

(Ruth Prins has been well known for twenty years as "Wunda Wunda" of Northwest television and as "Mrs. Alphabet" of NBC-Los Angeles. She is now director of preschools in View Ridge and Magnolia areas)

### WHAT IS A FAMILY?

Families are for children but are children for families?  
What does your child think of his/<sup>or her</sup>family?

To many children, a family is the provider. Brandon said, "I always want my mother and father because they're very nice to me and if I didn't have my father and my mother then I wouldn't have any food and I couldn't live and then I'd just die and everybody's be said." Johnny concurred, "A family is important because if you don't give 'em any food it won't be a family any more." When asked if food were the most important thing, Johnny answered, "Yes...and then drinking...orange juice and milk." Meaghan agreed. "I like my family because they take care of you and they're the ones that buy the food." Whereas food and shelter were uppermost in some children's minds, others were more interested in the convivial aspects of family.

Janel said, "I like my family because I have some girls and I have some boys and it's fun when we play."

Scott: "I want a family because I like someone to be with all the time."

Kevin: "If you don't have a family then you can't live with 'em and you'll be all lonesome."

Angie: "If you don't have a family, then you don't have anybody to be your friend."

Food and friendship but what of sibling rivalry? Several children were sanguine enough to admit that if it were possible they'd like to be an only child. Most found the pleasures of instant companionship outweighed the disadvantages of sharing love and resources.

Jess said, "My sister doesn't like me/ When I go next to her she says 'get away from me.' She hates me. I wish I didn't have a sister."

Wally is ambivalent: "I think my family's real neat to

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have but sometimes I feel I want to be so nice to my sister I just make something for her and sometimes I just feel so mad I just can't hold back and there's no time to count to ten or to tell mommy and I just have to punch her and we get in a big fight. Sometimes I wish I didn't have a sister little sister and sometimes I don't but there's someone I love in my family all the time and that's the cat!"

Lois is smug. "I hate my brother. And he hates me. He tells me so all the time. My Dad's useful. when my brother doesn't come home from school, my Dad goes and finds him and then he spansks him but he doesn't spank me because I'm gooder than my brother and I get candy all the time."

Meaghan's parents did a good job of preparing her for sisterhood. "I like my family and I wouldn't want to leave them. I wouldn't even want to go on a trip without them. I like my little brother because he plays with me nice and because my mother's taught me to play with him because he doesn't have very much friends to play with him and I'm lonely and he's lonely because I don't have any friends maybe and he doesn't so we both play together."

And then there's Sarah whose wise parents have enabled her to achieve a most comprehensive view of family, well beyond her years. "I'm happy to have a baby brother. It's something you live with and you take care and then pretty soon you have a new baby and then when it grows up then they'll make another family and then they get a baby and when their baby grows up and has a baby.. then there'll be a lot more people! ...and then some people are losing by dying and some people are coming or growing up."

Marcy was practical about the sibling situation. "When people get old they die so you have to have a new baby."

How does your child feel about your family? Is it something to be endured? Merely a source of shelter? Caretakers? Stacey said, "You need a family to take care of the dog and the babies." Or do your children subscribe to Kevin's view:

"A family means love...and that's just one of the things!"