

Exciting Excerpts

(No date)

Dear Grandma and Grandpa Hall,

For school I got Mr. Harris. We are really excited about the baby! I'm the only one who wants a boy. Charlotte, Cheryl, Paul, and John want a girl. Danny, Mom and Dad don't really care. Do you know that Brother Linebarger died? Well I really miss you. I hope that you are feeling well!

Love, David OXOX

Sept. 27, 1989

Dear Mom & Dad,

Since David wrote his letter we have had lots of excitement here. We have a little girl! Emma was born Sat., Sept. 23, 2:26 p.m. She weighed 6 lbs. 13 oz. - 19 1/2" long. She has lots of black hair. Seems to look most like Cheryl. When the Dr. announced she was a girl I started crying and could hardly stop for two days. She is so precious. She wakes up and looks around - doesn't cry too much, eats well. Her every move delights her six siblings, who so far have not tired of holding her. Except for the usual aches I am recovering well. Neighbors have been generous with meals and Rich's office sent lots of clothes. Hope you are well. Love,

Jeannie

September 17, 1989

Dear Mom & Dad,

Jordan thinks it is his duty to throw things on the floor. He opens cupboards and pulls things out and if it makes a big noise he'll pick it up and drop it again. When he eats he has to drop his spoon or bowl and then lean over to look at it. He squishes food in his hand and then shakes it onto the floor. Food tastes much better eaten off the floor you know.

Brandon likes to pretend he's Super Grover from Sesame Street. He puts out his arms--Grover flies through the air. The other night Brandon asked us if we wanted him to sing and he got out his stick, put it in his mouth, hummed, and moved his fingers on it like he was playing an instrument. He also made us disappear with his magic wand. ●●● Love, Anna

Vertical handwritten notes on the left margin:
Dear Grandma and Grandpa Hall
To Mr. D... and Mrs. P...
(11/1/89)
You are my first boyfriend
Dad's name is...
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Vertical handwritten notes on the right margin:
Benji's Book 1/24/89
1989 (1st printing)

Vertical stamp on the right margin:
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Dedicated to Jordan Ashcroft on his first birthday (Oct. 6) and all other past and future
one-year-olds.

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To My Daughters, with Love (Title)

their approval, which you deserve, you may not fall backward and break your bones. Your bones are not your business yet. It is strictly the duty of others to guard you but not to hinder you. Your duty as well as your joy now is self-education. Never again in any years of your life will you learn so much and so well as you have learned in this year and will learn in the next.

Your best teacher is yourself, and this will always be true. No one, indeed, can teach you anything unless you want to be taught. Schoolteachers will discover this even later than your parents, though it will take them years to learn it and some of them never learn it. You know it already. You are your own best pupil just as you are your own best teacher. I hope your parents know this, too, but if they do, it is most unusual and you are a fortunate child. You will do well in life, you will grow up adjusted, as they call it, and you will not have to pay money to psychiatrists. If your parents do not know it—and this is more likely—then you are beginning a long struggle and you can hardly hope to escape damage, for if you yield to them, you will become a weakling, at the mercy of any strong-armed bully and dictator, and if you rebel, you will get the habit of rebellion which may end, if you are stubborn enough, in your becoming the sort of person who rebels at everything and one who will eventually pull down the walls of a nation as Samson pulled down the walls of the temple to his own destruction and the destruction of all within.

There is the possibility that you have parents of good sense who will learn from you as they strive to make you

*Thought you'd enjoy this - from
Pearl S. Buck, 1949 - - 1972 (7th printing)*

To You on Your First Birthday

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learn from them. If they are indeed persons of good sense, they will reason with each other and later with you, and you will all arrive at a state of compromise. That is, you will grant that in some ways they know better than you. As, for example, when you try to drink a bottle of liquid of a pleasant color, labeled POISON, you will grant that they have the right to forbid it. The state of compromise means that each of you allows to the other certain inalienable rights: you to have all freedom short of killing yourself or others; and they the right to forbid you dangerous pursuits which would end in death or injury for yourself or others.

This is enough for the first year. Independence takes on subtler aspects as time goes on, and your second birthday will certainly present more complex rights, that is, rights more entangled with those of other people than this first birthday reveals.

Today is yours. Take your own pace, talk when you must, walk when you like, cry as you please, ignore the boring, but smile at least as often as you can for those who love you and for the stranger who longs to love. Feel no duty toward keeping your diapers dry, and when you sit in your high chair with the bowl of porridge before you—or better still, the soft-boiled egg—ladle it into the air if you feel inclined. Now is the time to do that sort of thing, for later the rights of others and their reluctance to clean up after you may make it harder for you or even prevent you. This is the age of freedom, the age of being one year old.

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