

Raising Rinnie

A General Guide, Learning by Situations

Things happen and someone has to deal with it. Rinnie did not arrive with instructions. Among the first situations was responding to the cry of a baby. First thought is to look around to see if there is something wrong. Is she kinked where she cannot move, or stuck by pillows. It took a few days to distinguish the tones of each cry, to know the meaning.

Tone of the Cry

The most common cry was being lonely, a high tone reaching to other rooms. Nights and mornings were often like setting an alarm when she awoke. With the right tone, it was obvious she needed to see someone. After a few days, I noticed the tone was exactly the same for each wakeup.

This made me think through a way to modify her options.

One day she called me in while lying on her back. She would stay in that position and cry until I picked her up. I made the same sound and took my hand, tapping my lips like an Indian yodel. Rinnie looked at me in a strange bit of wonder, like what are you saying, and began to cry again.

I took two fingers and tapped her lips while she cried. This made the same yodel sound, so she started laughing. That was an interesting start, so we practiced that yodel method for a while.

The very next morning, like clockwork, I heard the wakeup cry. In a few seconds I hear bub-bub-bub, and she started laughing and bub-bub-bub again. Walking in the room, she was flat hand pulling down her lower lip with her finger tips, making that sound and stopping to laugh. That was a memorable wakeup to her laughing that day, much better than a cry. It took another week or so before she moved her jaw to change the tone. She mastered that quickly, about the same time she could stand in the crib.

Left Hand Rules

We have no data to prove this theory, yet the evidence of observation, compels a reason. When the crib was set in her room, the pillow had to go one end or the other. Her window faced west, so to keep her eyes from direct light, the pillow went west. This placed her right side against the wall and her left side by the crib bars. Not much thought went into placement other than sunlight through the window.

Rinnie being left handed wasn't noticeable until her second year or later. Was there a left-handed correlation to the crib placement or not, is still only a guess.

Fingers With a Grip

From her first days it was observable; Rinnie had a marvelous grip.

Before she could even crawl, she would latch on to my index fingers a solid grip. I could then lift her to stand, and to hold on the top of the crib bars. It took only days for her to lift herself on the crib bars to stand while still learning to crawl. This is not common for other kids, most will lose grip as you lift them. Rinnie was always smiling with an acrobat grip wherever we went, she never lost fix of a hold.

Moving Rinnie to the living room was easy.

She would grasp my fingers, as I lift her up and over the bars to the floor. Instinctively she let go for me to switch hands so she would face outward. With weight lifted off her feet, she walked into the hallway, stopping by the kitchen for a banana or such, and off to the TV room. She would stand by the couch and one step at a time, walk one end to the other and back. Then she crawled to a blanket and rested, playing with toys.

We made many trips walking through the hallway and all around the house. I would tell her what room it was and where we were going. All the while, I was bent over with a bit of a back strain while she scooted her feet walking, and grinning at every step.

I did wonder if this might stretch her arms, hanging on my fingers to lighten her feet. Yet she was always smiling as we toured the house everywhere, including the yard. On many occasions, I would see her sleeping comfortably with her arms straight up. One quirk seen years later, when she makes an exclamation, her hands go straight up. Like a spectator shouting in a stadium, it highlights her expressions remarkably.

Since Rinnie began to walk and until she was elbow high, about 40 inches; She would reach up to my arm, wanting to hang on as long as she could. I would hold my arm straight out, keeping her feet a few inches from the floor. Then set her down after a minute or two, when I sensed she was tiring. I really don't recall her ever letting go on her own. She would grunt and groan and whine until I set her down. If she was set down too early, we had to do it again. Rinnie is very insistent.

A Missed Image

Once while working at the PC desk, Rinnie was stepping around the room while bracing against the furniture. She was carefully moving and exploring things, she never fell. I noticed she was headed toward a full-length mirror, so this was something to watch. It was more of a surprise than I expected, and a missed opportunity for a camera. This was years before cell phones existed.

When Rinnie saw herself in the mirror, it was a long shout of glee and smiles. Like someone had just seen their greatest gift, she discovered a new friend. The bouncing movements and tapping of the glass where scenes of wonder as she watched for an image response. Rinnie would have stepped through the looking glass if she could, for solid joy.

Watching Rinnie Grow

Several times Rinnie had notable changes in height.

She often played under the TV room desk, with a long window behind it and no chair. This was a favorite area for her to gather toys under there to play. The bottom of the center drawer is 24-25 inches from the floor, so about age two, she was near that height. One day I saw her stand and bump the desk, with an expression of horror and a wail, learning the hard way. As far as I can recall, she never again played under that desk.

Making Tea

Working two+ years in Virginia at Lipton Tea Company, the instant tea product became a standard at home even now. There was always a tall white plastic cup near me that Rinnie enjoyed warm in winter and cool in summer. This was on my nightstand, where Rinnie would come in at night, she knew where to find a drink.

One morning about age 3 she asked how to make it. Two flat spoons of tea, two rounded spoons of sugar. Then she came back asking how much time in the microwave – 222. The tea she delivered with a smile, she made it only that one time, yet still very memorable.

Jogging

Years before, I ran hundreds of races and averaged 50 to 80 miles a week, while jogging at a good training pace. While Rinnie was in pre-school, I took her on many runs in a red 3-wheel jogging cart. This was effortless to push, with a very cozy seat and canopy that gave her a special cruising tour through the neighborhoods. We were in Waco on one of the jogs near home, when I passed by Dr. Alderton's estate, as I had many times. I occasionally saw him on the front lawn, but this time he was beside the road as we approached. We stopped to chat, and I encouraged Rinnie to talk with him, but she was in a silent mood like a Zombie. She just sat and looked straight ahead completely mute. I reached to lift her out, but she sat immobile, refusing to get out. This is one of her character moods that occur, so it finished the chat and we moved on. Her chance to meet the grandson of Dr. Alderton, who created the Dr Pepper drink wisped away, though we went to his museum several times for a Dr Pepper ice-cream float.

Scared of the Dark

Before age three, Rinnie had an evening where she did not want me to turn off her light. Whatever the cause is still unknown, maybe a movie or cartoon or some story she heard. She was truly showing fear, even shaking in plea to leave the light on, like never before. I would have left it on, yet she needed to be able to do it herself, though still too short to reach. So I set her on my forearm facing outward, and went to the front door. Two switches were at the doorway. I had her flip one and showed the porch light on and off. Then flipping the living-room light on and off, on and off again. Then to the dining room, a switch each for the living-room and dining, on and off twice. Then other side of the dining room, a hall light and dining room dimmer to push and turn. She pushed it on and turned to dim and bright, and pushed off, then hall light on and off. Bath light on and off, then back porch on and off, then we came to her room.

I sat on the floor by the bed and told her to turn out the light.

Rinnie stretched up to show it was way out of reach. Not saying a word, I pointed to a small plastic chair, point and point, finally she looked. Rinnie hustled to the chair and carried it to the switch, she whined, still could not reach. I bumped a small square pillow on the bed, sown by my grandmother; bumped again, and she put that on the chair. Still she could not reach, so I bumped the other square pillow, with that she turned the light off. Now you can do it - I got up and turned the light on, saying turn it off when you are ready for bed, okay - goodnight.

The next morning, I heard cartoons coming from her room, not from the living room. That was odd, she could not normally reach her remote and TV on top of a tall dresser. Going in to investigate, I was thrilled and stunned with fear! Rinnie had made a stair-step of the dresser drawers; the bottom out and next half way, and the next a few inches, a perfect stairway to the TV. The fear came from realizing it

could have tipped over! I was astonished she figured it out on her own, and thankful it came to no tragedy.

After that, I secured the dresser to the wall by the bed, and placed the remote more accessible. Rinnie never again expressed any fear of the nights.

Ready for School

Once I was at the dining room PC while Rinnie was watching cartoons in the living room and lying on the couch. I took a laser pen and moved a red dot slowly in a zig-zag from the doorway to the front of the couch. This caught her eye and she plopped to the floor and chased it under the couch. It reappeared from under and she chased it again, never knowing what it was. I was amazed that she would fearlessly chase a bright red bug. Something Rinnie learned early was the alphabet and reading, long before others her age. She had a PC program made to teach letters and words, and others to read stories while highlighting each word. In later evenings, I could sit on the floor with two laser light pens. On the ceiling or wall, I would draw a letter and Rinnie tells me what it is. She would draw one and I would tell her what it was. That was a game of letters and words and animal shapes and just fun talk time.

While driving Rinnie to school, we pass by signs on businesses and I ask her to spell it. A favorite was Dairy-Queen and Pizza-Hut, I watch her read it and spell it out. I was watching and waiting each day for her to spell it without looking at the letters.

When that day came, after we passed the place, I asked, how do you spell Queen.

There was a pause, as she realized it was two words.

Rinnie spelled out queen, and I asked how to spell Hut, and some others.

This is all before and while in kindergarten, she could read at least a fourth grade level.

There were times when I had extended lunch, so I sat in her classroom as an observer. One day it rained during recess, so all the kids stayed inside. I saw five or six kids brought books to Rinnie to read for them their favorite stories. I watched this and knew she should be advanced to another grade level. I asked the teachers and principal several times, but jumping grade was not allowed.

Waco Park and Zoo

There were many weekends at the park and zoo in Waco. The park has an old bridge that was famously used to move cattle over the Bosque River by the Texas Rangers Headquarters. Now a landmark for the park, the bridge was adjoined to park activities, slides, Ferris-wheel, vendors and music. This is where Rinnie saw her first concert. A duo named 'Trout-Fishing' sang kid songs, and were very popular. Rinnie would run up to the stage where kids were dancing, then run back. Then back to the stage and back where I had a blanket on the grass. I bought their CDs of some of her early favorite songs.

Touring the Zoo was also a favorite evening time. Once we went to see the tigers. This went on a narrow path through a thick swath of bamboo. Rinnie got scared, knowing there were Tigers beyond, so I had to convince her, we would only do this once. We saw large Tigers that were watching us and pacing like dinner was outside the fence. It really was a creepy feeling around them, and so we only saw them that once.

The peaceful animals were much more appealing. One day I brought a bag of apples for the Elephants. Rinnie tossed a couple over the narrow pond. One landed on a cliff ledge, some went in the water, and one landed near the Elephant. Watching him crush the apple on the curl of his trunk, he let out a holler, and others came near. He fished out another apple from the pond, then took in a load of water and sprayed Rinnie. It was a treat for the elephants and an experience for Rinnie too. We also had apples for the Rhinoceros, Zebras and Giraffe. A zoo keeper saw us feeding the Giraffe and told us to only use the vender food, though the animals reacted like apples were a delight.

Golden Whistle

One year the Barnum & Bailey Circus came to Waco. Since we were often in crowds, and near out of sight while around groups of kids, I bought Rinnie a small golden whistle on a golden necklace. I told her to blow that whistle if she cannot find me in a crowd. She wore this first, at the Circus in Waco. There was a very large crowd, but we all moved slowly. While leaving an event, I notice Rinnie looking at her whistle and drifting away from where we headed. I sensed she was ready to test this thing, so I casually walked on to play the game. She was about 30 yards back to my right when she blew the whistle. That is another part of Rinnie's character, to test things her way.

Hale-Bopp Comet



The famous Hale-Bopp Comet came around in May 1996. Rinnie had a telescope and we could see the streak in the day and night for two weeks. With her tripod telescope on the sidewalk, we had a lot of visitors come by to see it closely. Rinnie had a remarkable charming story line, to tell all about what visitors were seeing. She was only 4 years age, yet taught like an excited professional, to all who walked by.

Beyond the Comet, we identified North Star and Big Dipper handle points to Arcturus, the bright double star of Passover. Then 6 months later, we saw Pleiades the 7-star shape of an arrowhead, east of Orion in Fall.

Learning to Swim



We had a large swimming pool in the Arizona apartments with wonderfully warm water. Rinnie took to the water anxiously and paddled around with water-wings and a foam surfboard. She also had an RC boat we ran around the pool if the waves were calm.

Her water-wings were inflatable tubes that go on each arm to the shoulder, a cozy safety feature. These are highly recommended for beginners, to keep their head up with no effort.

Rinnie could splash around and play for hours until she got hungry, but never tired.

One day there were four girls her age that came to the pool, and they could swim well. They swam one end to the other quickly, and Rinnie could not keep up while wearing wings. So she finally plucked her wings and went everywhere the girls went, all over the pool. After the gals left, I told Rinnie we needed a picture of her swimming first time without wings. This is still a favorite photo for me, and among our relatives.

Theater Nights

Some weekends we had popular movies listed in the newspaper. So we indulged with her buddies. The I-Max Theater had a few 3-D movies & cartoons with things that seemed to float right in front of us. One 3-D cartoon was so intense; the roller-coaster scene could give your stomach a whirl or make you grab your seat to keep from falling out.

The Drive-In took planning for the Sub-Way snacks, and we could see up to three movie screens. We took a 10x10 rug, a lawn-chair, cooler, and a red RC-Truck with spare battery. Rinnie had a fondness for the Sub-Way sandwich and loved to use the clear bag like a balloon. Sometimes there were marbles, stones and pennies, even feathers that went into the bag before she inflated and tied it. That was her homegrown play-toy until we reached our destination.

The RC-truck was modified to add head-lights & tail-lights. Before the movie started, not quite dark enough, I drove the RC up & down the dirt road between the cars. Rinnie and a dozen kids would chase it and run around hollering and stirring up a dust cloud. That was usually as entertaining and memorable as some movies.

We also ran the RC-truck at intermission and between movies. In the dark, Rinnie had a multi-colored light-wand we got from the Barnum & Bailey Circus. That made her easy to identify, even in a crowd in the dark, so those film-nights were chosen when the movie theme seemed appealing. Some movies were great; we enjoyed RC and Subs on others. On Rinnie's 10th birthday, one gift had 3-D movies and cartoon DVDs with 3-D glasses and an adapter for the TV, so she and her friends could watch them at home.

Paddle the Canyon



Nearly every summer weekend we would go to the canyon for a hot day on the cool water.

Choices were to paddle Canyon Lake, ride the Dolly, camp, or



paddle Salt River. Rinnie mastered the kayak immediately, so there were no delays beyond getting to the parking lot. That was a very scenic drive from Phoenix to the lake, through the Tonto forest of Saguaro cactus. This large lake started at the Dam, and has three branches of narrow canyons, all a delight to see.

Mostly on while on my own, there were hiking trails in many areas. Once while climbing a cliff, I pulled myself up to small ledge, and came face-to-face with a large tarantula. Easing myself down, hoping it would not jump on my head, I did not scale cliffs any more. I also hiked areas of old gold mines and caves, until one day a pack of wolves were watching me. There were also footprints in the sand of a mountain lion. Those things are known to be the demise of some of the original gold miners of the area. Since that day, I intentionally kept Rinnie off the trails.



Narrow canyons with colorful walls made our whole day finding something new to view.

The docking area has a nice restaurant to cure the hungers and occasional air-condition break. However, we always carried an abundance of snacks in case the journeys went far.

Rinnie's first time in the kayak, she was to go around a No-Wake buoy about 30 ft away. She went straight to it and rammed the buoy in the center,

bouncing straight back, then paddled around it twice, exploring this thing and back to shore. That was Rinnie's typical character, when asked to do something, she always adds her own little twist to test thing her way.



My kayak was larger, so when other kids were around, she took my Dagger kayak with up to 4-kids riding along. They explored the shores and conquered the beaches. Then paddled off the beach to see the cliffs on the other side with contours of fossils and petrified wood imbedded in the rock.

Tasting the Clouds

On long road trips, Rinnie had some things to make the day. She used the

Subway bag as a play toy balloon, pencils as drumsticks on the bag and dashboard. She drew cartoon characters in all my notepads, spotted all the hay fields saying hey – pointing to a bale. Rinnie also liked reading the Bible out loud, from a 1918 pocket sized collection where each Bible book had its own volume.

On a cloudy day, Rinnie rolls down the window, reaches up to grab a piece of a cloud, to taste it. Yum it tastes like strawberry. I would reach out and say this one tastes like chocolate, and she grabs one that tastes like ice cream or watermelon or peach or banana. Most folks just look at the clouds and imagine the shapes; Rinnie likes to taste them.

When we crossed a bridge she would hold her breath over the water. Some of those bridges like the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers were well over a minute. Roadside parks were nice. One in Oklahoma had a McDonald's over the highway. Another had large flat stones as a long walkway, about a foot apart and a foot high through the woods.



Reunions in Missouri

My parents host a family reunion week every two to four years at resorts in Missouri. One place was a novel town where we lived in the 60s. This small town of Steelville near St. Louis became a tourist spot for rafting, canoes, camping, parks and novel shops within the Mark Twain Forrest. So the activities and charm and everything needed as tourists for our reunion was there, and we knew the area well.

We would take the canoe trips, yet I brought my own kayak. With a herd of relatives, we were bussed upstream on the Meramec River to launch a dozen+ canoes. About three hours on the river pass rope-swings, caves and many beaches with collectable crystal lined stones. This photo was taken when Rinnie and Fran explored a small spring by the river and found some edible plants.

Waking Rinnie

When I needed to run off to work, I had Rinnie enrolled in an art teacher's summer class. Then a retired neighbor couple would take her to the pool or home to eat or nap. Getting Rinnie to wake when I was ready did not need to be drastic, but a good routine was needed. When I spoke while she slept, her eyes would move before the lids opened. So I told her it's time to wake, I'm going to turn the lights on. I covered her eyes with a shirt, and flipped on the lights. Then when ready for her to get dressed, I used a jar of pitted cherries with stems. Taking one from the jar, I say here's a treat; it's time to wake up. Holding the stem, I dragged a wet cherry across her lips and slowly she gulped it in like a fish. I tugged a bit until she plucked it off the stem. Sometimes she opened up ooh-ooh for another one. Those little things made wake timing easy, Rinnie arose sharp and ready without slow slog delays.

Biking Colorado Springs & Manitou

At the East side of Pikes Peak is Manitou and Old Town, by Bear Creek, and into Colorado Springs. The creek has a paved bike trail on both sides for miles, making the area a pleasure cruise for bikes and joggers. Rinnie and I had lightweight Trek mountain bikes, and put many miles on our scenic journeys.

One trip covered 36+ miles in one day visiting the Manitou park springs that deliver natural carbonated water of several flavors. We each had a favorite spring to fill our bike water bottles. This park has dozens of carved animals in tree trunks, and hollow trees

with stairs and windows to explore. We rested at every ice cream and soda shop we found and plucked wild raspberries from a large patch by the river trails.

On a downhill stretch, Rinnie chased a mink for nearly 100 yards that was only inches ahead of her bike. It finally made a hard turn and scurried into a narrow path by the creek.

The large black and white Magpies were under the trees like a gathering of chickens.

They stayed out of our way on the trails, and were not worried of our presence. These birds made sounds nearly like musical instruments.

We reached the 'Garden of the Gods' park and explored the unique formations of cliffs and a balanced rock the size of a train car, on a pedestal of a few feet. One area had an

apricot tree of perfect flavor, which we filled several containers of the very small fruit.

They resembled little peaches, less than two inches in size with the bright red and yellow colors, and the same flavor of a peach, yet the pit was smooth like an apricot. Maybe the 7000 ft altitude made a unique growth. We fed on those excellent treats for several days.

