

Corbett is helping to redefine education

There is a Mississauga senior who has followed a dream throughout her life, sustaining a passionate ideal from its conception to reality.

When Dr. Barbara Corbett looks at her life's work, she needs only to gaze across from her study window to the Froebel Education Centre on Dundas St. W. Now, at the age of

reflection on one's achievements, she looks forward with as much gusto and delight to its future as she did years ago as an idealistic student.

It was during her years of research for a doctorate in education that Corbett formulated the idea of a school founded on the

principles of 19th century German educator Friedrich Froebel. He maintained children's education must begin with their own natural activity, using each child's developmental stages as the foundation for educational experience.

Froebel's ideas influenced the establishment of kindergartens in Ontario public schools in the 1880's, a development Corbett



SENIOR SIGHTLINES

Lynda Chiotti

explored in detail in her book, *A Century of Kindergarten Educa-*

tion in Ontario. But Corbett feels large classes and a confusion of theories has now produced a public system that is not as good as it could be.

During her own elementary education in the Depression years in Vancouver, she was in a demonstration class for teachers in training, a creative atmosphere in which students were given opportunities to stretch themselves, doing things normally thought beyond them.

"We were very active learners," she remembers, "we organized everything."

After some years spent teaching in the public system, she organized her dream of a model school into a modest reality in 1970 with nine children and one teacher (termed a kindergartner by Froebel) in rented premises near their present location.

With friend Judith Bowlhy as administrator, Dr. Corbett gradually trained additional kindergartners and added students, today numbering 85 and ranging from 3-years-old to Grade 8.

Teachers and parents are attracted to the school by its philosophy, rather than the cachet of belonging to a private school. Their new building opened in the fall of 1990, a considerable achievement for a small group of families with not much money but much plenty of faith.

Dr. Corbett refers to the centre as a lighthouse for Froebel's principles, where educators, many visiting from the public system, can see his ideas put into practice for the benefit of the children there. She hopes in this way to have his influence extended and reaffirmed in public schools throughout the province.

And as for herself, now at the age when she could justifiably rest on her success? She dismisses the idea of retirement with a chuckle.

"I'm very keen about teaching."