

# The Credit is All Theirs

By Steve Calechman

Here's the pecking order in my house: My son, Milo, comes in first. My wife, Jenny, follows, and I take the bronze every time, and that's only because we don't have a dog.



I'm fine with the hierarchy. I was a bachelor for 42 years, had my star time and understand that the parenting gig doesn't come with a publicist. Besides, I don't need any accolades from the outside world, which is good because I'm getting even less than that.

Jenny and I are home with Milo every day. We love it, and by that I mean that it can be amazingly tedious.

Sometimes I'm out of ideas before lunch and I'll build an afternoon around walking 30 feet to the mailbox. But then small victories pop up – Milo starts dropping groceries into a cart or he figures out that his mouth, not his nose, is actually his mouth. I want to revel, if only for a few seconds, in my boy's discoveries and my small part in it, but I find out that the moment has already been stolen by people I've welcomed into my home.

Before I continue, a caveat: My in-laws are overall lovely people. I probably wouldn't exchange them for a year of undisturbed sleep, but what has become increasingly clear in the last few weeks is that they're a bunch of glory hogs.

Here's a recap of the last two months:

Milo can dance and faux snap his fingers to a song. Jenny's mom takes credit for this.

Milo can clap his hands. Jenny's mom's boyfriend takes the credit.

Milo can point. The boyfriend again.

Milo can say "Dada" when prompted. Jenny's dad claims that victory.

Milo can give five. My brother snags that one.

Their justification is all the same. They did the action in front of him once and that was the experience that imprinted. I like these folks but I have some things to share. None of them has ever spent three hours alone with Milo during normal business hours, let alone 20 seconds at 3 in the morning, and there are plenty of opportunities for both. None of them has ever changed his diaper, helped him fall asleep, strapped him into his car seat, carried him up a flight of stairs or given him a bath. Add to that, Jenny's dad lives in Ohio. My brother lives in Oregon, and both have seen Milo twice in his life. In fairness, I acknowledge that Jenny's mom has spilled water on him on more than one occasion. When Milo learns how to swim, I'm sure that she'll bring it up.

I'm not resentful, not even close. I actually feel lucky to call these people my own. They just need to be in the vicinity of my child and their mere essence makes him more learned. They're so potent that Milo recently started eating toast by mimicking Jenny's brother, who lives in Phoenix and has never met him.

Now I feel like the hog, monopolizing all of this talent when there are people out in the world who want to lose weight, learn Japanese and dominate Words with Friends, and they want to do it now, over the phone, if possible.

My relatives need to broaden

their scope, run workshops, become certified life coaches and buy islands with their boatloads of cash.

I wouldn't begrudge them. I'm content getting up every day, putting on my sweats, keeping my head down and tending to my child. I know what I do for him, and when I forgot recently, Jenny quickly reminded me.

And then she suggested the topic for this column. ■

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