

# A Special Day At Grayling

By MATTIE PAT SHAW

No, not the end of the world — but, school. It's a rather special day for me, as well as the children. We spent our last day cleaning up Grayling. The children were sent out in teams

of two or three, their names printed on trash bags, with instructions to pick up all the trash they could find. First prize, fifteen dollars; second prize, ten dollars and third prize for the most bags of trash collected, five dollars.

What action! The children kept me busy writing their names on bags. William Painter, our aide, directed traffic in front of the school, and Johnnie Shaw, our principal, could be

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Pen and Paper days are over for a few months as the

# ● SCHOOL YEAR ENDS

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heard all over the village admonishing the children not to pick up rocks.

The contest was over at 2:30 p.m., and the undisputed champions were Alfred Painter and Joe Maillelle, Jr.; second place went to the team of Glen Howard and Fred Norman. Donna Wulf and Loretta Maillelle came in third.

Johnnie had all the children line up in front of the school, made the presentations, and then gave all the participants a dollar each. One little girl, Brenda Nicholi, was the last one back to the school. She was a study in emotions. All the children passed her, waving their money and laughing, and there she stood, a little second grade girl, about as big as a minute, with tears rolling down her cheeks, dragging a bag of trash about twice her size.

She thought she had missed out on everything. Johnnie called her over, gave her a hug and a dollar, and off she went, tears forgotten to the store for her favorite candy bar. Joe Maillelle, Jr., was so intent on coming in first, that he picked up a roll of new insulation from

his home and stuffed it very neatly in one of the bags. We'll have to rescue it before it goes to the dump and return it to the Maillelles. They'll probably need it before winter sets in. Grayling has always been a pretty village, and now it's also a clean one, thanks to the children.

After all the children had left, I went back to the classroom to turn off the lights. I Looked at all the furniture piled in the middle of the room, the bare walls and above all, I listened to the quiet. It was deafening!

I sat down at my desk and thought of all the fun and learning, tears and smiles, heartaches and happiness, that had transpired during the year. I remembered one little first grade boy, who, for no apparent reason, yelled out "I'm a white man." So, he became a white man for one day. I thought about the fourth grade boy, Timmy, who brought me a bag of live, wiggly eels, and on his way out the door, told me that they were electric. I remembered the first time that the first graders read a sentence by themselves. Then, there was a little first grader, Stanley, who whispered confidentially

to me that Brian was a Native, but all the other children were Indians. I thought about how pretty Barbara and Judy looked with their beaded headbands and I laughed when I thought of the little first grade girl, Amy, who was being interviewed and was so awe-struck by the tape recorder, that she forgot her name.

Then, there was the upper grade boy who brought me a duck, plucked and cut, and ready for baking, he did it all by himself and couldn't wait until the next day to bring it to me. He brought it over around 11:30 p.m., a smile from ear to ear, happy that he could do something for me.

I thought about the eagerness, the desire to please, the humor and the beauty of all the children. I hope and pray that I have taught the children the things they need to know, but above all, I hope we have become friends, not for just a school year — but for a lifetime.

None of the children call me Mrs. Shaw, a few call me Pat, but most of them call me — teacher — what a beautiful name. I hope I live up to it. Now, all I have to do is walk out of this ghost room — and close the door.