



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHER'S DIARY

Success is worth the struggle

Each morning my kids start the day with three or four cartoons.

It's a way of loosening up. You don't have to think a whole lot—just sit back and be entertained and amused. With some cartoons, though, a theme can be extracted and some values taught.

For me, it's in the car at 8:15 a.m. or so. Almost reflexively upon exiting the driveway, I reach for the on/off dial of the radio and turn on news radio 88. I listen to what's happening in the world, especially the Big Apple, get the up-to-date inside stuff about the weather and restlessly await the 8:30 mark when Charles Osgood is on the air. Why so much anticipation? Well, for one thing, the news of the day is not only factually presented in good English, it is manicured and packaged, quite often in poetic form, so your imagination is stimulated and you feel you really have learned something.

Take the morning of Sept. 22, 1980. Osgood's report concerned itself with success and failure. Having a 12-year-old daughter who must really work hard to achieve, I was particularly sensitive to the message presented.

I could hear my daughter Elizabeth's words very clearly: "I'm no good. I failed. They didn't choose me to be on the cheerleaders' squad." She never had a thought about why. Simply, she had failed.

There is no way I can paraphrase what was so eloquently broadcast by Osgood. He and CBS have been very kind in allowing me to share his thoughts with you:

*If at first you don't succeed,
the saying says that then
The thing to do is not give up
but try, try again.
But if at first you don't
succeed,
A saying isn't what you need.
What you need are some
reasons why
It might be worth your while to
try.*

*Lust for Life by Irving Stone,
the story of Van Gogh
Was turned down by many
publishers—seventeen said no.
The public wouldn't buy this
book, Irving Stone was told.
At last report now, twenty-five
million copies have been sold.
And Vincent knew the bitter
sting of mean rejections's
knife.*

*Of paintings, he sold only one
—one painting all his life.
And Julia Child's first cook-
book, she would be the first to
say,*

*Was rejected, failed as flat out
as a novice's soufflé.
Dr. Seuss, the brilliant writer
that the kiddies just adore,
Has lots of his rejection slips.
Well, maybe twenty-four.
The Muppet Show is popular,
with its funny, clever scenes.
But for twenty years, the
network couldn't see the show
for beans.*

*Beethoven's "Fidelio" was a
miserable flop.
It was after the composer died
that it came out on top.
And the emperor for whom
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
wrote*

*Criticized one of his operas;
said it had too many notes.
Many great composers who
are honored so today—*

*Berlioz and Franck and
Shostakovich and Bizet—
Had to cope with great
rejection, had to do the best
they could.*

*Even though some critics said
their music simply wasn't any
good.
The Beatles were rejected, and
it seemed they might be
through.
Before Parlophone took them
on in 1962.*

*"A balding, skinny actor"—it's
in black and white right
there—*

*"Can dance a little," says the
sheet, rejecting Fred Astaire.
The Steelers once rejected a
young quarterback, the dolts.
So they later had to face
him—John Unitas of the Colts.
To fail is not the terrible
disaster it may seem,
If you just hang in there long
enough and hold onto your
dream.*

*To dream, as William Shake-
speare wrote, "To dream, ah,
there's the rub."
And if at first you don't
succeed, well, welcome to the
club.*

Without delay and upon getting to my office, I wrote Osgood and asked for a copy of his broadcast. Within two weeks I had the copy in my hands and gave it to my daughter to read.

Many hours were spent that night by the whole family, trying to analyze why we work, why we should go to school, why we should take music lessons and what we would like to do with our life on earth.

We all realized that we had shared more disappointments in life than we did successes. However, without the disappointments, we would not have had the opportunity to improve our abilities.

For Elizabeth, well, the article and our discussion gave her a better perspective on life and the need to always try and give what ever you do the very best effort. Equally important is being honest with oneself in recognizing the faults and impurities that do exist, and change them into positive assets.

For my youngest daughter, Michelle, she couldn't believe the Muppets had a hard time for 20 years. She thought they just were invented and became an overnight success. Come to think of it, so did I.

Be a doer

The essence of the message Osgood has given my family is to do and even fail at it, but never just dream about doing and getting nothing done. Simply by trying you are getting closer to success—a thought Elizabeth has now accepted and internalized.

It's difficult to teach our kids Osgood's message. They often are not interested and want an easy out. But by them observing success and failure in us and people in the news, by being a part of post-mortem evaluations of why we did or did not succeed, our kids may develop a reasonably sound value system and motivation about growing up that will generate adult stability and give to the world the successes it needs.

Note: quote used by permission of: CBS Radio Network, Charles Osgood, Newsbreak, September 22, 1980, 8:30 a.m., EDT.