

## The Grandparent Game

*By Hap Hansen*

Becoming a grandparent means a lot of things. It means pride. It means responsibility. It is something that moves me frequently. But most of all, it means getting even. Getting even with your kids for all those times they stayed out late and didn't call. Getting even for all those times they ate too much candy and got sick on your shag carpeting. Grandparents get even with their kids by spoiling grandchildren rotten. When babysitting, giving them too much candy (in their parents' home, of course). By letting them stay up late to watch the nine p.m. spooky movie on a school night. And by justifying all those events to your children under the guise of 'grandparent education.' Speaking for this grandparent, it gives me great pleasure and moves me to hear my son say, "Dad, you know those kids can't stay up late on a school night." And I say, "Yes, Son, I know. It won't happen again." But both of us know that it will happen again.

Over and over and over. It's fun to spoil grandkids, because I don't have to suffer the consequences. It may take my son a few days of listening to whining, complaining and hearing, "Grandpa let me do that, why don't you?" before he gets his child straightened out. Just the thought of what he's going through gives me great pleasure and that moves me. And I'm getting even in a pleasant way. At least it's pleasant for me! I know my father got even with me in the same way. As his father did with him. And as my son will do with his kids after he becomes a grandparent.

Getting even with one's adult children in those small ways has probably been going on for generations. The difficulty is in making sure that one's child is in a quandary about what it is the grandparent is doing. Grandparents cannot come right out and say, "I'm getting even with you for what you pulled on me as a kid!" No, grandparents must play the getting even game straight up, straight faced and straight on. Let your child try to figure out what's happening. Usually, they won't know until their own children have children. Then the light comes on! They realize what you have done and start making their own 'getting even' plans.

Who's the winner? Why, grandchildren, of course! They get little extra candy, a little more loving and a little more time with grandparents. It's a wonderful game. And that's a few of the things that move me.