Spring 5-1-2001

The Recycler

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol21/iss2/19

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If my fourth child had been my first, he'd be an only child. To use the politically-correct term, he's "high maintenance." Even more high maintenance is the cache of junk he collects. I have raised the ultimate CONSUMER, a materialistic man. Maybe it's birth order. Number One Son is not possession-oriented. Neither is Number Three. Number Two is a daughter and that, in and of itself, has its own inherent materialism.

At the age of five, Busy (as we affectionately call him) told the clerk in the grocery store as he was paying for his candy, "I'm not paying the tax. I don't use the roads." To which the sixteen-year-old gum-cracking clerk responded, "Okay."

He's cheap, he's frugal, and now he's learned the art of garbage-picking. We live in a suburb with good pickings. Each week on the night before garbage pick-up, he dons his gloves and packs a flashlight into the back pocket of his jeans. "I'll be back in an hour or so," is followed by a slamming door. In the morning, I'll squeeze past his garaged treasures in an attempt to get into my car. An hour later, I'll get the usual call from my husband telling me to relay the message to "Biz." "Tell him to rent a garage of his own."

Now, this is not necessarily a bad thing. The kid is an entrepreneur. He mows lawns, washes cars, house-sits, and walks dogs. At fourteen, he has more spending money than I do. And I've worked all my life.

These "recycling" efforts started as part of his business venture. He got to know some of the neighbors and found that, although they were relatively smart business people, they had basically no street smarts. One of his first "finds" was a Snapper lawn mower that had been thrown away because its previous owner couldn't get it started. "Biz" brought it home, drained the overfilled oil, refilled it with the correct amount, and it ran like a top. Actually, I use that lawnmower now (the boys are busy doing other people's lawns).
He's acquired an edger, a weed-whacker, and another mower. Last week, when I picked him up from the swimming pool, I screeched to a halt as he screamed from the back seat: "STOP!" He'd spied a snow blower in the trash. He mumbled something about it being, "In their garage sale last week for $75; guess it didn't sell." He's gotten picky. He made sure it started before he hauled it home.

We can't get in his room any more. He has stereo equipment from kids gone off to college. He got golf clubs from the neighbors across the street. Everyone knows him. Now they give him things before they even make it to the trash.

I'm not complaining. When he goes to college, I'll give the stuff away to charity. I can use the tax deduction.

The Circle

Jeanette Helmbrecht

for Jenny

The child lives her life as what it is and takes her living from the hand that gives then graciously she turns her hand to giving and draws the perfect circle with her living.