

OneBranch

a newsletter for parents and families

the art of Listening

by Brenda Aueland

It is through this creative process that we at once love and are loved.

I want to write about the great and powerful thing that listening is. And how we forget it. And how we don't listen to our children, or those we love. And least of all - which is so important, too - to those we do not love.

But we should. Because listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. Think how the friends that really listen to us are the ones we move toward, and we want to sit in their radius as though it did us good, like ultraviolet rays.

Who are the people, for example, to whom you go for advice? Not to the hard, practical ones who can tell you exactly what to do, but to the listeners; that is,



the kindest, least censorious, least bossy people you know.

It is because by pouring out your problem to them, you then know what to do about it yourself.

When we listen to people there is an alternating current that recharges us so we never get tired of each other. We are constantly being re-created.

Continued on page 5

a record of Nature

by Fred Gehlbach

My parents were farmers as children and brought the knowledge they gained to my childhood. So when I grew up at the end of pavement on the city's edge, we raised chickens, rabbits, and had a vegetable garden an acre in size.

Almost a hundred years ago, when my parents were young, farmers had to keep their own daily records of crop growth, harvest, weather, and wildlife interactions, because there was little media information for them to use. So we con-

tinued to jot down daily observations.

Even after our city-edge farming ceased, because suburbia grew around us, my dad kept a daily record of weather and wild bird observations, since he liked to feed the birds. So I was exposed to daily journaling about our home environment, and the usefulness of notes about events and what they meant. During grade and junior high school, I delivered the morning paper on my bicycle and passed through wooded areas.

I kept notes on my observations of nature and people and noticed many interesting things, including birds that weren't supposed to be there. After some time I learned that wildflowers bloomed early or late depending on the year's

Continued on page 8

What's inside...

- 2 Setting Priorities, Daddy Go Home!
- 2 Reading Aloud - Does it Matter?
- 3 A Teacher's plea for parent involvement
- 4 Growing a Baby
- 5 In the Library
- 6 Word Search Game
- 7 Help for Reluctant Mentors on Becoming Teachable
- 8 A Treatise on Reading
- 8 Nature Notes from 2003
- 10 Lessons Brought Home Series
- 12 Background on the Parent's Library

note from the editor



For this winter issue we decided to try to be as still as a tree and listen.

We find ourselves moving through the fifth year of the 21st century with more problems in society than we can even grasp. So what does a parent do? That question keeps coming up. What lessons can we bring? What do we need to rethink, unlearn and relearn? Are we listening to the messages around us?

We invited parents and other caring adults to write about issues that could use some of our attention. Like the importance of family time, listening, and sharing stories. Like the awareness of our environment and our part in it.

As a parent of three young children, I have found that listening is not as easy as it sounds. Some days it seems an incredible balancing act to face the flood of diversions that seek my attention. In other words, I need ear training. So I can learn to filter through the noise and hear the music. So that I can notice and be less susceptible to distractions of the world. So that my family might have a chance to be on a learning path and pursue quality of life.

But it doesn't end there. I also need to learn more about history. So that I can bring lessons to my family from the past.

Sincerely,
Lisa Westbrook

setting priorities, Daddy Go Home!

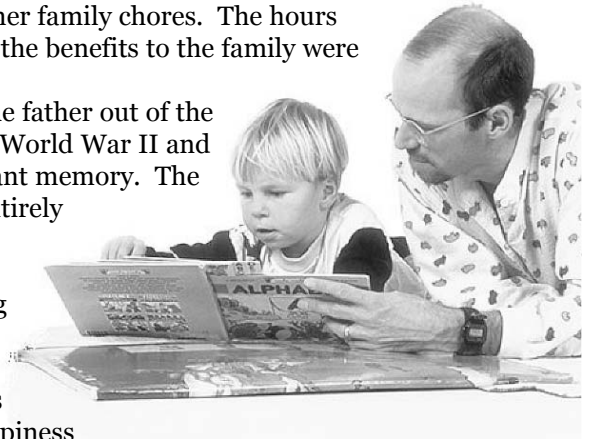
by Tim Seelig

With the industrial revolution came a new attitude and commitment to the workplace. Prior to the industrial revolution, the American society was almost entirely agrarian and all members of the family were involved in the income. Children learned, as soon as they could walk, how to plant and harvest, feed livestock and other family chores. The hours were generally long and hard, but the benefits to the family were immeasurable.

The industrial revolution took the father out of the home. The mother followed after World War II and the family that was became a distant memory. The competition for jobs created an entirely new breed of American worker.

Suddenly the American Dream seemed available to anyone willing to work for it, no matter the sacrifice. Terms such as "latchkey kids" became common descriptors of our new society. Pursuit of happiness got mixed up with material gain at the expense of the family. Day care centers were erected in every neighborhood and became the new family structure.

Continued on page 7



reading aloud

Does it Matter?

by Don Hooser

Why aren't parents, grandparents, and teachers reading aloud to children like they used to? Largely because of television, overly busy schedules, and modern education that places too much stress on assignments that can be measured and tested. But we don't have to rely totally on the schools. And we can choose to turn off the TV and give a child the full attention he or she longs for and needs.

We all have 24 hours in our days. It is not as much a matter of time as priorities. We choose to do the things that we feel are most important.

Reading aloud will motivate children to read more. Then the more they practice (read), the better they get at it; the better they get at it, the more they like it; and the more they like it, the more they'll do it. They'll have much more of a bent for books. Adults must ignite the

spark of desire in the reading.

And what about the effects on family relations of reading together? Reading, unlike TV watching, is a social experience. Reading brings parents and children together. They can stop at any time to talk about the story or to laugh or cry together.

They are sharing matters of the mind and heart. They are building emotional bridges.

One of my best memories from childhood is of my mother reading with me and my brothers. I especially remember our reading Miss Minerva and William Green Hill and laughing until tears were streaming down our faces. And one of the best memories I have of my own children is when I was reading to them.

Continued on page 4

a teacher's plea for

Parent Involvement

by Sherry Hammons

"Mommy, read to me please," pleaded four year old Maggie. "In a minute, Mommy's busy right now," responded her mother. Maggie knew the routine, it was always in a minute, but the minute seldom ever came. Unfortunately, this scenario takes place countless times in a majority of households.

Parents are under more pressure than ever and are spread thin. In every direction, demands are placed on them by jobs, family, friends and social activities. There are car payments, mortgages, car repairs, home maintenance, medical bills, etc. The list goes on and on and sadly so do our children. They grow up and leave the comfort and safety of the nest and no longer require our attention. As parents, we need to question what effect our example is portraying to our children. The leaders of tomorrow, the very people who will make decisions for us in our old age were not given, for the most part, our undivided attention. We institutionalized them in day care at an early age and

rationalized our behavior with the notion that quality time was more important than quantity time. We missed so many of the important little things that add up to the big picture. How can we wonder why the younger generation has no work ethic for the most part and expect at a young age what the older generation worked for years to attain.

As a parent whose children have left the safety of the nest, I can say with much remorse that I myself was guilty at times of being too busy for my children. How I regret so deeply all the times I put them off when they wanted my time, when they needed me to listen more and talk less.

As a teacher it grieves me to observe the lack of parenting taking place in our homes. Children spend a majority of their time in front of the TV or video games. There seem to be few interactive, family centered activities



taking place anymore. A large number of children start to school knowing the latest cartoon characters or the teeny bopper singers but have very limited exposure to good literature.

Somewhere, adults have lost the priceless gift of spending time with their children and really listening to what they have to say. It has made many young children and adolescents aggressive and angry as adults. It has been said that the greatest gift we can give our children is for the parents to love one another. It needs to go one step further, love one another and love your children and do it while there is still time. If you wait until the car keys are in their hands, you have waited too long. The time you spend with your child now impacts the rest of their lives - make it count, we only get to do it once. ■

Sherry Hammons has been a first grade teacher for 20 years.

a few board books
to read aloud

- *On Mother's Lap* by Ann Herbert Scott, illustrated by Glo Coalson, (Clarion Books), New York, 1972.
- *The Lost Sheep* by Kenneth N. Taylor, (Tyndale House Publishers) 1990.
- *Duck is Dirty* by Satoshi Kitamura, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux), New York, 1996.
- *Abraham's Home* by Gordon Stowell, (Moody Press), 1998.
- *From Seed to Sunflower* by Barbara Reid (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd)

the role of
Listening

by Patricia Galvan

Growing up in rural Maine, I spent countless hours in my great-grandmother's kitchen listening in fascination as she told stories about her youth. She passed on sagas about numerous members of my large family and told anecdotes about neighbors that she chronicled in detail to a willing audience.

Why did I find her stories so appealing and what role did 'Listening' play in my early history?

I think the answer, in part, is that listening helps to establish connections between individuals and local experience that explain to a child where they exist in the scheme of

things. These stories and thereby the knowledge that is transmitted through these stories act as an impetus in decision making and choices that are made during childhood in preparation for the adult experience.

Listening engages the imagination filling the mind's palate with information that transforms the spoken word into a three dimensional form, that contains flavor, texture and meaning to each child.

Through listening to my grandmother's stories I learned to develop investigative techniques and practiced communication skills. By practicing active listening, I learned about the world around me, I discovered who my parents were, where I fit into the family tree and began to build a blueprint of my personal identity. ■

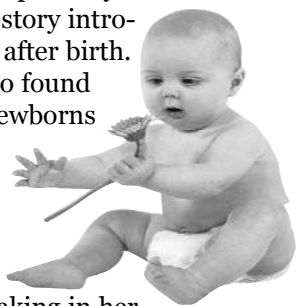
growing a Baby

Interesting research findings

By Breanna Waldrop

I recently read an article that highlights amazing findings about fetuses and their capabilities.

A psychology professor at the University of Carolina, Greensboro, Dr. Anthony DeCasper, found while researching auditory stimulation and response that newborn babies prefer a story read to them repeatedly in the womb to a new story introduced after birth. He also found that newborns prefer to hear their mother speaking in her native language than a foreign one.



There were many other interesting findings. One more that stood out was by researchers Jean-Pierre Lecanuet, Ph.D. and colleagues in Paris, France. They found while researching fetal hearing that fetuses can tell strangers' voices apart, and that they seemed to like familiar stories better than unfamiliar ones.

See if you can find the article to read all the other fascinating discoveries researchers are finding about babies!

Hopson, Janet L., Fetal Psychology (Sept/Oct 1998) Psychology Today, pp.44-48.

reading aloud

from page 2

However, I didn't realize how important it is to read to your children until I heard Jim Trelease being interviewed. In the United States, he is the most well-known advocate of reading aloud

to children. I deeply appreciated reading his book, *The New Read-Aloud Handbook*. If you read it, you'll be sold on the value of reading aloud to children. The book answers any question you might have about this vital subject and teaches you how to be a more effective reader when reading aloud. It gives many suggestions for good read-aloud books.

Who should do the reading, mother or father? Both! In the average family, the mother does most of the reading to the children. Boys get the message that reading is not masculine and therefore lose interest. As a consequence, most of the children in remedial-reading classes are boys. Therefore the father must display as much interest in developing his

child's mind and heart as in developing his body. The father and his children benefit greatly when he reads to them.

When is the best time to start your read-aloud program? When your children are very young, the younger the better. Parents talk to their child as soon as he is born. We know that this talking is very beneficial for the chil-

dren in bonding and in teaching the language. Likewise, the same is true of reading to children. When a child becomes a reader, and even when he gets to be a teenager, there is no reason to stop this family tradition. We never get too old to enjoy a good story. As a child gets

older, reading together is important in a little different way. It's important to have an aid in keeping the lines of communication open. Children may open up more about a relationship problem after reading about a similar problem. As children face increasing moral temptations and dilemmas, the situation in a story and the relaxed togetherness with the parents may lead to a helpful discussion. ■

History Detectives book search

Look on Grandma's bookshelf to see if you can find any books by William D. Hayes. Books by this author include Project Genius 1972 (6th Printing) and Project Scoop (1966) and are fun to read aloud.

picture books to read aloud

- *When Marian Sang by Pam Munoz Ryan, illustrated by Brian Selznick (Scholastic).*
- *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge by Mem Fox, illustrated by Julie Vivas, Scott Foresman (Pearson K-12).*
- *The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Stephen Gammel, (Pearson Learning).*
- *David's Songs by Colin Eisler, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney (Dial Books).*
- *Pancakes, Pancakes! By Eric Carle (Aladdin Library).*
- *Rattlebang by Mark McCord, (Chariot Books).*
- *What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin? By Jean Fritz, illustrated by Margot Tomes (Puffin).*
- *Stickeen by John Muir, as retold by Donnell Rubay, illustrated by Christopher Canyon, (Dawn Publications).*
- *A Baby Sister for Frances by Russell Hoban, Pictures by Lillian Hoban (Scholastic).*

art of listening

from page 1

That is why, when someone has listened to you, you go home rested and lighthearted.

Recently, a man I had not seen for 20 years wrote me. He was an unusually forceful man and had made a great deal of money. But he had lost his ability to listen. He talked rapidly and told wonderful stories.. But when I spoke - restlessness: "Just hand me that, will you?... Where is my pipe?" It was just a habit. *He read countless books and was eager to take in ideas, but he just could not listen to people.*

Patient listening

Well, this is what I did. I was more patient - I did not resist his non-listening talk as I did my father's. I listened and listened to him, not once pressing against him, even in thought, with my own self-assertion.

I said to myself: "He has been under a driving pressure for years. His family has grown to resist his talk. But now, by listening, I will pull it all out of him. He must talk freely and on and on. When he has been really listened to enough, he will grow tranquil. He will begin to want to hear me."

And he did, after a few days. He began asking me questions. And presently I was saying gently:

"You see, it has become hard for you

to listen."

He stopped dead and stared at me. And it was because I had listened with such complete, absorbed, uncritical sympathy, without one flaw of boredom or impatience, that he now believed and trusted me, although he did not know this.

"Now talk," he said. "Tell me about that. Tell me all about that." Well, we walked back and forth across the lawn and I told him my ideas about it.

"You love your children, but probably don't let them in. Unless you listen, you can't know anybody. Oh, you will know facts and what is in the newspapers and all of history, perhaps, but you will not know one single person. You know, I have come to think listening is love, that's what it really is."

Well, I don't think I would have written this article if my notions had not had such an extraordinary effect on this man. For he says they have changed his whole life.

He wrote me that his children at once came closer; he was astonished to see what they are; how original, independent, courageous. His wife seemed really to care about him again, and they were actually talking about all kinds of things and making each other laugh.

Family tragedies

For just as the tragedy of parents and children is not listening, so it is of husbands and wives. If they disagree they begin to shout louder and louder - if not actually, at least inwardly - hanging fiercely and deafly onto their own ideas, instead of listening and becoming quieter and more comprehending.

But the most serious result of not listening is that worst thing in the world, boredom; for it is really the death of love. It seals people off from each other more than any other thing.

Now, how to listen. It is harder than you think. Creative listeners are those who want you to be recklessly yourself... They don't love you just when you are nice; they love all of you.

in the Library

Science and Nature Room

This room is now open and features an inquiry question about water. Join us in thinking about this important resource. Thanks to Shaun Venish for his work on these rooms.

Technology Room

Under construction... The featured inquiry question for this room is: *Imagine you are going on a short trip, and you have accessible all the technology of the day. What would you take along to handle your basic needs and communications?* Send your thoughts about this question to thinkgame@onebranch.org.

Parents Reading Room

Under construction... Based on feedback we are designing a room especially for parents/educators to share useful information and stories. Parents, grandparents, and educators are encouraged to share stories, books reviews and helpful tips on parenting!

Collaborative Projects

List of projects for all ages clickable from main room.

Art and Music Room

Under construction... We are asking musicians and artists to join us in designing this room. We'd like to highlight tools that learners can use for art and music. One idea is to have a web slide show of each instrument, such as Day One Violin and introduce the instrument and tell its history. We'd love to hear your ideas.

Visit the Onebranch Interactive Library at www.onebranch.org.

juniors to seniors book club

Anyone who wants to participate in a discussion of one of these titles please send email to Lavon Holcomb j-holcomb@sbcglobal.net

Selections for 2004 include

- The Hornet's Nest by Jimmy Carter (Simon and Schuster)
- Pickled, Potted and Canned by Sue Shepherd (Simon and Schuster)
- Messages from the Wild by Fred Gehlbach (University of Texas Press)

Continued on p.8

a Riddle:

I am a verb. I can be active anywhere, anytime of day or night. I don't cost money and I am fun and helpful. Without me conversation can't happen.

I am



a word Scramble:

Unscramble these words to find out what every family needs.

STRENAP

Answers on p.12

a Game:

From Salt to Sea - A Dictionary Game

There is a saying "what good is an egg without salt?" Season the days of 2004 by looking up the word *Salt* in your dictionary. Think about how a little salt adds flavor



while too much will ruin a good omelet. Then look to see what words come after salt. Check out a few of the words from *Salt all the way to the word Sea*. You may want to salt away a few of them. Careful though, there are characters of all sorts you may encounter on the way. Look up definitions in more than one dictionary if you can.

Word Search

Words from this issue

P	H	E	A	R	Q	U	I	E	T	P
A	E	U	T	E	U	N	N	N	I	A
R	A	G	T	A	I	D	C	C	M	T
E	R	I	E	D	E	E	L	O	E	I
N	I	V	N	I	T	R	U	U	M	E
T	N	E	T	N	H	S	D	R	O	N
S	G	L	I	G	E	T	E	A	M	T
T	B	O	O	K	D	A	D	G	O	S
I	L	V	N	O	S	N	R	E	S	D
L	E	E	I	E	N	D	E	S	O	E
L	I	S	T	E	N	I	N	G	S	E
O	U	R	C	H	I	L	D	R	E	N
O	B	S	E	R	V	E	L	I	F	E
B	U	I	L	D	F	A	M	I	L	Y

Look for these words above

Attention
Patient
Observe
Children
Reading
Understand
Encourage

Include
Parent
Dad
Hearing
Still
Mom
Quiet

Build
Listening
Give
Family
Life
Time
Love

daddy go home

from page 2

The need for both a father and mother in the home is painfully obvious in today's society. Street gangs provide a sense of identity for teenagers. Young girls, desperate for a father figure, fall into bad relationships. Children's brutality to other children is rampant. And family violence has reached epidemic proportions.

Wouldn't it be a refreshing change if we could learn a valuable lesson and bring a new commitment to family values as we progress into the 21st century? Knowing we have to work to live but not forgetting that it is the relationships, and not the stuff we accumulate that matters?

I worked for a man who is a perfect example of today's American worker. When I asked him why he worked 10-12 hours every day and generally one or both weekend days, he responded, "I hope to be recognized for the long hours and be compensated for it."

Unfortunately, corporate America has proliferated this work ethic; one who is more committed to the company line than the family unit. And, sadly enough, my friend will probably be rewarded for his efforts.

Meanwhile his wife, who also works out of the home, provides the majority of the parenting in the family.

He talks about how his kids are out of control and he and his wife seldom have a discussion that doesn't end in an argument. I can't help but wonder what compensation is worth sacrificing a loving and caring relationship with a wife and children - the only legacy most of us will leave after we breathe our last breath. To repeat a common phrase, a man's headstone will never say, "I wish I would have spent more time at the office." ■

Related Articles of Interest

Successful Parenting Begins with the Brain - A Father realizes the importance of parental attention in the article *Successful Parenting begins with the Brain*.

<http://www.ucg.org/gn/gn35/parenting.html>

Slip Sliding Away - a dad notices his affect on his daughter when he tells her he needs some space. Full article at <http://www.familyresource.com>

The Elephant Story - about teenage delinquent elephants in need of male role models terrorizing rhinos. Review of the PBS Special

<http://www.ronnieuggie.com/pachy.htm>

"I became addicted to doing big deals. If I felt trapped or isolated, I could always do another deal and point to it as proof that I didn't need anybody. I relied on my own taste, my own judgement, and my own sense of creativity. I not only had to work long hours, I wanted to. I allowed myself to get completely lost in my work. And who would question that? I was gaining notoriety... More money. More status. More emotional distance. More self-justification. More hiding from my family... I was turning into one cold fish, rarely showing warmth or interest in my wife or family, but still I was the stellar provider."

Lazear, Jonathon (2001). The Man Who Mistook his Job for a Life. New York: Crown Publishers, pp. 28-29.

Help for Reluctant Mentors

on becoming teachable

Howard Baker, who writes a monthly column on servant-centered leadership brings up the important role of humility in mentoring: In his August 2003 editorial, Dr. Baker writes, "A mentor must be humble and teachable. Humility allows us to be released from false thinking and false assumptions."

When you assume you are already right, and that your role as the mentor is only that of changing others, you shut off listening and being influenced by others. You close down open and two-way communication about important issues. You avoid difficult conversations." ■

www.learningleader.com/August_2003.htm

print and web resources for parents

- The High Price of Materialism, Tim Kasser (MIT Press)
- What Kids Really Want that Money can't Buy: Tips for Parenting in a Commercial World, by Betsy Taylor (Warner Books)
- The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the resultant plague of joyless, selfish children, by Robert Shaw (Regan Books)
- A Guide for Learning English <http://esl.fis.edu/>
- Math Puzzles <http://www.stetson.edu/~efriedma/puzzle.html>
- Family Histories <http://www.migrations.org/>
- Informal Education <http://www.infed.org>
- Community Outreach <http://www.utexas.edu/outreach/>
- Family TLC <http://familytlc.net/>
- Public Education Information Resource <http://www.texaseducationinfo.org/>

art of listening

from page 5

In order to listen, here are some suggestions:
Try to learn tranquility, to live in the present a part of the time every day.

Sometimes say to yourself:
"Now. What is happening now?"

This friend is talking. I

people are saying, but also what they are trying to say, and you sense the whole truth about them...Then watch your self-assertiveness. And give it up.

Remember, it is not enough just to will to listen to people. One must really listen.

We should all know this: that listening, not talking, is the gifted and great role, and the imaginative role. And the true listener is much more beloved, mag-

Sometimes say to yourself:

"Now. What is happening now?"

This friend is talking. I am quiet. There is endless time. I hear it, every word."

am quiet. There is endless time. I hear it, every word." Then suddenly you begin to hear not only what

netic than the talker, and he is more effective and learns more and does more good. And so try listening. Listen



to your wife, your husband, your father, your mother, your children, your friends; to those who love you and those who don't, to those who bore you, to your enemies. It will work a small miracle. And perhaps a great one. ■

Brenda Ueland, a prolific Minnesota author and columnist, died in 1985 at the age of 93. From a collection of her essays,

"Strength To Your Sword Arm: Selected Writings by Brenda Ueland." Copyright 1992 by The Estate of Brenda Ueland. This excerpt is from a longer article titled *The Art of Listening* and is reprinted by permission of Holy Cow! Press, Box 3170, Mt. Royal Station, Duluth, Minn. 55803. Phone/Fax: 218-724-1653, www.holycowpress.org.

more on listening

Resources we found while researching the topic of listening

- Horton hears a Who! By Dr. Seuss (Random House Books for Young Readers) Horton's ears hear the pressing needs of a village in distress. I wonder what we would hear, if we could hear like Horton hears?
- A Bugle Call Right in the Ear by Frances Hesselbein Leader to Leader, No. 30 Fall 2003, <http://www.pfd.org/leaderbooks/l2l/fall2003/fh.html>.
- The Lost Art of Conversation (about parents and teens talking together) <http://www.nappaland.com/Nappaland-dot-com/Magazine%20Archive%20pages/Lost%20Art%20of%20Conversation>.
- A website that encourages listening, <http://www.ears-2-hear.com/>.
- A website to encourage us to slow down - includes tips for bringing silence and solitude back into our daily living <http://www.newdream.org/thedream/slowdown.html>.

a record of nature

from page 1

weather and that the wild critters did different things when it snowed or rained and the tree leaves fell or grew. I began to see patterns and came to understand that I was part of those patterns.

By keeping a journal on "what's up" in the local wild and culture, I learned to understand natural patterns that humans cannot control, no matter how hard they try. Eventually, I found that I could learn how the world works by understanding my neighborhood. I discovered for myself, as others have in other places, that humans do not stand apart from the natural world but are part of it. Also, that I could be very much at ease with the world outside my door--trees that fell on my driveway, bugs crawling on my floor, and lizards on my patio chairs--because they were seasonal and timed to the Earth's cycles, often modified by my own activity.

Life with my native neighbors is reassuring, because it is harmonious--or at least it was until we start tinkering with it--and certainly instructive at the same time. So I look in my notes to see if the screech owl in my nest box lays eggs at the same time as last year and the year before (my owl notes go back 38 years). It turns out that nesting is earlier as the years go by and always earlier than in the countryside. That record is matched by wild flowering and other happenings, because the city climate is warmer than the rural climate and both are increasingly warmer. But some

Continued on p.11

a treatise on Reading

by Lisa Westbrook

When you read a book, article, web page or anything else for that matter. Read as a:

learner
thinker
child

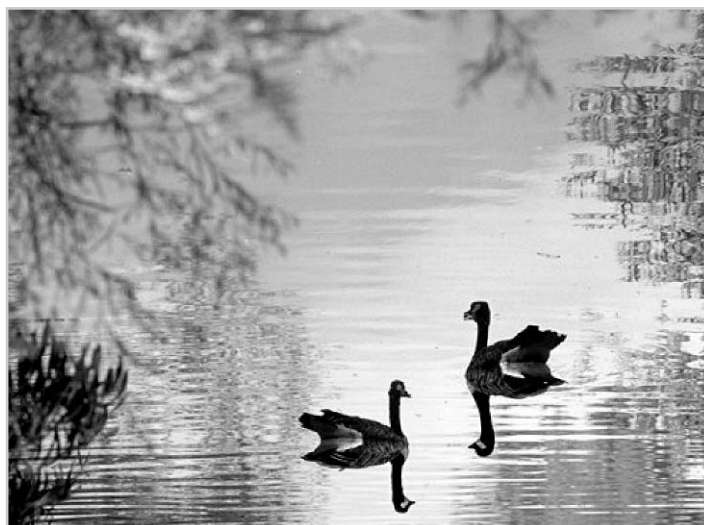
Look for treasures.

Realize books are written by people just like you. People that have some good days and some down days. Start a book wherever you want.

Some are good for scanning through. Some you'll want to read cover to cover. Its your choice, everytime.

Read for information, for pleasure, for inspiration. Then think about what you read.

Some of it will feel right and some of it may not. Think about what you read and don't jump to quick conclusions. Then find the treasures that add value to your day. Leave the rest for someone else to find their own treasure. Enjoy reading. Everyday! ■



Nature Notes

from 2003

We hope you are getting a chance to watch as the season changes from Winter to Spring, and will be encouraged to record some of your observations as we move through the year. Here's a few observations from our 2003 Journal:

- weeds will take over a field if there is no gardener to weed it
- weeds are much easier to pull after it rains
- both the mother and the father white-wing dove care for their young
- a sparrow mother-to-be chirps encouragement to the sparrow father-to-be while he picks up sticks to bring to the nest
- ants can be found busily rebuilding after a rainstorm
- trees of the same kind don't all bud at the same time

Hello...

If you are new to the Parent's Library, Welcome!

Our objective is to encourage and strengthen families by rethinking, relearning, and dialoguing about basic knowledge of parenting and life skills - including basic knowledge of the sciences, basic knowledge of history, and basic knowledge of thinking, learning and problem- solving.

We hope you'll decide to participate in building a place where we can learn together. Join us online at www.onebranch.org. Or write to us at Onebranch Interactive Library, 7920 San Felipe Blvd. #1703 Austin, TX. 78729.

Why Rethink or Relearn?

John Dewey answers this question in this quote from 1932

“The business of reflection in determining the true good cannot be done once and for all, as, for instance, making out a table of values arranged in a hierarchical order of higher and lower. It needs to be done, and done over and over and over again, in terms of the conditions of concrete situations as they arise. In short, the need for reflection and insight is perpetually recurring.”

*This quotation is from **The Collected Works of John Dewey**, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991)*

The .org Files - *of family resources*



Other Parent / Educator Resources

- <http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/lpt/nwpr/869>
- <http://www.medlit.org>
- <http://www.tcrecord.org>
- <http://www.merrycoz.org/kids.htm#more>

Raising Lifelong Learners

- <http://www.2think.org/learners.shtml>
- <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedletter/v14n01/5.html>
- <http://www.awesomelibrary.org/>
- <http://www.learner.org>

lessons brought home series -

Peace Corps Volunteer Shares her story of Water use in West Africa

By Jennifer Tullis

When I was in the Peace Corps, I lived in a rural village called Akpafu-Mempeasem in West Africa. My house was relatively large and modern, made of concrete, owned by a wealthy man who lived in the capitol. Akpafu had no running water, and there were no bore-holes or wells.

Most of the villagers collected water from either of two spring-fed streams, bucket by bucket. Mine was one of the few houses with a rain catchment system. The roof drained into a concrete cistern that supplied me and the family that shared my compound with more than enough water during the rainy season.

However, the labor of carrying all of the water I needed for drinking, cooking, cleaning, bathing, laundry and toilet flushing fifty feet into the house made me appreciate water conservation.

I quickly learned how to stretch each bucketful to its limits. The key was in pri-

oritizing the uses for different grades of water. The highest quality water, which I filtered through ceramic candles in order to eliminate mosquito larvae and particulate matter, was reserved for drinking.

For cooking and washing food, I would use rainwater that I stored in the "good barrel" made of plastic. I would reuse water as much as possible in the kitchen; for example, leftover water from boiling yams could be used to wash dishes.

For the bathroom, I had a fifty-gallon drum lined with tar to prevent rust. The tar left an oily film on the water, which I did not want to use in food preparation, so I used this water for bathing and flushing the toilet.

When it was laundry time, I would set up two buckets, one for washing and one for rinsing. Once the rinse bucket got too sudsy, I would redesignate it as the wash bucket and get a fresh batch for rinsing. The dirty,

sudsy wash water was ideal for the toilet. Thus, each bucket could be used up to three times: to rinse, to wash, and to flush.

As one might imagine, the toilet had its own set of

The most remarkable thing was how this lack of water affected me psychologically.
I cried.

rules. I only flushed the toilet after defecation. Additionally, in order to keep solid wastes out of the toilet bowl as much as possible, I adopted the common habit of storing soiled toilet paper in a special bucket as dry garbage. This, along with other non-composting garbage, would be burned in the back yard.

During the dry season, we would go without rain for four or five months, and the cistern would run dry within the first few weeks.

When possible, I would borrow the school truck and drive ten miles to the district capital where there was a public water supply. For a small price, I could fill up three or four drums to take back to my compound. Otherwise, I had to depend on water from the muddy stream nearby.

I lived near the bottom of the hill where the stream became sluggish and full of

sediment. Eventually, the stream would dry up until the rains returned. I remember one weekend when water became particularly scarce. It was late in dry season, and the stream was nothing but mud.

The headmaster was out of town with the school vehicle. I had just about a bucket or two left in my barrel to last me until Monday when the headmaster would return. Suddenly, my water priorities became much more critical. Housecleaning and laundry were out of the question. In terms of hygiene, brushing my teeth was about all I could afford - I attempted to sweat as little as possible. The highest priorities were clearly drinking and cooking. Even the dirty dishes could be left to the ants until I got more water.

The most remarkable thing was how this lack of water affected me psychologically. I cried.

Our village had unreliable electricity. Being without power, as we often were during thunderstorms, was inconvenient, but in a tropical climate it was certainly not life-threatening. Water, however, is a different story. Like food and oxygen, it is essential to life, and I was never more keenly aware of this fact than I was that weekend in Akpafu. I learned not to take water for granted. ■

hands on science sites

- <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/entareas/science/eric/eric-toc.htm>
- <http://www.cosi.org/>
- <http://www.exploratory.org.uk/>
- <http://www.hands-on-science.org/>

Print-outs of Student Water Activity Worksheet and Water Word Search Game available in the Onebranch Reading Loft

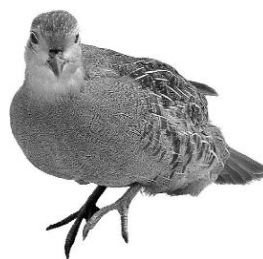
a record of nature

from page 8

cultural events remain the same, because they happen in heated-air conditioned constant-temperature chambers we call houses, cars, offices, and classrooms.

changed radically. Those that stayed all year like cardinals and mockingbirds became more abundant, while others that migrate south for the winter slowly disappeared.

I learned new information about how humans change nature, even though we try to save it for educational and recreational purposes. Others who kept their own notes



but also cultural events, I have been amazed and instructed and thus able to educate folks about the place most of us live-the city.

It is fun, fascinating, and educational to keep a journal on happenings in cities and in the out-of-doors world that we didn't create and, therefore, must be very careful about. ■

Dr. Gehlbach is Professor Emeritus of Biology and Environmental Studies at Baylor University and author of Messages from the Wild - An Almanac of Suburban Natural and Unnatural History, University of Texas Press, Austin, 2002.

Record keeping aids observational skills, which are increasingly important, as humans create cultural complexity that replaces nature.

Begin by making short daily or weekly walks on your property and in the closest semi-natural park or other nature area. Take note of several things that seem to be common in your first few weeks of walking and watching, write them down, and record what happens to them.

Focus on events. Note things like the first freeze, first 100 degree day, highest and lowest weekly temperature, first appearance in spring, first bloom, first bird and cicada song, and fall disappearance.

Pay attention to both cultural and natural subjects. Employ a maximum/minimum thermometer, rain gauge, bird, butterfly, and bat boxes, feeders, birdbath or pool, and hummingbird and butterfly gardens.

Chart your records over time and look for trends. Chart data on life events against weather and your weather versus the local weather station's plus such cultural events as lawn watering, pesticide use, and loose pets relative to rain and changes in native plants and wildlife.

From the library and internet find comparative records from other places and get them from friends and neighbors.

Convince family and friends in other cities to join the fun and education by making comparisons. Ask your teachers to have their classes do such journaling and compare notes among students and classes.

Make it a regular project, so each class can benefit from a longer time period. Ask your teachers to do the same with their colleagues' classes in other schools and in other cities.

Make e-mail comparisons across the United States and talk about what they mean.

If you happen to be near Waco Texas in April, you may enjoy going on a birding walk with Fred Gehlbach. For more information you can call the Baylor University Continuing Education Dept. at (254) 710-3350.

Local evidence of global warming is only one of many discoveries that have meshed with those of other folks around the world. For example, I noted that as suburbia sprawled around me, native nesting birds

in other places noticed the same patterns. As a consequence, some of us developed a new field of study called Urban Ecology.

By keeping a record of the goings on around me, not just the wild things,

"Nature tells us what has worked or not over the long history of life - how our natural heritage still operates or doesn't. The messengers do not hoard resources unnecessarily, because the costs exceed benefits, but interact in ways that allow reciprocity, because that's the only directive for survival."

Fred Gehlbach

topics upcoming - spring 2004

- *Time and Energy in 2004, how important is it?*
- *Educator Dialogue - we asked several educators to think about what lessons from the field of education they would want to bring to the 21st century. We'll let you know what they have to say after they've had some time to think about it.*
- *Spring Cleaning - How this yearly activity can renew your life*
- *Found Passages - Join our collaborative project as we look for insights in texts from the field of Education written in the 1900s. Most of the textbooks written then are now out of print. Lets see how many we can find and what the authors had to say about learning.*

Readers are invited to share perspectives and insights on any of the above topics by writing to us. We would love to hear from you.

background on the Parent's Library

The Onebranch Interactive Library is one place where parents can share and learn, the official web presence of Onebranch.org, established as a 501 C (3) educational nonprofit in November of 2001 by a small group of parents, educators and librarians. The original focus was to promote math and science literacy. But this was expanded in response to a request for a convenient place for the hundreds of questions children ask, where parents can share insights and resources.

Our growth these past three years has been facilitated by seed funding from several board members, 95% volunteer labor for research, writing and development, and by a growing list of caring individuals who serve as advisors. The most recent addition to our board of advisors is Dr. Joan Wink. Dr. Wink is Professor of Education at the University of California at Stanislaus, where she encourages students (who are also teachers) to reflect on and improve their teaching practices. She is also a grandmother who strongly believes in the role of stories in strengthening families. *Welcome Joan Wink!*

Answers from page 6

Answer to Riddle: Listening

Answer to word Scramble: Parents

OneBranch.org

7920 San Felipe Blvd. #1703
Austin, Tx. 78729



a newsletter for parents and families

Published by OneBranch.org 2004.

All rights reserved. (Issue #4, late Winter 2004)

Board of Directors: Connie Maxfield, M.S., Exec. Dir.; Sherry Hammons, Pres.; Rhonda Waites, Vice-Pres.; Becky Elliott, Sec-Treasurer; Lilly DeHaven, CPA; Jeanenne Glass, R.Ph.; Lavon Holcomb; Lisa Bilotta-Kunkel; Beth Solomon, MLS.

Editors: Becky Elliott, Terri Gray, Lavon Holcomb, and Lisa Westbrook

Art Director: John Elliott

Special thanks to all our contributing writers: Howard Baker, Pat Galvan, Fred Gehlbach, Sherry Hammons, Don Hooser, Tim Seelig, and Breanna Waldrop.

This newsletter is available online in PDF format. We also do a print version in small batches as funds are available. If you would like to sponsor a batch for your local library or community center, let us know. Volunteer opportunities currently available on our web development, research, book review, grant writing, and community outreach teams. Contact us by calling 512 335-4180, or write to Onebranch.org 7920 San Felipe Blvd. #1703, Austin, TX. 78729. Guest writers encouraged to share stories. We would love to hear from you.

Photo Credits: Hemera Technologies Inc; COSMI Corporation.

Mission: To involve parents in thinking and learning.

*A place for parents
and families*