

6/17/07

The Gift of Family History

Being a father can be one of the most rewarding experiences one may have. No child can quite comprehend and appreciate what it is like to be a parent until he or she becomes one. The parent however, has the advantage of having been a child, so may have insights into their children's lives that their children are unable to have of their parents'.

One thing that may help your child have more insight and increased appreciation for parents is for you to share some of your family and childhood memories and stories with them – perhaps even a few stories where you were not always the image of perfection. – Of course, use good judgment, age appropriate, etc.

Recently my son called me to share his enthusiasm about a conversation he had with my sister. She shared some old family stories, dating back to my son's great-grandfather and the childhood times of both his grandmother and his aunt (my sister).

I myself enjoyed a great number of stories about my parents' childhoods and those of many of their adult friends, although I was just a pre- or young teenager when I heard them. I also shared many such stories with my son while he was a child.

In this manner, children can learn of the *real* persons in the preceding generations. They inherit a legacy in the form of a personal and intimate history of real people. They learn about the 'black hats' (or Black Barts) as well as the 'white hats' in the family tree. Our children gain insight into their parents' moral grounding as well as learning of some of their *chicaneries*. It is colorful enough to be interesting and personal enough to be meaningful.

I knew my dad as a *real* person, from his childhood, teen years and onward from stories from him and his confederates, and so did my son learn from me. This imprints impressions that will never fade. It adds relationship cohesion, which seems to be lacking in many families today. We find ourselves connected to and belonging to our family in a deeper and more complete way.

Sharing your past with your children can be an act of intimacy, love and respect. Have you given your children the gift of family history? It is not too late. It will likely change them. It will likely enhance your relationship. Enjoy your Father's Day.