DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Getting Started

Mark L Berch
492 Naylor Place
Alexandria VA 22304

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What does one say in the opening sentence of one's issue #100? Using the second sentence to point out that such a question answers itself risks insulting readers who noticed that already, so I won't. Wrapping up the paragraph by pointing out how self conscious all this should be enough to remind you of what an egomaniac I am.

Perhaps you are expecting something traditional, along the lines of "I never thought I'd reach issue #100." Actually, I fully expected to get this far. Of the next 100 issues, I'm not nearly so confident. If I do reach #200, I doubt it will be before the turn of the century. For tradition, I have a salute and a dedication.

This issue itself is a salute to Piggott's Laws of Fanzines. The longer I publish, the more I'm convinced that these are the best guidelines for long term sucess in putting out a Diplomacy zine. They are as follows:
"1. Good fanzines are produced for the benefit of their editors." Not the readers, but the editor. The editor's best writing will be on topics that interest him, not on what he hopes will interest his readers. The games he runs should be those that he likes to run. The Houserules, the format, the schedule, the layout ---- he must do it for himself. In a job, you do your work for the benefit of others, but for unpaid work like this, it must be done for yourself, or you will surely get tired of it. The best advice I can give to a new publisher is: write about what you are interested in, not what you think we want. If you're good at it, you'll attract people who are interested in the same things.
"2. A good fanzine will contain material which cannot be obtained elsewhere in the same form." Strive to be unique, because if you can't meet this standard, you and your readers may decide: Whats the point? This rule overlaps the first , but is not the same, since it adresses content rather than intention.

This issue, as you will soon discover, is as extreme an example of the editor writing for his own benefit, and providing that which cannot be found elsewhere, as you will ever see in a dipzine. I wouldn't recommend doing it on a regular basis.

And second, a dedication. In my opinion (not universally shared), the zine is soul of the hobby. This is not to deny something like correspondence, and I've immensely enjoyed these, especially with Rod Walker and Francois Cuerrier. But, aside from putting out this zine, it has been reading , and contributing to, the hobby's zines which has given me the most pleasure in the hobby --- far exceeding that of playing the game postally.

This issue is dedicated to the six people who have put out six of the seven zines I have enjoyed the most: Gary Coughlan (Europa Express), Bruce Linsey (Voice of

Doom), Robert Lipton (The Mixumaxu Gazette), Richard Sharp (Dolchstoss), John Michalski (The Brutus Bulletin), and Conrad von Metzke (Constaguana). The seventh zine, Diplomacy World, has had quite a sucession of editors.

Robert, Richard, and Conrad, along with Rod Walker have been the most talented writers I've seen, and their zines reflected these skills. Gary's zine has been the most-honored in the North American Hobby. John's produced an energy and an intensity not seen before or since. Conrad's revived Costaguana is currently the hobby's hottest zine. And Voice of Doom was, for my money, the greatest dipzine of all time.

And finally, the essay itself is dedicated to my in-laws, my parents and to Mona. They are probably in there in ways I'm not even aware of.

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To those seeing this dipzine for the first time, please be aware that that is a very atypical issue. Unlike most dipzines, I'm usually pretty firm about keeping my personal life out --- the zine can easily go for a year without any mention at all. But when I do put it in, I pretty much push every thing else aside. All of nothing. I'll soon be returning to normal, with one caveat. Mona and I are planning to move some time in 1987. Exactly when is unclear, since we haven't found the right house. Thats a very time consuming process. Moreover, it means that the Berch Archives will be packed up for several months, making it nearly impossible to do any reprinting for a while. I'm not sure how I'll handle all this disruption, so be flexible in your expectations. There may be some temporary changes around here.

If you have any comments about this issue, please feel free to write. Some space will probably be made available for this (as I did last time in DD #75), but I have to be careful not to overdo it. I realize that there is a substantial chunk of you who will have little or no interest in this issue. I promise, next issue, we get back to Diplomacy.

I have a pretty good feeling about the hobby these days. Part of this comes from having won the Xenogogic 20th Anniversary writing contest. That netted me $100 plus three free games from Avalon Hill Game Company ---- by far the most I've ever "won" at anything in my entire life. In addition , it may appear in AH's The General, which might generate a royalty check! The essay is on triple alliances, and its the best one I've seen on the topic, if I may say so myself. It also appears in the current issue of Diplomacy World, just out. The issue features two other essays from that contest, and a good deal of other excellent reading. This is certainly one of the meatier issues of DW ever put out. At this point, its clear that the revival process for DW has been a sucess. Larry has gotten the zine onto a very firm foundation, and so its existance is no longer in doubt. There are several positions available, so if you are interested in a job, large or small, let Larry know.

In this regard, Larry has suspended publication of Xenogogic. I've mixed feelings about this. It was a very personalized zine, which I liked, altho at times it seemed like Larry was going for quantity rather than quality (perhaps on the theory that if he threw enough in, you were bound to find some items you liked). But DW will be the stronger for Larry not having this major distraction. Both Walker and Jones before him tried to keep up their personal zine at the same time as they ran DW, to the ultimate detriment, I suspect, of both.

Add to that another fine issue of Europa Express and a sensational Costaguana, to name the larger items arriving recently. Dick Martin has revived House of Lords with a pair of impressive issues. Some constructive ideas are percolating (another PDO auction, increased focus on novices). The tone of the hobby is fare better than it was a year ago.

Yup, its a good time to put out an issue #100.

GETTING STARTED

Relax. This will not be an exhaustive chronology of Joshua ("And then, in the 27th week, he..") Indeed, to a large degree, its not about Joshua at all, its about being a parent.

Some caveats: First and foremost, I'm NOT talking about your kid, either the one you've got, or the one you might some day. This is true regardless of the wording of any given sentence. I've never met your kid, so I can't speak of him or her. Second, I am not an expert on childraising, or any aspect thereof, nor do I think of myself as one. I am one of two experts on the subject of Joshua (my wife Mona is the other), but thats as far as it goes. Finally, the views expressed herein are mine and mine alone, not necessarily shared by anyone else on the planet. Moreover, they are only my current views, held during the three months or so when this was written, and are thus subject to change. I say this because being a parent has a way of altering one's views on many things.

All ages unless otherwise stated are in months; e.g "6-" means six months or younger.

I make no apology for the structure of this. It's several basically unconnected essays. Moreover, each is subject to rambling side excursions, abrupt shifts and the like. No serious attempt is madeto separate fact from opinion --- this is not designed as a scolarly essay. Virtually all of it was written directly on the typewriter --- i.e. this is essentially a first draft. If it makes you feel better, please consider all typos to be deliberate.

There is a sort of companion essay, which runs 8½ pages, called "The Coming of Joshua". It covers the period before Joshua was born. It was in DD #74, and is available to subbers for 40¢

FOOD

This is an appropriate topic to start with. With a hungry baby, very little is possible. With a well-fed baby, anything can happen. It appears to be the most satisfying activity they do, and for the first few weeks, it occupies a surprisingly large amount of their waking time.

What to give the baby --- bottle or breast --- is usually the first major decision that the parents must effectuate. Breastfeeding fell out of favor with American mothers in the 40s, 50s and early 60s. It is now very much more in vogue. If you read the popular literature, you might get the impression that practically everyone is choosing breastfeeding. I don't know of any statistics, but a lot of women are not, and of those who do, many last only a few months or even a few weeks.

There is no serious dispute about the fact that with very rare exceptions, an unmedicated mother is better off not starting with formula (If the mother is forced to take certain types of drugs, e.g. many anti-cancer drugs, her milk will not be safe). Even the literature on the formula jars often states this explicitly. From the baby's perspective, there are, with the rarest exceptions, no drawbacks at all to breast milk. Moreover, the composition of milk tends to change as the baby gets older, matching the child's needs. Space doesn't permit even a summary of the

advantages over formula, but there are books you can get on the subject. I should add that there is some disagreement as to the scope and extent of these factors, in some cases. For example, one of the most commonly noted advantages is that bottle fed babies are more prone to getting infectious illnesses. However, most of those studies have come from third-world populations where sanitary conditions are deplorable, and its unclear how much of an advantage there is where sanitary conditions (e.g. the quality of the water used to prepare the formula) are better. Moreover, there is some evidence that most of the anti-infective properties of breastfeeding may come from the colostrum. This is a special secretion which comes in the first few days before the true milk arrives, and is especially rich in things like anti-bodies and globulins. Its extremely valuable for the baby also because it helps condition the digestive tract. Other advantages are clearer, altho their value to the baby may be subject to some dispute. Nursing babies must suck much harder to draw the milk, so that their jaw muscles develope much quicker. In fact, bottle fed babies sometimes get the milk so fast that they must thrust their tounges forward to staunch the flow of milk. This can become a reflex after a while, and can interfere in later feeding until it is unlearned.

But the basic fact of the matter is, human breast milk is as carefully matched to a human babies' needs as cow's milk is for a calf's needs. The modern formulas used cannot possibly come even close to providing what nature provides, expecially the trace compnents, and some of the complex proteins. While the chances of getting an allergic response can be reduced by using formula based on soy rather than on dairy , some babies are allergic to soy as well. There are so many times later in life where compromises must be made, and your kid can't get the very best, that it seems a shame to turn down the very best in favor of an expensive and inferior substitute.

From the mother's point of view, there are both advantages and disadvantages. The nursing dependency is a tether; you can't go very long without your baby. To some degree, milk can be pumped, and then stored, to be given later from a bottle. There are, however, limits to much of this you can do, and a pump is never as efficiant as a baby in getting the milk out, once the infant gets the hang of it. Moreover, as much as the baby needs to suck, the mother needs to suckle. This is particularly true after 3 or 4 months, when milk production gets into high gear. One way or another, the milk must come out to keep the breasts from becoming painfully engorged, to keep lumps from forming, etc. So it is very much of a two way dependency.

It is also tiring, and a job which cannot be delegated. If the baby is hungry at 1 AM, and then again at 5 AM, its just you; you can't take turns. It is time consuming and interruptive. Moreover, apparently, breast fed babies apparently feed somewhat more often than bottle babies. Breast milk is digested faster than formula, meaning the baby is hungry sooner. At the same time, especilly when the baby is very young, nursing is much more tiring for the baby, so she may take less before become exhausted. The net result is more frequent feedings. The pattern of frequent, smaller feedings is probably better for the baby, since the food comes in steadily and doesn't overload the immature digestive track, but thats more disruptive for the mother.

The attitude of the father is more important than you might think. I was surprised to learn, from Mona and from reading, that

uncooperative and even hostile attitudes by fathers are not uncommon. You might think that avoiding all the bother and cost of bottles would be welcomed, but it doesn't work that way, apparently. It should be pointed out that breastfeeding is a pretty alienating process for the man. After conception, the father is basically cut off from the reproductive process until the child is born, in contrast to the mother, who lives with it on a dailybasis. He must then make an active effort to reconnect. Food is the infants most visibly urgent need, and feeding gives the strongest positive response the baby is capable of. And he suddenly finds himself cut off from direct participation in that process too. Of course, this may not take as drastic a form as not wanting to have the kid breastfed. A friend of of mine, for example had their kid get some formula fairly early on because he wanted to be personally involved in the feeding process on a daily basis.

This is not the only type of dynamic which goes on. Some men, to put it crudely, feel that their wife's breasts are their private property, not to be shared. Or they may have trouble viewing breasts as other than sexual objects. Moreover, the increased physical contact, and some hormonal changes, both of which come from breastfeeding, tend to make the woman less interested in sex.

But beyond all that, its impossible, or rather, it was impossible for me to avoid some feeling of envy. Amoung human relationships, breastfeeding is unique. In a sense, its a continuation of the pre-birth state of affairs (all nourishment comes from mommy), but thats too passive to be a relationship. I have heard more than one older woman say that it produces a type of closeness that will never recur. The mixture of intimacy, interdependence, obligation and tenderness is not available elsewhere. Giving a bottle, Mona assures me, is not the same thing. I am not by nature an envious person, but this is the first time in my life I've ever had feelings of resentfulness that I wasn't born a woman.

Nonetheless, the father can have an important, albeit secondary role if he wants to be helpful. It is very, very common for the mother to run into problems along the way, especially during the first 6 weeks. You then need to be patient, understanding, and encouraging. You can also help by shouldering a larger share of the housework (and not complaining when it isn't done), because breastfeeding does take time, and does engender the need for naps. You can also watch over her diet, for she will need increased levels of fluids, calcium, and protein. Even small matters like lifting the kid out of the crib, changing her and scrambling for an extra pillow --- all at 3AM, can help.

But that's all it is -- help. If, for example, I had been sullen and uncooperative, Mona would have breastfed Joshua anhyhow, because she felt it was the right thing to do. It just would have been harder. The biological fact of the matter is, during the first few months, the mother will do a great deal of her"bonding"thru nursing, and the father must actively look for other ways to do his bonding.

Joshua was weaned, very gradually, at 11½. So far, we've been pretty lucky about his eating. Altho not a hearty eater, he's not picky or fussy, and will eat most of what we'll eat. The one major restriction he has is on sweets. So far as I know, he's never had candy. (He once came home from school with a plastic egg with jelly beans, and had no idea what the beans were). Ice Cream is a rare treat. Cookies and cake he gets on a very ocassional basis. The deprivation seems to bother

adults more than it bothers him. He gets so little of it that he doesn't really ask for it. Peanut Butter and pita bread is a fine sandwich; he's probably unaware that kids usually get jelly with it. Predictably, he has somewhat of a fixation on fruit --- that's his notion of dessert. Dried or fresh, he'll eat it all, except for grapefruit. I should add that there is no good scientific evidence that one age is any more influential than another in determining taste preferences, and of course, the more he's at school, and visits friends, the less control we'll have over his diet. And I realize that some fruits, especially dried ones as as sweet as some things he doesn't normally get. Still, we hope he's getting off in the right direction, because the amount of sweets kids get these days is astonishing.

education

In most regards, Joshua has had a fairly typical upbringing. With a few exceptions, he has an ordinary diet, wears the usual sorts of clothes, and has a conventional armada of toys. There is one area which is quite different, so much so that Mona is sometimes reticent to even bring it up. Because it will be so unfamiliar to nearly all of you, its worth exploring at some length --- its not something you will easily find elsewhere.

I am by training, a chemist. But certain other areas in science have always interested me, so I try to keep up, to some degree, with what is happening in those fields. One of those has been the study of the brain, especially, cognitive science. One of the things that struck me about the brain is the tremendous amount of growth and maturation that takes place in the brain, both in its structure and its functioning, during the first several years of life. This is by sharp contrast to other essential organs, such as the heart or lungs ---- they do little more than just grow larger as the years go by. At the time, this was just an isolated observation.

Sometime later, my sister-in-law told us about a course they had taken on child education. Rather than emphasizing the "school years", the focus was on the earlier years, starting right from birth. I thought it was quite interesting that they were targeting exactly the time frame in which so much developement is going on in the brain. Could these be connected?

When Mona became pregnant, the issue was no longer academic. We decided to sign up for their course, and drove up to the Instititues for the Achievement of Human Potential ("IAHP") in Philadelphia. It was to be a very eye-opening week.

Its not possible to give even a good summary of their philosophy and program in the space availble here. Moreover, we have only put into effect some of what they teach, and what I discuss will be weighted toward what I can discuss from first hand experience but I'll mention other items.

Before I start, however, an anecdote. A few days ago, I sat Joshua down with a library book. He had had it for three weeks, so it was about to be returned. He had had the book read to him frequently, about 15 times, I'd guess, 20 tops. This time I had him

recite it to me, from memory. He did the entire book. He needed a prompt (the first few words of a sentence) perhaps every 4 sentences or so, sometimes a single word was enough. Sometimes, but not always he'd need the page turned before he'd continue, so he relied partially on visual clues, I'm sure. On several ocassions, he restarted a sentence when he had left out a word. In many places, he gave the words the same emphasis or inflection that I did. In short, he had the book down virtually cold. Later I counted the book: 92 sentences, and not baby-sized ones.

If you are a parent, this probably doesn't surprise you. I suspect that most three year olds are capable of this. Still, it raises some disturbing questions. I consider myself to have (outside of foreign languages) a very good memory. And yet I could not possibly have memorized that book just by having someone read it to me 15 times. And I have several advantages. Unlike Joshua, I know what all the words mean, and I have a lot more experience using my memory than he does, and I know more about the structure of sentences, etc. So it "should" be easier for me.

And consider this: If he could learn "The Royal Hiccups" so quickly, what else could he learn with just some repetition?

And lastly: <u>This was not Study Hall</u>. Joshua did not work at it. He was not cajoled or bribed to learn. I was tired of the book, and Mona was sick of it, but he got it 15 times because he liked it.

<u>How is it that little kids can learn so effortlessly?</u>

They don't have the answer to that one at IAHP, but they do have an entire program that revolves around their belief that parents can take advantage of their kid's rage to learn, and teach them almost more than we can imagine.

We old folks live by the rule use-it-or-lose-it. They believe that for kids, it operates in a more powerful form: The more you use the mind and body, the more capabilities you can develope. In the case of the mind, we have no idea what the limits are. We do know that only a fraction of the brain is used in normal adults.

This principle is familiar in the area of muscles. The more we lift weights (to a point), the more weights we can lift. They apply this principle to all aspects of learning, body and mind. If you want to stimulate the growth of the visual centers of the brain, fine, look at as many different things as possible, and do it in the tender years, while the brain is still growing. Sounds, tactile sensations, balance, it all works the same way. Give them the opportunities to learn, and the kid's intense desire to learn will take it from there. Learning is a survival skill, its part of the essential makeup of every kid.

Much of the course is dedicated to persuading you that kids are much more interested, and much more capable of, learning than you would have thought. Some of this takes the form of the usual exhortations, and there are quite a few demonstrations, or reading, math, and other forms of knowledge, and physical demonstrations (the latter in a sense being the most persuasive, since they cannot be faked). They believe that the youngest kids are the ones which take in facts the best, that the kids will then later deduce underlying laws from facts given them, and on and on..

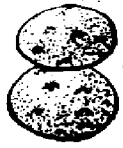
At the same time, they are critical of things that they believe interfere with this process of getting facts into those kids, and it is there wherethey get into very unorthodox views, as well as getting

a little carried away. Games and toys, they say, are invented by adults to get rid of kids. While this is true, toys do a whole lot more (spurs to the imagination, teach the kid how to function autonomously from the parent, etc) They also beleive that even 3 year olds are better off interacting with their parents than other kids, especially since so much of that interaction is pretty negative. They don't see much value in unstructured, let-the-kid-do-what-he-wants-to play. It is a very radical view of learning, and of childraising.

And at the core of the mental program are flashcards, altho at the IAHP they prefer the more dignified "bitcards". These allow you to present a huge number of facts to your kid, to organize them as you think best, and present them whenever you want. The flashcards themselves will be discussed a little later.

Most parents these days are familiar with the "infant stimulation" approach to childraising. IAHP's approach, as taught in this course can be either viewed either as an extreme form of this, or a step beyond it altogether. I lean toward the latter view. Both begin with the premise that children develope by reacting to stumuli, and that parents can hasten this process by giving them right stimuli, opportunities to see cause and effect, physical activities, etc. But IAHP takes the potential value of infant stim a whole lot more seriously than is usually done; they beleive that kids can absorb much more of it than they are normally given credit for. Moreover, they go about it in a different way. Infant stim normally relies to a great degree on gadgets, especially toys. IAHP has little use for toys that do not involve direct parental involvement --- and thats much of what is sold as child developement toys. They do beleive that a child should be able to learn on his own, without parents, but their idea of how to accomplish that is to teach the kid how to read a book. In general, they beleive the best possible form of mental stimulation is to present facts to the kids, and this is not what you will see in the infant stim literature at all. That is the sharpest difference, and it is one of kind, not of degree (as are some of the other differences). Much of the course is devoted to trying to persuade you that kids, contrary to what you might have thought, really are interested in facts, and can profit from them, and much of the rest is practical ideas of how to go about doing that.

While they try to present a lot of their radical ideas as this-is-what-you-would-have-thought-if-it-hadn't-been-for-all-those-so-called-experts-saying-otherwise, you can't avoid the fact that some of what they teach is counter-intuitive. For example, "Given any choice, children will always choose the subject of greatest complexity" This is certainly contrary to what people usually think, and to the way they act. We read them very simple books, give them simple art work(Mickey Mouse) simple songs and music, etc. I was dubious (and I still think the proposition is overstated), but I must say that my experience with flashcards seems to bear this out. I would say that, generally speaking, his prefernces there are 1) art and buildings/monuments 2) Animals, especially mammals 3) plants, faces, and 4) abstract (shapes, dots). That ordering is approximately most-complex to least complex (One exception was an initial preference for geometric shapes and faces. The preference for faces was gone by about 6, and by 10, it was down at the bottom of the list. The preference for geometric shapes declined even faster). I've also noticed that he much prefers the longer titles (of artworks) to shorter ones.



When the course was over, we left with our heads spinning. It had been six days of total immersion --- lectures, demonstrations, study materials for the evenings, and virtually unlimited opportunity to ask questions. But what to make of it all?

The prospects they presented were nothing short of dazzling. And it all (well, most of it) seemed reasonable, especially in the intense enviornment up there, and seeing all these bright and healthy kids.

In the weeks that followed, some of the other side became clearer. This was a very labor-intensive form of childcare. It calls for a maximum of time interacting with your kid, regardless of what exact form the interaction took. And there would obviously be a good deal of preparation time (to make the flashcards, for example) as well. Moreover, it was hard to find something good said about these people (a point I'll touch on a bit later), or their methods. The latest issue of "Dr. Spock", for example, makes a passing mention to the use of flashcards. It was not, shall we say, supportive. When we interviewed some pediatricians, one of them, who was from Philadelphia, said that they were, "crooks. That's C-R-O-O-K-S, Crooks." (In this regard, I must say that if they are indeed crooks, they are remarkably inefficient about extracting money from their marks. The usual forms of chicanery, such as special drugs or fancy equipment for rehab work are absent from their approach. If they've put out any special, overpriced manuals, they've forgotten to tell me about it. They've been in operation over 40 years, an unusually long time for crooks. And they've gotten grants from outfits such as the Pew Memorial Trust and the United Steelworkers. For whatever that's worth)

They were, in short, so far out of the mainstream as to be almost invisible. Balanced against the possibility of high gain was, if not a high risk, then at least a high degree of uncertainty.

But as any gambler knows, the time comes when you have to put your money down on something. The child will grow, parental time will be available, and we agreed it was best to have an operating philosophy, rather than "just let things happen". While we knew that a lot of what was taught we'd not be putting into practice (such as the foreign language program, and some odder suggestions, like a crawling track which I haven't even mentioned), there was plenty else to do, and we decided to give them a try.

What we needed most of all was some signs that these guys knew what they were talking about. And we got them.

The way to stimulate his visual system is to give him things to look at that he likes to see, they explained, which makes sense. But what? Brightly colored swirling designs? Gay bunny-rabbits and elephants? No, they suggested, start with a large black and white checkerboard. This is not exactly what one would have guessed. I combed thru my modest collection of baby books --- absolutely no mention of this. A typical piece of TAHP nonorthodoxy. So, feeling a little like Noah being asked to to build an ark, I built it.

When an infant is only a few weeks old, his attention span is very short, so that anything which holds his attention even for an extra second is very easy to notice. This difference was dramatic. He would look at that checkerboard like it was the most fascinating object on earth. With the sole exception of faces (its generally beleived that babies are programmed to scan their enviornment for faces) he looked at the checkerboard longer and better than anything else. Also, babies aren't born with

the ability to "track" moving objects. Parents often move themselves or objects in front of the infant to stimulate them to learn to track. He would track the checkerboard at an age where he would not track any toy, even one that made a good deal of noise. One of my most vivid memories of Joshua's first month is him rolling his eyes and craning his little neck trying to keep his checkerboard in view.

The notion of giving infants things to smell may seem a little silly. Why assume they can even smell anything? Had I not gone to to IAHP, it probably never would have even occured to me to give a 10-day old kid something to smell. But they said, sure, the sensory apparatus was all in place, so you want to stimulatethe olfactory centers in the brain. The stronger the better. The problem, I figured, was that I'd have no way of knowing if this really registered on him unless he cried, since at that age, infants can't smile or coo yet. Wrong! I put a jar of cumin under his tiny nose, and a second later, his eyebrows shot up! It was truly a magic moment. Garlic powder, soy sauce, cloves, even perfume ---his eyebrows would shoot up, and for several months, that was the only stimulus that would elicit such a response. There was even a short period of time during which this was the most reliable way of getting a smile out of him.

Incidently, I also learned that newborns can not only discern colors, but can express preferences. I put some colored glasses over his eyes, telling him "green", "blue" etc when I did this to start teaching him colors. But with red he turned his head away, regardless of what order the glasses were presented. I tried switching from transmitted to reflected light (towels) and got the same response. This aversion to red disappeared in a few months. Its never too early to start teaching your kid about the world.

Perhaps the most dramatic early sign was a phenominon that Mona and I both discovered more or less independently, sometime around 4 or 5. Ocassionally, Joshua would get very cranky, and absolutely nothing would help. Diaper, food, hold him, don't hold him, sleep, rocking, toys, nothing works. So we tried the flashcards. The IAHP never mentioned this as a use for flashcards, but in these situations, you try anything. And it often worked --- dramatically. He would start calming down immediately, and by the 4th or 5th card, would be quiet and attentive. It happened far too many times to be considered a fluke, and it worked in cases where other forms of lap time failed. This was very useful, but it also got me to thinking: Why is this happening? I see two reasonable possibilities:

1. The cards are a very powerful distraction. Kids at that age can give their full attention to only one thing at a time. Given a choice between focusing on the mystery ailment and the cards, the strong attraction of the cards wins over, and the kids awareness of his problem melts away. Distraction is a common technique for a variety of ages of kids, and the cards here are sucessful when other distraction methods fail.

2. The kid was crying in the first place because he wanted some stimulation. The flashcards were in fact the exact solution to his problem.

Its my own belief that both of these factors have been involved, altho I can'tprove it. I have demonstrated(to my own satisfaction)that the first theory is real. On two ocasions, Joshua was complaining and I was pretty sure he had an uncomfortable diaper --- he had a particular way of squirming. I decided to delay the change and, as an experiment, give him a few decks instead to see what would happen. On both

ocassions, he quieted down immediately --- he was, in effect, either willing to put up with a wet diaper in order to see the cards, or so entranced that he forgot about it. When I was done, he resumed squirming.

The second possibility is a little more difficult to accept. Mona has encountered some skepticism when she suggested that a kid, even in a room full of toys might be, ahem, bored. Why not? Adults can be bored with far more diversions. We saw any number of times that when cranky Joshua was given his daily set, he was fine afterwards. It doesn't prove the point, since the sheer passage of time might have done the trick too, but its good evidence.

Beyond all this theorizing, tho, is the clear impression that the flashcards are powerful, that they do have an impact, at least in the short term. Whether they will prove to have a long-term impact is a separate question, and will require much more time.

At any rate, these early experiences gave us some confidence that this was a reasonable program, that they were onto something.

Let me turn to a description of the mechanics of flashcards. Those of you who are familiar with the IAHP procedure may note that I have made some alterations.

Altho the popular press often uses the phrase "fancy flash cards", they are really pretty simple. The cards are 11"x11" posterboard. You can buy the sheets and cut it up yourself, but I find it easier to buy them precut from IAHP. On one side is mounted a large, clear picture of something. Ideally, there will be little or no backround to distract or confuse. In practice, that may be impossible (a snake may be curled around a cactus), or it may be too timeconsuming to trim away the backround. They also suggest that you only put one of an object on a card, but I don't agree. If I can, I will have a view of the bird resting and one of it flying. A front and a side view of an animal is better than either alone. I see nothing wrong with putting both male and female if they differ. Many animals, especially larger ones, will show variations one from the next, so I'll put several on, so Joshua can get the general idea of the animal. In other cases, its a more difficult choice. There are, for example, several hundred kinds of damsel flies. I'm certainly not going to prepare a separate card for each one I come across, espcially since nearly all are identified only by scientific name or not at all. So one card gets all these, and hopefully, Joshua can abstract from this the notion of a damselfly. These problems don't occur with, for example, paintings, altho you can be vexed by other matters. I have often come across two or even three reproductions of the same painting, with striking differences in the coloring. Its hard to know which one to use. Different sources may give quite different titles for paintings. Sometimes, but not always, this can be attributed to different translations. Another aggrivation is when painters give the same title to several different works. Sometimes I have cut corners here, by, for example, translating a french title into English, or by cropping a picture a little too large for the card.

At any rate, the picture is best mounted with rubber cement, since that doesn't wrinkle (Elmer's is a safe brand). On the back of the card, the title is written across the top in large letters. Also on back is any further information about the thing you can locate --- what the person did, a discussion of the painting, what the bird eats, etc. Usually

itsprinted matter which I tape right onto the back. I sometimes have a secondary picture to put on the back, often because I don't want the front cluttered or there isn't room. These are often action pictures. For example, I have a wonderful picture of a puffin; on the back is a much smaller one with some fish in its mouth (the puffin's beak, in fact, is adapted to hold several fish). On back of the inchworm card is some drawings of how the inchworm moves; Paris' Arch of Triumph has an arial view of the neighborhood on the back, etc. Unfortunately, this can slow you down, not only in preparing the cards, but in presenting them. Once Joshua knows which ones have pictures on the back too, he insists they be turned over, and if he's in a leasurely mood, he may ask that they all be turned over, just in case.

What kinds of things do you put on the flashcards? Well, what do you want your kid to learn about? And what pictures can you get your hands on? Those are really the only limits. Don't worry about what will interest them --- it all will. The great bulk of what I have made cards for are people, animals, plants, and paintings. But there are many other topics, and these do add important variety. You can have shapes (geometric, countries, states, etc), Buildings & Monuments, boats, foods, sea shells, musical instruments, street signs.

Finding this material is another matter. IAHP has a bookstore with some of what you need. They've got some good collections of B&W fotos of famous people, and street signs, too, for example. They have a small selection of printed cards, too, including a wonderful set of internal body organs, but these are a bit pricy. This you can order by mail.

Otherwise, books and magazines are your best bet. Nature mags (National Geographic, Audubon) and arts magazines and high-quality general interest magazines like Smithsonian are very good sources. But nothing should be ignored --- even newsweeklies can give fine fotos. Books can be even better, since they provide a lot of pictures on the same topic, and usually provide text to put on the back, something you often don't get from magazines. Other sources include newspapers, travel brocures, catalogues and the like.

The challenge is to avoid going broke in the process. The volumes of material you will need preclude buying this material at full price. Magazines can generally be gotten for 5-25¢ each at yard sales, flea markets and the like. Books are more variable in price, and stores selling used, remaindered, or hurt books are a good source. I've gotten a lot of material from the local library, which keeps a shelf of donated material available for a very low price. I juggle availability, cost and quality. A 25¢ magazine normally isn't worth it if it provides just one picture, but a $4 book of paintings (about as high as I usually go for books) can be a good buy if there is enough to cut. Quality counts too; material from the 50s, or printed in eastern Europe may have inferior color quality. General availability counts too. Renoir is easy to find; Utrillo is not. If you live near a big city, and will spend a little of time and locate sources, you can unearth quite a bit.

I must say, however, that preparing the cards takes a lot of time, and its best to be very efficient about it. This is especially true if you are combining material from several sources, and collecting information for the backs. It will chew up a lot of evenings. It is one of the reasons that DIPLOMACY DIGEST no longer appears every month. Its a labor of love, no doubt about it.

The cards are next arrainged in decks of approximately 10. How this is done requires some care. Animals, for example, are broken down into birds, insects, reptiles/amphibians, etc. But within each deck, its best to have as much variety as possible. An entire deck of brownish birds, or a whole set of beetles is going to get very repeti- and it will be hard for the kid to keep things straight. Its partly for this reason, for example, that the sea creatures decks usually have a mixture of fish, crustacea and even sea plants to keep the deck from being semi-monotonous. As Joshua has gotten older, I've cautiously introduced some more specialized decks (snakes, mushrooms), but a very early one (showbirds, mostly parakeets) was not a hit at all with Joshua. Similarly with plants --- use a mixture of flowers, trees, houseplants, etc.

Artwork is easier to handle; mostly decks are just the collected works of a single artist. But I do have potpourri decks here because a certain amount of material is by people I'll never have enough work from to make an entire deck.

The more abstract material (dotcards and shapes) he has less patience for, and these decks are made smaller, 6-9 cards, and a few decks have an extra card or two, but the great majority have 10. They are secured by a large rubber band.

Joshua's "daily set" consists of 11 decks. He started off with about 5, but as he grew older, I gradually increased the number to where it is now. He sometimes starts to get restless during the last couple of decks, so I'm not really tempted to add more.

Ideally, he'll get that daily set three times a day. When he was younger, this was very common ---- over half the days, he'd get them three times. Nowadays, however, he rarely gets them three times; two is the norm, and ocassionally only once. As he's gotten older, his range of interests increases, and flashcards have more competition for his time.

I do have to be strategic about wher to show them to him. While IAHP literature presents kids as always being up for flashcards, thats just not so, any more than kids always wantto eat or sleep or be read to. For Joshua, the very best time was right after he got up in morning. For quite a long time, in fact, he'd get his flashcards before he got his morning milk or even got changed --- perfectly content to watch them in his wet diaper. This was a good time, because he was very alert, but not physically"reved up" for the day. In this way, he could see them before I left for work at 7 AM. The other time he gets them now, is some time after dinner, perhaps an hour before bedtime, with a book as a lead-in. Another good type of time is after he's had a long strech of phycical activity, on car trips, and (less so now) after he gets up from his afternoon nap.

At present, he gets his daily set all in one sitting. This normally takes 10-15 minutes. This can take a little longer if he's a little inattentive, or if he's in a chatty mood. And if a new deck of paintings is being introduced, that can stretch things out as I reply to his barrage of questions and speculations. Sometimes, this has to be cut short, as he may get sidetracked with endless questions about, say the environs of some famous building.

I do have to be a little flexible, because sometimes when he's sat down, he'll turn out to have little or not interest. There was quite a strecth of time in which better than half the time, he wouldn't sit for it. He was harder to "read" then. Also, there was a time when I

had to split the daily set into two sessions, because his attention span fell off, but that rarely occurs now. Sometimes he will protest, verbally or physically (squirming) when I sit him down. I'll usually persist anyhow, because usually the problem is that he doesn't like the idea of sitting still. If he's still doing it by the 4th or 5th card, I'll break it off, but that seldom happens anymore.

The speed of presentation also requires some judgement. IAHP reccomends a pretty brisk pace, and I've found that that usually is a good idea. A deck of ten cards, with short names and that he's very familiar with runs about 15-18 seconds, assuming that nothing gets discussed, and that the objects are fairly simple. A more typical deck will run 50-75 seconds, and if I'm deliberatly throwing in bits of information, or pointing to things, it can run to 1½-2 minutes. One of the best ways to judge is by watching his eyes. If he looks at the picture, and then looks away before the next picture is presented, I'm doing that deck too slowly. It may be he's already pretty familiar with that deck, or that morning, he may just have a short attention span or be impatient. And now that he's more verbal, he'll ocassionally complain that I'm going too fast. Oddly, tho I sometimes get the message via body language that I'm going too slow, he's never verbalized that complaint.

Every day, one or sometimes two decks are retired from the daily set, and fresh decks are bought in. When the deck is retired, a date is put on the back of one of the cards, and its put at the end of his pile. Its replaced then with a deck from the top of the pile, or perhaps a brand new one just made. In this way, decks which were previously retired are then recycled. At present, a deck usually stays in use for about 7-9 days (unless it is a brand new one, in which case it is usually used for 10-12 days). After being retired, it will pop up again in about 14 weeks. This turnaround time has been falling recently because I've been stepping up the rate of purging, in part for reasons I'll mention later. Purging (done at the level of individual cards for people, decks otherwise) is needed because eventually, he sees cards so many times, that it becomes counterproductive to continue. He pretty much knows them.

Deciding which deck to retire takes a bit of juggling. I usually go by which deck has been in the daily set longest (thats where those dates come in), but if a deck has become very familiar, or its an abstract one, or I can see that he's tired of it, that one will come out earlier. I also try to keep some sort of balance within the daily set. At present, that means 3-4 art, 3-4 animals, 1-2 plant, no more than 1 abstract or one people. Ideally, the daily set will have two fresh (not recycled) decks, but sometimes I don't generate material fast enough to do that.

The recommended set-up is to sit facing your kid on the floor, with the cards inbetween. For various reasons, I rarely do it that way. I find that psychologically uncomfortable. Its too teacher-student and not intimate. Instead, I sit on a chair, with him on my left thigh, and my left arm circled around him. If I don't know the deck real well, it will be to my right, upside down, allowing me to read the titles. I then pick up the card with my right hand, and transfer it to my left, which holds the cards in front of him. Alternatively, the entire deck is held with the right hand, and cards dealt away from the front with the left. What is important is that the procedure be comfortable to both of you. Since his head is only inches from my eyes, I can, if needed carefully monitor how he's reacting.

At varying ages, Joshua has had a different physical reactions to the cards. At around 6, he insisted on handling the cards,

trying to turn them over and figure out what behind them. At first I resisted this, but I figured that he was going to have to satisfy his curiosity about the cards themselves. Once he got a pretty clear idea what the cards were all about, that phase passed. In another phase, he wanted to take off and/or put on the rubber band, and hurl it across the floor. Now he sometimes wants to hold the cards or some such. There's not much point in fighting these diversions, I've learned, and they may be useful as minibreaks.

So that this doesn't get too hypthetical, let me describe the daily set he got at 6:15 this morning. It included nine recycled decks : 2 plant decks; musical instruments; buildings (Eiffel Tower, St. Peters Square, etc); Van Gogh; Hopper; mammals; birds; Prehistoric Animals. There are two fresh decks, introduced during the past week: Matisse (a mixture of some fauvist stuff, some of his later cutouts, a self portrait drawing, etc) and a sea creatures set(archerfish --- a spectacular shot of the submerged fish squirting a stream of water at a drenched bug, who will soon fall and be eaten, King Salmon(breeding and sea colors), Purple Bleeding Sponge, Halfbeak, Portuguese Man of War(with a closeup of the stingers on the back), Swallow Tail, File Clam, the bizarre Leaf Fish, Blue Shark and Slipper Lobster --- one of my better decks!) The whole session lasted about 13 minutes. The only real discussion took place when Joshua didn't accept my explanation as to why cars weren't allowed to drive on top of the Great Wall of China. He was noticably restless during one of the plant decks, so that one will be retired tonite.

Parents usually have a favorite time of the day with their kid. For me, its right after Joshua gets up. The house is quiet, and we curl up together on a big chair. Its a cozy scene: Just me, Joshua, and the universe.

All of this may strike you as being overly detailed, and in a sense it is. I did it for two reasons. First, if any of you want to do this yourselves, you'll have a clear idea of how I do it. Second, I want to demystify the whole business of flashcards. As I have seen them referred to in the popular press, they have an aura of being part of some arcane ritual, a super-Yuppie tool, and exotic. "Fancy Flashcards" they seem to be called. They aren't. They are posterboard, pictures, text, tape, rubber cement, time, and love.

Flashcards may strike you, as they did me initially, as being unnatural and unnecessary. But think about it. How does a kid learn what the word"piano"means? If you have one in the living room, she'll hear the word used when people are near the piano. If she's lucky , someone will point to it and say, "piano". Of course, she may think "piano" refers to, or includes the stool, or means the place where the piano is, or its sound, but eventually, with repetition, it will all be sorted out. But what if you don't have a french horn in the house? Suppose that a reproduction of the Mona Lisa doesn't hang in your living room?

Suppose you're not a hex-gamer and there are no hexagons around the house? I can't look out my window and see a Hovercraft, the Roseate Spoonbill doesn't nest in my backyard, and the Taj Mahal is a bit of a drive from here. Of course a real piano is better than a picture of a piano but the mechanism of instruction is the same in both cases:1.The kid hears the word spoken and sees the object at the same time 2. The process is repeated many, many times. Moreover, flashcards can provide a certain clarity and unambiguity. You can be certain of what you kid sees with a flashcard, since there's usually nothing else he can be looking at. Unlike the robin out front, it doesn't move and she can see it close up. But the learning process is essentially the same; its not a new way of learning.

In addition to the flashcards, with pictures of things on them, they had two other programs with cards. The first are "dot cards" to teach numbers. The theory is that numerals are too abstract, and that the way to teach twelveness is to show them a card with 12 large dots and say, "twelve". These cards were integrated into his daily set. So far as I can tell, this aspect has been largely unsucessful. He has shown little interest in the dot cards, and usually insists that the cards be flipped over so he can inspect the numerals on the back. If he's presented with a set of objects and asked how many there are, he has to resort to counting (not one of his favorite activities) unless there are two or three --- those he can usually recognize without counting. And that might not have come from the cards at all --- he may have learned those numbers the old-fashioned way, by watching Sesame Street.

The other one is the reading program. Oversimplifying greatly, it bypasses the alphabet, but instead teaches words by flashing word cards before the kid's eyes. The word cards start off huge, but then as their eyes get better, the words get smaller. This is probably their most spectacular program,,since its very impressive to see (as we did), a 5 year old kid pull a book off the shelf and begin reading --- an adult book. The full details are in Doman's best selling book "How to teach your baby to Read" Unfortunately, the program has been a total failure with Joshua. After an initial period of curiosity, he was completely disinterested in the word cards, and became quite sullen on the subject. My response was to put them away for a few months and try again. No interest. So I put them away again. Etc. Around 34, he started to show some modest interest in them, at least for a time, as the idea of being able to read started to have some appeal to him. So now there's a few words that he (proudly) knows, and in the near future, I'm going to put some more effort into this, since his time for this may have come at last.

They also urge auditory and tactile stimulation. Play your kid music (a common recommendation anyhow) and especially use a xylophone to help teach the kid pitch (say the name of the note while you play it, again and again). (Especially in the early months, Joshua would be so attentive to the xylaphone that I thought he had stopped breathing. He would be absolutely rivited to it) And give the kid as many things as possible to touch, or rub it against him. Fabrics, tree bark, anything. And start it all early, the day he is born if you want. That may sound silly, but babies are often very alert on the day they are born, even if they sleep nearly all the second day. I was surprised to discover how many different sounds just by tapping on things in the hospital room, and how many different textures were available.

Aside from the intellectual program, there is also a physical program, which gets less attention, but is also fairly unconventional. They believe that a child's motor developement should move in the sequence creeping-crawling-walking-running-sports. And the child should go thru the sequence as fast as the child "wants to" and can. I put those quotes in there because its really a trivial limitation. Kids will want to walk as soon as they recognize thats what Mommy does.

They do this in two ways: Provide opportunities, and don't provide barriers/distractions. The child should be very frequently be placed on her belly and be encouraged to crawl. They are thus opposed to to two common baby structures: play pens&"walkers" (these are basically seats with bumpers and wheels). The former limit the child's movements, not only physically, but also psychologically. They give the clear message that we don't want you to move around in any significant way. We never had a play-pen per se, but instead we got (and recommend) a device called Crawlspace . This is a large, flexible length of fencing. When the ends are linked, it forms a large playpen (with no floor). We rarely used it in this mode (e.g. outside, to keep him on a blanket), but usually unfurled it to block off an unsafe part of a room (fireplace).

They are especially opposed to walkers. Crawling teaches the kid gravity/height, and strenghtens the muscles for weight-bearing. But most important, it teaches the "cross-pattern" --- being able to move simultaneously the leftarm and right leg, alternated with right arm, left leg. True walking requires this, andcrawling practices it. The walker defeats all of this. I might add that I have seen the cross-patterning argument against walkers outside of IAHP literature. The more common argument againstthem is the fact that they are a leading cause of accidents serious enought to require medical attention. They are very widely used, alas.

Their program places great emphasis on crawling, and they encourage children to crawl long after they have started walking. They also believe that crawling is related to reading. The crawler scans the floor in front of him at approximately the reading distance, and thus the eyes get a lot of practice focusing at short distances in a moving environment. They claim, for example, that societies which don't put their kids on the ground (too dangerous) tend not to develope written languages, even tho their vision at distances may be superlative. They also suggest that crawling be included as part of any regimen for treating reading disorders. I must say, however, that while Joshua was an enthusiastic crawler, once he starting walking (around 11), it was difficult, and then impossible to get him to crawl again.

The main piece of excercise apparatus they suggest is a "brachiation latter", basically, a long ladder horizontally disposed, which you hang from and traverse, looking like a gibbon. Unfortunately, we never got one of these, in part because IAHP doesn't seem to sell them, and in part because they are a little too tall for our basement.

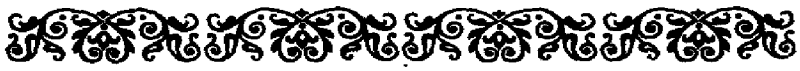
While the physical program is not as unorthodox as the intellectual program, there is a lot of it, including gymnastics. And of all the demonstrations that we saw, the physical ones were by far the most impressive, bordering on the unbeleivable. We watched a kid who was about 5 years old run around a track in superlative form, and at the end it was clear she wasn't the least bit winded. We saw a boy of about 8 years fall from very loudly from a brachiation ladder to the mat below. To my amazement, he did not have the wind knocked out of him, in fact, he didn't even seem to be flushed. Without exception, the kids seem to be trim and ac-

tive and fit. It is clear that the extensive academic and arts program was not being run at the expense of athletics.

I should mention here the vestibular excercises. The vestibular system is what tells the body where it is; how its oriented in space. It is thus related to balance(and the kinesthetic sense to a much smaller degree). The apparatus is in the middle ear, along with the brain and connecting nerves. The theory again is that if you excercise this, you develope it. This is done simply by swinging the kid thru various orientations, i.e. upside-down-and-then-right-side-up in various different ways. Joshua got these hundreds of times, tipped sideways and front over back, rapid and slow rocking, etc. I'll probably never know if they did any good, but he certainly did enjoy them, and to this day I still do them ocassionally, and they have been encorporated into one of his favorite games, a roll across the floor which we do every night at bedtime.

They also recommend an active language and arts program. If you want your kid to learn French, fine, start when she is born. Talk to her in French and teach her French. This may strike you as quixotic, but thats the way French kids learn French too. The earlier, the better. This view is no longer unconventional. When I went to school, we started language in the 8th grade, but now some public schools in this area start early in elementary school, with the realization that the earlier you start, the easier it is, and the fact that they are still learning English is not an impediment.

They strongly urge that a child start on music at a very early age, and suggest the Suzuki method (a picture of such a child appears on the cover of the March 28, 1983 Newsweek with his scaled-down cello). Altho this method has its detractors, it is a lot more mainstream than a lot of what IAHP does. We heard a recital (and a performance of part of the Mikado) where we were up there. While I'm no judge, it certainly sounded good, and the kids were clearly having a good time.



I should mention the one area where I completely disagree with the IAHP's approach. They are very much opposed to testing of any sort, and both the course and book go to some length to explain how terrible tests are. I don't see it that way. First, telling a scientist not to test is like waiving a red flag before a bull. Second, I, personally, since about Junior High School, have not had a problem with tests, and in fact, I often rather enjoy them. You can react to tests in one of two ways: A) An attempt by large people to ferret out what you don't know, trip you up, and generally make you look bad, or B) A game, a contest, a socially acceptable way of showing off. Of course, tests are normally designed as A, but thats no reason to buy into that approach. If you can view them as B, you'll be a lot less tense, and you'll do better on the tests. A kid is going to get so many tests in his life, the sooner he gets a good attitude, the better. Of course, at the beginning, opportunities to test don't even arise, but at some point, a certain amount of feedback is good to give you a general idea of what is being absorbed, what cards need to be retired, etc.

This can be done in a fairly subtle way. I'll show the card to Joshua, and say, "This is...." and give him a few seconds to spring forward with the name. If he doesn't (or gives the wrong name), I just say the right name and move on. More recently, I've begun a more formal procedure called the "Flashcard Game". This is done with a deck that I'm sure he's very familiar with, and in fact is usally done as a prelude to purging the deck altogether rather than just recycling it. The cards are arrainged in a large circle with him in the center, which I'm sure makes him feel very important. "Where is the...." I ask, always starting with the easiest card, to get him off on a good start. He's always done well, and doesn't seem upset by the ocassional goofs. In fact, he's started now to ask for the game , so it seems to be viewed as a special treat. If he gets a card wrong, I don't ask him to try again, but instead tell him what that one was, and pull the right one. I've already determined that he didn't know that one and a second shot's results won't change that. More importantly, it increases the chances of making another mistake (since, if he doen't really know it, he may just take a wild guess in his second try.) The point of the excercise to to get him to generate right answers, not wrong ones. At any rate, I feel that testing is perfectly legitimate, provided that its done in a careful sort of way. If it can be dressed up as entertainment, so much the better!

I'd like to deal with a few responses that I have gotten, since you may be thinking the same thing.

"What makes you think your kid was going going to be, or is, such a genius?" I haven't and don't. My assumption all along was that Joshua would probably have intellegence falling somewhere within the "normal" range. I might add that, so far as I can tell, thats the way things are turning out, altho its way too early to say anything definate. But we didn't embark on this program with either the hope it would turn him into a genius (I don't think it works that way) or gifted,nor did we do it to cover the contingency that he might be gifted. Obviously, if he turns out to be gifted, so much the better, since experts agree that gifted children need extra stimulation. But this was done on the assumption that a "normal" child would benefit, would find it stimulating and interesting, and would learn from it. I am, after all, just teaching him what things look like, what the names of things are, something that kids learn anyhow. He's just getting a great deal more of it. He has his own zoo, his own garden, his own museum --- places where "normal" kids learn things.

"But isn't it dangerous to learn so much?" "What about all those neurotic genuises?" Its hard for me to even understand this one. The human brain cannot be overstuffed; the capacity is just too great. There have been brilliant but loopy people, just as there are brilliant/sane and ordinary/loopy people too. But that first type gets a lot more attention. The notion that you can be too smart, know too much is just silly. It might not do you any good, but it cannot harm.

"Why not let kids be kids?" Of course; in fact, you can hardly prevent them from being kids. Joshua spends the great majority of his "free time" in various forms of play. Believe me, he draws, he has trains, he works puzzles, he builds with blocks, he runs amuck, etc. This is not an either/or situation. There is somuch time available in the day that.

there is certainly time for both traditional and non-traditional activities. Moreover, part of being a kid is learning. This represents an intensification of the normal, essential process of learning. A child learns light and dark. You can accelerate this by turning the light switch on and off a few dozen times for your neonate. I don't in any sense view this as robbing Joshua of his childhood. To be a kid is to learn about the wonders of the world from your parents (as well as finding them out for yourself) and that is exactly what we are doing.

"Has it made any difference yet?" This is an imponderable question. There's no way of knowing what Joshua would have been like if we had done none of this. Its easy to see where things have not worked (such as the reading program) but where things might have worked, you can never be sure. Here's an example. For most developemental things like walking, talking, social smile, etc, Joshua seems pretty typical at when he started these things. But he was able to sit up unassisted amazingly early. This requires muscle tone and balance. He had had by then a great deal of vestibular excercises, which is done in large part to aid balance. But maybe he would have sat up at the same time, who knows?

Ocassionally, something will pop up which is unambiguous. We were driving down the road when he was about 24, when we passed a large gravel-pit operation, and he said, "I see pyramids" There were indeed several large gravel piles in the shape of cones, which is pretty similar. I'm sure he got that from from his Pyramids of Giza flashcard. The first time he ever saw a bunch of beets in a supermarket he was able to identify them correctly. He once saw a parody version of the Mona Lisa, and to my amazement was able to identify it. On a few ocassions, he has seen larger scale versions of paintings he knows (originals or bigger prints) and sometimes he has been able to identify them. These are all very small items of course, but it indicates to me that he can transfer what he learns from the cards to the outside world, at least sometimes. But how much of an overall impact this entire program has had, I can't say. I should know more in another 3 years. Still, his collection is at present, 161 decks. I would estimate that he has seen just over 200,000 cards in his life. I am certain that there has been impact from this, but how great and how lasting, remains to be seen.

Some of you may be thinking, "We did something very similar. We read to our kids a lot." For those of you who don't have kids, be advised that "Thou Shalt Read Books To Thy Youngsters" is on everyone's 10 Commandments list. Buts its not the same. I don't mean in any way to belittle reading to your kids. Its a superb form of lap-time. Its teaches the rhythm, the structure, the cadence of speech. Children learn phrases, in part, by memorizing books that are read to them over and over. It stimulates their own desire to learn to read, since kids do imitate, and has other benefits as well. Obviously, flashcards do not do all of this.

But by the same token, reading has its limitations, which flashcards can address. One is the nature of the artwork, which is especially important for 24- kids, since it holds so much of their attention. I'll give you an example. One book had a drawing of a rhinocerous. It was pink, and rather fetching. It wore a two-piece bathing suit. It stood up on its hind legs (on the back of another rhino, as I recall), and was clapping with its front legs; a gay ribbon was festooned on its horn.

In short, it had little resemblence to what the child will encounter in a zoo, and if this is all the child has seen, she'll have some serious unlearning to do. By contrast, Joshua has a "Black Rhinoceros" card. The creature is finely drawn, grey, four-feet-on-the-ground, unclothed, and imposing, if not fearsome (he's got a card for the Greater Indian Rhino, too. I don't mind artistic liscence, but kids book are usually done by just illustrators. I don't mind in the least the creatures of Dr. Seuss or the Cookie Monster, but when I point to a book and say, "Look at the Rhino", I want it to look like one. And the truth is, real creatures can be everybit as appealing as fanciful ones.

The second reason is the lack of anything really educational in much of children's literature. A child can be a real expert in "The Gingerbread Man", but he's learned exactly nothing. While some stories do have a moral of some sort (tho whether a 2½ could abstract it is another matter), and others may have some emotional value, many books, so far as I can tell, impart nothing of worth.

By contrast, every flash card has facts associated with it. Moreover, they often make wonderful starting points for little discussions, especially since each one stands alone, and isn't tied to a continuing story. You can explain just whats going to happen to the bug on that Pitcher Plant (its carniverous) and why David is playing the Harp in Rembrandt's "Saul and David". Falshcards abound with chances to play, "find the..." games, such as find the unopened blossoms on the camellia plant. By contrast, flowers in children's books are seldom identifiable as a particular type, and to have such detail as unopened blossoms is almost unheard of. They can provide good outlets for a kid's imagination. This is particularly true for every-picture-tells-a-story painters like Norman Rockwell, but even nature studies like a leopard lying on a tree branch can challenge a kid to explain how he got there and why he'd do it.

Of course, some books, especially educationally oriented ones can do this too, but are generally much less sucessful. Books usually don't have the full range of color that even an average reproduction of a painting will have. There is a great loss of specificity in books. Most birds, for example, are just generic birds. Even if not, theey will be drawn in a stylized way, such as the way an owl is usually drawn. In fact, there are many different kinds of owls. Books also feature tremendous loss of detail. A kid can be fascinated by a rim of red around a white eye, or by how individual feathers overlap, or different shapes of noses.

But most important of all, and this gets to the essense of the use of flashcards, they allow you to lay the sights of the entire world at your child's feet, in a way that children's books don't even attempt to do. A cute tarsier, with its head turned all the way around, a raptor with a half eaten frog in its beak, the fleshy "bathers" of Renoir, the cool perfection of Michelangelo's "David", Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock, a profusion of zinnias, the shape of Panama or a nonagon or the human stomach, the curve of a cabbage looper, the elegance of a Comb of Venus seashell, the face of Albert Einstein, the way puffball mushrooms grow together, the intricacy of a French horn, the tracks of a sidewinder, ----I've never seen any of that in a children's book, wonderful as they are for, e.g. telling stories. With flashcards, you choose, you teach. As best you can. Joshua has a card for "Deptford Pink" plant. I told him its stems are sticky. That word he understands now, tho not a year ago, and now he wants to know why the flower isn't sticky too. When he's a little older, I'll explain how this flower is the origin of our color label "pink". In other cases, you don't know. I show him Picasso and Kandin-

sky altho some of this stuff, I have no idea why people like it. Maybe he'll explain it to me some day.

But please, don't make the assumption that they aren't interested in seeing things they don't understand. They are, in unpredictable ways. For some strange reason, the picture of the brain appealed to him, so he learned that word at the same time he was picking up nose, toes, etc. Much later, when he understood the relationship between food going in and poop coming out, he got quite excited by the stomach picture which he had seen dozens of times previously. The first word from a flashcard he ever learned was "gull", from a card of the California Gull; in fact it was one of his first half-dozen words (For a while, all birds and even the shelf where the cards are kept were called "gull").

A legitimate question which arises is: What sorts of scientific studies back up their theories and operations. Answer: Very little. They claim, with some justification, that control studies would very expensive to operate. During the lectures, references are sometimes made to this or that study. In some cases, it seemed clear to me that the work hadn't been replicated, eiher because people couldn't, or didn't feel it was worth the bother. Ultimately, the proof will be in the kids. IAHP runs a private school, and when these kids reach high school, the impact of this program should be a lot more clear.

Nonetheless, an article which appeared on 6/24/86 in the New York Times, while not proving anything, has some intriguing results which are consistant with some of what IAHP espouses. Much of it comes from a new technology called "PET Scan", which measures biological activity in the brain. By the age of 2 years, the child's rate is already equal to that of an adult, and by age 3 or 4 years, its about double that of an adult, with the most pronounced activity in the cortex. This is despite the fact that its only when you reach age 6 or 7 years that the brain becomes adult size in volume and weight.

Even more intriguing is the fact that animal's brains include certain regressive events --- and that includes humans. There is a period of massive cell death in the brains of embryos, and shortly after birth there is an elimination of axons. Now they have discovered a third process in humans, a pruning of synapses as a child enters early adolescence. Yes, but which ones?

The article goes on to say, "Dr. Philip Nelson ... said well-used neurons and synaptic connections seemed to release nerve growth factors, substances that help insure their survival...In an evolutionary sense, a highly dynamic brain makes sense. "You are born into a situation where you don't know exactly what connection you'll need," Dr. Feinberg said. "You have essentially a decade to determine what you're going to use." In this view, the child's brain developes all potentially useful neural interconnections by the age of 2. But it is childhood experience that shapes the architecture of the brain, strengthening the neural circuits that are used and ultimately sacrificing those that are not used .... Then, in early adolescence, Dr. Chugani said, the mature brain seems to emerge, as excessive or unused synapses are chipped away, perhaps under the influence of changing hormones." So we're back to use-it-or-lose it. Of course, some of this is just theorizing, and will be refined/modified as more research is done. But the underlying thrust is consistant with IAHP's basic assumption that stimulating the child stimulates the growth

of the brain itself, and that what is done in the very earliest years does have a lasting impact on the brain.

Still, it must be emphasized that while they do attempt to draw from various sources, and appeal to "common sense" or what you (supposedly) intuitively know, the bulk of it is not backed by any hard evidence whatsoever. And my assumption is that some of what they teach is going to turn out to be exaggerated, wishful thinking, or just plain wrong. Perhaps a lot of it, perhaps just a little. (lack of proof)

On the other hand, that is not as important a flaw as you might think. Its amazing how little is known for sure about those years. PBS had a show in their "Nova" series, on how children learn to talk. One of the central questions addressed was: Do kids first learn what words and phrases mean, and then use them in speech --- or vice versa? A pair of nifty studies were presented. Unfortunately, the two studies came down on opposite sides of the question.

Another related, but very important issue is the old "nature versus nuture" controversy. How much of what a child learns, or can learn is genetic and how much is enviornmental? IAHP naturally stresses enviornment, altho they downplay genetics so much that its a little hard to take them seriously. Their most reasonable statment on the topic is to the effect that genes are a floor, not a ceiling. If you read what comes out these days, your conclusions would be that 1) your genetic makeup influences a lot of things you'd never have even imagined, and 2)your enviornment is a more powerful modifier of a child than you would have thought. Yup, ability is mostly heredity, and also mostly enviornment.

A paper in the Nov 1985 issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA (a prestigious but non-refereed journal) is very relevant to this whole discussion. It reports on a longitudinal study (i.e. same kids were studied over a long period of time) done on 11 kids and their mothers, from middle- to upper-socioeconomic status. I quote from the abstract: "Infants who processed visual information more efficiantly and had mothers who more frequently encouraged them to attend to properties, objects, and events in the home enviornment in the first 6 months excelled in verbal developement during their first year and scored higher on a conventional psychometric assessment of intellegence at 4 years." The first item there is presumably hereditory. What they do is give a kid a repeatedly presented visual stimulus, and they measure how quickly he gets bored with looking at it. Presumably, the faster you get bored, the more efficiantly you've processed this information. This sounds like something you're born with. In the other, "observers recorded when mothers didactically, physically or verbally encouraged infants attention to properties, objects, and events in the enviornment --- to illustrate, maternal encouraging attention included handling the baby a toy, pointing to a picture, or naming an object" Sound familiar? Flashcards are simply a way to do this, and lets the mother get around the limitation of things "in the home enviornment" --- she can let the whole world into her home. The author also pointed to another study on 13-month-old kids which found that the kid's developing verbal comprehension was correlated to "mothers encouraging their toddlers' to attend to a new property, object or event, in the enviornment, as opposed to elaborating on whatever was already under the child's purview". In other words, keeping showing them something new. Other factors (maternal education, familial socioeconomic status) were not significant factors. So what we have are two factors contribu-

ting to cognitive competance: One heredity, one enviornment. And that points to the truth: Both are very important, both matter.

But in my view, what doesn't matter is the relative importance of nature and nurture, and I think that people who fret over that are walking into a trap. Regardless of how important heredity is 20%, 50%, 80%, whatever, you can't change it. What matters is that enviornment is important, and that you can affect, for better or worse. I don't deny the importance of heredity, but wher it comes to raising your kids, it can amount to just a distraction.

If you want to get some views of IAHP's program, or the general educational principles underlying it, you are going to have a surprisingly difficult time, once you go beyond IAHP's own literature. This is so far out of the prevailing philosophy that you can look at book after book after book, and find absolutely no mention of it at all.

Perhaps the best "outsider's" view of the Better Baby Course was in an article called "Goodbye, Dr. Spock" in the March 1986 issue of Harper's. Its subtitled "Vignettes from the brave new world of the better baby", and the first one deals with this course, and some of the principles behind it. The essay was, I thought, quite perceptive, and I think that, for better or worse, he caught the essense of the course, and its limitations, very well. I'll provide a copy for anyone who is interested --- its very strongly recommended.

The March 28, 1983 issue of Newsweek has "Bringing up Superbaby" on its cover. One of its writers took the course at the same time we did, so there's a lot on the course. The writing is a lot breezier than in the Harper's essay, but it gives you another view. The Time issue of August 15, 1983 (Joshua's birthdate!) has its cover story on the exciting research being done on the whole question of what babies know, and how (quickly) they learn. This article was more oriented toward current research, and its results, and is a very exciting piece.

Aside from some TV appearences (most recently on the 5 part Phil Donahue series, where Glen Doman has appeared), thats about all I've been able to find in a positive vein.

Negative material, espcially directed at flashcards, the most visible manefestation of all this, is much more common. Sometimes it appears that writers take a pot-shot at it for no discernable reason, other than perhaps to make their own position on some other matter seem sensible by comparison.

A recent example appeared in the August 1986 issue of Parents magazine (very much a mainstream publication). Bernice Weissbourd has an article on 2-year olds entitled "The Importance of Play". OK, play is very important, and she's only got one page, so you'd think she'd cram it with the how's and why's of play, but no, she starts the essay with an unrelated criticism: "There is a strange mood sweeping the nation and permiating the enviorment in which little children are growing up ... in some day-care centers ... infants have "flashcard" time so they can look at numbers." Horrors! If you aren't revolted by this, she nails the point down in the next paragraph with this sweeping sentence: "The fact is ((not her opinion, mind you, but fact)) that substituting direct teaching time ((flashcards)) for play is counterproductive." No productivity studies were cited. That's it: No matter how much the kid may like seeing his flashcards, if you take so much as ten minutes out of the, say, 8 or 9 hours of play the kid gets, he comes out behind.

Indeed, what is so typical about this quote, and irritating to me, is the "either/or" quality to it. There is somehow this notion that if you are doing this direct teaching, then you are not doing something else, more important, instead. For example, a psychologist quoted in the Newsweek article says, on the kid's first year, "don't worry about teaching as much as providing a rich and emotionally supportive atmosphere." Well of course an emotionally supportive atmosphere is absolutely essential, most especially during the first year. But teaching not only doesn't conflict with it, it can be an vital part of it. One aspect of being emotionally supportive is to meet the child's needs and wants ---- food, warmth, physical affection, communication, protection from danger. We all understand that providing these is emotionally supportive. But babies also want to learn about the world, and teaching is one way to satisfy that need. Joshua is, like all kids, curious about the world, and I view that need-to-know-about-the-world as one of his emotional needs.

Or take this quote from the Newsweek article: "And, increasingly, they expect tots to absorb Bach or van Gogh before solid food. Laments pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton of Harvard: "Everybody wants to raise the smartest kid in America rather than the best adjusted, happiest kid." As it happens, Joshua did indeed get a van Gogh deck before he got solid food. But think about it. You get solid food when enough teeth come in. What does that have to do with art? And I will say this --- at age, e.g.15, Joshua would never have to be coaxed to look at his van Gogh deck, but he would often have to be coaxed to eat solid food. And as for the quote, again, why does it have to be either/or? To me, raising a kid to be"smart"is the same path as adjusted/happy.

Make no mistake about it --- this approach is not endorsed by experts (at least, not yet). The Time article states "Most psychologists engaged in the new research, however, are strongly opposed to any formal schooling before the age of three or four, even if the child is capable of it." This attitude baffles me. It would be one thing if they argued that kids are incapable. But we all know that babies are in such a learning mode at that tender age, and if they are capable, and interested, why not?

The answer to that question tends to be very vague. The paragraph just quoted continues with more naysaying, and says, "I think you're going to get children burned out on learning." Why? For a child, the person most capable of infusing joy and excitement into an activity is mommy or daddy. The mere association of a parent with some process or activity is always a plus, because of the nurturing enviornment the kid associates with the parents. Nonetheless, you will see repeatedly either vague or speculative comments of this sort.

One exception was an article in the Dec 1985 issue of New Age, which was at least somewhat specific on the types of problems one could expect would occur. They mentioned such things as gastric disturbances, "vitiated initiative" and incipiant type-A personality (I'm not making this up!). I find it a little hard to take seriously, but I'm sure its possible. But the evidence cited is all anecdotal (rather than a scientific study), which is exactly the case for the other side, too.

The most common form, however, for mentioning flashcards is much more casual. A quick putdown, regardless of whether it is all that relevant to the subject at hand. The September issue of Psychology Today has an article on parenting, full of practical advice from some people who ran a program in Missouri. On the table of contents page, each

article has a one sentence precis. This one's was, "Parents can be taught to enhance their children's intellectual and social developement --- and without flashcards and fancy toys." Unless I missed something, this article, which goes on for pages, has the word "flashcard" in it exactly once (and even that sentence didn't really say anything about the use of flashcards). Its easy to single flashcards out for a quick jibe, and its done often. At one time, these references used to puzzle me, but now I tend to feel that they're included to make sure the reader doesn't feel guilty about not using flashcards. No one should, in fact, feel guilty about not using flashcards. But I think those little putdowns aren't very contructive, and do contribute to the generally low image that flashcards have.

Still and all, its a bit discouraging to read some of the things said, especially when it misses the point, or is attacking a strawman. This, for example from Zigler and Lang at Yale, "Even if infants could be trained to read, learning to read would not result in long-term gains in IQ." So typical. IAHP, one of the most vigourous advocates of early reading, never claimed during their course that it would raise your IQ. The point of it was not IQ-raising, but that reading was immensely enjoyable, and a marvelous way to learn. The use of the "Even if" implies that they are skeptical that this takes place at all, meaning that they haven't actually studied such kids, and if they haven't, how can they be so sure of what won't result? And I have to say that the 4-year old we saw reading, could not have been just relying on a memorized text, unless the demonstration were completely fraudulent. Similarly, Irving Sigel of the Educational Testing Service : "What happens to kids' sense of self when their valued only for achievement?" Who's advocating that? I don't doubt that there are parents who do that, just as there are parents who do a thousand other dumb things. But limiting the areas in which a kid can be valued has never been a part of these programs. Its just the opposite. Good parents are always looking for additional areas to praise and encourage their kids. Kids like to see themselves growing and understanding the world better. I'll give you an (admittedly trivial) example of what I mean. I cut Joshua some pear slices, stacked them in a staggered manner and asked him what that reminded him of. He was stumped. "What are the slices doing", I asked. He struggled to find the word, then said, "They are leaning over. Oh, that looks like the Leaning Tower of Pisa." In the second sentence, he was smiling broadly, and was clearly very pleased with himself for seeing the similarity. The notion of valuing Joshua "only" or largely for his achievement strikes me as preposterous, but I can't help feeling that his self esteem took a tiny step forward when he was able to make the connection.

Then, finally, there is that old standby, the ad hominem argument: Assign bad motives to the parents. I even saw this once in a Canadian Diplomacy zine! An article in the NY Times says, "...many child developement specialists ... charge that such "overstimulation" of young children represents a pandering to the ambitions of upwardly mobile parents ---"gormet babies" is one term they use..." Similarly, T. Berry Brazelton condemns it as "a way for young parents to feel successful in their parenting." You will see more of this in the future. There is somehow the notion that if something is done for a "bad" reason, it must, therefore, itself be bad.

This is not to say that conflict is inevitable. But people must dig into things, and be cognizant of the degree to which we are just operating on our own assumptions. Marguerita Kelly, who writes an engaging column on the family for the Washington Post, writes that Jean Piaget's "work teaches us that children can go only as fast as nature intended." Yes, of course. But what exactly does that mean? What does nature intend, and how can anyone be sure they know the answer to that. Joshua loves to do puzzles; its not unusual for him to do every single one he owns in a single session. Did nature intend for little kids to work interlocking puzzles? Did nature intend Sesame Street, tricycles and all the rest? You don't have to go very far back in history to find learned people arguing that nature did not intend higher education for women, or any education at all for blacks, etc. Will our current thinking some day look just as foolish? Where is it required that every kid develope in the same way that Piaget's kids did? Can we find out how "fast" kids can go without a deliberate effort to see what the limits are? If most kids don't seem to be ready to read till age 6 or 7, does that really mean they aren't ready, or does it mean were not going about it in the right way? People used to think -- assume, actually -- that the human body just couldn't run the mile in 4 minutes. Nature didn't intend it. Training methods have changed. I read a little while ago of a race where one guy finished in just under 4 minutes --- and barely finished third. I'm not arguing that those with the most optimistic view of how much kids can learn are necessarily the closest to the truth. But the truth is, we know a lot less than we think we do about the true capabilities of the human mind.

I'd like to put a little perspective on this so-called "Superbaby" controversy, because I view it as only one aspect of a larger complex of issues. My impression is that, except for the "merit pay" debate, the whole question of very early children's education is the hottest topic in the education biz at the moment:

1. All day kindergarten. This is the practice which has gone the furthest into the mainstream, especially in metropolitan areas. I suspect that its driven mostly by the need of parents in two-income families for something longer. The traditional arguments against are based on economics (the money is there for all-day first graders, but not all day K. In other words, 5-year olds aren't worth the money), and the long standing belief that many 5 year olds just can't take more than about 3½ hours (typical length of a K day). This latter argument is disintegrating. Parents are finding that their three year olds and four year olds do just fine with even longer days. At Joshua's preschool, the three year olds, who attend every day, go 4-5 hours (depending on when they are dropped off). Still, this is controversial. The Washington Post recently ran an article on the debate, concluding with one expert who said that the issue was largely resolved, all day was a fiat accompli, and in the rest of the decade it will be mostly a matter of the bulk of the remaining schools falling into line. The other said, no, its just a fad which is peaking out now, and that schools which have it will largely abandon it in the coming years. We'll see.

2. Public pre-K schools for 4 year olds. This is much less common. Originally, public schools started in the first grade. But

in the 1920s, kindergartens were begun, designed especially to teach social skills. By the early 50s, there were tens of thousands of private kindergartens, and finally, public schools began to operate them too. Today, every state provides at least some funding for kindergarten, and a few have even required 5 year olds to attend a liscenced school. The push is on again. Part of the problem arises from the fact that, as studies have shown, the great majority of parents who can afford a preschool will put their four year old kids in one. These kids are much better prepared for kindergarten than kids who haven't gone to preschool, in large part because they are experienced in working in groups. They have the social skills necessary to function in a room with 2 dozen other kids, they are accustumed to the type of rules that are required, etc. Thus, a kindergarten class is immediately devided on economic grounds: the better off, better prepared kids, and those not so. Second, there is a great variety in the quality of pre-school programs, ranging from those which are day care centers, and no more, to those with substantial educational components --- and again, there will be economic statification. A public pre-K program would, in effect, set a floor, and programs worse than that would wither away, since few will send their kids to such a program when a better one is available for free.

But the really contentious issue here is: What should these early programs be like? One notion is thatthey should be basically remedial, with resources focusing on kids who need to catch up. This would be a sort of scaled up "Headstart" program. Such a program, however, would be geared to meet the needs of only a modest sized group of kids, and would never gain the political support needed.

The other two notions are very different. One says that these early programs should be modeled after day care centers and the less intense nursury schools. They would look for a homelike enviornment, with an attempt to tailor the program to individual needs. These would thus not be located in public schools themselves, which promote a hurly-burly atmosphere. The staffing would be by people with training in child developement, and experiencedin day care, as opposed to liscenced educators.

The opposite approach is that this should be, in effect, a downward extension of kindergarten. It would thus be run by professional teachers, who are capable of adjusting their methods to meet the needs of a younger group of kids. This would be a much more structured program than the alternative, and would have specific educational components. The theory here is that kids are capable of learning more than what would be provided in a more "supportive" day care enviornment.

But in one form or another, I'm convinced these programs are coming to public education. This Spring, a commision reported to Mayor Koch of New York that the city make a half-day of school available to all 4 year olds --- thats 100,000 kids right there. They suggested a combination of the three aproaches above.

There are others, of course. In New Orleans, many elementary schools are open 7 AM - 6 PM. Parents, for a modest fee, can have their kids stay for special pre- and post-school programs, which range from visits by artists to yoga instruction. Others have just tacked on simple day care arraingements. Boulder Colorodo has a plan whereby at the end of the day (3 PM) kids can be bused to (or stay at a school where there is) an afterschool program run by the YMCA. It runs up through the third grade.

3. At the furthest end are private schools which practice what is derisively referred to as "hothousing". These are preschools

which have large amounts of academic material in their program. They begin these very early. "Creme de la Creme" in Houston, Texas, for example, shows flashcards to kids under one year of age. Many of the elements of the IAHP approach are involved here, including for example teaching a foreign language to preschoolers. The very important difference is that this is not done by the parent, but by a professional. Needless to say, these are very controversial, as many experts do not beleive that "jump-starting" little kids is possible or desirable. But there's no doubt that academically oriented pre-schools can be in very high demand. The Hunter College Elementary school (which requires a 135 IQ and a parental essay on the child) gets 1500 applications a year for its 86 pre-K and kindergarten slots. In this area, Sidwell Friends, which charges up to $5000 for its pre-K program, reports 300 applications for 28 slots. There's even a standardized test that some schools use, and inevitably, educational consultants to help your tyke pass the 40-minute exam.

All of these to some degree turn on the basic issues discussed here. How fast can kids learn? When are they ready for "schooling" and what form should it take? What should take place in the home and what in school?

I should note in closing here that the U.S. is pretty much the only developed country in the world which has no national policy on child developement. The federal government accepts no responsibility for providing comprehensive services. There was a shot made at this in the early 70s --- the Comprehensive Child Development Bill --- but after it passed congress, Nixon vetoed it, calling it part of a plan for the "sovietizing" of our society. So it was all left up to the states, which provide a tremendous amount of variety. The kid could be lucky and be in Missouri, which has provided a extensive network of specialists, who work with the parents of newborns and toddlers. Or he could be born in a state that just sits on its hands.

Or he could be born in Belgium, where more than 90% of the 3 and 4 year olds are enrolled in schools, without charge.

But as things stand now, most of it is being left to private enterprise, for better or for worse. And a lot of that is not the traditional, church-run, or non-profit or cooperatives, etc, that you may associate with pre-K education. Its run by corporations whose responsibility it is to make a profit. And you'd be surprised at what big business it is. Kindercare, for example, has over 1000 centers, liscenced to take up to 100,000 kids, with programs ranging from 6 weeks old to "reading readiness" programs for 5-year olds. Operating revenue in 1985: 192 million bucks.

For those interested in further information about the IAHP, they can be contacted at 8801 Stenton Ave Philadelphia PA 19118. Glenn Doman has a book on the market, "How To Multiply Your Baby's Intellegence" (Doubleday). This presents part of their course in book form. It covers largely the intellectual program; the physical program is covered only briefly. The transition from lecture to book isn't entirely sucessful. Some of the "boosterism" just doesn't work in the printed form, but the book is quite interesting, and I recommend it. Doman's "How to Teach Your Baby to Read" has been on the best seller lists for over 20 years, and "Teach your Baby Math" is also available. IAHP also distributes "What To Do About Your Brain-Damaged Child". There have been at least two first-person accounts of people using these methods on brain-damaged children. One is called "Brain Child", and may be out of

print. This other is "Doran", just published by G.P.Putnam's. It is a mother's account of how she refused to accept the conventional and pessimistic verdict passed on her son who was brain damaged at birth, but instead turned to the IAHP for help. The following is an excerpt from the Forward, written by Dr. Jonathan Miller (of PBS' "The Body in Question"). Altho directly relevant only to IAHP's program for brain damaged children, its also pertinent to their equally controversial work on normal children.

> "Orthodox neurologists have often expressed serious doubts about the scientific rationale of this program and it is not easy to decide whether the positive results constitute a reliable proof. Nevertheless, as is often the case with unorthodox procedures, the positive results are sometimes so impressive that it would be pigheaded and narrow-minded to overlook them simply because the theory that justifies them is scientifically controversial. In Doran's case, his life has been literally remade as a result of the efforts that have been spent on and with him; and whatever one's scientific opinion might be, one would have to be mean-spirited and inert not to be moved and inspired by the progress that this child has undoubtedly made."

All of this emphasis on education (both in Joshua's life and in this essay) may strike you as, uh, obsessive, and perhaps it is. So you may be wondering why.

In part, I think it was the way we were raised. We are Jewish, and in Judaism, education has always been of utmost importance, at the very heart of being a Jew. Jews have established schools even under the most harrowing conditions. Educating a child is a specific parental obligation, a mitzvah.(a term that combines the concepts of a good deed and a moral duty). And that obligation includes teaching a trade and, interestingly, how to swim. But beyond that, Judaism traditionally views edcation as a process, rather than just a means to a specific end. Education is thus not a process that one completes, it is never "finished". And it can start early: traditionally, once a child can speak. The extraordinary emphasis that Jews have placed on education has been going on for so long that, who knows, it might possibly be in our genes.

When we were growing up, education was paramount in our houses. Anything which parents perceived as significantly interfering with schoolwork was simply not tolerated. And any support I needed for school was always there. My father made it clear that if we wanted money for summer school or any amount of advanced education, money would always be there for it (all four of us, in fact, have post graduate degrees). So far as I know, none of us was ever pressed to take a part time job to support this -- in my case, at least, the issue was never even raised. My parents did two moves, prompted in large measure because of dissatisfaction with the local public school. I skipped a year in high school (as did my brother); my father persuaded me that college would provide a much wider choice of courses to take, and that college was far more interesting than high school --- and he was right. That extra year came in handy later, as it took me 7 years to get my PhD. My mother has been in education her entire life. For a long time, she taught in Junior High School, and I can't tell you how many dozens of times I've heard people exclaim over what a wonder-

ful teacher she was; after that, she became a curriculum specialist. She for many years ran our synagogue's school, which she found immensely rewarding, and is now a museum docent and is active in adult education.

There are of course limits to the extent to which how one is raised affects things, but education was an integral part of our families on several levels. And that did affect us.

For there is a pleasure in learning, a "Pleasure In Finding Things Out". Like its more celebrated cousin, sensual pleasure, its extremely difficult to describe, but there's no mistaking it when it occurs. But all too many people live lives where learning is forever a chore, and this type of pleasure comes seldom, or never. That is a tragedy, for this pleasure, like sensual pleasure, is one of the things that makes life worthwhile.

But how to engender this? There are many paths, but which ones will work? If Joshua can feel this pleasure keenly, and if we his parents were instrumental, then we will have suceeded in a very important task of parenting.

What I think it boils down to is this: No one is better placed to do this than the parents, and no time is better than when the kid is very young. At this tender age, virtually anything the parent does consistantly, joyfully, and lovingly, the child will enjoy. The association of the parent with the activity is a tremendous boost. Ultimately, the exact form that this takes is besides the point. Mona has taken Joshua to museums dozens of times, which can take some doing. To him, such a trip is not an exotic adventure, removed from ordinary life, but part of it. In the same way, flashcards are a normal part of the way he spends almost every evening. Its as integral a part of his life as eating breakfast. Education is then woven into the fabric of everyday family life, and it is tied intimately into his relationship with his parents. Its not the only way, it may not be the best way, but its our way, and I think we are all on the right track.

BEING A FATHER

Society provides a tremendous amount of support (which can actually reach suffocating levels) for a woman in her role as a mother. There are thousands of "play groups", a euphemism for what is largely a support group for mothers. There is a tremendous body of literature available which is clearly oriented towards women's child-raising. General women's magazine's, such as"Women's Day" feature a steady diet of the sort of articles that you'll rarely see in, e.g. "Esquire". There are even specialized magazines for women who work ("Working Woman")and those who don't("Welcome Home"). There is social support for virtually any level of motherly involvement. Look at the covers of baby-oriented magazines and books. If it features a child and one parent (a common format), the great majority of times, that parent will be a women.

Things are very different for men. While support groups for fathers have arisen in some areas for men recently, they're not very common; many have a focus on men's-rights-after-divorce. Men's literature, such as'The Father's Almanac" is sparse ,and again, quite recent. The first real fathering magazine only came about in 1986.

I suppose I should mention in this regard "Good Morning Merry Sunshine", by Bob Greene. This book was on the best seller's list for quite some weeks, and so probably got more attention than all the other father's books combined. Its a father's journal of his daughter's first year. Greene is a writer by profession, so its a smooth and entertaining read, much more so than you'd expect from the usual first-person narrative. He writes frequently about how he reacts to things, what he felt about the changes around him, the emotional component of becoming a father. I think every new father will find much to empahthize with, especially since he writes with great candor, and makes no attempt to present himself as anything special. The book is warm, engaging and informative. On the other hand, I'd hate to see this guy become some sort of paragon of fathering. In part, but only in part, because he travels alot, he doesn't come across as a real hands-on father. I don't recall any mention of his bathing, diapering, or excercising his daughter. Either he didn't do much of that, or didn't feel it worth mentioning. He also seems, in a word, slow. His daughter crawls for over 3 months, and it doesn't even occur to him to put latches on the cabnets. It takes him a while to start really talking to her, something which should be done right from the start. Even by the end of the book, he is apparently incapable of figuring out why she cries before going to sleep (most likely, its because she realizes that fun-time is over, and is protesting). This latter point may reflect the thing I found most irritating about Greene, viz, his continued astonishment that she was able to learn anything. Its one thing to be pleased and delighted when your kid picks things up, but he keeps being so surprised that I suspect the essential point, that kids learn faster than growups think they do, never really sinks in.

But the book is still recommended, along with "fathers" magazine from PO Box 53384 Wash DC 20009. If you're further interested, you might want to check out these:

■ ***Finding Our Fathers: The Unfinished Business of Manhood***, by Harvard psychologist Samuel Osherson, The Free Press, 217 pp., $17.95, 1986.

■ ***Father: The Figure and the Force***, by Christopher P. Anderson, Warner Books, 1983.

■ ***The Developing Father: Emerging Roles in Contemporary Society***, by Bryan E. Robinson and Robert L. Barrett, Guilford Press, 1986.

■ ***In a Man's World: Father, Son, Brother, Friend and Other Roles Men Play***, by Perry Garfinkel, New American Library, 1985.

■ ***Men in Families***, 1986, Sage, and ***Men's Changing Roles in the Family***, 1986, Haworth, both by Robert Lewis.

I'm not writing all this to say that I am somehow deprived. In fact, I've had what is arguably the best kind of education one can have in fathering, viz, a strong role model in the form of my own father. He considered raising the four of us to be a responsibility of utmost importance, and acted accordingly. I could thus see (especially as the oldest) not only how he went about doing a very sucessful job of fathering, but I could also see how rewarding he found it to be. There may be substitutes for that kind of experience, but there are no equivalents.

But by and large, society provides much less support for active fathering, with predictable results. You may have heard a lot about "The New Father". I must say that from what I've seen and heard, this trend is more exaggerated than real. There has been a change is a few highly visible areas, such as fathers being present in the delivery room.

A generation ago, this was rare. By 1973, about 40% of fathers were there; now the figure is estimated to be about 90%. But in other areas, I don't see much change. I hear from Mona tales of her friends' husbands and its pretty discouraging how little some of them do. They are amazed that I would get up in the middle of the night to change the diaper of a nursing infant. I usually take Joshua with me for grocery shopping, and its very seldom that I see a small child with just a father. Even on weekends, if you see little kids playing in the yard, if one parent is watching, it will nofmally be the mother. I have seen this attitude in conversations with people, e.g. my coworkers. For example, someone will ask how its going with Joshua. As often as not, I'll give some fairly specific answer, describing a recent problem or curious habit or whatever. The responses would be quite different. A mother would usually listen carefully, and then give a meaningful response. "Well, my second daughter had the reverse problem..." or some such, or a suggested solution, or perhaps just a related anecdote. The response from fathers was usually quite different. I'd get a generalized response, with no real reaction. Or I'd get a response that would show amazing ignorance. "Breastfeeding is just a fad". "From the day my kid was born she preferred hermommy to me" (In fact, its some weeks before the kid can distinuguish between its parents) "Kids are deaf for the first month or two, aren't they?" (Healthy kids can hear on the day they are born, but it will be a while before they will learn to search their enviornment for a sound's source).

Or my all-time favorite, "Little kids, little problems, big kids, big problems." I've heard that any number of times, but never from a woman. The underlying notion here is that women, whose responsibilites are greatest when the kids are youngest, don't have to deal with "real" problems. The sad fact of the matter is that many, many men just don't consider kids to be interesting until they can catch a ball and carry on a conversation. Listen to enough men and women talking about their kids, and you'll hear what I mean. Women will talk about kids of any age, but men tend to talk about just older kids, not preschoolers.

In fact, the amount of fathering going on may actally be decreasing. Some fathers are spending more time, no doubt about that, but there's an opposite trend. Increasing levels of divorce mean increasing numbers of non-custodial parents, 95% of whom are men at present. Joint custody deals are still quite uncommon. A recent study done at U. of Penna paints a sorry picture. When parents have separated and/or divorced, half the kids have not even seen the non-custodian parent during the past year, and only one in six averages weekly contact or better. The non-custodial father's relationship most often is social/recreational, with little or no caretaking. Few children ever sleep over with thir non-custodial fathers, and a majority probably have never set foot inside his house.

I have to mention a conversation I heard a little while ago in an elevator. The guy said, approximately, "I know we got twins now and I'm willing to do my fair share. But I told Linda when we got married that Fridynight I go out with the boys, and Saturday afternoons in summer I play softball. I don't see why I should have to give either of those up." His friend nodded sympathetically, and added, "There's plenty of time for the kids when they get older. Women don't understand what a mans needs are."

Everyone loses with an attitude like that. The mother loses because she is deprived of needed help. I suspect that most fathers are unaware of how demanding a job it is to take care of small children. Mona has worked for many years as a nurse, a fairly exhausting line

of work, but has said many times that this is by far the hardest job she's ever had. I think all fathers should ocassionally take the kids for the whole day, preferably two whole days. By that I mean Mom splits in the early AM, and comes home to find dinner on the table. If this can't be done on a weekday, then the weekend is fine. Its only a taste, mind you, but it should give a father a better idea of how much helping with the kids relieves the stress of what mother has to do. The father who comes home and wants to spend just a modest amount of time with the kids isn't really giving Mom the help she needs.

The kid also loses. She gets 1¼ or 1½ parents instead of two. Fathers play an important psychological role. He invariably will relate to his kids in a different way than Mom, and thus not only teaches that people are different, but acclimates the kid to the idea of interacting with someone who is not-Mom. Beyond that, he facilitates the long but essential process of letting-go-of-Mom. His prescence and interest clearly communicate that there is an exciting world beyond Mom, a world that is worth investigating, and even letting go of Mom for. For this, Dad must be caring --- and available. No human parent can be all things to a kid, but the two can compliment each other. I can roughhouse with Joshua in a way that Mona cannot, just as Mona can sing to him while I cannot. Parents bring different attitudes and styles and strategies to childraising. Inevitably that means that each parent is forfilling the child's needs in some way that the other parent is not. It also means that each parent learns from the other , which can be a fairly important process when raising the first child.

And finally, the father loses. Raising kids to adulthood costs a lot in not only money, but time and disruption and pain. Why not reap all the benefits that you can? Contrary to what many fathers seem to think, the rewards start from day one, and you'll never know exactly when and in what form they will come. Take , for example, the archtypical drudgery: Changing diapers (altho beleive me, there's worse....). But, at least according to the diaper company statistics, the typical baby is changed 7000 times. Thats hundreds of hours on the changing table, and that's time for a lot of interaction. Especially at 12-, this can be a good time for parent-child interaction. Joshua, at least, liked to be changed, and he would let you know it. Flat-on-your-back is a comfortable position for the kid, and face-to-face is ideal for direct interaction. Plus, at that age they really dolike all that manipulation and body contact that goes on.

Or take the simple matter of giving a kid a bath. I saw a study --- I wish I had saved it --- which surveyed fathers of kids under two years, who felt that they did their fair share of the childraising. What I remember was the figure on baths. One third had never given their kid a bath, and the average as I recall was about one permonth. One! There's no excuse for this, especially since a bath is often done in the evening when Dad is home. I say go further --- get in the bath tub with your kid. I've given Joshua scores of baths that way. I've seen people 's jaw drop when I say that, but its a gas. It can't be put off --- there's only a narrow time frame when you can do this (Joshua is already too old for that), so that becomes an opportunity lost forever. And I assure you, no rubber bath toy is EVER going to be as much fun as daddy to your kid. If you have qualms because of considerations of modesty, etc, just put on a bathing suit.

There is another consideration here, which is a lot more speculative, and pertains to fathers raising sons.

Our society, like many others, has a pervasive amount of sexism. Much of it has its origins in male attitudes toward women. One of the most common, I suspect, and deep seated notions is that women are not to be trusted with real power. Underlying that may be a male fear of women having power. Where does that fear come from? One theory has it that this arises from the early tremendous power that mother has over the kid, when the child is raised in a traditional way. I am not talking about such adult concerns as what city the family will live in, or what the family car will look like, which are often determined by the male. What affects the kid directly are the myriad of decisions made daily, the web of rules that shapes what the kid must and cannot do. Even if Dad is appointed the executioner ("Wait till your Father gets home!"), its still Mom's rule that has been transgressed, and Mom who has decided that something that the kid won't like will be done about it.

This breeds resentment, and a desire to break free from mother's power --- which is a normal part of growing up. But then "mother" becomes generalized to all women. The desire to no longer be under the power of mother becomes transformed into the fear of ever falling under the power of a woman (again). The feeling that women are not to be trusted with power has its origins in the power a woman -- our mother -- once had, and our desire not to let that deplorable state of affairs repeat itself.

The antedote to this is for the father to have as much of an operational role in the kids life as possible. In this way, parental power will not be viewed as so gender-specific. The kid will still resent the authority of parents --- that can't be helped, and he will eventually want to break free, which is healthy. The goal here is to have a son who does not especially fear the power of a woman.

As I said, this is just a theory. And many psychological theories which look good on paper turn out to have no basis in fact. But I think there may be something to this. There are a variety of ways that fathers can try to keep sexist attitudes from developing in their sons, and this may be one of them.

Being a father is liberating, humbling, exasperating, and a dozen other things. I find myself, for example, with a wider range of emotions that I've ever had.

I've also learned a lot about my limits, and how to stretch them. I've thought myself to be a tolerant, understanding person, only to find myself enraged by something Joshua has done (or, done for the fourteenth time) more often than I ever would have thought. I've also learned about dependence. Its one thing to understand, intellectually, that a baby is completely dependent on adults, but its another thing to actually feel the weight of this dependence. That not only includes taking care of her needs, but the kid is also dependent on yournot doing stupid things (or at least, not doing them too often), like leaving a kid on a bed when he's capable of rolling off it onto the floor.

At the same time, you yourself also become dependent. This can be quite a shock in an age and culture that esteems self-dependence, but to be a parent is in most cases to be reliant on other people. Joshua is lucky to have all four grandparents alive and in good health, which is somewhat unusual for a kid born to parents both in their late 30's. Mona's parents are almost three hours away by car, so he doesn't get to see them as much as any one would like. My own parents are about 45 minutes away, and he sees them so often that they are an integral part of how he has been raised. Their condo long ago became a second home to him. We are very dependent on them --- nearly all the time we've spent away from Joshua has been when he's there (or at school). Their caretaking far transcends the notion of "babysitting", and so, until school came along, they were the most important resource we had. Joshua greatly benefits from this type of ongoing, caring relationship. It is of immense value to have a place where Joshua can be left -- for days at a time if necessary -- without our having the slightest worry about how he'll do. And one also becomes dependent on friends and neighbors for the ocassional sudden need for this or that, something which didn't exist before Joshua.

Sometimes things are puzzling, often exasperatingly so. As I come from a backround in the hard sciences, it sometimes amazes me at how little agreement there is on childraising practices. Take, for example the question of whether it is proper (or wise) to hit yourkid. Amoung both parents and experts, there is nothing even approaching a consensus view on this question. This hasn't been a problem for us, since Mona and I are both opposed, and for largely the same reason. (Children tend to emulate their parents. In my view, if the parent hits the child, the spouse, or anyone else for that matter, that tends to legitimize hitting in general. The distinction that we adults draw may be lost on the kid. As he sees it, if you get mad enough, or if someone has been bad enough, you're entitled to hit. I might add that I personally oppose the death penalty for largely the same reason. The government's killing tends to legitimize killing per se.) If a kid wakes up crying in the middle of the night crying, at what age (if ever) should the parent just ignore it, and let the kid cry herself back to sleep? When should a kid be out on a "schedule" for feeding? When does giving a child what he wants risk "spoiling" him? If you don't have a kid, these may strike you as mundane, rather than profound. But the issues arise so frequently that they are of great operating importance, and in turn they do at least reflect more basic issues in child developement.

While I find such questions interesting and challenging, as a father I find it somewhat worrisome that such basic matters are so completely unresolved. In fact, if anything, the issues are in a sense becoming less resolved. More parental practices, accepted without much debate in the past, become challenged now. Or more and more, the answer, perhaps rightly so, is "that depends on the kid" That may be the case, but such an observation d sn't actually get you any closer to solving the question at hand. This is especially true when dealing with kids so young that little of their personality has come through.

Here's an example of what I find troubling. Some time

back I read a pair of articles on the nature of allowances. The context, as I recall, was nine year olds. One argued that allowances should be given because the kid was entitled to money, needed to learn how to spend money, and to save it, needed to learn the relationship between power and money, etc. The writer rejected a tie between the money and household/school responsibilities. If, for example, responsibilities were rising, but needs were not, or vice versa, then one could change without the other. The other writer took the exact opposite point of view. The two should be tied. Individual jobs should not be given a price, but the child should be made to understand that the allowance is being earned by doing his responsibilites, whatever they might be at that time. Both articles were pretty good size, and dealt with the issue with care and concern.

The problem is not the issue of allowances per se. Those decisions are years off. Moreover, If it happens that Mona doesn't agree, my views might not be implemented anyhow. What was troubling was that I found both articles utterly convincing. Each was sensible, well reasoned, appealed to values that I held, and seemed the essense of practicality. I could see at least the outlines of some sort of compromise plan, containing elements of each approach, but I was doubtful that such a compromise would be better than either "pure" approach. And of course, any hybrid approach contains the sort of inconsistencies that a sharp nine-year old might be able to exploit or manipulate.

And beyond the myriad of unresolved issues, I feel a little threatened by all the ambiguities, all the mysteries of everyday life with a small kid. Time and again, Mona and I will discuss some unexpected thing Joshua has done (often, events I haven't seen, to make matters worse) and we will try to puzzle out why on earth he did that. What does it mean? Is it something we ought to do something about, and if so, what? Psychologically, I don't feel fully prepared for this. I have lived a fairly structured life. My job, altho it requires a great deal of judgement, is also a fairly structured one, where I don't have to deal with much in the way of baffling behaivior. All the problems I have to deal with in my job, and most of those in my life are those where I can bring some (and often, a great deal of) experience to bear on the problem, or at least I can find some widely accepted expertise to draw on.

But not so in my role as a father. Oh, sure, there are friends, and especially my in-laws and parents to chew things over with. They help, and sometimes, thats all thats needed. But they can't know Joshua as well as we do, and we can get lots of contradictory views that way. It might be easy enough to leave it all up to Mona, who sees more of him than I do anyhow. But that's not being a father, and besides which, Mona would never accept that kind of cop-out anyhow.

Sometimes, things that we'd fret about would have a way of resolving themselves, even tho the resolution might not be "correct". One example was the question of where the baby could sleep. Conventional wisdom was that the kid should be moved to her own room as soon as practical, certainly after a few months. Neither of us liked that solution at all, so Joshua stayed in our room till he was close to a year old. But more contentious was the issue of whether the kid should be permitted to sleep in the same bed as the parent(s). Some relatively non-conventional literature said that it was not only OK, but a good idea, especially under 24. Indeed, there's even a book on the topic, "The Family Bed" But the great majority of sources said it was a terrible idea. Every pediatrician we discussed this with (during the period we were interviewing for pedia-

tricians) either discouraged or condemned the practice. I'm not sure why, but Mona and I must have discussed this topic nearly a dozen times. Its probably because I was puzzled why there should be so much disagreement and criticism over a practice which, I suspect, is fairly common.

In the end, we decided it probably wasn't such a hot idea, but it got done anyhow. Often, he'd fall asleep after being nursed, and Mona would be so drowsy that she'd just leave him there in bed while they both napped. I'm dubious that any harm ever came from this (I suppose that its possible that Mona could roll over and suffocate him, tho I'd think only a very heavy sleeper would be capable of doing that. Joshua would be at greater risk of being dropped by a very sleepy Mona while being carried over to the cradle or bassinet. But I digress)

I don't want to give the impression that being a father is grappling with an endless parade of doubts. Many problems are solved, many opportunities are risen to, and often, matters chug along on an even keel. But the image of the father, especially on television, tends toward the extremes. He may be so distant or so out of it that his views, solutions, analysis, etc, are largely irrelevant. Or he is so competant and confident that only the most unusual of events are able to derail him, and often even those events are just stages where his true wisdom can be unveiled. Neither of those views bears any resemblence to my own experience as a father. And I didn't want to come across as some superconfident, always in control father.

CHANGE

Change is the engine which drives life forward. Joshua has seen many changes. But the biggest change since the day he was born took place on March 19, 1986 with the birth of his brother, Ezra Michael Berch.

When Mona was pregnant with Ezra, I asked people whose first two kids were between about 24 and 36 months apart what they told the older kid in preparation. I was a little surprised by the response. Most told their kid fairly soon, but what the kid was told was remarkably one sided. With the exception of pointing out that new babies cry a lot, the new developement was presented in entirely positive terms. A common component was to tell the kid that she'd have a new playing companion. But, while that may eventually be true, really playing together won't take place for quite some time. A greatdeal will happen before that , and I wonder whether its right to raise hopes in that way. We took a somewhat different approach. Joshua was told only when Ezra was about 6 weeks away. Joshua tends to be impatient, and has only the most limited concept of time. His notion of waiting for something was to set the timer for his egg to cook. As it turns out, our cautiousness may not have been necessary, since he showed little signs of impatience (in fact, when we first told him, he was completely disinterested!)

I also wanted to give him a more balanced view of what life would now be like (within thelimits of what I could predict and he could understand). I pointed out that mommy would often be busy, and that he would sometimes have to wait. It was explained that babies need to be fed right away, and that sometimes mommy would have to stop play-

ing with him to tend to the baby. These were not painted as catastrophes, just as adjustments that would be made.

On the bright side, he was told, the new baby would have to be taught a lot of things, and that he, Joshua, would be explaining things to the baby: Where things are, and what to do. This seemed to appeal to him (remember --- almost anything parents do themselves, will be desirable to the kid). Moreover, unlike playing with the baby, which would be a long time in coming, that could start whenever Joshua wanted, and involves no physical risk to the kid. It would involve Joshua talking to the baby, something that would be desirable for all involved. I should add that we did not make a huge big deal over this to Joshua. He was going to lose his position as sole occupant of center stage soon enough, and we felt there was no need to hurry him off.

A few weeks ago, a friend pregnant with her second asked a familiar question: "Does it all come back?" As I reflected on this later, it occurs to me thats its best that "it" all doesn't come back too clearly. With the first kid, one takes a fairly open mind: Who knows what will happen? Its all too easy to just assume the second will be pretty similar, especially if the same sex is anticipated. This can lead to some real surprises.

In our case, it was the matter of size. Mona and I are both on the small side, and I come from a whole family of short people. Joshua has been quite small --- usually below the 10th percentile in both hieght and weight. The difference is striking when you see him with his peers. So despite my best intentions not to make assumptions, it never even occured to me that Ezra might be what he turned out to be --- enormous. He started off a pound heavier than Joshua, and while Joshua took over a month to regain his birth weight, in two weeks, Ezra was well over it. He was an efficient feeder, and soon we were amazed to see that he was well above average in weight and height. The point here is not that of size (numbers at this age are of no lasting significance), but the ease of falling into assumptions about how kids will resemble each other.

Similarly, most of you have probably at one time or another remarked on how two siblings (especially if of the same sex and similar in age) landed up with totally different lives. Buried in there is an assumption that the kids were raised the same. These past few months have made it all too clear that, even if you want to, you can't raise kids the same, even at the start. For 31 months, Joshua was raised as an only child, and the first months are those when the parents have their greatest impact on their child. For better and for worse, Ezra hasn't had that experience(except for the first few days), and, we hope, never will. There is no way Ezra could have been given the intense levels of attention that Joshua got. And Joshua never had the experience of having a sibling at home, something which is already shaping Ezra's life.

Psychologically, it is more complicated. With only one kid, you balance just your own needs with that of the kids. You know the former a lot better, and to some degree, they get postponed. With two kids, that strategy doesn't work, since it may involved postponing one kid's needs in favor of the other, something one is reluctant to do. The number of times the kid gets the full attention of both adults falls off drastically, especially now that Ezra isn't sleeping as much. Guilt creeps in here. While we once could say confidently that we were giving Joshua all we felt he needed in terms of our attention, thats just not true anymore; there aren't enough hours in the day.

I don't want to paint this as all negative. Joshua's life has already been enriched by this extra dimension, and Ezra has had the benefit of there being a lot more going on to watch -- and imitate.

We have already noticed that Ezra is much better at playing without parental intervention at 7 than Joshua was. It might have turned out that way even if there had been no Joshua, but more likely, this was a skill born of necessity.

We had heard stories of dreadful reactions from the older kid when the new one arrived, but by and large, these have not occured with Joshua. Losing some toilet training is a common reaction, but Joshua had very little to lose at thatpoint. Joshua was pretty mad at Mona for the first few weeks, but even that consisted largely of withholding affection. He didn't seem to take it out on me or on Ezra. Generally, he's been pretty good with Ezra, altho if he's tired, he's prone to sudden agression, so he has to be watched much more closely then. With some exceptions, he's rather solicitous about Ezra's welfare, and will often chime in with his opinion about what ought to be done --- suggestions which are not always in Ezra's best interest! While he has shown some imitative behavior (finger sucking, which he rarely did until Ezra started doing it, infantile mouth noises, playing with Ezra's toys and other types of regressive behaivior), it hasn't really been a problem; we've been pretty lucky. When he acts like a wretch, its generally a three-year-old wretch, not an infant.

Most of the same things we did with Joshua we do again with Ezra, tho to his own pace. We give him smells, for example, (a much wider range, in fact. I don't know why I was so cautious with Joshua), tho at the beginning, he was much less responsive to them than was Joshua, and to some degree, still is. His flashcards were started in the middle of his second month. His collection consists of decks purged from Joshu's collection. Like Joshua was at his age, he's quite fascinated. We have noticed that the flashcard-s-sooth-the-upset-infant phenominon has been much stronger with Ezra. Ezra has proved to be a much fussier car traveller than Josha was at that age, especially in the late afternoon or early evening. The cards have proved to be lifesavers, and have even worked when he was clearly hungry , but there was just no place to pull over so Mona could nurse him.

But Ezra's story has barely begun.....

SUMMARY

Its time to sum up, but that doesn't seem to be possible. Perhaps I just haven't been at it long enough (Joshua is only 39 , so I've only done a very small part of the parenting job). Caring for a pet, being a nurse or psychologist or teacher or day care worker, etc, --- all have bits and pieces of the task, but parenting is clearly a task resembling no other.

The one image that sticks to my mind, at least as far as preschoolers go, is the Parent as Superpower. An anecdote:

We had just plopped Joshua on the toilet for the very first time. We awaited his reaction. He looked up at us and asked for a newspaper. Now, when we read the newpaper on the toilet, it wasn't to model behavior for Joshua. But the way he sees us doing things is, to him the way things are normally done. The parent has a collosal influence over a kid, especially during the first 2 or 3 years, and regardless of their intentions, they shape much of a kid's personality, especially his early attitudes. It is a degree of influence which would be pathological if seen in adults, but it is the natural order of things for infants and toddlers. The "civil libertarian" in me is suspicious of permitting one human to have so much power over another, but like it or not, there it is. I realize that parenting at other ages is a very different matter. But that will be the subject of another essay, some years hence.