

**OLD FELLOWS CAN LEARN MUCH BY OBSERVING THE
GRANDKIDS
January 14, 2003**

Millions have been made highlighting the words coming from children. Everyone is well aware of the statement "from the mouths of babes."

Most parents live in fear their children will inadvertently and innocently "spill the beans." It can happen to anyone who has ever been a parent. An old friend, who years ago went to his reward, pointed out that one could assess how others viewed them by the reception they received from their children.

Art Linkletter and Bill Cosby capitalized on that truth and became both rich and famous because of it. All I ever received because of it was plenty of embarrassment and admonishment from the better half.

I have always loved kids, at least up the teen years, and age has heightened my appreciation for them. It also has caused me to give more thought and time to their welfare and safe keeping. I am blessed with eight grandchildren - three granddaughters and five grandsons. All three girls and one grandson are well into their teens or beyond. I am not ashamed to say I love them all equally, but have more rapport with the boys. The greatest joy at this late date in my life is derived from trying to be a mentor to them.

I am not sure how correct that statement may be because I feel I am learning as much or more about life from them as they are from me. They have already convinced me that the Femi-Nazi Myth - that there is no difference in the sexes - is just that: a myth. That thought crossed my mind on Christmas Eve when four boys between four and nine, were here at our home opening their presents. Two of the boys, brothers Forrest and Tecwyn Williams are eight and six respectfully, while Meric and Alex Gousset are eight and four, in that order. They all live just across the road from our home, which makes it convenient for grandpa to indulge them, much to the consternation of their parents. They never cease to amaze or amuse me. The two older boys are into science, animals, insects, books and art. The two younger brothers are military minded and macho.

I love to plan activities where I can involve all five of the male cousins and observe their actions and interactions. The two younger boys are still further down on the learning curve and susceptible to Gramp's pranks and teasing.

A favorite activity is taking all four of the younger boys to Boonville for lunch at Burger King and ice cream at Mercer's after. One of the

highlights for all four on one occasion was several soldiers from Fort Drum stopping in for lunch in full camouflage with military vehicles. Their reactions were most memorable.

On one occasion when we stopped for ice cream I was presented with the type of behavior that rewards my efforts. I told all four boys to stay in the truck while I picked up the cones. When I came out with two for the two older boys in the back seat, Alec began to wail.. I assured him his would be forthcoming. After returning with the younger boys' cones and while we were pulling away, I found out the reason for Alex's distress. Tecwyn had told him he was not getting ice cream but a baloney sandwich instead.

Don't feel sorry for Alex, or Big Al as we call him. He may be the smallest, but he does not know it. He broke me up a short while back after I got after him and his brother for roughhousing a little too actively. When we sat down to eat he scowled at me and informed me he was not my "special" any longer because I hollered at him.

After reading Bill O'Reilly's book, *The O'Reilly Factor*, in which he points out everyone should tell their children they are special, I have followed his advice. It's followed with, you hope they never do anything to change that perception. It's true, but I would be hard pressed to find something they may have done to actually feel any differently.

Fortunately, Al has had a change of heart and admits he is my "special" once more. I am doing my best to see he and the others think of me in the same way.