

A Homeschooler's History of Homeschooling

Part III

1990-1992

by Cheryl Lindsey Seelhoff

As I researched the early 1990s for the purpose of writing this third chapter of *A Homeschooler's History of Homeschooling*, I realized how significant the years 1990, 1991, and 1992 actually were. These years marked a fork in the road, an important turning point in the history of the homeschooling movement ...

Summary of Parts 1 and 2

In Parts I and II of this series, I offered a brief history of education and educational movements in general, tracing the development of the Western system of education to Christianity and the interest of Christians in "apologetics," meaning making an intellectual defense of the faith. The university concept began in Medieval Europe and carried over to the United States, where colonists established church-sponsored schools and universities. Affected by the European Enlightenment, American leaders like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams pushed for universal education and state-sponsored educational facilities. By the turn of the 20th century, state-funded public education became mandatory for American children. Church schools continued to exist but faced increasing pressure from public school officials, eventually resulting, in some cases, in lawsuits which in the end, upheld parents' rights to decide how children would be educated.

I then traced the history of various educational movements in this country through the mid-1900s, when several men began to advocate for homeschooling. I included in this group John Holt, Dr. Raymond Moore, Dr. Peter Lindstrom, and Dr.

Rousas J. Rushdoony. By 1982, homeschooling was legal in 40 states. In the remaining 10 states, it was legal if overseen by a certified teacher.

In the early 1980s, visible Christian organizations mounted a campaign to fight what they called "secular humanism" in the schools, and this campaign affected Christian homeschoolers and Christian homeschooling leaders, who in increasing numbers began to object to what was then defined as "secular humanist" philosophies they felt they were seeing in textbooks and educational materials and in children's television, movies, and toys. Prior to this time, homeschoolers had worked together side by side despite their differences, united by their shared concerns for their children and their right to homeschool. As concerns about "secular humanism" increased and more and more people began to homeschool, things began to change. Conservative Christian homeschooling leaders and individual families and homeschooling support groups began to encourage Christian families to separate themselves from homeschoolers who did not share their faith. Differences arose between homeschoolers

about such issues as readiness, discipline, structure, and homeschooling style in general. Some Christian leaders began to call for "biblical separation" and to encourage homeschoolers to shelter their children, meaning keeping their children from spending time with people whose religious beliefs and practices were different from their own. The calls for separation eventually led to homeschooling groups requiring that leaders and/or members sign statements of faith as a condition of joining homeschool support groups, and the newly-exclusive groups began to reject writings, curriculum publishers, speakers, and other homeschoolers whose beliefs were not consistent with the beliefs of conservative evangelical Protestants, even when they had welcomed these individuals in years prior. Many who were excluded were self-professed Christians who stood outside the conservative evangelical Protestant faith tradition: Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, Eastern Orthodox and others. By 1990, homeschooling was legal in all 50 states and serious threats to homeschoolers were becoming rare, but the movement itself had become deeply divided and was now beset by internal strife and conflict.

In Part II of this series I described how the differences between homeschoolers affected them individually and homeschooling as a movement, and I also discussed the influence of specific groups and individuals on the homeschooling movement, including the Unschooling Movement and John Holt, Dr. Raymond and Dorothy Moore, and Bill Gothard and his Advanced Training Institute.

As I researched the early 1990s for the purpose of writing this third chapter of *A Homeschooler's History of Homeschooling*, I realized how significant the years 1990, 1991, and 1992 actually were. These years marked a fork in the road, an important turning point in the history of the homeschooling movement in the United States. I have devoted this chapter to covering those years in particular.

While for the purposes of this article, I have included some individuals, groups and movements within the parameters of a specific category, i.e., "conservative, evangelical Protestant," or "progressivist" or "existentialist," I would like to acknowledge the limitations of such categorization and the fact that some of those whom I have placed within these categories may not agree with my assessment.

Educational Philosophies as a Source of Division

In 1990 homeschooler Mary Hood (1), in her helpful and interesting doctoral dissertation entitled *Contemporary Philosophical Influences on the Home Schooling Movement*, identified four educational philosophies which she then used to analyze the conflicts and division which were apparent within the homeschooling movement. Said Hood:

"...if the various philosophies feeding into the movement can be explained, it may help the homeschoolers to understand some of the conflicts that have been developing within the movement itself and to defend their educational ideas to others. In addition, such

knowledge will enable them to become informed consumers of homeschool materials, capable of choosing curriculum materials and developing methodologies which are consistent with both their spiritual and educational beliefs." (2)

Hood then went on to identify four groups of homeschool authors and workshop leaders whose goals and beliefs appeared to line up with the tenets of four educational philosophies: essentialism, progressivism, perennialism, and existentialism. They were:

1. ... Gregg Harris, the editors of *The Teaching Home*, and the publishers of structured curriculum packages, such as Bob Jones University and Abeka Books, who appeared to adhere primarily to **essentialist** beliefs and practices;

2. ... Dr. Raymond Moore and his wife, Dorothy Moore, who appeared to adhere primarily to **progressive** beliefs and practices;

3. ... Charlotte Mason, Susan Schaeffer Macauley and the founders and directors of Child Light, who appeared to adhere primarily to **perennialist** beliefs and practices; and

4. ...John Holt, Holt Associates, and the editorial staff of *Growing Without Schooling*, who appeared to adhere to primarily **existentialist** beliefs and practices." (3)

Essentialist educators believe that they know beyond a shadow of a doubt what skills and knowledge students must acquire in order to be adequately prepared for adult life. There is an emphasis on the authority of teachers, obedience to authority, and on the value of hard work on the part of students. Curriculum

is highly structured and evaluation is done by way of testing.

Progressivist educators focus on the "importance of change, adaptation and growth, and on the interrelationship of individuals and their social and physical environments... individuals [are] encouraged to question and challenge established norms and to grapple with moral questions in the context of specific situations... in order to develop a feeling of social responsibility for their behavior." (4) Hood notes that John Dewey is often viewed as the founder of progressivist educational philosophy, and because Dewey signed the *Humanist Manifesto*, by association, the Progressive Movement has sometimes been adjudged to be entirely atheistic. However, the progressive education movement was, in fact, complex and attracted people from both religious and nonreligious perspectives. Progressivists emphasize readiness, experiential learning and integrated unit studies, along with including students in the planning and evaluating of their own work.

Perennialists believe that absolute and timeless values exist across time and culture, and they advocate the use of classical curriculum emphasizing traditional ideas. They focus on introducing students to the great ideas of western civilization – great literature, music, and art – and on offering a broad liberal education, and while teachers are still viewed as authority figures, respect for students is also emphasized. Evaluation is through oral or written compositions instead of testing.

Existentialist educational philosophy emphasizes authenticity in relationships and places an emphasis on honest relationships

"...if the various philosophies feeding into the movement can be explained, it may help the homeschoolers to understand some of the conflicts that have been developing within the movement itself and to defend their educational ideas to others." -- Mary Hood

An important observation Hood makes is that differences in educational philosophy do not "always follow the same lines as theological splits. When this is not recognized, difficulties can arise..."

between students and teachers, with students choosing their own curricula. There is an emphasis on avoiding labeling or categorizing in favor of recognizing what is unique about every person and every relationship. There are both theistic and nontheistic existentialists, that is existentialists who believe in God and who do not believe in God. Religious existentialists also emphasize authenticity as it relates to an individual's relationship to God. In education, homeschoolers who fall within this category will emphasize parents as facilitators of learning, unschooling, mentoring, and avoidance of tests and measuring devices such as grades.

An important observation Hood makes is that differences in educational philosophy do not "always follow the same lines as theological splits. When this is not recognized, difficulties can arise. Members of the same religious community often have trouble understanding why their ideas on educational goals, curriculum choices and methodologies do not necessarily mesh with those of their associates." (5)

The period between 1990 and 1992 was marked by a distinct

"... it is important for policy-makers to recognize that no single individual, group or organization, either on a local or a national level, can possibly hope to represent the views of all home educators adequately." -- Mary Hood, 1990

separation between homeschoolers, including among those who shared a common faith but who diverged in educational philosophy. A proliferation of books, magazines, workshops and curriculum resources which identified themselves as "Christian" during these and later years became the source of ongoing division and splits among Christian homeschoolers who did not distinguish between differences in educational philosophy and differences in religious belief, and who assumed that only specific educational philosophies and materials could be consistent with Christian beliefs, especially. In these years Christian homeschoolers who bought products from nonchristian organizations or who homeschooled consistent with any but essentialist philosophy often found themselves criticized or rejected along with homeschoolers of other faiths or of no particular faith for their "unbiblical" homeschooling style. If homeschoolers had recognized the sources of the differences between them were rooted not in religious beliefs but in educational philosophy, I believe they might have applied themselves to evaluating the varying philosophies carefully with an eye towards intentionality or mindfulness, and with the result

that they might have begun to understand one another more fully and to give one another the benefit of the doubt more often. Instead, partially because so many Christian homeschooling leaders espoused only a single philosophy, that unevaluated philosophy came to be viewed as the standard by which to measure all other homeschooling forms and all homeschoolers, whether the evaluating was being done by people inside or outside of the homeschooling movement.

Said Hood:

"... it is important for policy-makers to recognize that no single individual, group or organization, either on a local or a national level, can possibly hope to represent the views of all home educators adequately. Whenever policy decisions are made, it is important to include representatives of the homeschool movement in the planning process in order to ensure that decisions are fair and plans are feasible. However, the views of minorities within the movement should be given consideration and the concerns of those individuals or groups who are most noticeable or vocal in a given area should not be allowed to dominate the discussion completely.

"Home educators may find it helpful to recognize that religious convictions, while important, do not always mesh neatly with educational beliefs. Perhaps this realization may help ease some of the tensions that currently exist within the movement among participants with the same religious beliefs who disagree over educational matters. If educational differences can be recognized outside the context of specific religious beliefs, it may help the various segments of the movement to understand some of their disagreements and enable them to work cooperatively in those areas where unity is desirable."(6)

Would that many homeschoolers and homeschooling leaders, both religious and not, had read Hood's dissertation and had given it some thought. Divisions based on homeschooling methodology were not restricted to Christian homeschoolers; there were also divisions between those who

homeschooled for other than religious reasons. What might have happened had homeschoolers sat down together and evaluated which of these or additional approaches most closely matched their own beliefs and values? At the very least, the homeschooling community would have gained an essential grasp and understanding of their differences which might have resulted in an ability to be more accepting.

During the same month that Hood's writings appeared in the *Home School Researcher*, a homeschooler wrote, in a letter published in *Home Education Magazine*:

"While I respect those homeschooling for primarily religious reasons and accept many of those values, I come from a Roman Catholic background and homeschool because I feel I can teach my daughter more at home. ...I was told [in a support group] that the only valid reason for homeschooling was religious-based on the Bible. In another situation I was told I couldn't be Catholic and teach evolution. (The leader of that group wanted to call my pastor and report me! Please understand that I have presented evolution as one theory, not the entire truth.) In the nonreligious-oriented group, I have felt uncomfortable because I have allowed my daughter to take standardized tests. I understand why others are concerned about such tests and I support their right to disagree with authorities. However, I also reserve the right to make the decision I feel is best for my family." (7)

Another letter-writer wrote:

"I think it's important to find a better way to describe this situation than "Christian vs. non-Christian." There is so much pressure on Christian homeschoolers to belong to exclusive groups, as if to join a non-exclusive group is to admit one is not truly a Christian. We must make it clear that nonsectarian groups are not only for non-Christians." (8)

These were only two of such letters written to HEM and to other publications during this time as parents hurt by rejection or ostracism sought answers and understanding.

It was also during this time (1990) that The National Center for Home Education (NCHE) was created by HSLDA's Board of Directors as a ministry to state leaders. According to HSLDA, its interests included "legislative actions relative to home schooling, educational issues in general and parenting concerns from a conservative Christian fundamentalist viewpoint" (9)

In the face of increasing divisions among homeschoolers, many of them rooted in educational philosophy — although again, many homeschoolers mistakenly mistook diverging educational philosophies for religious, doctrinal differences — and also related to a growing belief that Christian homeschoolers should "separate" themselves from nonchristians, attempts were made to organize exclusively Christian state homeschooling groups, even when the states in question already had large and thriving inclusive groups. (10) *The Teaching Home Magazine* had long had a practice of including newsletter inserts from state organizations for the benefit of subscribers in each state. At some point the decision was made to stop including these newsletters as inserts unless the organizations were thoroughly Christian and would agree to require the signing of statements of faith either for all members or at least for board members. This resulted in a situation in which inclusive state organizations which had published their newsletter in *The Teaching Home*, sometimes for years, had their inserts dropped when they would not or could not become statement of faith groups. According to one state leader, "'The Teaching Home publishes the WCHEA newsletter, advertises its conferences, promotes the speakers who speak at these conferences and workshops... The Teaching Home also serves as a resource to exclusivist organizations and has a "State Organization Representative's Office" (headed by Sharon Grimes of Syracuse, NY) which makes special requests for new state leaders and organizations and helps them get organized. (Such a request was made in an attachment to a memo from Sharon

Grimes dated March 27, 1990, for the following states: Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, and Wisconsin.) (11)

In my own home state, Washington, *The Teaching Home* had published the WHO newsletter as an insert for many years. WHO was the first and largest state homeschooling organization in Washington. While most of its board was Christian, some members were not. In 1988 or thereabouts, the WHO newsletter disappeared from the pages of *The Teaching Home* and soon after was replaced by the WATCH newsletter (Washington Association of Teaching Christian Homes.), a group headquartered in Eastern Washington and far removed from the vast majority of Washington homeschoolers who lived on the other side of the mountains in the Pacific Northwest where WHO headquarters were located. No explanation was offered for dropping WHO's insert and replacing it with the WATCH insert. I recall being confused and wondering what must have happened. Had WHO folded or disbanded? Had there been some kind of falling out? Had WHO decided on its own to discontinue the insert in *The Teaching Home* or had it been pressured to do so? Was this just an error in the printing and mailing process so that the insert was overlooked? Was *The Teaching Home* discontinuing the practice of including the inserts? What was this new group about and how might it be similar or dissimilar to the old group? These were pre-internet days, and in some states it was difficult to obtain information about state groups, which were often operated by ordinary homeschooling families with just an answering machine and a post office box. Nobody knew immediately what was happening in other states, and in general, homeschoolers decided to wait and see.

With the exclusion of inclusive newsletters in *The Teaching Home* and the movement towards homeschool groups which required a statement of faith, lines of communication in the homeschooling community, which were already eroded by virtue of events and circumstances discussed previously

© Gentle Spirit Magazine -- Volume 6 Number 11

"The breaking down of the homeschool community is heralding more restrictive laws and regulations for all homeschoolers... Long established support and political networks have been damaged, and in many cases replaced with new exclusive groups." -- Mark and Helen Hegener

in this article, eroded further. Leaders and homeschool suppliers who were not Christians, or who were not the right "kind" of Christian, stopped receiving invitations to speak and to display their merchandise in homeschooling conferences, and their writings were no longer widely published. They were no longer listed on resource lists and they no longer received recommendations or referrals from Christian homeschoolers with whom they had sometimes worked for many years.

Alarmed by increasing levels of polarization and division in the homeschooling community, in spring of 1991, Mark and Helen Hegener, publishers of *Home Education Magazine*, published a special series of articles entitled *Homeschooling Freedoms at Risk*.

They wrote:

"The breaking down of the homeschool community is heralding more restrictive laws and regulations for all homeschoolers.

Long established support and political networks have been damaged, and in many cases replaced with new exclusive groups. Legal

actions have been taken which have resulted in the strengthening of states' rights over the education of our children. A view of homeschooling has been actively promoted which advances the notion that there is only one way to homeschool, and which ties that one way to an extremely narrow range of social and political support. A sense of community has been lost and our homeschooling freedoms are being threatened...

For the past three years hundreds of letters, conversations, phone calls, and other communications have been telling the same stories, asking the same questions, communicating feelings of confusion and bewilderment, and alerting us to an increasingly serious problem within the homeschool community. We have repeatedly attempted to address the underlying issues, and to alert people to problematic actions and directions. Now it has become obvious to us that people need to hear, clearly and unambiguously, what we and many others perceive as a serious threat to the homeschooling community.

That threat is the undermining of individual responsibility, with an

These were pre-internet days, and in some states it was difficult to obtain information about state groups, which were often operated by ordinary homeschooling families with just an answering machine and a post office box. Nobody knew what was happening in other states immediately...

increasing push toward a reliance on experts and professionals, and an ever-tightening monopoly on the tools and resources that homeschooling families need. " (12)

Unfortunately, by spring of 1991 when this report was first published, polarization between inclusive homeschoolers and groups and statement of faith homeschoolers was nearly a *fait accompli*, with the result that few in the latter group ever read the document or knew it existed.

During this same month, May of 1991, the Homeschool Heartbeat radio program, sponsored by HSLDA and described as a "public service program designed to encourage homeschool families," and hosted by Michael Farris, began airing on 76 stations nationwide. (13) The formation of NCHE, the exclusion of non-statement-of-faith groups from groups and communication networks, and programs like Homeschool Heartbeat gave rise to a monolithic image of homeschoolers as conservative evangelical Protestant Christians.

Two years earlier, in response to the idea that no one person should speak for homeschoolers, Mr. Farris had expressed his position as follows:

"Who gets to speak for the homeschooling movement? The majority speaks for the movement. Why should it rattle anyone's cage for the majority of homeschoolers to define the position of the movement? I would hope that non-Christian homeschoolers would endorse the rights of Christian homeschoolers -- including the right to vote our convictions and the right of majority rule." (14)

The Home-Centered Living Movement

In these same years, the years between 1990 and 1992, the homeschooling movement came in greater degrees to be influenced by what I will call the Home Centered Living Movement. I trace the beginnings of this movement to home-

schooler Mary Pride's book, *The Way Home*, published in 1986. In her book, Mary Pride set forth a vision for home-based living: home birth, home education, home business, in short, a life oriented around home and staying at home.

Pride's book and her newsletter presented homemaking and motherhood as a career and urged women to pursue lives as "Renaissance Women," managing their homes well, starting home businesses, educating their children at home. Around the same time that *The Way Home* was published, Pride published *The Big Book of Home Schooling* which she marketed to homeschooling families, in time writing a regular column for *The Teaching Home*. Her influence grew in homeschooling circles and in 1987 Pride began her newsletter, *HELP for Growing Families*, for those who were inspired by the vision for home-centered living.

Advocates for home-centered living usually shared certain beliefs: that family planning (called "family banning" by Pride) was unbiblical, that women should leave the number of children they conceived "up to God," that sterilization was wrong, that home birth was preferable to hospital birth, that it was wrong for women to work outside the home, an appreciation for large families, a belief that homeschooling is the best educational option.

While home-centered living advocates were zealous for their cause, they often struggled with the practical challenges of many children and with balancing homeschooling, home management, and home centered life in general. I understood this very well because I had experienced the same struggles in my years of homeschooling, and in 1989, I began my own publication, *Gentle Spirit*. My goal was to offer practical help, particularly from experienced, older women, so that women at home could be helped to accomplish their goals and might find greater satisfaction in the lives they had chosen. *Gentle Spirit* was the magazine I would have wanted to read when I began homeschooling in 1983. To that end, I published regular articles, written by me, by regular columnists and guest

In these same years, the years between 1990 and 1992, the homeschooling movement came in greater degrees to be influenced by what I will call the Home Centered Living Movement. I trace the beginnings of this movement to home-schooler Mary Pride's book, *The Way Home*, published in 1986.

writers, on the subjects of home organization, homeschooling, pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, large families, gardening, homemaking skills, crafts, home business, and other subjects of interest to women at home. From my counterculture days as a college student in the 60s, I carried into my homeschooling life, and hence into my writing and editing, an appreciation and preference for what was homespun, earthy and natural. During this time in my life I had also become convinced that it was right to attempt to literally "do" the Bible, and I shared my thoughts and experiences with others.

The Home-Centered Living Movement was a lifestyle movement. Increasingly, partially in response to this movement, the focus in Christian homeschooling groups and among Christian homeschoolers shifted away from the nuts and bolts of homeschooling to other aspects of home-centered life which I have just described. This aggravated already-existing tensions in the homeschooling movement and Christian and nonchristian home-schoolers began increasingly to square off over issues which were not directly

homeschooling-related: birth control, family size, home birth, prolife work, home business, home church, dress styles and headcoverings for women. Those dedicated to the movement were often enthusiastic and zealous; there was a kind of excited contagion about this new lifestyle where pregnancies and births were celebrated and welcomed, gardens were planted, wheat was ground for homemade bread, home businesses were created, books on discipline and Christian parenting were read and discussed thoroughly, simplicity was viewed as desirable. These homeschoolers' lifestyle made them very different from the cultural mainstream and different from other homeschoolers as well. Often, even their appearance marked them as different - it is during these years that jumpers became *de rigueur* for homeschooling moms - and they depended heavily upon one another for support and encouragement.

The Issue of Remarried Homeschoolers

One of the more serious issues which divided homeschoolers in these important years was the issue

While home centered living advocates were zealous for their cause, they often struggled with the practical challenges of many children and with balancing homeschooling, home management, and home centered life in general... in 1989, I began my own publication, *Gentle Spirit*. My goal was to offer practical help...

One of the more serious issues which divided homeschoolers in these important years was the issue of remarried homeschooling Christians.

of remarried homeschooling Christians. In the summer of 1991, right around the time the Hegeners had released *Homeschooling Freedoms at Risk*, an article entitled *Marriage and Revival* appeared in Mary Pride's publication, *HELP for Growing Families*. In this article, Mary Pride suggested that God was not sending a revival among Christians because so many Christians had divorced and remarried. After presenting her understanding of the passages of the Bible relating to divorce and remarriage, Pride wrote:

"So what did Jesus teach? The best answers we have seen are in a book Home Life offers, *Till Death Do Us Part*. The bottom line: God wants you to stay with, or return to, your original, legitimate spouse. (If your original spouse had a living ex-wife or ex-husband, your marriage to him or her was not a legitimate, God-sanctioned marriage. Only your first marriage to a person with no living ex-spouses is a legitimate marriage.) If you can't do this, you must at least not have sex with anyone else other than your original, legitimate spouse. This means that those of us who want to stay married can relax – nobody has the right to take our spouses away from us, and if they do depart, we are still entitled to receive them back, rather

than having to surrender them permanently. When the church as a whole adopts this teaching, backing it up with discipline (e.g., only accepting into membership those who have proper marital alliances), then we will have removed the "Achan" from our camp ...and God will go forth with us and fight for us again.

"...You may feel your situation is legitimate because (1) the divorce happened before you were saved. (2) the original marriage partner committed adultery, (3) the original marriage partner abandoned you, (4) the original marriage partner divorced you and remarried, (5) the original marriage partner was evil to you or the children, or simply (6) it would be too hard on you and your family, especially the children, to consider the possibility that your present marriage is not legitimate. We do sympathize, but are asking you to read the book..."(15)

For some who had followed and participated in the home-centered living movement and whose very identities were often wrapped up in this lifestyle, this was devastating. Having abandoned birth control, often having a large, one-income family, remarried homeschooling couples often struggled and agonized, wondering whether their

marriage was, in fact, acceptable to God. In some instances, homeschoolers, particularly in house churches, confronted remarried couples, telling them that in order to remain in fellowship, they would have to separate and return to legitimate spouses. Reports circulated that some homeschooling remarried couples had separated, or were considering separating, even when they had many children. In other instances, remarried families were shunned, once their background was learned, denied admission to church fellowships, or they hid the fact that they were remarried in order to stay in the good graces of people upon whose support they had come to depend and worried constantly that their "secret" would someday be revealed. Most conservative homeschooling Christians had never heard of these teachings relating to divorce and remarriage and Christian homeschoolers were divided on the issue. Increasingly, Christian homeschooling conferences increasingly offered workshops dealing with subjects which were not directly homeschooling-related: dress styles, courtship or betrothal as opposed to dating for teenagers, submission and other issues related to marriage, so that immersion in this lifestyle was total and, for many, to leave it, unthinkable.

As time progressed, two magazines for men in these circles emerged: *Patriarch Magazine*, edited by homeschooler Phil Lancaster, dedicated to "equipping men to be godly leaders in family, church and society," and *Quit You Like Men*: edited by Robert Green, and devoted to "the pursuit of true Christian manliness." These magazines offered articles relating to home business, farming, leading in the home, livestock, gardening, homeschooling, church matters, and other matters viewed as of concern to homeschooling fathers. These magazines were also home-centered living magazines.

The Expertization of Homeschooling

Although traditionally and historically, homeschoolers had resisted an emphasis on experts in favor of viewing homeschooling

The Home-Centered Living Movement was a lifestyle movement. Increasingly,..[its particular emphases] aggravated already-existing tensions in the homeschooling movement and Christian and nonchristian home-schoolers began increasingly to square off over issues which were not directly homeschooling-related: birth control, family size, home birth, prolife work, home business, home church, dress styles and headcoverings for women.

parents as themselves the experts by virtue of their homeschooling experience, the years between 1990-1992 marked an increasing expertization of the homeschooling movement. Conferences in many states were becoming large, commercial extravaganzas held in convention centers in large cities. I spoke at some of these conferences and was always struck by their incongruity: here were thousands of parents, lots of women in jumpers and some in head coverings, people who, in general, led simple and humble lives, often without television, movies, or even music, attending large, impressive conferences in convention centers where all children save nursing infants were excluded, listening to "expert" after "expert" as each one presented his or her view of what God was expecting from these parents. I was often struck by the dissonance, the contrast between sitting in a conference amidst 20th century opulence and affluence, and returning to my unusually humble home where my nine children, farm animals, and garden awaited me. How did we get from there to here, I wondered? How had we gone from learning to homeschool our own kids in our own way day by day to this new scene, where we assembled together to be told how things should be done? I remembered my early days of homeschooling, where a "conference" was a picnic in the park or a small meeting in someone's church fellowship hall or recreation room, complete with cookies, juice, coffee and handouts, usually with children playing in the background and lots of laughter and talking.

The expertization phenomenon wasn't specific to statement of faith conferences. This was a time of growth in the homeschooling movement. One homeschool writer wrote:

"I have mixed feelings about these new conferences. I miss the woods and the baked beans and potato salad and the pioneer spirit...I don't particularly miss the mosquitoes and the rain and the mud and the portable toilets. I must admit that I allow myself to become spoiled at conference hotels...The most common complaint I hear

the years between 1990-1992 marked an increasing expertization of the homeschooling movement. Conferences in many states were becoming large, commercial extravaganzas held in convention centers in large cities.

about conferences is the bias many of them have toward commercial solutions to homeschooling challenges...It is argued that when such conferences host a vast number of vendors with their academic materials and feature dozens of speakers who give relatively conservative pedagogical advice, they foster the assumption that home education is primarily about making the right purchases. Alternative views, natural learning or unschooling among them, are overpowered by this dominant commercial presence." (16)

Rebuilding

Homeschoolers outside of statement of faith groups had been placed in the position of working hard to rebuild networks which were fractured or destroyed altogether. The National Homeschool Association, in particular, sought to include more homeschoolers nationally in 1991 by way of a conference in Sacramento. Ironically, the strengths, gifts and independence of inclusive, non-statement of faith homeschoolers – the same characteristics which have given them courage and helped them to persevere alone — sometimes proved to be obstacles to organization and to moving forward with new organizations and networks. Quite commonly, inclusive homeschoolers

sought to avoid traditional hierarchical patterns of organization and preferred consensual, nonhierarchical meeting and relationship styles.

One organizer said:

"Everyone came as an equal, with something to learn and something to share. This is so different from most conferences where attendees go expecting to be told what and how to do something from "experts" and "leaders" in a movement. However, it stands to reason that someone who has chosen to go against the mainstream of traditional schooling already is a "leader." The NHA conference was intended to support and empower all home-school leaders, whether they have just begun homeschooling or homeschooled in the 60s...Once you recognize that you are your own "expert" you begin full participation in the NHA conference! And it is exciting to exercise this heady freedom." (17)

I would like to point out in closing that the pressures on statement of faith homeschoolers were, in some instances, severe. Some felt they were required by God to have as many babies as they could, for instance. Some worried

The perspective of many statement of faith homeschooling leaders as to establishing separate, groups is summed up in this excerpt from *The Teaching Home*:

"Christian organizations have both a Christian purpose and Christian leaders. These organizations are not, however, "exclusivist" as claimed by a currently circulating false teaching. Their leaders do not feel they are better than anyone else, nor do they shrink from all contact with non-Christians. They minister to all, just as Christ did - not with all, but to all...The problem comes...when non-Christians or uninformed or misled Christians cannot accept the personal beliefs of others and their desire to follow and please their Lord. These Christians are doing what they believe is God's will for them by establishing home-school organizations with a distinctly Christian purpose. Christians are not trying to stop or slander others who wish to establish secular groups. We ask for the same courtesy."

--Sue Welch, Critical Concern Issue, "Christian Home-School Organizations Enable Leaders to Honor the Lord God as they serve others." *The Teaching Home*, Oct/Nov 1991, p. 63. Emphasis in the original.

"Everyone came as an equal, with something to learn and something to share. This is so different from most conferences where attendees go expecting to be told what and how to do something from "experts" and "leaders" in a movement. However, it stands to reason that someone who has chosen to go against the mainstream of traditional schooling already is a "leader."-- Agnes Leistico

because they were remarried. Home centered lifestyles could be extremely grueling, with long days and hard work the rule and not the exception, especially when there was little money, as was often the case in homeschooling families. These families often believed that God would reward their obedience and alternately, that He would punish their disobedience. They often had a heady sense of belonging, of being part of a pioneering, remnant group which enjoyed God's special favor, and this feeling of belonging often kept them struggling through dark and difficult times when they were afraid or weary. I believe most of these people were sincere in their beliefs and were not intending to cause any harm the homeschooling movement.

Continued next issue

Footnotes:

(1) Mary Hood, *Contemporary Philosophical Influences on the Homeschooling Movement*, Doctoral (Ph.D.) dissertation, University of Alabama, Birmingham. (University Microfilm Order No. 9114878), reprinted in *Home School Researcher*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1991, p. 3. Hood is also the author of **The Relaxed Homeschool: A Family Production**, Ambleside Educational Pr. 1994.)

- (2) Ibid, p. 3
- (3) Ibid, p. 4
- (4) Ibid, p. 4
- (5) Ibid, p. 2
- (6) Ibid, p. 7
- (7) Letter appearing in *Home*

Education Magazine, March-April 1990, pp. 8-9.

- (8) Letter appearing in *Home Education Magazine*, November-December 1990, p. 6.
- (9) www.hslda.org/hslda/history/timeline.html
- (10) Larry Kaseman, *Freedoms Responsibilities And The "Four Pillars*, Wisconsin Parents Association, 1991
- (11) http://www.home-ed-magazine.com/INF/FREE/hsinfo_far1.html
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) *Homeschool Community News, The Teaching Home*, Aug/Sept 1991, p. 25

(14) *Teaching Home Magazine*, April/May 1989, Column by Michael Farris

- (15) Mary Pride, *Marriage and Revival, HELP for Growing Families*, Vol. 3, No. 4, Summer /Fall 1991, p. 1.
- (16) Earl Stevens, *Talk About Learning, Home Education Magazine*, May-June/1992, p. 61.
- (17) Agnes Leistico, Letter to *Home Education Magazine*, March-April/1992, p. 8
- (18) From the conference brochures of the 1992 Washington State Homeschool Convention and the 1993 Christian Home Educators of Colorado Conference.

Statement of Faith Homeschooling Conferences Contrasted with Inclusive Homeschooling Conferences

The 1992 Washington State Homeschool Convention, sponsored by an inclusive, non statement-of-faith group, offered, among others, the following featured speakers and workshops:

- ▶ David and Micki Colfax, Keynotes, **“Rafting Across the Sahara,”** *“a delightful topic about learning from our homeschooling graduates: Who they are; where they have been; Where they are going.”*
- ▶ Linda Montgomery, Featured Speaker, **“Raising the Best of Kids in the Worst of Worlds”** *“Scores of parents today are confronted with the dismaying truth that despite the advantages they have provided of good homes and material blessings, their children have never grown up. Dr. Montgomery will identify the essential ingredients of the home curriculum, a curriculum guaranteed to prepare the youth of the last decade of the twentieth century for every kind of leadership in the 21st.”*
- ▶ Carol Moitozo, Featured Speaker: **“Parents as Turtles, They Make No Progress Until They Stick Their Necks Out”** *“As parents we may seek the protection of our shells, but turtles who retract into their shells get nowhere. Calculated risks are necessary, yet our parental instincts are often detoured by doubts, peer pressure, and circumstances.”*
- ▶ Arnold Hoffman, Featured Speaker: **“The Mad Scientist – Backyard Style”**
- ▶ Steve Moitozo, Featured Speaker: **“American Education—Is Anybody Home?”** *“After nine years serving on community boards and committees and hosting a radio talk show 55 times each week called “Education Today,” I’ve learned to crystallize the issues and have discovered why homeschooling ‘takes a licking and keeps on ticking.’”*
- ▶ Cheryl Lindsey (Seelhoff), Featured Speaker: **“Run That You May Obtain: Persevering In All the Seasons of Homeschooling”** *“Whether you are in the springtime of homeschooling, teaching phonics to little ones, or entering harvesttime – launching your graduates – or in a combination of all at once, the unique challenges of each season of homeschooling can be overwhelming. How perseverance pays off.”*
- ▶ Joel Black, Featured Speaker: **“Beware Your Local Professional Educator”** *A career educator looks at the dangerous (and healthy) philosophies rampant (or overlooked) in education, what is quality education, and why it is increasingly obvious to educators that homeschool is the fountain of genius.*

The above speakers include four nonChristians (agnostics or atheists), one speaker who did not state a religious preference, two conservative Christians, and one Mormon.

By contrast, the 1993 Christian Home Educators of Colorado Conference, a statement of faith organization, offered these workshops, among others. (Note: Featured speakers at this conference offered a number of workshops; I am not specifically listing them all.)

- ▶ Michael Farris, Keynote: “A Transitional Generation”
- Featured Speakers:
 - ▶ Cheryl Lindsey (Seelhoff);
 - ▶ David Quine (Cornerstone Curriculum Project),
 - ▶ Rob Gregory (host of Focus on the Family Family News in Focus);
 - ▶ Jane Hoffman (Backyard Scientist)

Some workshop titles (various speakers)

- ▶ Once a Month Cooking,
- ▶ Reality Scheduling: Organizing Your Home;
- ▶ Building a Biblical World View;
- ▶ Identifying Family Problems;
- ▶ Biblical Concepts in Character Building;
- ▶ The Biblical Basis for Science Teaching;
- ▶ Spiritual Warfare: Recognizing the Schemes of the Enemy;
- ▶ Absolute Truth in an Age of Tolerance;
- ▶ Our Children: A Letter of Christ;
- ▶ Christian Coalition;
- ▶ Whole Wheat Bread Baking;
- ▶ Titus 2 Living in a Feminist Age”(16)

Of the above speakers, four were conservative Christians and one did not state a religious preference. (18)■