

RICHARD WRIGHT

Tough to survive Baby Talk 101

I've been taking a language course for the last year. It is one of the toughest courses I've ever taken.

I'm teaching my daughter how to communicate.

Now teaching English shouldn't be that tough. But my daughter is 2.

A typical conversation goes like this:

Me: "Alley sit down, please."
 Alley: "No."
 Me: "Please?"
 Alley: "Nooo!"
 Me: "Come on, please sit down before you fall off the couch."
 Alley: "Papa. Juice?"
 Me: "No."
 Alley: "Juice, Papa?"
 Me: "No. Sit down, please."
 Alley: "JUICCCCCCEEEEE!"
 Me: "NO."
 Alley: "Juice, Juice, Juuuicccccce!"
 Me: "OK. But what do you say?"
 Alley: "Peas?" (That's her attempt at please).
 Teaching my daughter how to speak has been a challenge. There have been a few times where she has said a few words I didn't mean for her to say. Also, her mother and I are beginning to sound a lot like her when we speak.
 Alley: "Papa?"
 Me: "Yes."
 Alley: "Go bye-bye?"
 Me: "No, Papa stay."
 Alley: "Papa go."
 Me: "No, Papa stay. Alley go bye-bye."
 Alley: "Where Mama go?"
 Me: "I dunno. Where Mama go?"
 My daughter also has a hearing problem.
 It's a selective hearing problem. My wife says it's from my side of the family. At least she said she told me that. I didn't hear her the first time she said it.
 Alley doesn't seem to hear me



My daughter also has a hearing problem. It's a selective hearing problem. My wife says it's from my side of the family.

when I tell her to get off the cat. She is constantly irritating our 10-year-old cat.

Me: "Alley! Don't sit on Bailey."
 Alley: Nothing but a smile.
 Me: "Alley, get off the cat."
 Alley: Giggle, giggle.
 Me: "Alley, please don't sit on Bailey. Be nice."

And then there's her brother. He's only five months old and can't fend for himself. She doesn't hurt him, she just tries to help. Even when he doesn't need it.

Me: "Alley, leave Aaron alone."
 Alley: "Un-uh."
 Me: "No, don't stick your finger in his mouth. You're going to wake him up."

Alley: "Arn go night night?"
 Me: "Yes, Aaron go night night. ... No don't give him his Nuk. He doesn't need it. He go night night." Here I go again, baby talk.

Alley does have quite a vocabulary; she even said Mogadishu the other day. At least it sounded like that.

We've worked with her trying to teach her what is what. When we see animals, we tell her what they are and then try to have her repeat them to us. She also knows some of the animal sounds, although sometimes she gets them screwed up.

Me: "Alley, what kind of animal is

that?" as we drive down the road.

Alley: "Cow."
 Me: "What does a cow say?"
 Alley: "Moooo."
 Me: "Good girl. What does a horse say?"
 Alley: "Mooooo."
 Me: "No, good try. Horse goes Neeeeiigh."

Alley: "Mooooo."
 Me: "OK, whatever. What does a sheep say?"
 Alley: "Sheep?" Pause, while she thinks. "Mooooo."

I give up. She also knows what sounds her brother makes.

Me: "Alley, what does Aaron say?"
 Alley: "Arn." Pause. "Waa waa."
 Teaching my daughter to speak has been one of the most enjoyable and pleasing experiences of my life.

But the best part is seeing the glow and smile on her face when she speaks and understands what she is saying.

This learning experience has been good for her, but it has been an even bigger learning experience for her father and mother.

I can't wait until we get to teach her brother.

Wright is a graduate student in Journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

ALAN PHELPS

Whiny Bushes hide in fortress

Former President George Bush says he doesn't care for the press, but stories by a few news services caught up with the busy little guy over the weekend.

It's been almost a year now since the Bushmeister's election downfall, and he seems to be doing pretty well for himself. As an unemployed World Leader, he can earn up to \$100,000 a speech on the lecture circuit, be the recipient of numerous awards and get to live with Barbara.

On top of that, Bush has Secret Service security and a fat pension. He just built a \$500,000 brick home on that Houston lot he always used to point to as evidence of his Texan citizenship. He and Barbara are both working on books, and he can sell his autograph.

Best of all, he doesn't have to cater to the media anymore.

"I don't miss Washington. I don't miss the politics. I damn sure don't miss the press," he said in a speech last week.

Pretty harsh language from a former president. But then, he apparently puts much of the blame for his defeat on the press, who, he says, painted a bleaker picture of the economy than necessary.

The new Houston home is seen by some as part of Bush's ongoing resentment against the press. Reporters used to poke fun at Bush for saying he lived in Texas when all he owned was a vacant lot. I guess he showed them. He can build a half-million dollar house anywhere.

Barbara offered a rather cryptic remark about the Houston affair.

"How happy we'll be in that fortress you've forced us into," she told reporters.

I'm not sure what she meant by that. No one forced the Bushes to live anywhere. George is the one who always called himself a Texan. But then, Barbara's always been a cryptic person, doing things like talking to her dog, Millie, and trying to look like



After the answering machine beeped, I left a short message saying I wasn't the president, either. But the sarcasm in my voice will let George know I'm on to him.

George's grandma.

I thought I might discuss this matter with George and Barbara. They're down in Houston these days, settling into the fortress, and probably more than willing to talk to folks on the phone now that George has destroyed communism and all.

The Houston operator was very nice and gave me two numbers for George Bush: the office on Memorial Drive and a house on Northborough Street. I was pretty surprised how easy it would be to talk to George. Surprised, and kind of warm and fuzzy inside.

I tried the office first. Even though it was Sunday, I thought George might be hard to work former presidenting. He's got that book, for one thing, and then there's the European speaking tour he's gearing up for.

But alas, there was no answer. The ringing phone probably echoed across the empty office, mournfully calling out for the former president.

All was not lost, however. I still had George's Northborough number.

I was a little nervous dialing the phone. After all, even though I have worked at the Daily Nebraskan for a few years now, I've never interviewed a former President.

But nervousness turned to intrigue when George Bush's answering machine turned on.

"Hi, can't come to the phone right now," Bush said. He spoke with a distinctly Southern drawl I didn't remember from his Washington years.

"Thanks for calling anyways. This is not the president, and I'm not related, so if you're calling for him, don't waste your time or mine."

I wasn't surprised by Bush's denials. If I were the former president, and I was stupid enough to have a listed number, I'd probably pretend I wasn't me, too.

After the answering machine beeped, I left a short message saying I wasn't the president, either. But the sarcasm in my voice will let George know I'm on to him.

I wonder if George was merely using the answering machine to screen calls. He probably was there, listening to my message.

"How did that reporter get into my fortress?" I pictured him saying as he clenched his fist like he used to do when he talked about Saddam.

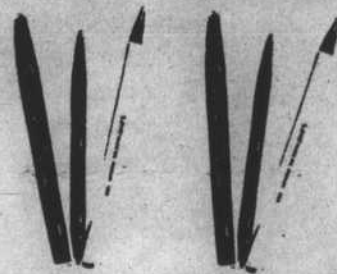
"First they force us in here, now they won't leave us alone," Barbara might have replied.

Oh well. I suppose there are other presidents to bother. The Bushes deserve a vacation after having to put up with this country for so long.

That doesn't mean we have to listen to them whine, though. Barbara whines about that huge fortress she has to live in, George whines about the free press, whine whine whine. You might think they'd turned into liberals or something.

Phelps is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter and a columnist.

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