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'Super Pop' tells how to be a father

By Chris Turkel
 NEWS WEEK STAFF

Volumes have been written about being a mother but all too few books have emerged to help dear old dad be the type of father he would like to be: kind, patient, fun and instructive, yet able to convey sufficient discipline to insure a proper measure of respect.

One such father has shared his loving, exuberant approach to raising children by writing a book entitled "The Fun Book of Fatherhood." The author is the first father ever to win a paternity leave. Jerry Cammarata's wit and wisdom are now in paperback (Pinnacle Books, 303 pages \$2.50) after becoming a best seller among parenting books while in hardcover at \$9.95.

Father of two daughters

Dubbed "Super Pop," Cammarata is a speech pathologist for the City Board of Education and the father of two very well-adjusted daughters, ages 6 and 10. Cammarata applied his four-year unpaid leave of absence to helping his wife during the early development of his youngest daughter, feeling that the first several months of a baby's life are crucial to its eventual well-being. Cammarata's work to elevate the standard of fatherhood has not gone

unnoticed. Besides making a nationwide lecture tour, he has been recommended by Reps. Mario Biaggi and John Murphy and Sen. Daniel Moynihan to be a member of President Carter's 1980 White House Conference on the Family.

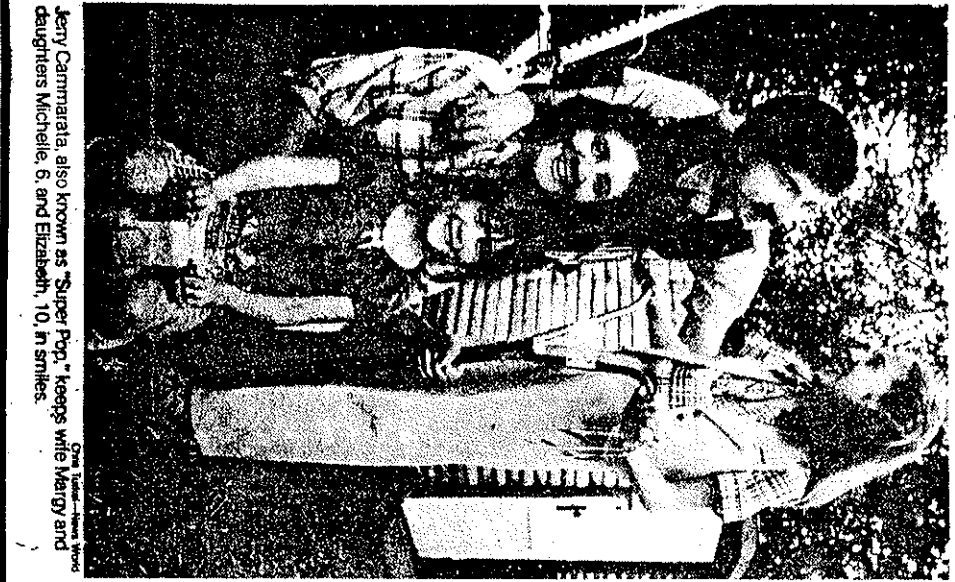
The News World interviewed this "professional" father, surrounded by his happy, affectionate family, at his Staten Island home. He was asked to explain the attitudes that underline his book.

Friend and parent

"The theme of the book is how to raise kids in a relaxed way and to show through the experience of animal behavior when the children are very young that life, growing up and learning are as fun and educational as a cat playing with a ball of twine.

"A father should be both a friend to his children and a parent as well as an authority figure. If the combination of those three can be realized, then the child is going to have a little bit more enjoyment as being part of that family.

"As an authority figure sometimes you have to put your foot down and say, 'This, this and this have to be done. If it's not done it's going to be injurious to you, whether it be psychologically, physically or whatever. You may not understand what it is, (continued on page 16A)



Jerry Cammarata, also known as "Super Pop," keeps wife Mary and daughters Michelle, 6, and Elizabeth, 10, in smiles.

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now, but I'm responsible for providing the kind of role model, providing the kind of experiences, that will afford you a better experience as you grow older. That doesn't mean that the experiences I will afford you or will allow you to engage in are going to be the best. I don't know because I make tons of mistakes as a parent. Kids make more mistakes—or maybe fewer mistakes—than parents do.

A learning experience

"It's the combination of give and take, with all willing to accept the fact that parenting, fathering—childering if you will—is a learning experience. If you treat it that way, when you make a mistake, you realize the mistake is not part of perfection, but the mistake rather is part of the growing pains of life. In fact, it's not a mistake—it's a decision based on previous experience. With that in mind, you constantly grow and perfect your skill.

"The authority that's shown here is a hierarchical kind of authority. Our daughters are required to show respect to my wife and I. We, in turn, show that respect to our in-laws and to my parents. So that by viewing the way we talk to our parents, they are learning how to respond to us.

"It's the way you establish things early on that will later create the attitudes of dating. It will either be catastrophic, difficult to cope with or will just be a part of everyday life. You have to ask yourself: First, what do they want to do? Second, what do you want them to do? Third, what do you agree upon if you do come to an agreement? Fourth, what eventually they are told to do, if you have to come to that.

"This is very, very important. A lot of parents will not go that extra step any more because they're listening to psychologists and psychiatrists—you've got to cut them out. That's one of my pet peeves. That's one of the motivating factors of the book. You do not go to your psychiatrist, you do not go to your psychiatrist.

"The book simply says: Look at the animals. Not from a funny and ridiculous standpoint. Look at how the animals view law and order, family relationships, helpfulness, fun, frolic, communication—because it's all there, without human pretension.

Doing things naturally

"What I'm saying is that there is an easy, simple, logical, law, order, a law of doing things naturally. If you can give some of these valuable, fun experiences to a child, they're going to realize that growing up is all right.

"Why did I choose the animal kingdom? I was trying to figure out a way that I could keep my own sanity about being a parent and finding it interesting to be a teacher.

"I'm not a zoologist. Whatever I have managed to put together in the book is not from the zoological approach, but as a parent trying to find ways to stimulate myself in learning and then parents stimulating kids. We are all animals blessed with an extraordinary power of rationalization.

"Americans are moving away more and more from the extended family to the nuclear family, which is a very sad commentary on our society. I don't think the extended family can truly be preserved, in terms of having aunts, uncles, grandpa and grandpa in the same household.

"Yet the extended family could certainly be preserved as Margaret Mead and other anthropologists have determined by looking at the community at large as an extended family. Margaret Mead did feel that we are going to be returning to a three-generation community.

"When we say family, we're talking about so many things. We're talking about education, we're talking about religion, we're talking about just the spirit of living together and cooperating. Families today wish they could be united, wish that they could have each other's support."