

Ferdie J. Deering

JUL 20 1984

Families That Pass Along Their Beliefs

SUMMER is a favorite time for family reunions and friends have been telling of visiting relatives they have not seen in years.

Such gatherings provide opportunities for exaggerating successes, minimizing shortcomings, realizing that other people also have bright grandchildren, and observing folks getting older.

Despite continuous pounding away at the stability and morality of the family by virtually every means of communication, most Americans still respect and maintain viable family relationships.

Besides negative social propaganda, the family is under stress resulting from normal activities. Both parents may work and be away from home much of the time.

Children also are mobile, with bikes until old enough for cars of their own. They have school interests, ball games and hobbies that may make a meal where the entire family sits down to eat and talk together a rare occasion. Television

often consumes family conversation time after dinner.

As a result, it is not uncommon to meet young people who have little or no knowledge of their family history and they may have only limited acquaintance with living relatives. About the only time some families see one another is at weddings or funerals.

Recently I received a copy of a family newsletter written by Thomas E. Bennett Jr., young Stillwater banker, following a practice started years ago by his father, Thomas E. Bennett Sr., of Oklahoma City. He includes a few friends who "have been like family" on his mailing list.

Young Bennett and his wife Sue have been married 10 years and have three "incredibly brilliant" sons. He admits that is his own opinion but descriptions of their activities and interests make it seem quite plausible.

Family activities frequently have something to do with University Heights Baptist Church, Bennett

writes, but they also include community activities from politics to the United Way.

His July 4 letter included a patriotic essay setting forth his views on the founding of the United States, religion, and the route he believes our nation should follow in the future.

His objective seems to be to pass along his faith in God, his hope for America, and his love for family and friends to others. It is one way to strengthen family ties.

"I believe that the reasons for our financial and social problems are selfishness, greed and pride," Bennett says. "We are a nation blessed by God. Yet we have not used our blessings for His purposes. We have convinced ourselves that we have pridefully set out to make ourselves richer and more powerful than anyone."

Many family leaders hold similar solid philosophies. This could be a better, stronger nation if more of them could devise effective ways to pass along their beliefs to relatives.