

Capturing Kids Quotes

“Come on, guys! I know this place like the back of my HEAD!”

In this show of bravado expressed to his cousins, our five-year-old son introduced a favorite family saying which has been quoted with some regularity throughout the intervening years. It never fails to bring a chuckle, with fond remembrance of the sweet little fellow who first said it.

Art Linkletter had it right: Kids do say the darndest things. As children learn to use language, their innocent missteps often result in memorable words or phrases which become part of their family’s vernacular. Words like “m-sketti” and “ephalant” become more than amusing misspeaks. They are triggers which recapture precious moments at the same time that they knit tighter the bonds that make up our family’s common culture.

A caution here: I’m not suggesting any sort of ridicule of children. There is a fine line between enjoying the experience without embarrassing the child. One approach is to affirm the child’s originality. “Look at you! You’ve just created a new word!”

Sometimes, remembered comments are not so much accidents of language as much as they are original thoughts concocted in the minds of little ones seeing the world through fresh eyes. On his first visit to K-Mart at the age of three, this same son of ours exclaimed upon leaving, “I YUV dis pwace!” The honest enthusiasm of this observation places it in the Hall of Fame for our family sayings. You are likely to hear it repeated anytime a member of our family visits a great spot.

In a home with young children, these adorable comments flow with such frequency that it is a temptation to assume we will remember them all. But time is a cruel thief, and most of these comments will be lost to obscurity. A few will be repeated often enough to embed them in our neurons, but most will simply be forgotten.

The best way I know to preserve these memories is to write them down. Some parents are disciplined about getting out the baby book and writing down every delicious morsel they want to remember. Most parents are too busy or disorganized to get that done.

An easy alternative is the Quote Sheet. Suggested by a dear friend, the Quote Sheet is simply a piece of paper taped inside a kitchen cabinet. Whenever a child says something cute or funny, you grab a pen and write it on the Quote Sheet. When that sheet is full, you take it down, stash it somewhere for later reference, and tape up a new page.

Even if you just shove the page into a drawer, you will find it again one day and thrill to the flood of happy memories it evokes.

My friend’s Quote Sheet contained this, one of my favorite children’s comments, spoken by her then-four-year-old son on a beautiful October day: “Fall is like when you get into the bathtub and the water is just right.” No poet could have captured Fall more

eloquently, and we have his mom's Quote Sheet to thank for memorializing it for the ages.