TEENAGERS AND MORAL VALUES

BY IRIS LILLYS

As a result, the children developed into remarkable teenagers who are in the making of sound and solid citizens for the future... The young boy continues in his letter...

"I started at Tom Thumb's sacking groceries and scrubbing floors. When an employee working at the grocery department went on vacation, I was asked to fill in for three days... I have been there ever since... Yet I have enjoyed the job far more than just the money..."

Together with his letter, the teenager sent an essay to the colleges where he has applied..." I hope you may like to read it" Uncle Jim" he continued...

Uncle Jim, a very succesful executive at a large firm in New York City, read his nephew's story and was moved. Friends of his read it, too, and could not believe it. It came in my mail and my reaction was to thank God that one can still find a few decent people in this distorted world. We agreed that this piece should be published with the hope that maybe one or two youngsters could be alerted to their erroneous and negative thinking. Also it should be a blessing if parents recognized the disastrous effect that over indulgence has on their children and put aside the parental comment — "I want my child to have all that I did not have..." This is the essay of an eighteen-year-old boy from Dallas whose approach to life give him a guarantee for a brilliant future.

"For the past year and a half I have worked for a Tom Thumb Supermarket in my neighborhood. I started as a courtesy clerk, sacking groceries and cleaning the store, and moved my way up to the grocery department where I have been stacking the shelves and ordering products since June. While this is not necessarily out of the ordinary for many high-school students, I have tried to make my job both interesting and meaningful. It started when I began to look for another place of work, something more mentally challenging and in line with white-collar professions. I was unable to find another job which both paid well and offered flexible hours. So I settled on a second year at Tom Thumb, but I decided to tackle the job from a different perspective. Instead of only going through the motions, I became intent on developing a new attitude in which my primary goal would be to learn more about how a store was run, with particular attention to details which may affect my future. With this new attitude, I was able to view my job not as a source of cash, but as an extension of my schooling.

Soon I began to see how service managers hired and fired, disciplined and rewarded their workers. Quickly I realized that the qualities I take for granted, because of the way I was raised, are actually very rare in workers at entry level positions. While I was never even

GREEK-AMERICAN REVIEW
late for work, I noticed as co-worker after co-worker was first disciplined and then terminated for failure to arrive on time. I have always been a perfectionist, and though this has not always been to my advantage, my father has taught me to stick with a job until it’s completed to the best of my ability. Having grown up with this philosophy I was shocked to see how many managers had to follow up their instructions to employees. But perhaps the best lesson I was able to apply to my experience has been the common courtesies and interpersonal skills which my mother has enforced upon me. I have received two awards at Tom Thumb, both of which I attribute to my parents’ diligence in raising me. The first was a Gold Badge which I earned through politeness and kindness to customers. In July, I earned my second award, as I was named Associate of the Year, a reflection of the many qualities I have been able to learn and use.

Though there was a high turnover rate among employees in the positions which I held, the managers in the store remained constant. Soon they began to notice my commitment to their profession and thus took an interest in me. All levels of employees knew they could depend on me. I enjoy the fact that people count on me in times of crisis. It is a knowledge which has made me more self-confident.

The culmination of my efforts thus far occurred in late August as a new Tom Thumb, the “flagship of Cullum Companies” opened for business only two blocks north of our store. All but two of the managers and all of the assistant managers were moved to other stores and our Store Director moved to the new store. Though I was given the opportunity to move with him, I chose to stay in order that I might gain a better understanding of how new personnel are able to take control and gain the respect of not only their workers but also the customers.”

And he concludes: “I have been able to turn an ordinary work experience into an extension of my schooling, learning many valuable lessons along the way... Now, if the young Texan will make Ivy League or not, is immaterial. One thing is sure: with such ideals and drive he is bound to be an outstanding success in whatever he chooses to do...

And don’t ever let anybody tell you that achievements in life are a matter of luck. Hard work and discipline have always been the motto of the successful...