

SPANKING'S STILL A GOOD TEACHER



by ROBERT GARDNER Judge of the Superior Court of Orange County, California

"GOOD GRIEF, here come the Arthur Browns!"

As the Arthur Browns, complete with Junior, drive up in front of the house for a short visit, everyone bursts into frenzied activity, removing everything breakable, movable or touchable.

Not that the Arthur Browns aren't nice people. But Junior! An uninhibited urchin who dashes around defiant of threats of punishment he knows will never be carried out.

To you Junior is a nuisance. To me he is a future case. I am a judge.

Some day I will administer to Junior by court action the figurative spanking that his doting parents are failing to administer now. Not that I am clairvoyant, or that Junior was born bad. It is just Junior's tragedy to have been born to overindulgent parents, rightly characterized by Bishop Fulton Sheen as the curse of the 20th century.

Most authorities agree that man's vital training period is from birth to 12 years of age. If, by age 12 or thereabouts, we can produce a child with a background of loving and affectionate parents, with healthy moral standards based on our own examples, and with basic training in behavior, decency and respect for others, Junior has a fine chance of making good in this troublesome world.

But before he can be exposed safely to life outside the nest he must have strong self-discipline, the intestinal fortitude to say "no" at the right moment. And where does he get that? At his mother's knee, it is true. But also, when necessary, across his mother's knee.

What's wrong with spanking? Has it become un-American? Subversive? Most of us can look back to a little woodshed therapy as a helpful and healthy part of our upbringing.

I will admit that whacking a child in anger just to vent one's spleen proves nothing. But I submit that a little laying on of hands under proper conditions is a basic part of the educational experience of young people.

A noted judge tells why he believes a switch in time will keep our youngsters out of court

I WELL REMEMBER a part of my childhood when my father worked for a railroad, and we lived in a tough little railroad town in Wyoming. Also working on the road were a group of foreign-born workers who had never been exposed to modern child psychology.

As I recollect, there was a considerable amount of corporal punishment inflicted by these parents. And, believe me, there were many times, as I ran through the sagebrush with one of their well-spanked children in hot pursuit, that I wished vehemently he did have a broken spirit! Not only were their spirits not broken, but I am inclined to think they thrived on the whippings they received!

I spend much too much of my time on the sawdust circuit making after-luncheon and after-dinner speeches. Often I find myself about three jumps behind a speaker who takes the modern child-psychology approach.

For instance he lists 10 conflicts in the average family and tells you how to handle each situation. He makes me feel so inadequate that I want to quit, and he makes me sound like Simon Legree.

I can hear him now: "Reason with Junior. Reason with him. When you spank him, you are admitting failure."

All right, I say, admit failure once in a while. If it exists, it is moral cowardice not to admit it. It is far better to admit a temporary failure, even with the reasoning and sympathetic-understanding process, than to let Junior grow up into a repulsive brat because of your own pride.

Remember that there are two great injustices

that can befall a child: One is to punish him for something he didn't do. The other is to let him get away with doing something he knows is wrong.

If Junior doesn't behave, just whack him a couple of times under quiet but firm conditions, and you will be surprised at the wonderful results you get. I am, of course, not advocating brutality to children or unjustifiable punishment.

The modern family practice is to attempt to find the cause for the child's misbehavior. Then, with almost Godlike patience and restraint, we remove that basic source of irritation.

Nonsense! I say. Who is going to go through life with Junior, removing all sources of temptation, difficulty and irritation and satisfactorily solving his psychological problems? No one.

The time will come when Junior is going to be all alone in this big cold world. When an unpleasant or perhaps dangerously attractive situation presents itself, will he go into a tizzy and register his protest against the unfairness of it all by anti-social behavior? Or will he remember a few good spankings which, in addition to putting a blush on his posterior, also put a little iron into his character? Will he at that time exercise a little self-control and emotional maturity and conquer that situation all by himself? It is as simple as that.

Of course, we should all try to be good examples to our children. For those who have attained perfection, this is the complete answer. For all of us non-perfect people, a situation is presented: Junior is not only following my good example; he is also following my bad example. What do I do? Do I run to the closest child-guidance clinic? Do I manfully and stubbornly continue my futile effort to attain perfection?

Or do I face the realities of human frailty, and admit that it is best for all concerned to stop, survey the situation, and with hairbrush firmly in hand, say, "Now, Junior, this is going to hurt me worse than . . ."

COVER:

School starts off with a smile, at least for the teacher on Bob Hilbert's cover. But mischief-makers beware: not every schoolmarm will be as amused by a lemon among the apples on her desk.

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