

A Unique School

By Heath Macquarrie, M.P.

The establishment of Prince Edward Island's first school for the deaf recalled a most interesting film short which I saw at a New York movie house last fall. On the screen were the pupils of the Roman Catholic Institute of St. Michielsgestel in Southern Holland.

The children, who heard nothing from the outside world, were able through body vibrations to distinguish various tones, the low ones through the stomach, the high ones through the chest and throat. In effect, the children's bodies became antennae.

It was interesting to see them point to the picture of a male singer or a female singer depending upon which they had "heard" from the recording, being played for them. The children's ability to detect and appreciate musical tones was most interesting and encouraging.

USE RHYTHM
This wonderful school emphasizes rhythm in teaching speech, and Sister Irena, who was a teacher of physical culture before making the veil, attended ballet school and studied dancing for two years. She is today world's only choreographer in nun's clothing, and to see her perform in her flowing black robes is a rewarding sight indeed.

As the deaf-mute, by playing his own instrument, becomes increasingly familiar with tone vibrations, he gradually learns to interpret them as no hearing person ever could, and as time goes by, he develops such a sensitivity

to vibrations, that it will permit him to absorb music and to catch its rhythm with no more than a special hearing aid. And thus he can learn to dance—a tremendous help in his psychological development.

DANCE THERAPY
I was so much impressed by this film and its revelations of the use of dance therapy for deaf-mutes that I contacted the Netherlands representative to the United Nations, Prof. Peters, who served on the Fourth Committee, and I asked for further information.

I received from the Netherlands Mission a press release which is sufficiently interesting to warrant its reproduction:

"It had never happened before in the history of London's famous Albert Hall. After a dance performance by twenty-two Dutch girls, the roaring applause of the elated audience was totally ignored. Not one of the young dancers took a bow; they turned around and left the stage without further ado.

APPLAUSE UNHEARD
"They weren't even aware of the reaction in the darkened hall, you see," said Father Van Uden, the man who made it possible for deaf-mutes to learn to dance. Connected with the Roman Catholic Institute at St. Michielsgestel (St. Michael's Geste), a n.d. just returned from England with his group, he continued to explain. "Our girls had given an interpretation of 'The Lord is My

Shepherd' before the intermission, and the audience had been so impressed, that it was literally dumb struck; no one applauded. Therefore, when after the performance of the 'Magnificat' wild ovation resounded, the girls were totally unaware of this reaction, and walked off stage without a single acknowledgment."

How deaf-mutes can be taught to dance is quite a story—such a unique story, in fact, that the entire dance group and their leaders had been invited to attend and perform at a recently held convention of therapists working with deaf-mutes, organized by the University of Manchester in England. Before a forum of forty-two nationalities—all experts in the field—the twenty-two pupils of the Institute at St. Michielsgestel, ranging in age from eight to eighteen showed how such handicapped youngsters can be made sensitive to music and rhythm.

VIBRATIONS
The clue seems to be vibrations—or rather, those vibrations produced by the deaf-mute himself. It began with a Hammond organ that was given the institute in 1940. Somehow, its vibrations were caught by the pupils, and it suddenly occurred to Father Van Uden that he could make it simpler for the children if they themselves could produce certain musical tones.

At first, clarinets were borrowed from the local village band, and these were later replaced by specially designed, two-octave blow organs—miniature organs,

the keys of which are played by the child as he blows into a tube. Through an amplifier, the player now senses the acoustic vibrations he himself produces, and gradually, he learns to know the close relationship between body movement and sound.

WONDERFUL TIME
Of the 460 boys and girls at the Institute, the 22 girls were chosen to make the trip. They had themselves a wonderful time, as you can imagine. In London, after their appearance at Albert Hall, they visited the Tower, saw the Horse Guards and all the other thrilling sights. In Manchester they performed such works as Weber's "Invitation to the Waltz" and De Falla's "El Amor Brujo", all in the prettiest costumes.

The note of poignancy that their appearance necessarily brought about never registered with them, nor were they impressed by the professional interest with which the convention delegates regarded their performance.

They behaved as they were—happy girls on an outing.

But, as Father Van Uden pointed out, their leaders saw the importance of sharing their experience with others. "And don't forget," he added, "there were 42 nationalities represented in Manchester. We are doing our best to disseminate the system we've found, so as to benefit all mankind."

ANCIENT SKIERS
Rock carvings of 4,000 years old depicting people on skis have been found in Norway.

KINGSBORO

Mr. and Mrs. Charles MacCormack, North Lake, have taken up residence in Charlottetown for the winter months.

Mr. Cyril Mooney, Greenvale, accompanied by his mother, Mrs. D. J. Mooney, and his sister Joan, left recently for Toronto, Ontario where they will reside.

Mrs. Chester MacNeill, Red Point who had been a hospital patient in Souris is convalescing at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Wilbur Jarvis, Kingsboro. Mrs. Ferdinand Gallant, returned to her home in Halifax, after attending the funeral of Miss Regina Campbell, Elmira.

Mrs. James Jardine who had been spending some time with her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Poole, Souris, has returned to her home in Kingsboro.

Mr. Frank Stevens whose home is in Nova Scotia, returned to this vicinity by horse and buggy, and has been a guest at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Dixon, East Baltic.

On Friday, Dec. 4th., the Kingsboro U.B.W.M.U. observed their annual Day of Prayer, together with Baptist women around the

world. Mrs. Russell Garrett led the worship service, with a number of members participating. Members of the C.G.I.T. held their affiliation service with the Missionary Society, at the close of which refreshments were served in the Church Vestry, by the C.G.I.T. and their leaders Mrs. Walter Dixon, and Mrs. Lyman Rose.

Mrs. Henry Jarvis, is convalescing at her home following minor surgery at the City Hospital, Charlottetown.

Mrs. Margaret Ryan, Lakeville, has left to spend the winter with friends in Souris.

Patients from this Community who were quickly evacuated from Souris hospital, where fire recently caused heavy damage, included Mrs. Ralph Robertson and Mrs. Chester MacNeill. They

were sheltered for the night by kind neighbors, as were several other patients where condition did not warrant their removal to hospitals in Charlottetown.

Mr. George E. MacDonald, Charlottetown a former resident of this community, has been a patient in the Charlottetown hospital where he underwent surgery.

CENTRAL LOCATION
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It was my privilege and pleasure to be in charge of all interior painting and decorating of St. Anthony's Parish Hall.

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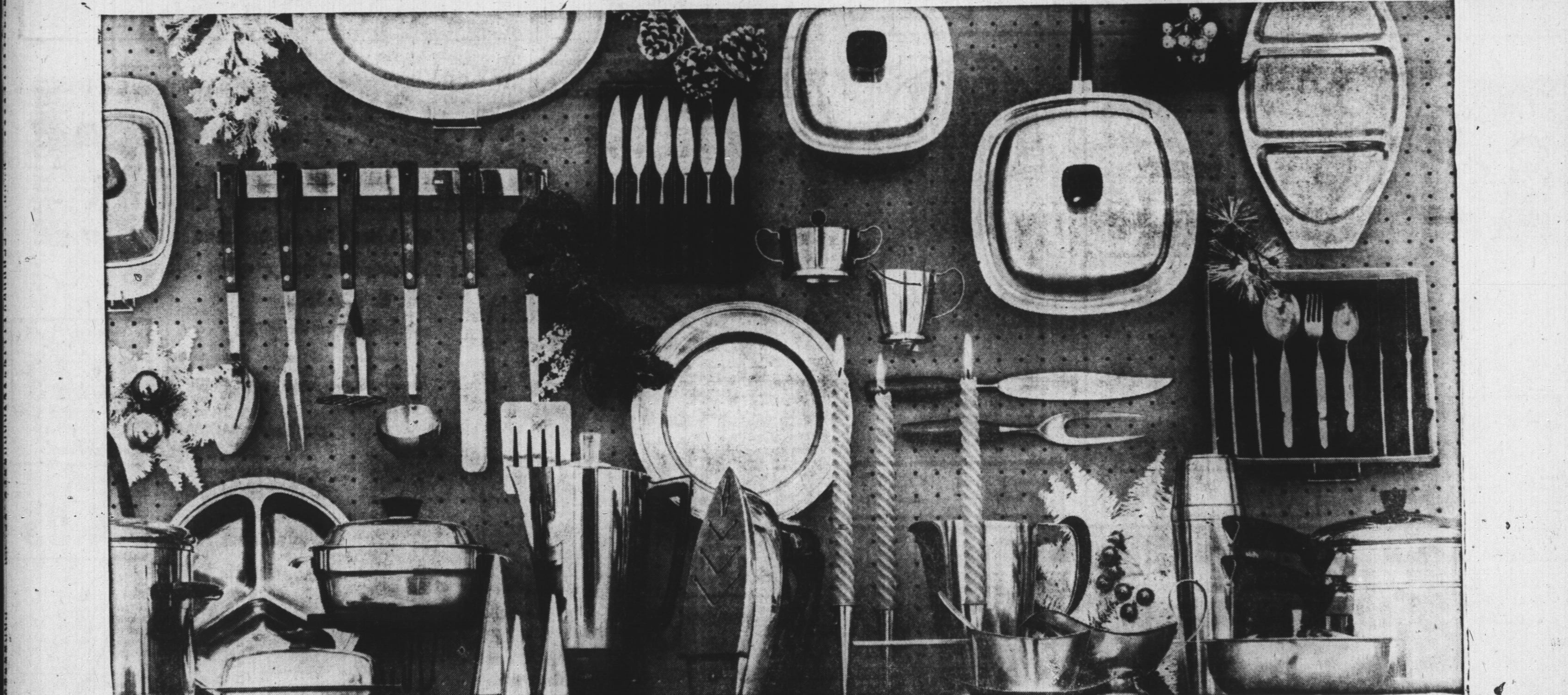
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