Warrendale
The Children

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Produced for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
by Allan King Associates
Warrendale is a residential treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children. It is both an experiment and a frontier.

The children are not brain damaged or mentally defective; their problems are emotional. Their behaviour is so disturbed that it is not tolerable to the community. They are not able to live with their parents or foster parents - if indeed they have either.

In the past the alternatives would be juvenile detention or a psychiatric ward. Many of the children here have had bitter experience of both.

We spent all our time in House Two. There are twelve children and they live together as a family with eight full time staff to care for them. It was the same in each of the other houses of the Centre.

The film was shot over a five week period, February and March, 1966. The final version is one hundred minutes long and was edited from forty hours of film.

[Signature]
The children who live at Warrendale are people whose lives have gone off the track. At some stage in their growing-up, they began to follow abnormal paths of emotional response to their world of people and objects. Eventually, their paths diverged so far from the normal that it became impossible for them to live in a normal family or a normal community. Their fear, their rages, their withdrawal had become so extreme that parents and teachers and friends could no longer contact them, and they were lost. They represent perhaps one out of ten children in a Western community.

The programme at Warrendale was designed to bring these children back to the point of divergence and set them out anew on a path that tolerated normal human relationships, with a rediscovered control over the ego.

The atmosphere is that of a family. The children live in groups of 12, in a house, with a trained staff in loco parentis, in a warm and supportive atmosphere that not only tolerates but welcomes and encourages the expressions of all feelings, even the most violent and destructive. Unlike traditional institutions where outbreaks of violence are controlled or contained by drugs, "Quiet Rooms", and straightjackets, the Warrendale treatment calls for firm, safe, physical personal holding of the child who blows up. He is taught that, in a "holding" it is safe for him to blow completely; he cannot hurt himself or others, and he is allowed to express his most inner and terrifying feelings in a context in which love and concern are physically manifest. He may be encouraged to regress to a stage where most ego controls vanish, and he becomes for a while a baby, safe and supported by the physical presence of the staff, a baby who this time may grow up along the paths of normal contact with other human beings.
Everything is open at Warrendale. Each one's business is everybody's business. The children become involved in, knowledgeable about, and profoundly concerned with each other's welfare. They learn to an extraordinary degree to understand and to accept the expression of the strongest feelings and the most naked revelations of self. And so when the camera and the camera crew become a part of the community, as they did in the making of this film, you as the audience are taken into a dramatic human experience, not as a spy, or interloper, but as a welcome and acceptable member of that same community. The effect on your own feelings, particularly on your attitude towards your own anger and fear, is likely to be irreversible.

Although it is as difficult to summarize the "story" of Warrendale as it is to summarize Hamlet, it is clear that this film is an experience of fear and anger that assaults the person of each who sees it, immediately and powerfully, leaving him with the inescapable necessity either of re-examining his own darkest feelings, or of building new barriers to protect himself from them.

Patrick Watson,
Executive Producer
FOUR LETTER WORDS KILL WARRENDALE FILM

In an unusual policy statement, the CBC yesterday announced, after four months of deliberations, that it had decided not to televise a controversial 100 minute-documentary called Warrendale. Toronto Daily Star, April 18, 1967

You are luckier than the Canadian television viewers who, because of a four letter word (much repeated, it is true) will not see Warrendale, the latest Allan King film. Certainly, the word is a harsh one, but it is shouted by children whose emotional disturbance has left them half way between insanity and despair.

The behaviour of these tortured children (but how much more alive than any stock figures) goes beyond any notion we have ever had of mental illness. The cries of an impossible life, and the difficulties of Being, have never been thrown on the screen with such bewildering strength. No actor, not even the founder of an Actor's Studio, could match the rage or the sacred lack of restraint that the protagonists in this film show, to affirm their will to live and to be loved. While making the film, Allan King was almost jealous of the powerful scale of expression they had at their disposal.

If I am giving priority to the speech, forgetting the careful selection and precision of the images, it is that the Word in this case bursts beyond the normal frames, achieving incredible power: as in the scene where the therapist, leaning over a child, defenseless and abandoned to her disorder, raises his voice before us, no longer trying to communicate with the child but to break through directly to her ego.

It is difficult to capture in a few lines the gigantic and lithe silhouette of Allan King striding across Canada, which is immense, and across its cinema, which is compelling. It is difficult to recount briefly the role that he has played in the Canadian adventure of the portable camera and the discovery of the "direct documentary".
However, it seems to me that his attention is always drawn to characters facing difficult situations so that he might demonstrate the tenacity and intensity of their struggle, and the ingenuity of their efforts. I recall particularly his patient treatment in Skid Row, of alcoholic wretches trying to find a way to survive.

With Warrendale, this director again confronts a matter of life and death: these disturbed children for whom some bold workers try to bring back confidence and joy by methods which I cannot evaluate, but with admirable patience and energy.

As the world changes more rapidly than our habits, we thirst for aggressive images, for exemplary nightmares. Neurosis for fun, cinema of the void, and incomunicability are there to help us kill time. Yet the hydra of self-destruction still had to be discovered: the excruciating mixture of anger and anxiety, the face of the tortured children who no longer hope or understand. Delicately yet rigorously, Allan King offers us the image of the entity which still had to be revealed.

Despite some almost intolerable scenes, and some dialogue of almost Elizabethan crudeness, only a very cautious viewer (or a TV programme director) could find any offence in it.

Andre Martin
Interview with John Brown,
Director of Warrendale, 1953-1966.

Interviewer: When we first meet Tony in the film he
seems to be a perfectly agreeable kid who has a legitimate beef
about a staff member's bad breath. Is he really a disturbed
child?

Brown: Yes. To put it in perspective, he's
now been in the treatment centre nine months, having come
from another institution. A child who is raised in an instit-
ution is a classic example of a character-disordered or de-
humanized child: someone who has learned that human rela-
tionships are not dependable, that he has to rely on his own re-
sources.

Now the degree of his disturbance actu-
ally shows in the incident in the film where Tony is being
held by a staff member, Robyn Rice, and is complaining about
her bad breath. The complaint in itself is perfectly legiti-
mate, but that Tony feels this breath will burn out his insides is
a distortion of enough magnitude to indicate some very serious
and deep disturbance in the boy. It isn't the fear that just
Robyn's breath will consume him from inside, but that other
people's breath will also consume him. It's in this fear of hu-
mans' harming him, especially in ways he can't resist except
by keeping his distance, where the pathology in the boy shows.

Interviewer: Even so, how is Robyn justified in pro-
voking Tony to the extent she does, by apparently blowing in
his face?

Brown: She didn't blow right in his face.
There wasn't any action on her part that was a deliberate
provocation of the child. It's impossible not to breathe on
the child when you're holding him. If there's any question
about her intervention it would be - should she have held
the child at all? You see, we're talking about a child who has been de-humanized and has failed to get the touch communication that all humans get as a normal process in mothering. This is something that happens automatically in nature unless you happen to be an orphan, as Tony is, and placed in an institution where staff don't hold you or touch you. So if we're talking about a child who has never had this early communication with humans, which is part of the civilizing and humanizing process in nature, then any opportunity to hold the child is a desirable thing. Treatment staff must involve the child in physical contact as much as possible, as constantly as possible. They mustn't accept the child's block to physical holding, his rationalizations for remaining at a distance, out of communication.

What we're dealing with here is the fact that in the natural process of emerging from birth, the infant grows to become a civilized and humanized and experienced person through human communication, primarily through the sense of touch. The child lives for many months almost totally dependent on the sensory modalities of touch and taste because his eyes, though they perceive, don't understand what they perceive. He hasn't catalogued the world. He still has the task before him of identifying all the objects in the world and classifying them into order: those that move and those that don't move, and those that move that benefit him and those that move that don't benefit him, and so on. He gets the basic humanizing and civilizing influences through touch before he has the experience necessary for classifying the object world, before he has language.

Tony essentially is a child who is unaffiliated with humans because he has never had the experience of physical affiliation and he's frightened of the unknown. Now, do we say he has a right to remain frightened of physical affiliation, he has a right to remain de-humanized the rest of his life? I say no. The process that we undergo in the treatment of this child is to find every opportunity possible to give him a physical contact. At first we know he will fight us because
this is the distance that he has maintained. He has had to rationalize why he was at a distance. He's had to make it be reasonable or he couldn't have tolerated it. He would have been leaping on people and grabbing them if he hadn't rationalized why it was necessary to be distant.

Now, it's extremely difficult for a child, for anybody, to resist the message passed by physical communication, because a communication of touch cannot be distorted in the same way that verbal communication can be distorted. I can say something to Tony and he can put his fingers up - "bull shit", he can distort it in any way that he likes. But when I touch Tony, if I touch with fondness and affection, no matter how hard he tries, it's going to get through. Now his first reaction, symptomatic of his past rationalizations, will be an attempt to deny the touch: "you're hurting me". But I go right on touching him because I'm not hurting him and I'm communicating concern for him and love for him. Gradually the message gets through that maybe he can relate normally to other people, and treatment continues from there.

Int: In the scene with Terry and the psychiatrist, Tony doesn't appear to be a person who avoids physical contact. He seems very comfortable on Terry's knee, very happy to be stroked by her.

Brown: Yes. This is of course a thing that is happening to him. Before Tony came to Warrendale he would have resisted this familiarity or he would have tolerated it only with some elaborate tricks to protect himself: "I will do this, but I will do this with my fingers crossed."

A part of the appeal in this particular sequence with Terry, Dr. Fischer and Tony concerns the fact that Dr. Fischer was involved with another child before Tony comes in. You have to realise how the character-disordered child for years and years held off the professions in treating him, why originally a character-
disordered child was considered to be untreatable.

   Basically it's because these children are so clever in the manipulation of the professional contact. When you are engaged with one child, the other demands your attention. When you set a time for one child and are exclusively involved with him, then he doesn't have time for you or doesn't want your attention - a common device by which the child resists a humanizing influence, and a useful guide to Tony's behaviour in that scene.

   On that particular day, there was a psychiatric assessment of a deep anxiety in Tony - "would he continue to live in Warrendale or would the psychiatrist say he shouldn't be here?" Tony put it the other way around, denying his wish to remain at Warrendale so he wouldn't be disappointed, so that no-one could fool him or catch him off guard. When he hears people saying, "We want you here, you belong here, you have a right to be here" you can see pleasure creeping out of him in spite of himself.

   Now, this is a very primitive sort of response. Tony's just on the borderline of accepting the fact that maybe he's wanted. He's like the little infant very soon after birth who feels the pleasure of the mother's attention and is first aware that he gives pleasure to the parent. Remember, Tony is a kid who never gave pleasure to any adult in his life, unless it was a deal of some kind, in exchange for something. That session with Dr. Fischer and Terry indicates the first bloom, that Tony is inwardly aware that someone gets pleasure from him and somebody wants him - you can just see the sunshine sort of blossom out of him. He felt that he had to hide it - he tried to keep it away but he couldn't.

   There are other factors involved in Tony's reluctance to accept the psychiatrist's attentions. He's had many psychiatric evaluation sessions in the past and he knows that adults can make decisions about his future, send him to this institution or that, simply on the basis of a few questions. It's like being in the Army -
you have no control over your movements, you quickly learn not to volunteer for anything, to keep your mouth shut, because the chances are you'll end up in a worse situation. This is a common reaction by people who have been robbed of participation in their destiny. Consequently, Tony is on his guard during the interview and would tolerate things - like Terry's lap - that he would never tolerate otherwise.

This illustrates the basic nature of the de-humanized, character-disordered child: when you offer him service, he doesn't want it; when you are busy with somebody else, he intercedes as though he were really asking something. If everybody stopped and dealt with him, then he would back off again.

Int: One of the most apparently outrageous things that happens in the course of the film is the group announcement of the death of Dorothy; couldn't the mass outburst of strong feeling have been avoided had the children been taken aside individually and quietly informed of the death?

Brown: If there is one thing that professional psychiatric workers understand extremely well in dealing with people, that is how to repress feeling. We have so many techniques for shutting feeling off in the professions that it would have been very simple to inform the children as you suggested. We could have handled it in such a fashion that there wasn't even a whimper heard. Everything would have been as sedate and calm and beautiful as a funeral parlour. The question is, what good does it do, what value is it?

We have to look at some fundamental questions about loss and mourning. First of all, is it an individual experience and what happens when it's an individual experience? Loss cries for expression and it cries for a communication of some kind. When I have had a personal loss of great magnitude, I want to express my feeling about it, my rage, my hurt. I don't want to hide it inside of me. I want to express it
badly about all the grief that they had hidden up to this point. In the past they had been made to feel that feelings of grief were something bad.

Int: At the end of that session we see the two staff members literally screaming at one girl, Carol. Why?

Brown: A bit of background might be helpful. Here is a child who has been nine months in this particular treatment centre. Before this she had spent some thirteen months in a children's psychiatric institution. Before that she'd spent two years in a treatment centre for girls run by a Catholic order. Before that, she'd been in her own home. She was sent to Warrendale because she was unmanageable in these other environments. She wasn't sent in love, in hope for her recovery; she was sent because she was hopeless, incorrigible, intolerable. She used to stick objects into her ears which had to be removed surgically; she tried to drown herself; she'd bang her head against walls interminably. These are kinds of self-destructive acts by a child who has somehow had the communication that she's bad, she shouldn't exist.

Now, in the film itself you see a sequence where Carol's playing with the cook who died. They're playing death: first one pretends to be dead and is wakened by the other, then the other is dead and resurrected. Within a period of time, it actually happened. The cook died and the immediate reaction of this child, who was the focal point in the group announcement of the death, was that she had somehow been responsible, that her wickedness had in some magical way killed Dorothy. She immediately began a wailing, first a denial: "She isn't dead" and then "Don't anybody be near me". The latter meant "Don't you realize my potency? If you get close to me I will kill you!"

Int: "I don't want your fucking arms around me" really means "Stay away, you're in danger"?
Brown: Right. And this indicates not only the terrible image she has of herself, but the deep sense of responsibility she feels, to keep other people away, to sacrifice herself, because she may be a contaminating influence on others.

Now, at a certain point in the process of ventilating her feelings around Dorothy's death, all Carol's efforts to keep people safely away from her by external or aggressive action had failed: the staff stayed with her, they held her, they struggled, they were part of her existence. At that certain point she did what was symbolic of her past behaviour: she turned her struggle against herself and tried to isolate herself by destroying herself. Therefore, she withdrew, she closed her eyes, she shut out people. Then the treatment staff began to yell at her. They had to reach her in a way that brought her back into communication.

Int: Was that correct on the part of the staff?

Brown: Yes, I would support such action any time a staff member assesses that a child is shutting the channels of communication as a self-destructive thing. It is most important that staff fulfil their responsibility for the child: by allowing the child to withdraw they would, in effect, be confirming the child's feeling that she is too wicked to exist.

Furthermore, in order to do that, you can't talk in nice quiet tones. You're going to have to yell more dramatically. You're going to have to in some way engage the child. Walter and Terry demonstrated this extremely well in that particular sequence when they screamed at Carol: she couldn't shut them out no matter how hard she tried. That impact of verbal slam after verbal slam brought her right back in contact again; they simply didn't let her withdraw. Later, when brutally combing her hair, Carol tried to communicate
again: "I'm going to harm myself, I've been bad, I need to be punished." Again, the staff engaged her immediately and wouldn't allow her to hurt herself in that fashion.

Now these kinds of communications to the child mean there are adults around that think enough of her to intercede, not to permit her to treat herself badly. This is an important new experience for the child. In her previous institutional experience, she was either permitted to do these things or a needle was stuck in her ass to knock her out for twenty-four hours. Of course, this kind of treatment says to the child "I don't give a damn about you, I just don't want to be bothered with you and I'll take a chemical way out." In the film, all the holding of children by staff, all the handling of their mourning, speaks in concrete undeniable ways of the staff's personal involvement with the children: "This is a burden that we have to get over; I will be part of that burden with you."

The only fault in the entire mourning sequence is the fact that nothing was shown of how staff handled their own mourning. One of the staff said, "How the hell can I explain it to a kid if I can't explain it to myself?" but that was only the tip of the iceberg, there was much more there that she needed to ventilate. The staff need to mourn in a group as well, and part of their mourning needs to come with the children. When the children had settled, it would have been appropriate for the staff to admit honestly how upsetting Dorothy's death was to them, how it reminded them of losses in their own lives, even to cry. Again, it would be denying the validity of the children's feelings if the staff attempted to pretend no need to mourn themselves.

Int: Is it legitimate for staff people to take out their feelings or work out their problems on the children?

Brown: This is another fiction in the field
of mental health that has to be corrected: that it is possible for one human being to relate to the agony and pain of another human being without investing himself, involving himself personally. There is no way to communicate with another human being without bringing yourself into it.

The question is not whether a staff member reveals his own feelings, but whether he reveals them honestly or deceitfully. You could sit down with Carol and talk about death's being a natural thing, that Dorothy's now with God, and all kinds of platitudes: you are involving yourself in a backward way just as much as if you sit down and say "Death is a painful separation, it hurts. It's a feeling that you want to strike out against. It's all right to scream about it. I'd like to scream about it too." How does one approach take out feelings more than the other? It's just a question of the form, of one's honesty in facing the child, of making the child aware that other people feel the same pain.

Int: Shouldn't those who are dealing with emotionally disturbed children be extraordinarily mentally well themselves?

Brown: No, quite the contrary. What motivation would there be for an extraordinarily mentally healthy person to work with the mentally ill or emotionally disturbed?

Int: To help the children.

Brown: On what dynamic? You'd pay them? You'd motivate them to do this by paying them?

Int: No, because they'd feel that this is a good service to provide.

Brown: This sort of altruism is a fiction. People do what they do because of their needs, although they find rationalizations and excuses for it. I'm sure if you
asked staff people who appear in the film why they do this work, they'd explain not only that they want to help disturbed kids, but that they are concerned about their own mental health. They're honest enough to work on it along with the children. In a therapeutic community, all people must be involved in the process.

Int: Does that include you as the director of this community?

Brown: Oh yes, of course.

Int: But you're relatively rational and well-adjusted; why do you need to go on helping mentally emotionally disturbed children?

Brown: Well, in the last five, six, seven years, I've removed myself, and now I'm operating an enterprise in which other people are doing what I used to do. I'm five, six times removed. I wasn't in the film in any way directly dealing with the children, only indirectly. I don't even do that a great deal, most of it's administrative. I did have a need to be directly involved, at a point in my life. It was very useful and helpful to me. Having gone through this stage and come out the other side, as it were, what remains in all honesty is a compelling awareness of a kind of cynical outlook on life, on our culture as it is now constituted.

Int: That you have?

Brown: That I am always struggling with. I see reality, I see how people behave. I see how groups in societies behave. I see how organisations behave. I see how the whole rationale behind the "reality" of our society is based on a terrible cynicism, a cynicism which is manifested again and again in every level of human behaviour.

People have wondered about the key to John Brown - this is it, that I am becoming more
and more aware of the horrible pressure of this pervading cynicism in the whole public sphere, and that I am actively fighting the feeling that this cynicism is inevitable for the well-being of our society. This is a dynamic which I have expressed very inadequately here, but which I feel very strongly.
Int: How did you make the film? Where did you begin?

King: When I first came to Warrendale, I had a long talk with the director, John Brown, and then met Terry Adler, the head of House Two. I spent the afternoon with her and stayed to dinner with the children. The early visits were short. I'd come and spend time at each of the four houses, trying to decide which house to film in, getting used to the staff, to what was going on, and simply becoming accepted by the children and staff. I gradually stayed longer and longer each day. It was about a month before I brought the crew in.

Then we spent another ten days—almost two weeks, visiting, getting to know the kids, especially in House Two. I wanted the kids to know the crew—Bill Brayne, the cameraman and Russ Heise, the soundman—so that by the time we started filming everybody would be comfortable with each other.

The first task in this kind of filming is simply to be accepted and trusted by the people you are going to film. You have no hope of doing good work until trust is built up—and, in fact until you trust them too. Also you must like the people you are filming; at least it is that way for me. Otherwise filming becomes a form of attacking, rather than discovering, the person involved.

The children were in many ways a total challenge. It was never any good trying to smooth-talk your way round a problem. If we pretended something we didn't actually feel, we would immediately be caught out as phonies. And that is almost the ultimate crime, for these children.

I remember the first time we filmed a child who had gone out of control, so that she had to be
physically held by one of the staff. We were all nervous. What would the kids think of our filming a "holding"? Would they resent it - especially the girl being held? Was it exploitation? What were the limits? Besides, the event was disturbing in itself. I was changing film in a camera magazine on the living room table. One of the other girls, Irene, was sitting on the couch across from me, watching. Suddenly she said "You're nervous, aren't you?" I was about to say, "no, no, not at all," when I looked up and caught her eyes and I realized that a denial was no good at all. So I admitted that I was nervous, was uncertain of Carol's reaction to our filming her rage, and that conflict situations upset me. And Irene answered, "That's all right, that's ok. Carol's been high all day. She needs to be held. She'll be much better for it." And I was much better for Irene's demand for honesty.

Int: The thing that struck me most when I saw the film was how completely unaware of the camera the children seemed to be. Did they really forget the camera was there?

King: No, I don't think they forgot at all. It's very hard to do good film work if you hide the camera. We would usually be six or seven feet from whoever we were filming.

But the thing a person being filmed has to feel is that you are not judging him, you don't think him peculiar, you accept him as a valid person in his own right. You are there filming, but you are a part of the environment he is in.

After we settled on Terry's house, we spent two or three days putting up lights - a very small number, just enough to give us reasonably even and adequate lighting throughout the house, so that we wouldn't have to cause a disturbance by changing lights all the time. We let the kids play with the tape recorder and the camera, showed them how they worked, had them look through the camera and record themselves,
talk to us on tape, and so on. We did some filming of this and showed it to the children. Then the next two or three days we spent very casually shooting small things around the house. Gradually we began filming more and more.

Int: How did you organize your filming?

King: Usually we came in at seven or eight in the morning, at wakeup, and stayed until after dinner (and then often stayed on playing or talking with the children till bed time.) Or we would come in at lunch time, sit in on the staff meeting afterwards, then film until bed time. The staff conferences gave us a good notion around which daily events a particular child might experience difficulty.

Organization of the material was a great problem to us. A film normally consists of a series of events, scenes, between people. Now, it's one thing to construct or write a scene; you can decide when an event starts and when it finishes. But in real life, it's difficult to recognize the significance of an event as it occurs, even to realize an event is in fact occurring. You can't really tell until afterwards, when you reconstruct it subjectively in your mind.

Before we'd actually start filming, I had jotted down notes on about twenty scenes I felt should be included, based on my previous visits to the house. But in this kind of filming, you have to intuit, in fact anticipate what is going to happen and what it is likely to mean. Otherwise not only would your camera be running all the time, you would have no direction to your approach.

Because the children are encouraged to be emotionally free, and because they are often impulsive, things happen very, very quickly. There would be an exchange between two children, but by the time we'd guessed its significance and focused the camera on it, we'd have lost half the exchange.
Our footage from the first four or five days was absolutely exasperating. It was almost a week before we tuned in sufficiently to really feel what the children were feeling and to be able to anticipate.

We spent a total of about five weeks filming and shot about 80,000 feet of film. That's about forty hours. The last two weeks were less intensive; we were waiting, trying to get particular pieces that we wanted for the film.

Int: How do you direct the cameraman in this kind of film? Isn't it much more a cameraman's film than a director's or an editor's?

King: Some people think that the only way you can make this kind of film is to shoot and edit it yourself. However that may be, it's not a practical solution for me. I am not a good cameraman. I can shoot, but Bill Brayne's a far better cameraman than I would ever be. The same goes for editing; Peter Moseley's far more skilled.

What is absolutely essential is that you work together as a group, and we work together extremely well. I would never attempt to shoot a serious film with a cameraman I hadn't shot several films with before. And I'd be extremely reluctant to edit with an editor I hadn't known for a long time. Bill and I have known each other for ten years. When we are filming our responses to the events occurring are usually either parallel or complementary. So I don't have to do much more than look at something and nod, or he'll look at something and nod, and the shooting goes ahead. We don't need more than an exchange of glances. If you have to speak, you've lost the scene.

And the same with editing. I don't stand over an editor but, rather, give him as much
freedom as he can take. Afterwards we talk and adjust.
Sometimes I like the way the scene goes and he doesn’t;
sometimes the other way round. Then we work it out to-
gether.

Mind you, between scenes and
while screening rushes, there is a great deal of talk - to
refine responses, assess mistakes, and adjust the approach
and style we are developing.

Int: Your original idea was to make a
film about human communication. How did you come to
film Warrendale, a treatment centre for emotionally dis-
turbed children?

King: I wouldn’t say "a film about human
communication." What I wanted was to make a film ab-
out a child, or a small group of children - the way they
behaved with each other, their interactions, how they
play, what’s important to them. And to develop a mean-
ingful line out of that. It’s like taking real life actuality
and treating it the way a novelist or a script writer would
do in a novel or a fiction film.

The definition of art I like best is
John Dewey’s - that art is a formed expression of emotion.
The world comes at you as a confusion of events and you
have to make sense of it. Art is a primary way for peo-
ple to handle their feelings, and to reconcile themselves
emotionally to life. This can be done in film either by
reshaping actuality or by constructing it fictionally.

With this film, the object is to
allow the audience to experience the lives of the chil-
dren through the events we chose to present.

Warrendale was an extremely
good place to do this because it is an environment with
a high premium on freedom and honesty of emotional ex-
pression. I was less interested at that stage in ques-
tions about emotional disturbance, treatment techniques,
- any of those things. I intended to concentrate on one
or two children in one particular house - a sufficiently restricted environment where I could study intensively, observe intensively, the experience of a child.

However, two factors forced me to abandon some of my preconceptions. First, the treatment is obviously a large part of the environment. And a problem of the film, at least in the short term, is that some people wish to view it as a demonstration of treatment. That it is definitely not; treatment is the modus vivendi of the environment in which the filming occurs, but it is not the subject matter of the film itself. In fact the film is necessarily, to some degree, a distortion of treatment: out of the many emotions of the children's experience we tended to focus on their anger.

The most significant factor in shaping the film was the death of Dorothy, the house cook. We were thereby confronted with a very dramatic event, accompanied by profound emotional responses of anger and rage at the sheer unacceptability of death.

Because this was an event with powerful associations of loss for all the children, and because the death happened relatively early in the making of the film, we couldn't continue our original notion of focusing the film on one child. Given the group environment, the fact that the death was a tragedy felt by all, it was impossible for us to relate one child's individual experience to his experience of Dorothy's death. So the problem of the film became providing a context for this event to be understood and assimilated. This became our guide-line.

Int: I've asked about some of the problems of making the film. Why did you want to make it in the first place?

King: Perhaps I can answer indirectly.

Before we began filming we had two
meetings with the children. It was essential to obtain their full consent. Before they would agree, they wanted to know why we wanted to make the film and what other people would think of them. Would people think they were crazy? Weren't we just taking advantage of them for our own purposes? I told the children that I thought our society was emotionally cold and ungenerous, a soulless and inhuman environment. It seemed to me that people were seldom honest with each other, seldom able to express their feelings directly or meaningfully. And that often repressed feelings came out indirectly in acts of cruel indifference if not downright brutality; that the life experience of many of them had been shaped by this, and that they had suffered from it. It seemed to me that the children had gained a great deal from the freedom of expression towards which they were working and that they lived with a feeling, a warmth, and a genuine humanity which was rare in our world; that this was something people should know about and feel for themselves. And that through the experience, others would come to accept them simply for themselves, as children. So they agreed to the film.

The children still had a few reservations, though. The older girls were a bit worried what the outside world would think of a fifteen year old girl taking a baby bottle. One evening after the younger children had gone to bed, we were sitting around the living room talking with some of the older boys and girls. When Carol asked us if we'd like some coffee, I asked for a glass of milk. I was busy talking to Irene when Carol came back from the kitchen. She had her hands behind her back and a giggle went up from the others. She said, "Close your eyes and open your mouth." I did, and a great hoot of laughter went up as a baby bottle was jammed into my mouth. Then we all took turns, Bill, Russ, and I.

When we left Warrendale, we exchanged presents with the children. They presented us with a baby bottle. It is our most prized award.