

Reflections (continued from Page 1)

I somehow managed to tear myself away from this extravaganza to attend some sessions. I played musical rooms catching snippets of talks looking for ones that I wanted to stay and listen to. Of the many that I attended, three were particularly meaningful. Their messages gave me insights into mathematics education and Logo's role in that arena.

First there was Chuck Allen, an administrator from the Los Angeles School district, who demonstrated some strategies for teaching math to inner city school children. He used his strong personality, a sense of humor, and some interesting activities to convince me that he indeed was successful in teaching these children. The key to his success, in my opinion, was his ability to make his students feel that he personally *cared* about them.

Then there was Harold Jacobs (author of several math texts including his classic *Mathematics: A Human Endeavor*) who used articles from newspapers, magazines, etc. as springboards for high school math lessons. It was so refreshing to watch this incredibly creative, talented teacher weave such interesting and empowering contexts for learning.

Finally there was John Saxon, a former WW II pilot, turned textbook publisher, who advocated that the road out of the sea of math education woes should be paved with his textbooks. "What's needed is a no-nonsense approach to the 'drill and practice' of mathematics skills. Watch your school's test scores go up, if you use my textbooks!" he says. I believed him, especially if HE actually taught the classes. He reminded me of a strong, charismatic teacher I had in high school that pushed me towards higher achievement. I did well, but there was no enthusiasm in my efforts. It was all hard work and I dreaded it.

What bothers me about Saxon and his many supporters is their vision of math education, which is about doing traditional mathematics better. The focus is on the mastery of skills and rewards are extrinsic (grades, test scores, etc.) Creativity is hardly mentioned. Yet Saxon's message is very appealing because of his personal charisma and his substantiated promise that skills will go up if you follow his regimen.

There's a part of me that wants to go on an anti-Saxon crusade and do battle with his forces. But then I think of Chuck Allen and Harold Jacobs who represent for me a non-Logo, Logo-Like approach to education. What they do is share activities that have worked for them in making mathematics more meaningful and empowering for

children. They model how I should be with children - more caring and creative. Part of Saxon's power was that he did genuinely care about the children. They felt that caring and they respected it. But in this regimented environment there is little time to discover one's ability to be a creator of mathematics. This opportunity to be an inventor of mathematics is what is valuable about Logo. It offers children the opportunity to discover mathematical ideas in a way that personalizes these ideas for them. So, rather than waste my energy in debating Saxon, I will in the spirit of Jacobs and Allen, use this newsletter to share ideas that hopefully will inspire you to be more creative in your teaching. And this, in turn, will encourage your students to tap and develop their innate mathematical abilities.

Have you seen.....

the Electronic Lesson Plans column in the April/May, 88 issue of *Teaching and Computers*? *Springtime Shapes* engages students in identifying arches and ovals in nature by experimenting with variables in Logo. Worth reading.

Doug Clements article, *Research on Variables, Algebra and Logo: Part 1*, in the January, 88 issue of the *Logo Exchange*? He refers to an interesting piece of research conducted by **Eliot Soloway** and colleagues which stated that when students are engaged in writing equations to solve a problem in a programming environment they tend to get more of them correct than if they write them to solve math problems in a more traditional way. Interesting implications for using Logo in Algebra classes. **Eliot Soloway**, by the way, is the luncheon speaker on Friday at the NECC conference. He is definitely worth the price of admission to hear! He's entertaining and thought provoking.

Bulletin Board (Continued from page 3)

I hope this description is helpful. Obviously lots of details were left out because they depend on your particular setup. Hopefully you will hang in there until you are successful. Please use conventional forms of communications until you are more comfortable with this exciting new way of communicating.