Smile for the Camera!

Earlier today I was watching a short video on the internet - nothing dramatic, just a short clip that my son-in-law had taken of my two grandsons. These little videos that he prepares are not the kind of thing that would be of interest to anybody outside our family, but I eagerly await their appearance, as I am not able to see the two boys very often. Sometimes I notice something in the clip that makes me think, "Gee, little Alex behaves just like his mother did when she was that age," but I have no actual way to confirm that, because when his mother was that age, we had no video camera.

When my children were young, video cameras were still very expensive, and nowhere near as ubiquitous as they have since become. We did have a regular camera of course, so although we have no video records, we do have many hundreds of still photographs of the kids at various stages of life (although there are considerably more photographs of the first child stored in the albums, as is probably the case with most families).

Going back another generation, to my own childhood, the number of extant photographs decreases dramatically. A few years ago, my mother presented me with a small album containing some photos from my childhood they had managed to keep - a few dozen in all. There are large gaps in this album, extending over a number of years in some cases, so part of my life is lost forever - I will never know what I looked like at that time!

Nobody will be surprised when I mention that - moving still farther into the past - very little has been preserved from my parents' youngest days; nothing but a handful of faded snapshots is left. Beyond this, we of course have nothing. Just what my grandfathers looked like - at any stage of their lives - will forever remain a complete mystery.

But for my two young grandsons, the situation is exactly reversed. Their growth will be observed and 'catalogued' at every step of the way, both in photographs, and in video. I am quite curious how this will affect their self-image as they grow up. I would imagine that a child who is always seeing videos of himself would be less self-conscious, and not as shy as would otherwise be the case.

An extreme example of this would be actors or people who are always on television. Because they are always being 'watched', it becomes second nature for them to present themselves in a confident manner. The more I think about this, the more it seems to me that this modern practice of constantly taking videos of our children could really play an important part in their development.

I don't mean that we should try and train them to be actors, but by providing them with these frequent opportunities to 'see ourselves as others see us', I think we will be helping them to grow up to become more confident and self-assured in their behaviour.

So I can clearly say to my son-in-law, "Keep that camera rolling! For their own good, keep it rolling!" And as soon as they are old enough to manage it, get the boys to take a turn behind the viewfinder, so that they can show us the world as they see it. In the years to come, they are going to 'go places' I would never dream of, and I'd love to tag along ... even just virtually!

David Bull
Seseragi Studio
Nagabuchi 8-4-5   Ome City
Tokyo   Japan   198-0052
http://astoryaweek.com