

CHALLENGE

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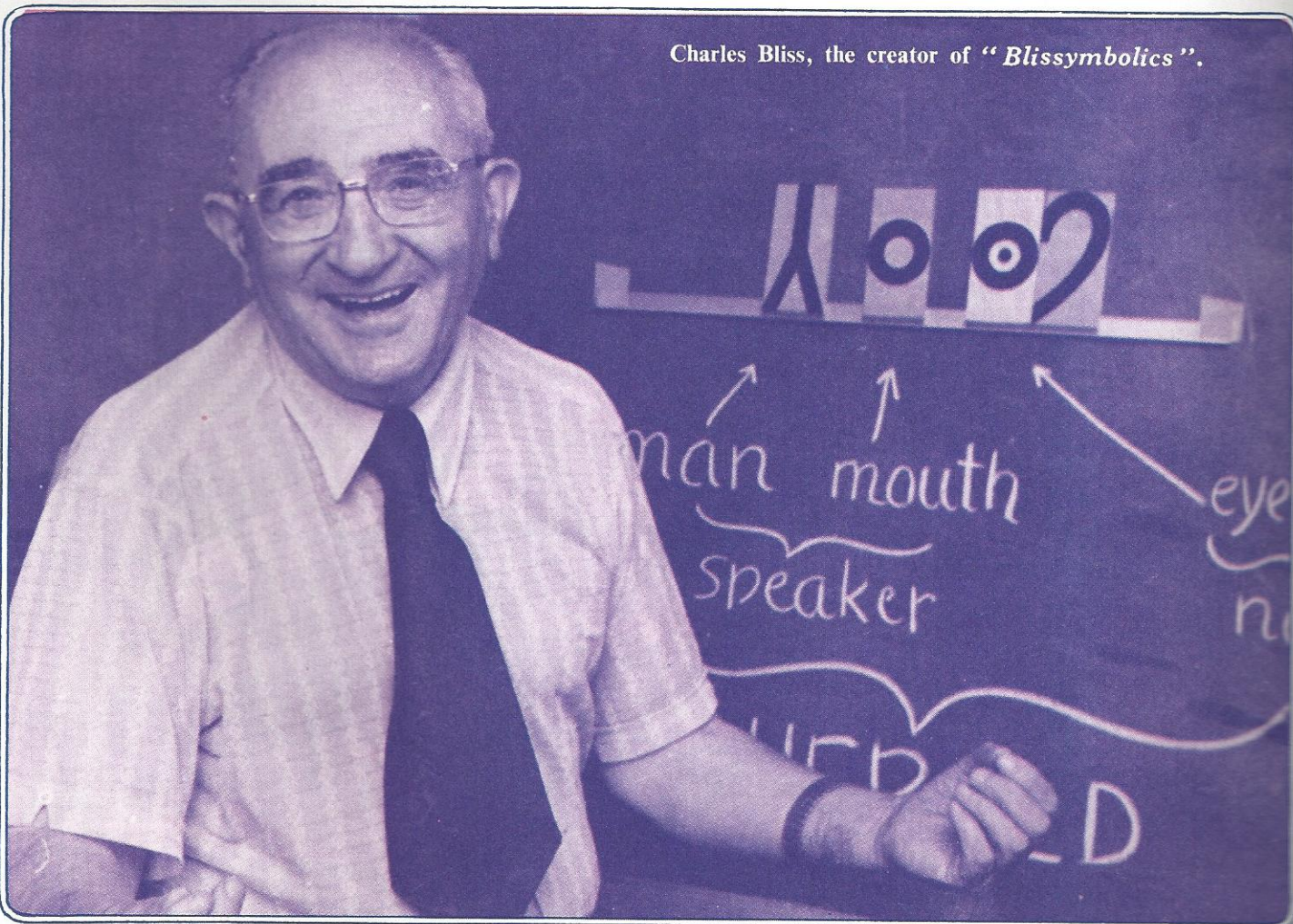
BLISSYMBOLICS • A PICTURE WRITING

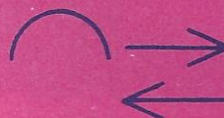
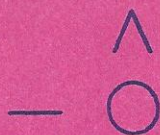
The symbols that make up part of the title to this story may mean nothing to you, but to individual children in many parts of the world they have opened up a new way of life. The symbols in the title are just some from a system that has been created by Charles Bliss.



Charles Bliss, a person in his seventies, is a bundle of energy and enthusiasm. He devotes most of his energy to promoting the use of the picture symbol language he has created, which he calls *Blissymbolics*. He began to create the picture language over thirty years ago, but it is only recently that the importance of the picture language has been recognised.

Charles Bliss, the creator of "*Blissymbolics*".





CHILDREN WITHOUT SPEECH COMMUNICATE IN SYMBOLS

IN CHINA

After the Second World War, Charles Bliss and his wife lived in China. Charles Bliss became fascinated by ideographs, or the picture writing that was used there. Although the Chinese people spoke in many different dialects, they could all understand the Chinese picture writing, and so were able to communicate with each other in writing, if not in words.

Charles Bliss felt that the Chinese picture writing united the millions of Chinese people together as a nation. He believed that there should be a pictorial language that could be understood by people all over the world.

A man called Dr Ludovic Zammenhof had already invented a "world-wide" language of words, called *Esperanto*. He had intended that the language would be spoken by people anywhere in the world. But, because the language was quite difficult, and took a long time to learn, very few people have tried to learn *Esperanto*.

Charles Bliss felt that a language written in picture symbols would be much easier for people to learn and understand.

BREAKTHROUGH

The breakthrough happened in Ontario, Canada. Unknown to Charles Bliss, a worker at a handicapped children's centre decided to try using his symbols, on a large board, with children who suffered from communication problems. The children quickly learned to use the symbols for communication and, since then, the use of *Blissymbolics* with certain types of handicapped children has become very common.

Here are some of the more commonly used symbols.



 earth	 sun	 day sun over earth	 star	 time dial
 heartlifting happiness	 downhearted sadness	 water wave	 rain water down	
 electricity lightning	 fire flame	 volcano mountain on fire	 house	
 letter	 post office	 man	 woman	
 child little flower	 animal	 insect	 wheel	 bicycle
 eye	 to see Action	 mouth	 to speak Action	
 ear	 to hear Action	 mind outline of skull	 to think Action	

(Continued next page.)

A WORLD-WIDE PICTURE LANGUAGE

It took several years before Charles Bliss was able to complete the basic system of about one hundred symbols. It was possible to combine these one hundred symbols to make over one thousand symbols. But, at first, no one seemed very interested in learning about *Blissymbolics*. No one could see a need for a world-wide picture language. It was only "by chance" that the value of Charles Bliss's work was discovered.

BLISSYMBOLICS · A PICTURE WRITING

HANDICAPPED

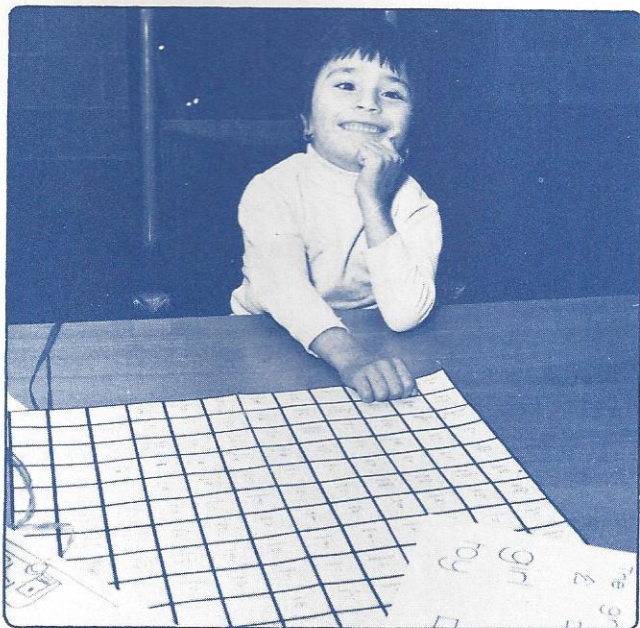
Blissymbolics are mainly used with children who have been born with brain damage, or who have been in accidents resulting in head injuries. These children are often unable to speak. They are able to make sounds, but not the sounds of recognised words. Because they cannot talk, they cannot communicate easily with other people.

But once these children learn the meanings of the symbols invented by Charles Bliss, they are able to use the symbols they wish to on a large symbol board, or they will draw a series of symbols to form a sentence.

For many of the children, the sudden ability to be understood by others is a tremendous experience. At last they can express thoughts and feelings that have been bottled up inside them.

"BLISSYMBOLICS" IN AUSTRALIA

In Melbourne, teachers at several centres for handicapped children are working with *Blissymbolics*.



Nikki Cacalis with her symbol board.

"With *Blissymbolics* the children are able to express themselves where they had no means of doing so before," commented Ms Helen Hill, Senior Speech Pathologist, who uses *Blissymbolics* with several children at the Yooralla Special School (Glenroy). "The children use the symbols to communicate with their families at home, and can participate more in their family life."

WRITING IN BLISSYMBOLS

Here is the explanation of the Blissymbols displayed in the title of this article.

This is our planet earth  with the earth axis. Friends of Charles Bliss discovered in it the pen  the "axis of our modern world" and use this symbol to mean Charles Bliss' work "Blissymbolics".

A picture is something the eye  sees that can be framed . A writing is the Action of the pen  in inclined writing position. Together a picture writing.

This means small , this big  this a flower  A child  is a small flower. The multiplication mark on top  means the plural children.

Minus — mouth  action means without speech. This is the outline of the upper skull, housing the brain, mind . Adding to and fro  means communication.

This is the earth , this the sky , together world . Adding the pen  means World Writing or Blissymbols .