

Class Ceilings and Sticky Floors

The agony of choosing between dreams



Barbara Brotman

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
May 1996

By JILL NATWICK JOHNSTON
I was recently offered a great job, a lifetime opportunity. I was to head a department in one of the world's largest and most profitable companies, with a sizable staff reporting to me. Part of the assignment was to re-engineer the function, so I could have configured the work to fit my specifications. My current salary would have doubled, and great perks were part of the package. I would not have had to relocate. As a female, I would have held a highly visible position reporting to senior management in a male-dominated industry. In many respects, it was one of the most prestigious positions in my field, something I had been laboring in the vineyard of corporate law departments for 15 years to achieve.



I turned it down.
I turned it down to keep my family intact. I turned my back on the temptingly tangible and esteem-enhancing benefits of a great job so that I could be there to cook dinner for my husband and help my kids learn their multiplication tables. I stepped off the top rung of the ladder of success so that I could watch my daughter learn her ballet steps. In the process I realized that for me, and for many child-bearing women who are also successful in their careers, the greatest obstacle is the conflict of job and self-sufficiency against parenting and wifehood.

As Mother's Day 1996 approaches, family and career conflict is nothing new. What is new is how inexorably the demands of family pull women away from career success. Now that finally women in large numbers are within spitting distance of partnerships, vice presidencies, and other top positions, as we are finally hitting our stride professionally, those of us in our 30s and 40s with children are terribly torn. Say what you will about sexism and old boy networks, many women are held back from the top jobs far more fiercely by the sticky peanut-butter-smear kitchen floors of motherhood. It's not a glass ceiling we encounter; it's a looking glass, a funhouse mirror reflecting and refracting back at us our own images, distorted by the opposing forces of family and position, of self-effacement and self-advancement, tugging and pulling at our centers, at the cores of our being.

I have for years uncomfortably straddled the world of work and home, environments as different as artichokes and peas. I have worked and I have mothered. My husband is an attorney and businessman who I married, in part, because he has single-focus drive and is dedicated to his work and our financial well-being. He is not and never has been a househusband, and so I have had the privilege and responsibility of being the primary parent.

And I am enough of a traditionalist to feel responsible for the emotional health of my family.

My husband recently bought a new business headquartered 250 miles away from our present home. I somewhat reluctantly agreed to move to the small town in which the new business is located, knowing that there was little

chance that I would be able to continue to practice my area of specialty there. Then the new job offer landed in my lap.

After much searching of souls, number crunching, out-of-box thinking and rational analysis, we finally concluded there was no way I could take the job unless we wanted our children to be raised completely by the sitter and our marriage further stretched. Though the job was undeniably attractive, it would have meant considerably longer hours and more travel than my current job. We've struggled with a long-distance marriage long enough to know that increased absence is neither healthy for us nor for our kids.

I passed up the great job so I can move, in a month, to a small town where my practice will suffer but, I hope, my family will thrive. The lure of prestige and position that propelled me steadily forward and upward since high school succumbed to the far stronger gravitational pull of family need. Perhaps this is just a brief hiatus, a chapter in my life. Perhaps I will pick up the thread of my career when the children leave home in 10 years. Perhaps.

Theoretically, women of my generation now have unlimited life choices. But we can choke on that very abundance of choices that we have fought for, whined about and now experienced for the first time in history. I know how lucky I am to have this overflowing buffet of opportunity in career and family. I make no sacrifice, merely a trade-off between richly but differently rewarding options. But I realize that I am my career's worst enemy.

Still, as I back away from the job of a lifetime, I steal some over-the-shoulder, wistful glances in the funhouse mirror at the over-achieving part of me I leave behind, at least for the time being. To paraphrase Pogo paraphrasing Oliver Hazard Perry, I have met the obstacle, and she is me.

On June 19, family bested hockey: Darryl Sutter resigned as coach of the Chicago Blackhawks to spend more time with his family — specifically his 2-year-old son, Christopher, who has Down's syndrome.

It was an extraordinary sight. He gave up a position that offered enormous satisfaction and financial reward, not to mention a chance to win the Stanley Cup.

The event received public attention commensurate with its rarity. Who would make such a sacrifice, relinquish a prized goal, change life so utterly?

Women. Every day of the week.

There are no press conferences for mothers who give up their careers for their children. No public jaws drop; no throats tighten.

But the fact is that for many women, the joyous arrival of a child, whether healthy or in need of special care, is a catalyst for soul-searching.

You look in the eyes of your baby, and a hard question looks back: How badly do you want what you always thought you wanted?

To be sure, it is a dilemma of privilege. Most working mothers can't afford to quit their jobs. And only women fortunate enough to have careers that give them pleasure would be tormented by the question.

The question is deeply personal. Many mothers continue to enjoy both careers and children, and they resent any suggestion that they are short-changing either. But enough women choose otherwise so that in upper-middle-class communities, a mother leaving or cutting back on a successful career is unremarkable.

"I'm surrounded by women like me," said Janet Herbstman, 38, of Flossmoor, who quit her job as a lawyer when her first child was born 10 years ago.

The soul-searching often hurts.

"It was a very hard decision," said Margaret Determan, 37, who resigned in November as a partner in the law firm of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal to spend more time with her 3-year-old son, Nate.

"I loved being a lawyer," said Determan, a litigator. "I always felt bad when people said bad things about being a lawyer."

"But when I put my son in preschool, I realized that I didn't have much time left to spend significant amounts of time with him; that if I was ever going to do it, I had only a small window."

Facing enormous time and travel commitments on a major case, Determan, then working in Sonnenschein's New York office, where she had transferred from Chicago, proposed working part-time. Her request was ignored.

"I was literally doing this calculus in my mind: Is this worth it anymore?" she said.

"When that seed gets planted, you start to do some hard analysis of what you're getting out of the job. I started to realize that more of me was doing it for the money than I liked."

Nate bested money. Easily.

Even when the decision carries no regrets, there may be an occasional twinge.

"There are times when I think about what I could have been doing had I had different priorities," Dr. Diane Schaar, 42, of Olympia Fields, a pediatrician and mother of two, said of her decision to practice part-time.

"But I can't say I regret the decision I made. I have these wonderful kids."

No one wants a press conference. But a little more understanding of the difficulty of the choice wouldn't be unwelcome — not to mention more opportunities for part-time work or reduced hours.

And not to mention more Darryl Sutters.

"If men start really saying, 'Listen, my family is more important,' it will really alter the landscape of the work world," Determan said.

Someone recently asked whether she missed being a lawyer.

Father first, athlete second

The Packers' Ken Ruettggers has written a book, but not on football. It's "Home Field Advantage, a Dad's Guide to the Power of Role Modeling."

By Curt Brown
Star Tribune Staff Writer

One moment in the locker room turned Packers offensive tackle Ken Ruettggers from merely a blocker to an author on the subject of role models.

A couple of years ago, Ruettggers brought the oldest of his three kids, Matthew, then 5, into the locker room.

No big deal. He had been in there many times. But this time was different. "Instead of running around energetically as usual, he was standing dumbfounded with his mouth dropped wide open," said Ruettggers, 33, who will play against the Vikings on Sunday.

Matt was standing in front of the locker of a Packers star, whose name Ruettggers doesn't disclose. "I felt like cracking open some smelling salts," he said. "Suddenly this player, who had just been another of Dad's football buddies the year before, was in a strong position of influence."

Ruettggers watched and hoped the player would turn around, and acknowledge his son. "Instead, nothing happened — Zippo!" Ruettggers said. "It hit me harder than any shot I'd taken or delivered on the field. It hurt me because it hurt Matt."

Ruettggers got to thinking. Why did that back-turning star have such power and influence over his kid? "I was so busy accusing my teammate of not living up to his responsibility that I failed to see who Matthew's true role model is," Ruettggers said. "Me."

That realization prompted Ruettggers to write "Home Field Advantage, a Dad's Guide to the Power of Role Modeling (Multnomah Books). He interviewed 55 athletes on the subject and shares some intriguing anecdotes.

The book includes religious banter, but is a well-laid-out read for a parenting book. Ruettggers admits he falls toward the Rush Limbaugh side of the political spectrum, but some of his analyses are amusing.

For example, Ruettggers' second chapter is entitled Beaver 6, Beavis 35 — Kids 0. In it he

compares Beaver Cleaver to Beavis of Butthead fame.

"Today, the kind of kids who laughed innocently along with the Beav and Wally are exchanging the guttural, sneering laugh of a far different character," Ruettggers writes. "His name is Beavis and he epitomizes . . . blatant rebellion, crass disrespect for authority, clear rejection of moral standards, shameless glorification of sexual morality and an open invitation to no-holds-barred hedonism."

As you can see, it gets a little preachy at times, but at least it's different than most of the drivel churned out by athletes and their ghostwriters.

"I have a new respect for writers because it was tedious work," Ruettggers said. "The main message is to encourage fathers to realize they have a great power and opportunity every day and they don't need to be superstars to shape kids in a positive way."

The book is already in its second printing and has been well received. "It's really terrific," said Packers coach Mike Holmgren, who has four daughters. "Ken is a good example of a professional athlete who has prioritized his life with a proper perspective."

Fatherhood comes first

Bill Galston tells President Clinton: 'You can replace me and my son can't'

By Sue Shellenbarger
Wall Street Journal

People quit jobs all the time to spend more time with family. But they aren't usually men in policy-making roles at the White House.

Bill Galston was at the peak of his career when he resigned recently as a domestic policy adviser to President Clinton to return to teaching at the University of Maryland. He says he wanted to "strike a new balance" between work and life with his family, including his 10-year-old son

Few people have paid such a high career price for family time. A look at his decision provides a glimpse of life on the razor's edge of work-family conflict, when two commitments — one to a job, the other to a child — simply can't be reconciled.

Galston, an ex-Marine, professor and adviser to the Progressive Policy Institute, a Democratic think tank, had worked on presidential campaigns for John Anderson, Walter Mondale and Al Gore before he was tapped to join the Clinton administration. After more than a decade of getting trounced at the polls, the slight, bespectacled scholar — at 49, already older than many Clinton aides — was bringing into government ideas he had nurtured for years behind the scenes.

At the White House, his influence was evident in the president's call last January for a national campaign against teen pregnancy, an idea Galston had worked on as a private scholar. He planned the national service program, worked on education revisions and Head Start legislation, and consulted with administration officials on matters from affirmative action to consumers' mood.

"He had an excellent reputation here, and he loved his job," says Gene Sperling, an economic policy adviser who shared an office with Galston.

Also at stake was no ordinary father-son relationship. In a speech last fall before the National Fatherhood Initiative, an advocacy group, Galston said of his son Ezra: "Fatherhood for me has been the most deeply transformative experience in my life. Nothing else is a close second. It is a prism through which I see the world."

Galston tried many of the usual ways to integrate time with his child into his workaholic schedule. Though he worked 12-hour days, he often brought Ezra to his White House office on the evenings his wife, a law professor, taught classes.

"He'd flop down on the floor of my office, do his homework, and we talked," Galston says. When he was called into meetings, his efforts to be two places at once "got to be a joke" among staffers as he raced back and forth to check on his son, a White House aide says.

When Sperling complimented him on his "Herculean efforts" to juggle everything, Galston looked at him and said, "It may show a lot of effort, but it's still no way for a 10-year-old to be treated."

Many afternoons, he and his son's Little League game started waking up at 6 p.m. because it was "one of the few periods I could be counted on to be around the house," Galston says. Many evenings, he came home "so wrung out that even though I was technically physically present at 8:30, I wasn't present in any other meaningful sense." After seeing Ezra to bed, he sometimes headed back to work at 10 p.m.

He made the rounds of meetings and conferences, often speaking about the welfare of children. A frequent theme was one he laid out in "Putting Children First," a 1991 monograph written at the Progressive Policy Institute with Elaine Kamarck (now an aide to Vice President Al Gore): The acid test of any societal change is how kids are served, and "somehow our nation has gotten socially and culturally poorer" in that regard, he says. His speeches and writings on revitalizing the nation's civic life drew bipartisan praise.

All the while, Galston sensed that his own house was in disorder, that "the sand was running through the hourglass" of his son's childhood, he says.

Then came Ezra's letter. Headed "Baseball's Not Fun," the note to his father began: "Baseball's not fun when there's no one there to applaud you." There followed a litany of Ezra's achievements that Galston had missed: Hitting a triple and a double, stealing home and catching the final pop-up of the game. If his father was there to watch, "baseball would be fun," the letter said.

"It's not the kind of letter that a father is apt to forget," Galston says. Clearly, "what seemed like a minimally tolerable balance from my standpoint was not acceptable from his." Worse than his son's anger, he acknowledges, was his own private fear that the child might simply resign himself to his absence.

"These days, kids 12 and 13 are teenagers, looking to their peers much more than their parents," he says. He feared that if he "let those two years go by without re-engaging fully in my family . . . there would be a significant price." To a coworker surprised by his resignation, he said, "I told the president, 'You can replace me and my son can't.'"

It's easy to dismiss Galston's dilemma as an accident of timing.

Families' needs ebb and flow, and his job of a lifetime got caught in a high tide. It makes sense, too, that a man who calls finding better ways to integrate parenthood and work "one of the most important age before our society in the next 2 years" would change jobs to improve his own work-family balance.

But if Galston and others are right — if we as a society are beginning to agree that the declining welfare of kids is a problem and that we need to put children first — we may see more decisions like his.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL SUNDAY / Family & Work

A BALANCED LIFE

By TARA PARKER-POPE AND KYLE POPE

Knowing When to Stop

A few weeks ago, we spent a weekend with our over-achieving friends. He is one of the most prolific people we know—he writes a weekly magazine column for which he often travels, has a booming free-lance business and is in the midst of writing a book. His wife has a successful corporate career, travels on business several days a week and often works weekends on projects she brings home.

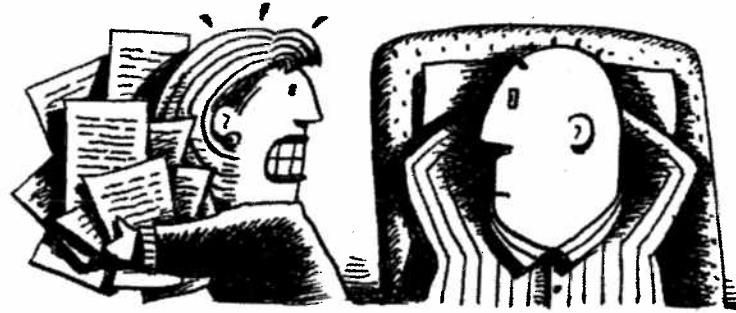
But when it comes to their time away from work, they lead very different lives. He finds time to exercise at the gym nearly every day, goes to several baseball games each season, regularly attends synagogue and often spends evenings with friends. Her life is so consumed by her job that she rarely arrives home before 9 p.m. and has little time for more than a brief visit with her husband before going to bed.

It surprised us that two people living under the same roof could have such vastly different approaches to their jobs and home life. Indeed, we had always thought that the struggle to achieve balance was hindered by external factors like a demanding boss, looming deadlines at work and financial pressures.

But our friends have taught us that the battle is much more personal—and that often one of the biggest obstacles in our search for balance is ourselves.

When our two friends were in college together, both were intent on achieving the 16 A's necessary to graduate cum laude. She spent hours studying in the library, while he hit the books just a few hours a week. They both achieved their goal—she got 17 A's and he got 16.

"I worked my tail off to get A's," she says. "He didn't." What is his secret? It's not that he's any smarter than his wife, or any more motivated. He simply



knows when to let go. "I was always happy to get an A-minus," he says. "I was happy to do what was sufficient."

He cautions that he's not advocating mediocrity—he just realizes what it takes to do good, even great, work, and when to stop. It's a strategy that he has adopted in his professional life, and one that he believes allows him to cater to his ambitions without giving up his entire day to work.

To some of us, this philosophy runs counter to years of conditioning. Since we were children, all of

us have been told not to settle for anything less than the very best.

It's a noble goal. But knowing when something is good—and when more tinkering won't make it any better—is a skill that not everyone, including our friend's wife, can master. During our weekend visit, she spent several hours working on a project. She finished it once, then went back and took a whack at it again.

Her problem, she told us, is that it's difficult for her to let go. In her view, "It can only be good if it's perfect."

The visit with our friends prompted us to take a look at our own work habits in the office and at home. Even though our friends don't have the demands of children, we think their experiences offer a good lesson for anybody struggling to give adequate time and attention to both their work and personal life.

This past winter, we both suffered our own workaholic meltdowns. Tara had taken on a book project and had begun writing a newsletter for a local charity. But before she knew it, the newsletter became an albatross. She struggled with production problems, often because the fancy graphics and photographs were more demanding than she could handle—and more elaborate than the project really needed. Instead of farming out the distribution to other volunteers, she ended up

stamping and mailing the newsletter herself. Meanwhile, her weekends were spent on the book project, which was taking longer than expected. Between her projects and her job, there wasn't even time to catch a movie or meet friends for brunch.

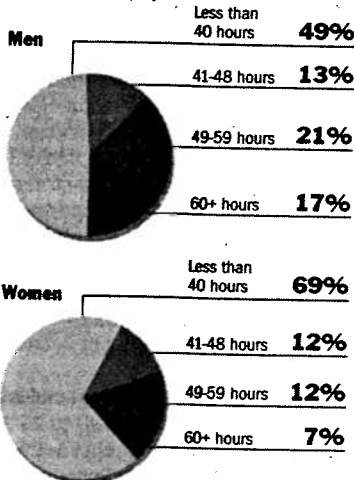
Meanwhile, Kyle's job had become so demanding he often worked Sundays and spent several evenings a week at work-related functions, instead of attending a class he had signed up for because he was interested in the subject. He began setting his alarm two hours earlier just so he could read magazines and the newspaper.

At the time, we felt as if we'd simply taken on too much. But looking back, we both could have managed better if we had adopted our friend's tactic of finding the fine line between perfecting your work and agonizing over it. The newsletter could have survived one issue without photos and could have waited to be mailed by other volunteers. Kyle probably could have skipped a few of his work functions and simply scheduled meetings at other times with those people. And who knows how many work hours we could have shaved off our week if we'd simply filed our articles when we knew they were done, rather than spending precious hours tinkering with minor changes.

At the end of the visit with our friends, we asked them both if they felt they were living a balanced life. As we expected, her answer was no. But to our surprise, our friend who has perfected the art of knowing when things are good enough confided that his work-life balance isn't good enough. The reason? "I never see my wife," he says.

Working Overtime

Hours worked per week by managerial and professional employees



Source: U.S. Department of Labor (1998 survey)

To contact Tara Parker-Pope and Kyle Pope, write: A Balanced Life, The Wall Street Journal Sunday, 200 Liberty Street, New York, New York 10281. Email: balanced.life@wsj.com

Life is like a juggling act

Marriage, family and career vie for attention

Attention people of Eden Prairie! If you have more to do than you can fit into one day, I want to recommend a new hobby. For me, it all started when I was in high school with those cans of tennis balls. I remember fooling around with them one day, wondering how people learned to juggle. I worked for a long time, learning the pattern for the balls. Once I figured it out, I needed to perfect the technique. It took me months to become fluid, but I finally mastered three-ball juggling. After that I entertained myself thousands of times by juggling whatever I could throw in the air. Soon, no piece of fruit was safe in our kitchen.

Even though the zenith of my career has been performing at my own kids' birthday parties, over the years juggling has given me a lot of satisfaction. In fact, juggling seems to be an appropriate metaphor for life. With your busy schedule, do you ever feel like you are trying to keep three balls up in the air with only two hands?

I started to think of the three balls I juggled as representing three parts of my life — my family, my career and my self. I remember when I first got married, as wonderful as those first few years were, I was shocked by how time-consuming marriage was. I realized for the first time in my life that it would be hard to do everything each day that I wanted to do. At that time, my career consisted of going to school full time and working part time. When I got married, I discovered it was harder to find time to exercise every day, and I wonder how other people managed their schedules. I



Rev. Ed DuBose
Spiritually Speaking

think back on that time now and laugh.

After I left school, I began working for the church. Soon, I not only had trouble finding time to exercise, but some days I couldn't find enough time to talk to my wife. Juggling was harder than ever. But I still didn't realize how good I had it.

Next came children. Suddenly, finding time to exercise wasn't as high of a priority as finding time to eat all three meals each day. I decided it was time to learn how to juggle four balls.

At first, it seemed impossible. Then I figured out the pattern and realized I just had to practice a few thousand times. Four balls seemed like a better analogy for life: career, family, spouse and personal. I have discovered that of the four main priorities, at any one time I can do three of them very well.

I can spend lots of time with my kids and my wife and do everything I need to do to care for myself. IF I don't spend too much time at work.

Or, if work becomes the main

focus of the week (as it often does) I can find plenty of time to read to my children, help out around the house and go on a date with my wife IF I cut back on things like exercise, reading and sleep.

I think that I can do any one of these three things well if I commit about 30 percent of my time to it. The problem is that to do all of them well, it takes about 120 percent of each day.

I can do 120 percent a day if I have to, but only for about two or three days. Then I crash, think of Peter at that point, look at my two-page "to do" list and say, "The soul is willing, but the flesh is weak."

It is during these moments of angst about my personal limitations that I need to remember the old preacher's motto: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." I need to focus on each day's demands and look upon them as balls I can juggle in the air.

I have to warn you, it takes a lot of practice and all of your concentration. I hope life doesn't get any more complicated than it already is, because I've heard that juggling five balls takes a lot longer to master.

(The Rev. Ed DuBose, a pastor at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, shares this space with two other church pastors: the Revs. Marlin Meendering of Road Home Church, the Reformed Church in America, and Matt Marzluft of Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church. "Spiritually Speaking" is one of several opinion and commentary pieces appearing regularly in the Eden Prairie News.)

Of Glass Ceilings and Sticky Floors

By JILL NATWICK JOHNSTON

I was recently offered a great job, a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was to head a department in one of the world's largest and most profitable companies, with a sizable staff reporting to me. Part of the assignment was to re-engineer the function, so I could have configured the work to fit my specifications. My current salary would have doubled, and great perks were part of the package. I would not have had to relocate. As a female, I would have held a highly visible position reporting to senior management in a male-dominated industry. In many respects, it was one of the most prestigious positions in my field, something I had been laboring in the vineyard of corporate law departments for 15 years to achieve.

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The agony of choosing between dreams



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To be sure, it is a dilemma of privilege. Most working mothers can't afford to quit their jobs. And only women fortunate enough to have careers that give them pleasure would be tormented by the question.

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"There are times when I think about what I could have been doing had I had different priorities," Dr. Diane Schaar, 42, of Olympia Fields, a pediatrician and mother of two, said of her decision to practice part-time.

"But I can't say I regret the decision I made. I have these wonderful kids."

No one wants a press conference. But a little more understanding of the difficulty of the choice wouldn't be unwelcome — not to mention more opportunities for part-time work or reduced hours.

And not to mention more Darryl Sutters.

"If men start really saying, 'Listen, my family is more important,' it will really alter the landscape of the work world," Determan said.

Someone recently asked whether she missed being a lawyer.

Father first, athlete second

The Packers' Ken Ruettggers has written a book, but not on football. It's "Home Field Advantage, a Dad's Guide to the Power of Role Modeling."

By Curt Brown
Star Tribune Staff Writer

One moment in the locker room turned Packers offensive tackle Ken Ruettggers from merely a blocker to an author on the subject of role models.

A couple of years ago, Ruettggers brought the oldest of his three kids, Matthew, then 5, into the locker room.

No big deal. He had been in there many times. But this time was different. "Instead of running around energetically as usual, he was standing dumbfounded with his mouth dropped wide open," said Ruettggers, 33, who will play against the Vikings on Sunday.

Matt was standing in front of the locker of a Packers star, whose name Ruettggers doesn't disclose. "I felt like cracking open some smelling salts," he said. "Suddenly this player, who had just been another of Dad's football buddies the year before, was in a strong position of influence."

Ruettggers watched and hoped the player would turn around and acknowledge his son. "Instead, nothing happened — Zippo!" Ruettggers said. "It hit me harder than any shot I'd taken or delivered on the field. It hurt me because it hurt Matt."

Ruettggers got to thinking. Why did that back-turning star have such power and influence over his kid? "I was so busy accusing my teammate of not living up to his responsibility that I failed to see who Matthew's true role model is," Ruettggers said. "Me."

That realization prompted Ruettggers to write "Home Field Advantage, a Dad's Guide to the Power of Role Modeling (Multnomah Books). He interviewed 55 athletes on the subject and shares some intriguing anecdotes.

The book includes religious banter, but is a well-laid-out read for a parenting book. Ruettggers admits he falls toward the Rush Limbaugh side of the political spectrum, but some of his analyses are amusing.

For example, Ruettggers' second chapter is entitled Beaver 6, Beavis 35 — Kids 0. In it, he

compares Beaver Cleaver to Beavis of Butthead fame.

"Today, the kind of kids who laughed innocently along with the Beav and Wally are exchanging the guttural, sneering laugh of a far different character," Ruettggers writes. "His name is Beavis and he epitomizes... blatant rebellion, crass disrespect for authority, clear rejection of moral standards, shameless glorification of sexual morality and an open invitation to no-holds-barred hedonism."

As you can see, it gets a little preachy at times, but at least it's different than most of the drivel churned out by athletes and their ghostwriters.

"I have a new respect for writers because it was tedious work," Ruettggers said. "The main message is to encourage fathers to realize they have a great power and opportunity every day and they don't need to be superstars to shape kids in a positive way."

The book is already in its second printing and has been well received. "It's really terrific," said Packers coach Mike Holmgren, who has four daughters. "Ken is a good example of a professional athlete who has prioritized his life with a proper perspective."

Fatherhood comes first

Bill Galston tells President Clinton: 'You can replace me and my son can't'

By Sue Shellenbarger
Wall Street Journal

People quit jobs all the time to spend more time with family. But they aren't usually men in policy-making roles at the White House.

Bill Galston was at the peak of his career when he resigned recently as a domestic policy adviser to President Clinton to return to teaching at the University of Maryland. He says he wanted to "strike a new balance" between work and life with his family, particularly his 10-year-old son.

Few people have paid such a high career price for family time. A look at his decision provides a glimpse of life on the razor's edge of work-family conflict, when two commitments — one to a job, the other to a child — simply can't be reconciled.

Galston, an ex-Marine, professor and adviser to the Progressive Policy Institute, a Democratic think tank, had worked on presidential campaigns for John Anderson, Walter Mondale and Al Gore before he was tapped to join the Clinton administration. After more than a decade of getting trounced at the polls, the slight, bespectacled scholar — at 49, already older than many Clinton aides — was bringing into government ideas he had nurtured for years behind the scenes.

At the White House, his influence was evident in the president's call last January for a national campaign against teen pregnancy, an idea Galston had worked on as a private scholar. He planned the national service program, worked on education revisions and Head Start legislation, and consulted with administration officials on matters from affirmative action to consumers' mood.

"He had an excellent reputation here, and he loved his job," says Gene Sperling, an economic policy adviser who shared an office with Galston.

Also at stake was no ordinary father-son relationship. In a speech last fall before the National Fatherhood Initiative, an advocacy group, Galston said of his son Ezra: "Fatherhood for me has been the most deeply transformative experience in my life. Nothing else is a close second. It is a prism through which I see the world."

Galston tried many of the usual ways to integrate time with his child into his workaholic schedule. Though he worked 12-hour days, he often brought Ezra to his White House office on the evenings his wife, a law professor, taught classes.

"He'd flop down on the floor of my office, do his homework, and we talked," Galston says. When he was called into meetings, his efforts to be two places at once "got to be a joke" among staffers as he raced back and forth to check on his son, a White House aide says.

When Sperling complimented him on his "Herculean efforts" to juggle everything, Galston looked at him and said, "It may show a lot of effort, but it's still no way for a 10-year-old to be treated."

Many afternoons, he missed Ezra's Little League games. The child started waking up at 6 a.m. because it was "one of the few periods I could be counted on to be around the house," Galston says. Many evenings, he came home "so wrung out that even though I was technically physically present at 8:30, I wasn't present in any other meaningful sense." After seeing Ezra to bed, he sometimes headed back to work at 10 p.m.

He made the rounds of meetings and conferences, often speaking about the welfare of children. A frequent theme was one he laid out in "Putting Children First," a 1991 monograph written at the Progressive Policy Institute with Elaine Kamarck (now an aide to Vice President Al Gore): The acid test of any societal change is how kids are served, and "somehow our nation has gotten socially and culturally poorer" in that regard, he says. His speeches and writings on revitalizing the nation's civic life drew bipartisan praise.

All the while, Galston sensed that his own house was in disorder, that "the sand was running through the hourglass" of his son's childhood, he says.

Then came Ezra's letter. Headed "Baseball's Not Fun," the note to his father began: "Baseball's not fun when there's no one there to applaud you." There followed a litany of Ezras achievements that Galston had missed: Hitting a triple and a double, stealing home and catching the final pop-up of the game. "His father was there to watch, 'baseball would be fun,'" the letter said.

"It's not the kind of letter that a father is apt to forget," Galston says. Clearly, "what seemed like a minimally tolerable balance from my standpoint was not acceptable from his." Worse than his son's anger, he acknowledges, was his own private fear that the child might simply resign himself to his absence.

"These days, kids 12 and 13 are teenagers, looking to their peers much more than their parents," he says. He feared that if he "let those two years go by without re-engaging fully in my family... there would be a significant price." To a coworker surprised by his resignation, he said, "I told the president, 'You can replace me and my son can't.'"

It's easy to dismiss Galston's dilemma as an accident of timing.

Families' needs ebb and flow, and his job of a lifetime got caught in a high tide. It makes sense, too, that a man who calls finding better ways to integrate parenthood and work "one of the most important agendas before our society in the next 10 years" would change jobs to improve his own work-family balance.

But if Galston and others are right — if we as a society are beginning to agree that the declining welfare of kids is a problem and that we need to put children first — we may see more decisions like his.

Dads gain insight while raising their children

By Cameron Potts

Home-dad. That's his term. Ben Walker likes it. He says it sounds good, better than some other terms he's heard over the years. Home-dad.

Walker, at his Eden Prairie home near the border with Chanhassen, plays and cares for his two sons, Quintin, 6, and Zane, 18 months, while his wife works. He is a stay-at-home father, but he prefers the term home-dad. In August, Walker will have been a home-dad for three years, something he takes great pride in. He would not give up the time he's able to spend with his sons in order to go back to work now.

In Chanhassen, Craig Wallestad puts his 1-year-old son Nathan on his shoulders. "He likes to sit there. If I'm in a high backed chair, he will just lean there and enjoy himself," Wallestad said.

Retired because of health problems after 20 years at Flourware in Chaska, Wallestad helps raise his newly adopted son, getting a second chance to see a child grow. Wallestad has two teenage children from a previous marriage, but says he missed a lot when they were growing up because he was working. Today, he "is able to toss this little guy up in the air a lot more" than when his other kids were growing.

Differences

While their situations may be different, Walker and Wallestad share a common bond, men who choose to stay home during the day and raise their children.

For both, it is a joy to see their kids grow in front of their eyes.

Walker and his wife Maureen moved from Colorado to Eden Prairie three years ago when she was transferred in her job as a salesperson. At the time, Walker owned his own printing business, but made a conscious decision to raise his kids while his wife worked. At first, bucking the stereotype of men working was hard.

"My generation of men especially believe that the man brings home the money. Both the man and the woman can work, but men are the bread winners. That was hard for me," Walker said. "When I go out during the day, I basically see women everywhere."

His life changed drastically when he stayed home, going from being the boss of his own business to meeting the daytime needs of his two sons. That was a tough transition, he said. "The first year was hard because it was difficult to communicate with Quintin. It takes a lot to cope with everyday things that kids do at home," Walker said.

A year ago Wallestad retired, mostly because of health problems. Wallestad suffers from epilepsy and diabetes, leaving him unable to drive. The son of the founder of Flourware, he and his wife Nina were financially stable enough to retire, allowing him to stay home with Nathan, whom they adopted from Russia last November. Wallestad plays with and cares for his son as much as he can, allowing Nina to do volunteer work at Wooddale Church, while still being home enough to care for Nathan herself.

taking care of him, feeding him, playing with him," Wallestad said — taking care of roughly a third of all of Nathan's needs, he explained. When Nina is busy with church activities, Wallestad takes a more active role.

"It makes it great for me because if I have to do some errands or run into church, I know I can leave Nathan with someone who will care and love him as I would. It is just great," Nina said.

"One of the first days I was gone out doing things, I came home and while Nathan was glad to see me, he wouldn't take his eyes off Craig. It was a great bonding experience," she said.

Patience

At the Walker household, Ben needed to learn patience, something he claims not to have an abundance of before he started. "Certain days you wish you were working at a job that was just eight hours. This is an all-day job," he said.

Maureen works some from the home and at times, Ben said, she sees him playing with the children outside, and wishes she could be part of that. He said their relationship works great because she will spend a lot of time with the children after work, giving Ben a break in his day.

Ben plans to return to work part-time once Zane is off to school. He said he still wants to be home when his children return from school, giving them a stable presence in the home.

Five days a week, Ben heads to the Chaska Community Center to work out, dropping the boys off to play with other kids at the center (Quintin goes when he is not in kindergarten). Ben has the chance to bond with other parents, talking with both mothers and fathers about how they raise their kids.

One thing I learned right away was to talk to women who stay home with their kids. You have to be both the mom and the dad during the day. You have to play with the kids, and have time to snuggle and read to them. That was difficult to learn at first," Walker said.

More children

The Wallestads are hoping to adopt another child soon, which means Craig will become even more involved in the day-to-day caring of the kids. Nina said that as Nathan begins to talk more, he still has a favorite word, something that makes her feel good about Craig being able to spend time with their son.

"Poppa is his favorite word. He loves saying it and knows just who that is," Nina explained.

Both Walker and Wallestad gain insight and inspiration from Minnesota Dads, an organization started by Peter Hoh of Minneapolis. Hoh organizes events for stay-at-home fathers to get to know each other and talk about their daily lives. Walker and Wallestad are not very actively involved, but they receive newsletters and information which helps them in their daily lives.

"I'm proud of what I do and who I am. This can work for anyone, but you have to be willing to put yourself aside," Walker said.



HOME-DAD Ben Walker takes time out during the day to read to his two sons, Zane and Quintin. Walker is a stay-at-home father, a job of which he is proud. (Photo by Cameron Potts)

