

Sarah Child

Our oldest child complains that while I frequently write about her younger brother and sister, she is given short shrift. I remind her that when she was younger (and anecdote material) I wrote about her often. She reminds me that she could not read then and I have not bothered to save what I wrote. This then is a letter to her on the occasion of a birthday.

Sweetheart: Somebody has said that the tenth birthday is a milestone in a child's life. Well, maybe. But, I find that the milestones as I see them have nothing to do with calendars or numbers.

I am delighted and only the tiniest bit sad they you are ten. On your fifth birthday I wept a few tears. Your father chided me for imagining you already grown up and gone away from us. He said I was silly but I forgave him because inside he is, I know, even more sentimental about his children than I.

I love having you ten. Not only have you long since mastered those nuisance chores, such as tying your own shoe laces, getting in and out of snow clothes and washing your hair, but you can now scramble better eggs than I can. You also can interpret printed instructions which I find impossible and size up an emotion-laden situation with finesse whether it be an altercation between your father and me, a joust with a sales clerk or two of your girlfriends in a snit.

But best of all I like having you ten because now we can and do communicate with language as well as with hugs and squeezes. Lucid conversation has always been one of my prime treats. Conversing with one's own child is a rare pleasure worth cultivating and worth waiting for.

At the beginning of this letter I talked about milestones. I remember bringing you home from the hospital. Your father and I had been married for a little more than a year. I remember looking at the two of you together in our own home and thinking that never before had I felt so much concentrated love. He walked around with you in his arms that night, upstairs and down showing you each room, explaining every detail to you as if you were a much desired, prospective tenant whom he was trying to persuade to stay.

Nothing you did was insignificant. We did not wear our hearts on our sleeves. We patted them on our noses slightly above our prideful, doting smiles.

Your great-grandmother when she learned of your brother's imminent arrival said she was surprised. She thought we would not want to share our love for you with another.

But it was precisely because we loved you so much that we wanted to expand our focus. And because we loved your brother so much that we became parents for the third time.

In this day and age of women's lib and Zero Population Growth it is not very popular to talk of enjoying your children or ex-

tolling the advantages of parenthood.

I think I can speak for you father as well as myself in saying that whatever else we do with our lives it must necessarily pale in the challenge and accomplishment of rearing you all to loving, responsible adults.

This is not to say it has been effortless. "Hail Mary preserve us," I have been heard to scream not infrequently. Your father, only slightly less volatile, takes turns roaring and purring as the occasion demands.

Bringing up kids is not easy. There you are one moment a kind, well-behaved, lovely and intelligent human being. The next I find I am a mother to a karate chopping, ten-year-old, nit-picking cowboy.

The other day you surprised me by throwing your arms around my neck and whispering "I love you." That kind of expression becomes more rare with each year you accumulate — and more precious, as you yourself are.

Happy Birthday, Love.

Former Mission Prospers in Lay Hands

By BONITA BALDWIN

The people of the Rochester Diocese should be proud that they helped start and are a continuing part of a new creative enterprise. Tim McCluskey, former lay volunteer to the San Juan Obrero Mission in La Paz, Bolivia, was talking about the indigenous control of the Bolivian parish that has attracted wide attention.

Last August, the Rochester missionaries, who included Fathers Thomas O'Brien, Peter Deckman, Paul Freemesser, Edward Golden, and Daniel Tormey at one time or another since the mission's beginning in 1967, returned home, leaving the parish under the leadership of an eight member lay team. The team's success has been noted in the National Catholic Reporter and America magazine, weeklies of national circulation.

Father Joseph Reinhart, diocesan director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, received an unsolicited self-

evaluation from the Bolivian team last week. It is significant that at a time when diocesan leaders here are concerned with goal setting and evaluation, their Bolivian counterparts should produce such a sophisticated report. Father Golden commented. He added, "All the programs are still there and developing. They're every bit as well done as when we were there, and in some cases there is more activity."

Work has continued with the water and credit cooperatives, health clinic, liturgy outreaches, religious instruction, and pastoral ministries. The library started in memory of Tim McCluskey's father has grown in the past six months. (Anyone interested in contributing to this cause may do so through the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.) The Bolivian evaluation also reported an increased focusing on youth ministry, according to McCluskey.

The American missionaries chose the team as a cross-section

of the parish. A tailor, housewives, a doctor, university students, and others, rich and poor, serve on the team. Two hospital priests participate as part-time chaplains, and Jorge Jaime Jimenez, star center-halfback for the Strongest, La Paz's championship soccer team, acts as full-time, salaried coordinator.

The team derives its authority from the approval of Archbishop Manrique Hurtado of La Paz and from its responsibility for diocesan funds pledged at a decreasing rate for the next five years. Father Golden stressed that the diocese maintains its stance toward the La Paz parish and its commitment to the idea of mission. "It's good for the diocese to be involved outside its geographical boundaries."

Father Golden and McCluskey agreed that the group is alive and trying to be creative in taking the initiative. Tim said that he hopes the Bolivian experiment will be viewed as a model for a new direction in inner-city ministry.



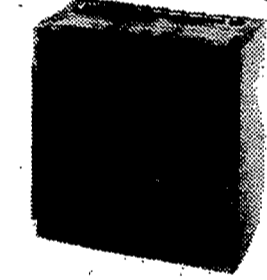
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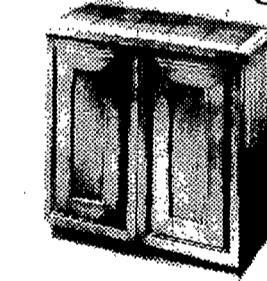
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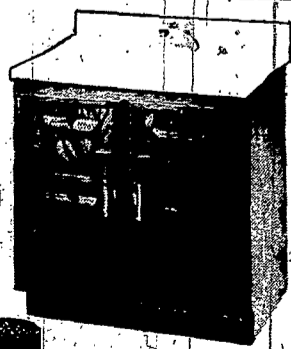
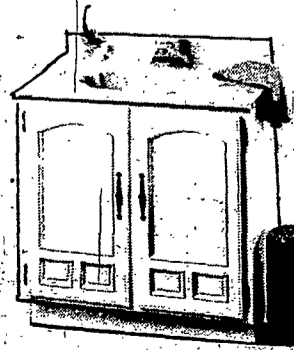
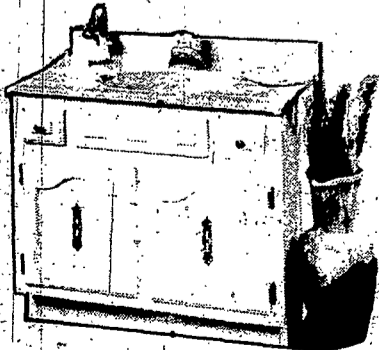
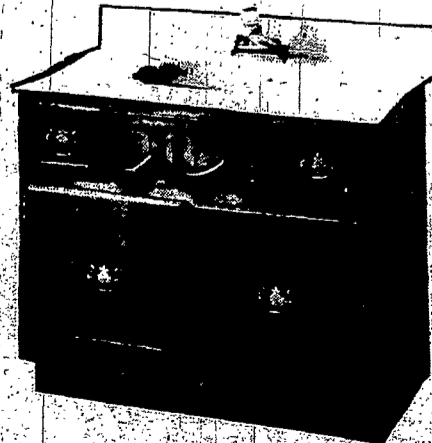
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