

HOW I TOLD HIM ABOUT
MY GRANDCHILDREN
By J. B. Leftwich, Columnist
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It was a long flight so I came fortified with a copy of *Smithsonian*. I was reading some less than inspired article on cliff-dwelling Indians.

The man seated next to me was poring over a copy of *Newsweek*. Immediately he folded his magazine and introduced himself. Wanted to know all about me. A bit gregarious, this fine fellow. I gave him a briefing of a life that so far has not attracted international attention.

Grandchildren? he wanted to know.

Yes. Eight at that specific period of my life. He was interested.

“Well, there’s Missy...”

He has only one grandchild, he said. Josh who at the time was four or six or 23, Whatever. A precocious child. Could play Debussy or Mozart or Willie Nelson at age three. Taught himself to read.

“My granddaughter, Peri...”

Josh is an outstanding athlete. Hit, 500 in T-Ball or Little League or with Pittsburgh or whoever. Was a strong-arm pitcher when he started. Switched to the outfield so he could bat more often.

“My grandson, Matt, is a good athl...”

Knows a lot about mechanics, this remarkable child. At age four he could tear down and reassemble his tricycle or his Legos or the television set or an atomic bomb or something.

“My grandson, Andy, loves machiner...”

Josh’s talents are unlimited. At age two or 22, or thereabouts he had the lead in the kindergarten play. Played Prince Charming or Hamlet or somebody. Unfortunately drama critics never saw it so Josh won no major acting award.

“Jason played in Snow White in his kindergar...”

And art, Josh’ gifts knows no bounds. At age three or thirty, I forget which, he illustrated a major article for a major magazine with a major circulation at major fee. Had his own private art show at age five or 15 or 50.

Anna, shows some promise in art.”

A complete sentence. Progress. Maybe I could extol our younger ones at greater length. I was beginning to feel less annoyed with my traveling companion.

He picked up his copy of *Newsweek*.

“Well,” he said in a final-word tone. “I certainly enjoyed hearing about your grandchildren. Perhaps we’ll bump into each other again sometime.”

Back to *Smithsonian* and the cliff dwellers. Conversation over.

That’s the problem with grandchildren.

No matter how bright or beautiful or athletic or gifted they are, somebody will show up with a grandchild who is brighter or prettier, more talented, a better athlete or a musical prodigy.

No matter if you have nine and think this is distinctive, somebody has 10 or 12 or 31. At some point, you put your pictures back in your billfold.

In reality, most of us have to acknowledge sometime in our lives we have no Rembrandt, no Mendelssohn, no Joe Montana, no Sequoia, no Harry Truman, no Jonas Salk, no Clara Barton, no Golda Meier, no Einstein among our spinoffs.

But, on the other hand, most families have no Stalin, no Pretty Boy Floyd, no serial killer, no rapist, no child abuser, no Charles Manson.

And when that somebody shows up with grandchildren more precocious than yours, just remember his pride in his runs no deeper than your pride in yours.

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