

SPECTRUM

A Cooperative Newspaper for the Tallahassee Community

Issue 48

Summer 1986

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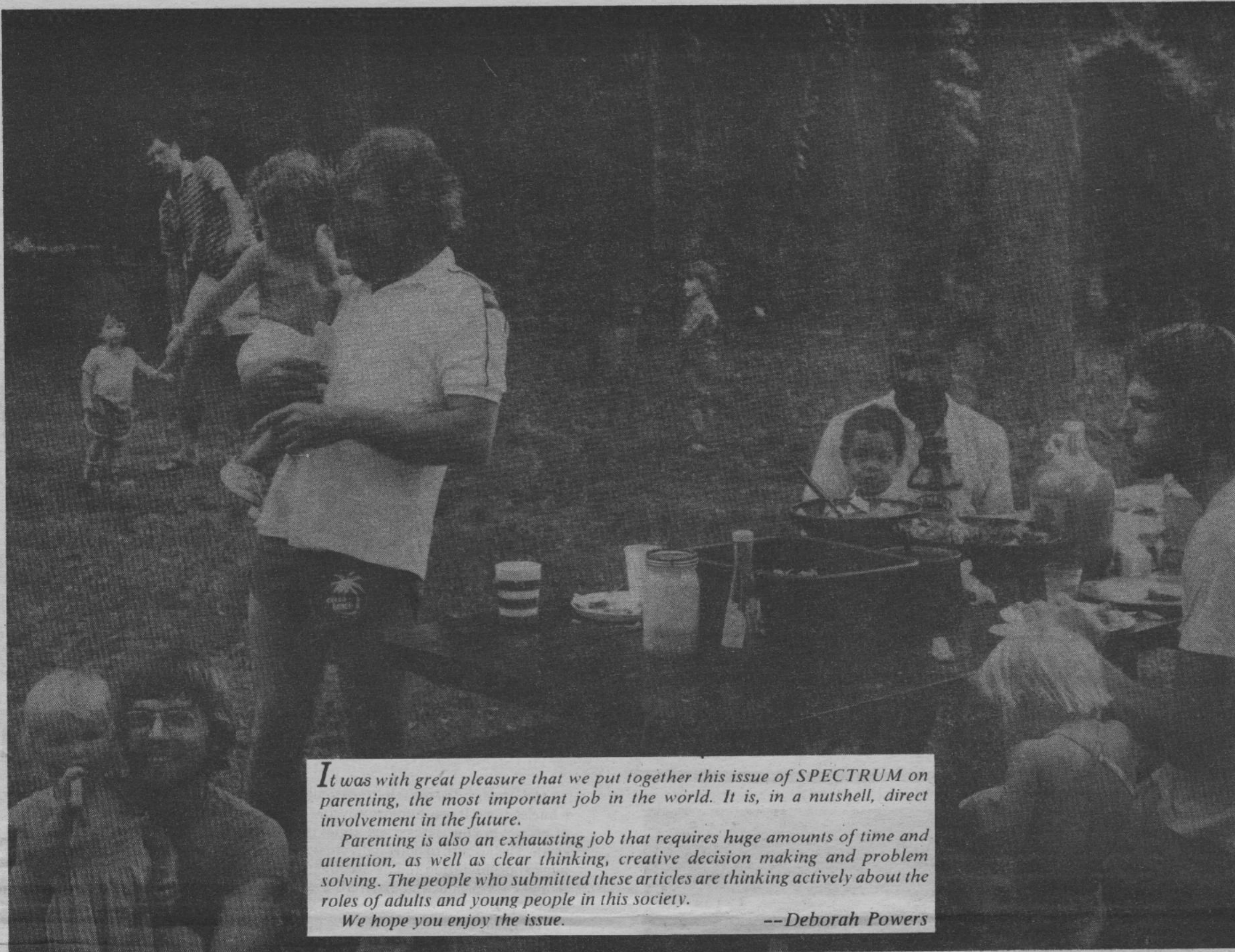
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SPECIAL PARENTING ISSUE



It was with great pleasure that we put together this issue of SPECTRUM on parenting, the most important job in the world. It is, in a nutshell, direct involvement in the future.

Parenting is also an exhausting job that requires huge amounts of time and attention, as well as clear thinking, creative decision making and problem solving. The people who submitted these articles are thinking actively about the roles of adults and young people in this society.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

--Deborah Powers

photo by Larry Teich

Breaking the Silence: Five Years After Birth

by Tana McLane

Since I became a mother five and a quarter years ago, I have: become much more serious; gained weight; withdrawn from almost all old activities that absorbed hundreds of hours each year; tried to get a career underway; watched my marriage flounder and utterly change shape; invested much of my psychic/emotional self in a world that now appears too dangerous for a child I am afraid to lose; and continually reevaluated life, the universe and everything.

This is the nit and grit of parenting. It's the hard part, the part that hurts. Bringing a child into the world has caused a screen to play and replay the story of my life as I attempt to grapple with old experiences and set them straight so I can approach the daily work of being a parent with the clearest focus possible.

A voice that plays in my mind says that all other parents are doing this part painlessly. It tells me that this is only my distress getting in the way of having the most loving, special experience possible. If only I could settle my own past, things would go right and all would be well.

But this is a culture that isolates parents in a rather terrifying way, during the early years when we are raising babies. There is little that gets down deep into my terror more efficiently than being awake at 3:30 a.m. with a child who has a fever. Is it a cold? Meningitis? Have I erred in not completing his vaccinations, giving in to my ambivalence about them? Will he pay the price with one of the really *big* diseases? Who do I call then? Is it a real emergency requiring a trip to the emergency room, or something that is common and will be better by morning with a little Tylenol? How could the universe have left me with such a monumental decision?

On those nights, I climb into bed with my child after reading everything in the house on health and disease and snuggle him close, hoping to monitor his vital signs even as I sleep. My last guilty thoughts as I close my eyes are that I am probably building in all kinds of dependencies, that my message to him is that minor illness is scary, and that he can expect this kind of concern all his life, which isn't true. Who climbs into bed with me to check my breathing? I paint myself into a corner. I can't win.

The isolation of parenthood builds a stronger character. I can stand being alone for long periods now, indefinitely. I have learned to trust my instincts as to health and childrearing more. I can live inside my cranium now; inventing more, analyzing more, making longer plans. At 27, when I began this journey, I lacked attention for doing that.

But the isolation is real, even when with a partner. I have had a partner all these years, a very committed father who would not dream of time away from this child. I know that he has made it far easier than going it alone. There is possibly as wide a distinction between single parenting and co-parenting as there is between being a parent and not having children. There are bottom lines that we cross in becoming parents. We can never be the

see Breaking the Silence, page 4

Are Fathers "Second-Class" Parents?

by Henry Hall

I was a stepfather to two children for eight years. Then, I became a natural father.

I weathered the worst two years of my stepchildren's angry need to point out, "You're not my father" by cheerfully responding, "You are absolutely right. No one will ever replace your father." I had gone over numerous hurdles of my stepchildren's rejection of my offers of caring and was eagerly awaiting the time when my natural daughter would look at me and call me daddy. I looked forward to loving her, and having a child who could easily accept my love without having to protect herself from it.

On the first day she was here, I held my daughter relaxed on my lap, and we just looked at each other. I knew that I did not have to do anything else. I just watched while she looked, listened, and got acquainted with the world new to her.

Don't let anybody kid you, changing diapers can be great. I loved it, craved it. It was another way that I could care for my child. I learned the difference between cries that indicated hunger, gas pains, boredom, and simply the need to cry. Some of the dearest moments were holding her while she cried...never trying to quiet her, knowing that the day's frustrations had built up and just needed to be cried out. Her tears would flow for awhile and then she would be done, relaxed and happy again, having gotten out the necessary feelings.

After a week of being with her, it dawned

on me that I was going to have to go back to work. I woke up in the middle of the night, got up, sat for awhile and cried. How was I ever to adjust to going back to work? I was not ready to deal with that yet. Maybe in a month. Maybe. The sun came up, I got ready to go, said goodbye and drove to work crying. I was thinking of all that I would miss that day and in days to come. Also, I was glad that I could feel something so strongly that it made all society's teachings about "being a man" and "work" seem insignificant.

It wasn't until about three months after she was born, that I began to pay attention to a nagging feeling, something that had slipped in unaware, but which had been with me for a while. I noticed it most acutely with my daughter. It was the feeling that I couldn't seem to get in touch with all my love.

When I had time, I tried to mull over what was going on. Mainly, I felt there was something wrong with me. I had a hard time looking at it because I felt I should not be this way. It was a slippery sensation to get a handle on and I did not talk to anyone about it. After the feeling had grown, I started making some sense of it. I had never felt this before and so, intellectually, I knew that this wasn't inherently part of me. But emotionally, I was still afraid that it was.

I reviewed the previous year to try to pin down where and when it started. Looking back now, it's easy to see that it started with her morning sickness (or, more

see Fathers, page 4

SPECTRUM

A Cooperative Newspaper for the Tallahassee Community

The Collective Is:

Larry Teich • Lisa Krehbiel • Frank Brown
Carmy Greenwood

Contributors To This Issue:

Doug Lee • Tana McLane • Deborah Powers
Pierino Cipolloni • Morgan Bunch • Ed Cambeiro

Back Cover Art by Kevin McLane Teich

SPECTRUM is written and produced entirely by volunteer labor donated by members of the Tallahassee community. Production and printing costs are covered by paid advertising. Please let our advertisers know you appreciate their support!

Note SPECTRUM's new address: 820 E. Park
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This issue is dedicated to Rudolph Howell and family,
whose 2 year struggle with cancer is over.

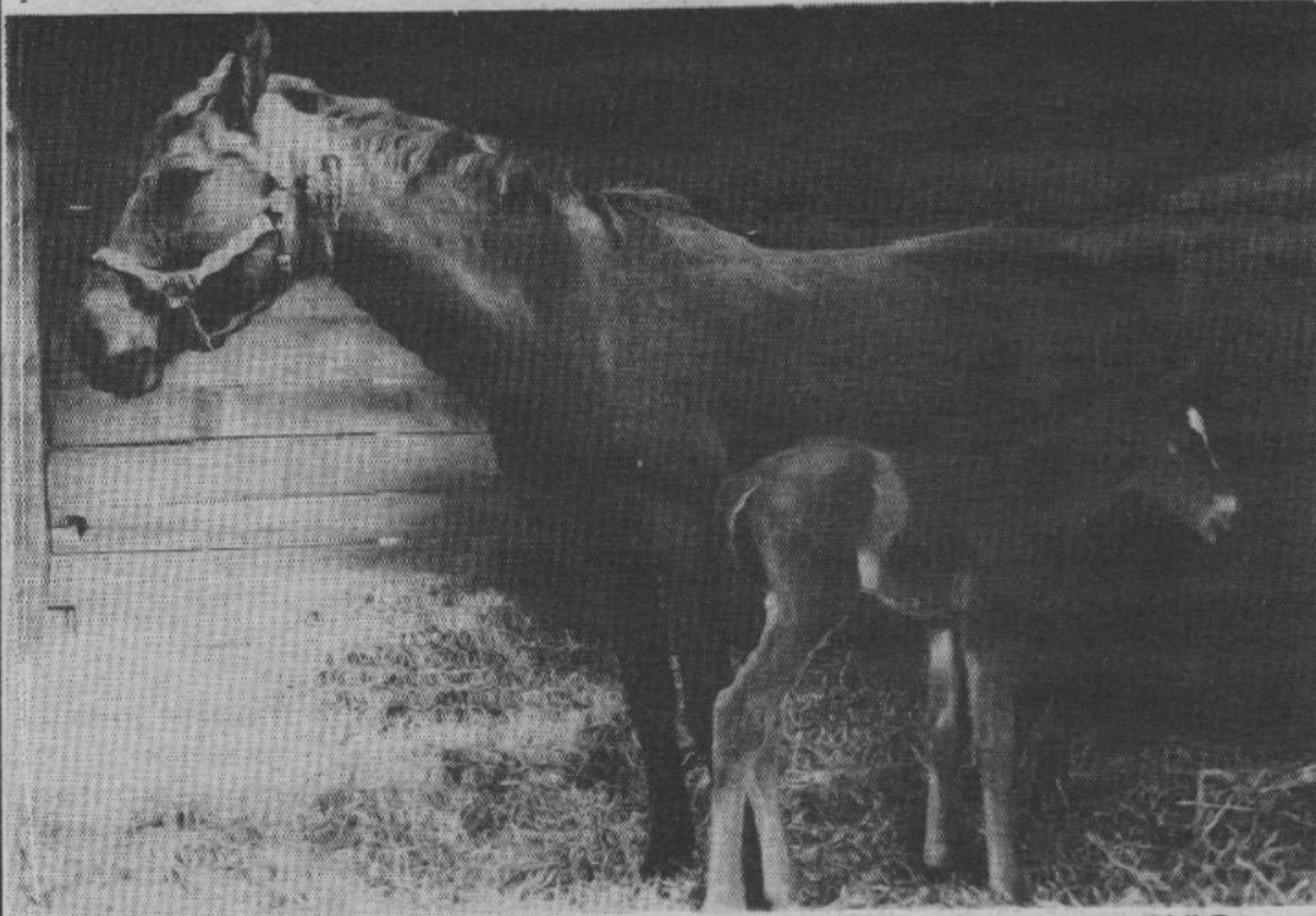


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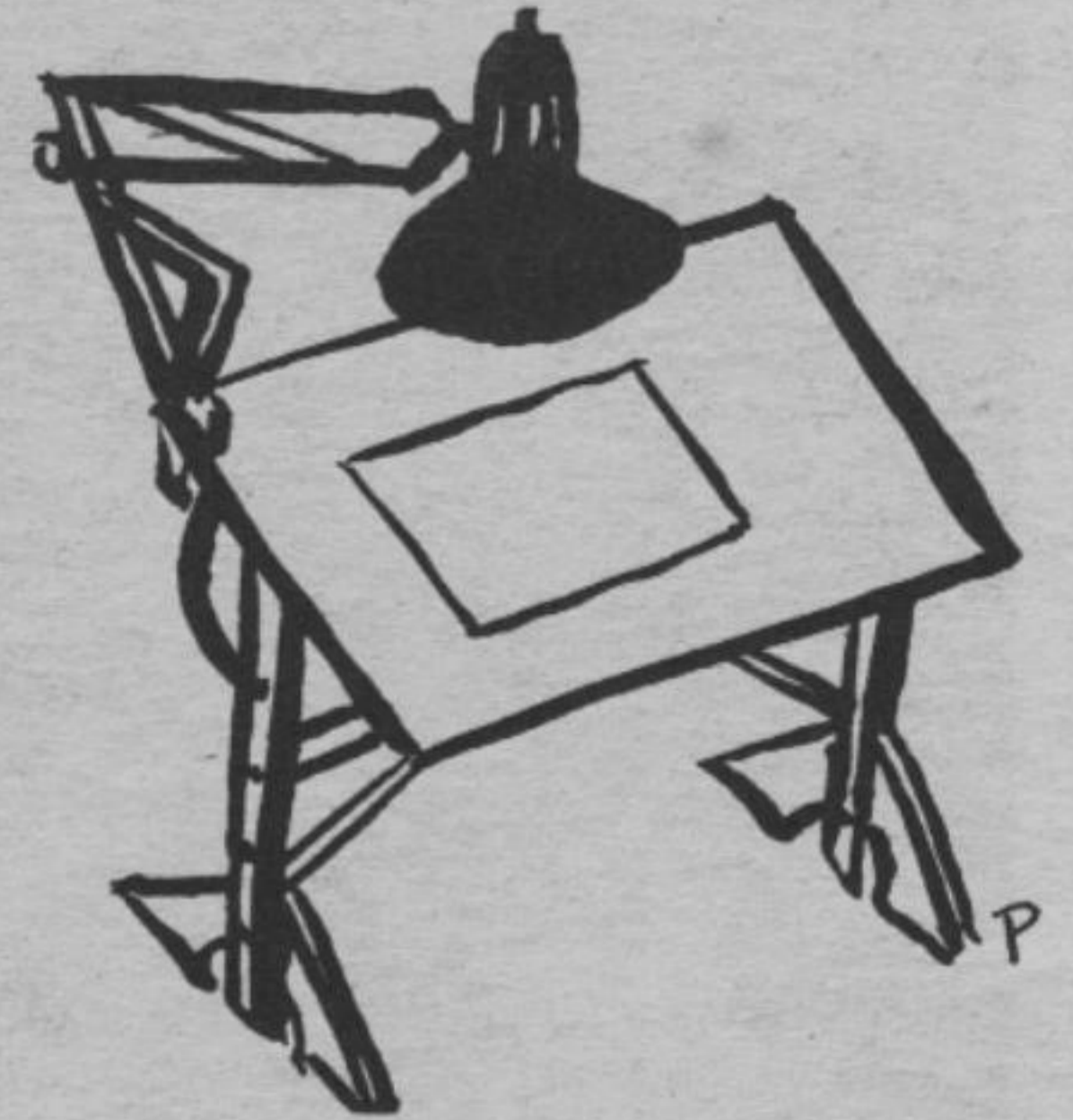
SPECTRUM's Devolution

by Larry Teich

Once again, we emerge from suspended animation to print another issue after 10 months of soliciting articles (concerning parenting). Our key solicitor, Debi Powers, experienced some delay in arm-twisting while she and her own solicitor, Jeff, took time out (appropriately) to have a baby, Emma. Since no deadline was given for completed copy, no action was taken by procrastinating, overworked writers. Probably, in these Raygun years, we should have started paying some token amount of money as an incentive.

The four of us (the skeleton crew) enjoyed time off from deadlines and production responsibilities since SPECTRUM's appearances seemed increasingly to be generated from internal (us) rather than external (community) forces. And so what started out as a monthly has become an annual publication by default.

The original concept envisioned by Tana McLane in 1978 was lost to the evolution of political activism in the '80's. SPECTRUM was to be a useful community tool for various groups and politically sympathetic organizations to pool their resources and consolidate their outreach to provide an intelligent and enlightening presentation of important issues not otherwise validated.



SPECTRUM is an idea whose time has gone. Given the factors of less community interest and less available personal time and energy, we've decided to make this issue #48, the last, SPECTRUM.

Thanks to all the advertisers over the years who have provided the finances and made it easy to do the distasteful job of selling ads. Thanks to the subscribers for their support and encouragement. We're sorry some of you won't get the 10 issues promised (it would have taken seven or eight years at this rate). Thanks to all the readers. I'm proud of every SPECTRUM printed, where nothing might have been.

-30-

Modern Morality Play Planned

Alice in Blunderland is musical allegory exploring individual responsibility in a nuclear age. It was humorously and lovingly written by Legacy, Inc., a group of people in Ohio concerned about their children's future and the fate of the earth. Their desire to build individual and community awareness of the issues of nuclear proliferation and the seemingly never-ending arms race prompted them to make the production materials available to anyone interested in putting on the musical.

The Tallahassee Peace Coalition purchased the production packet two years ago and after one aborted effort to get the project off the ground, the materials sat in my closet until now. Once again, we are going to try to produce this delightful and thought-provoking play with the goal of taking it beyond our county limits after initial performances in Tallahassee.

The land of Blunderland is peopled by odd and outrageous characters, including a cynical, journalistic Cat, a long-winded, stuffed-shirt Prime Minister, unscrupulous salesmen, amoral scientists, flowers of the *attitudinous flowerosa* genus, two boys continuously trying to outdo each other in their supply of fairy dust bombs (Tweedledum and Tweedledummer), oysters, forest gnomes, and, of course, Alice.

We have immediate needs for a stage manager, production manager, set designer, music conductor, childcare coordinator, and other workers. We are targeting November 21-22 for the performance, with auditions in September, music and dance rehearsals the first two weeks of October and blocking beginning the third week of October.

We feel there is a significant number of people in our community to provide all the talent and energy necessary to make the longstanding dream of bringing Alice in Blunderland to North Florida. If you would like to join us in this effort, please call Judith Lyons (224-0626 or 877-6851) or Martin Guttenplan (386-7043).

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Legislature Plays With Children's Issues by Sam Miller

Kids and parents are affected by an invisible partner in their relationship — Florida law. The issues and responsibilities are volatile enough so that Florida legislators regularly get involved.

This year's session had its share of parenting and parental rights issues, as the Legislature wrestled with paddling and birth control, counseling in the schools, abortions for minors, child support enforcement and the care of children in state-supervised foster homes.

The Legislature refused once again to repeal a law allowing corporal punishment in the schools. There have been annual efforts to abolish this statute since Rep. Sam Mitchell, D-Vernon, got it passed several years ago.

Mitchell, a former high school principal and football coach, considers "paddling" an essential tool for classroom discipline and he wants teachers to at least have this option open to them.

But opponents of Mitchell's law say that individual parents should have the final say on corporal punishment of their children or local school boards should establish district policies, responding to the desires of area parents.

The Senate killed a proposal by Sen. Peter Weinstein, D-Coral Springs, allowing parents to send a note to school saying their children are not to be paddled.

"The parent who takes the time to say they don't want their child paddled is a concerned and caring parent," Weinstein told his Senate colleagues. But Sen. Bill Grant, D-Madison, argued that parents who don't want their children spanked should make sure they obey school rules.

Abortions and birth control counseling for minors were once again a controversial and highly emotional issue.

There was the so-called "Dr. Snitch" bill that would have required physicians to get parental consent before performing an abortion on an unmarried minor. The bill was finally weakened by opponents to require parental notification instead of consent. That version passed the full House, but was blocked in the Senate by Health and Rehabilitative Services Chairman Roberta Fox, D-Miami.

Rep. Jim Watt, R-Lake Park, a candidate for attorney general this fall, was chief sponsor of the proposal. Watt contended that parents have a right to at least be informed when their daughter is planning on having an abortion, even if an already troubled young woman would be subjected to additional grief. "She has a lot of pressures. It's a very traumatic moment. But the people who are best able to provide her with psychological support are her parents," he said.

But Fox argued that the decision on an abortion is a matter strictly between the young woman and her physician, unless she chooses to bring other people like her parents into it.

The Legislature decided to continue an experimental program to establish health care clinics on high school campuses that would, among other things, provide birth control counseling. A clinic that has operated at Shanks High School in Quincy created a big controversy and a drive by Rep. Elvin Martinez, D-Tampa, to stop the program before it was expanded.

But legislative leaders — House Speaker James Harold Thompson of Gadsden County, in particular — overruled Martinez, who also was a staunch supporter of the "Dr. Snitch" bill. Funding for the Quincy clinic was continued and additional money was appropriated to open a clinic in Orange County.

Florida faced the loss of \$30 million in federal money unless the Legislature addressed another parenting issue, which it finally did. The House and Senate agreed on a plan to go after parents who stop paying child support. Under the new law, state and local officials must go after well-to-do white collar fathers who skip out on child support, as well as the poor. Enforcement efforts so far have concentrated mainly on the poor and parents on welfare.

The Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services is comfortable with the new authority it gets under the plan, but not with the resources. It requested an additional 721 investigators and got less than half that many.

HRS had requested money to better train its "child welfare" and "juvenile justice" employees, in response to the death last summer of an infant in a Pinellas County foster care home and recommendations of a consultant studying the department's operations following its massive, 1978 reorganization. It got the training money and authority for a special center in the old hospital in Quincy.

Child welfare workers investigate child abuse and neglect complaints and decide whether the children should be temporarily removed from their parents and placed in foster homes. They also advise the courts in the difficult decision of whether parental rights should be permanently terminated. Juvenile justice employees work in community detention centers and state detention institutions.

The Legislature also made an insurance decision that will be of concern to parents. It eliminated the requirement that daycare centers carry at least \$100,000 in liability insurance, a response to high prices and availability problems facing some centers as part of what has been called the commercial property and casualty crisis. Most, if not all centers will continue to carry liability insurance, but probably in reduced amounts.

Attempt to Establish Child Care Co-op Fizzles by Linda Miklowitz

The following is a story of aspiration, if not success. It's a story of parents at work who yearned to have their children close by. It's a story of more than a year of effort.

In the spring of 1985 the idea surfaced of a co-op daycare center at the Florida Department of Transportation. With almost 1,300 employees, most of them at the Burns Building, by the railroad tracks at the foot of Myers Park, there was a base of support. The co-op would be organized roughly like the local food co-op, with a hired staff and members working to lower fees if they wanted to. The Legislature was expected to approve three pilot child care programs for state employees and appropriate \$100,000. The timing appeared right.

A survey brought a response from almost 200 employees offering about 100 kids. Many, including those without children to enroll, offered donations of furniture, equipment and supplies. We were inspired.

We went to the director of administration. There are many good reasons for management to support work based daycare. Surveys show that it lowers absenteeism, promotes retention of employees

and enhances their recruitment. Maternity leaves are often cut short, even for nursing mothers. It portrays management as caring for the welfare of their workers' families, and, even more important, appearance becomes the reality as co-workers assist each other in caring for children.

While the administration was supportive, we saw two limitations: there was no space available in the Burns building, and the DOT was not legally permitted to spend its gas tax revenue on the project. However, we had moral support and a few tangibles like permission to devote work-time to the project and copying and mailing privileges.

"...parents could have lunch with their children and nursing mothers could conveniently visit."

In July we called an organizational meeting which almost 60 people attended. We discussed our ideal: a high quality child care center emphasizing the latest child development techniques, close enough to the building so that parents could have lunch with their children and nursing

mothers could conveniently visit. Policy would be set by the members, parents and their kids would plant flowers and hang murals, co-workers, even those without children, would volunteer to lay music, demonstrate drawing and painting, or conduct "Mr. Wizard" science classes. A graduate student would be selected to design a child development program as a dissertation or thesis.

Officers and a board of directors were elected. Members decided to incorporate and chose the name DOTCARE, Inc. At a later meeting the articles and bylaws were approved. About 30 families signed up in the beginning. When I returned from filing the articles of incorporation at the Capitol, I received a phone call from two interested secretary of state employees who had read our documents and wanted to know more. It seemed we had a hot idea!

The legislature's \$100,000 went to one, not three, pilot programs. The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles was chosen. While DOT already had a membership organization, the other agency, two miles east on Apalachee Parkway, had a one story building in the

back that could be renovated. We were undaunted. We would continue, borrowing seed money if we needed it from a lending institution or from our members.

By fall we found an old house that captured our imagination. It was up the hill across from Myers Park. The front of the house overlooked a duck pond from a bluff with a great view through French windows. Well established azalea and camellia bushes promised a fantastic spring. However, the house would need renovation. We spent our first big chunk of money — almost \$200 — on our county license fee, so the county health inspector could go over the house with a fine tooth comb and present us with comments.

After negotiating with the owner, it looked like we needed \$30,000 to get into this house. No lender we could find would give us the money without personal signatures, meaning that if the corporation could not pay, individuals who signed would be held responsible. We sought 15 people who would be limited to \$2,000 each. We could find only about half the number.

see DOT, page 9



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Breaking the Silence, from page 1

same. Children leave treadmarks on us, on our bodies and in our minds. We are changed by these little teachers, so much so that even if they should not exist any longer we would not go back to a time of their pre-existence. We may heal from their demise, but we could never not have known them.

The reality of parenting has almost nothing to do with how wonderful the child is. It is that we do it in a vacuum. Well-meaning friends can be reached out to. There are some parents who find themselves in a supportive atmosphere, perhaps living in groups familiar with children. But by and large we do it alone.

We get used to it. Used to the extra laundry, the extra emotions. We get used to being back in school, this time as adults watchdogging the progress of our child. We are expected to be involved, to a point. Then we are expected to back off and not interfere. Watching for subtle signals in our children about when to run interference and when to allow the bumps and bruises is a fine art. I have learned to let Kevin climb and cartwheel and be a daredevil and an adventurer. My policy is to let him experience the ordinary injuries while being adamant about experiments that could result in loss of life or limb or eye. We make our house as childproof as possible and alert him about the realities of chemical poisoning, sharp corners, and not letting strangers in. After that we have to trust that he is intelligent and can apply the information he has been given.

Sometimes I scream. This is usually when I am overwrought and exhausted, not getting the things I need. A lot of the time I worry about finances, that delicate juggling act I do each month since I am not willing to live simply and poor any longer. The income hasn't gone up in leaps and bounds, but it costs \$2,000 a year to insure us against the long odds and another \$1,300 a year in school tuition. I lived on less than that amount for years. When they tell you that children are expensive, believe it. Tuition and insurance and planning for the long run are almost impossible tasks unless you have the job security and benefits that require fitting into and working within the system. I have not yet been willing to go that far.

When I scream, I think my son understands that I am letting off steam and that he is also allowed to scream when necessary, though a lot of people don't like it and it isn't very pleasant for us, either. We usually have a standoff, cry, and make up. Then we discuss what's really going on.

I am very close to him because we are very much alike. This is a quirk of nature. I bask in this fact because I have always yearned to have someone to communicate with, and I

think he intuitively knows and sees things the way I do. He pushes his limits and reminds me that I am an adventurer. He wants me to teach him to sail in the ocean like I did all my childhood. I tell him, sure. His task this summer is to master swimming because he is too important to risk drowning in the inevitable capsizing. This gives me time to conjure up a boat and a sailing situation.

We are so much alike. But I am cautious to remember that he is also a separate person who has different sensibilities sometimes. He will grow and he will go. I am planning for my empty nest now, while he is five. He begins kindergarten this fall. He is tall and he is big, and he looks older than he is by at least a year. He swings daringly from his trapeze, pushing himself to break records he set the day before. Soon he will be doing tricks on his bike. Soon he will be playing sports. Soon he will be having homework and learning to use computers. He envisions himself a magician/police officer. I tell him the world needs more magician/police officers.

This is a journey that is poignant and painful. I wouldn't have missed it, even after what it has done to my life. I have a very hard time listening to people trying to work through whether to have children. Part of me is very bored by this discussion and part of me is very uncomfortable with it because I don't think I asked myself these questions. I think I always just knew I would have a child, that I would have him/her before I was thirty, and that by this age my focus would be back out on the larger world. I can't do it all at once. I am such a perfectionist that I had to be willing to disappear for a few years to emerge again as this mother person.

I think my child is my friend for having done that. I am ready now to become friends again with other people my own age.

Facing these realities does not seem to be overly negative. I think there are mothers who do not experience things as heavily as I have described. I'd like to talk to them. But facing reality and talking about what's hard is a way to survive. I survive by understanding where I have been and admitting the difficulty I have overcome. I am somewhat saddened by the years I have missed in Tallahassee's community. It has changed since I turned away. It's been a long time since I've been to a good community dance, flirted with friends, and been part of a general discussion on the state of our community.

If my child is around when I do any of these, I may appear somewhat distracted. My attention wanders to him naturally as I monitor the environment for his safety, a vestigial habit from when he was a toddler a few short years ago. Balancing what I want with what he needs is surely a career in itself.

Fathers, from page 1

accurately, all day long sickness). It boiled down to the fact that there was really nothing that I could do about it. I did as much work as I could to make it easier, but it never felt like enough. I realized, too, that after the word got out that a child was on the way, people stopped asking me how I was doing. The question changed to, "Hi, how's mom-to-be doing?" I didn't really notice at the time, but they were conveying society's message -- "fathers aren't really important." Now, I make it a point to ask fathers-to-be how they are doing, remembering all the hopes and dreams that I didn't have much opportunity to express.

As I continued my memory tour one thing stood out -- the call to my father to announce that he was a grandfather. After sharing the good news, I said, "Well, I have to get going. Mom needs her rest. Having a baby is hard work." "Before you go," he said, "having a baby can be hard work on fathers too. Be sure to take care of yourself." He had delivered well over a hundred babies in his time and didn't feel that I would be shirking any manly duties if I

rested. I slowed down for a minute, but there were things that needed doing, so I put his admonition away, only to remember it three months later.

I slowly began to understand what the feeling was all about. It was that if one is a father, one is not a real part of the parenting process or important to it. Society's assigned role divisions were working their way into me.

This was brought home to me on two occasions. Once, a friend stood up and, seeing our daughter, proclaimed, "What a beautiful baby! Who does she belong to?" I was beaming with fatherly pride when a mutual friend announced, "Oh, that's (Mom's name)'s baby." The look on my face must have motivated her to guiltily add, "Oh, and his too."

On another occasion, I was sitting with my daughter after touring one of the local malls. She wanted to walk up and down the stairs endlessly and we were taking a brief rest before beginning again. An acquaintance spotted us and came over. "Baby-sitting tonight?" she asked. "No," I said,

"I'm her father." I wondered if my daughter's Mom had been there instead of me, if our friend would have felt that she was babysitting for me?


I began to look around to see what else was happening to fathers in our society. I saw an article in *Mothering Magazine* entitled "Fathers being mothers." I was glad in the next issue that one of my contemporaries had written in to point out that fathers could be good parents in their own right and didn't need to be called "mothers." I also noticed that I wasn't as quick on some counts in dealing with our daughter as her Mom was. The reality was that it had nothing to do with being a man. I simply didn't spend as much time with our daughter as her Mom did.

This has been happening to men and women for centuries. Men have been overburdened with work outside the home, and women overburdened with caring for the children and household. All my best energy was going into work outside the home. Rarely did I get to spend mornings with my daughter when she and I both were well

rested and fresh. I found that a lot of my attention was perpetually tied up in fearing that I wouldn't be able to make a good enough income for us. This is a fear of many fathers and may be why it is so hard for fathers to stop thinking about work.

I revel when I see men out during the day with their children. It seems that I see this more and more. Talking with another father, he said he would give anything if he could just nurse his daughter. I wonder what other "unmanly" desires are in the hearts of other fathers?

I have come to terms with the fact that I didn't have to put up with morning sickness, or the discomforts and pains of pregnancy and giving birth. I deeply regret the fact that I will never know the joy of having a life growing inside me, and be able to bring that life into the world. That is something that I will miss forever. But then again, I get to be a father and no unaware societal attitudes or teaching ever again will be able to repress me and how important I really am.



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by Kathleen and James McGinnis
Orbis Books, 1981 \$4.95, (PB) 142 pp.

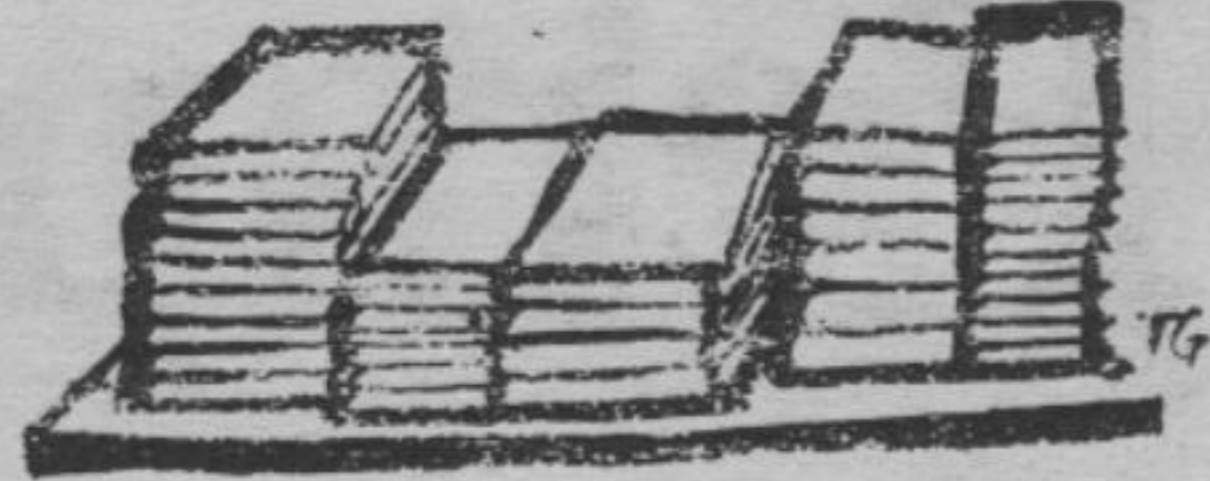
In spite of the lofty, idealistic title, *Parenting for Peace and Justice* is a practical, helpful book for parents and adult allies to children who want to translate their values into daily living with young people.

The authors, James and Kathleen McGinnis, are activists and Catholics and the book reflects both their activism and their Catholicism. However, their goals and compassionate suggestions on how parents can be activists through their parenting transcend barriers of politics and religion.

"We want to be able to act for justice without sacrificing our children, and to build family community without isolating ourselves from the world." This is the dilemma of most parents who see that the world must be changed to be safe for our children, while at the same time our children must be raised well in order for it to be worth having had them at all. The McGinnises offer much needed help both as models and as teachers. They have three adopted children and are staff members at the Institute for Peace and Social Justice in St. Louis.

Chapters deal with issues such as

—nonfiction—



stewardship/simplicity, nonviolence in the family, helping children deal with violence in our world, multiculturalizing family life, sex-role stereotyping, family involvement in social action, prayer and parenting for peace and justice. Practical suggestions range from how to deal with TV watching (watch with our children and incorporate time for talking about what each of you saw and how you feel about it) to how to include your children in social services or actions in ways that build their self-esteem.

My favorite excerpt suggests ways to set up a regularly scheduled family meeting in which complaints and conflicts can be raised, providing an opportunity to build community, establish a sense of shared responsibility and encourage mutual problem solving.

Perhaps one of the most wonderful things about this book is that nothing is offered smugly or glibly. I have never had the feeling that this book shows the weak spots in my parenting or that the suggestions are just too easy to be real. The McGinnises recognize and acknowledge with each idea that parenting for peace and justice in this world is hard and time consuming, and that pressures on parents are great. Their compassion and intelligence is constant. Their book is friendly and a real tool for real people.

—Laura Newton

—fiction—

Novel plants seeds of respect

An Episode of Sparrows
by Rumer Godden
Copyright 1955, available in paperback (1981) from Perennial Library, Harper & Row Publishers.

Here is an endearing tale of street children and English society which may plant seeds of respect for independent thinking in readers' minds.

When I first pulled this paperback from my bookseller's used fiction shelf and glanced through it cursorily, an excerpted quote in the front caught my fancy:

"You are making a mountain out of a molehill," said Angela. Olivia was suddenly inspired to answer, "A molehill can be a mountain to a sparrow."

I bought it.

On first reading I was charmed with the finely detailed, realistic descriptions of English streets and their inhabitants. "It's about little people," I decided, "children who are individuals with thoughts, feelings and circumstances just like everybody."

When next I took *Sparrows* up again, there was no problem picking up the story where I had left it off. Indeed, each successive reading sustained my interest for a longer period of time.

Then, all of a sudden, came a master stroke. Totally unsuspecting, I was in the middle of eating an eggs, bacon & hash browns breakfast, accompanying myself by reading comfortably when ... I had to escape to the men's room so nobody would see me wiping away tears.

At that point, I realized the amazing power of this writer, Rumer Godden. She had made me cry by describing something good happening to poor Vincent and his restaurant on Catford Street. (Thinking about that scene still brings a lump to my throat.) There was to be more, of course; I checked and gratefully saw I was barely half way through the covers.

Other skilled writer's touches emerge as one continues with this story — contrasts between what's real and what's pretense become hard to ignore, for instance.

If you read this book, you'll get more than just a good read. It'll touch your heart, make you think, and perhaps let you see people in a different way. What more could one ask from literature?

—Frank Brown

The Extended Parent: The Over-Extended Parent's Best Friend

by Margie Menzel



Mother Nature didn't intend for all of us to be parents. It's been said of me, for instance, that I wouldn't recognize a maternal instinct if it were handed to me on a skewer with tartar sauce; certainly I've never had much interest in reproducing. But that's precisely my point. Parenting isn't the only reason for an adult to relate to children. They also make excellent friends.

I relate to an ever-increasing number of families as a sort of extended member, and I swear by the practice. It's good for the kids, of course, to get some fresh adult energy and attention. It's good for their parents, too, needless to say, to get some practical support. But my basic motivation for free-lance child care isn't altruistic at all, but selfish to the last drop. It's good for me. (Ayn Rand would be proud.)

Children's energy is necessary to adults. I belong to the school of thought that says all ages are necessary to one another, anyway, but kids are uniquely utilitarian. An adult who pays respectful attention to them will get a lot of food for thought. For most people, the process of growing up is too easily confused with the process of growing old, and children can show you why.

Ever read "The Doors of Perception" by Aldous Huxley? He described the human brain as a "reducing valve." His theory was that the amount of information we can acquire by sensory perception is so vast that we can't possibly process it, so we reduce it to a manageable amount. We block the rest. Neurological data rushes into our brains in a deluge and comes out in a trickle, the amount we need to survive. The rest passes us by.

What strikes me about that "shutting-down" process is that we aren't born with it. The censoring of reality is an acquired behavior; we're taught to deny our senses systematically, by our environments. A Cro-Magnon woman had a different set of sensory reflexes than I have. It's a neurological matter up to a point, and then our socialization takes over. In other words, the sensory half-doubt inherent to the modern human condition is compounded and reinforced by the politics of oppression. We not only learn to perceive less, we learn to invalidate what little we perceive.

To me, the major benefit of being with kids has to do with what I learn about staying open. Or at least about retarding hardening of the cerebral arteries.

Most children relate to me, with considerable glee, as half-adult, half-kid. Part of that is my individual personality, but most of it is a matter of interrupting their calcification. For example: I'm responsible only for myself, more like them than like nearly any woman they know. But no one can tell me what to do, either. As far as they're concerned, I'm a big kid with money, a car, and no bedtime. It's a good contradiction in a child's socialization, just like a woman who's athletic or intellectual. I have the conscious goal of giving the children I love a sense of expanding possibility, even as they give the same to me.

One thing remains to be said. The importance of children as a factor in my life is relatively recent: about four or five years. My friends began having kids, which revolutionized their lives, and I had to adapt if I wanted to understand the new importance of diapers and vomit to those with whom, in the dear old days, I had discussed art, politics and religion.

Parenthood is not a choice I would make. It's not a choice I could bear the weight of. Living in the nuclear age is enough of a moral dilemma for me without giving hostages to fortune. But if those I love have made that hard choice, I'll support it as best I can.

And I'll help their children become the heroes and heroines they'll need to be just to survive. There's a spark of heroism in every child; when one loves the child's parents, it's just that much easier to catch the light.

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Perspectives on Parenting

Single Parents Can Reach Out

by Elaine Roberts

Being a single parent is exhilarating, challenging and, of course, the hardest way to parent. It certainly has encouraged my inner growth in ways I never previously imagined. I am occasionally approached by women friends who are thinking of becoming single parents by choice. Their questions produce a fair amount of anxiety for me because I want to impress upon them the miraculous joy of sharing one's life with a young one, but also the difficulties of being totally responsible for a young, fragile life. The most important thing I tell people is the value of a good support system. I really believe children need at least four adults taking care of them in order to receive all the care and attention they need. We parents need to figure out ways to give the best of our attention to our children, and then make sure they have others to turn to when we cannot provide the attention they need.

Cultivating deep, solid friendships with other parents, being as flexible as possible with our jobs, and committing ourselves to communities, communal households, or other close living arrangements are some ways to make sure our children are surrounded by loving adults. Also not to be forgotten are non-parent adults who would love to share time with a young person. Often, when arranging child care, we act as if we are imposing on someone because they are caring for our child. Our attitude should be "how fortunate you are to get to spend time with my child!"

Giving our children our best attention means freeing ourselves as much as possible from guilt, stress, and hurtful behavior patterns we picked up along the way. Children will demand our best, and they deserve not to feel that they are the cause of our hurt.

Throughout the first two years of my daughter's life, I functioned with very little support. I operated with strong behavioral and cultural patterns of isolation even before the birth, and being home with a baby reinforced these patterns. The only real bright spot was my strong, steady love for my daughter. I read and thought a great deal about parenting, and the kind of life I wanted for my daughter and myself.

When Allison was two and a half, I moved to Tallahassee, and discovered the Early School. I met some wonderful people there who reinforced some of my good ideas about parenting, and who also opened many new doors in my thinking. The full realization of just how isolated I had been also led to some major changes in my life. I began to reach out, even (gasp) to ask for help and support. I received a lot of support, and in the process, acquired some good, solid friends who I intend to keep for life. I am firmly convinced that loving attention, aid, and sustenance from others is what every parent, single or otherwise, needs in order to feel good about herself and her children.

The traditional nuclear family is not always the best model for raising children. In a lot of cases, it has detached people from each other, contributing to the severe isolation that begets so many of us. With a network of loving friends, a single woman with a child has some advantages over a woman in a traditional nuclear family. Obviously, it is easier for the single woman to circumvent the patriarchal/ownership role models and to give the child a powerful alternative image of a woman.

Raising a strong, powerful woman who really loves herself is one of the best ways to spend my time on earth. Loving and accepting myself totally and building my self-esteem is the best way to teach my daughter to love herself.



Bonnie Acker/CFP

Raising Boys To Be Free

by Laura Newton

When I was twenty and pregnant with my first child, I wanted a girl. I wanted a chance to raise a strong female, an amazon who could challenge the patriarchy in her own right. I also wanted a friend, someone like me, who would grow up to be my confidant, my peer. I wanted a daughter who could be everything, a young Anais Nin, an Emma Goldman, a me with no limits.

I had a son. And six years later another son. And although I still think it would be nice to have a daughter, I have realized over the years that my sons are my friends; they are like me; they are my peers and will be my confidants.

"In retrospect, it appears that my desire to have daughters rather than sons was the result of a sort of progressive backlash, a counterculture despair about men that plagued and still plagues many of us..."

In retrospect, it appears that my desire to have daughters rather than sons was the result of a sort of progressive backlash, a counterculture despair about men that plagued and still plagues many of us. At the same time that we were striving to free women from the shackles of biological destiny, we were beginning to use terms like "testosterone poisoning," implying that the world is the way it is because men are intrinsically violent or dominating. For the feminist mother this presents a rather serious dilemma. How can she take pride in herself as a mother and a feminist when she is faced with the seemingly hopeless task of raising the oppressor not to be an oppressor? Of course, she can hope to raise girls. Or, when she is faced with the boys she has given birth to, she can try to raise feminist sons.

Raising feminist sons in this culture is certainly a challenge; however, the real challenge here is to realize that we have focused our despair about our culture on the males in our lives and that many of those males are small boys, and all of them are human beings. Because they seem to benefit most from the structure of the

patriarchy, we have confused them with the patriarchy. Recognizing this confusion may be difficult when we look at the men in our lives, but if we look at our sons, at the little boys and the infant males in our lives, maybe we can think more clearly, free of the "men as the problem" mind set, and see that they do not benefit and that our freedom as people rests on freeing all of us, including our sons.

What we need to free our sons of are the messages that tell them they must be prepared to kill or be killed in order to be real men, that their worth lies not in themselves but in their ability to provide for others, that they must not feel how they feel (boys don't cry) and that they must be tough, not mushy and loving (don't be a sissy).

Many of us used to think that not allowing boys to play with guns or to watch certain kinds of TV shows would miraculously save them from macho posturing and hurtful behaviors. I would like to suggest here that the most important aspect of raising boys is not what we forbid them to do, but what we allow them to be. If we forbid them to play with guns but do not allow them to cry, to throw tantrums, to sleep with us, to hold hands with us or with each other, or to be "sissies," we will not have accomplished much in their favor.

The most radical approach to raising sons that I can imagine involves two things. First, we must allow them the full range of their feelings, of their humanity, even when that looks feminine or weak, even when it looks traditionally masculine. We can model, as adults, our full range of feelings, showing boys our softness, our tenderness, our compassion, our tears, our frustrations and our triumphs. Second, we must throw out our fear that they are somehow doomed to be oppressors. We can regain our balance and not react with fear if they enter a stage of not liking girls, or being fascinated with guns, or if they show us anger. If we can be at peace with our daughters wearing frilly dresses and makeup and our sons playing cops and robbers, if we can be comfortable with our sons crying hard and our daughters climbing to the top, if we can support their exploration of who they are with the faith that they will figure it out and it will be good, then we have a chance of freeing them and of being allies in their search for their own complete humanity.

At times, a baby will cry for no apparent reason. All her physical needs have been met, so what can be the problem? This is when adults really get anxious and try every trick in the book to get the child to shut up. But babies are not dolls: they are human beings with feelings. And like adults (even more so because they are less conditioned to shut down their feelings) the hurts any of us received in our lives are and aware and give our children the attention that they need.

Now, this is substantially different from the "let them holler" school of thought that suggests leaving a child in isolation to cry

baby to stop crying so that we will not be reminded. There are a million tricks that are used to distract a child from crying—jiggling, rubbing, rocking, walking, bouncing, singing, distracting with a toy, a pacifier, etc. What this does is leave the hurt inside instead of allowing it to be released through crying. The most conscientious and loving parents do this on a routine basis because it seems like the right thing to do. Many parents believe that the hurt stops when the crying is stopped. Nothing could be further from the truth.

It can be very embarrassing to parents when their young one begins to cry in

"One of the more common responses to a crying baby is to leave her isolated in her crib until she finally gives up. This adds yet another hurt to the initial hurt..."

and scream. On the contrary! When a baby cries to release emotional and physical hurts, she needs the loving, relaxed attention of another person. (This goes for all humans, not just babies!) When the baby is really through crying, she will again be the happy baby she was before the hurt happened. No residue of the hurtful experience will be left to pop up again.

One of the more common responses to a crying baby is to leave her isolated in her crib to cry until she finally gives up. This adds yet another hurt to the initial hurt, generating fear, anger, insecurity, and a sense of powerlessness in the child. Most of the hurts any of us received in our lives are coated with a layer of isolation—no one was there for us when we were hurting. This accounts for the varying degrees of isolation that all of us feel as adults in relation to each other. A child's cries should always be answered and attention given. Such a child will know that she is loved and will feel secure and able to trust other people.

So, why is it so hard to give loving, relaxed attention to a crying baby? Basically, it is because we were never allowed to cry enough to release our own hurts as babies. As a result, listening to a baby cry brings up all of the old hurt feelings from our childhoods. When that happens, we will do anything to get the

public. We have all heard the question: "Is this a good baby?"—meaning, "does the baby cry much?" This puts a great deal of pressure on the parent to make sure that the baby is quiet and does not disturb anyone, lest people think the baby is "bad" and the parent incompetent. We must remember, despite the disgruntled stares directed at us, that all babies are good. There is a legitimate reason for the crying that deserves the aware attention of a loving adult.

As the mother of an infant, I understand how hard it is for parents to listen to their children cry. Sometimes when parents are exhausted, their crying baby brings up so many feelings of frustration and anger that they feel they might go insane or cause their baby harm. It is common for parents to pass on to their children the hurts that they experienced as children. Parent support groups can be extremely helpful in giving us a safe place to deal with both our frustrations as parents and our painful childhood experiences. It is important that we remind ourselves and each other that parenting is a difficult job. We have always done the very best that we could with the resources and information that were available. When we, as parents, support each other and help each other work on our own feelings of hurt, we can be more relaxed and aware and give our children the attention that they need.

Lesbian Parenting

by Jan Johnson and Candice Creekmore

Lesbian parenting is different than single or nuclear parenting, but not that different. Of course, with each situation comes its own set of particular problems, but all share certain fundamental ones. For example, almost all parents will battle the "Rambo" and "Barbie" roles that society attempts to shuttle our children into.

As the lesbian parents of a four year old male child, the problems that we have run into regarding our sexual preference have been minimal. The biggest problem facing homosexual parents today seems to be explaining their home life to their children's school.

When we approached our pre-school, we explained that having two moms was normal for our son and that we wanted it to

be treated normally in the schoolroom. As a result of our honesty, when Cameron says, "I have two mommies," the teachers reply, "Gosh, how lucky you are." And when we were greeted with two sets of Mother's Day cards, how lucky we felt.

There seem to be no incredible differences in a child's development dependent on whether he or she is raised in a traditional nuclear family or in a lesbian family. It seems that the questions we face most often are: how do we explain our relationship? Will our child be scorned by his schoolmates?

Hopefully, these issues will not be blown out of proportion. Hopefully, this child will be secure in our love for him and will grow up with an inherent acceptance of all those in society who are "different."



Crying Communicates Babies' Needs and Feelings

by Deborah Powers

A crying baby. Such an upsetting thing to most of us.

"What am I supposed to do?"

"Is something wrong?"

"I think I'll lose my mind if this kid doesn't stop crying!"

"I'm so embarrassed! People will think I'm a bad parent or that I have a bad baby!"

Just for a moment put yourself in the body of a newborn baby. You have recently emerged from the womb. You are a highly intelligent, delightful human—but your body is immature. For nine months you have been growing in a safe, warm space with all of your needs automatically met. Now, suddenly, you have to depend on others to supply you with food, warmth, closeness, security, and stimulation. Not only that, but you cannot speak the language! It can be terrifying when the humans on whom you depend do not meet your needs.

For babies, crying is the best way to forcefully announce that needs are not being met. Babies are powerful creatures. A baby's cry will immediately get the attention of everyone within hearing distance.

The first appropriate response to a crying baby is to see that her needs for comfort, security, food, etc. are met. This is not spoiling the baby. An infant's needs are pure and real and her cries are not manipulative. Babies have needs for closeness and security; they need to be held a lot and to get plenty of attention. A baby who

is assured that she is loved will grow to be an independent, cooperative, and self-confident person.

Some parents feel it would be impossible to give a child all the attention she needs. They worry that their child will make never-ending demands for more and more attention. They withhold attention because they fear becoming victim. Actually, the demanding child is the one whose needs are not being met. If a child is receiving the attention she needs, she will not demand more.

Bedtime is one of the hardest times for parents and young ones in our culture. The modern practice of having children sleep alone in their own rooms is rarely questioned. Although it has been a social taboo in this country for parents and children to sleep together, families have slept together for thousands of years and it is still the rule in most countries of the world. It is an entirely legitimate and natural need of young ones to have the warmth, comfort, security, and closeness of their parents at night. All mammals sleep with their babies for just this reason. A great many bedtime power struggles would be alleviated by parents' recognition of their child's need for closeness at night. Another advantage is that a breastfed baby who sleeps with her parents rarely cries at night, when exhausted parents need their rest and have the least amount of attention and patience. The baby wakes up to nurse and falls right back to sleep. No one has to get up in the middle of the night and everyone gets more sleep as a result.

Parenting For a More Peaceful World

The following discussion is between mothers committed to parenting for a more peaceful world. Communication now is more vital than ever, for each personal or family or community struggle is magnified by the earth's struggle to survive the onslaught of humankind.

We know that if we are to create a more peaceful world, certain premises must be re-examined. How do we rear strong, nurturing boys and girls? How do we discipline? Is spanking permissible? Although we may grow passionate, argue, applaud, laugh and cry, we agree, above all, upon our need — and our right — to this communication between us.

Thanks to Mary Alda Balthrop, Patience Gaia, Suzanne Suarez, Vickie Peace, and Laura Newton for sharing heartfelt words.

—Norine Cardea

S. Let's talk about the differences in how our parents raised us, and how we'd like to change and direct culture...differences between the generations.

M. I come from a family of nine children. I saw my parents become different people; from the time I was a young child, my mother thought that the way to make me behave was to spank me. She would no more have spanked my two younger sisters than she would have flown to the moon! She just thought it was inappropriate — you didn't hit another human being. She lectures my siblings who think that it is appropriate. Most people don't have that experience — to see that their parents learn from what they do. It is great to see that parents are learning all the time.

P. My parents used physical discipline with us, belts and things like that, and I grew up thinking that that was generally wrong, but still that spanking once in awhile for very important things was appropriate. But looking at my son now, it is totally inconceivable. Add that to my experience working in a child care center, and I can't see how hitting a child ever does any good. Even with the most problem child, hitting does not correct the problem.

L. It is interesting that in answer to the

question, we all think of discipline. The thing that I was never allowed to be as a child was a complete human being. There were "don't look at me like that, don't use that tone of voice with me, don't ask those kinds of questions." There was a whole realm of communication with the world that was cut off from me because I was somehow an incomplete person because I was a child. That headframe is the one that allows a parent to hit a child. In the early years of my mothering, I had not shaken that, and I did slap my kids. When I would strike one of them there would be this great chasm between what I expected of myself and what I was doing, and I realized that it was my mother wooshing into my body... literally, it was me doing what had been done to me.

The thing I think I have done differently is that my mother always stood in this intense isolation from us. "I'm allowed to do things that you can't do. I'm a complete adult, and you are an incomplete, small child." Instead, I say we're all in this together. We are all complete human beings, I'm a big one and you're a little one, we all make mistakes, we all need to say I'm

sorry, and we're all going to change and grow. And somewhere along the line, I crossed over to the point where I would never think of hitting one of my children.

S. For me, I had a real different feeling. I was raised by a violent stepfather and a mother whom I loved, and both of them spanked me. But what I remember clearly is my stepfather because he did not have the biological or psychological connection with me that my mother did. I don't resent my mother for spanking me sometimes, I don't even have memories of when she did. But I have all kinds of memories of when my stepfather did, because he was angry and he was unfair a lot of the time. I've been around quite a few mothers who did spank their kids, and their theory was that if there is a busy road and a child by the road, then it may be right on. This is my opinion which may differ from yours, but you have to have enough of a grasp on them to tell them not to go in the road. A little swat on the hiney to let them know that you mean business if they do run into the road, as in this case.

see Peace, page 9

Daycare Makes Children a "Commodity"

by David Cipolloni

It's strange to be consulting for preschool programs in that fundamentally I don't advocate them. I certainly don't support them as accelerated versions of the lockstep schooling a kid faces for 12 or more years ahead, and I detest them as daycare. But above all, I don't accept them for what they say about the status of children, nor for what they allow in defining parenting.

It is not good for young children and infants to be harnessed into miniaturized academia. It is not good for young children and infants to be maintained through the bulk of their day in groups of other young children and infants by total strangers.

Surely it is a marvel to have your three year old show off solutions to algebraic equations, and a blessing to have your daughter taken care of so mother can go back to work. The kids may be smarter younger, may be more compliant, may certainly be "ready for school" — but what is missing is far more important for the child.

What is missing is the elemental familial bonding that is essential to developing strong, healthy, viable emotional self-knowledge.

All growth and learning extend from one's concept of self, and self-concept in infancy and early childhood is founded on and molded from how the child feels the world. The investment, nurturing, famili-

arity and genuine caring of parent to child is a unique and total ambience that best meets a child's primary needs: it defines a quality of childhood and parenthood that is indispensable.

The child's best deal, therefore, is one that focuses on feeling good, being accepted, wanted, adequate, competent, supported, happy, and encouraged. (Is this so unheard of? Doesn't this strike deeply, as what we adults still desire?) It's a fact that the best preschools I know do not and cannot offer such a deal.

"By abdicating their obligations and delegating the significant process of the child's development to others, parents further society's role as final authority, as caretaker, as the larger accommodating parent."

To charge the marketplace with the responsibility of raising children determines the nature of this experience for both child and parent. Culturally, the presumption of daycare as an institution depersonalizes children into a commodity, as it obviates the responsibility of biological parenting.

The responsibility of parenting begins not at childbirth, not at conception and pregnancy, but during the process of

deciding whether to bring a child into the world. That responsibility demands the consideration that it may not be right to birth a child if there is no one to parent. If it will be necessary for parents to work and send their child to daycare, they are not acting in the child's interests but their own. Couples and single women bear children for hosts of reasons, often no reason at all. Because they are expected to. Everyone does. To save marriages. To give meaning to life. To extend or establish identity. These are not insignificant needs being expressed. Yet these needs are usually believed sufficient to have a child without seriously accounting for the child's true needs and the abilities of parents to meet them.

By abdicating their obligations and delegating the significant process of the child's development to others, parents further society's role as final authority, as caretaker, as the larger accommodating parent. The social responsibility becomes one that supplants the family's rather than supplementing it. Parenting has become "easier" because an institutional service sector will do much of it for us.

Consequently, the predominance of the custodial society reaches even further into

our lives. Once more the principle is embedded that our interpersonal relationships need not be developed but can be mediated. We do not need to learn responsibility, communication, nurturance, understanding, compassion; we can pay someone. Or have the government do it.

We have a deep social failure when it is more important for parents to work than to raise their children, when parenthood and childhood exist as polarities and not as complements.

Imagine that people are to be respected, given dignity, encouraged autonomy, empowered.

Imagine that children are people, deserving nothing less than equal respect and opportunity, and that respect extends even to a newborn infant.

Imagine that the relationship between child and parent is given highest regard and value as a personal and intimate one, and one of specific and inalienable obligations and responsibilities.

Imagine that childhood is a time and experience that each child enjoys and develops to the optimum. That sort of childhood would have to enhance the time and experience of parenthood, and in turn improve the quality of life for us all.

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Peace, from page 8

P. What I would do is to try to explain many times before I used physical force.

L. The crux of it for me is that I believe very deeply that the source of all the problems we have on the planet is people who don't feel good about themselves. They've lost touch with who they really are, with their inner sense of pride and worth as human beings. And that is how a person treats another when they don't feel good about themselves, whether it's malicious gossip, or hitting, or starting a war. I think that one of the things we do to our children to make them not like themselves is to hit them. I really believe that. I think that what that says is: I can do this to you. I can hurt you this way. What happens in a small child's mind is not: I shall stay out of the road, but: I am so awful that I just got slapped. If what we want to do is change the world, and we're talking about parenting for peace and justice, we need to inconvenience ourselves and keep the child out of the road by some other method.

V. My daughter was spanked at the daycare center. I told them that was totally unacceptable, and they never did it again. But there are people working there with very different values than mine, and I had to explain to them what my values were. To go back to people who don't feel good about themselves, I see people whose parents were very strict and disrespectful of them as children, who didn't value them as children; I have seen them feel miserable about themselves, and have to learn, as adults, how to feel good about themselves through their accomplishments.

S. I was definitely away from my daughter more than I wanted to be. Maybe that makes a difference. It is very hard for me to handle her sometimes. But I love my daughter, she is the only thing I have! We are a family; I don't want to lose her. I want her to know that when I say stop, she has to stop. She has to be protected somehow.

L. What bothers me about that is I don't want to raise a child of mine, and I don't want your daughter, to think that it's okay for her to be hit, or to be threatened into behaving. What I would do instead is choose another path. It makes me proud of my son when he says: you can't hit me. That's our agreement. And I'm glad, because when he walks out into the world and some stranger tries to hit him, he will look at them in disbelief and say — but wait a minute! He will then try to choose a more peaceful path. That's what I hope will

happen. That is interrupted a thousand times because he interacts with other children, and he's going to integrate all of that, but I do see our children choosing other alternatives.

V. They go through times when they deviate from that, but I think that to have that base of respectfulness which you have shown them makes all the difference in the world.

L. It's hard to be a parent in this culture; we don't get the emotional and financial support we need. We need to be constantly building networks.

V. Parents who abuse their children were abused themselves. Some of us had parenting done in a very gentle way, and some of us had a harsher kind of discipline, and we've had to take that and consciously make an effort to change the way we parent our children.

P. Respect is a critical issue. I think about all the different times I am so clearly not respecting that other small person as a full, valuable human being. Sometimes I walk over his rights, and then I realize just what I've done.

V. And I think it must also be the other way around. Some parents that I come in contact with forget that children need to respect them, too. I see some parents who let children walk all over them. And what does that teach that child but not to respect?

S. You know, one thing I've noticed with a lot of new age parenting is people who've been oppressed as children say, "I don't want to do that, so I'm going to let my child be 'free' to express his emotions." Sometimes it doesn't work out in certain situations. It is misrepresenting the world to lead a child to believe he is the same as an adult. They need to learn to be respectful, by discipline or whatever it takes. Then, out in the world, they will be respected. Sometimes, "trying to work it out with them" is giving them a whole lot of attention for the negative thing they are doing.

L. I think that we put adult values about that kind of stuff on children. My approach would be to go off with a disruptive child, if I could do it and do it well, sit quietly, and see what it is he is trying to tell me.

P. Yes, the important thing is to pay close attention.

M. Sometimes it can be worked out even more smoothly. The child may be doing something inappropriate, and all you say is come sit on my lap. Because you've moved toward him to be generous and make contact with him physically, he is fine. And when you really give someone attention, you're seeing exactly what he needs.

S. Just in the way that we live we instill values in our children.

P. Role models are so important. Models for feminism, for peace issues, for recycling, for using as little as possible in a world full of other people.

M. Some of the research about the fear that children have about the arms race suggests that children of families who don't acknowledge the arms race and don't do anything to promote peace in the world feel more fear than do children in families that are actively involved in peace-making activities. I can alleviate the fear that they might have because of the current world problems by my example of being in charge, by being an active person trying to change the world.

V. To eliminate sexism is so important for our children as peacemakers. I want my daughter to know that she is strong; I also want her to be loving and nurturing, but to get the things, too, that I didn't get because of the way I was raised.

L. When I hear you describe the characteristics you want for your daughter, they are the same characteristics I want for my sons. I want them to be independent and powerful and I want them to be nurturers.

V. And what that means for me is that I have to make sure that my relationships with men are right. I am setting an example.

S. How are we going to raise our sons to make it different?

L. We need to raise our sons and daughters with the same sets of values instead of one sex embodying power and one embodying nurturing. And it's not just that we have to raise boys to be nicer to women; they have to be raised to be nicer to themselves and to each other. They are entitled to be nurturing and loving because it is our birthright and our essential nature to want to love each other.

DOT, from page 3

We were stymied until last winter when one of our realtors approached us. He managed an already licensed child care center very close to our building, and wanted us to take over the lease for five years, starting at a bit more than \$800 monthly. We quickly reactivated and examined the possibility. We checked with city utilities to see what our costs would be. We got quotes on insurance. A budget office employee prepared a budget for us. We had some trouble making it balance, but we finally did. We would pay our teachers and caregivers above minimum wage, keep child/caregiver ratios below the state minimum and match the monthly rates for the pilot program: \$200 for toddlers and \$217 for infants under age two.

In May we distributed six page brochures on our plan for co-op daycare with a sample day's schedule. We asked for donations of items so we would know what we didn't have to buy. We held an information session but the response was disheartening — fewer than a handful. Some of the comments indicated that our fees were too high. Many parents were paying closer to \$160.

We slashed our budget, reducing salaries and increasing child/caregiver ratios to the state minimums. But we were now able to charge only \$160 per child. We sent the message out with posters around the Burns building and extended the enrollment period. The response was slightly better, but no where near the 65 children on which our budget was based.

We could not enter into a long term lease, hire staff, buy \$4,000 of furniture, equipment and supplies with such an initial turnout. We're sure that once we were in operation, parents would trickle in with their children and enroll, but we could not afford to operate at a loss for so long. Down the parkway at the Highway Safety pilot program, the center, planned for 75, opened with enrollment in the low 30s.

We've had to conclude that the need for full time child care for state employees has been met by private enterprise. We got numerous inquiries about drop-in care, but we cannot depend on that for regular income. Further, the benefit of co-op childcare over childcare for profit is not appreciated. Parents are reluctant to switch from an established program to a new one no matter how attractively that new program is portrayed. There being no further need for us, DOTCARE, Inc. will dissolve.

It's been an exciting year. I certainly learned a lot about the childcare business, real estate, lending and people. I wish very much my toddler son could be in a co-op center, but not this one and not now.

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Parenting Teenagers: A Dialogue

by Gerry & Joy Brudenell

Parenting, from our perspective, involves at least two individuals listening and learning from each other. Over the years, we have learned many skills for working with each other from neighbors in our community. These and many other teenagers and adults could be credited with the words we write.

We are parents and teenagers learning together. Four premises guide our relationships with each other. Parents and teens have information to share about their world. Teens and parents have had experiences which prevented them from acknowledging and expressing all their feelings. Parents and teen both deserve attention for expressing their information and feelings.

Gerry says:

Teens benefit from receiving my attention as well as giving me attention as we develop and share our lives together.

Our offspring have developed into initiating and responsive young adults. These teens recognize that we are human, mistake-prone, and in an unfinished state as parents. Teenagers let us feel our way toward perfection as parents. Our mutual admiration promotes a healthy and continuing dissolution of the generation gaps which prevent parents and teens from peaceful co-existence.

Teenagers respond to parents' expressions of teenagery (flashbacks to adolescence). Parents respond to the teens' parenting inclinations. When disruptions have bubbled up (or exploded) in parent/teen relationships, each has contributed to harmony by acknowledging that the negative feelings expressed only represent one person's learned behavior. That historical way of responding to stress obstructs clearness in interpreting information, requests, and affection. However, family members can move beyond the tension.

Often, persons who have met our teens ask for advice about relationships with their own teenagers. I avoided giving such advice until recently when I realized they were probably asking, "When parenting my teens, how can I behave?" My response is, "When parenting our teens, I take responsibility for my behavior. Simply stated, I work to stay on the same side of the table."

Teens are telling me that "When we communicate, I make good decisions." Avoiding adversarial, and moving toward egalitarian, communication sets the stage for parents and teens sharing harmonious lives.

Teens bring differences in substance where they may lack experience. Teens have different information, often unknown to the parent; teens make different decisions not yet experienced by the parent; teens know parts of the world unknown to the parent, and can add fresh perspectives when thinking about a problem. When teens and parents work together "on the same side of the table" the work they define is larger.

Abrupt initiatives and bold challenges from teens do not necessarily mean the disruption of family harmony. Over time, these wonderful expressions of independence test the emerging adult. Life together is bumpy at times, but only in the awkwardness which comes from trying out new aspects of self.

Families change even though some family members are unable to acknowledge the



photo by Deborah Powers

changes. Parents and teens continue to demonstrate those changes.

Most important, parents and teens teach each other by seeing clearly what old behavior patterns limit the relationship, and assist each other past the limitations of their old ways toward change. Together, parents and teens can re-evaluate their old behavior patterns and reclaim their personal powers.

Joy says:

Trust and support can help a kid grow stronger and feel more self-assured. Trust is very important in a parent-teenager relationship. If parents don't trust their children, children might not trust themselves. Distrust make for a very confusing self-image. Intimidation is also very hurtful in this relationship. It can cut off communication and make it hard to show true feelings. Constant reassurance helps, concentrating more on the good than the bad. If a parent is constantly referring to the bad instead of the good, the teenager might do the same.

Restrictions are a constant reminder of what the teenager did wrong. Instead, with the statement "I see what you did wrong but I trust you will do better next time," parents indicate that teenagers are smart enough to see what they did wrong and correct it next time around.

Sometimes you'll hear a parent saying something like, "Well, I know what's best for you." Even though a parent may have more knowledge on the subject, nobody knows more about oneself than that individual and that sort of comment might bring up a lot of rebellion. Nothing will get done with rebellion and authority going against each other. Instead, sharing

knowledge and talking things over works, like saying "Well, what do you think we should do about this?"

Parents add balance to teen lives by taking some time to think and feel from a teenager's point of view. Often, children are asked to grow up, to act older. Young people spend so much of their time living in an adult world. Sometimes, parents benefit from "thinking younger."

Being a good model is also important; young people pick up on everything. A hypocritical parent is a sure stimulus for rebellion. Supporting and encouraging, but not pushing independence helps. Many times the youth is unprepared when suddenly at age 18, she is expected to know how to handle responsibility. I personally got a lot out of getting a job and participating in activities which helped me learn more about myself. There is nothing like making and spending your own money, and feeling good about yourself at the same time.

Joy and Gerry:

Parents can raise teens successfully by "letting go" and recognizing that teens are in the act ... as active participants in parenting teenagers.

What Teenagers Want Parents To Know

by Jennifer Harbeson

Parents were teenagers once; surely they can remember the unsureness, humiliation, resentment, happiness, letdowns, and sorrows that naturally accompany the teenage years.

I don't know any one of my friends who doesn't complain about her parents at least occasionally: "They just don't listen to me!" "My mom loves to power trip me!" "Don't they trust me?" "Why does she treat me like a sub-human!" The list is endless.

You are supposed to respect your elders. Why? Because they are your elders. Big deal, right. Do they respect you for who you are, not what they want to make you? It's not very fair for a generation to be brought up to respect their elders if their elders don't respect the young.

Respect breeds respect. Please respect me. Listen to me. Understand me; don't judge me. Remember the frustrations of being too young for this but too old for that. Treat me as an equal and I'll do the same for you.

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The Top 10 Censored Stories of 1985

Condensed from an article in *The San Francisco Bay Guardian*

For ten years, Project Censored — brainchild of Sonoma State University communications professor Carl Jensen — has been compiling reports on major news stories the news media have refused to cover. Dr. Jensen states that "it's quite clear things are getting worse... We're seeing increasingly important domestic- and foreign-policy information that never reaches most Americans." Here is a summary of the top 10 censored stories of 1985:

1. Fierce Aerial War in El Salvador is Unreported in U.S. Press: Since June 1984, 3,000 tons of U.S.-made bombs have been dropped on civilian targets. More than 2,000 people have died in the attacks.

2. Military Toxic Waste Sites: More Dangerous than Non EPA-regulated:

- Some 500,000 leaking nerve-gas rockets are stored at sites in Maryland, Kentucky, Oregon, Utah, Arkansas and elsewhere.
- Leakage from an abandoned Agent Orange manufacturing site near Fort A.P. Hill in Virginia exposed dozens of Boy Scouts on a jamboree in the area to dangerous levels of dioxin.
- In Jacksonville, Ark., a residential community near an old Agent Orange storage facility is contaminated with levels of dioxin five times higher than those reported at Times Beach, Mo.

3. Ten Years of Genocide in East Timor: Amnesty International reports that as many as 200,000 East Timorese — 1/3 of the population — have died at the hands of the Indonesian military since 1975.

4. The Reagan Revolution: Liberty Under Siege: Because of Executive Order 12291 issued in 1982, all federal agencies are required to consider "cost-benefit principles" when implementing health, safety, welfare and public information programs. A few dozen clerks in the White House Budget Office virtually dictate the enforcement of new regulations, in effect nullifying acts of Congress.

5. Media Merger Mania Threatens Free Flow of Information: "The drive for profits, coupled with the collapse of the FCC in 1985, paved the way for the specter of an international communications cartel."

6. The Birth Defect Crisis and the Environment: On a Navajo reservation near Shiprock, N.M., so many children are born deformed that the community hosts its own "Special Olympics"

every year. The reservation is located in the middle of an area that has hosted the nation's largest uranium mining operations.

7. Administration Officials Release Phony "Star Wars" Test: Nearly every piece of "Star Wars" hardware tested so far has failed to perform up to standards — and the administration has consistently lied about those test results. By the fall of 1985 more than 55 percent of the physics faculty at the nation's top 14 university physics departments had signed petitions denouncing "Star Wars" as "ill-conceived and dangerous" and had pledged neither to "solicit nor accept" SDI research funds.

8. Nuclear Decapitation Study: An Extraordinary Case of Censorship: Congress commissioned Bruce Blair to write a report dealing with the issue of how the nation's military communications infrastructure would fare in the event of a prolonged nuclear war. The conclusion must have been so negative that it has been so completely classified that not even its author can read it. It has sparked a project known as the Ground Wave Emergency Network. Under a \$1-billion contract with the Air Force, RCA corporation will build hundreds of "relay nodes" in communities around the country. Each "node" will consist of a 300-foot tower connected to an underground copper screen 600 feet in diameter. In addition to these "nodes" there will be a network of 57 30-story towers encircling the continental United States.

9. Federal Government Rips off the Homeless:

- The Department of Defense received \$8 million in 1984 to renovate vacant military facilities for use as emergency shelters. The department identified more than 600 potential sites around the country. Of these, only two were renovated, at a cost of less than \$1 million. The rest of the money was spent on routine maintenance of active army reserve facilities.
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development agreed in 1984 to provide vacant single-family homes as shelters for homeless families. By the end of that year, however, HUD held 9,225 such homes in its inventory — only 10 were made available to house the homeless.
- The General Services Administration agreed to make vacant federal buildings available as temporary shelters. But out of 3,847 available buildings, the agency allowed homeless people to occupy only three.

10. High-Tech Health Hazards: A New American Nightmare? Poisonings are twice as common among semiconductor workers as they are among workers in other industries. The industry is badly in need of stringent federal regulation and the Reagan administration has been able to get away with sharply reducing occupational safety inspections and is proposing a voluntary compliance program that could "exempt thousands of plants from surprise inspections" in the future.




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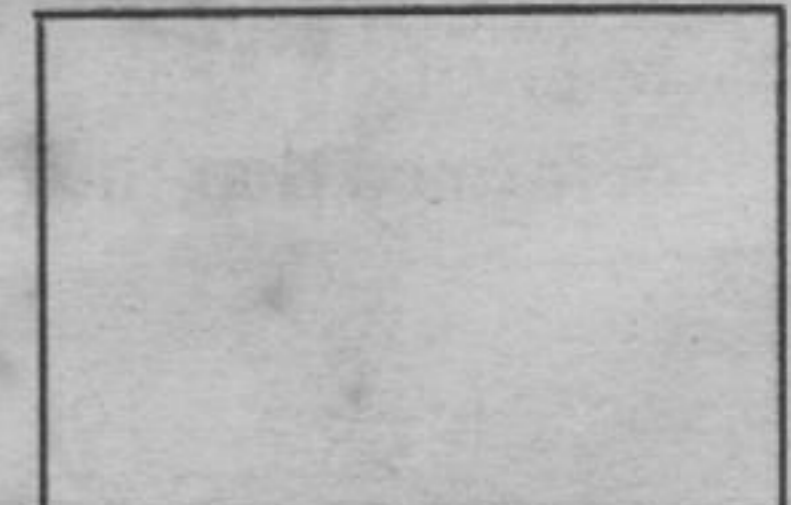
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