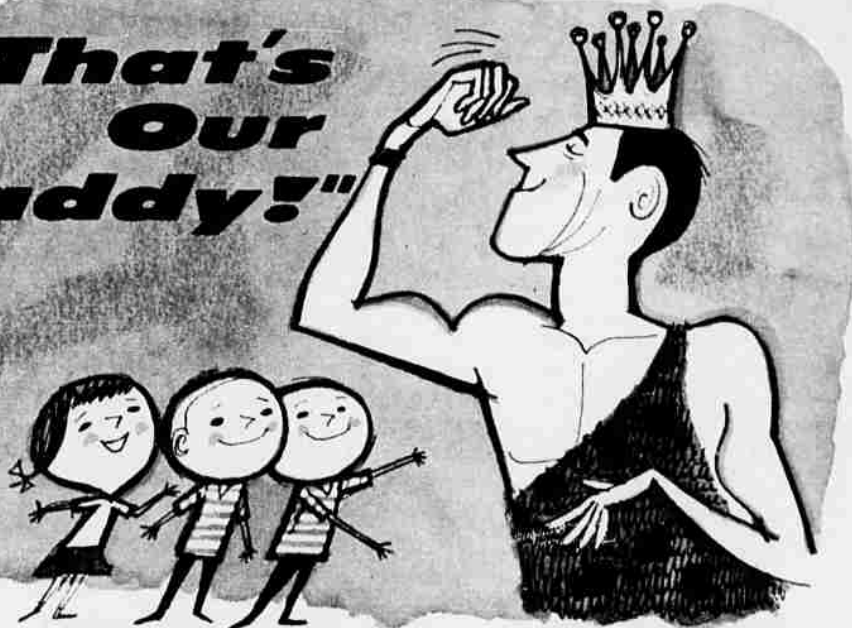


**"That's
Our
Daddy!"**



by Dick Emmons

ONE OF THE pleasantest things about being a father of small children is that there is always somebody around to look up to you—especially if you happen to be taller than your children. As luck would have it, I am.

Almost everything I do seems big and important in the eyes of our 4-year-old-twin boys and 8-year-old daughter. The realization that they are the only ones in the world to whom the things I do seem big and important is only momentarily disturbing.

The other evening, for example, the twins reached into my trousers pocket and pulled out a couple of dollar bills and a handful of change, and spread it on the rug.

"Gosh, Daddy! You're rich!" Davie cried. "Mommy, come look at all Daddy's money!" Dickie squealed.

The fact that the \$2.87 had to cover my lunches and miscellany until next Friday and that my bank only the day before had been making ominous gurgling sounds about overdrawn accounts completely vanished from my mind.

"That's a lot of money, boys," I said dreamily.

"Can I have one of those quarters, Daddy?" Ann begged. "I need a new jump rope awful bad."

"Sure," I said airily, "have a quarter." "Me, too?" the twins chorused.

"You can each take a nice penny," I said in my best Rockefeller tone of voice. "Oh boy!" they chimed.

Suddenly my wife, Helen, eased in from the kitchen, swept up the dollar bills, and remarked, "Charity begins at home."

I finally got the two dollars back after pledging to buy her a new little hat the next payday.

My youngsters not only think I'm a financial tycoon; they're also convinced that I'm an awesome physical specimen. (Actually, I'm only 5 feet, 8 inches tall when standing on tiptoe, which, incidentally, I

find increasingly hard to do these days.)

I overheard a conversation not so long ago which did more for this 152-pound weakling than Charles Atlas could ever hope to accomplish. The twins had captured a caterpillar and their mother was trying to get the lid off a fruit jar and put the contents elsewhere so the boys could house their find. Mommy was having trouble getting the lid off.

"Let's call Daddy," one of the boys suggested confidently.

"Yeah," his spitting image added. "He's strong and powerful!"

"He's a real brute," Helen said sardonically. I ignored this.

"What's the problem, boys?" I asked, casually tearing our 22-page suburban telephone directory in two.

"They want you to unscrew this lid, sinews," my wife said.

"Nothing to it," I smiled, reaching for the jar and giving it a vicious twist. I jerked again. I put the jar between my knees and wrenched fiercely, my face coloring and my breath coming quickly.

"Maybe the jar doesn't know how strong you are," Helen murmured.

"I'll get . . . it in a minute . . . I think something's . . . beginning to give," I gasped.

"I think I know who it is," she replied. Dickie and Davie were looking at me in disappointment.

"Tell you what, fellows," I said finally, "caterpillars don't like glass houses anyway. What do you say we make this one a wooden house of his own?"

The three of us hustled excitedly downstairs and I put together a box from some scraps of lumber I had been meaning to throw away.

When it was finished, the boys grabbed it and ran off to show their friends. In addition to their other beliefs in me, they also think I'm the world's greatest builder of caterpillar houses.

As a matter of fact, I am.

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