

Family LIVING



The Portland Observer

Family Matters "I Hear 'The Man' Coming, Mama"

BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

Last week, I introduced the readers to a contemporary nontraditional family that functioned very well in our neighborhood: the "Van lady" whose very being and purpose here seemed to be that of nurturing her extended family of little ones who had needlessly suffered the sling and arrows of current socio-economics.

I think that it is quite alright to extend the meaning of "family" beyond that conveyed by conventional words and phrases such as "kinship, bloodlines, paternity, consanguinity and so forth -- this comes from observation (and mother wit). But, in any case, even 'Webster' allows us to avoid those constraints and seek a more humanistic viewpoint as follows.

For today's presentation of an extended family of a sort from yesteryear, I call on 'Webster' for the following ancillary definitions of family: "Deriving from a common stock -- A group related by common characteristics". Or, how about, "All God's children"; that concept's been around awhile.

I move on to describe a special extended family that I knew as a child; lets take the 1930's for instance and choose a typical city with a typical ghetto -- St. Louis, Missouri. The "family" in question would be composed of the most outrageously flamboyant group of vendors that ever traversed the mean streets of urban America. A fascinating breed of mostly-independent business people, small-time merchants and artisans, cooks and bakers.

But these people of a more warm, caring age were so firmly integrated into the neighborhoods that they and their customers were all on a first name basis and parents away at work would leave all sorts of notes, directions and monies for these vendors; Sometimes with small children and sometimes in special 'hiding places which were really nothing of the kind. Some got notes telling them to be sure the children were alright and who to call in an emergency.

Now, lets see; traipsing through the neighborhood at all times of day were these tradesmen with their loud sing-song description of their wares; some in good voice with a melodious chant, and others screaming out a hoarse description of their wares. It was, "get your red hot tamales here" in a lilting composition -- or it was brusque "rag man, rag man, I buy old rags". some pushed converted baby buggies with butane burners. Others drove horse and wagons. Just a few had the new-fangled 'step vans'.

But, in any case, you could hear them coming from a long way off and loud and clear. As we said in the title of this article, kids would shout, "I hear the man coming, mama!" and a mighty host of them there was.

There was the "peanut man, the fish man, the skin man, the junk man, the rag man, the ice man, the coal man, the bread man, the coffee man, the milk man, the egg man, the popcorn man, the ice cream man, the tamale man, and the flower lady". But, don't forget the lamplighter who came by every evening at dusk to light the gas street lamps. Drove of children and dogs would follow him for blocks. In later years I've thought of that fairy tale, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin" (he spirited all the children away when the greedy towns people refused to pay him for getting rid of the rats).

Well, that's this week's 'family', from an age of warm interpersonal relationships, trust and sincerity. I have a thought. In these times of traumatic layoffs and economic dislocation some sharp folks will see an opportunity in renewing not only these type of commercial relationships, but some new 'to-your-home services. After all, we now have big modern vans with every type of convenience. Hey, why not go for it?

Paragon Contest Promotes Value Of Reading

Area teens are being challenged this school year to test their creative instincts and expand their reading in a contest sponsored by Paragon Cable.

The Find Yourself in a Book contest will see students compete for prizes and an appearance in a nationally-aired public service announcement.

"This teen reading campaign motivates

students to discover ways reading can enhance their lives and stimulate learning," said Kevin G. Kidd, president of Paragon Cable.

Students in grades 7 through 12 are asked to write a 50-75 word script tied to the contest theme. Entries must be submitted by June 30.

One national grand prize winner will receive a \$2,000 educational merchandise

certificate and the winning school wins a \$1,000 certificate. Paragon Cable will also provide local prizes to teens whose entries are picked during a random drawing in July.

Entry forms are available at Paragon Cable walk-in centers and participating school libraries. For more information, contact Jonene Zinne at Paragon Cable at 230-2099, extension 362.



President Les Swanson (left) and Chancellor Joseph Cox of the Oregon Board of Higher Education cut the red tape, to symbolize new legislation that allows the board to develop its own purchasing and contracting methods. By moving to a more entrepreneurial approach to doing business, the board expects to save \$5 million annually to support educational programs.

Stores Watch Kids, While Parents Shop

Nathan Stoven doesn't even give his mother a second glance before scooting through the multicolored, child-sized door of Freddie's Playland. "Bye Nathan!" Linda Stoven calls out as she departs for an hourlong shopping trip at Fred Meyer. The 3-year-old boy flashes her a quick smile, then turns his attention to a "Tiny Toons" cartoon on the television. "Now I can shop in peace," Stoven says. "And the other customers probably appreciate not having Nathan running up and down the aisles." Retailers such as Portland-based Fred Meyer, Fort Worth-based Incredible Universe and Smith's Food & Drug of Salt Lake City are discovering the value of providing short-term care and support for parents with small children.

Fred Meyer first tested its drop-in baby-sitting areas in 1988 at four Utah stores. After rave reviews by parents and employees, the chain expanded the concept to Oregon, Washington and 10 of 12 stores in Utah. Now, all new and renovated outlets include play areas. Parents can drop off children ages 2 to 6 at "Freddie's Playland" for up to an hour. There is one attendant -- trained in CPR -- for every eight children. There often is a waiting list to get a child in because the service is so popular, says Tate. "Kids have fits if they

can't come in here," says Playland attendant Lucy Jones, who works at the same store. "I've had parents call on the phone and ask to reserve time for their children."

Incredible Universe customers will be able to drop their young ones off at "Kids View" when the electronics and appliance chain opens its first Utah store this winter. "Kids View" is a glass-walled area capable of holding up to 30 children ages 3 to 9 for an hour. Children can play the latest video games, tackle educational computer programs or snuggle into a beanbag chair to watch a movie on a big-screen television. Those less interested in technology can color or create their own art at a crafts table. "It is easier to make that important decision about the refrigerator you need without wondering if your kid is getting lost," says Incredible Universe spokesman Doran Davidson. "The area exposes kids to our products and lets them take a test drive."

Fred Meyer and Incredible Universe officials stress their play areas are not day-care centers. Employees do not change diapers or provide meals. And if children misbehave, parents are paged to immediately pick up their child. In addition, parents are not allowed to leave the stores to do other errands

without picking up their children. "We had one couple that dropped off their child and went over for lunch at McDonald's," says Jones. "The child had to go to the bathroom so bad he was crying. One of our managers finally took him. I read the parents the riot act when they got back." In exchange for parental compliance, Fred Meyer and Incredible Universe say they provide safe, secure, and free play areas for children. Doors are locked at all times and no one other than the children and attendants are allowed inside. Store insurance covers any child who might get hurt. Children left at "Freddie's Playland" wear a bright pink hospital-type wristband with an identification number. The parent who drops the child off wears a matching band and must show the number upon their return. "If the parent removes the bracelet before coming back for the child," says Fred Meyer spokesman Rob Boley, "then they go through an elaborate process to prove who they are." At Incredible Universe, parents must show ID -- usually the store's membership card -- when dropping off their child. A computer prints out matching stickers for the child and parent. To get the youngster out, the same parent who checked him or her in must show the sticker and ID.

Sony Releases Videos To Day Cares

Responding to the Motion Picture Licensing Corp.'s recent announcement that it will stop day care centers from showing home videos to children unless the operators pay a public performance fee, Sony Wonder has announced that it will allow and encourage day care facilities to screen its videos free of charge.

Sony Wonder is currently developing and establishing national outreach programs to work with day care centers on an on-going basis. Details on the program are expected to

be announced shortly. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., has expressed concern about the fees and has stated that unless an exemption is granted to day care centers, she will begin proceedings to legislate an exemption. Sony Wonder's pre-school releases include new "Sesame Street" titles, which will be in stores beginning January 1996, as well as existing titles. Also included in the program are Sony Wonder's pre-school videos from the critically acclaimed new PBS pre-school series "The Puzzle Place"; the new Nickelodeon

pre-school programming block Nick Jr., which includes "Allegra's Window," "Gullah Gullah Island" and "Eureeka's Castle"; and Sony Wonder's

own original, direct to video "Enchanted Tales" series, which includes the platinum selling "Jungle King," "The Night Before Christmas," "Snow White," "Peter Rabbit," "Noah's Ark," "The Christmas Elves" and others.

Sony Wonder is the children's and family division of Epic Records and Sony Music.

TIME TESTED PHONICS HELPS CHILDREN READ

In an effort to halt the decline of children's reading skills, California's top educators are recommending a corrective course for schools, the reintroduction of phonics,

a time-tested approach, to early education reading curriculums. Augmenting this trend, LeapFrog's new Phonics Desk and Phonics Traveler, learning aids which allow parents to teach phonics and reading skills to their children at home, are making a timely appearance in the marketplace.

Public and professional reaction to LeapFrog's new teaching toys has been nothing short of enthusiastic. Among the country's foremost educators, Dr. Robert Calfee, of Stanford University's Graduate School of Education, said, "Learning to read and write

is the door to success in school. To ensure success in reading and writing, parents should read stories to their children and introduce them to the basics of print - letters, sounds, and words. "LeapFrog's Phonics Desk uses modern

technology to help parents introduce the basics to their children in a playful way, while ensuring that learning is effective. Based on 50 years of research, the Phonics Desk teaches letter names (the best predictor of reading success), letter sounds (the second best predictor of reading success), and word families. Children learn to read and to spell at the same time - and it's fun.

The Phonics Desk is available at specialty retailer stores and Toys 'R Us stores nationwide.

Attention Called To Child Abuse

According to government and private sources nearly 2,000 children a year, or five children a day, die at the hands of their parents or caretakers in the United States.

October is domestic violence awareness month and the following child abuse facts were provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Oregon Children's Services Division and Children First and the National Victim Center.

- In 1993, there were 10,948 incidents of child abuse and 11 deaths in Oregon.
- Most victims of child abuse are infants.
- Abuse and neglect in the home is a leading cause of death for children age 5 and under.
- Some 18,000 children are permanently disabled and about 142,000 are seriously injured from abuse each year in America.
- The rate of American children reported for child abuse or neglect increased 50 percent from 1985 to 1993.
- Mothers and fathers are the two most prevalent perpetrators of child abuse.
- Head trauma is the leading cause of child abuse fatalities.
- Shaken Baby Syndrome kills 20 to 25 percent of its victims.
- An estimated 50 percent of homes with adult violence also involve child abuse or neglect.
- Only 21 states have laws that allow parents to be prosecuted for murdering their children under "felony murder" or "homicide by child abuse." Charges of homicide are routinely reduced to lesser crimes.
- Twenty-nine percent of all forcible rapes in America occur when the victim is less than 11 years old.

L.I.F.E. Center Collects Blankets For Portland's Children

October 16 kicks off L.I.F.E. Center's month-long drive to collect 300 blankets for Portland's impoverished individuals.

"Winter will be here soon, and hundreds of single parents will need blankets for their children," said Chair Richard Rickel.

Blankets should be clean and in useable condition. They can be dropped off at L.I.F.E. Center, 2746 N. E. MLK Blvd, Portland, weekdays from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm., or donation pick-up can be arranged by calling 284-6878.

The blankets will be given out beginning November 13.

L.I.F.E. Center has been serving the food, clothing and household item needs of Portland's impoverished for more than 28 years.

For more information, contact Charles Carter at 284-6878.

Family Classes Offered At Dishman

Dishman Community Center is now offering classes that will give young and old new insights and widen their horizons.

Basics for Music is an introduction to the elements of music class. If you play by ear and would like to learn how to read music, this course is for you.

Other classes include Homework Club, Chess Club, Gospel Choir, The Joy of Color, Fall Frolic, Lady Hoops, Girls Volleyball, Sewing for Kids and Jump Rope.

For course schedules and more information, or to volunteer your expertise, call Todd at 823-3163 or 823-3165.