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Chapter Five

"Ever wonder. . ?"
Inquisitiveness begins at Home

Stories that surround us—"I don't believe it!"

The place to commence any major transformation of how our citizens think and behave is at home where children receive their first and, often, their most powerful lessons. At the dinner table, by the fireside, within our multi-media theaters, on family vacations and during work around the house or apartment, "Everything speaks." That is, we are always modeling appropriate behaviors and attitudes for our children and these are very powerful lessons, the ones learned in our early years.

Let me begin with my own childhood and the stories I grew up with, most notably one about my mother's skepticism about snowflakes. Every family has stories, stories we grow up with that slowly and almost without our knowing become part of who we are in the world. Our lives are surrounded and nurtured by stories from parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles oftentimes about their own growing up way back when. Stories nurture us into the adults we become.

Some of my earliest memories are of my grandparents—their growing up and courting. At one point, so the story goes, my grandmother, Florence (Wright) Ferguson entertained a gentleman caller. He came, they sat on the couch, talked about various and

sundry things and then he left. After his departure my grandmother happened to look behind the couch and there, written on a small card, were all the topics they had discussed numbered 1 through 10, neatly arranged as was the conversation she'd just had. Young Florence did not marry this man.

She married Llewellyn Ray Ferguson, a young chemist who worked for General Foods. Ray came to LeRoy all alone and raised a family three girls and one boy. He became established in his chosen profession and in 1928 he was awarded a patent for the nation's first dietetic desert, D-Zerta[1]. Subsequently he won three more patents for this Jell-O product. He was, indeed, a pioneer, a visionary, a man of science who led the way for people struggling with diabetes and, eventually, those with weight problems to have their cake, eat it and not suffer the consequences.

My mother, Elizabeth, was their second child and a very bright one at that. One of the first stories I heard sitting around the dining room table at Thanksgiving after my grandmother's turkey with Pepperidge Farm dressing and giblet gravy was of my mother's taking the New York State Regents examination in high school geometry. Not only did she take it, but, the story goes, she attained a perfect score! No incorrect answers. When I reminded her of this story most recently, she said, "I don't remember that at all!" But she does remember other stories from her childhood like this one:

She and her father were standing in the sun room of their spacious LeRoy house. This many windowed room provided a panoramic view of the winter snow storm occurring on this Saturday afternoon.

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[1] Kraft Foods now markets the product under the name of Jello-O D-Zerta.

"Look at all those snow flakes, Betty," he said. "They're just so marvelous! You know," he paused, "they're all unique. Each one a separate and distinct specimen—sort of like your finger print."

"Do you mean," she asked, "that each one is entirely different from the others?"

"Yes. Each is unique."

"Does this mean that they have always been unique?"

"I think so. You see it depends on how snow flakes are made—"

He wanted to continue with his understanding of the science of snow flakes, but his high school student who had not yet made a perfect score in geometry, interrupted his explication of the history of snow flakes—

"Well, I don't believe it!"

"*What?* What do you mean you don't believe it?"

"I just don't believe that all those flakes out there, falling down now and those from a week ago and those that will fall tonight—that they're all different—unique as you said."

Slightly stunned at this youthful challenge to his expertise in meteorology, Ray replied, "Why not? *Why don't you believe it?"*

Betty brushed back the white sheer curtains from the walnut window panes and said, "It's just not possible that all of them now and before could be different from each other."

"But why not?"

"I don't know, Dad. It just doesn't seem reasonable to me. Besides, who has observed all those snowflakes, anyway?" And with that she left to go up to her room to study math or Shakespeare.

"Good Gawd," my grandfather probably said to himself. "What's going on here?"

When I last took my mother around the Rose Center for Earth and Space at the Hayden Planetarium, I reminded her of the story. She remembered it quite well. And then she topped it by saying in a very clear sharp eighty-seven year old voice, "And I don't believe that all grains of sand are unique either!"

As we entered the Hall of Planet Earth with its answers to questions like how did the earth form, I said, "But they are!" knowing full well I was baiting the trap she had set for me.

"How could they be unique?" she asked pointedly. "Have you seen all of them? So, how do you know each is unique?"

And then I launched into a discussion of how earth's rock formations weather, and how beaches form from the continual eroding of sedimentary surfaces, igneous and metamorphic outcroppings; how oceans' lapping waves over millions and millions of years have ground down the tiny fragments of earth's crust to the fine grains we find by the ocean today. I felt just like my grandfather trying to explain why snow flakes were unique.

"Well, I just don't buy it." There was no convincing her as he stared at the slab of Acasta Gneiss from the northwestern parts of North America, a former piece of an early continent with a date of 3.96 billion years old.

She looked at the models of plate tectonics, at the black smokers from the spreading Pacific Ocean floor and at lavas from various volcanoes around the world.

"You want me to believe that if there are as many grains of sand in the world as there are stars in the Milky Way, that no two are exactly alike?"

I tried again to describe the tumbling, grinding down of boulders into rocks, into pebbles into grains of sand being washed up onto beaches and how each tiny fragment had to have cuts, bruises, facets and composition slightly different from its neighbors all from these forces of erosion occurring over millions upon millions of years.

Well, she didn't accept my assertion for any reason.

When I asked my mother where she acquired this skepticism about natural phenomena, she said her mother was quite an independent person. I always wondered if living in the house of a chemist--a person who was continually experimenting in the laboratory, who had to, by the rules of his profession, question any results, both expected and not, search for alternative explanations--whether that also made a difference.

Her story is one I've told to many, many students over the years to serve as a model of an inquisitive mind, a person who thinks for herself, who doesn't take any claim even from a father with four patents from the US Patent Office at face value.

The essence of critical thinking is this skepticism about what we are told. It involves raising questions about claims, judgments and conclusions. My mother's asking "Who has observed all of the other snowflakes, anyway?" put the nail in the coffin of my grandfather's certain inference. How could anyone be so sure if she hadn't examined all the other snow flakes? This question serves to decimate many a glittering generality

hastily arrived at from a cursory examination of a few samples. Elizabeth Ferguson's questioning the basis of her grandfather's conclusion is the major factor in testing the validity of many claims inferred from data.

To this day I marvel at what my mother has taught me, or that I hope I am beginning to learn—to question what I read, see and hear.

Box Insert—"How many snowflakes have you observed?"

When someone makes a statement such as "All snowflakes are unique" we can say this is a generalization derived from looking at data or evidence. Sometimes such conclusions are, however, also derived from one's beliefs that may or may not have been tested against evidence.

Generalities result when we have sufficient or conclusive evidence to warrant them. Under what circumstances need we be wary of the generalizations of others? At home, in media, politics? What questions should we ask?

A special form of generality is the "glittering generality," a propaganda technique (together with bandwagon, loaded words, transfer, either/or and big lie) used to persuade. For example, "A rising tide raises all boats." These generalities tend to oversimplify and ignore difficulties and problems.

What kinds of generalities have you recently encountered that require a second look?

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Our parents are our first models—of how to behave in the world and how to accept and challenge it intellectually. Our parents set before us ways of thinking about all the events that surround us, personal and professional. My mother's skepticism about the snow flakes is something I now aspire to, not because I want to disbelieve what I'm told, but because this healthy skepticism is a necessary survival skill in our world as it was when she was growing up. We need to doubt and question as part of learning how to command our own vessels sailing through the turbulent seas of growing up and becoming responsible adults.

"Show me!" can and ought to be more of an accepted disposition in our daily dealings with the world.

Setting High Expectations--*"There's no such word as CAN'T"*

My father was a pioneer in the computer industry way back in the very earliest days of thinking about the amazing power and speed of electrons traveling through wires and through the air. Whether or not he knew Tom Watson at IBM in the early 1950s is not clear but he certainly acted as if he were cut from the same fabric. He foresaw what a computer could do for his industry, the hotel industry. I was in high school at the time—in the early 1950s-- and I'd come home from classes and afternoons of running track to find him in the den of our house in Wellesley, MA. He'd be working on something and listening to his classical music, a Brahms or Beethoven symphony. And he'd ask me what I was doing.

"Studying."

"What?"

I'd tell him about reading Plato or James Joyce.

Then he launched in to his stories about working with engineers trying to devise ways of sending a hotel reservation through the airways using this new gadget called a "computer" from New York to Dallas in less than 4 seconds.

"Can you imagine that?"

I could hardly capture the significance of the speed of such business translations and really could have cared less.

"My engineers are continually telling me, `Ralph, that can't be done!' And me, Ralph J. Barell, who's not an engineer, I tell them, `Yes, it can. Keep at it! ***There's no***

such word as CAN'T.' God, how I hate that word! It ought to be banned from the English language" he would argue passionately with a wave of his hands as if on stage before hundreds of students.

Unfortunately, my father had been drinking a bit by this time in the afternoon and whenever that happened I almost automatically set up the guard dogs at the gates to memory, trying to beat off anything he would say.

But, as you can see from the re-telling of this story, his messages got by the memory guard dogs and lodged deeply in my conscious memories, there to tell of Never Giving Up!

Now when I sit here typing these words on my computer capable of billions of operations a second, I marvel not only at his persistence in the face of negative claims by those engineers whose expertise far exceeded his. I also marvel at his pioneering spirit, his ability to see far into the future. He knew, by some kind of business-technological intelligence, that computers would revolutionize his industry and perhaps all businesses and everybody's personal life. He could see into the future whereas, at the time, my concerns were naturally with tomorrow.

I'm not sure where his persistent pioneering came from—somewhere in his own upbringing in Hibbing, Minnesota, where he endured long cold winters ice fishing on the Rangley Lakes and where he must have spent many hours beholding the iron ores mined from deep within the nearby Mesabi Range. Maybe he learned you could do anything you set your mind to from his family, his opera singing relatives or his mother, a postal clerk in Hibbing. Perhaps from his being the concert master of the Minneapolis Youth Orchestra.

I impulsively rejected most of the stories my father told me under these conditions and now at a stage in my life when I am much older than my father was when he told me his computer story, I realize the value of what he modeled for me:

Persistence in the face of overwhelming challenge *(*"*Never, ever give up!*") ;

Commitment to an ideal, to a vision ("*Make a mark in your industry!")*

and Belief in your own abilities to move the world toward new ideas and places

("There's no such word as CAN'T!")

Even though my father was a heavy drinker and, as an adolescent, I berated him for his inability to stay sober, I now realize that what he possessed was a strong belief in his own abilities, what sociologists call an "internal locus of control." A person with an internal locus of control relies upon his or her own sense of direction to make decisions and is not overly swayed by what others think. Such a person possesses what is called an agency orientation—one that focuses upon what I personally can do to modify my own life. Such people avoid pointing fingers at circumstances and others to account for what happens to them. "I am responsible."

My father knew what he wanted to do with this fledgling technology known as a computer. He said he was an "idea man, not some 9 to 5 clerk." I thought he was nuts, but then I was in high school and valued a very different role model for a father.

Leah

Leah Kraus taught business education in Smith High School in Guilford County, North Carolina. Several years ago I was invited by Jan Williamson to conduct a workshop for Leah and her colleagues. I chose to share with these teachers my own story about becoming an educator, about reading a book about polar exploration by

Admiral Richard E. Byrd (*Alone*, 1938), reading everything in sight about Antarctica, meeting Byrd when I was a young teenager, planning to journey to the South Pole and, eventually, doing so as part of the Navy's Operation DeepFreeze in 1963 and 64.

In the room that day was Leah Kraus. Over lunch she and her colleagues thought of their own stories and when we returned I gave everybody about 30 minutes to write down a story of their own growing up that had some significance for them as educators, either directly or indirectly.

Here is part of Leah's story:

> From a very young age I can remember listening to my father and trying to understand and interpret what he was saying. He was talking about what it means to be a Jew. I can remember one of the most important qualities is that Jews question, ask, and learn as much as we can.. . .I did not know at that time how these discussions would affect me, my career choice, and my lifestyle. . .
>
> My mother and father have always encouraged my brother and me to ask questions. During this Passover season I have missed our family Passover Seder when we would ask not jut the Four Questions, but together as a family we would ask and answer many more.
>
> As I got older my questions began to address philosophical issues. I needed to find answers to questions that were about ideals and interpretations. I needed to find my own answers to universal questions. My parents and the Jewish interpretations were no longer satisfying my curiosities. Unfortunately, as I found my answers, problems and conflicts and even more questions arose.

As Leah grew she began to realize "that there is very little black and white or good and evil, but there is a lot of gray." She tried to "live by the interpretations I have developed while continuing to reexamine the gray." She has found answers with which her parents disagree, one of which was the choice of a husband, who was not Jewish.

Leah "learned that questions can lead to answers that create more difficult questions and sometimes even conflicts."

Her father had become a rabbi when Leah was a senior in high school. Just prior to our workshop she had attended the Passover Seder in Beaufort, South Carolina, at a Marine Air Base for her father's congregation. There she began to realize something:

> My father and mother were great educators. They made me want to know myself, and they taught me to question and not always accept the easy way. As I looked round that room in Beaufort, I saw several generations of something that I'm connected to. The knowledge that I am connected to people whose names I may not even know has brought me back to where I began—sitting around the seder table with questions for my parents. I have some answers, but I have so many more questions. (Kraus, 1993, p. 12)

Every time I re-read Leah's story I marvel at her growing up in a family that taught her to be inquisitive, at her own wrestling with the very complex and difficult questions of personal values and morality and of her courage to formulate and accept her own answers.

Again, the power of modeling inquisitiveness for our children, the efficacy of the language of inquisitiveness (The Four Questions) and the love of engaging in ceremony serve to infuse us with a deep commitment to searching for meanings within our lives.

Box Insert--How we nurture inquisitiveness

In her book *The Trouble with Islam* Irshad Manji recounts the story of being born in Uganda and emigrating to Toronto where her father placed her in the Rose of Sharon Baptist Church because of free baby-sitting services. Irshad was seven years old, but she learned from a South Asian lady who supervised Bible study and reflected "the same patience she displayed with her own son. She made me believe my questions were worth asking. Obviously, the questions I posed as a seven-year-old could only be simple ones. Where did Jesus come from? When did he live? What was his job? Who did he marry? These queries didn't put anyone on the spot, but my point is that the act of asking—and asking some more—always met with an inviting smile." (2003, p. 7)

When Manji asked similar questions in the madrassas, she was immediately rebuffed.

How do we invite or discourage our children's curiosities?

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In a children's book by Barry Lopez, *Crow and Weasel*, one of the animals makes these observations:

> . . .remember only this one thing, said Badger. The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves. One day you will be good storytellers. Never forget these obligations. (1990, p. 48)

We all remember stories, those told to us by our parents, aunts and uncles about growing up in our families. These stories fashion and nurture us into the persons we are as adults. Some stories present us with high expectations for thinking and believing in ourselves and these we share with our own children, the stories of the family, of the elders who continue to teach when they are no longer with us. These stories surround us with the warmth of the love with which they were first passed down to us. We are expected to cherish them, first, and perhaps learn from them as well.

Sheindel and Isidore I. Rabi

Once upon a time there was a young family that emigrated from what is now southeaster Poland to live first in Manhattan and then in Brooklyn.

Back at the turn of the twentieth century the Rabi family--father, mother and young son--lived in what was pasture land, full of cows, chickens and probably goats. They owned a small grocery store and this must have been a significant change for the father who had been a tailor back in his native home of Rymanow. Without the benefits of much education they made a living awakening to the rooster's crow at the break of

dawn—a sound I often heard when I taught there in the early morning hours about six decades later.

The son, Isidore I. Rabi, went to school and was an avid collector of all kinds of gadgets and small machinery that he stored in his living room much to the consternation of his mother, Sheindel Rabi. But both mother and father encouraged their son to be good in school, pay attention and be thoughtful.

Their encouragement certainly paid off.

This young lad grew up to become one of America's foremost nuclear physicists. He worked with J. Robert Oppenheimer on the Manhattan Project, though he stayed at MIT to pursue his World War II research on radar, a project that definitely helped determine the successful outcome of this world-wide struggle against fascism.

In 1944 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics for his research on the characteristics of the electron, research that paved the way for today's magnetic resonance imaging technology.

In the early 1950s he served under President Eisenhower as the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Shortly before he died in 1988, a colleague asked him how a person from such modest beginnings grew up to be an award-winning physicist.

Rabi said his mother made him become a physicist without ever intending such an outcome. Sheindel Rabi had not attended school for very long, but she knew what it took be successful in this world.

Rabi told this little story:

"Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask their child upon returning from school, `So, did you learn anything today?' But not my mother. She asked a different question. `Izzy,' she would say, `did you ask a good question, today?' That difference—asking good questions—made me become a scientist." (Sheff, 1988, p. A26)

And that difference—asking good questions—could have meant the difference in so many national events to be discussed in this book. Asking good questions is the hallmark, the very essence of being a good citizen, of being a patriotic American.

That difference—asking good questions—he said, "made me become a scientist."

The power of his mother's words.

Not occasionally, but everyday.

Not just a question, but a good question.

Not "Did anybody ask you a good question?" but "Did *you* ask a good question, today?"

I have often wondered about Izzy's mother, Sheindel. Who was she? Where was she born and where did she grow up? Where did she go to school, for how long? How old was she when she married Izzy's father and where was he born?

Sheindel Rabi, was born, as was her son, in Rymanow, a small town in southeastern Poland near the Carpathian Mountains. Her husband, David, left for America shortly after Izzy's birth in July of 1898. He arrived at Ellis Island as an uneducated and unskilled man, but one who saw promise in America. Shortly thereafter he sent word "Come to America."

The Rabi family settled in the lower east side of Manhattan in an enclave with other residents from what was then, in the early twentieth century, Galicia (of the Austro-Hungarian empire). Young Israel Isidore Rabi became "Izzy" when school officials asked his name and Sheindel responded with what she and her husband called him in their Orthodox Jewish home.[2]

In 1907 the Rabis moved to Brownsville in Brooklyn, near where I once taught at Thomas Jefferson High School on Pennsylvania Avenue in East New York. Their grocery store became a focus of neighborhood discussions on all sorts of subjects and it was here that Rabi developed his love of science, specifically astronomy, by reading a book from the local public library.

"They [his parents] were simple people. My mother was a woman of great intelligence, but very little education," Rabi observed later in life. (Rigden, 2000, p. 17-19)

I like to think that Sheindel was wise in ways so few of us are. She wanted to know what was on his mind--"Did you ask a good question, today?" What were the puzzles, mysteries, difficulties, and curiosities that he had encountered such that he posed a good question?

Look at what she had to understand based on her own growing up in Eastern Europe and then moving here to Brownsville. She knew that

Learning is very important.

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[2] John S. Rigden 2000 *RABI—Scientist & Citizen*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. P. 17-19.

> We learn when we actively engage our minds, not just sit back and let others tell us stuff.
>
> Learning is fostered when we sit up, take notice, and inquire about strange and perplexing situations in school and in our personal lives.
>
> We become inquisitive when we are wide-awake to the doubts, difficulties and confusions we encounter. That we need to recognize such difficulties in understanding what we're studying, become determined to clear them up by asking a good question and then following up with thorough investigations.

The process of meaningful learning—as opposed to sheer rote learning by mindless memorization—originates with our own inquisitiveness.

To become what parents, board of education members, teachers, superintendents all want for their children—life-long learning—originates with our own curiosities.

This Sheindel knew intuitively or she had, while watching her husband work at the grocery store, reasoned out by herself. Maybe her own growing up had been like Leah Kraus's: nurtured by the Four Questions in the Jewish tradition. I don't know.

Maybe she secretly wished he hadn't been so curious as a boy when her living room wall was full of his first radio transmitting equipment!

What I do know is that when I work with school kids and teachers in New York City or anywhere in the country, I tell them about Izzy and they remember the story.

Imagine what kind of soft revolution would occur if parents all over this country greeted their children after school with Sheindel Rabi's question! Imagine how these school children could enliven their classrooms and, I hope, bring such delight to their

teachers who want to work with kids who are continually curious and actively engaged in their own learning. Yes, there are a few who will be apprehensive about so many questions, but we could learn to benefit from our students' powerful inquisitiveness.

Imagine growing up in a household where your parents and grandparents focused not on the questions *they asked* you, but on *your own curiosities* about yourself, the world and beyond!

I began to feel that the home is where the revolution can begin. What we can do is to focus upon stories within our family's history and those we encounter daily that speak to our awakening curiosities about the world. We can hold out the expectations that "There's no such word as CAN'T" and that we grow up asking our own questions as Leah and Izzy did so well.

Recent studies indicate that family members sharing stories of how they overcame various obstacles, like my father's completing his computer project against the nay-saying of his engineers, can have a very positive impact on children's self-concept and upon their academic successes. (Shellenbarger, 2005, p. D1)

Thus, knowing our family's history gives us a good grounding in who we are and what we have to live up to.

[Insert Illustrations—Cartoons related to family stories by Larsen, Sempe or others.]

The Language of Inquisitiveness

One of the most profound aspects of family life is our use of language. We learn the language of our culture from our parents, siblings and friends. But this language does not come to us in a neutral fashion, so to speak. The language patterns of those who are educated in homes and schools of significant resources differ from those who grow up in

poor families. For one thing, highly educated parents give their children "more experience with the quality features of language through the extraordinary amount of their talk. . ." (Hart and Risley, 1995, p. 127) Children in lower socio-economic households received fewer of such rich experiences. The amount of talk, in other words, matters.

But not only does quantity matter, but so also does quality. Parents in affluent, professional homes seem "to be preparing their children to participate in a culture concerned with symbols and analytic problem solving;" whereas in families of welfare recipients "the lesser amount of talk with its more frequent parent-initiated topics, imperatives and prohibitions suggested a culture concerned with established customs" that teach "obedience, politeness and conformity."

The use of more complex sentence structures does, indeed, positively affect our intellectual development. In other words, when we grow up in households where there is the language of discussion, question and debate, we will become older children and adults who think in more complex fashions; we can use language to analyze, compare and contrast and draw reasoned conclusions from evidence. (Sigel, personal communication, 1995.)

Where these researchers would place the experience of Isidore Rabi and his mother, Sheindel, I'm not sure.

"How do you know?"

One of my favorite exhibits at the Hayden Planetarium is the poster-child picture of the Eagle Nebula in the constellation Serpens, the serpent. This image of towering gas

clouds one or more light years in length of dark brown gases with a crown of gold, red, green and yellow is an amazing one with light streaming toward us from about 6,500 light years away in our own Milky Way Galaxy.

[Hubble Space Telescope image of the Eagle Nebula to illustrate Betty Barell's question "How do you know?"]

When I showed this image to my mother on my new Mac computer, I said, "This is where stars are born." She came over to look, then asked, "*How do you know?*" I was forced to defend my assertion first, by reading what the astronomers at NASA had written on the Hubble website and then when she followed up with "Well, how do *they* know?" I had to explain, using my rudimentary understanding of astrophysics why we think stars are born in nebulae like the Eagle, Orion and the Crab

The skepticism and inquisitiveness my mother demonstrated was born in her home living with a scientist father and a mother who stayed at home to raise her four children and was keenly interested in their day-to-day experiences. Her father told his children the story of his growing up as a boy who stuttered, of his deep humiliation at this malady and at how he overcame it. "I put myself in situations where I was forced to talk," he told his daughter Ann. He had to converse; he didn't hide from the challenge. By the time he got to Cornell "I began to force myself to go to meetings, to say a few words. . .I went out of my way to chat with strangers, watching their expressions to see if they detected any speech defect." (Ferguson 1950 p. 10.)

This story must have had a deep effect on all of the children because they saw their father as someone who confronted challenges head on and didn't shy away from them.

The language of thoughtful inquiry teaches us to think before we jump to conclusions, to think through our judgments to ensure we had some information or evidence to support our ideas. Their questions form the basis of critical inquiry: gather evidence and data before you form a judgment or draw a conclusion. Too many adults work the other way around—searching for examples, evidence, information to prove the conclusion they have already arrived at by various means.

Box Insert

Inquisitiveness at the Dinner Table

Plan for family dinners at least once in a while. It's difficult but as President Ronald Reagan said in his Farewell Address to the nation in 1989,

> "**. . .** let me offer lesson number one about America: All great change in America begins at the dinner table. So, tomorrow night in the kitchen I hope the talking begins. And children, if your parents haven't been teaching you what it means to be an American, let 'em know and nail 'em on it. That would be a very American thing to do." (20 January, 1989)

As you sit down to dinner in the kitchen or dining room encourage family members to share the excitements of their day.

> Make some time for your children to respond to Sheindel Rabi's inquiry: "Did you ask a good question, today?"

Encourage all to listen attentively and ask questions about what they've heard before jumping in to tell another, unrelated story. Model for children good listening habits that can lead to asking questions about what you've heard.

Plan for discussions about current events where each family member relates what she or he has heard and what more they want to know about that subject.

Model for children various kinds of questions to ask, such as "Why?" "How do you know?" and "What if. . ?"

As President Reagan said, it's important that we know our American history, its heroes and villains. Around the dinner table is one place to begin questioning where we came from and where we're going as a family, as individuals and as a country.

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It may be here in the family where we gain our first lessons in how to think through complex issues in life: "How do you know?" and "Have you counted/observed all the snowflakes?" Don't settle for what Tocqueville called a "brief and inattentive investigation."

Playing Devil's Advocate

My father was a debater in college and my family thought this was a good thing, to be able to argue different sides of an issue, to be quick on your intellectual feet. My grandfather was an ardent Republican who strongly disliked President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his anti-Depression policies. He had a friend, so the story goes, who wanted to run over FDR, back up and run over him again, because of the of the New Deal legislation he had pushed through Congress, like TVA, Social Security, the CCC, and others. "Even in his wheelchair!" my mother remembered.

When my father and grandfather got into a political argument, my father would listen attentively and then stun his father-in-law with this sucker punch,

"OK, Ray, can you now argue the other side of this issue?"

My grandfather probably looked a little shocked at the question, reared his head back still balancing his cigarette with ashes creating a parabola-like fish pole shape over my mother's carpet. He often, according to my mother, responded:

"Why would I want to do a damn fool thing like that!?"

My father's curiosity was bothersome and my grandfather didn't enjoy playing this game that I loved watching and listening to.

I remember the heat of these arguments, not their specific content. What I do remember more specifically are the stories about my father's being a debater and the columns he wrote for his college paper, witty, sharp in their social commentary and slightly off-beat in their way of looking at the world. Occasionally, with mother and her family present, he pulled out his college columns and regaled us all with his sharp wit.

(What life at home would have been were he able to sustain this personal charm, wit, and intelligent drive for success!)

My father was teaching me during these heated arguments about the New Deal and FDR that the basis for rational decision-making and drawing conclusions about political events was that we should have an open mind about possibilities, alternative solutions to problems. We need to be able to inquire about the other or opposite side of an argument.

He relished playing "Advocatis Diaboli," a role instituted by the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Sixtus V in 1587. The function of the devil's advocate, later called the Promoter of the Faith (*Promotor Fidei*), was to present all the arguments against someone's being canonized as a saint. The Church felt it necessary to be even-handed, to counter unbounded enthusiasm for someone in an attempt to ensure they had considered all evidence, on both sides. Subsequent Popes wanted there to be open dialogue, a process of considering all angles and elements before beatification of one of her servants.

Studies on the informal reasoning patterns of high school, undergraduate and graduate students by David Perkins of Harvard suggest that some people typically do not

consider any points of view different from their own in forming their conclusions about specific issues. Their arguments focus only on their own ideas and seldom develop or consider counter arguments. I once asked a Harvard classmate of mine if he could present the counterargument to his position in favor of sanctions against South Africa and its apartheid policies. "No, I don't think I can," he said to my astonishment. Maybe he'd just never thought in those contrarian terms.

We can wonder what would have happened prior to 9/11 had the leaders of CIA and FBI possessed this disposition toward inquisitiveness, openness and sharing of all relevant information about possible terrorist activities here at home. What would have happened if CIA and FBI got in the same room and challenged the information that each possessed about terrorism with contrarian points of view? We will discuss these questions more fully in Chapter Ten.

Box Insert—Playing Devil's Advocate

When playing Devil's Advocate we are not necessarily attempting to change somebody else's mind. We might engage in this important critical inquiry approach to broaden the discussion, to enhance ours and other people's thinking prior to making a decision

Under what circumstances in the past do you wish you had had a Devil's Advocate asking about the other side of the issue? Someone presenting evidence contrary to your desired point of view?

When in the future might you want to play this role yourself or invite someone else in to do the same?

End Box Insert

"Have you ever wondered?"

My grandfather was always asking me questions about the goings on in his laboratory at General Foods. When we visited him in his New York City apartment

overlooking the Hudson River he would regale us with his plans to place mirrors in the doorways of the bedroom that overlooked the Hudson River, the hallway and the living room so he could sit in his comfortable easy chair and watch the boats plying up and down the river.

He loved playing with us in the "dumb waiter," a box that worked on a pulley from down on the first floor that allowed the groceries to be delivered right into the kitchen.

L. Ray Ferguson also loved to engage his grandchildren in the mysteries of science by inviting us to wonder and speculate with him. On so many occasions he would say, "Johnny, did you ever wonder?"

He would ask us about what would happen if you mixed various chemicals within the laboratory. No one knew much about these substances, but this was a game. We played with him because he loved to challenge us to think, to stretch our minds. He also wanted to teach us about what he was creating in the lab. While we were growing up, he was still perfecting his D-Zerta achieving the last of four patents during the mid 1950s.

So a trip to grandmother's house was full of wonderful food, especially her homemade "chocolate icebox pudding," which today we would call chocolate mouse. And the house was always filled with the language of inquisitiveness,

"Johnny have you ever wondered. . ?

What do you suppose would happen if. . ?

You know what intrigues me is. .

What I want to find out is

This is what I don't understand. . ."

Unlike questioning games in school, I relished these adventures into the unknown. I wouldn't feel stupid if I didn't know the answer, because almost invariably I had no idea what the answers might be. I loved playing this "Ever wonder. . ?" game with my grandfather and I now realize that they led to my current work on inquiry.

One challenge I remember vividly called for me to notice the size and shape of the sun at its zenith and then as it sets upon the horizon.

"What do you notice, Johnny?" he would ask.

"They're different," I'd say.

And I knew what was coming next. "Why do suppose that is? Have you ever wondered why the sun looks different at the zenith than on the horizon?"

What would follow would be a Socratic question and answer session where he would lead me to discover for myself that the sun's rays would become distorted as they shone through the atmosphere. There's more atmosphere to penetrate as the sun sets on the horizon than if it is directly overhead. I would also learn that such scattering of light waves was what made the sky appear blue (other wave lengths get absorbed).

On another occasion during a long walk through Central Park in New York, we both had occasion to use the men's room. Upon exiting he engaged me in considering why you could turn on the cold water in the sink and it would run continuously, but the hot water ran only in short bursts in response to your pushing down on the hot water handle.

"I don't know."

He then led me to consider how we turn cold water into hot water; how we create and use heat; the cost factors involved and then came the answer: it costs money to make hot water and to let it run would be wasting money.

Such thought experiments taught me first to recognize puzzles, anomalies and wonderments within the natural world, to formulate questions about their inherent mysteries and then to think through them logically toward an answer.

It is through experiences with language such as these that we learn how to think through various complex situations in life. Research by my colleague and friend Irving Sigel of the Educational Testing Service at Princeton, New Jersey has demonstrated that kids who grow up in families where language reflects what I've experienced--complex thought patterns, questions and challenges to figure things out--develop more sophisticated reasoning patterns as adults. In families where language does not reflect such complex thought patterns, is more controlling and commanding by use of short one or two word orders, injunctions and responses, children might not develop those complex thought patterns. (Sigel, personal communications, 1988)

The First Days of Television--"The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports"

As a family during the 1950s we watched the first ever television shows. The ones that I recall most vividly were the comedies: "The Texaco Star Theater" with Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca and "Uncle Milty," Milton Berle, "The Jackie Gleason Show" and "The Honeymooners," and, of course, "I Love Lucy." Without realizing it at the time we were witnessing the birth of television comedy. We loved their antics and comic

routines and, because it was live television, the occasional slip up on a scripted line. There was no "laugh track" back then.

Early television comedy brought the family together for an hour or two after dinner and when your homework was finished. Viewing Lucille Ball, Sid Caesar and Jackie Gleason make fools of themselves in front of thousands of people brought thousands of laughs because they were showing us—the American people—and all our foibles, idiosyncrasies, as well as our strivings for a better life.

Most Friday evenings in the new era of television my father and I watched the fights from Madison Square Garden. Sponsored by Gillette the program was called, as I remember, "The Gillette Cavalcade of Sports."

My father used to love watching two men engaged in the manly art of boxing. He never taught me how to defend myself in a ring nor on the playground. He was a spectator of the sport and not very athletic at all. "Sound body and mind, the Greeks said," he noted telling me in an aside to model myself after his thinking not his non-existing athletic capacities.

It was the contest he reveled, of two pugilists battling for victory.

Another pugilist of a sort whom he loved watching was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, a man of the Roman Catholic cloth who came on television once a week with a chalk board on which he scrolled at the top in a very fine hand "JMJ," we presumed for "Jesus, Mary and Joseph."

My father—a lapsed Catholic who never attended Church with the rest of the family-- loved the play of the Bishop's mind over very complex issues of religion, politics and philosophy during this show, "Life is Worth Living." I'm sure my father

reveled at the good Bishop's strong anti-communist words, his direct and facile way of bringing the truths of Catholicism home to the average viewer and his good humor. When he heard the Bishop proclaim, on a program entitled "Heaven is not so Far Away," that "Heaven is outside of Time. . .[and] Eternity is in the mind" he would have sat up and begun to play in his own mind with these concepts of time and eternity the way, he thought, that Einstein had when he was fashioning the Special Theory of Relativity (published in 1905.) My father would have questioned the Bishop about his assertion that "You are in Heaven already" and "Heaven starts here" on earth. The Bishop would have had a broad smile on his face upon making this claim about Heaven residing within each of us and would have held that grin during a meaningful and dramatic pause for fullest effect. I can still see that beaming smile as if the good Bishop had been on television only yesterday.

We now know that Bishop Sheen's program, aired from 1952 to 1957, outdrew the father of American television at the time, Milton Berle. When asked how he felt about playing second fiddle to a Catholic Bishop, Berle said, "The Bishop had better writers."

My father was an intellectual combatant, doing battle with ideas and opponents on television as well as with his father-in-law.

I've never linked the two in my own mind, but now it seems plausible that watching these shows, the fights and Bishop Sheen, with my father may have led directly to my own fascination with two programs of high intellectual and emotional drama, the Army-McCarthy hearings starring Senator from Wisconsin Joseph R. McCarthy and the political conventions of 1952 and 1956. I loved watching these programs endlessly.

What I loved most about the Army McCarthy hearings were the verbal sparrings between McCarthy and the counsel for the Army Joseph Welsh. McCarthy had alleged the presence of over 200 "members of the Communist Party" within the Federal Government. In Wheeling, West Virginia he famously waved a piece of paper on which, he claimed, he had written down the names of these members of the Party that governed the USSR, the Soviet Union our arch enemy during the Cold War.

During these hearings McCarthy was alleging a connection between private G. David Shine and the Secretary of the Army, Harold Stevens. There were allegations of doctored photographs and always, continuously, McCarthy's "Point of Order, Mr. Chairman," which any high school student could see as a delaying tactic that frustrated Welsh to no end.

Here was high drama and I was glued to the tv for hours watching these televised sessions.

I saw a similar drama in the battles to become the Republican nominee for President in 1952. Who would it be General of the Army and victorious Commander in Chief of Allied Expeditionary Forces that landed on Normandy, Dwight David Eisenhower? Or would it be a leader of the Republican Party, Robert A Taft? That was one battle, but on the Democratic side there was an even tougher struggle. I remember ballot after ballot being cast before the Democrats selected the Governor of Illinois, Adlai E. Stevenson.

What was most fun was trying to follow the strategies of various constituencies as if all of this were a giant football game of politics. I loved it just as much as I did listening to the march of the Notre Dame football team as they amassed victory upon

victory before falling to Purdue one dismal Saturday, a day of dire defeat after some 37 straight victories at the hands of one Dale Samuels, the young quarterback for the Boiler Makers.

We all grow up surrounded by media of various kinds and now with the Internet our children are exposed to a virtually infinite number of places to visit on the World Wide Web, most of them informative, but some of them hateful and very harmful to young minds.

The programs we choose to watch model for our children what is important culturally and historically, what is entertaining and what is worth spending time watching. Today there are so many educational programs on many different channels—PBS, Nickelodeon, Discovery, National Geographic, TLC, Bravo, C-SPAN, A & E, and so forth—that we have far more choices than my parents did when they were raising me and my two sisters.

Today we can help foster within our children a love of science and nature by watching NOVA on PBS and the Discovery Channel; of history by viewing the History Channel; of literature by watching Masterpiece Theatre on PBS; of music and other arts by viewing PBS, A & E, BBC and BET. All these offerings present marvelous opportunities to become fascinated and intrigued by the mysteries of nature and life in our world.

We communicate our priorities through the media choices we make. Of even more consequence, perhaps, is the way we interact with the speakers, presenters and performers. I loved watching my father argue, debate and agree with Bishop Sheen. He was always actively engaged, not merely sitting back, beer in hand, feet up just soaking it

all in. No, his debating skills were in evidence as he duked it out with the good Bishop. He raised questions with Sheen just as he had with my grandfather and his distaste for FDR.

We model through our interactions with each other as well as with the media visitors we daily invite into our home. It is perhaps because of his sometimes furious political arguments that I now feel freer asking questions of those on political talk shows, questions that sometimes Nancy, my wife, answers.

The choices we invite

One of the most powerful educational approaches we have within the family as well as within schools and businesses is the way we deal with choice. The easiest thing to do when choices have to be made with children, students or employees is to make the choices for them. The teacher, parent and employer is a person of more experience and older. This alone is reason, for some, to make most all of the decisions. “I know best and why spend time trying to teach someone what to do?”

However, if we want our children to grow up to be responsible adults we can and should afford them with opportunities to make choices that we can then monitor so they learn from the experience.

“Mommy, what shall I wear?” asks Jane.

“Well, let’s see,” says her Mother. “What’s the weather doing outside?” she asks her six year old.

“Oh, Mommy please just tell me!”

“No, what’s it doing outside?”

“It’s dark and looks like rain.”

"OK, then, what do you think you ought to wear to school?" (Barell, 1995, 2/e)

This little scenario reminds me of the many times I would engage adults who are teachers in discussions in my graduate classes only to hear someone say, "Oh, just tell us the answer!" Why are you asking us to think, in other words. It might have been 9 o'clock in the evening and they had been teaching all day and didn't want to think.

In another family the father of four children would continually ask them in difficult situations, "What do you want to do?" He wanted them to assume responsibility for their own choices.

Another parent decorated his home with images of smokers, the kind where you see diseased lungs full of cancer or emphysema, trying to persuade them to decide, on their own, not to smoke.

How does independence of thought and decision-making relate to intellectual curiosity? It fosters the same kind of taking a stand on your own that my parents demonstrated. When we are intellectually curious, we possess a sense of independence (more of an "internal locus of control" or "inner direction") required to formulate a question and the will to pursue answers wherever they might be. When adults, be they parents or teachers, make most all our decisions for us, we are educating them for the kind of passive dependence that does not support intellectual curiosity. It takes a certain amount of courage to pursue a line of questioning that may be unpopular or quite far out of the box.

Taking responsibility for our own lives is an essential element in being a curious, self-directed person.

And, finally, parents asking their children good questions can serve to model the kinds of questions to ask, as in the father asking the teenager, “What do you want to do?” What decision do you want to make for yourself, rather than my making it for you?

Conclusion

In all of these varied ways—the use of language, telling stories, intellectual challenges, responses to claims that “All snowflakes are unique ,” watching, listening to and critiquing media, and the choices we encourage children to make on their own—we teach our children about what is important in life.

Michael Kaufman, a colleague in professional development for educators, used to say, “Everything speaks.” This means that all our actions, our words, our emotional responses to situations, our non-verbal behavior—they all communicate. They all model who we are and what we value in this life and beyond.

Let me conclude with one story from that most meaningful workshop in North Carolina, told by Pam Lowry, a middle school social studies teacher. What “speaks” here are her father’s very high expectations for her future.

As a twelve year old girl growing up in rural South Carolina, part of a summer’s fun was eavesdropping on adult conversations. Here’s where she learned some important lessons in life.

Her father was conversing with her cousin:

> Daddy (for all southern male parents were thusly called) was earnestly saying that he had to make more money. . .Daddy had recently started his own paving company and long hours of backbreaking toil didn’t always mean an abundance of dollars. He continued talking to Lee Roy (for most men in my hometown were Lee Roy or Jim Bob or Joe Dean). He remarked in his solemn

> voice that he was determined to make more money so that college tuitions would be available for my brother and me. . .
>
> Lee Roy casually drawled, `Why would you want to waste money on sending Pamela Lea (for females were always called Pamela Lea or Vera Sue or Deborah Jean) to college? She'll just get married and have babies; she won't need a college education for that."
>
> Daddy, a soft-spoken, hard-as-rock, no nonsense kind of fellow, replied in a voice I didn't recognize, `She deserves the same chance as her brother. She will do exactly what she wants to do as an adult. . .maybe teach school. But she will go to college and she will decide! Being a girl has nothing to do with whether or not I spend money on giving her a chance for an education. . .' At that moment in time I accepted the value of an education.

Pamela Lea went on to college and did, indeed, become a teacher.

> . . .more than anything, Daddy gave me a sense of my own self- worth. He made me believe that education made all things possible and that education had value and dignity. That's what I try to teach to young people today and when I get discouraged I think of my daddy and the lessons I learned from him." (Lowry, 1993, p. 10-11)

Daddy taught Pamela Lea that education was a pathway toward living our lives to their fullest. In how many ways do we teach the lessons of life!

In all these aspects of family education we encounter strange and perplexing phenomena that foster our inquisitiveness:

Snow falling
Chemical reactions
Aspects of the sun, solar system, galaxies
Presidential elections
Congressional hearings
The aspirations of "Those People"
The President and his/her policies
Emerging new technologies
Growing up in any ethnic group
Living, arguing and playing with siblings and friends
Setting and following rules
Managing the household
Planetary nebulae, galaxies, black holes

All these very complex, often perplexing life experiences can be the focus of family, shared inquiries just as they were for those in this chapter.

And here is the potential for bringing up our children to value education --to look at the world as a giant puzzle with invitations to come, be curious, wonder about the natural and human mysteries that surround us, speculate, investigate, pursue and find answers that represent your considered judgment.

Practical Applications/Self-Assessments for the Family

1. Who are the models of inquisitiveness in your family and how have they influenced your life and the lives of others?
2. What were the expectations set by your parents/grandparents and/or older siblings while you were growing up? How have these affected your life?
3. What family stories do you cherish and wish to pass on? Why?
4. How was the language of inquisitiveness ("How do you know?" "Have you ever wondered?") a factor in your growing up? How might you alter the language you use around the house based on your experiences?
5. When have you played the role of Devil's Advocate? How might you play this game at your own dinner table? When should you play it in the future?
6. What are the stories of inquisitiveness (or courage, persistence, cooperation) you share with your own children, nieces and nephews, cousins?
7. How are you a model of inquisitiveness? What do your children learn about you from your use of language, stories and viewing of television?

8. Keep a journal for a month or more noting therein your use of language, stories, and media to influence those with whom you live. What changes would you make in your priorities? Why?
9. How can you use the **SEADS** acronym while watching television or reading the papers with your children? Better yet, what is your own acronym of important questions to ask about stories in the news?
10. Write a brief story or memoir piece about your growing up that illustrates how you became an inquisitive person. Share this story with your own children.

Sample Journal of Inquisitiveness Entries

What I want to know is. . .

I am intrigued by---

Today I saw/heard-------- and wondered why-----

What I don't understand about ------- is-----

I am curious/puzzled by----------

This seems to be related to ----------

I'm wondering about causes, connections and consequences here-------

The person whose curiosity and persistence I admire is

If I could have asked one question in the past it would have been [describe circumstances and question]

I am feeling------- about my own inquisitiveness

Personal Assessment—Being a Model of Inquisitiveness

1. I welcome complex, puzzling and sometimes ambiguous situations at home, school or at work.
2. I (often, sometimes, seldom, hardly ever) ask questions about these kinds of situations or about a claim that someone has made related to personal affairs. Public affairs. News media.
3. I love reading about inquisitive people and their investigations. About situations I find curious.
4. I want to know how things work.
5. I am curious about human motivations.
6. When I think of a question, I usually ask it or attempt to find an answer myself.
7. I persist during formal or informal investigations to find answers.
8. I love sharing my curiosities with others.
9. There are models of curiosity whom I admire and speak of.
10. One of the things I am passionate about is learning, discovering, finding out answers to my own questions.

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Dr. James L. Freeley is a professor of business at CW Post University. He is head of the Entrepreneurship Project, an effort to document the history of business efforts on Long Island.

He has three children who work for him and he says he likes sharing his knowledge with them.

"My kids ask me a question," he said, "and when I tell them, they say, `But how do you know?'

"I tell them `Because I'm 62—I know.:" (Strugatch, 2004, p. 6)

So there.

End Box Insert]

Annie Dillard grew up in Pittsburgh as a very curious person. In An *American Childhood* (1988) and *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) she describes how fascinated she became with bugs, microscopes, the Field Book of Ponds, the French and Indian War and the nature of our planet. She became passionate about rocks. "I would crack the earth's crust like a pinata and spread to the light the vivid prizes in chunks within." She discovered the marvelous powers of the element silicon to hold the cracks, folds, fissures and broken

rubble of earth together. "If there were no soluble silicon, how many feet thick, or miles thick, I wondered, would the sterile rubble be?" (Dillard, 1988, p.139, 140) With an amazing inquisitiveness she probed the mysteries of her neighborhood, of boys and her parents.

Her mother was a no nonsense kind of person who continually challenged Annie and her sister Amy to use their own heads, not rely on somebody else's thinking:

> Always I heard Mother's emotional voice asking Amy and me the same few questions: Is that your own idea? Or somebody else's? "*Giant* is a good movie," I pronounced to the family at dinner. "Oh, really?" Mother warmed to these occasions. She all but rolled up her sleeves. She knew I hadn't seen it. "Is that your considered opinion?"
> (p. 116)

On another occasion, when Dwight Eisenhower was running for President, Annie proclaimed, "Eisenhower's going to win.

> She lowered her magazine and looked me in the eyes: "*How do you know?"* I was doomed. It was fatal to say, "Everyone says so." We all knew well what happened. "Do you consult with this Everyone before you make your own decisions? What if Everyone decided to round up all the Jews?" Mother knew there was no danger of cowing me. She simply tried to keep us all awake. And in fact it was always clear to Amy and me, and to Molly when she grew old enough to listen, that if our classmates came to cruelty, just as much as if the neighborhood or the nation came to

> madness, we were expected to take, and would be each separately capable of taking, a stand." (p. 117)

Annie's mother was teaching her and her sisters the lessons of life: Don't listen to other people who are merely repeating what Everybody says. Be sure you know what you're talking about. Get the information to support your own conclusions. If you believe Eisenhower's going to win, fine, but do so based on your own assessment of his political ideas, strategies and the other guy's, Adlai E. Stevenson's positions as well.

Perkins, 1985) suggests that "the typical argument. . .concentrates on one side of the case, does not develop that side very fully, and neglects relevant counterarguments and appropriate hedges." (pp 14-16).

James Harvey Robinson once wrote in *The Mind in the Making* (1921) that "most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do." (p. 47)

We know from studies of how children encounter language during their first three years of life that the amount and quality of interactions makes a difference in their vocabulary growth as well as in the style of their cognitive development. Researchers Betty Hart and Todd Risley in 1995 identified several indicators of high quality in parent-child interactions—ones that positively affect the subsequent IQ scores of the child. Among these indicators are talking beyond what was necessary to manage personal affairs; listening beyond what was necessary "to care for and educate" children; trying to be nice even when enforcing rules and providing children with choices(p. 85):

For example, Corinne is going to the refrigerator for some yogurt:

> Corrine (34 months): "Me get some yogurt. We got kinds of yogurt."
> Mother: "What kind you want?"
> Corrine: "This kind."
> Mother: "What kind is that?"
> Corrine: "Cherry, cherry, cherry."
> Mother: "You want your blue spoon? Or this spoon?"
> Corrine: "That spoon."
> Mother: "You wanna sit up at the table?"
> Corrine starts eating where she is standing.
> Mother: "You don't think you'll spill it?"
> Corrine: "No."[3]

These observers found such choices offered in all economic levels of household, not merely in the affluent, professional home.

Media Analysis [Note: This sample will be updated.]

When we see people (often politicians) being interviewed on television, we ought to spend some time analyzing the questions asked in addition to listening to the answers. For example, here are several questions asked of President Bush during a news conference in April – 2004:

1. "Have you learned anything else about that report [PDB of 8/6/01], since that time? And do you now believe you were falsely comforted by the FBI?"

2. "How would you answer those critics? And can you assure the American people that post-sovereignty [in Iraq], when the handover takes place, that there will be more burden sharing by allies, in terms of security forces?"

3. "Did that trigger some specific actions on your part and the administration, since it dealt with potentially hundreds of lives and a blackmail attempt on the United States government?"

4. "Mr. President, April is turning into the deadliest month in Iraq since the fall of Baghdad, and some people are comparing Iraq to Vietnam and talking about a quagmire. Polls show that support for your policy

[3] Hart and Risley, *op. cit*. p. 90.

> is declining and that fewer than half of Americans now support it. What does that say to you and how do you answer the Vietnam comparison?"
>
> (http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=64304)

Thinking of how the President might answer such questions, what strikes you about each of these questions from members of the White House Press corps? Which question/s will elicit the most thoughtful responses? Why? How might you rephrase one or more of these questions and why? For example, are there questions that call for a "Yes/No" response rather than a thoughtful, more complex reply?

My father was always examining my elementary school report cards looking for the words "excellent," "superior" or "outstanding." He couldn't abide anything less for me and for himself. He always claimed that when his company sent him out of town he traveled first class.

Unfortunately, my early report cards often said, "John is doing well but can do better." These words made my father very angry and I grew up to place special value on success, achievement and doing your best (if only out of fear).

Perhaps this is why we were both avid Yankee fans during the golden eras of Joe DiMaggio, Micky Mantle, Whitey Ford and Yogi Berra—they were without doubt, the very best.

Each of us grows up within a family—it may be the traditional nuclear family with a mother, father and brothers and sisters. It may be an extended family with mother, father, grandparents, aunts and uncles and cousins living in close proximity. We may have grown up in single parent, single sex or adoptive households with no brothers or sisters, or in foster homes with no blood relatives. These expectations may vary from growing up to be President of the United States to working in a place where you say, "Do you want fries with your order?"

Regardless of the kind of family we grow up in, someone sets forth expectations for our levels of personal achievement and success.

I grew up with a mother, father and two younger sisters in various towns outside of New York City and Boston. We lived modestly but I never lacked for creature comforts and was blessed with always having what I wanted in the way of opportunities for playing .sports, reading, going to college and serving in the US Navy.

It is within the family that we first become socialized to the ways of living and being within the larger society. It is here that we learn the scripts for the roles we will play as adults; it is within the family that we learn the values and basic skills of participating within a democracy. And it is within the family that we learn a language of how to navigate through the world of amazing and often puzzling situations.

So when I brought home that sixth grade report card that read "John is doing well but can do better," I knew that there would be some difficulties at home. My mother said, "Your father's not going to like this." He was always saying, "Do your best—your very best." Bs on a report card were not good enough.

He worked in the hotel business, for Statler Corporation and then for Sheraton Hotels. One of his oft-repeated dictums was that you wanted to "Make your mark in the industry." I've never forgotten the report card story nor the expectation that I excel in school. Nor have I forgotten that there was an expectation that I, too, make a significant contribution to the work that I would choose. Being what he called "a nine to five man" was an unacceptable position. You had to stand out, speak with a different or slightly dissonant voice, ask "Why can't we do this?"

By the hearth, the bedside, at play and at the dinner table we learn how to be wide-awake to the dangers that surround us, how to strive for excellence and how to think about diversity within our society.

Throughout our growing up we are immersed in the language of our parents. The content of their language—as well as the feelings with which it is shared-- shapes and guides our becoming a young adult who seeks her own place in the world. The stories we hear growing up are some of the most powerful teaching tools that we find in families. And parents' behavior provides us with concrete models that we might emulate throughout our lives to greater or lesser extent.