

Omaha Boy's Brain Better Than a Perpetual Calendar

Here is a Little Tot Who Performs Some of the Same Feats that Made Young Sidis Famous



Edward Rosenthal

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Edward Rosenthal, Five-Year-Old, Will Tell You Promptly the Day of the Week for Any Date or the Reverse --- His Mind Turns to Figures as Other Boys' to Play, and Parents Allow Him Full Scope for His Peculiar Gift

RIGHT off hand, now, on what day does December 30, next, fall?

No doubt, you do not know, unless it happens to be your birthday and you have looked it up; but ask little 5-year-old Edward Rosenthal, who lives right here in Omaha, and you will see him catch on your words excitedly, his deep brown eyes will slowly scan the ceiling and then, with the enthusiasm of one who is holding up a rich treasure, just found, he will explode, "Monday!"

An easier one still: What day of the week was the Fourth of July?

Not one person in a thousand can tell unless some special happening linking the day with the date and stamping it indelibly on the memory, occurred to him.

Ask little Edward Rosenthal and he will tell you before you can say Jack Robinson that July 4, 1912, fell on Thursday; and any other date of any year you may mention will bring from him the day of the week on which it fell quickly enough to hold you spellbound in awe and wonderment.

In the September McClure's, H. Addington Bruce tells a story of Miguel Alberto Mantilla, 6-year-old son of a Mexican banker, whose gift for relating coinciding dates and days has attracted widespread attention even to the American Society for Psychical Research.

Yet the gift of this lad is scarcely more remarkable than that of this little Omaha lad, the son of Omaha parents who reside at 538 South Twenty-fifth avenue. In fact their gifts are quite similar and singular is the fact that each child's talent was discovered in much the same way.

"Briefly stated, the story that had preceded him to New York," says McClure's of Miguel Mantilla, "backed by the weight of affidavits sworn to by judges, lawyers, educators and prominent business men of his native town of San Juan Bautista, was as follows:

"Until he was 6 years old, little Miguel's life had been that of the average child, a life made up mostly of eating, sleeping and playing. No attempt had been made to educate him, except that he had been given some elementary instruction in reading. On the evening of February 1, 1910—that is, two days after his sixth birthday—his father was discussing with his mother the advisability of keeping open, on at least one of the three holidays that would occur in February, the bank of which he was manager.

"I think," he observed, "that I will close it on two of them, but keep it open the third— naming a date.

"Miguel, playing on the floor, looked up sharply.

"But, father," said he, "you certainly will have

to close it that day for it will be Sunday."

"That is true," responded his father, after a moment's thought. "And how did you know it would be Sunday?"

"Why, that was easy for me. I can guess many things much more difficult than that."

"In that case," said Mr. Mantilla, smiling, "perhaps you can tell us on what date the first Sunday of April will be in 1918?"

"To his amazement, the child after an interval of only a few seconds named a date which investigation proved to be correct. Other questions of a similar character followed. Always the right answer was given."

Young Edward Rosenthal of Omaha was three years younger than the Mantilla boy when his parents discovered his remarkable gift. Like the Mantilla boy's parents, they were mentioning a date, talking about a trip made to the home of a relative in Council Bluffs a few months before.

The wee youngster overheard the conversation, eagerly caught the date and repeated it, giving the day of the week.

Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal laughed at what they thought an idle childish utterance, but on looking at the calendar were astonished to find the little fellow correct. And more amazed and awed were they on discovering the fact that the lad could tell them the day corresponding to any date of any year they might mention.

The Rosenthals do not credit their child with any supernatural power. This faculty, they declare, is merely an indication of a remarkable memory, constantly being fed through an insatiable desire to learn.

How he acquired the ability to tell the days of the week coinciding with any date given him is explained, they say, by his using the calendar as a plaything. Since a mere baby little Edward has shown a greater desire to ponder over the calendar than he has for hide-and-seek with neighboring children; to such an extent, in fact, that his parents have had to deprive him of it lest it incite over-exertion of his mentality.

Little Edward told The Bee man that he "remembered one night when he dreamed the whole year through and back again," meaning, no doubt, that the mental pictures of the days and months on the calendar had flitted before him in a dream and he had pondered them, counting them forward and backward.

Playing with the calendar instilled within him a remarkable streak of curiosity. When his parents took him out on the streets, he would point to signboards and ask, "What is that number?" When told, he never forgets it. Fearing something untold would result from this bent, his parents often endeavored to evade his questions. If they answered incorrectly what they had answered correctly before—no matter how long before—the boy quickly would remind them of the previ-

ous answer and demand which was correct.

The street cars that passed the Rosenthal home used to attract the boy's attention. At the end of the day he could tell the number of every car that had passed and on what line it operated.

While but 3 years old, too, he learned the alphabet. This was in Peoria, Ill., where he took delight in the companionship of a neighboring florist, who was willing to answer his every question, and the florist taught the child the alphabet. His parents learned of this one time when he had pointed out and named a letter. Questioning him, they found that he knew the whole alphabet, and, moreover, could recite it backward as rapidly as a grownup.

This has been followed by the child's learning to read, in some way, almost inexplicable. Now, at the Rosenthal home about 4 o'clock every afternoon a little brown-eyed boy may be seen perched upon the porch waiting eagerly for the paper carrier. The minute the paper arrives the boy hurriedly unfolds it, and after noting that the date is correct, proceeds to read from front page to last, all the news of the day that interests him.

This reading enabled him a few afternoons ago to tell that Chief of Police Donahue had died at 5:10 o'clock Thursday afternoon, August 22. "At St. Joseph's hospital," he added, his face brightening.

Likewise, he gave the information that two circuses have been in Omaha this summer, one July 27 and the other August 9. Another circus was coming, Edward knew, August 30. Two circuses were in Omaha last year, one July 11 and the other (of this Edward was not so sure) August 8. His memory for past dates, his parents say, is gradually leaving him since they have taken him from the field of figures and tried to turn his mind in other directions.

He still retains his knowledge of the calendar, however, and if not deterred will devote hours at a time in studying it. Cover the name of a month so he cannot possibly see it and the tot, after scanning the arrangement of the figures, will name the month unflinchingly.

He will tell you that January, April and July begin on the same day of the week; that November and March are the same, as also are Septem-

ber and December, February and August; and June, May and October, says he, are different from all the rest, each beginning on a different day. Few persons have noted these facts.

His parents have allowed the child to study whatever he seeks to know, but refuse to let him study long. When he wanted to learn to tell time, his mother gave him an old alarm clock. He sat on the floor with it one day and turned the hands about, with each new position asking "Now what time is it?" He never asked twice and at the end of that day the boy knew how to tell time to precision.

Another item worth mentioning—Mrs. Rosenthal never has to look in the telephone book for a number she is accustomed to use. Her baby boy knows all these numbers and supplies them. When she can't recall the address of a friend she asks young Edward, and he tells her unerringly. When she wants to know when she visited a certain place; when she received or wrote a certain letter, Edward can tell her. He is the information bureau of the Rosenthal home. He knows the numbers on all the houses up and down the street two blocks either way from his home and he can name the streets north and south from Dodge street to the city limits unhesitatingly. He knows the names of all the city car lines and on what streets they run and the places of interest they pass.

As the boys parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal, are not experimenting with him, they have tried every way to keep him on a mental plane with his playmates. They have taken him from his study against the day when he enters school and the most of his knowledge he has gained surreptitiously.

Mr. Rosenthal says it got to be a bore to take him downtown, where he would meet friends who would put questions to him to answer which pleased him more than if they had given him

candy.

Recently the boy's attention has been turned to the typewriter. He writes numerous letters and shows in them unusual knowledge in composition for a child of his age. Following his natural bent, each sheet is properly dated as are also the answers he gets.

In the following, one may see his spelling ability and get a glimpse of his trait for date and figure memory. The slight mistakes in spelling and capitalization are the fault of his typewriter, as the lad explains in reading it:

July 31, 1912.

My dear daddy

I went to reverview park with Grandpa yesterday Afternoon and we toke ore lunch with us when we came home he gave me a Tomato. what town are you in now. how are you now. are you feeling all write now huh? Will you be home for the circus August 9th? and take me? I've got to take a nap now so good bye From Edward.

P. S. Mother just took 23 splinters out of my hand. I got them on a teetertotter and the boards were rough.

And this, remember, written on a typewriter by a child of 5!

He writes letters galore to his father and friends and relates in them his experiences in play and news he has read in the paper. He does not confine himself to newspapers, however. If left alone, he will choose the "grown up" books from the family library for reading. He enjoys running across a word that is long. A word he has not seen before interests and pleases him greatly and in these books in the library he finds many of them. Most of the time he pronounces them correctly, giving each syllable its proper accent. Oftentimes, too, he can judge their meaning from the context, but if he cannot make out the meaning he is quick to ask.

In a word, an Omaha lad not yet 6 in certain lines manifests the mind of a grown up who has had special training and experience.