

# The Importance of People

Column Editor: Harold Benjamin

Contributor: Anthony L. Tovatt

## Invitation to Hardy Settlers

*Following the admirable examples of my predecessors in the editorship of this column, I hereby formally declare this space open for settlement and occupancy each month. Contributions from young men and women whose ideas are upsetting to their elders are earnestly desired, although original and startling notions from old and respectable essayists will not be rejected summarily. I want good settlers in this valley, and I would not keep one out just because he rubbed me the wrong way with his youthful brashness.*

*You take Anthony L. Tovatt of the Ball State Teachers College, Indiana, for a sample. When I read the following fantastic tale, I gritted my teeth and beat on my desk in rage. I was once a principal, a superintendent, a dean, a director of this and that. What does this young man mean by such a story? But there you are. He's a good, tough settler and we need to build up this valley. So I signed him up.*

Harold Benjamin

## A Curriculum for Chameleons

CORNELIUS CHAMELEON was in a brown study. His long body sagged disconsolately against the tree trunk which formed part of his office. As Superintendent of the Arboreal Union High School District, he was under fire. Certain prominent parents in the community had just told him that the school's curriculum was not at all satisfactory.

In fact the president of the school board only half an hour earlier had asked the superintendent formally to tender his resignation unless he could revise the curriculum at once.

The president made it very clear, furthermore, that a panty-waist revision of the logical, methodical, school-teacherish kind, with a curriculum consultant from that red University of the Woods poking his disloyal nose into the community's affairs, was emphatically not wanted. The solid people, the patriotic people, the president said, wanted the school's offerings thoroughly overhauled, disassembled, junked in

large part, and then put together again so it would be like the Arboreal High School's curriculum in the good old days when there was public morality in high places and private morality on the lower levels.

## Flies and Ointment

Focusing binocular vision idly upon an over-adventuresome fruit fly playing across the desk, Cornelius fell to meditating upon his situation.

"How in the pink and blue blazes did I ever get in this fix?" he muttered, the large patches of study brown on his body merging gradually into intense anxiety spots of dark yellow. "I came here with the theory, approved by the biggest lizards north of the Purgatoire, that education was supposed to provide for the life needs of learners. I set about developing a curriculum that would give opportunity for our students to broaden their interests and gain insights and skills in all phases of arboreal living.



"I threw out *Chameleoglitich*, with its academic emphasis on such topics as the physiology of color mixing and the physics of camouflage, and put in the good modern subject of *Chameleoeducation in an Arboreal Society*. The students worked on such topics as conduct in winning a mate, the use of color in defense, the laying and care of eggs, and other practical matters. The trouble was with the teachers. They sort of dragged their feet from the first. Of course they went through the motions, but they didn't seem to understand the curriculum. They tried to know what to teach and how to teach it, however—or, say! Did they? Well, I guess they did—to a certain extent. Oh, those teachers colleges and schools of education! Why in the immortal purple and magental heavens don't those amphibians in charge prepare these teachers correctly in the first place?"

The superintendent opened and closed his front paws in convulsive thought. "It was the parents," he continued in bitter soliloquy. "They were reptiles of another color. From the outset they were suspicious of the new program, although I did my brownest

to keep them from knowing too much about it. I knew, of course, that the success of the whole business depended upon a minimum of parental meddling. But the parents, blast their green and orange hides, persisted in trying to find out what was going on. The first thing I knew they knew enough to raise indigo hob. They began to holler for a change back to pure and unadulterated Chameleoglitich—and no heliotrope foolishness about it either. They crawled into this office singly and in droves demanding that their pups be taught the outworn theory that chameleons change color only to match their surroundings instead of the up-to-date and scientific knowledge that color change is partly a reflex action and partly a wilfully controlled deed. And that topic about choosing a mate! How they hit the branches on that one! 'Leave that sort of thing to chance,' they insisted. 'That's the only decent thing to do.'

"And then there were the students. They learned a lot of useful things under the new program, but they didn't admit it very often. They were afraid of their parents. Those who did admit they liked the program were obviously having too much fun. So now a lot of them are complaining that they aren't being educated properly. They notice that pleases the old folks.

"Finally the members of the staff have got their wind up. The last few days they seem to be avoiding me even more than is usual for teachers ducking the superintendent. They are scared to say hello. When I walk into their rooms I get the impression somehow that they have been teaching Chameleoglitich on the sly just before I enter. They always seem just to be starting on that unit on catching flies with the tongue. When I hinted at something like this going on, in the faculty meet-

ing Tuesday, I got a sullen silence, sidelong glances, and not a single violet denial."

With a heavy sigh, Cornelius shifted from Administrative Planning to Administrative Action. He began to listen to the subdued murmur of voices in neighboring classrooms. "Young minds learning in a new curric—," he began proudly and then halted as his keen ear caught a disturbing thread in the pattern of sound. "What's that?" he cried. "It sounds like—is it? It is!"

The superintendent was right. The students were reciting Chameleoglitch in unison. In open defiance of all new regulations, the teachers had back-slidden. The yellow spots on Cornelius' body changed through orange to flaming scarlet in anger. Then they subsided to a mottled gray and back to deep brown. He was in his study again. He had seen the school board ultimatum fluttering on his desk.

He stared down at the parents of the community scurrying along the logs below his office. "Should I have taken those creatures with me?" he asked himself in a moment of conscientious weakness. "No!" he replied with a stiffening of his vertebrae. "They would never have understood anyway."

Suddenly he knew what to do. His body assumed a rugged vermilion shade. Because he was hungry, he first snapped up the venturesome fruit fly from his desk, champed his jaws meditatively, and then began to write:

*Henceforward the curriculum of the Arboreal Union High School will consist solely of pure, unadulterated Chameleoglitch. All persons concerned will note and comply.*

As he finished writing and folded the directive, his color changed to a normal gray-green. With his keen, binocular vision he began happily to seek other foolish fruit flies.

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from *May Hill Arbuthnot*

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from *Marion Monroe*

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