

family



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHER'S DIARY

Dad describes his favorite gift: book on raising kids in the '80s

Yes, the festivities and religious seasons of Hanukkah and Christmas are over for 1980. We have memories of just a few weeks ago, and, in addition, possess the material treasures called presents. Is there any one present you received that has a special meaning? For me, it's a book entitled, **Growing Up Free: Raising Your Child In The 80's**, by Letty Cottin Pogrebin (McGraw Hill, 1980). This book was left by Santa Claus. Well, to tell you the truth, by my daughter, Elizabeth.

I asked Elizabeth why she chose the book and her response was that she liked the title. The book reminded her of the World Book Of Records and some of the world records I attempted many years ago. The book also reminded her that having choices in life was a good thing. We spent some time talking about being free and having respect for other people. We agreed that the freedom each of us had in the family and the trust that went along with that freedom was the main reason for us being a happy family. I told Elizabeth that at \$15.95,

she inadvertently left the price on the book jacket, she made a good investment in a book that we all could explore for a long time to come.

Let me share the book with you. Ms. Pogrebin exposes the myths, cliches and stereotypes of traditional child-rearing and charts the way to the role-free family life. As a result of eight years of research, interviews and human experience by the author, her book has provided insight into every aspect of parent-child relationships and offers inventive plans for a fair division of household chores, discussions of family feelings, power struggles, personal belongings and private spaces, mealtimes and bedtimes, privileges, rewards and restraints. I was pleased to read one important goal parents should have in raising kids: 'nourishing the unique person in every girl and boy'.

The book has given me thoughtful and valuable suggestions on how to recognize and avoid the pitfalls of gender favoritism, how to maximize the role of the fully involved and nurturing father, how to chart a sen-



Family life is a process of growing.

sible course through the murky redefinitions of motherhood, how to cope with shifting images of marriage and family, and the contemporary passages of parental life.

My philosophy of parenting has always included shared responsibility. Ms. Pogrebin has amplified this concept to include parity

parenting, an interesting and useful force of family organization. Simply, the author states, "if each parent is a competent, loving childrearer, it follows that two such parents are a double bonus for children. It's also a bonus for the adults in the unit. Rather than cover half the waterfront all the time, each parent can cover all the waterfront half the time, a revision

that offers diversification, more leisure per person, and resentment-free marriage." The concept of parity parenting seems to find its greatest importance in the single parent family. Knowing that one parent can cover the entire waterfront, has got to be a good feeling.

I was particularly pleased to read about the need for a relationship cur-

riculum at home as well as in school. According to the author, "a relationship curriculum should give children hands on experience with younger children to develop nurturing competence -bathing, changing, feeding, empathy, discipline-without-abuse just as we build math and reading competence. Furthermore, students should study the economics of child-rearing from birth to age eighteen. They can visit hospital nurseries and child care centers and help out in nursery or kindergarten classes in school. Older groups might conduct speak-outs on battered children, adoption, divorce, living with a single parent, custody arrangements, and foster care." I can remember setting up a kind of relationship curriculum with my older daughter, Elizabeth, before her sister, Michelle, was born. Being the only child, Elizabeth was encouraged to practice the various techniques of parenting with the dolls she had. The doll play allowed for a nice transition to occur when Michelle came along.

Ms. Pogrebin ends her book with comments on the sexist language syndrome. She feels language tells us, "Boys are better". I won't even begin to feed your curiosity on this topic. However, if you should be vacationing on an ocean liner with the author of this book, and you hear the captain blasting on the loud speaker "man overboard" there had better be a man pulled out of the water.

You can bet, *Growing Up Free: Raising Your Child In The 80's* will be an actively used family book in my house.