

# SANDSPIEL

Newsletter of the Minnesota Sandplay Therapy Group

Volume III, Number 2

May 1991

## MSTG Begins Fourth Year with 60 Members

The MSTG annual Members' Meeting on April 25, 1991, marked the beginning of the organization's fourth year, and a growth in membership from 12 in 1988 to 60 in 1991.

Reelected to the Board of Directors were Ethel Griggs, Joe Meyer, and Mary-Lynn Harrison, who replaced Ruth Goodwin. Regina Driscoll will continue into her second year as President.

The MSTG's financial situation remains healthy, allowing the organization to lend money to the Sandplay Therapists of America (at 1% over prime) to use as start-up money for the second national sandplay conference to be held in San Rafael, California, May 14-17, 1992. In addition, a scholarship fund has been established to assist low-income members with tuition to MSTG events.

There was a sense of accomplishment over the

### **Kaspar Kiepenheuer Leads Workshop And Experience in Wilder Woods**

Kaspar Kiepenheuer of Zurich, Switzerland, Jungian Analyst and Member of the International Society of Sandplay Therapists, presented a one-day workshop for 47 people at Children's Hospital's Heart and Lung Center in St. Paul on April 20th. This was followed by a members only workshop at the Wilder Nature Center, Marine-on-the-Croix, April 21st.

In his Saturday workshop, entitled "Children Change Parents," Kaspar presented four clinical cases amply illustrated with slides of artwork and sand tray scenes.

Kaspar said that after children enter therapy, the parents wonder, "What are you going to do with our child? In reality, they envy the child...so often, they use or misuse the child for things they haven't put into life themselves. Their children would live that un-lived life." Then, when a parent enters therapy, he begins to claim his un-lived parts, to take them back and own them.

On Sunday, the group focused on how to use nature as a sand tray. We met at Wilder Nature Center in the morning, and began in a circle, sharing some thoughts, feelings, and experiences, past and present, of the forest and nature. Kaspar then led us on a walk and introduced the idea that later on we would each create our own "sand tray" in the woods.

While walking silently, we found "treasures" at the edge of a corn field, near a barn, and while traipsing through the woods. I picked up stones, small corn cobs,

year-in-review, with members recalling the personal, professional and organizational growth allowed by the success of the educational experiences. These included the attachment workshop with Nessie Bailey in April 1990, Lauren Cunningham's presentation on sandplay with children in May 1990, Nehama Baum's presentation on sandplay with the developmentally disabled in October 1990, the residential seminar on Mayan symbols in Akumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico, this past January, and the recent wonderful weekend with Kaspar Kiepenheuer as he presented on children changing parents and how to use nature in therapy.

This year also marked the beginning of informal meetings with a discussion of "The Little People" this past March. The concept of member-presented discussions was well-received and the group plans to have two to four such evening events during the coming year.

Discussion also led members to think about other educational opportunities for the future including co-sponsoring events with the Minnesota Art Therapy Group. Topics being considered include making sand toys oneself, how to take good photographs of sand pictures, developmental stages in sandplay, and an expansion of courses on Jungian theory, symbols, archetypes, etc., plus professional seminars to review completed cases.

The education committee welcomes the addition of new committee members Lynn Thompson and Larry Greenberg, and also welcomes suggestions for workshop topics and ideas from the members-at-large. Please forward ideas to Barbara Weller at 724-0854.

An exciting development of the MSTG is the readiness to take on a research project which is being planned in conjunction with St. Stephen's Community School in Minneapolis. This program will be designed to look at the effects of time-limited sandplay therapy in children who otherwise would not receive therapy services.

The MSTG has enjoyed three newsletters in the past year focused on events and topics of interest. Send ideas and contributions for articles to Mary-Lynn Harrison at the MSTG Center for consideration for future issues. The MSTG also welcomes help from those who have talent, skills or interest in doing publicity.

If the coming year continues the trend of growth and development of 1990-1991, an exciting year is guaranteed.

*(continued on p. 4)*

*—Carol Kindschi*

## Barbara Weller One of Four Elected to New STA Council

At the annual meeting of the Sandplay Therapists of America (STA) in Bodega Bay, California, this March, Barbara Weller, MSTG's Past President, was elected as one of four new members of an egalitarian Council which will replace the first executive committee. In addition, the STA expanded the Board of Directors and decided to invite interested therapists to join as Associates.

The other three members elected to the Council are Lauren Cunningham, San Francisco, Lucia Chambers, San Jose, and Mary Jane Markell, Santa Rosa. The first executive committee (Estelle Weinrib, President; Kay Bradway, Vice President; Lauren Cunningham, Secretary; and Lucia Chambers, Treasurer) resigned their offices. A nominating committee proposed that the structure of the executive committee be changed to the Council of four which would reach decisions by consensus whenever possible.

The STA expanded the Board of Directors from ten to twelve members and criteria for election to the Board were established. The two new Board members are Luana Rowland of Palo Alto, and LaVon Bobo of Sunnyvale.

The annual fee for Associates will be \$45, and benefits include a subscription to the *Journal of Sandplay Therapy* and discounts on conference fees at national events sponsored by the STA, such as the 1992 national conference in San Rafael, California.

## 2nd National Sandplay Conference Set for May 14-17, 1992 in California

The second national conference on Sandplay, entitled, "Sand, Psyche, and Symbol," will be held May 14-17, 1992, in San Rafael, California. The conference is being sponsored by the Sandplay Therapists of America (STA), the America affiliate of the International Society of Sandplay Therapy (ISST). The first national conference was held in St. Paul in October, 1989, and was co-sponsored by the Minnesota Sandplay Therapy Group and the STA.

The keynote speaker for the 1992 conference will be Dr. Hayao Kawai of Kyoto, Japan. Also speaking will be Martin Kalff, of Zollikon, Switzerland, Estelle Weinrib of New York, Kay Bradway of San Francisco, and Chonita Larsen of Honolulu, all of whom are founding members of ISST. In addition, members of the STA will be offering small group presentations and discussion throughout the conference.

Conference brochures will be mailed in October, 1991. A large discount will be offered to those who register before February, 1992, and also to those who are associates of the STA. If you want to be sure you are on the conference mailing list, send your name, address, and phone number to Barbara Weller at 3616-19th Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55405. (MSTG members are already on the list.)

MSTG members who volunteer to help at the

## Board Meeting Times

**Tuesday, July 9**

7 p.m., Barb Weller's house

**Tuesday, August 13**

5 p.m., swimming, potluck, business.

Home of Carol Kindschi and Larry Greenberg,

2129 Larpenteur Avenue, Falcon Heights

RSVP to Carol, 642-9417

**Thursday, September 19**

7 p.m., Barb Weller's house

All MSTG members are invited to the meetings.

second national conference will be eligible for a discount on the conference fee. The amount of discount has not yet been determined, but if you are interested in volunteering, please notify Barbara Weller or Regina Driscoll by July 1, 1991.

## Lucia Chambers to Present October 4

Lucia Chambers, MFCC, of San Jose, CA, will present a full day workshop entitled, "The In-Turning Spiral: The Path to the Healing of the Feminine," Friday, Oct. 4, 1991, at the Maryhill Retreat Center on Summit Avenue in St. Paul. Lucia will present her findings from six years of research into the manifestation and significance of the spiral in the sandplay process, a profound journey for client and therapist alike. Brochures with registration information will be available in August. Anyone wishing extra copies may contact either Regina Driscoll at 220-6721, or Barbara Weller, at 724-0854.

Those who would like to see and buy sandplay miniatures or MSTG t-shirts may call Joe or Doris Meyer at 458-3115, and arrange to see the items individually. T-shirts are \$9 and available in white or yellow with blue print or turquoise with navy print.

### Correction:

The February 1991 issue of *Sandspiel* incorrectly stated that Hilario Hiler has been working with photographer Duncan McPhee to record contemporary life among the Maya in Mexico. The correct photographer's name is MacDuff Everton.

*Sandspiel* is the newsletter of the Minnesota Sandplay Therapy Group, 3616 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55407, Tel: 612-724-0854. *Sandspiel* means "sand play" in German. The MSTG was formed in 1988 to provide education and training in the area of Sandplay, developed by Dora Kalff of Switzerland. 1991-92 board members: Regina Driscoll (President), Mary Ellen Einspahr, Ethel Griggs, Mary-Lynn Harrison, Carol Kindschi, Joe Meyer, Holly Smart, Alice Wagstaff, and Barbara Weller (Past President). *Sandspiel* Editor: Mary-Lynn Harrison.

# The Little People and Sandplay Therapy

Generally, from ancient times Elves, Gnomes, Fairies and Dwarves come to mind when one thinks of the Little People. One might also think of Leprechauns, Hobbits, Smurfs, or Kender from more recent writings. There have been many other Little People throughout history. In fact, it seems to me that all areas of the world have had their stories of Little People.

In this paper I shall attempt to bring out a few of the significant details about the Little People. I shall also attempt to suggest ways in which the Little People may have importance when they appear in the sand tray.

## General Impressions

The Little People around the world often seem to be perceived as child-like. They are small, and in many cases lovable or mischievous as the trickster or the joker. They tend to be well-liked and trusted by some people, or ignored, belittled, or mistreated by others.

In some cases the Little People are powerful, able to grant any wishes, do any special thing they chose to do for humans who met their requirements. Often the requirements have to do with being open, honest, simple and pure. Many times the Little People can be nasty to humans, especially if those humans are selfish, jealous, or wicked.

At times the Little People are old, even ancient, and often very wise. Sometimes they are misshapen or deformed, even ugly. Some tales, however, report Little People of rare beauty. Often they can do anything they choose to do, but were pleased if a human would be polite or willing to help them or share with them.

## Symbolism

**Dwarves** usually lived in the hills or mountains. Mountains symbolize a place of revelation or a move toward greater consciousness, while a mountain pass is a symbol for transition. Dwarves dig deep into the earth, which is symbolic for going into the unconscious. There they search for precious metals and rare jewels (the gifts of the unconscious) to use in creating useful and beautiful objects; this leads to a transformation.

**Elves** and **Fairies** live in the wilderness, often deep in the forest. Some Little People, such as Dryads, are never far from trees and are said to be the very soul or spirit of a specific tree. Some of the Little People live in or near the water.

The forest, as well as water, can represent the unconscious. Trees represent green and growing things which combine the elements. Their roots go deep into the earth and their branches, leaves, or needles reach to the heavens. The significance of trees goes well beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note the close tie between the Little People and growing things.

It seems to me that the Little People are a symbol of the unconscious. When they appear in the sand tray, they can represent the journey into the wilderness, forest, mountain, or water, all explorations of the unconscious. Little People in the sand tray may occasionally symbolize the Self, but are more frequently seen as guides or guardians on the journey. In these instances, they relate to the process of change or transformation. They can be powerful partners.

## Sources of Study

One many study to gain more depth or breadth in understanding the Little People. I will share a few quotes, but encourage the reader to start with the *Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* or other tales from around the world to gain

further awareness of the importance of the Little People.

**Dwarf:** A symbol of ambivalent meaning. Like dactyls, elves and gnomes, the dwarf is the personification of those forces which remain virtually outside the orbit of consciousness. In folklore and mythology, the dwarf appears as a mischievous being, with certain childish characteristics befitting its small size, but who as a protector... may be regarded as the guardian of the threshold of the unconscious. Smallness may also be taken as a sign of deformity, of the abnormal and inferior.<sup>1</sup>

**Elf:** The word elf was related to helleder, people belonging to Mother Hel as Death Goddess. In general, it meant heathen, both dead and living. But there is little doubt that elves were the ancestral dead, still "alive" in their burial mounds; it is well known that in Scandinavia the dead were formerly called 'elves'. The paradise of Alfheim (Elf-Land) was always matriarchal, inhabited by the bright female spirits who made the sun.<sup>2</sup>

Innumerable cautionary folktales proved that it paid to be kind to elves. Properly propitiated with gifts of food or clothing, elves might come in the night to do all the housework, sew boots for the shoemaker, cut cloth for the tailor, or make porridge for the cook. They would watch over children or domestic animals. Sometimes they would bring the heart's desire. On the other hand, elves not properly propitiated could be mischievous and destructive. These tales obviously arose from ancient customs of offering gifts to the dead. It was well known that "elf" used to be another name for ancestral *ghost*, especially a pagan spirit from pre-Christian times.<sup>3</sup>

**Fairy:** The Irish word for fairy is *Sheehogue*, a diminutive of "shee" in *banshee*. Fairies are *denee shee* (fairy people). Who are they? "Fallen angels who were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost," say the peasantry. "The gods of the earth," says the Book of Armagh. "The gods of pagan Ireland," say the Irish antiquarians, "the *Tuatha De Denan*, who when no longer worshipped and fed with offerings, dwindled away in the popular imagination, and now are only a few spans high."<sup>4</sup>

...Their chief occupations are feasting, fighting, and making love, and playing the most beautiful music. They have only one industrious person amongst them, the *lepra-caun* — the shoemaker.<sup>5</sup> Occultists from Paracelsus to Elphas Levi, divide the nature spirits into gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, undines; or earth, air, fire, and water spirits.<sup>6</sup>

The fairy queen was obviously the ancient fertility mother, like Demeter or Ceres.<sup>7</sup> The Romance of Lancelot du Lac spoke of times all those women were called fays who had to do with enchantments and charms...they knew the power and virtue of words, of stones, and of herbs.<sup>8</sup>

Fairies probably symbolize the supra-normal powers of the human soul...Their nature is contradictory: they fulfill humble tasks, yet possess extraordinary powers. They bestow gifts upon the newly born; they can cause people, palaces and wonderful things to appear out of the air: they dispense riches (as a symbol of wisdom) — their

(continued on p. 4)

## Kiepenheuer (continued from p. 1)

wisps of dry grass or weeds, and pine cones, and cupped them in both hands. We were instructed to find a special spot to store our treasures. After a family-style lunch, we returned silently again in the afternoon but this time with the company of four deer, a grouse, and a butterfly. We were told to return to our special place to create a scene that related to the elements, earth, air, fire and water.

We all dispersed. I thought I'd marked my sacred space well, but soon discovered that all the trees and fallen branches looked the same. My markings had been useless. First exasperated, then resigned, I gave up hunting, and established a new place for myself beneath a healthy, large birch tree. As I cleared away dry old leaves, I was drawn to the exposed roots, and began my sand tray from there. Later, I peeled layers of dry curled bark from the birch, which revealed the new bark underneath, tawny and full of moisture. Finally, I sat down on a log and dozed while enjoying the soft breezes and warm sun.

We gathered again to share our experiences, and those of us who wished brought the rest to our special spots to talk about them and what they evoked. Our sand trays were scattered around, some of them up on a hill, others down close to the water.

I thought that Kaspar offered us that afternoon a gentle and encouraging container for this experience. I left the woods feeling peaceful and reverent.

—Mary-Lynn Harrison

## Little People (continued from p. 3)

powers are not simply magical, but are rather the sudden revelation of latent possibilities.<sup>9</sup>

As we have seen above, the Little People may be the Gods and Goddesses made small, but retaining all of their power. Or, they may be spirits of the dead, or perhaps merely figments of imagination. Whatever or whoever they are we seem unable to get enough of them. In recent times, we have continued to create new ones such as the Smurfs in comic book stories, the Hobbits or halflings of J.R.R. Tolkien, or the Kender of the *Dragon Lance* saga from the people of TSR, Inc. The popularity of these stories and of various role playing adventures such as *Dungeons and Dragons* point to a wide and intense interest in the Little People. In those adventures the Little People often brave overwhelming odds to stand against chaos and evil and prove that purity and good can endure.

—Joseph A. Meyer

*We invite your comments. We encourage further research. We invite further examples of the Little People in other lands and in other cultures.*

### Endnotes

- 1 Cirlot, J.E., *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2nd edition, 1971, p. 91.
- 2 Walker, Barbara G. *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, 1983, p. 279.
- 3 Walker, Barbara G. *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, 1988, pp. 244-45.
- 4 Yeats, W.B., Ed. *Irish Fairy and Folk Tales*, 1986, p. 10.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Walker, *op. cit.*, 1983, p. 298.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 299.
- 9 Cirlot, *op. cit.*, p. 101.