

PRESCHOOL ADVENTURES

BY GARY W. BOYLE

As with most of life, preschool was an adventure for the Boyle family.

Like most new preschool parents, we were surprised when we received the first ziplock bag from our child's teacher. We thought it must be some sort of award or commendation. We were excited that our youngster was doing so well.

We were excited until we noticed that the bag contained underwear. One whiff after we opened the bag told us the whole story.

We now know ziplock bags that come from preschool should be quickly transported to the nearest hazardous waste disposal site and never, ever opened. (The word "disposable" must have been coined by a parent receiving a ziplock bag.)

Part of preschool is learning your address and telephone number. My wife and I took that obligation seriously and spent lots of time teaching Mac how to say his address and phone number carefully and clearly. My wife even made a little song out of it because some expert suggested it was a good idea.

We attended a semi-annual review session with Mac's teacher. These sessions are supposed to be better than report cards, however I prefer the anonymity of the written report.

We were shocked to learn that Mac didn't know his address and phone number. We were sure we had failed in our parenting duties and were ready to turn the child over to the experts permanently.

When we arrived home, we asked the four-year-old to tell us his address and phone number. He told us clearly and distinctly, just as we had taught him to do.

"Mac, why didn't you tell your teacher your address and phone number?"

"I know my address and the teacher knows it because she has it written on a card. Why should I tell her my address?"

That was the moment we began our parenting duty of explaining the concept of "test".

My daughter's time at preschool was also interesting. Every year the children drew pictures of their entire family in which each person was doing something typical. The teacher wrote what the child said the people were doing. All the children's drawings were on display for parents' night.

After some searching, I found Katie's drawing. In her picture, her brother was yelling at her. This may seem a bit dysfunctional but Gail and I were not surprised.

Katie's mother was in the kitchen cooking salad. Mom was happy this portrayed her as a nutrition-conscious mother who cooks at home. I thought the fact that she was "cooking" salad was interesting.

Dad was sitting in front of the television watching football. It didn't exactly paint an intellectually stimulating picture, but at least I wasn't committing any crimes.

I had no idea how troublesome this exercise could be for parents until I found the drawing made by Katie's best friend.

Her friend may not have been a perfect child, but she came from what seemed like a normal, healthy family. We assumed she had loving, caring, supportive parents. It seemed that way until "The Night in Preschool Hell."

In Susie's picture (all names are changed to protect the innocent), her brother was listening to music in his room. Normal enough. Mom was making dinner in the kitchen. Sounds like something from Norman Rockwell.

The drawing then took a strange turn because it appeared that there were two mothers. I looked closer and read what the teacher had obediently written. "Daddy is dressing up in women's clothes."

You've never seen a stranger look on a man's face than Susie's father's expression when he found his daughter's work.

Preschool is full of adventures and many of them are entertaining. Fortunately, the best story is about someone else's father.

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