "anything that came from the earth" in to the compost can, they know that clean paper is recycled and they know that limiting use of items (like zip-locks, juice boxes, saran-wrap, etc.) that need to go in to the garbage (or landfill) is really important.
- **Teacher Kathy Breaux** was the originator of the Community Helper Program and the Green Light Food unit 4 years ago. This game of asking the students to rate there lunch items as green, yellow and red light foods during lunch time in the Pre-K classes. It continues to teach the students how to eat healthy and makes us, as parents, more conscious when packing their lunches.
- **Teacher Nancy Rahimi** continues the community helper program in the Pre-K class and the students learn what it means to be a good citizen and helper in the community from each very special visitor.
- **Teacher Leslie Marx** returned to teaching at CPNS as a core teacher in 2007 and has always had a special time during the class where she plays games (like hide and seek) with the children. She has a special way of relating with each child individually.

CPNS rents downstairs in the historic building now known as **The Congregational Church of Belmont**. The building was built on its hilltop setting as the club house for the Belle Monti Country Club in the early 1920's. In



the sanctuary you'll notice the sconces still have crossed golf clubs. The dining room upstairs displays many historic pictures (on loan from the Belmont Historical Society) that you are invited to view anytime.



The Congregational Church (CCB) has been in this historical building for 55 years. Being a CPNS parent AND a church member, I have the unique experience of seeing the similarities in both. As mentioned in my opening paragraph in reference to the philosophy of CPNS, "all of these doors-



art room, snack room, music room, outside..... are always open to each child...." the same is very true of upstairs at church as well. CCB is an open and affirming congregation welcoming of ALL people. Many CPNS kids have taken part in the annual Christmas Pageant and currently there are 6 CPNS alumni singing beautifully in the children's choir. CCB also offers a variety of Montessori-based Sunday School Curriculum. To rent the building and /or playground for parties: www.uccbelmont.org 650-593-4547.



Teacher Barbara's class-Firehouse, 1969

History Webpage compiled by Sarah Eggen-Thornhill, CPNS parent / CPNS/ CCB Liaison/ April '08. Much gratitude to the following people for their contributions to this page: Lillian G. Katz - our founding mother; Nancy Rahimi - our wonderful CPNS director; Kathy Breaux-retired and missed CPNS teacher; Shelley Jones-current-3am teacher; Leslie Marx-current-4pm teacher; Leland Paige-alumni and CPNS parent; Sarah Pederson-alumni and parents of 2 alumni; Nic Kiyasu-our current CPNS president; The Belmont Historical Society-who gave the church all of the wonderful old pictures on display upstairs in the dining room; Michelle Beckham-CPNS parent and author of the alumni article used on this page; Erin and Michael Pont; Erin's mother Pam, Kathy Wolfe, former teacher at CPNS and finally Therese Dunn, CPNS parent who made this history page come alive to you in 2009.

