

# Heart To Heart #61

Best Of....

This week in this space we are re-running two of the best Heart To Heart in our archives. Let us know what you think.

Hope you're having a great summer.



William J. Schwartz, M.D.

## Heart To Heart #58

Good Fathers

Because it's Father's Day this week, let me tell you a story that happened in the course of being a "good" father.

On Memorial Day Weekend, it was just the boy (my son, Ethan) and I. Zoe was finishing her trimester in Minnesota and then heading for Japan, Priscilla was in New Haven for her Yale College reunion. And I was home with Ethan, who was diligently studying for exams and SAT II.

A movie was a designated break activity—Ethan loves movies, and so do I. So we set out to see the 7 p.m. showing of "X-Men III", which had just opened. Anxious about tickets and seating, I told Ethan we would "fandango" the tickets and get to the Regal/Kaufman at least 30 minutes before show time.

There was no traffic, so getting across the Queensboro Bridge was no problem. There was space for parking in front of the movie theater, I quickly shoved my credit card in at the box office, so in no time we had seats together in the middle of the 10th row and 25 minutes to sit and observe that the theater was filling to capacity with adults and children of all ages.

The first thing I noticed is that I could adjust my armrest up or down for comfort—and to hold a drink. I looked down the row of seats and saw that every seat had the armrest down and that every armrest was holding a jumbo drink. I looked down the row again and now I saw each seat filled with a person who was holding a jumbo popcorn. Half the seats in my row held kids, and each kid held a jumbo drink and jumbo popcorn. Some of the tubs of popcorn seemed bigger than the kids holding them.

Something was terribly wrong

with this picture. Many of the people in the row, if not most of them, were FAT!! I watched new people coming in and noticed a similar phenomenon—big drinks, big popcorn and big people of all ages. For me, it was a public health epiphany.

It's no secret in the public health-medical community that the population of the United States is getting fatter. I use the word "fat" because that is what the medical problem is—we are getting heavier because of additional fatty tissue.

Fatty tissue acts as a separate organ in our bodies. As such, fat cells produce their own proteins and hormones that contribute to or precipitate diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol abnormalities. As the three major risk factors for the production of plaque in the coronary arteries are diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol imbalance, excessive, metabolically active fat cells are a central medical problem.

So there I was, at the movie to be a "good" dad, but as a cardiologist, witness to a dangerous medical situation: overfeeding ourselves and our children, associating eating empty calories with the pleasures of a movie and the company of family and friends. It's hard to resist the smell of popcorn at a movie.

As the lights went down, Ethan returned with our sodas (diet) and popcorn (medium size). It's hard to break old habits! After the movie, we walked over to the Cup Café and ordered two salads. It's never too late to start!

We all want to be good fathers, but for the sake of our children, we must do better. Their health as adults depends on their habits as children.

Let's make Father's Day healthy and happy!

## Heart To Heart #60

Wait A Minute

On July 4, my uncle, Nathaniel Schwartz died. He was 82. He was my father's brother. They were a family of three boys. My father, the middle one was a lawyer; Nathaniel, the oldest, was an engineer and builder, and Ammiel, the youngest, is still practicing gynecology in Brewster, New York.

Nathaniel participated in the development and construction of Levittown (the one in Pennsylvania) where they lived. It was in his house that the three brothers and their children, nine of us, would gather on Thanksgiving to play, to eat, to take pictures and to bond as a family. Nathaniel was a sensitive, warm and giving brother, father and uncle. I miss him already. The funeral was Thursday.

To my surprise, Nathaniel was also a writer. The piece that follows is a column he wrote in 2001 for an AARP newsletter. It addresses a philosophy of life that I can connect with and embrace. It warms my heart and soul and I prescribe it for you!

### Getting there...fast.

*A little while back I watched a television program featuring the marvelous exploits of a 24-year old, young woman who single-handedly sailed a custom-made yacht in a race from England around Antarctica and back. What a remarkable feat, what a brave nery person, how focused she was to suffer and strive for three months to get back to England fast as possible trying to win the race.*

*...So that set me to thinking...I also have a sailboat...not a brand new multi-million dollar sixty-five foot yacht, but a twenty five year old fifth-hand sloop worth a lot to me, but which wouldn't fetch beans in the used boat market.*

*Some of my friends who race, and guys I know who have motorboats, keep telling me I should get more power and better (more expen-*

*sive) equipment so I can go faster and get THERE quicker. I've been thinking about how to answer.*

*I used to race, used to drink Martinis too...but now I drink some wine and just sail my little twenty foot boat for the fun of it. I sail at the New Jersey shore in the main channels but also on the back bays and creeks. I get to see some mighty big motorboats rushing off in different directions, going somewhere real fast...boats of all sizes going somewhere fast. Water skiers, wave riders, fishermen, even sailboats of different classes racing around fixed courses. Every now and then a tremendous Cigarette or Fountain boat (like the kind the drug smugglers have on TV shows) come blasting by...noisily going somewhere really fast.*

*Now I tinker with my rigging, hang the rudder, hoist the sails, judge the wind direction...and just go sailing. No noise, just the sound of the wind and the waves and the easy splashing as the boat goes through the water.*

*That and the calls of the sea gulls and other waterfowl and birds. No gasoline or diesel stink either. I enjoy the glint of sunlight on the wavelets, the sinuous undulation of the water-edge marsh grasses when caressed by waves, seeing the Cormorants dive for fish, then spreading their wings in the sunlight to dry...I see the cloud formations ever changing, and am aware of wind shifts while adjusting the tiller and sails, the dynamics of the tides and the harmony of nature...because I'm not preoccupied with going somewhere real fast...*

*So, I've got the answer...when I walk down the dock and climb on to my little sailboat...I'M ALREADY THERE!*

—Nat

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