

Reflections on Dr. Albert E. Trieschman, 1932-1984: Motifs of Caring and Esperanza

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In June of 1984, we were deeply saddened by the sudden death of Al Trieschman. He was known to many different people in many different ways. Al Trieschman was a husband, a father, an author, a therapist, an executive director, a teacher, an advocate for children, and an advocate for the profession of child care work.

For all who had the opportunity to know him, in any of the above capacities or in other ways not mentioned, there were certain qualities about him that prevailed. One was a sense of deep caring and another was the perennial message of what could be referred to as "esperanza" that served as a basic motif of his writings, speeches, and discussions about children and child care work. "Esperanza" is a Spanish word and in Spanish, as is true in most languages, there are words that are difficult to translate literally to another language. Perhaps the best literal translation for "esperanza" is hope.

Along with hope, this word in Spanish also carries the connotation of inspiration. When one considers Al and his many achievements and attributes, the motifs of caring and hope are prevalent and they continue to provide child and youth care workers with invaluable inspiration and a sense of "esperanza".

In the past ten years, this writer has had an opportunity to attend many workshops, conferences, and activities for child care workers throughout North America. One cannot help but be impressed with the number of people that one meets in the field whose lives have been touched by Al Trieschman. All who knew him were moved by the fact that, in spite of his international prominence,

he still had time to give to others who had relatively little or no prominence at all.

One can easily identify several other "so-called" advocates of child care workers around the country who have not achieved a fraction of what Dr. Trieschman has achieved, and who have not taken the time to become involved with those who they perceive as having little prominence.

Al Trieschman's impact on the field of child and youth care work has been both professional and personal. Clearly his writings and concepts have made invaluable contributions to the body of knowledge in the field of child and youth care work. In a personal way, he was able to leave significant impressions on those who had an opportunity to dialogue, relate, and to interact with him. For those of us who were direct line workers when we first read *The Other 23 Hours*, it gave us an important first sense of professional self-esteem, and when we later met Al Trieschman, the person, we were not disappointed because the professed theories and the person were not inconsistent.

Perhaps the best way to express what Al Trieschman has meant to child care workers and to the profession is to include the lines from a poem by Grace Stricker Dawson, entitled "To A Friend".

You entered my life in a casual way,
And saw at a glance what I needed:
There were others who passed me or met me
each day,
But never a one of them heeded . . .

I know there were many such chances before,

But the others — well, they didn't see it.

You said just the thing I wished you would say,
And you made me believe that you meant it;
I held up my head in the old gallant way,
And resolved you should never repent it.

There are times when encouragement means such a
lot,
And a word is enough to convey it;
There were others who could have, as easy as not —
But, just the same, they didn't say it.

There may have been someone who could have
done more
To help me along, though I doubt it;
What I needed was cheering, and always before
They had let me plod onward without it.

You had helped to refashion the dream of my heart,
And made me turn eagerly to it;
There were others who might have (I question that
part) —
But, after all, they didn't do it.

Al Trieschman was a man who cared about children and about those who care for children. He was a friend of child care work and a friend of child care workers. Al's contributions have been numerous. We will miss him greatly, and though his life was much too short, his example has given us "esparanza" — and we will continue!