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### WHASSERNAME?

by Ruth Prins

"I dunno."

A plaintive call from mother: "Mary Agnes Virginia doesn't know the names of any of her teachers and she can't have any friends. She says she doesn't know anybody."

Children learn quickly their teachers' names for how else can they ask for a particular class when they've gone to the lavatory or are late and classes have shifted. This is useful data and quickly and accurately acquired. It is also hazardous information. Mother doesn't only ask WHO the teacher is. The child knows the first query is going to be followed by questions increasingly in depth and while he doesn't mind discussing a day's activities on his initiative, he soundly despises being pinned down and quizzed. It's such an easy out: "I dunno!"

Children are also self-centered. This is especially apparent at three years when the child seems to operate in a cloud-like cocoon oblivious to other children. An important part of pre-school experience is drawing the child from his cocoon into contact, inter-relating, even confrontation with other children. There is no necessity to learn a peer's name when a pointing finger or a jab in the kidney will clarify what-and-with-which-and-by-whom. A child's behavior is subtly shaped by any manner of games and stragegems wherein it is impottant and necessary to identify, ~~desereber-and-re,er,ber-a-peer/--of~~ , describe, and remember a peer. If a peer has a name and an identity, he also has feelings and can be hurt...or pleased. (With wonder: "He bleeds!" Of

a teacher: "She eats!" )

"You have beautiful blue eyes, Ann. What color are my eyes?"  
Ann considers the fact that others beside herself have eyes, that someone noticed that her eyes were blue, and that someone is waiting for her opinion! Gradually, happily, and sometimes with excitement (John has green eyes), children discover others. It is not to be rushed and the day still dawns when Ann says with slight interest, "I don't know what her name is...BUT I know what MY name is!"