

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Mealtime with a four-year old grandson

Over the past week, my daughter and grandson visited from California. I pulled out the Thomas train set and all the toys, bed gear for little kids, highchair, everything left from last year's visit. Yet, with each passing season, my grandson, "Jaz...z...z", short for Jasper, grows an extra 3-4 inches, at least. And when I try to help him get dressed or go the bathroom, Jaz reminds me, "Nana, I'm 4 years old. I can do this myself now. And, when I am five, I'll be able to tie my shoes."

His short two to three word sentences are now paragraphs! And we can actually understand quite clearly what he is saying. Jaz is very obvious about what he wants to eat too. I felt particularly excited to see my "health food" rearing of my own daughter has rubbed off on her. Jaz loves fresh fruit, carrots, whole grain bread and brown rice, even fresh salad greens; and of course barbecue chicken! So, mealtime was a snap for Momma, Nana, and Papa. But we couldn't pass up making a little macaroni and cheese treat for all of us kids!

With raising two girls, I find the appetite of a very active little boy is huge! We kept hearing, "Momma, I'm hungry. Can I have a snack? Nana, can I have some dried mango?" Between Papa and Jaz playing in the plastic pool for hours that we set up and squirt gun fights in the backyard, we all got soaked and had big appetites. And it never

fails that my husband, John, visits the grocery store to pile up with all kinds of goodies too cook up...good for you, with maybe a snickers bar thrown in for later.

Our precious grandson, Jaz, never failed to surprise us with his astute observations of what we were concocting with each meal. On more than one occasion, we would hear, "I like that, but don't put onions in!" And if Papa or Nana forgot, we would hear it again, "Papa, remember, I told you I don't like that. So, make it without onions." And Papa would say, "Jaz, and what else do you say?" Without a missed beat comes "Please, Papa?"

So, if you are blessed with grandchildren sharing a meal with you, enjoy every moment. Always remember to relax the rules a little. They may want to bring their little car or Thomas train to the table with them. As long as they stay focused on sharing a meal with family, their small toy, favorite "orange cat" or "huggy bear" will be very polite company. And don't be surprised if a couple peas or carrot are offered to their little friend who is always kind and loyal; or puts a couple green beans or blueberries in the little freight car for a later snack! You may even find little dried up bits here and there hidden away when cleaning up a couple months after they return home. Isn't it wonderful!

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Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life wellness coach-consultant, specializing in life skills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations (www.harvestenterprises-sra.com).She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com.

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Mealtime stories from one of Boerne's Grandpas

This week I was waiting to get my car inspection sticker renewed and had a very interesting conversation with an elder gentleman. He shared how life was like in Boerne and the Texas Hill Country in the past 70+ years. I gained a glimpse into how quiet downtown Boerne was in the early 50s and about land and farm life from a genuine "country boy."

I heard about his adventures in the military during the Korean War era and how he rode a troop train to California to complete the full battery needed at the military fort where he was stationed before going to Korea. The train ride must have been a significant experience for him since he had never been out of Texas before. And a Texas "country boy" being side-by-side with California boys when he arrived was definitely a culture shock for both! The troop car he rode to California was set up so the soldiers had a place to sit during the day.

After supper, they came back to the car and all the bunks were in place for sleeping. In the morning, after breakfast in another car, they came back to see the seating areas all set up again. Train transportation was "the mode" of the day. Hardly anyone drove their cars nor did they fly. Life in the hill country was simple, thrifty, and "country" life. Sitting at the end of the day on the back porch watching the sun go down was a very treasured "simple" pleasure.

This kind gentleman then proceeded to tell me about the changes in the generations as time went on after the 1960s and 70s. From the explosion of people coming to his neck of the woods, developers bringing in high-density housing communities, the negative attitude and politics of our brave soldiers who died to keep us free, to even the loss of basic knowledge of farm life and food.

He shared how his children and grandchildren really don't grasp how it was when he was growing up, growing his own food, hitching the horse to the plow, and more. When I said my goodbyes to this veteran gentleman and got in my car, an epiphany hit me for this article! Here it is.

I have an assignment for you and/or your children who still have grandparents with you. And by all means if your children are around eight years old or older, have them complete this assignment to share with you.

- First, invite your grandpa over for lunch. Ask him what his favorite foods are for the meal you will share with him.
- Then have a tape/CD/video recorder handy with lots of extra tapes, etc.
- Either before the meal, during, or after the meal together have a list of questions to ask him (whether it's before, during, or after depends on if your Papa generally falls asleep after a meal for a quick nap or is revived).
- Share with him that you are very interested in his stories about his life and would like to record it, with his permission. If you get it, then start recording until he feels he wants to stop for now. If you still have questions left, give your Papa a big hug and save them for another day. But make sure to set a specific day to meet again soon.

- Then transfer your recording to your computer to store and share with family and friends about those by-gone years that were so precious to your Papa.
- You will do the same for your Grandma or “Nana.” She will have her own special recollection of those years with Papa and her own childhood, no matter where she was raised.

Never lose sight of your recordings (even put them in your safe deposit box). You never know. You may want to publish Papa’s story someday for all to read and/or hear. You can even submit it to your local library’s oral history department. I bet they would love to have it. And, for sure, treasure them so you can share them when your become adults and have their children to hear about their great-grandpa and great-grandma.

This kind of mealtime memory is an invaluable legacy for you and your family throughout the generations. I realize for some families, one’s relationship with parents and grandparents may not be a good one. Yet, isn’t it time to think about the silver lining in what you learned and how you raise your own kids today? Your own children will more clearly understand about you, learn forgiveness, the wisdom, and grace you have today. You will be amazed at your own children’s wisdom and understanding when truth is shared with mercy. There is an ancient biblical proverb that says when mercy and truth have met together, whole living and peace kiss each other, and goodness comes to the land. Doesn’t that sound like it’s worth giving it a try?

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Showtime Mealtime, come one, come all!

Whenever you and your family go to the movies together, do you skip dinnertime because ya'll are going to fill up on popcorn, coke, and candy? There are those of you who tell your kids "You have to have some protein." So, you throw in a hotdog or two with mustard and relish! And, of course, as my husband always tells me, popcorn is the yellow vegetable of choice! Now, that's a family mealtime sharing routine for millions of us movie goers.

It's always fun to take an occasional break in the mealtime routine and go for the junk. Even I do (but not as much as my husband; and if you ask him, he will deny it!). Yet, in the past several years, a new phenomenon has arisen at theatre locations. Restaurants are not only close by anymore. They are right inside the theatre complex. You may find a Whataburger, Taco Bell, or any assortment of fast-food outlets.

Yet, more and more, you will find a number of very nice sit-down restaurants inside on one end of the complex and game arcades on the other side, with a possible bar somewhere in-between with adults sipping a margarita while watching the latest football or basketball game (the Spurs of course!). In some theatre complexes, adults can actually watch their movie while sipping on that margarita or glass of wine.

Large business franchises, corporations, and even universities are targeting nearby locations with these types of entertainment/recreation complexes all centered

around food and fun. Even live theatre is a part of the layout to attract us to more than just meals and a movie. So, the next time you and your family head for the movies, look around and see what's at your fingertips for fast foods or a full-course meal (healthy ones preferred; more menus have healthier choices now) at your live and movie theatre café or five star restaurant. Then give your kids a little extra time at the video arcade. And by all means plan a party in one of the party rooms. But if you have your kids with you or are driving, remember to please pass up on the bar idea for that night. Keep it safe and enjoyable for all.

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Come Aboard 09.09.09—All Businesses, Arts, & Railroad Enthusiasts!

Have you ever wondered how your business and the arts can be dynamic partners for the economic and cultural benefit of both? Here's your chance to find out. I decided to combine this month's topic, *Meals*, with an invitation to a very special luncheon & evening event on September 9, 2009.

Come Aboard for 09.09.09 Business & the Arts Speaker Series Launch! Among two awesome guest speakers and two exciting announcements, you won't want to miss this. I'll give you a couple hints here.

First, you will soon be hearing that the Cibolo Arts Council has a new name, Hill Country Council for the Arts (HCCArts). You now have a new friend in the Arts as HCCArts comes on board with their Business & the Arts Committee, Sonja Howle, Chair—to strategically connect with small, medium, and large business leaders who have creatively blended the arts for mutual benefit.

Second, HCCArts has partnered for this first luncheon with a newly formed Friends of Old No. 9 (www.oldnumbernine.org) to host the 09.09.09 speaker series event with a Railroad Theme. The Luncheon (12noon to 2pm) will be at the Scenic Loop Café between Boerne and Leon Springs. Bruce Flohr, former CEO of Railtex, will be the guest speaker. The topic will be *Creativity in American Business: Entrepreneurial Spirit and the Value of Art*. Sonja Howle shared that "Bruce Flohr grew up in Wallace, Idaho, a

booming mining area for lead, zinc and silver. His grandfather and father were bankers in Wallace. But banking didn't interest Bruce as much as the logistics of getting commodities from one place to another. He said that he'd see a train or truck and think: What was in that train? Where was it going? Why?"

You want to learn more, come hear Railtex's ride; and how Flohr and his wife, Janet have a passion for the arts, and are integral parts of the arts community. Then hold on! There's more...

The Evening Reception (6 to 8pm) at the Cibolo Nature Center will have Lynn Barnett, former president of Texans for the Arts and the Executive Director of the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council, as guest speaker. Lynn's topic will be *The Arts: A Sound Economic Strategy*. Howle shared that Barnett's presentation "...will demonstrate how Abilene invested in the arts to revitalize their downtown. Abilene is a model for small and mid-size cities interested in using the arts as the engine to fuel their revitalization efforts." Barnett has served as the Executive Director of the Abilene Cultural Affairs Council for twenty eight years. In 1997 Abilene and the council were gratified to be selected by ABC World News Tonight to feature as a city that has used the arts for downtown revitalization. She also initiated several innovative cultural tourism promotions including Abileneroadtrip.com and the driving CD "Tales of the Texas Frontier from Fort Worth to Abilene".

HCCArts & FON9 want to offer special thanks to their business partners who helped make this event possible: Bear Moon Bakery, Boerne Conventions & Visitors Bureau, Cibolo Nature Center, Cisneros Financial Services, Hungry Horse, Polonyx Graphic Design, Scenic Loop Café, The Creek Restaurant, The Dodging Duck

Brewhaus, Toyota of Boerne, and Ye Kendall Inn. And this is where you will experience some of the best culinary delights at both luncheon and evening reception.

Sounds like an exciting luncheon & evening event to me! Hope to you see you there. This launch is just the beginning of a dynamic HCCArts Business & the Arts quarterly luncheon speaker series. Ask about what's coming in December! So, get connected to hear from CEOs and business leaders who have proactively partnered with the arts. Whether you are a business owner or artist, learn how you can too.

Also, learn more about Business & the Arts programs and Hill Country Council for the Arts at www.HCCArts.org. The 09.09.09 event has limited seating. So buy your tickets now at <http://www.hccarts.org/hccarts-store>. Tell your colleagues and friends. Be sure to bring them on board! And I just might give you another hint with the next article. So, watch for it!

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