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Summer Is Here... It's Time To Relax!

With the first of June came great celebration as the Schenks welcomed their first baby girl. One of the great blessings of my life was found in attending the birth... three days of hospital labor followed by a Cesarean delivery, five weeks early. Little Bethany Allison weighed in at 5 lbs 15 oz and 18.25 inches long. After almost a week in the NICU she is home with her family, a healthy little peanut of a girl. I'm quite sure there has never been a baby more loved or welcomed than she. Last night they brought her to dinner and she napped in the doll cradle my grandfather made for me, with plenty of room left over!

Besides the baby, June has brought rain: rain, rain and more rain. Up here on the hill, ark building 101 is beginning to sound like a viable summer school subject. The gardens are loving the water but the kids and I are wearying of the long grey days. The boys have been spending the time helping Daddy to build kitchen cabinets and hang

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them. Ezra has taken over the responsibility of running the shop-vac, incessantly, and keeping the floor of their work room clean. Soon the new half of my kitchen will be useable and the tearing out of the old half can begin. Let another summer of construction mess begin! This summer may actually see us "done" with the project. When you own a house are you ever really done?

We have declared ourselves finished with school for the summer. The evaluations have been filed with the state and we're all breathing a collective sigh of relief. The kids are using their new-found morning freedom to scream down the hill on their bikes. They have figured out how to construct jumps (which are an obstacle course to friends arriving in cars and trying to scale the hill around concrete blocks and plywood!) and find great delight in showing off the scrapes and bruises that result. My time is now consumed with writing the next level of our curriculum for

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Hannah and reassuring the test pilot families that I haven't forgotten them and that I will, in fact, have it done on time... I think! We have started riding our bikes together in hopes of being able to do some cycle touring in the future. The kids are very excited about getting out on the road and riding to different towns. For me, it's better than the thigh master! Last Saturday we logged 12 miles, and yesterday we logged another ten, riding back from the beach. We have procured two "trail-a-bikes" which perch the two little boys jauntily off of the back end of our bikes: one more wheel, and peddles to help! I think we are actually even more of a spectacle than usual tooling down the back roads with four kids under ten. Our goal as a family is to be able to ride an easy twenty miles in one day by the end of the summer. Maybe that last five pounds of baby fat will finally depart from my thighs!

This past weekend brought another distinct joy: the marriage of the eldest daughter of dear friends. The new family was born in a church built in 1730 on the very tip of Kittery Point in Maine, overlooking the harbor, with lobster pots nodding gently on the tide. It was lovely. Both families were overjoyed at the union. Hannah had the pleasure of attending as a junior bride's maid; a privilege which was accompanied by her first

For Stephanie

Steph... I loved your article, and in your honor, I will print the quote in Latin currently gracing our school room wall:

Sapere Aude

Dare to be wise

pair of high heeled shoes. Note to Hannah: this is not to be construed as a blanket endorsement of high heels for life, rather as a one time dispensation of gold sandaled grace. The highlights for me included dancing with my husband (with Ezra sandwiched between us, as always) and with my sons (who stepped on my toes) and watching Hannah, who for all the world looked like a big girl, dancing with her Daddy, bare feet perched on top of his shiny black shoes, like the little girl she still is. La vita e bella.

So, here we are in mid-June... rushing through calendar pages at a dizzying pace. The following month will hold little more than long bike rides and leisurely beach days. The children were eyeing the blueberry bushes, laden with tiny hard green fruit, when we stopped by the beach on our bike ride yesterday. Ezra can't understand why they aren't ready yet. This month we rest, and recuperate from the baby and wedding. Next month our travels begin anew, with Canada (twice) and another three thousand mile tour down the east coast to Florida on deck for July and August. For today, I will hike down the hill to the garden and clip some mint for my iced tea and check on my flower gardens. I'll do some writing, and play a vicious game of Uno with my kids. Summer is here and it's time to relax.

Ponderings Of The M.I.T. (mother in training): The Rubber Has Hit The Road

by Dianne Schenk

Dear readers--Some months ago I put my monthly two cents' worth into the newsletter under the title "Ponderings of the M.I.T." over a period of several months. After a sabbatical during which I've quit work to stay home full-time, gone through eight months of pregnancy, and given birth to a precious little girl five weeks early, I'm back for this month at least and I couldn't resist sharing some of my feelings concerning new parenthood. I'm sure all you moms and dads out there can relate in some way or another. The following is my first letter to my daughter...

My dearest Bethany,

I can hardly believe that you've been with your daddy and me for ten days already. It was a lot of hard work to help you to come into this world but I don't regret a single moment of that experience because it brought me you.

You are so beautiful and so sweet. I love how you cuddle yourself on my chest with your head under my chin in the middle of the night when no other solace will do for you. I love to bury my nose in your soft, fuzzy blonde hair on your tiny head and kiss your delicate little ears. I love it when you yawn and form your sweet little mouth into the cutest oval, and you ball up your tiny little fists in the air and flex your whole self to one side, stretching. I love when you're awake and you stare into my eyes, your own eyes wide with curiosity--I can just see the little wheels rolling in your brain; you are learning about your mommy and daddy and the world around you. It's so much fun to set you up on the little Boppy pillow and let you look all around at your surroundings with your slightly cross-eyed gaze, taking in everything you see. I never knew how much I would love you, my sweet girl. When the

doctor showed you to me for the first time, even though you didn't look your best at the moment, you were so beautiful to me and you still are. I always knew that I would love my children, but I could never imagine the feelings I have now for you. I love you so much it hurts sometimes. Daddy and I can't wait to begin teaching you and training you up in the ways of the Lord, showing you and guiding you which ways to go. We know that we are not perfect, Daddy and me, and that we'll make lots of mistakes, but God our Father has enough grace to suffice where we are lacking. In fact, we could never do it without His help. You are God's gift to us and He has entrusted you to us. What an awesome privilege. We pray for you that you will know how much we love you and care for you but that most of all you know that your Heavenly Daddy loves you more than you can ever know. It is

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our prayer that one day you will make the same decision to follow Jesus that Daddy and I made in our own lives. We want you to know that you are such a welcome member of our family, the Schenk family, and that even though it's only been ten days since you came "to the outside", we can't imagine what life would be like without you. Daddy and I would do anything for you, even if it meant laying down our lives. So even when you are crying in the wee hours of the night and it seems like you'll never stop, even when I can't get you to nurse like you're supposed to, even when Daddy and I wish that for once, we could get more than two hours of uninterrupted sleep, we love you more and more each day. We will never ever stop loving you. In the future, you will make mistakes. You will sin. We all do,

Submissions?

Do you have any great ideas for summer activities for children? Would you like to share a book review with our readers? Do you have an article brewing on some aspect of home or educational life? Have your children written a great poem, or article they would like to share? What gives this publication life is the submissions from families everywhere... just like yours! Please consider what you have to contribute and send your submissions to us at i4reality@i4reality.org

because the Bible says so. You will aggravate me or irritate me, and there will definitely be days where we obligingly do the same for you! We will have hard times. You will not be perfect. But your Daddy and your Mommy will never, not ever, in a million years, stop loving you. We never could. You are our baby girl, our sweet little June bug, our little Squeaker, our beautiful, dear, precious daughter. I could tell you I love you a thousand times and never say it enough. Daddy nearly cried the first time he had to be away from you overnight, when you were still in the NICU in the hospital and Daddy had to go home to go to work. He loves you more than he even knows. You like to rest in his arms quietly listening while he reads Dr. Seuss to you. You stare up at him curiously, quizzically, as he talks to you

and has whole conversations with you. Daddy can't wait to take you fishing when you get big enough. Little girl, you have a long and interesting life ahead of you and your Mommy and Daddy can't wait to see what the future holds. But for now, we are content with what we have--a six pound, 18 1/4 inch-long treasure of a human being--you, Bethany Allison Schenk--so tiny, yet you occupy such a huge part of our hearts. We can't tell you how much we love and adore you. You are precious, both to us and to Jesus. Thank you for coming into our lives, sweet baby. May God bless you as you grow in body and in mind, in heart and in soul. You are our treasure. We love you.

Love,

Your mommy

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Mama Hummer

There are many blessings that come with forest living: no grass to mow, no fences to contain us, and neighbors that are unlike any we've had in the suburbs we've lived in. A new neighbor presented herself on Wednesday morning. We were laying in bed listening to the violin/cello/guitar trio practice below us and assessing the days weather in the sky through the window above us. My husband looked up and said casually, "Oh, look, the humming birds are back." "Where?" "There, see her, she's sitting on the branch?" "Oh, yes, there she is... what is she sitting on? Is that a nest? I can't tell, I don't have my glasses on..." We sat up and peered through the window. Sure enough, there she was, sitting on a nest no bigger than a ping pong ball cut in half; her head and her tail sticking out of the nest cup. She is still there, five days later. The branch is maybe twelve feet from our bedroom window, with a perfect view. My ninety something year old grandmother says she's never in her life seen such a thing, so we count ourselves especially blessed to have been given this rare gift. Like Mama Hummer we are watching and waiting for a few little beaks to appear above the edge of the nest. Home school science at its best!



Nature's Classroom: Unruly House Guests

by Judy Daley

It has been three months since having my two tiny Pomeranian boarders, Coco Puff and Black Velvet. I was excited to see them again and to see how much they have grown. When I last cared for them, Coco weighed one and one half pounds (at three months of age), while Black Velvet weighed in at a hefty three and one half pounds. Now, at 4 and 8 pounds, they do not seem as fragile.



In the month of February the pups were here for house breaking lessons. The owners were busy with their floral business, stating they had no time to dedicate to this daunting task. Generally it takes several weeks of continual intense training. I was not given the luxury of that much time. I was only given two weeks, so I had to begin work immediately.

I use a bell when training, as this gives the dog and the owner an audible “heads up” that the dog(s) must go out NOW! The dog is taught to tap the bell on his/her own. Each dog who learns to use the bell, will eventually settle in to his or her own special technique of ringing it. My dog Casey uses his nose to lift the bell up, allowing it to slam down on the wall. It makes a loud sound which not only tells me the dog has got to be let outside, but also which dog needs to go out. My female dog Lindsey uses her foot to tap on the bell, which is a much gentler sound. Of course this also trains the owner to respond to the bell as well. He who hesitates is the one left picking up the mess!

It was an exhausting two weeks back in February. Constantly hand ringing the bell, bringing the pups out the door into the fridged winter air, and then standing there with hasty words of encouragement until they “emptied” themselves. Thank goodness for my own two dogs. They were instrumental in teaching the puppies to brave the winter elements. All day long, while the puppies were awake, I would ring the bell and bring them out the door every 20 minutes, whether they needed to relieve themselves or not. Before long, a pattern was set.

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By the middle of the second week, Black Velvet had begun to use the bell.

Perhaps he did not quite grasp the concept that the bell meant he was to go outside to relieve himself. But it was pure joy to watch him as he lifted the bell with his nose then watched it bounce off the wall with the sound of “ting-a-ling” over and over again.

More recently, the pups were back for a week long visit. They seemed to remember being here before. They immediately began running frantically through the house smelling all the places they had been in February.

After re-establishing themselves with the house, the pups began to show signs of disobedience. The male lifted his leg on my husband’s shirt that was hanging over the kitchen chair and the female had squat down to piddle in a number of locations. Both puppies began jumping on furniture and running in circles like mini tornados as they chased each other through the house. They were biting each others tails, hanging off my pant leg and barking incessantly. As I began to interact with them I realized that they had no knowledge of voice command AT ALL! They were clearly OUT OF CONTROL! I knew I was headed back to square one. This week promised to be a test of wills between me and the little darlings. It was really difficult to put the puppies in their crate for a “time out” when they looked at me with those adorable faces. But the “time out” theory works! They settled right down each and every time they entered their crate.

Maybe the owners could live with unruly dogs, but this old girl most certainly would not! Not only were the dogs out of control, but the weather was as well. Flooding rains continued for the greater part of the week. T’was not fit for man nor beast out of doors. The pups were clearly not interested in going outside for any reason. However, every half hour or so, I would pick them up in my arms, speak the word “outside”, then ring the bell, before walking out into the torrent of water. It was the only way to reintroduce them to the rules of house breaking.

By day three Black Velvet and Coco Puff were once again housebroken. By day four, I had them lined up for pictures. I then e-mailed the pictures to the owner, who was shocked that her dogs would do anything “on command”! I’ve come to think of it as “on demand”.

As with any training, animal or human, once the behavior is learned and reinforced, life is so much easier! It is worth all the effort one puts into it. Just as with children, the “guiding” process is a continual job throughout life.

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There is no guilt when using proper instruction and correction. Not only are the dogs happier when they know what is expected of them, but the owner is too (and definitely the care giver as well).

Why Latin?

by Stephanie Payton

Many of you reading this have come from the same background as I. Though I attended a private Christian school, my education itself was much like that of my public-school counterparts. Yes, I had godly teachers, and we studied the Bible every year. For that, I am very grateful. But similar to the public-school children, we were fed information with the expectation of memorizing that information and proficiently regurgitating it when the time came. While I do remember being told to "think", it was more with a tone of "think as WE think." Controversy or unlike opinions were discouraged. It was not until I was a junior in college that I had a professor who expected me to put my own thoughts in writing. Not only did he want to know my position on a certain topic, he wanted me to defend it!

So here I am, nearly fifteen years later, with a deep conviction to prepare my own children to think deeply. However, I find myself regularly frustrated by my own limitations in this area. It is frustrating to a point of not being able to verbalize it. I can see, however, that God walks beside me, filling in the gaps of my own insufficiency and teaching us all in the process.

I have attempted to begin the study of Latin for the past three years. I have very few friends incorporating this in their educational goals. Hence, upon sharing my lack of discipline in this area, I am often asked, "Why is it so important?" This year we finally experienced some growth in this area, and I now understand why it is important to me. So, for you everyday moms with not a speck of "classic" in your own educational background, here are some reasons for studying Latin you might not have thought about.

1. Latin is fun! Granted, I may be a little above the average person in my love for large descriptive words. Finding out that most of those words have come to us through Latin has made our studies even more intriguing. My own enthusiasm has overflowed into my children, with even the four-year-old refusing to be left out. You might be surprised to find how much your own family would enjoy it.
2. Latin provides structure and discipline in a way many other areas of study cannot. It is familiar, yet totally different from anything we've known. It stretches our minds, encouraging the processes of persistence and analysis. There are others who could define this "thing" better than I, but I know it is there. Perhaps I will be better able to define it a few years down the road, but for now it is enough for me to simply experience it.
3. It paves the way for learning other modern languages. I am amazed how much more proficient my miniscule ability to speak Spanish has become as a result of our Latin studies. I never thought I had a knack for other languages, but I am now seeing that perhaps I just never had the right tools.
4. Latin is fun! Oh, did I already mention this? Okay, I will admit at this point that I am much more enthusiastic about this than my children. We all know, however, that our children usually are quick to pick up on our enthusiasm, regardless of that enthusiasm's target. I know that age/experience is giving me an enthusiasm for

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this that my kids cannot appreciate. But it makes them wonder what is so interesting about it, which leads to their own interest.

5. It brings greater understanding to our own language. I am killing two birds with one stone this year—studying English grammar through Latin. That means my schedule has been simplified, leaving time for other pursuits. That is always a good thing in my house.

I have not shared this new interest of mine with many other moms. The few times I have, I find that they feel some sort of false guilt for not incorporating it into their own curriculum. I then hear comments such as, "I just have to remind myself that my kids can have a good education without learning Latin." And that's okay. They are right. In fact, I told myself that over the past couple of years, when things were quite chaotic around our home. But now I have discovered the secret. It is both intriguing and practical. It helps smooth the way in other areas. I am hooked. It is quite surprising, really. It has stimulated so much interest for me, in fact, that I am beginning my own study of Greek, in order to better teach it to my children in a couple of years. I can hardly wait to give them the gift of reading part of God's word in the original language. I am excited to gift myself with that! I have said it before, and will probably say it many times more: One reason I homeschool is to give myself the education I never had. Now, Hebrew, well, the jury is still out on that one. I would like to think I could accomplish that, but reality tells me it just might not happen. We will have to see.

There are many resources available if you feel pulled to study Latin in your family. The elementary programs are designed for moms like you and me, with no prior knowledge of Latin. Do not let the thought of it intimidate you. Remember, we are on this journey WITH our children. It is okay to learn right along with them. I often wish I had enjoyed my education the first time around, for I am learning so much this time around! So take the plunge, if you so wish. The journey awaits you, and you just never know what a fun journey it could prove to be!

Mail Bag

I just want to thank you for the newsletters. It really is so encouraging and motivating.

I hope you are doing fine. We have been in South Africa for several months and will return to the US towards the middle of July. I will contact you again, because we would love to use your year plan books for this coming school year.

God bless you with a wonderful summer!

C.C.

In Praise of Poetry

I hated poetry as a child. Nothing was dreaded more than the inevitable spring assignment to write a poem about some aspect of nature. I would sit, pencil poised, waiting for inspiration to strike... and nothing would come. I would sit outside, close my eyes and listen, just like the teacher said, but the breezes didn't speak to me, nor did the flowers whisper their secrets... I thought a bee was whispering in my ear once in fourth grade... but it turned out that he was just wishing for nectar from the plastic flower on my hair clip. The most I could conjure was some tacky little set of couplets in which the ending words of each line rhymed. I wouldn't call it poetry, I knew then that it wasn't, it was just something I contrived to get over the assignment.

In retrospect, the problem is clear. I could not write poetry, because I had not read or heard poetry. Of course, the teacher would read three examples of Haiku

before she set us to writing, but that can hardly be called a poetry rich environment. Research tells us that good readers are those raised in an environment of many written words; their parents read to them, they see their parents reading, the love for reading is passed on almost as surely as the curly hair that came from Grandma. Good writers, are often borne of prolific readers. Saturated in the words and writing styles of the great authors of all time, they develop a style all their own, drawn from the example of others. The same can be said of poetry.

For our children to enjoy poetry they must see us enjoying poetry (and I do NOT mean the "there once was a man from Nantucket" variety that every Grandfather feels it his duty to pass down!) In order to love it, they must see it being loved. In order to read it properly, they must first hear it read. In order to write it well, they must be saturated in the great poetic works of all time, as

well as the sweet little vignettes we associate with childhood.

WHY should we teach poetry? If written words are musical notes, then poetry is the symphony. Any one can combine the rudiments of language to get a point across; it takes a love of words, and the subject at hand to begin to compose a poem. Poetry is an expression of a personal connection to a being or an object. It takes pains to go beyond the obvious and to use language worthy of the subject to express it's intent. I know parents who say "I never liked poetry much, and it isn't really relevant to daily life... I'd rather spend that time teaching something that matters, like math." To which my not so delicate answer is this: Who cares what you liked! Poetry may have been the bane of your existence, but it may be the nectar of life to your child! Poetry not relevant! What! Tell me what could be more relevant than the ability to eloquently ex-

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press one's self in matters of the heart and mind? What is more relevant than having in your command the words and ways of combining them which move the hearts of God and man alike (there is much poetry in the Bible).

If words are the milk, poetry is the cream. Instead of skimming it off to be used later so that the milk may be consumed more quickly, I encourage you to stir that cream back in and feed your children the fattening milk of many words and much poetry. Begin with nursery rhymes in the cradle. Continue with such wonderfully illustrated volumes as A

Child's Garden of Verses. Memorize selections from anthologies for children, such as Poems for Memorization, or Favorite Poems Old and New. Then, just when they least expect it, skim off some of that cream and make ice cream! The really good stuff! Read aloud The Pilgrim's Progress, or The Odyssey. Read Shakespeare's plays, even to the very young. If it is not your cup of tea, then ACT like it is the fascinating, wonderful stuff that it is... for your children's sake. Write poems together to accompany the drawings in your nature notebooks, or stick a little love poem into a lunch box to be enjoyed along

with a foil wrapped chocolate heart.

Make poetry come alive in your home, for your children. Even if it never did for you. Begin simply, with the gentle poetry written for young children. Fall in love together with the lovely mixture of words and sentiment. Don't allow poetry to become the thing you'll get to if all of the other lessons are done... for they are never done, and you'll never get to it. Read a poem over breakfast, quote a poem to the birds as you feed them, memorize a poem from Scripture, whatever suits you. Give your children the gift of poetry.

A Day In June

James Russel Lowell from "The Vision of Sir Launfal"

And what is so rare as a day in June?

Then, if ever, come perfect days

Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune

And over it softly her warm ear lays;

Whether we look, or whether we listen,

We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;

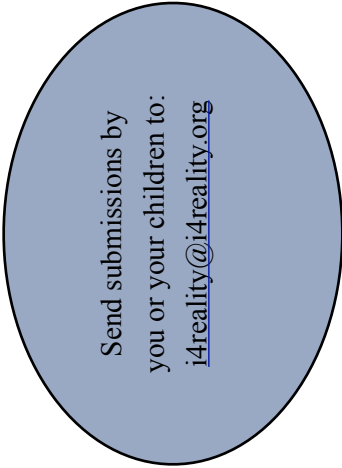
Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,

And, groping blindly above it for light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.

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