



## Happy anniversary to us

It's been 20 years, but feels like 400 to Dave

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On this anniversary of Chicago Parent, I urge parents everywhere to raise high a frosty mug of Pedialyte and toast the valuable contributions to child rearing made by this dynamic magazine, which in just two short decades has managed to stay in business for 20 years.

In the world of magazine publishing, a 20-year run is no small feat. To appreciate this accomplishment it is necessary to understand the demanding and coordinated labor that goes into the production of a single edition. First, people write stuff. Then other people make that stuff look like a magazine. Somewhere in here big printing presses are involved, and there's something about advertising.

I've simplified the process because, of course, I don't actually know anything about publishing a magazine. I barely understand what I do, which is basically that I write, then late at night drive to the abandoned cannery out on Rural Route 57 where I leave the manuscript beneath a flat rock by the old guard tower. Within 24 hours \$2.6 million is deposited in one of my offshore accounts. Then I change my name and move to a new city.

### The early years

To appreciate the impact Chicago Parent has had on families, one must view parenting magazines in a historic context. Few people outside of the humor columnist community know that Chicago Parent traces its lineage back to America in the 1600s when the magazine – then a scroll – was known as Colonial Parent among the dour, taciturn European settlers. The stern parenting methods common to that time are reflected in this excerpt from the then-popular advice column, Ask a Puritan:

*Dear Puritan,* I am the dour, taciturn parent of a lazy boy and two lazy girls. The boy is nearly 5 years old, yet balks at helping with even the simplest chores, such as splitting logs. I tell him, "The stockade is not going to build itself, Jebediah," but he just complains that the ax is too heavy, or the ground is too frozen, or there are too many cougars.

The girls, though older, are no better. Also, they are cruel to their brother, ill mannered around neighbors, and generally act like a couple of little witches. I mean it. I think they're witches. Sometimes raising these children makes me mad enough to say 'Prithee!' Any advice?

Dour and Taciturn in Salem

*Dear Dour,* There are several schools of thought on public dunking vs. burning at the stake. Personally, I'm opposed to both. Boys will be boys and girls will be, in your case, witches, but child rearing is best guided by a gentle hand. Especially a hand that's holding a stout stick. Now get those little shirkers busy on the stockade, or they'll wish you were a cougar!

The superstitious ignorance of the 1600s eventually gave way to the more enlightened ignorance of the 1700s. As a young America was chafing at the shackles of British tyranny, so too were young America's infants chafing at the shackles of their diapers, many of which were made almost entirely of textiles.

To address such child health issues, the Founding Fathers created Founding Parent Magazine-another forerunner to Chicago Parent, this time on parchment-which featured medical advice from Founding Pediatrician Hiram "Apothecary" Wicketts.

*Dear Apothecary Wicketts,* Young Davy was complaining of a toothache, so we made him a poultice of sorghum and mashed beet root dipped in tallow, which is wore until the full moon, then buried in the cornfield. The poultice, not

Davy. Yet he still seems to be hurting. Did we do something wrong? This treatment always works on the hogs, who seem happy and healthy right up to the time we slaughter them.  
Founding Farmer, Somewhere in Virginia

*Apothecary Wickets* says: It is a common misconception among parents, especially – and I mean this with the utmost respect – among ignorant, unschooled dirt farmers, that children are like hogs simply because both roll in the mud, hate to be bathed and root food out of the ground with their snouts.

While sorghum, mashed beet root and tallow may make a tasty pie filling, it is pure foolishness to imagine it a treatment for toothaches. Next time use MOLASSES, beet root and tallow, then bury it in a *bean* field. Forget about the full moon. That's just a superstition.

### **A century of progress**

Time marches on, and with it marches Chicago Parent, which in 1916 goes to war under the title War Bond Parent. It's mission: Raise morale on the home front with magazine features such as:

- Sorghum: Nature's perfect toothpaste.
- Molasses, beet root and tallow: Sweet treat or crafts project?
- Kids' corner: Summer camp vs. boot camp.

In 1920, the direction of parenting magazines changed dramatically with the passage of the 19th Amendment, which won American women the right to vote and the grudging admission by men that well, perhaps the little ladies did indeed have something to do with the parenting process. This important step ushered in yet another Chicago Parent precursor, *Amendment Parent Magazine*, and a new column: Ask Mamie, the Suffragette and Temperance Adviser.

*Dear Mamie*, My husband, Broderick, is as vocal in his opposition to a woman's right to vote as I am in support. Sadly, this argument has also divided our dozen children. Siding with their father are James, Broderick Jr., Thomas, Theodore and Jonathan. In support of women's voting rights are Elizabeth, Susan, Marian, Ethel and Harriet. The problem is the twins, Jill and Jacob, who are undecided as they are only 6 months old. Broderick accuses me, privately, of influencing their vote by breastfeeding. I counter that he is manipulating them by controlling all the family finances, including my household budget. He calls that nonsense, yet I've been unable to pay the butcher for three weeks. Who is right? Please settle this quickly, as the girls and I are down to the last of our sorghum and tallow.  
Proud But Hungry in Kansas City

*Dear Proud*, Be courageous, and if necessary, you go all Temperance League on his head, girlfriend!

Let us skip past the 1950s and '60s, a dark period in the Chicago Parent continuum that gave rise to *Red Scare Parent*, *Stepford Wife Parent* and *Alvin and the Chipmunks Parent*, which brings us to the 1984 premier of Chicago Parent as we know it today. Except that this was 20 years ago.

### **Today is the first day ...**

The story of the founding of Chicago Parent by renowned educator Estelle "Chicago" Parent has attained the status of folklore. Thus we will spend little time recounting the magazine's early struggle for financing, then for acceptance by an initially hostile International Cartel of Street Corner Newsboys. Neither do we need to dwell on the infamous Doctors Waiting Room Magazine Rack Rebellion of '87 that cost this nation so many fine, young soldiers.

In its 20 years, Chicago Parent has covered a wide range of parenting topics, which include – all of these are true --- private vs. community daycare, Attention Deficit Disorder, interfaith marriage, childhood obesity, minivans, telecommuting parents, Bozo, crisis hotlines for kids, teens and parents, imprisoned mothers, Barney, "empathy bellies" for fathers, interracial friendships, year-round schools, Harry Potter mania, cyber travel and terrorism.

Yet this magazine has sidestepped such touchy issues as: How can dad keep the kids out of his chair when he's watching the Bears game and has to go to the kitchen for another bowl of chili?

To correct this glaring flaw, might I suggest Chicago Parent consider launching a new and daring column called Ask Dave, in which the "advice" columnist saves time by "making up" the questions, then provides poorly researched or "untrue" answers. Oh look, here's a question already!

*Dear Dave*, I understand that you cook an indescribably tasty chili for Sunday football games. I'm quite envious and would love the recipe even if you charged me thousands and thousands of dollars. I am writing you a check now, as I'm sure every right-minded American is, too. What's your secret?  
Loyal Reader who, probably, is Not Dave, in Des Plaines

*Dave replies:* "Sauté your onions and garlic in butter. Add ground beef, chili powder and tomatoes. Mix in your sorghum, molasses, mashed beet root and tallow. Simmer, then serve in a warm poultice."

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