

DIPLOMACY DIGEST

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Response to #100

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For the first time in the history of DD, a free issue, and a double at that. All subbers have had 2 issues added to their sub. The response to #100 was the heaviest of any issue I've ever done --- by a wide margin. And I wanted to run them. But I figured that many of you either never read much of the issue, or have had enuf by now. So the issue is free. But even if you're not interested in any more, I urge you to check out the "A final Comment on Flashcards/bit cards" that starts further down this page. Its something that I wish I had put in last issue, an important point, so I'm saying it here.

I'd like to thank Steve Hutton and Bruce Linsey for sending along materials for flashcards; its appreciated.

A FINAL COMMENT ON FLASHCARDS/BITCARDS

I do not expect anyone to be "sold" on flashcards just by reading about them in DD. We weren't sold on them after almost a week at IAHP, a much more intense experience. If they hadn't worked out, I'd have dropped them (which is largely what has happened with the word cards). What sold us was the reaction of Joshua and Ezra to the cards. Nothing more is needed, and nothing else would have sufficed. Ezra, without using words, has unmistakably communicated his enthusiasm. He will sometimes ask for them by crawling over to where they are kept and pointing. He coos and smiles at birds, waves his arms in excitement at the Remington paintings (of coys and indians), jabs at the musical instruments, and unleashes volleys of baby-talk at pictures of people. And if I should pause a bit too long between decks, I can expect an impatient grunt from Ezra. Many a car ride has been saved by their entrancing effect on him. And as for Joshua, woe be it to me if I leave in the morning before showing him his cards. He complains then and reproaches me when I come home. He occasionally will take objects he has seen in bitcards (especially paintings) and "incorporate" them into, say, some tinkertoy contraption he is putting together. If he sees an animal at the zoo that he remembers from his cards, he's apt to point that out. I believe he views the cards are largely entertainment, altho occasionally, he asks me why I show them to him. He views these sessions as a normal part of the day, and often he signals the end of dinner by asking for book-and-flashcards. He even likes to play Daddy, trying to explain to me whats going on in the painting. In these and many other ways, Joshua has made it quite clear that flashcards are important to him. Only the future will tell what long range benefits will come, but for now, their obvious interest and delight is validation enough.

LEE KENDTER: What a bore. I thought I had stopped subbing to Parent's Magazine years ago.

KEN PEEL: If you care for my candid appraisal ... I'd say that it was excessively self-indulgent, and not all that interesting.

KONRAD BAUMEISTER: I got a lot out of it. I approached it with some hesitation, the education of babies/very young children not being of great interest to me (right now), but at the end I think I learned a good deal about you that I didn't know before. Maybe a triple-issue would not have been necessary, but it wasn't a total waste. Besides, as a subscriber to Piggott's law of Fanzines myself, and out of respect for your 100th issue, I found even that indulgence easy to overlook.

HUGH CHRISTIE: ...the personal touch adds a lot to our understanding of who and what Mark Berch is. ((And that, I feel, is exactly what legitimizes #100 as a dipzine. Getting to know the editor is part of almost every dipzine which goes beyond being a gamezine, altho editors go about this self-revelation process in very different ways.))

DR. NEIL HARVEY ((He is the Dean of the Temple Fay Institute for Academics. This is the umbrella outfit within IAHP for all of their educational activities, including their private school, the adult education programs, etc))

Most impressed by the 100th issue of your *Diplomacy Digest*, Glenn Doman has asked me to reply to your letter and the fulsome report in the *Digest*, to tell you how pleased he is that you, Joshua and Mona have apparently derived much of value from your attendance at the Better Baby Course, and that you have obviously understood and agreed with the vast majority of what we are saying and what we represent. We are especially delighted that Ezra will also benefit from your enthusiastic participation in his early learning program.

In your publication you briefly aired the matter of the absence of studies that would validate our approach to helping parents help their kids learn at very early ages. I have the impression that, in the hard sciences, carefully-controlled studies do not normally produce results that contradict each other (I may be wrong about that). It seems so hard for me to believe that such outcomes are possible in sciences such as physics (except in exotic areas) or in your field, chemistry. While such studies may not develop significant outcomes, I suspect that, given reasonably sound hypotheses, they would probably tend to produce results in the same direction.

((True. In the hard sciences, reproducibility is usually not a major problem. The challenge is generally figuring out which questions to ask, and figuring out a method of answering them.))

It is my personal opinion that the studies usually demanded as proof of validity of early learning have no place in such quasi disciplines as education and psychology where a multitude of variables are just about impossible to control, where each individual is truly unique and, therefore, not eligible to be manipulated as a subject in population statistics. I believe that the Gaussian curve and all that it implies is an abomination when applied to the kind of warm experience you describe as having enjoyed with Joshua. In my view, the entire sterile enterprise of so-called controlled studies in education and psychology is wasteful at

best and harmful at worst. It is an exercise in futility. I stressed this point in a talk I presented to the World Organization for Human Potential back in 1981. A reprint of that talk is enclosed.

On the other hand, longitudinal (very, very costly) and retrospective studies (time-consuming) do have certain value. Enclosed is a brief bibliography which lists some recent important examples of this kind of work in the field of early stimulation.

((The issue of "controlled studies" in the soft disciplines, especially education, is a contentious one. The tension comes from the conflict between those who insist on such studies, and practitioners who find such studies to be either very difficult or impossible to perform. Longitudinal and retrospective studies, altho requiring an awful lot of money and foresight, have more potential for gaining meaningful results, but it takes a long time to replicate them. On the other hand, without such studies, your theories, indeed, any "nonconventional" theories, will never gain the acceptance they presumably deserve. The overall results is that people believe what they want to believe. While some educational principles are well established (e.g. smaller classes are best), these are so few and so inadequate to the task. This is reflected in the extreme difficulty in devising standards for "teacher competency" that states are running into.

Let me state in passing that I believe that there will be a major revolution in education, especially elementary school education, in the 1990s. This will come from "interactive computers". The computers, with staggeringly large databases, will have software which allows the computer to determine how quickly the kid is absorbing the material, and adjust what is presented accordingly. If a kid is doing too well on a test, the computer switches to harder questions, or the reverse, or can switch from a test question to educational material underlying it if the kid so desires. This material isn't quite on the market yet; it will probably appear first in well-to-do educational districts, and in Christian Schools. Among other things, it will radically redefine the role of the teacher, and give us more insights into how fast kids can learn))

Your depth of understanding of what we're doing and positive expressions are so numerous that I hate to cavil, but I must stress that our rejection of the term, "flashcard" is not the result of whim, or a wish to be cute. The term, "flashcard" is normally associated with a high-school or college study technique (e.g. cramming for an exam). Or, with stacks of hundreds, maybe thousands of itty-bitty cards designed to help adults memorize a myriad of facts. When used with small children, such cards have, and deserve, a poor reputation.

On the other hand, the cards advocated by The Institutes directly result from basic principles of Child Brain Development, *i.e.*, how the brain grows and develops, the neurophysiological substrates of very, very early learning. The empirical evidence we've assembled from our work with some 15,000 children over the past 40 years has demonstrated clearly the value of having such cards be precise, discrete, unambiguous, new. Superficially simple, the concept is quite sophisticated. Likewise, the name, BOI, (Bit of Intelligence) derives from our reliance on that most compelling brain-computer analogy. Thus, we eschew the term, "flashcard," and all of its negative connotations. When it is used with reference to the BIT cards you employed with Joshua, we wince. In the minds of your *Diplomacy Digest* readers, when they see the word, "flashcard," they do not think of an exquisitely-developed early learning procedure, rather, they inevitably conjure up the commonly-held notion of an adult cramming technique.

((I used the term "flashcard" because that's what they are called around our house, and because I was afraid that the synthetic, exotic "Bitcard" would be somewhat offputting. The notion that one is "programming" (or more precisely, inputting data into) a child in a manner similar to a computer is going to strike some people as vaguely repellant, even if that's exactly what happens when Daddy exclaims "Look at that Crow" to the kid. However I must concede that the points you make are essentially correct, the distinctions you draw are real, and I may have made an error in judgement here. I did describe in detail what these cards look like. And I'll emphasize again that these are radically different from the cards used by adults for cramming and drill. These cards show pictures of things, which adult cards do not. And they are much, much bigger --- 11 inches by 11 inches. Size is an essential ingredient. There's not much point in showing a picture of a white-tipped shark if the picture is so small that he has to squint to make out the white tips. I have rejected many pictures for use on cards simply because they were too small (alho some compromises must be made for insects, since magnified material is hard to come by). Large cards are especially vital during the first 2 years when visual acuity is still developing. Large cards mean your thumb doesn't obscure the picture and facilitates a rapid pace of presentation))

Again, thank you for sending us the *Diplomacy Digest*. As The Institutes' Historian, I shall maintain it in our archives. Know that I read it from cover-to-cover with undiminished interest. I was particularly delighted that you had emphasized the fact that exposure to a rich, albeit structured, environment and the enjoyment of creative "free" time are not mutually exclusive activities during the 16 hours of a child's waking day, and that school for tiny children is not to be confused with the parent-child learning experience. I find those two issues particularly exasperating.

((School will be discussed a bit more in Linda's ^(w) letter, later on. While BIT cards could be used in a school setting, I don't think it would be desirable. With more than 3 kids, you will run into serious logistical problems. You could bypass that with an overhead projector, but with a significant loss of immediacy and visual detail. But beyond all that, doing it one on one allows you to tailor the pace precisely to the child's need, and to respond if he wants to speak. And anything that the parent does will have a greater impact, because tiny kids assume that what the parent does is very important. The one-on-one intimacy is a huge boost to this kind of learning.

And yes, there is, I repeat, plenty of time in the day for all sorts of activities, structured and otherwise, provided you are willing to give the kid the time she needs. A session of vestibular exercises takes about 30 seconds. To reach for a jar of spices, give a smell, tell the name, and put it back is, what, 10 seconds? How long does it take to put your kid in front of a closet full of coats and let him feel all the textures? To strike a xylophone to give her a pure tone to hear? There is plenty of time in the day for free play and all this too))

LINDA COURTEMANCHE:It was fascinating reading and I appreciate your sending it along. Steve and I don't have any kids yet, but when we do, I plan to reread the issue ((Someone else expressed a similar thought in a fone call. That may be year's off, and if you've lost your copy, write me again, and I'll send you another copy)).

JOHN KADOR: You've done a real service with your summary of your approach. The best part is that you've succeeded in avoiding any hint of defensiveness (altho a smidgen of petulance or even rambunctiousness may be detected) I realize that your audience can be stubborn and mechanistic to the extreme. I'm sure your message left a lot of people scratching their heads ~~...~~ Dr. Spock is the guy with funny ears.

Reading the essays, I saw that I, too, could write a book on fathering. I feel fortunate to be able to take such direct care of Danny. More than most men, I can arraigne my day to revolve around Danny's requirements, should I choose ((Well, why don't you? You are a professional writer, and successful enough at it that you could afford to set aside a little time for a long term project. You should be keeping a journal, collecting resource materials, and looking for ways to sharpen your ideas. We could use more good books on fathering by fathers)) My book would differ slightly from yours ... reflecting the differences between you and I, less so between Joshua and Danny, who seem to me to have a lot in common. I seem to concentrate on socialized oppressions of parents and children and the impact of these oppressions. I have a fairly integrated theory of how it all operates --- the details of which I'll spare you today.

I did wish you had addressed a couple of issues ... ((like)) toilet training. This is a subject that's probably germane to many of your reader's ... it's something we're struggling with now. Danny is ((etc. I don't think my readers are much interested in toilet training Joshua, let alone Danny, and I don't think I had anything really creative to add. Mona felt very strongly that a low key approach would be best, that he would be toilet trained when he was good and ready, and not a week earlier. So along with teaching him, we had to teach ourselves patience. Joshua missed going to camp last summer because he wasn't trained yet. Mona was furious about this, but her anger was directed at the camps, not at Joshua.))

We know that girls, by and large, master potty control faster than boys ((especially bladder control)). I can't prove it, but I believe the differences are socially engineered rather than based on any substantial physiological differences. Girls are simply "expected" to get it faster than boys, and to that extent, invites a self-fulfilling prophecy.... ((Cause and effect are often hard to separate, especially in childraising, since kids have such a tendency to do as kids are expected to do.. But I'm dubious. I read somewhere that this difference is seen in a very wide variety of cultures, which reduces the chances of cultural bias. Moreover, this is one area where there is a physiological difference. Besides which, girls tend to develop faster than boys over a very wide range of skills, especially around the age where toilet training occurs))

We mentioned this when we spoke last --- the issue of choice. I'm committed to maximizing Danny's palette of alternatives at every opportunity. The trick is to be patient and not to overrule or censor him, unless his choices are clearly dangerous or grossly inappropriate. ((By contrast, Joshua had a number of dietary restrictions, even to the point of what order he can eat foods (he can't start dinner off with fruit, for example). A lot of TV is off limits to him e.g. the Sat morning cartoons. He's not allowed to take toys away from Ezra, he has only a very limited ability to affect his bedtime, and his wishes that

shampoo not be used on his head aren't respected. He has no "war toys", no Christmas tree, etc. None of these would meet your "dangerous or grossly inappropriate" criteria, but he can't choose them anyway. Of course, if all kids were raised the same way, this would be a dull world!))

ELLEN DICKINSON: ((Ellen is not in the hobby, but is one of my oldest friends, going back to High School)) My first reaction to the piece was that it took me back to the Mark I knew 25 (!) years ago. How like Mark to approach fatherhood with flashcards. How appropriate for him to be with Joshua in this way. Mark, who was always interested in anything and everything, to whom nothing was beneath his notice or curiosity! Mark, who was competitive, but without the poison of ambition. Who was so non-judgemental about everything ((Ellen, some of my subscribers are rolling on the floor with laughter at this point!)) and who never got depressed about anything more important than losing his jacket. You have to be aware as to why most people are so opposed to flashcards. You have to be aware of this Yuppie movement to get their kids placed in the right pre-school, so that they can get into the right elementary school, so they can enter Deerfield Academy so that Harvard/Princeton can be the crowning end. ((Uh, well, as you surely recall, I went to an Ivy League school undergrad, and then to M.I.T. and if Joshua and Ezra did something like that, I'd consider that a crowning end. And we're planning on moving in part because of dissatisfaction with the local (public) schools)) You must know about parents who push their children from year one and flashcards would fit in with this regime perfectly. ((Ah, yes, "pushing". A tremendous trigger word. Virtually every responsible parent pushes their child, but we all think being too pushy is pushing more than we ourselves do --- a very subjective standard)). But its quite clear that you are not one of these people and that they flashcards nourish a relationship and a value system that is pretty unique to you (and perhaps your family). Its also quite clear that if I had used flashcards on my children, I would have poisoned the relationship & the value system. Because unlike you, I am both competitive and ambitious Ordinarily, I would be appalled at giving a baby flashcards, but somehow with you its alright. ((BIT cards are just neutral objects. They don't come with an evil enchantment which can only be overcome by a parent whose motives are stouthearted and true. As it happens, we use flashcards because the kids like them, because I like to teach and explain, because I hope it will "expand" their mind (especially memory and visual centers in the brain) and because I want to infuse in them a joy in learning. But if my secret purpose was to give them a "competitive" edge to getting into Harvard etc, the flashcards would look just the same. While I suppose its possible that flashcards could influence whether or where a person went to college, that is so far remote that the chances seem tenuous. If such a connection did occur, I think it would come from an attitude toward learning rather than the specific facts per se. And if such a thing did happen with Joshua or Ezra, that would be fine by me)) Have you tried any Escher on Joshua? Will particularly liked Escher, but then Will was heavily into mazes and puzzles ... ((Joshua has one set of Escher, and his reaction was unique. With all other decks, his interest in the deck either stayed the same, or, much more commonly, declined, the more he saw it (he had learned it and thus wanted something newer). This deck was the reverse. The older he gets, the more fascinated he is with trying to figure out what is going on (sorting out the impossible structures, figuring out how one thing

melds into another, and other games .))

One last thought I'll leave you with that has helped me tremendously over the years ... I firmly believe that a specific child is sent into a specific family for 2 reasons: One, that child is deficient in something that the family can offer; two, the family is deficient in something the child can offer. Not only are you teaching your child, your child is teaching you ... ((I don't believe that a child is "sent", altho I do believe that every child adds an extra dimension to a family, and in that sense supplies something that is missing. I think that what you get is a combination of genes, environment and luck. I think a parents obligations are to 1) be respectful of the child's inborn characteristics (which range from predisposition to diseases, some personality and intelligence tendencies, physical makeup) 2) provide a stimulating environment, an essential component to parental love and 3) accept that a certain amount of luck is involved.))

STEVE HUTTON: ...I wondered at first what you meant by your opening comment on the cover --- "Alas, this won't be one of your favorites..." I hastily flipped through the issue to see what would be likely to offend me. ... Your assumption was quite wrong. This was far and away my favorite issue of DD. I'd be hard pressed to think of an issue of any zine that I enjoyed more...

I have seen three sisters raising kids, and I have some definite ideas on what each has done right and wrong. It was good to hear an honest account from someone who has used the "Better Baby programme" I think your approach, and your conclusions about what would work and what would not, are similar to what mine would be (Will be?)

Its not widely known in the Diplomacy Hobby, but I would like to have children one day ((Steve is gay)). I realize it may not be very likely, since it will only happen if I find a life-long partner, and if he also wants kids, and if, and if, and if ... But I've always been good with kids, and I enjoy playing with them, and talking with them and listening to them. I know that whatever mistakes I would make (and I know that the job is so difficult that it can't be done perfectly) ((even for a single day!)), I would still do a better job than many of the people I see who claim to be parents... ((My comments will follow the next letter))

LARRY PEERY: I'm not too worried about having kids. I'm too busy making sure all my straight friends ((Larry is also gay)) raise theirs properly. And yes, I do give good advice in that area, or so they tell me. And, until they start changing some of the archaic laws that prevent gay couples from adopting kids, there isn't any chance of me having any. Considering I'm pushing 40 now, I may never get the chance. There are at least 40-50 gay teenagers in San Diego "homes" who straight couples aren't interested in, either because they are gay, social misfits, etc. Most of them have never had a decent gay role model to learn from. And so when they get out, most of them will end up on the streets or in the prisons. And start a new round of problems. Its unfortunate, because there are a lot of stable gay couples who could provide them with a home and an understanding environment to mature in...((My own views on this have changed since I became a parent. I now would find it impossible to explain to a child that its better to have no daddy at all than to have two daddies, and thats basically what society's attitude now is. I'm aware of the argument based on child molestation. Altho most male child molesters are straight, the proportion

of child-molesters who are gay/bisexual is much higher than anyone's estimate of the general population. However, the biggest risk factor for being a child molester is having been abused or molested oneself. And since that doesn't disqualify people, I don't see that homosexuals can be disqualified on that basis. Sure, kids don't like to be "different", but there are so many ways families are "different" these days (single parent, blended families, unusual ethnic backgrounds), that I wonder if this is as big a factor as it used to be.

I haven't seen mention of this in the press (perhaps its in the gay press which I don't read), but I wonder if the surrogate mother ("Baby M") and host uterus (tho that would require an ovum donor) procedures would provide a private-adoption route to get around the problem)

LINDA WIGHTMAN: ... This was the first dipzine I read before Porter did. ... We never went to any meetings of La Leche League, but I'm just as gung-ho about nursing as they are... Back in Rochester, we knew several SE Asian refugee families, and it always made me so mad when women who had breastfed several babies in Laos insisted on bottle-feeding their American-born babies, in order to be "American" Of course, it didn't help that they got free formula from the WIC program, but that's another story ((And not, I think, a relevant one. If a woman is to make a free choice, then both must be available. The WIC program should not take the risk that, lacking free formula, the woman will resort to watered formula or worse. In such a matter, if suasion does not work, that should be the end of it for products which are needed but are not harmful per se)) ... The only thing I can see against it that it does make bonding more difficult for the father ... ((who)) must make a real effort to achieve bonding, and may never experience it until the child is much older. ((If he doesn't, its his own fault; there is no natural law which says that bonding comes only via nursing. The child will bond with any consistent caregiver, and milk is only one form of care))

Congratulations on Keeping Joshua off sugar for so long. Now you must redouble your efforts. Heather had no salt or sugar for her entire first year. At ... 3 she was still eating peanutbutter and weatgerm sandwiches, and he birthday cakes were no sweeter than banana bread. But it was all down hill from there ... (1) peer influence. It is very hard to control what kids eat at other kids' houses ... (2) Porter's and my unwillingness to do without cookies, ice cream, and the like ourselves. After age 3 kids can't be fooled anymore, if you keep the stuff in the house. ((The first point is certainly true, and we see it with Joshua. The second point is less of a problem for us, since we don't normally keep anything sweeter than muffins in the house, and consumption outside the house is easier to hide. But the absolute quantities of sweets isn't the issue, but rather the attitude toward them. Many three year olds are obsessed with sweets, and view them as an entitlement, especially if they have eaten their meal properly. That is what we have --- so far --- successfully avoided with Joshua. Sometimes Joshua will take his (unsweetened) crackers, noisily pretend that they are cookies, and cram them into his mouth with great gusto. But he does this without complaint about his not having real cookies at home))

... We have never been to the Institutes, nor have we made any concerted effort to follow their programs. But if they are crooks I sure wish someone had tried to fleece us that way years ago. I'll agree that some of what they claim is not as intuitive as they say it is, and no

doubt some of it is just plain wrong, but it is rare that I react to a book the way that I have done with Glenn Doman's books, wanting to shout: it's true, it's true, it's so obvious; why hasn't anyone said this before?

Every negative comment I have read about the IAFP's methods (which usually comes without mentioning their name) has betrayed almost complete ignorance of their philosophy. There are warnings that it puts children under too much pressure, that they are being deprived of their childhood, that they don't leave time for fun. Indeed, I once (in ignorance) levelled similar criticisms. I saw absolutely no point in pushing a child to learn to read or add, or to play a musical instrument, or whatever. I felt very strongly that the young child should set the pace of his own learning, that he will learn to walk when he is ready, to be toilet trained when he is ready, etc., and that it makes little sense to try to rush the process. I still believe that, for the most part, altho I have learned that it is not only possible, but also sometimes desirable to alter the child's timetable once in a while. (When Janet showed no inclination to wean herself, even approaching her 4th birthday, I took matters into my own hands. There is such a thing as carrying a good thing too far.) But how does a child learn to walk? Surely, some timing is built in; a 2-month-old cannot learn to walk ... But just as surely the environment is important: if a child never saw anyone walking, would he learn to do it? ((I doubt it. My guess is that crawling is inborn. Kids do it without adults modeling that kind of travel. Walking is imitative, tho I suspect that eventually the kid would walk simply because it gives a better view and frees the hands)) I have my doubts ... but not everything is automatically presented to a child in this way; some teaching is necessary. Most of all, what I didn't realize at the time, and which most of the Institutes' critics don't seem to realize, is the philosophy that makes this teaching so child-centered: that the goal is intimate parent-child interaction, with the pace set by the child, and if it can't be done with joy by both parent and child it should not be done at all ((Agreed, tho you oversimplify when you say the pace is set by the child. The parent has a major role in this. In fact, I would say that the IAFP's view is that the pace is actually set by the parent. But to set the pace, the parent needs have have 1) an optimistic view of the child's ability to learn, and 2) a very close monitoring of how the child reacts. I believe that an alert parent will be provided for by the child of all the information he or she needs to know if he is going too fast or too slow. So the parent sets the pace, but under the continuous, if unconscious, guidance of the child.))

My other concern was for whatever activity this type of instruction might be replacing. If a child is learning to read, what is he missing ((One must ask also the companion question: If a child is unable to read, what is he missing?)) A child's life is full, and he tends to concentrate on learning one thing at a time. (At least our kids did) ((I don't agree at all. Kids learn a lot of different things all at the same time, altho we may not even be aware of it)) Have you read Superbabies ((Can't locate)). It is the fascinating story of Anthony Morris Johnson, whose parents followed the IAFP's program for normal kids with as much enthusiasm as Doran's mother followed their program for hurt kids. He seems to have prospered under it (to say the least), but it is obvious that he has missed out on much of the independent exploration that most kids get. I don't know how important that is, but I would be nervous about interfering quite so drastically with nature ((If you're not comfortable with a given level of this, then it's not right for you)) But that

obviously is an extreme. As I learned more about the program, and observed our own kids and others, I began to realize a few things. The first is that I have never met a child who had too much attention from his parents. ((I'm assuming that you refer here just to younger children. A 10-year old can obviously be smothered by too much attention)). That is almost a universal deficiency. Any program that promotes more, loving, parent-child interaction deserves consideration for that reason alone ((And its helpful for a parent who wants to interact with his kid more, but is at a loss for what to do beyond hovering while she plays with toys)). The second is that most children have vast amounts of their time wasted. That is, they spend it in front of a television set. I don't think much of Sesame Street myself, but even if you consider it to be worthwhile, the number of children who watch only such programs must be small. ((SS is a fairly harmless form of entertainment, with a small amount of educational material thrown in. Its not educational TV, because the main purpose is to entertain. Joshua sees it 3-5 times a week, in 1/2-2 hour blocks. To be honest, it is often used as a babysitter, especially now that Ezra is more demanding. And sometimes, Joshua needs a break from more active pursuits. For this he may get records or SS. Aside from an occasional nature show, SS is about all the TV Joshua gets, and I recognize that he's atypical in that regard. When he gets older, that could be a problem, as kid's play is often loosely based on what they see on TV, and he's not going to know what they are talking about)) I'd bet that more than 90% of American kids watch He-Man, the Smurfs, or similar Sat Morning Cartoon fare, and more than Sat mornings, too. How can any self-respecting human being (let alone an intelligent educator) say that this is preferable to sitting on a parent's lap, looking at pictures of great art ((It amazes me that a parent can have his kid watch "Roadrunner" cartoons but a flashcard of a real roadrunner bird is considered being too pushy by that same parent. At Joshua's school, one of the monthly newsletters took a jibe at flashcards as being "second-hand learning". This same school shows movies on Wednesdays.)) At some point, I realized that our children are going to learn, whether we like it or not, the only thing we can try to do is influence the direction of their learning. Altho I am somewhat of a civil libertarian (desiring that government leave people alone as much as possible) it does not bother me in the least that parents have such great power in their children's lives. I happen to believe that that is what parents are for. And I am also conceited enuf to believe that we know more about what's best for the particular children that have been entrusted to us than all the child-care books, government agencies, educators, businesses, TV programs, psychologists, teacher's unions, and Madison Ave types in the world. ((Of course, such a sentiment goes contrary to your earlier observation about how so many parents let their kids watch awful TV, for example))

...Have you noticed that most of the child care "experts" would have you believe that it is good for a child to be able to recognize Big Bird, but not the Mona Lisa; to memorize nursery rhymes, but not poetry; to learn commercial jingles, but not a Bach fugue? I have yet to see any comment on the absurdity of this position...((Its rooted in a failure to understand that kids will be interested in practically anything that their parents show them with enthusiasm, and in an assumption that kids must have everything simplified for them--which just isn't so))

Herewith are some of my observations that lead me to believe that Glen Doman is more right than wrong:

(1) With both of our kids, we started swimming lessons when they were younger than 5 months. We did not think this was anything unusual; we did it at the recommendation of our family doctor ... our lessons were at the YWCA, and they incorporated many of the IAFP's ideas, altho I didn't know it at the time. It was a parent-child program: the instructors were there to teach the parents, not the children ((which is the IAFP's approach as well)). The children set the pace, and a wonderful time was had by all. At least it was for the younger children --- those who were older than about 1½ tended to be scared. But the babies, never. They were soon moving about under water as if they'd been born to it ... We did not go into the program with the idea of making our kids Olympic swimmers. Teaching them to swim at an early age was not even very important to us; we didn't know that we would be moving to Fla, to a house with a pool, and would later credit those lessons with saving Janet's life. Indeed, it was an important time for father-daughter bonding, as Porter was able to come for several of the sessions ... They are good swimmers, and what's more, have always loved the water ... But so many people these days think that its a terrible thing to do to a child! Even the Amer Acad of Pediatrics (or Pediatricians or something like that) has come out against swimming lessons for children under three. They especially dislike the idea of letting small children put their heads under water. If we didn't already know better, and had listen to those folks, our family would have missed out on a lot of fun, not to mention a very valuable experience.... ((Swimming programs is one of the very few areas where ideas that IAFP espouses are gaining some mainstream acceptance. I think this is due in part to the fact that while its education, it doesn't have that "stigma" of "academic" education. I think its also due in part to the fact that the parent gets immediate and unmistakable feedback that the child is learning and enjoying and benefitting. But its important to show that "Experts Say to Moms: Wait" isn't always good advice, and if parents see that earlier can be better there, then perhaps they'll think: Where else might earlier be better? Alas, because of concerns for hygiene, we did not do this , worrying about ear infections. I think we well may have made a mistake in that regard.

(2) It seems to be the universal tenet of modern education that children will learn about things that interest them. In order to teach something, you find out what the child is interested in, and then figure out how to relate it to what you want to teach (e.g. let him learn decimal fractions by figuring out batting averages, if he likes baseball). Or, you can disguise the lesson with a lot of interesting action, a la Sesame Street. Both of these approaches may be useful, but I think they represent a backwards approach. Its been my observation that children (and adults too, for that matter) are interested in whatever things they know something about. Teach a child to recognize a few birds, and suddenly he's a bird watcher. Teach him to count, and he'll do it all the time. ...Take him to an orchestra concert and he'll be bored after a few minutes, but if they play music he's already familiar with, he'll listen, rapt, to the whole show. There are exceptions, of course ... But it has been my experience that, whatever a child is exposed to on a regular basis, in a positive context, he will enjoy. What a responsibility this is for parents! We have so few years in which we have the power to influence our children's tastes, in which, whatever we do and think is important simply because we are Mom and Dad...I do not think this power is misplaced ...Do

some people really think that the influence of their children's peers, say, is more legitimate than their own? ...

(3) We are classical music fans, and have always had good music in the house ((note how quickly "classical" and "good" become equated!)). But it was not until Janet was 3 and Heather 6 that we had the idea of giving them a tape of Bach music to fall asleep to. They had had many records and tapes of their own, mostly of the "kid music" and story type (which I am not knocking) and had often listened to them at bedtime, but Bach was an instant hit ... it has been a bedtime miracle, particularly for Janet ... We never have any trouble getting the kids to sleep in a strange place, if we have the tape recorder and music. I wish I had known about this earlier ... Janet, after a few months of this was easily recognizing the difference between "Bach" and "not Bach" you mentioned Suzuki music lessons...Heather takes Suzuki piano, and I have nothing but praise for the philosophy. She started quite late, just after her 7th birthday, but the methods are still valuable.

(4) For years I looked for books with simple, clearly-defined, distinct pictures. There are no color books, for example, that show simply "red"; instead, they have a confusing profusion of red birds, red wagons, red flags, etc. And the books of animals have too many different kinds on one page ... I felt that at least some of the books for children should be simple in style rather than content. I've never found anything like what I was looking for, so you can see why the flashcard concept appeal to me (there are a few books out like that, which I cut up for flashcards).

(5) I discovered the truth that is so cleverly hidden by all the professionals: there is very little that is as much fun as teaching your own children ... Not only do they not encourage parents to share in the joy of teaching, but they actively discourage it. Here in Florida it is (for this year at least) legal for a parent to teach his children at home, as long as it can be shown that the children are learning what they should be. Altho very few people take advantage of this opportunity, you'd be surprised at the fuss that the NEA is making just because its legal ... I have nothing but admiration for the "True Teacher, who can teach a whole classroom of kids. I've tried it as a Sunday School teacher; I can't do it, and I don't like it. But with my own kids, its a different story. But with my own kids, its a different story ... they enjoy learning as much as I do teaching. Whether this is from a true joy of learning, or because they can sense that I'm having fun, and that makes it more fun for them, I don't know, but I don't think it makes much difference. ((I suspect that the former arises eventually from the latter)). I will be forever grateful to Glenn Doman (and to Raymond Moore, who from an entirely different perspective said the same thing) for telling me that its OK to teach my own children, thus giving me something to do with them that is far more interesting than endless games of "Candyland."

...It came as a surprise to me to find out that we were actually doing our kids some good by hanging them upside down, swinging them around, flying thru the air. I thought we were just shocking the relatives. If I'd have known, I'd have done more. ((Its a bit more than just tossing the kid thru the air. Its not actually hanging up side down per se, which kids may like simply because it makes the world look different. Rather, its the changing of the child's orientation that stimulates the brain; its the process, not the orientation, that matters. I would swing Joshua (and now Ezra) upside down, but he wouldn't normally be

held that way for more than a second before being swung up again. A session would be 6-10 of these, in fairly rapid succession, and I generally tried for 3 or 4 sessions a day))

They say that kids don't like testing, I know, but ours insist on it. Whenever we do flashcards (we have a modest few ...) I always hear "don't say it, Mom, let me guess!" To get any teaching in, I have to say, "you can say it, but you have to be faster than I am." This also lets me get her off the hook if she really doesn't know. ((Sounds like you need some new flashcards. We continue to use the "Flashcard Game" (Joshua stands in the center of a circle of well-known cards, and he points to them as I call off their names), and he continues to view it as a treat, and if I promise it to him, and we forget, he reminds me the next morning that he got gypped. I can sometime control late-evening wildness by reminding him that if he's not cooperative, he won't get the game. I've become worried that he may forget the material that's in Ezra's decks, since he doesn't see them on a regular basis; they're not in his rotation any more. So, I pick out one of Ezra's decks, and we have a "review session" on that deck morning and evening, with his regular cards. Normally, he would be offended by having to look at Ezra's cards, which he views as having already learned. But I can cover the whole thing by presenting it as preparation for the evening's "Flashcard Game" --- which is indeed what it is. My point here is not the details of what I do, but that testing 1) can be enjoyable, so long as the kid gets the clear message that the process is to demonstrate what he knows (and not to expose what he doesn't know) 2) can be integrated into the learning process. When he gets older, that integration will take on much more sophisticated forms)).

Granted, there is much less support available in our society for father than for mothers, but I don't believe that there's that much for mothers, either. I've hardly found it "suffocating". I agree that there are a lot of women's magazines out there, but ... I have yet to see one that even comes close to supporting the eclectic mix of philosophies that compose my approach to motherhood... Most such magazines seem to assume that parents (especially mothers) are complete idiots. But I would give up all the magazines for some neighbors who share more than a few of our approaches to childbearing. I'll admit that I am an anachronism, being one who strongly believes that it is important for the children to have at least one full time parent... I am firmly opposed to day-care, even before-and-after school care, unless it is a matter of financial necessity. This old-fashioned attitude immediately alienates me from most people in this country... We are blessed with many friends on our block, but there are no other full time mothers. We do know some full-time mothers ... further away, and I've found their support very helpful, but I am even more radical than that. That is, I am totally opposed to nursery school, or formal preschool in any form. I know no other parents who feel this way. I firmly believe that the home is the child's best environment in the early years, (I'd extend that to about 8, but I can't do anything about it, short of taking Heather out of school)

are an "anachronism", altho they are the minority view among both experts and mothers in this country. Moreover, I suspect that most mothers who do go back to work, especially with a child under a year old, recognize full well the drawbacks to the baby, even if they feel that, overall, they are making the best decision. There are women who feel honestly, that they just cannot cope with a 2 year old, all day, every week day, without

rather serious side-effects on themselves, on their marriage, and even on their relationship with their kid. Your flat-out opposition to child care (except for financial necessity) translates into the message that such a woman should not have a child, and I believe you are setting too demanding a standard. No day care can ever be ideal, but there's no justifi-

fication for concluding that no day care can be as good as the worst mother. Sure, no day care is going to be as good as you, so day care is wrong for you. But other mothers may lack your resiliency and patience, may not have as committed a husband as you do, may feel unable to halt their career without some resentment spilling over toward their kid, or a dozen other human failings which a flat out opposition to day care refuses to acknowledge. Your home may be "the best environment", agreed, but to be totally opposed to child care is to make a statement about all homes which is just not justified)) I agree with Raymond Moore (I didn't know that the IAHF's say so too) that peer socialization is mostly negative for preschoolers. (Translation: kids pick up bad habits faster than good ones, a truth if I ever heard ones.) There is very little that a child learns in preschool that can't be taught better at home, thanks to the resources that are available in most communities. We have never felt that our kids have been deprived of interaction with other kids. Thanks to church activities, library storytime, swimming lessons (which are without parents from age 3 up), gymnastics classes, they have had plenty of opportunity to learn about group dynamics ((She goes on to explain how well her two children have turned out in school even tho they didn't attend any preschool)) ((I really wish I could agree with you on the subject of preschool, but I don't. Joshua's preschool starts 8-9 AM, and runs till 1 PM we had a choice of three day a week, or five, and chose the latter. Preschool is where you start getting into hard compromises. There are substantial numbers of pluses and minuses, and while the kid gets nearly all the minuses, he doesn't reap all the pluses. That is, preschool functions somewhat for the benefit of others. In this case, Ezra and Mona. Joshua going to school gives Ezra a large block of time in the morning when he can get the kind of individualized time that is just not available when Joshua is around --- and which Joshua had when he was small. A second kid can almost never get the attention the first kid does, but Joshua being in school gives him a bit of "only-child" time. I firmly believe that this benefit began before Ezra was born. Pregnant women need many things in excess of normal amounts, and one of them is rest. This is especially true for older women (Mona was 40 when Ezra was born). Its even effective now to some degree, as a late morning nap (when Ezra is asleep) can leave her in much better position to deal with the both of them in . . . afternoon and evening. I am aware of what kids pick up even at preschool. Yesterday, Joshua was proclaiming that he was "Superman and G.I. Jones" I asked him who these people were, and he hadn't the slightest clue; he was just repeating playground talk. You try to reenforce the good, and counteract the bad, but there are limits to how effective that can be. At the same time, he gets things in school which he is, as a practical matter, unlikely to get at home, especially in the arts and crafts department, and in terms of playground equipment that's available to him, and in being taught songs. The socialization question is perhaps the most contentious, turning on two unresolved points: At what age do the advantages of such interactions outweigh the disadvantages? To what extent are non-school socializations able to do what pre-school does? One of the things that

preschools can do, especially for 3 and 4 year olds, is teach how to function in medium size groups. I don't mean such matters as how to wait in line, but also how to adjust to the people around you. By seeing the same group of kids on a regular basis, your kid gains some knowledge of what to expect from them, and learns how to put that knowledge to use. From this flows a clearer sense of how people differ in ways other than size (which the family can usually teach very well, since everyone usually differs in size from your kid), and from that can flow a clearer sense of self. We have no regrets at all about sending Joshua to pre-school, altho part of this was luck -- we happen to have hit two very good ones, and Joshua's personality seems to have adapted well.))

You will not be surprised, then, when I say that I find the idea of all-day kindergarten, or public pre-K classes, appalling. Since I don't approve of the theory, you can imagine how I feel about our tax money paying for such a thing. I would far rather see the money go toward teaching "disadvantaged" parents to help their kids at home, as some of the newer "headstart-type" programs have done ((The one in Missouri is open to all parents, not just disadvantaged one)). I would rather, if it came to that, pay a mother or father to stay at home with her child, than offer federally funded day-care so she can go to work. ((Have you any idea how collosally expensive such a plan would be? Society isn't even willing to put up enuf money to run enuf federally funded day-care facilities, which are more efficient (\$-wise) in that one person can take care of, say, 4 or 5 kids. Paying people the difference between their salary and childcare costs would be far more expensive. Moreover, people work for more than just their "pay". In many cases, people also work for health benefits (for themselves and their family), for Social Security quarters, to gain the experience needed for a better job, and even for the self-esteem that comes from a job)) ... Even here in "backward" Florida, all day K is state-mandated, and public pre-K is starting next year in certain counties ... The schools themselves don't think much of it. There is really little gained by those extra hours, since they need to include lunch and naptime (also state-mandated; I don't know about Joshua, but our kids haven't napped since they were two). ((Joshua naps about half the days, but more on that later. Janet will likely just be put on a mat with a book or two. The argument against all-day K is only slightly stronger than the argument against all-day first grade. With so many kids coming into K with 1-3 years background in pre-school, the old notion that kids can't handle so much time away from their parents has been demolished. So it comes down to a question of economics: Are 5-year olds worth the money people are willing to spend on six-year olds? If a parent feels that all day-K is undesirable for their child (e.g. you), they should have the right to limit it to half-day, unless the state can show that the parent is not acting in the best interest of their child (which would be rather difficult to show!) But otherwise, I think all-day K should be available for parents, like me, who feel that is what is best for their kid.

The really big crime of public education (and most private schools aren't much better) is that so much of a child's precious time is wasted. Take a 1:30 teacher student ratio ((that would be very very unusual in this area for an elementary school, as Va, Md and DC all mandate lower ratios)), add to the fact that many of the children are poorly behaved ((etc.. Public schools will be covered in a future essay some years hence, as I've no personal experience to draw from. But the issue is important. Indeed, in looking for our home recently, we heard such good things about a particular elementary school that we limited our search to

the boundaries of that school district!))

... By the way, thaks for printing Mona's comment that motherhood is by far the hardest job she's ever done. I needed that. When I earned my living as a computer programmer, I had the respect, even awe, of many people. Motherhood is much trickier, much harder, and much more exhausting, and you can't leave it behind you at 5:00. Its a good thing its also much more rewarding, because all those people who think it takes a brilliant person to be a computer programmer think any fool can be a ((good)) parent. ((Thanx for your letter which was, even with all the editing, the longest ever run in DIPLOMACY DIGEST))

RANDOLPH SMYTH: ... I found it interesting enough to take a couple of precious hours away from studying to go through it. Nothing has any practical value today, but who knows, in five years? Anyhow, its an issue I intend to keep until I know whether it ever will be relevant...

... Has this organization come out with recommendations for older kids as well? ((None that I know of. It may be that they are waiting for some experience with older kids, to be generated at their school)) Presumably the flashcards aren't going to grab the interest of a 10-year old in quite the same way. ((The course never made any mention as to how long the bitcard program could be kept up. They did say it should start before the kid turns 6, or by the time he was 5, but this is not the same thing. At current turnaround rates, cards introduced to Joshua could last as long as 2 years before being turned over to Ezra --- but will he still be viewing them at 5 $\frac{1}{2}$??? There is no doubt that his relationship to the cards chages as he grows older. In the past few months, I've seen a phenominon which didn't exist when I wrote the earlier essay and can best be descibed as Joshua taking the bitcards for granted. This sometimes occurs in the evening session if Ezra is in the same room and moving about. Joshua tries to monitor both Ezra and the bitcards, giving the cards the briefest look and then watching Ezra. I may speed up the rate, or engage him in discussion of particular cards, or admonish him to pay attention. If that doesn't work, I'm not about to let the bitcards become background viewing, and so I abruptly terminate the session, telling him that he's just not paying attention. He invariably become quite alarmed and pleads with me, sometimes with tears in his eyes, to show him the rest of his cards (which I do). I've never had to do this twice, as he's quite good afterwards)) You made a passing reference to acrobatic 8 year olds without much description of how they got that way.

SCOTT MARLEY: Issue #100 was the best reason for renewing you could have sent me. I'm glad you're not letting some ((expletive deleted)) child psychologist tell you what Piaget said. Piaget never said it was harmful to expose kids to ideas too early, just that they won't absorb them until a certain age. ((And keep in mind that "ideas" and what bitcards display (facts) aren't the same thing. The idea of e.g. gracefullness is beyond the one year old, but the picture of a cheetah she can absorb. When she's older, she can start to associate the two)). American education sucks, and educators like to use that as an excuse, when the truth is that our teachers can't teach, and when Joshua grows up knowing who Kandinsky and Lautrec are, it'll make everybody else look real bad. ((Part of this arises from how poorly we pay teachers. In the areas where college graduates move into, teachers get paid the worst. By contrast, in Japan, a teacher starts at a salary which is approximately at the median for college grads.

That means that a lot of college students just don't take the idea of teaching seriously --- because society doesn't. School systems cannot be very selective in hiring, and, particularly in math and the sciences, are vulnerable to being raided by outsiders looking for, e.g. computer programmers, technicians, etc. This is especially true when the teacher has children to support. "You get what you pay for" isn't the whole story, but it's a good part of it.) Just don't force anything on Joshua that he doesn't really like, and you'll be fine. ((People shouldn't really worry so much about "forcing" Altho you can force a, say, 13 year old to learn, you really can't force a three year old to learn. If she's not interested, that's the end of it. I've yet to run across a bitcard that Joshua doesn't like, altho he seems to just tolerate the dotcards)). Even if he goes for the trashy stuff for a while, encourage it, give him plenty of it, and when he gets a little tired of it he will be ready for the subtler stuff. Before you appreciate Picasso, you have to go thru a stage where you like cats with big eyes and poker playing dogs. ((I don't agree with you here. I'm not going to show him poker playing dogs --- he'll see that in the general environment, and I don't think you need to become bored-with-the-kitch to appreciate the "subtler stuff". "Picasso" is the standard for ridicule for showing art to kids, but in fact, a lot of his work is not unduly abstract, cubist or bizarre. Some of it, moreover, is only moderately strange, which doesn't seem to bother him. The problem arises is that when Joshua asks, "Why is one eye red and the other eye blue", I don't have the slightest idea! Picasso has plenty of pictures with children in them, and one of them, "Two Brothers" is one of Joshua's favorite cards. I repeat, there is nothing wrong with showing Picasso to a kid who cannot yet walk. Do not underestimate what can delight.))

J.C. HODGINS: Congratulations on your 100th anniversary issue... You mentioned that Joshua could ((virtually memorize a book read to him 15 times, which surprised me since I couldn't have done it)). He has one advantage over you --- Joshua can't read.

...While taking a course on Greek and Roman literature in second year university, the professor told us a very interesting thing. ...The Greek performers used to recite the Iliad, that very long poem for their audiences --- from memory! ((Or so they claimed. No culture is immune to exxageration)). It sounds amazing, but adults, (as opposed to children ...) could and did memorize very long, very complex stories. This illustrates that the phemonon is not restricted to kids.

However, all this happened before writing, and reading, came into common practice in Greece. When writing began to dominate, and more and more people learned how to read, those "educated" people began to lose their capacity to remember, because they didn't need it anymore. Even today, certain cultures still practice storytelling as a much better art than the western cultures. These cultures haven't caught up to us in the ability to read and write. The professor used the example of children and nursery rhymes to illustrate her point. Children gave a great capacity to remember rhymes when little, but as soon as they begin to read, they lose this ability very quickly ... I think it is not so much that they can learn easily, but they can use the humna ability of memory to a greater extent than can we adults who are "educated". ... Interesting, isn't it? ((Interesting, yes; persuasive, no. I agree that necessity is the mother of invention. But all you can say here is that societies which become literate need not rely on gifted individuals to preserve stories. That is

, its entirely possible that the memory in our society is every bit as good as the memory in ancient Greece (that is, our reading hasn't harmed our memory). In each society, perhaps one adult in 100,000 has an extraordinary memory. In Greece, this special gift would allow such a person to gain great visibility as a story teller. In our society, the same people could not gain such visibility, since we don't need them all that much. Such a person might get a job as a numbers-runner (no need to carry those incriminating betting slips) or a waitress (wows the patrons by keeping track of complex dinner orders for large parties with no note pad), but no University professor is going to remark on them 2000 years later. Now, there is a strange phenomenon called eidetic memory, in which certain people have the ability to recall images with astonishing clarity. It appears that these people store information in a different way, in a more directly visual way, than do ordinary people, but little is known about it because it is so rare. There is some evidence that the ability is more common in small children, and then usually disappears. Whether this very unusual ability disappears because the kid starts to read is another matter.)

....Finally, a word about the issue as a whole. You state on page 1 that a publisher would write about what he is interested in, not the readers. You then proceed to do so. I agree with you to a certain extent. You won't produce good work if you are not interested in the topic at hand. But in the case of a zine like DD, don't you think the readers have the right to expect the topic(s) to be somewhat related to Diplomacy in some form? A publisher may write about his favorite movies, or his stamp collection, or his personal life, but that should only take up a portion of the issue, I think. The reader should expect most of the issue to pertain to what he has paid for --- in this case, articles on Diplomacy. You did state that the issue was an atypical one, and I will admit that you generally don't write about your personal life, but my point is that you have "used" 3 issues of my subscription, at your whim, to devote to this topic. In a way, you have reduced my sub by three without producing the "promised" material ... I think this is taking publishers' guidelines a bit too far... (You've made valid points, and I'm sure that many of my readers agree with you entirely, and might even use stronger language. Taken over the span of several years, DD prints less on personal life than many zines. For some zines --- some of the best zines --- this material is a staple. DD is not outside the norm in this regard. I simply package it differently. Rather than a modest essay every other issue or so, years go by with nothing, and then its all bunched together. Its a matter of format. I could have broken the essay down into 10-20 pieces, and then serialized it over a period of, say, 2 years, and could have met your "take only a portion of the issue" criterion, but a great deal would have been lost in that approach. Secondly, keep in mind that this is amateur publishing. Ultimately, what you are "promised" is nothing more than what the publisher feels like putting out. A zine may have a mixture of games and reading material, but then go for several issues with nothing beyond the games because the editor lacks the time or inclination to do more. Newsweek can't do something like that, but we amateur publishers can. Please keep that in mind, because if we can't write about what we want to, then the whole operation becomes less fun.)

BRUCE LINSEY: I greatly enjoyed your essays on parenting. You had one idea which I've also been planning to implement if/whenever I have kids, namely, the avoidance of sweets. Subject of course to my partner's feelings, too, I'd even eliminate dried fruit and ice cream from a baby's diet right from day one. Not only do I think that its probable that a child's tastes are acquired very early, but my sister Judy tells me that stuffing a kid full of calories like this in the first year can lay the groundwork for obesity. Fat cells are formed very early even if the weight gain doesn't appear abnormal till later. (Judy has a masters degree in nutritional therapy, and my paraphrase of what she told me may not be 100% accurate, but its close). ((Its best not to be too rigid, because you don't want fights over food to dominate the relationship with the kid. The problem is not the "first year". Diet then is easy to control, the kids preferences aren't expressed is sharp form, and dried fruit is beyond their ability to eat anyway. Dried fruit --- which normally comes down to raisins --- is a very common snack and an extremely portable type of food, and you often need something to take the edge off if a meal is delayed. Aside from the effect on teeth, I'm not sure that there's much point in drawing a line beteen grapes and raisins --- they've got the same amount of sugar in them. And dried figs can help regulate a kid's bowels. Fresh figs are rather hard to come by. And something like dried apple is probably less sweet than a fresh orange. So aside from diluting his fruit juice, we don't really worry about that. And occasional ice cream at a party, or hamantaschen at Purim, etc is just no big deal, and I don't see any justification for causing the kid to feel left out. The purpose here is not to avoid any contamination with things that are not, after all, poisons. The purpose is to avoid the attitude that sweets are a normal part of every meal, that the kid is entitled to sweets, and thereby to avoid the obsession with sweets, especially cookies, that so many kids develop))

....An added benefit ((to the bitcards)), one that I don't think you mentioned, is that the person who makes up and administers the cards is likely to learn a lot too. ((Quite true. I never heard of e.g. U trillo before all this started. I've also learned to be cautious about the names of animals, because they are so often generic. I had a nice picture of a sea lion, only to learn that there are at least 6 different kinds of sea lions. I've learned that artists sometimes use the same title for several different works --- e.g. Cezanne has at least 5 versions of "the Card Players". I've learned that the appearance of sculpture can vary widely according to how its photographed, and much much more))

DON'T USE MY NAME: People used to say that "every new generation thinks they have discovered sex". In looking at your education section, I think you've hit on a new version: "Every new, enthusiastic parent thinks they have discovered Infant Stimulation." Despite your frequent posing as a radical, using methods so exotic that people need to read DD to hear about them, the bulk of this is Infant Stimulation. And IS is certainly part of the mainstream of modern parenting. Our church ran a course on "Your Baby's Needs" for new parents, and it was pointed out, and, in a matter-of-fact way, that stimulation is one of the baby's needs, just as are naps, skin contact and all the rest, and you can start this as early as you like. Stimulation is just another aspect or category of child care, a legitimate activity. And aside from perhaps something like flashcards, its not really

controversial. If you look in up-to-date books and magazines, you'll see it covered. ((Ah, would that what you say be true, but its not. For example, the Washington Post recently ran a short interview with Dr. Louise Ames, of the very famous Gesell Institute of Human Development. She doesn't even like books about infant stimulation, saying, "the kind of parent who reads the book is the kid who is already doing everything a parent should be doing. They read the book and get the idea they should be doing a lot more." She also says, "... a lot of the popularity of infant stimulation has petered out. I am not enthusiastic about it." So much for no controversy. And as for stimulation being understood as an activity per se in childraising books, have a look like I did. I checked out "Better Homes and Gardens New Baby Book", "How to Father", "No Fault Parenting" and even "Dr. Spocks Baby and Child Care". All have indexes, some quite substantial, yet NONE had an entry under "Stimulation". And where there is one, it can be fairly grim. In "Understanding your Child from Birth to Three", there is a chapter of about 1 1/2 pages on "Deprivation, Stimulation and Overstimulation". Altho there are some general remarks on the value of stimulation, the chapter closes with a stern warning on the dangers of overstimulation. In fact, my general impression has been that there is as much or more written about the alleged dangers of overstimulation as on the benefits of stimulation. I don't know why this is. If a baby is getting too much visual stimulation, she'll just turn her head, pull away from physical contact, etc. An alert parent can tell if a baby is trying to disengage. If Joshua doesn't want to see his bitcards, he doesn't look at them. Even the more substantive discussions can be quite timid. Take this quote from "The Parents' Encyclopaedia" : "As soon as the child is able to understand, beginning about 2, you can begin pointing out to him shapes and proportions, letters and colors, rhythms and sounds." I cannot understand why the writer would suggest age 2 as an appropriate time to start. Kids are interested in shapes, etc long before their first birthday. Joshua at age 4 months was entranced by my slowly rotating shapes like pentagons in front of his eyes.)) Flashcards are a bit different, and in our course, the lady mentioned that it was better to have your kid experience the world directly rather than indirectly thru flashcards ((The school bulletin where Joshua goes made a similar remark about "second hand knowledge". Sure, I could take Joshua down to the corner and we can wait for an Edsel to cruise by, or maybe an aircraft carrier, and get it all first hand. The other day we left a restaurant, and Joshua was able to correctly identify the Goodyear blimp on a very large billboard --- and I'm sure if he ever sees the real thing, he'll recognize it too)) Still I'd consider flashcards as perhaps an extreme form of IS, but not a step beyond it as you see it. Isn't that how it was presented at your course? ((No. IAHP presented the bitcards as their own creation, and did not attempt to legitimize ("contextualize"?) them as part of the IS methodology. I recently looked at a book called "How to Have a Smarter Baby", subtitled, "The Revolutionary Infant Stimulation Program Explained in Full" (by Ludington-Hoe). It was chock full of gadgets, and methods and toys, etc, many quite imaginative. There was NO MENTION of using flashcards to show pictures of things. The only place they mentioned them was for teaching letters and numerals --- a rather unnecessary use because such things are done in zillions of books. Moreover, the method they suggested -- fanfold computer paper -- is so clumsy that I wonder if the authors tried it.))

JOAN EXTROM: ...Breastfeeding -- it certainly can be confining to have a child physically dependent on you for such a basic need as food ... Mothers have to become proficient at balancing a nursing baby on one arm and handling a fork with the other, trying not to spill too much food on the kid in the process. Samantha ((who turned 4 in Feb)) nursed until she was 16 months old, tho by the end she was nursing only in the morning and evening. ...Weaning was easy -- one night she had the choice between me and a bottle of juice and she chose juice. That was it. ((Joshua's weaning at 11½ was even more gradual, as he was down to about ½ feeding per day. Ezra, on the other hand, is over a year and has only started the process))

Loved the story about Joshua and the library book. Samantha does the same thing. We've often eavesdropped on her, playing in her bedroom and reciting, with the proper inflection, the entire text of one of her books without even looking at the book. She "read" me the book The Lorax by Dr. Seuss ... ((which is quite a long book, tho the rhyme of the book helps. The point here is not that Joan and I have extraordinary kids, but that we don't. When the parent teaches, the child can learn amazingly well)).

...p.9 "This was a very labor-intensive form of child care." That was a problem I had when Samantha was little. Being home alone with a baby all day involves so many routine, exhausting details of physical care that when I finally got a chance to sit down and rest, the last thing I felt like doing was providing stimulation for my child. I wanted to sit and read the paper or just vegetate....((When we took the course at IAHP, I was a bit put off by the large amounts of rah-rah put into the course; I felt the time could be better spent in giving us more information. Now that I'm a parent, tho, I understand that the "motivational material" is going to be needed. This is particularly true for making bitcards, since that entails keeping at it even after the kid is asleep))

I appreciate the fact that you switched back and forth between "he" and "she" when talking about an unidentified child. I'm very much in favor of non-sexist language and examples of it are hard to find. ((True. Even IAHP's book, "How to Multiply Your Baby's Intellegence" says lamely, "To solve the maddening problems of referring to all human beings as "grown up male persons" or "tiny female persons" we have decided to refer most often to all parents as mothers and to all children as boys. Seems fair." No, it doesn't. In the great majority of cases, the context is so clear that there's no doubt as to whether you speak of the child or the adult. In other cases, an extra word is all that is required, or two (e.g. "his" becomes "his or her"; "he" becomes "the baby" or "s/he"). Its not necessary that all be combined as "his or her", or that there be exactly equal number of each, but just plenty of each.))

Page 16--dot cards to teach numbers. Ken and I play backgammon a lot. Samantha has learned to identify numbers from the dice and is learning to add the dots on the dice together. We're not teaching her, its just a natural extension from playing games with dice. ((A good idea, but your child may be learning dice, not numbers. Six on the die is very different from six on the dotcard, because the former has a pattern. Samantha may be learning not sixness per se, but the-pattern-used-for-six))

Page 17 playpens and walkers. We've never had either, but ... there are times when it would be nice to have a safe place to confine your kid. Ever tried to walk around the kitchen with a baby crawling around your feet or hanging onto your legs ((Many times)). The baby could easily be

stepped on or spilled on or could trip you. I've spent many an evening cooking dinner while carrying Samantha in a backpack. It wasn't comfortable, but it was the only solution I could come up with. ((I'd agree; as you are viewing the playpen as a temporary, necessary evil, and not something that's done for the benefit of the child. Many times I have cut the lawn with someone in the backpack, another type of compromise))

I haven't seen anything positive written about walkers, but babies do get to a point before crawling when they desperately want to be mobile, but are physically unable to transport themselves. A walker may not help them walk any sooner (indeed, it may delay it), but it allows them to get somewhere under their own power and I wonder if it might have a positive effect on their self-esteem. ((Maybe, but their job is to learn, and the leg movements to operate a walker are ones a baby is born with, so she learns nothing. Joshua was desperate to learn how to crawl, but despite all our help, he just couldn't get the hang of transferring his weight to the forward arm so he could move the back arm. But his desire to move was so great that he kept trying and trying until he figured it out. If we had switched him to a walker he would just have been marking time, learning nothing about transferring weight, a skill needed for both crawling and walking.))

I disagree with your comments about children's literature on page 21. Sure flashcards have facts associated with them. That's probably important to you as a scientist. But I think books and stories deal with people and relationships, interactions and problem solving in a way that flashcards can't. I could easily see how books and flashcards could be good supplements for each other. ((Agreed; each can do what the other can't. In Ezra's case, the distinction is academic. While he adores his bitcards, it's impossible to get him to look at a book while I read it to him. Joshua was the same way; it wasn't till 15 months that he would consent to having a book read to him. Previously, he would either not be interested, or would want to attack the book physically))

If you don't like what you see in children's literature, why not consider writing some books yourself. I'm considering doing that. For example, I wear hearing aids. They're a normal part of my life and Samantha knows it. I have yet to find a children's book that even mentions hearing aids at all, though many people use them... books deal with deafness and sign language, not hearing aids. ((Any kind of handicap, whether it's a kid in a wheelchair or a bedridden uncle or a disfiguring scar or whatever occurs far less in kids' books than in real life. Moreover, if such a thing does occur, it's more likely to be the focus of the book, rather than something that's remarked upon, but is not of overriding importance. In fairness, I should note that some of the problems with older books, such as the fact that boys are depicted as more active and curious than girls, seem to be disappearing))

((And I think "facts" should be of concern not just to "scientists"! Its my impression (no facts to back it up) that kids see much less in the way of real animals than they used to. Part is the increasing proportion of kids who live in an urban setting. But so much of what they are "exposed" to is TV, and the great preponderance of that is fantasy animals, e.g. Big Bird, Smurfs, etc. It's a rare storybook that has a real animal, as opposed to one which wears clothes and generally is a hybrid of animal and human characteristics. I once overheard a woman at work, saying she had taken her girl to the zoo as part of her 4th

birthday, and the kid was delighted, but "maybe its the novelty; she's only been once before." Mind you, D.C. has a superlative zoo, easily accesable and no admission charge --- but I'll bet her attitude is not that atypical. Piccards are of course no substitute for the zoo, but they are an excellent compliment))

...As for the argument about 3 and 4 year olds not being able to handle long days ... when Samantha is in day care a couple of afternoons a week she gets overstimulated and needs more rest ... getting tired in day care really wears her out. I wonder how she'll handle pre-school for 3 hours a day, 4 days a week. I expect her to need regular naps. ((Good. Joshua is much more likely to take a nap on a school-day than a non-school day. Coming home tired tells me he's had an active, engaging day --- and thats what I send him there for, not for passive activities. And the nap per se is a plus ---it means he'll be on better behavior for the few hours I get to see him after work, and it frees up Mona's time, for Ezra or herself))

Ken's ideas about fathering are similar to yours ((she gives many many examples of what he does)) Have you ever noticed fathers referring to how they "babysit" their kids? Its as if its something out of the ordinary ((and custodial, rather than childraising)) Have you ever heard of a mother "babysitting" her own kids? No, because its assumed that childcare is the mother's responsibility. I'm totally in agreement with Mona that motherhood is an extremely hard job. Its a fulltime job in itself, but besides, a mother is usually expected to take full responsibility for the house ... plus have the time and energy left over for a relationship with her husband. That leaves little, if anytime left over for her emotional and intellectual needs. I find if my own needs are neglected for any length of time (we're talking about a few days) things fall apart in other areas. So, I'm in a book discussion group, on committees at church, taking a writing class, and so on. I'm a much better mother when I can get away from my kid regularly, and deal with other adults...

Samantha slept with us until she was about two. She still joins us several nights a week. She considers our bed hers, tho she has her own room, bed, etc. ((In))...The Family Bed ... the author naively suggests that there just doesn't seem to be any problems associated with a family bed ... for at least two years Samantha wouldn't go to sleep unless someone lay down with her. That was often a 1-2 hour process. Even in a queen size bed a wiggly kid can make sleep difficult or uncomfortable for parents((I suspect using the parent's bed routinely at night easily becomes a habit very difficult to break when the parents have had enough. We have used it sparingly on nights when Ezra doesn't seem to be able to get back to sleep after a middle of the night feeding.))




There's more to Joans letter, but thats all the room, alas. I am of course intersted in any reaction to this issue, but I don't plan to print any more. Next issue we go back to the regular format, and I'll give my COA at that time. We will be moving in early July, and while I can get out a May issue, a June issue is doubtful at this time. Next issue should have some discussion of hobby events, including the revival of Costaguana and Greatest Hits, the demise of Europa Express (sob!), the fine new issue of DW, a Runestone Ballot, and more.

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