A Clear Voice for Montessori:
Elisabeth Caspari

By Marjorie Ann Lombard

As a teacher of teachers, Dr. Elisabeth Caspari (1899–2002) traveled extensively for 50 years, sharing the wisdom she had gleaned from her training under Dr. Maria Montessori in Adyar, India, and from 4 years of frequent association with Montessori and her son, Mario, in Kodaikanal. The threads of opportunity that led to that association and that Caspari carried forward into a new career in the United States after World War II weave the tale of a very active life lived with an inspired and inspiring focus—to be a clear voice for Montessori’s vision of the child.

Like Maria Montessori and her son, Mario, Elisabeth and her husband Charles spent the World War II years in India, unable to leave the country after war had been declared in Europe. At that time, Montessori was training teachers in Adyar, a suburb of Madras, as a guest of the Theosophical Society. The Casparis were tourists with a group visiting various Buddhist monasteries in India and Tibet.

Before the Casparis’ tour was interrupted by news of dire happenings in Europe, they had spent time as guests at the Theosophical Society in Adyar. Here, the organizer of their tour (who also happened to be an acquaintance of Montessori) introduced the two educators. Caspari, holding doctorates in music and pedagogy from the University of Lausanne, was on a year’s leave of absence from her music school in Chateau d’Oex, Switzerland. There she had developed a successful method of teaching piano, not only working with young students, but also training teachers from many European countries in her unique and specialized method.

“You were a Montessorian before you met me!” exclaimed Montessori, after inquiring about Elisabeth’s methods of teaching music (Caspari, 1994). Caspari later recalled her impressions of that first meeting.

I was a musician and I knew her name, but not at all what her work was. After looking at my music books, she explained that she, too, starts with very young beginners, isolating difficulties. It is a principle of her method: the mind of the little child is not complex, and you don’t give him complexity. You isolate the difficulty. I felt very good and after we had some wonderful meetings, she said, “Why don’t you stay with me?” (Caspari, 1994)

But Elisabeth had committed to go on to Tibet with her group and knew she couldn’t stay. “It was a terrible thing for me to have such an invitation and to leave. However, I did not know, then, that war would be declared and that she and I would be stuck in India for so many years” (Caspari, 1994).

Leaving Madras and passing through Bombay and New Delhi, the Casparis’ group went on to Srinagar, in Kashmir, where they spent a number of months preparing for their further trek into the Himalayas. Following ancient caravan roads, they were welcomed in villages and monasteries, completing a good portion of their itinerary before being interrupted by news from Europe.
They hurried back to Kashmir, hoping to start back to Switzerland, but all planes and ships were requisitioned for the military. Transportation was no longer available. Their Swiss bank accounts were also frozen.

Wondering where to turn next, the Casparis received a letter from a friend Elisabeth had made during their brief stay in New Delhi. “Her name was Mrs. Hotz; she was Swiss and of course was very delighted to talk French with me when our group had stayed at her hotel. So in the evenings I had escaped from our party, and we had spent most of the nights in her office having glorious times together” (Caspari, 1994).

Mrs. Hotz’s letter read, “Dear Caspari, War is declared. What are you going to do? You had better come and see me” (Caspari, 1994).

In the letter was a check with two railroad tickets.

The couple spent 3 weeks with their hostess, but she soon had them traveling again—this time back to Adyar. Mrs. Hotz had asked Elisabeth, “What would you most like to do?” Her immediate answer: “Take the course with Dr. Montessori” (Caspari, 1994). Mrs. Hotz provided tuition for the course and money for travel and living expenses for the next half year. Dr. Caspari often spoke of the “Golden Thread” that carried her from one opportunity to the next and brought her to what then became her lifelong work with children and with teachers, being as clear a voice as she could be for Montessori’s insights and innovations.

During the 3-month course, she took notes from Montessori’s Italian while a Dutch friend took notes from Mario Montessori’s English translation. At night, they put their notes together. “We had a very happy time. The course was very demanding” (Caspari, 1994).

Caspari had come to the course as an interested educator, but also because she had been inspired by Montessori’s vision of the child. She had no particular plans at the end of the course, except that she and Charles knew they had to earn a living. Her Dutch classmate said,

You know, your husband, Charles, definitely needs to have a good rest, and my children go to an American school for the children of missionaries in a beautiful resort 7,000 feet high in the south. Why don’t you go there where we have a lovely room for you? It’s the best thing you could do for Charles. (Caspari, 1994)

Grateful, the Casparis traveled to Kodaikanal. In this hill station, news traveled fast; within weeks they both had full-time jobs. The headmaster of the American School (now known as the Kodaikanal International School) of 500 students, hearing of a well-educated musician close by, visited the Casparis. Many of his American teachers, warned by the U.S. consulate, had left India before transportation was cut off, and he was in dire need of replacements. Elisabeth accepted the positions of choir directress, band and orchestra directress, and piano teacher for 64 elementary and high school students (previously the work of five teachers). Charles, an engineer and fluent in many languages, was hired to teach algebra, geometry, French, and German. They were given a cottage on the campus and were more than grateful to have a way of supporting themselves and to serve the students, who challenged them and helped them learn English.

Now began a more intense association with Montessori, for within a few months, Dr. Montessori and Mario were sent from Adyar to this same hill station. For the next 4 years, the Casparis went almost every evening to the Montessori bungalow, where conversation flowed between them and others who were close to Montessori and her son. During these years, work continued on the advanced method and much of Montessori’s thought on “Cosmic Education” was formulated.

Montessori wished to have a school in Kodaikanal that could demonstrate her method, giving her adult trainees practical experience, and the Casparis’ cottage was selected as a place to begin. Montessori expressed the wish that it be bright and cheerful to welcome the children. With friends, paint, and brushes, the Casparis transformed it into a “Hansel and Gretel” cottage.

Solving a practical problem led to a custom that Elisabeth would make part of her own work in Montessori education and which would become a hallmark of the future Pan American Montessori Society. In Europe, shelves had been made of varnished wood, but the quality of wood available in Kodaikanal was so poor that
Elisabeth decided to paint the shelving. A different color was chosen for each area of work. Montessori was delighted with the result. Lena Wikramaratne, who had also been a student in the 1941–1942 course, was the first teacher in this cottage school. The Casparis would later sponsor Wikramaratne’s move to the United States.

Personal and group conversations with Montessori, who always shared with so much eloquence and enthusiasm her prescient insights regarding the child and new ways of serving his development, were a further training ground for Caspari. Through this 4-year association, she solidified the foundation and vision she would carry with her from India that would inform her work with children once she had started her own schools and had begun training Montessori teachers.

This “interested educator” had soon realized that Montessori had a wider message to share. She became a devotee of that message. “Montessori concentrated on the total child, mind, body, and soul. I saw music was a part of it. My work was very meaningful before, but with Montessori it took on much greater scope” (Caspari, 1994). Elisabeth especially identified with Montessori’s vision of the child having the potential to lead humanity to a better world, her understanding of the child’s development as “mind in the making,” and education as simply “help to life” (Caspari, 1994).

In 1948, the Casparis began a year of furlough from the Kodaikanal School and, chaperoning twelve graduating seniors, headed for colleges in the United States; they first visited Switzerland and England. During a 3-week visit with her family in Chateau d’Oex, Elisabeth’s mother passed away, and she was grateful to have been with her at this time. Within the year, Charles was advised by doctors not to return to India for the sake of his health. The Casparis would remain in the United States, and circumstances would give them the perfect opportunity to begin Montessori work there.

Arriving in the United States, they were eager to see this new country. Dr. Caspari already had plans for contacts she wanted to make during their year of travel. These included a trip to Kansas City to meet with the author/arranger of a series of music books she had used with classes at the American School in India. This brought her to a second goal—to visit Unity Village in Lee’s Summit, MO, not far from Kansas City. She and her husband, cleaning some high shelves in India, had discovered a copy of a Unity Magazine and found it so intriguing that they wanted to visit the Unity group.

One Sunday morning while in Kansas City, she and her husband, feeling a bit lost and blue, decided to visit a local Unity church. After the service, they were looking through books displayed in the lobby when “a tall gentleman” heard them mention their desire to visit Unity Village (Caspari, 1994). Ten minutes later, they were in the car of Lowell Fillmore, the president of Unity and oldest son of Unity’s founders. Caspari relates that they were given a tour of Unity Village and then sat down to visit in a room with a lovely fireplace. “What are you going to do?” asked Mrs. Fillmore (Caspari, 1994). Elisabeth answered that they planned to find an apartment, as she was interested in studying with Mrs. Gen, the music book author in Kansas City.

“Oh, we have many lovely apartments for our ministers who come every summer for conference, but they are free now. Why don’t you stay with us?” (Caspari, 1994). Once more, Elizabeth Caspari received an invitation that would shape her future.

The Casparis lived in Unity Village for almost two decades. Charles was immediately enlisted as a translator, and Elisabeth, for the first time in her life, was the wife without any teaching obligations. She played the piano in a large common room and visited with little children who came to see her. Then the thought struck her—she could start a Montessori school. She asked Charles if they could use some inheritance they had recently received to send to Italy for a set of materials. He agreed.

In 1952, beginning with just a few children (this later grew to an enrollment of 90), she opened Wee Wisdom...
Garden in Lee’s Summit. Accustomed as she was to passing on what she knew to others, she soon began teacher training. Three Montessori schools were subsequently opened in the local area. And since ministers and their families came each summer to Unity from many areas of the United States, invitations came to Dr. Caspari to help them establish schools in their home centers.

As opportunities arose, Caspari, with her husband as faithful assistant, would travel to various cities, train teachers, and help to establish schools. She would refer to herself as a “Montessori Gypsy,” traveling with the car trunk loaded with materials, staying as guests with one group and then another, giving lectures, managing courses, helping to set up new schools, and coaching interns (Caspari, 1994).

Yet she was a learner all her life, appreciating the work of others, and gaining information wherever she could. She completed further training and certification under Dr. Margaret Potts in Canada in 1964. The English-born Canadian had been trained by Dr. Montessori. Potts stated that she was one of the few people given by Montessori, in 1919, a letter of authorization to train and certify teachers around the world. In 1965, as Montessori was becoming a movement in the United States, Potts reported in a newspaper interview that Montessori had quietly flourished in Canada over many decades, stating that at that time there were 51 schools in that country (Doyle, 1965).

After studying with Potts, Caspari traveled to Italy in the summer of 1964 to take a Montessori course with Dr. Julianna Sorge in Verona. Caspari incorporated into her teaching and teacher training the math “boxes” that Sorge had developed as an expansion of the Montessori math curriculum.

In 1964, Unity invited the Casparis to Delray Beach, FL, to establish a Wee Wisdom Montessori school with Dr. Kathy Bowser as head teacher. Dr. Caspari trained teachers and, in 4 successive years, helped to organize the Miami Shores Montessori School with Catherine Bennett (1964), the Alexander Montessori School, with Beverly A. McGhee in Miami (1965), the Blake Institute with Linnie Lunde Jordan in Ft. Lauderdale, FL (1967), and then, the Sea Pines Montessori School with Sally Humphries on Hilton Head Island, SC (1968) (McGhee, May 16, 2008).

These school heads reflected the vision and enthusiasm that Caspari brought to her work; and they in turn worked tirelessly to advertise and bring together students for numerous training courses, and to help give the courses, do the testing, coach interns, and become Montessori teacher trainers themselves. In 1966, Dr. Caspari cofounded the Montessori Association of Florida, with Beverly McGhee and her husband James.

Beverly McGhee describes what Caspari brought to her teacher training and her work with others: “Charisma isn’t the word I’m looking for,” she says, “but faith—she had faith in the child to be, and faith in doing it the Montessori way. As a teacher, she gave us the spirit, not just the history. She inspired us. Montessori became our life” (McGhee, May 15, 2008). In 1972, friends and colleagues in Florida who had been taught by Elisabeth Caspari brought her sisters, Lucette and Estelle, from Switzerland as a surprise gift. Together with Montessorians in Florida, they gathered to celebrate the many schools Caspari had helped to start.

Again and again, Caspari’s inspiration propelled people into action. When Dr. Feland Meadows, a young Baptist minister in need of a Montessori teacher trainer for his work in Mexico, met Elisabeth in April of 1972 (the Casparis had been living in the Miami area for a number of years), she let him know she “wasn’t a bird on a branch” ready to take a leap (E. Caspari, 1994). She had many commitments, including teaching a course in Mississippi that coming summer. However, the summer after, Elisabeth and Charles packed their Chevrolet Blue Bird with clothes and Montessori materials and headed for Mexico.

From July of 1973 through July of 1974, Dr. Caspari gave 4 courses, one each quarter, educating approximately 100 teachers in Mexico City. Dr. Meadows began teaching the third and fourth courses with her, and together they founded the Pan American Montessori Society to perpetuate the work in Latin America, the United States, and elsewhere. Dr. Meadows was especially
grateful that they were able to train Mexican Indians who could take Montessori education back to the villages (Meadows, 1999). Meadows and Caspari would continue to work together over the next decades, as Elisabeth continued to train around the United States, awarding Pan American certification to interns who completed their requirements.

About Caspari, Meadows recalls,

She was inspiring as well as instructive. She inspired you to do the best you could do. . . . She was the most faithful disciple of Montessori on the planet. Sometimes you felt you were listening to Montessori herself. She would often quote whole passages she had memorized out of Montessori’s books and then comment on them.

(Meadows, May 18, 2008)

While in Mexico, the Casparis received a letter from friends in Hilton Head who wanted her to return there to assist with teacher training. They sent a key to a home they had obtained for the Casparis, with a picture of the mailbox with the Casparis’ name painted on it. Thus, Hilton Head became their next destination and their home until 1978. Charles passed away in 1977, a great loss for Elisabeth.

In 1978, reading about Montessori International in Calabasas, CA, Elisabeth went to visit to satisfy her curiosity and stayed for 8 years to train teachers at Summit University, while continuing to meet commitments to lecture and train around the country and overseas, including courses in Denver, CO, Savannah, GA, Southern California, and Switzerland.

In 1988, friends became concerned about Elisabeth’s health. She had entered the hospital for surgery to take care of a liver condition, but a fall from a hospital gurney while an X-ray was being taken had left her in critical shape. With the help and encouragement of the many who had come to love and assist her in her mission, she did recover. Now, however, she would use a wheelchair at home and a walker in public.

In 1992, responding to a friend’s request to come to Montana to attend her wedding, Caspari traveled from her most recent home in Santa Rosa, CA. Within a year, she had settled into what would be her final home, in a subdivision called Golden Age Village in Emigrant, MT. Here, she saw many young children who did not have a preschool, so she assisted a local private school in setting up another Montessori Garden and looked for someone she could train in this last decade of her life who would continue her work.

Anita Wolberd, who had trained under Caspari in California, and who had carried on Montessori work in Billings, MT, was chosen as head teacher at Montessori Garden. Very soon she and Caspari were organizing local teacher training courses and placing interns in schools around Montana. In 1998, Wolberd and her husband, with Caspari, formed the Caspari Montessori Institute (CMI) International, which continues her work today.
Celebrating its 10th year in July 2008, Caspari Montessori Institute’s MACTE accredited teacher certification program (for children ages 2½–6) currently holds classes at their centers in Boise, ID, and Livingston, MT (www.casparimontessori.org). CMI, a nonprofit educational organization, is affiliated with Pan American Montessori Society and the University of Montana Western. Students continue to be inspired by the Caspari Montessori legacy as they learn to respectfully guide and support the individual development of young children through classes taught by Anita Wolberd and other students of Dr. Elisabeth Caspari (Wolberd, December 17, 2008).

In 1994, the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) conferred the “Maria Montessori Lifetime Achievement Award” upon both Nancy McCormick Rambusch and Elisabeth Caspari. In 1995, Bretta Weiss, then national director of the American Montessori Society, awarded Dr. Caspari the “AMS Recognition of Contribution to Montessori Education” at the annual conference at the Eden Roe Hotel in Miami Beach, FL.

On September 5, 1999, in Bozeman, MT, friends, former coworkers, students, and associates from across America gathered for a dinner celebrating Dr. Caspari’s 100th birthday. AMS President Patti Tepper-Rasmussen brought gifts and greetings from AMS, including a plaque proclaiming Dr. Caspari to be a “Montessori Teacher Extraordinaire.” Others, reviewing the decades of Caspari’s notable Montessori service, presented tributes at the jubilant birthday banquet. Montana television and newspapers, covering the story, delivered Caspari’s message for Montessori to a wider audience.

Anita Wolberd (December 17, 2008) tells us that

Elisabeth Caspari believed in natural healing, health-giving food, sunlight, and prayer. Although during the last years of her life she was legally blind, could no longer walk independently, and suffered various physical ailments, she never let on to visitors. She was only interested in the advancement of Montessori’s work. The passion never subsided. Until her 100th birthday, she continued to attend CMI classes near her home from time to time and in Bozeman, MT. Students remember how she would tell them sternly, after a rigorous day of study and practice, “It’s not what you say. It’s not what you do. It is what you are. And you have to change!” Her only apparent fear was of hospitals. As her legal guardian, I was able to find sufficient help at the end of her life to keep her in her comfortable home surrounded with reminders of her Montessori life’s work. Even at her bedside, students came, learned, and were inspired. Two days before her passing, she began speaking only in her native French; the next day, there was no speaking. And then late in the day on July 11, 2002, she quietly slipped away. Her closest friends gathered near her, held hands, and said goodbye by singing her favorite children’s song, “Have in your heart sunshine . . . and all is well,” in English and in French. She would have been 103 later in the summer. The cause of death was recorded as pneumonia.

It was most unusual to have a conversation with Elisabeth Caspari that was not Montessori-oriented. Says Anita Wolberd (March 25, 2008), “She was well practiced in giving a succinct and convincing ‘elevator speech’ to anyone—a bank teller, a delivery person, even to her doctor who was trying to conduct an examination! It was her life’s mission to pass on the Montessori message!”

In an interview with a Palm Springs, CA, newspaper, prior to the beginning of another teacher training course in 1989, Caspari talked about Montessori as her inspiration. “Montessori brought more than a message. It is a way of life. I had 4 years of very close communion with her. She was a fire and I caught some of the flame” (Nunley, 1989) That fire continued through her last days and is well remembered today by so many who were associated with her over the years.

Caspari once said, “The best reward has been happy children in happy classrooms, learning the science of living. Children are my constant inspiration and joy” (McCarty, 1983).

References
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AN INTERVIEW WITH ANITA WOLBERD

When Elisabeth Caspari, in the last decade of her life, settled in a small subdivision called Golden Age Village in Emigrant, MT, amid the beautiful Rocky Mountains that reminded her so joyously of her native Switzerland, she noticed small children playing about. The fact that they had no preschool, in her mind, could not be left unattended. So once more, she was ordering materials and searching for a teacher.

Anita Wolberd, who had received her training under Caspari in California and who had been doing Montessori work in Billings, MT, agreed to work with her, and a classroom was opened in Emigrant. But this also meant that Caspari would quickly enlist her to help give the academic course for adults and to help train interns. Co-founder and director of the nonprofit Caspari Montessori Institute (CMI) International, Anita Wolberd is continuing the mission of Elisabeth Caspari by conducting teacher training courses currently in Montana and Idaho. She is a Pan American Montessori Society Master Teacher, a MACTE Commissioner, and a 2008 recipient of the Bozeman, MT Community Mediation Center’s Peacemaker Award for her work in Montessori education. She can be contacted through CMI at 406-223-0088 or at www.casparimontessori.org.

I interviewed Wolberd recently in Livingston, MT, at the CMI office. I wanted to know what qualities she found in Caspari, the enthusiastic and enterprising devotee of Maria Montessori, as she worked with her from 1992 through her last days in the summer of 2002.

Wolberd: The first quality was 100 percent focus. She was mindful, fully engaged in the moment. She was focused on the mission, and the mission was not just training teachers or opening schools. Her focus was a message of hope and a message of urgency to help us be ready for the current generation, to be ready for the next generation, who are coming to make a better world. So, what could she do as “a little girl from Switzerland,” as she called herself, for this most important mission? The best way she found to serve was to carry the message that Dr. Maria Montessori communicated to her in 1939.

ML: How did you see that focus play out?
Wolberd: In 1984, when I was doing my internship, I had the privilege of being invited to have tea with Dr. Caspari in the little apartment at the Montessori school where she was teaching and where I had my children enrolled. I was interested in the movements she was mak-

ing. Each one was so precise and beautiful in her making of the tea. I mentioned my observation to her and she said, “You never know when a child may be watching.” She handled the cups so beautifully, with no clatter or unnecessary movements. And that’s how we try to model for the children—not with such elegance that it’s pompous, but with a grace and a focus and an economy of movement. We bring carefulness and respect to whatever we are doing. I have often thought of this when I am hurriedly trying to put something together, “You never know when a child may be watching.”

In her final months (she passed away in July 2002), she was in bed most of the time and was cared for by friends, neighbors, and hospice workers. People would come to read to her and she loved this so much. They generally read the Bible and other spiritual books they thought she would enjoy hearing. But when I came, I always read Montessori to her. I remember the week before she passed away, I was reading an unpublished lecture on mathematics by Mario Montessori. She had her eyes closed as I read this long lecture.

When I finished, she opened her eyes and pointed her finger and said, “Do you know why teaching mathematics is important for young children? Divine order, divine order!” We know that children are in a sensitive period for order when they are 3 and 4 years old. And what is mathematics but order? So she had that 100 percent focus as she was seeking to have more understanding of these words, of Montessori’s methods. Once she got it, she wanted to teach it. I appreciate so much having this further teaching from her on Montessori math to pass on to my students.

During those last months, she was at a point where I thought she would not get out of bed again. But one morning when she woke up, she wanted to get into her wheelchair and come into the living room. She had a set of the Montessori bells in the room that had gotten dusty from disuse, so I began to clean them. Noting her interest, I picked up the mallet and played the scale. Her focus became intense; it almost made me jump. She said, “More tone! More tone! Bring the music out of the bells! Don’t put it in! Bring it out!”

So, here she was, one more time, giving me instruction on how to play the bells. This is another example of the intensity of her focus in each moment to what was happening—where she was. She wasn’t in the future, she wasn’t in the past, she was in the moment. Dr. Caspari was so successful in communicating the Montessori
message because the present moment is where children live. This is a vital message: that a teacher of young children must be there. Teachers must meet young children right where they are. That is why “Love Is the Key” is the motto Caspari brought to her work and we still use it today. If we love enough, we are willing to let go of our adult distractions and to be in the moment with them. When we are there with them, we can observe them properly and know how to support them. She was the master of modeling how to be in the “now.” How wonderful it was to have a model like that!

ML: I’ve heard you talk about how she was uncompromising.
Wolberd: Yes, she was uncompromising. There may be a better word in another language for uncompromising. It almost sounds like she was rigid. But she was not the least bit rigid. She stood for what she stood for, and she was very clear about it. The strength she had was like steel, and it was based on principles that she understood very clearly. When we were preparing for our first teacher training course together, we planned to use materials in our little community preschool that had come from my Billings school and from the new materials she ordered from Italy. I thought we had everything we needed, yet she gave me a long shopping list. She wanted to show the highest standard possible. She believed that when students came to the course they should see a perfect and complete example of each material, because human nature tends to go a little down from the standard.

One item she insisted that I buy was another set of the decimal system material, so that one would be for the bank games and the other for the big display of the decimal system. Because this beautiful bead material is expensive, I suggested that we use just one set for both lessons, saying, “Well, we could borrow….” And she said, “We are not people who borrow. We have.” So we bought another set. Only the ideal. She was uncompromising.

She also held a very high standard for the children. When I would bring the kindergarten children to her home for French classes each week, she expected them to pay attention and they did! They always seemed to be at their best with her, and they loved her so much. They never went empty-handed—even if it were dandelions, they came bearing gifts for their special teacher.

ML: 100 percent focus, uncompromising. What else would you pinpoint?
Wolberd: Humility. She considered herself to be a servant. She knew she had work to do and enlisted all of
us to be servants along with her. Sometimes it felt like we were servants to her, but, truthfully, we were walking with her as fellow servants. Because of this humility, she was always ready to learn from someone else and from events that were happening. She was open to learning until she was 100 years old and more. There's a story about Elisabeth Caspari visiting an intern in Florida. The intern was nervous about being observed. Dr. Caspari said, "Dear, don't worry. I don't come to judge. I come to bless."

Here's another instance of her humility. One day, my daughter brought a boyfriend to visit Dr. Caspari. She immediately took a great interest in him and asked what he liked to do. He told her he had a jazz band and was the drummer. Without a blink of an eye she sat up on the edge of her chair and said, "Oh, tell me! I know nothing about it!" He told her about his latest gig, the percussion instruments he found in Cuba, and so on, and he was putty in her hands. He left her house that day, walking taller than when he had arrived.

As the accomplished classical musician that she was, I was surprised that she shared nothing of her own accomplishments and interests, but only wanted to hear his stories.

ML: When she came to Montana, did you expect to work with her so long?

Wolberd: When I began to teach in the preschool in Emigrant, I did not think I would be a teacher trainer, because the rule was that I would need to have five courses with her. Five...5 years! She was 92! I did not have any contract signed, but I loved her, and how could I say no? As it turned out, she worked with us for another 10 full years. During those years, our students were opening schools in Livingston, Bozeman, Helena, and Paradise Valley as well as teaching in already established schools.

We felt her total love. In 2002, the mother of a 4-year-old in our school called to tell me that her daughter on hearing that "Mother Caspari" had passed away had cried and cried and was inconsolable, even the next day. She said, "Mommy, you don't understand. She was my best friend."

Everyone felt that Dr. Caspari was his or her best friend. It was a phenomenon, that people who had known her years before or people who had just met her the week before would feel a very special tie. This is not something that we experience often. Even the 4-year-old felt this loss of a best friend. The love that Caspari would send out to the children and to her students was very tangible. She won their hearts immediately and kept them.