

GOOD CLEAN FUN

The older we get the more we hear words or phrases roll from our very own lips that could have been uttered by good old mom or dad. You know what I am saying. As much as you may dislike admitting to it, I'm sure you've caught yourself saying, "By god, I sound just like my parents." That's how the cliché "good, clean fun" comes to mind. It's one of my mom's favorite phrases, and I recently heard myself use it.

This past February, my young daughter and I were at our Princess Winter Campout. Man! Did we catch a perfect wintertime Saturday. The air was cool, but not bitter cold, the wind was still and the skies were bright. This gorgeous day of winter fun and games culminated in the tribal sled races. As the appointed hour drew near, dads and girls made their way to the sledding hill back behind the lower level of the Camp Duncan dining hall. The amenities at Duncan are few compared to Camps like Tecumseh, Crosely or Sherman Lakes. But Duncan's special asset is its terrific sledding hill that speeds down a steep slope which ends gently down at the lakefront.

The tribal sled races took place on the great Duncan sled hill. Dads and daughters packed into their custom crafted tribal sleds speeding down the snowy slope out towards the lake. My mighty tribe, the Illini Princesses, joined in the fun with our Illini sled which plowed into and under the snow, while other tribal sleds skimmed speedily on the snowy surface. Our tribe roared with laughter and emptied out of our sled, dads and daughters, snow-covered, half-walking and half-tumbling down the hill, dragging our beaten sled down to the edge of the frozen lakefront. The tribal races were done and I just stood at the bottom of the sled hill looking up at all the dads and daughters laughing, talking and having a good time.

Although the races were over, no one left the hill. There were streams of dads and daughters riding their sleds joyously down the hill. Not tribal sleds, but all kinds of snow toys: inner tubes, saucers, flat plastic sleds, toboggans, small snow boards, plastic ski sleds and you name it, all coming down the hill occupied by dads and daughters. At the top was another gaggle of fathers and daughters loading and pushing people down the slope; and on the side of the hill, on the stairs, was another constant stream of dads and girls going back up for another run down Duncan's great hill.

I turned to one of my tribal members, still covered in snow after our quick exit from the Illini tribal sled, and asked him, "How many dads and daughters do you count up on this hill?" The reply came back, "At least 200." As I mulled that over for a couple of minutes, it occurred to me that almost the entire camp population was on the hill enjoying the afternoon. I could hear dads and their daughters laughing and joking and the sounds of excited voices, of both dads and daughters, screaming as they flew down the hill.

And then the thought came to me, searing into my brain like a branding iron into rawhide: "good clean fun." This is what mom would call "good clean fun."

And good clean fun is the best antidote for the barrage of daily life. Especially for our kids. We live in a fast paced environment bombarded by a relentless onslaught from an endless variety of media. Our kids are subjected to all kinds of entertainment, programming, games and cyberspace beaming from everywhere into our own homes right through our own televisions, computers, iPods, cell phones, TiVos, video and dvd players and even simple radios. And don't forget the print media which falls upon us swirling like an autumn wind storm full of more books and magazines on every subject imaginable. Some of the media is fantastic, and enriching for the lives of our children and ourselves. But some of it is rubbish!

Yikes! I can't believe I just typed that word: rubbish. Now, I sound like my dad. I can hear him, as clear as I can hear the endless sounds from the electronic gear filling our house. "Rubbish," dad would often say about various forms of popular culture when I was a kid. My parents are pretty open minded and made certain our young lives were enriched. But if dad didn't like it, then it was deemed "rubbish." He was usually right, and that very word, spoken by my dad in my childhood, still has relevance today in regard to portions of the endless flow of media aimed right at our kids.

Rubbish . . . wow . . . I can hardly believe that in less than a page and a half of text I've become my parents! But that's not so bad. My folks are tremendous parents and they are the source of my own parenting strength. When I was a kid, we of course had no personal computers or video games or cyberspace, but the expanding media was creeping in from everywhere. And if my mom and dad said whatever we were watching or listening to was rubbish, we were quickly directed towards some good clean fun.

There it is again – good clean fun. In Indian Guides, Indian Princesses and Trailblazers, we can step back from the relentless media assault. Here in the present day, we can take a break from the rubbish. Our Federation Program provides meaningful time with our kids away from the mindless clutter of the streaming media. Like tribal meetings with our kids, that's good clean fun. Federation Outings are another source of good clean fun. Civic service projects, tribal outings, bonfires, our ceremonies, campouts, and simple field games are all sources of good clean fun bonding daughters and sons with their fun loving dads.

Picture the hill at Duncan full of dads and daughters sledding on our last campout. That snap shot is the very essence of our program. Keep that image in your mind's eye: dad and kids enjoying a cool, crisp, winter afternoon sledding down a hill filled with sounds of laughter and joy all around. That scene at Camp Duncan is etched in my mind. It's an image of good clean fun simply summing up what our beloved Federation is all about.

Soak it all in dads and make it part of your memories. Life is not a dress rehearsal and we can't rewind life like a video tape. Participate in that which is offered to you. Recruit your friends, recruit your neighbors, spread the word, grab your kids and come out and enjoy some good, clean fun.

Silver Cloud, Federation Chief 2007-2008