



## WORLD PLAY DAY MESSAGE 2018

Once more it is time for my personal message to YOU for WPD.

One morning I picked up a pen with my first cup of coffee. I started writing on a spare piece of paper cut from some photographs I had printed recently. Thinking of topics for this message I jotted down the following. PLAYTIME \* FLOOR PUZZLE \* PLASTICINE \* PLAYING CARDS \* SUNDAY AFTERNOONS\* \*IF YOU DON'T PRESS A BUTTON, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

PLAYTIME. I wonder how many people who read this can remember the “magic of playtime” When I started school, just 5 years old, in 1938 the school schedule included several sessions of “Playtime”. We walked to school from distant villages and everyone seemed to arrive early and we played outside until the headmaster blew the whistle at 8.55 a.m. and that was the command to line up in our classes – and march into school “babies” first and the big ones last. In the babies’ class we sat in our places and sang a few songs to get the day going and then we practised our writing or did a few sums and before we knew it, it was “playtime”. In all weathers it was up and out into the playground to play. No one told us what to do. One favorite game was Cowboys and Indians – an older child would take a younger child for a piggy back and there was lots of shouting and rushing about - and that’s all I remember. I certainly had no idea what a cowboy was or an Indian; or, for that matter who won or even if there was a winner. For me it was prestigious to have a piggy back, to be included and not left out of the game. Then the days when there was snow – all dressed up for the weather, of course, we played “snow balls” Better still came the very icy

days when the playground, that had a convenient slope, became our ice rink and to help us run and slide from top to bottom our very sensitive head master would throw buckets of water down the slope that would freeze almost immediately providing the perfect ice-slide for us to skate down at top speed ending when we came to the fence at the bottom of the playground. Yes those were magic playtimes.

FLOOR PUZZLE In those long ago days a floor puzzle was made from wood about 1/2 an inch thick and beautifully carved leaving no splinters in large pieces for little hands and ours was a zoo puzzle with lots of animals. This was always played with in the corner of the “front room” and usually on Sundays because that was the only day when the family sat in the front room and there would be a fire burning. Always the puzzle was shared and completed with several members of the family, usually my sister (2 years older ) me and our dad. Mum sat by the fire.

PLASTERCINE – the fore-runner of play-dow – the friend of flour-dough

We two little girls, my sister and I sat at the kitchen table with a piece of linoleum each and a ball of brown plasticine. Brown because it was well used by little hands and the bright new colours of plasticine had long melted into this one friendly ball. My piece of linoleum was square and coupled with my metal farm set provided the basis of another Sunday afternoon play. A truly country girl always playing the game of the farm. My sister had a longish strip of linoleum and played other games from her imagination and gradually introduced bits of “mecano” (bits of metal with holes in and nuts and bolts) to mix in with the plasticine to tell her stories.

PLAYING CARDS

Our Dad could build the most extraordinary Card Houses; sometimes even with an “upstairs”. Great skill to be collapsed with the wobble of a single card or, of course a single puff from a little mouth. This game was an alternative to the floor puzzle - on the floor in the corner of the front room.

As I write this I am forced to reflect on the fact that all this “playtime” involved other people. Someone to be with, someone to talk to, someone to love and be loved by.

And then I ask

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU DIDN'T PRESS A BUTTON? Think of your day. Think of your activities. Could you get through this life, this week, this day, this hour without pressing a button? The door bell, the elevator, the kitchen, the computer, the hand phone. And how much of your day passes without seeing, speaking to or even touching another person. Can we actually imagine a life without buttons to press – alternatively do we overtly or secretly long for a day, a time without buttons to press – a “PLAYTIME”.

Two things come to mind that have happened recently

1. TOYS R US ARE CLOSING ALL THEIR SHOPS – could this, in part, be a decrease in the demand for the more traditional toys
2. As I browse the internet I see that Professors are advising parents to leave

their children alone, let them play as they will with whatever they will and all will be fine – they will have healthy bodies, alert minds, good social skills .....if we stand back and let it happen

The frame work of this message came rushing into my mind because I I picked up a pencil. I forgot to enable my hand phone, and -didn't press any buttons at all for 2 hours

I started this message before I saw that the theme for this year's WPD is FREE PLAY. For a moment let's just rephrase this to "FREE TO PLAY" I have written in previous messages about some of my descriptions of PLAY (See ITLA website WPD Message 2012) I won't repeat these but I will say that the essence of PLAY is FREE ,or to rephrase again - it isn't PLAY if it is constrained by outside forces, Play for each person can be different but free to evolve from the inside; the inside of the individual flowing freely as a gurgling, winding, mountain stream.

FREE TO PLAY Are we? Are You?

Play is inside all of us, so let's Play on WPD Day on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Freda Kim

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