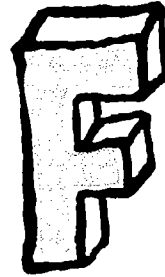


Straight from the Source: What It's Like Being a Manager's Kid

**Children of local
government
administrators
tell in words
and in drawings
about the good
and bad aspects
of being part of
a "management
family."**



First, let's talk about the good things of having a mom who is a city manager. A good thing is that she makes a lot of money. When I was in the third grade, she came to my class and taught us about city government; it was fun, but it was a little bit embarrassing because she told stories about me. Another good thing is being in the newspaper sometimes, when they talk about our family; it makes me feel noticed. Another good thing is that I can help her a lot; for example, once I told her how to improve the after-school daycare program.

Now, to go to some of the bad things. One is that she gets home at a later time, long after school is over. Another bad thing is that she gets stressed out and gets bad headaches, and I feel sorry for her. Also, I don't get to spend as much time as I would like to with her. These are really the only bad things about having a mom as a city manager.

I feel lucky that my mom is a city manager. I am proud of her. I love my mom! —Michael Lawson, age 10½, son of Penelope Culbreth-Graft, city manager, Grover Beach, California

Did you ever think, wow! what fun it would be to be the child of a city official? Or did you ever think how well off you'd be if you were the child of a city manager? Well, maybe after this you'll think twice.

My name is Katie Reid. I live in Titusville, Florida. I'm 12, and my dad's city management has its good points. You get to take really neat trips, stay in great hotels, and meet really neat people. But as for most things, there are bad points, too. Like, half the time, you can't tell anyone what's going on in your parent's career. I know that doesn't sound too bad; that's what I thought until someone asked me a question I couldn't answer. I wanted to go home and ask my parents what was o.k. to say. It's one of the most uncomfortable positions a person can be in, believe me.

Another bad point is [that] you have absolutely no idea how long you'll be living in a city or county. There is no statement saying you'll live in a place for so and so years. Each year, you start school wondering if you'll still be there at the end of the year. Or whether or not to get attached to any friends or teachers. All you can do is sit tight and act like you'll still be there at the end.

As I said earlier, we can hardly ever tell anyone anything. I finally decided I needed someone I could talk to who would understand at least half of what I was talking about. It finally occurred to me I needed another city manager. So, taking my Dad's book, *WHO'S WHO in Local Government Management*, I randomly picked a name. It turned out to be a manager in Texas, and for a year now we've been exchanging letters.

Not that I mean to put down city management. I have to admit when someone you've never met walks up and says hi, and then someone tells them whose kid you are, and they're suddenly grabbing for your hand, well, it's a feeling nothing meets. I

guess city management isn't too bad. Actually it's pretty cool; it just keeps you on your toes. Oh well, just don't be too quick to envy managers' kids. —Katie Reid, age 12, daughter of Randall Reid, city manager, Titusville, Florida

Hil My name is Katy Shukle, daughter of city manager Edward Shukle. I like my dad being a city manager because it feels good to know that your dad has control over the city's plans and ideas. My dad is city manager of Mound, Minnesota, a suburb a little west of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

My dad has a good job because it supports the family well, and he still has time to be with us. My dad has a nice office, and it is always clean. My dad has lots of friends there, on all floors of the building, so he can talk with them during the day. I think my dad does a good job being the city manager of Mound. —Katy Shukle, age 11, daughter of Edward Shukle, city manager, Mound, Minnesota

iwent to school in Australia for two weeks in 1992 while my dad was participating in ICMA's International Management Exchange Program. I had fun and learned a lot. Here are some comparisons and advice.

I don't know what public schools are like in Australia because I went to a private school. But there were a lot of differences from my school. There were two grades per class, and that made it confusing. But that worked out. When I left, I was in the third grade, and in times-tables. In Australia, fourth grade was learning times-tables. Desks were different too. They opened on the top, not on the side.

If another 8-year-old American girl in third grade went to Australia, she should do some studying on the country beforehand; do schoolwork on the plane (it takes forever to catch up!); and don't get fed up with all the questions everyone asks about America. —Allison Kerbel, age 10, daughter of Rich Kerbel, town manager, North Kingstown, Rhode Island



Drawing by Katy Shukle, age 11, Mound, Minnesota.



our upcoming story on managers' kids sounds like fun. Here's a story with a twist. Patrick Nasi, city administrator of O'Fallon, Missouri, is the father of 8-month quadruplets. Two boys and two girls.

After a long day at the office, Patrick finds time and patience to spend with the kids and every Saturday he takes them on a two- to three-hour stroller ride.

The children and I adore him. Thanks, and hope you might consider including this. —**Natalie Nasi, partner, and Lyn, Emmy, Reed, and Genaz Nasi, age 8 months, children of Patrick Nasi, O'Fallon, Missouri**



At the time this photo was taken, the quadruplets of Natalie and Patrick Nasi were 8 months old. Their names are (clockwise from top) Genaz, Lyn, Reed, and Emmy.



My name is Maggie Kridler, I'm 11, and I have a brother named Kyle, who is 8. Our dad is city manager of Springfield, Ohio.

Some of the things we think are

fun about our dad being a city manager are: you get to meet lots of different people, like the police chief, fire chief, and the mayor. Sometimes,

you might even get to help out—like hold the flags at one of the city meetings. Once, my dad had to do a TV interview with the "news team," and we got to watch him. He is also on the TV and in the newspapers a lot. We got to ride in a police car, and we met a police dog and its trainer. We have also met the city manager of Gatlinburg, Tennessee, where we were vacationing.

We thought of some not-so-nice things, too: when he has evening meetings, we can't eat dinner together; and sometimes, he has to work on weekends, so we have to put off some special things.

But even though

there are some not-so-nice things, we still like being a city manager's KIDS!
—**Maggie Kridler, age 11, daughter of Matthew Kridler, city manager, Springfield, Ohio**

P.S. My brother drew a picture, which I've included.



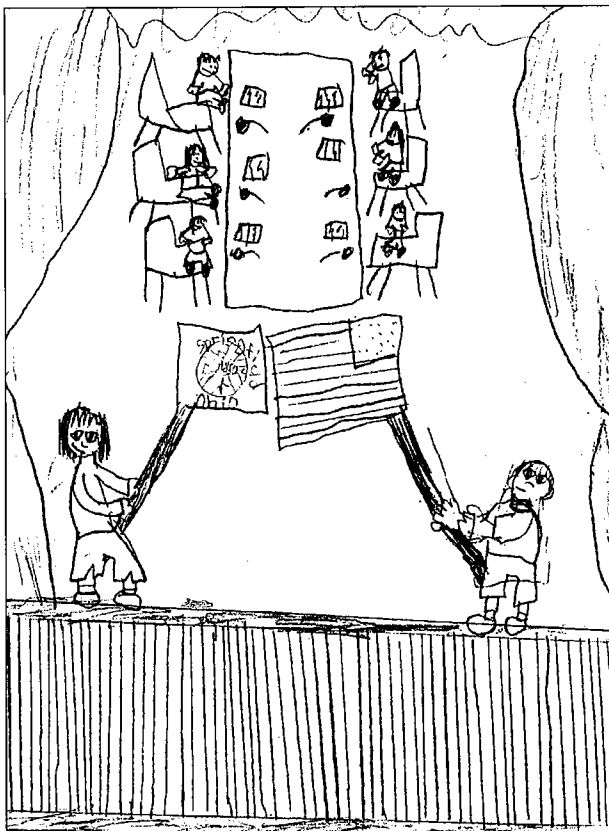
I think Dad should be congratulated for his work as city administrator. He has graduated from a hard job. Now that he left the office there are not very many jobs for him to take. I think having a dad as a city manager is sometimes very hard because you don't get to see him much. —**Kirke Anderson Elsass, age 7, son of former Fitchburg, Wisconsin, City Administrator Dan Elsass, Madison, Wisconsin**

For me, being a manager's child is fun. I like being a manager's child because my dad comes to my school to talk about the town. My dad also lets me go to his office and see how he works. Another reason I like being a manager's child is because we go on lots of conferences. I like going to conferences with my dad because I can see firsthand how cities in the United States are different.

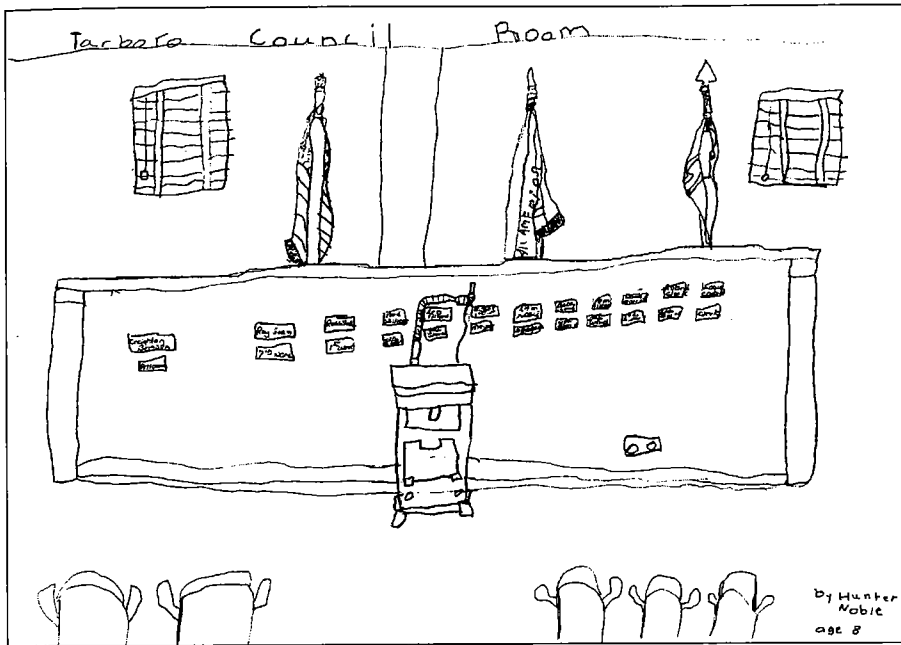
Sometimes, being a manager's child is not easy because my dad has lots of meetings and is very busy. All in all, I think I have a really neat dad. —**Audra Noble, age 11, daughter of Sam Noble, town manager, Tarboro, North Carolina**



People often tell me that I must be a slow learner because I'm going into local government management. The reason for this comment is that my family has maintained three generations in the local government profession. My grandfather, David D.



Drawing by Kyle Kridler, age 8, Springfield, Ohio.



This is a drawing of the Tarboro town council room, located in the city hall in Tarboro, North Carolina. It was drawn by Hunter Noble, son of Sam Noble, town manager. Hunter is 8 years old.

Rowlands, ICMA president 1966-1967, started his career in city government after serving in World War II in the 1940s and now is retired. My father, David Rowlands, Jr., began his career in 1968, and is the city manager of Antioch, California. I started my career in 1990 and currently work for the city of Mason, Ohio, as an administrative assistant.

I knew since the age of 5 that I wanted to be either a county or city manager. There only is one negative aspect of being a manager's kid: people expect you to act and behave in a certain way. The standard of conduct is perceived to be at a higher level, and it is. Also, often your accomplishments in school and on the athletic field are attributed to your being the city manager's son.

I feel that all other aspects have been positive. I grew up listening to my father and grandfather discussing the profession. I heard how to deal with a difficult council, the public, and employee problems. During these conversations, they would ask me what I would do in these situations. This is when I became an arm-chair manager. These "study sessions"

led me to my choice of a career in local government and prepared me for the rigors of the profession.

How the Management Field Has Changed

When my grandfather was a city manager, city councils were elected at large, and members usually served

only one or two terms. Councils for the most part were composed of leaders in the business community and were multiple-issue candidates. These individuals served their community and were not interested in "furthering their political careers" by running for higher office.

Since the mid-1960s, all of this has changed. In many communities, candidates now are elected by wards and districts; frequently, they aspire to higher political office using [the council] as a stepping stone.

Before the Great Society, local government was homogeneous and concerned with meat-and-potato issues: police and fire protection, infrastructure, and land use issues. Today, local governments are more diverse in ethnicity and spend a great deal of time on social issues. This change of focus has made many local governments surrogate parents to their citizens.

The biggest change in local government is the use of computers in the workplace. This has changed the way local governments operate and gather information. Records, databases, and files can be retrieved easily with the push of a button. What used to take a week to acquire now



Three generations of the Rowland "management family" are: (left to right) David Rowlands, administrative assistant, Mason, Ohio; David Rowlands, retired manager, Tacoma, Washington; and David Rowlands, city manager, Antioch, California.

takes a few hours. For example, press releases and council agendas can be faxed to various locations within a few minutes, making city hall readily accessible to its customers.

Management Style

Open, honest, and direct. This is the management style of my grandfather, my father, and myself and has been successful for more than 50 years. I have learned that you need to have an open-door policy with employees and staff, to treat employees and councilmembers with respect, and never to hide any bad news from your staff and council. It is important that the manager visit each department and meet with each employee.

Those of us in the local government profession are fortunate. I cannot think of another profession that can affect so many individuals in a positive manner. When my children are deciding on a future, I hope they say, "I want to join the family business." —**Dave Rowlands, administrative assistant, Mason, Ohio, son of David Rowlands, city manager, Antioch, California, and grandson of David Rowlands, retired manager and ICMA president in 1966, who resides in Tacoma, Washington**

The opportunity to submit these thoughts to *PM* coincided with my first attendance at an ICMA Annual Conference as a student member. It was after this meeting that I contemplated how I progressed from ICMA "brat" to ICMA member and how my father, Dave Taylor, city manager of Temple, Texas, had influenced that development. I wonder if I currently would be pursuing my MPA if my father was not a city manager; or would I be trading stocks, prosecuting criminals, or working in a field quite different from city management. Because public administration was not taught in my school system and there has

been no discovery of a career gene, I can say with confidence that growing up as a city manager's kid influenced me to study public administration.

A handful of people at the Chicago conference joked that growing up as a city manager's kid should have been incentive enough to find another career outside of public service. On the contrary, it was great as a child to boast to other kids that "my dad runs the town"! I took pride in the fact, and still do, that dad uses his expertise to ensure effective service delivery and to promote a high quality of life. As I grew older, I realized that his job does not end at 5:00 p.m., but that his job as a public servant is a 24-hour, 7-days-a-week responsibility. So, of course, if there is trouble in town, dad hears about it, even if it is 2:00 a.m. I believe it was in this environment that I began to realize that public service achieves a higher purpose than can be fulfilled in the business world.

My fondest memories of growing up as a child of a city manager would have to be ones of attending the annual ICMA conferences and board meetings. Here, I witnessed the solidarity among managers from across the country, Canada, and Australia who were brought together by the shared values and goals of local government management. Of course, these trips were sure to put envy into the eyes of my schoolfriends as I shared with them photos from Bar Harbor, Maine; Phoenix, Arizona; Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Anaheim, California. Plus, every kid's dream was answered when Disneyland opened for ICMA members only!

There is one downside to being the daughter of a city manager and attending ICMA conferences in beautiful, faraway places—I never received a perfect attendance certificate in grade school like all of my friends. However, mom and dad always said when I worried about missing school for ICMA: "You'll learn more on the

ICMA trip than sitting in the classroom." In retrospect, I realize they were right! —**Andrea Taylor, Athens, Georgia, daughter of David Taylor, city manager, Temple, Texas**

I was born in the second year of my father's 29-year tenure as town manager of Brattleboro, Vermont. It was a wonderful, Norman Rockwell kind of place to grow up, where my sisters and I enjoy returning to soak up the small-town atmosphere. But the fishbowl aspects of being a manager's child were heightened by the fact that everybody knew everybody in Brattleboro, or at least everybody knew Corwin "Corky" Elwell and had an opinion about how he was managing the town. This led to a few amusing occasions when people who did not know me blew off some steam about "that Elwell" or some action he had taken. More often, it meant that people tended, upon our being introduced, to say, "You must be Corky Elwell's son."

Being "Corky Elwell's son" was not so bad; I was proud of his lasting impact on my hometown. Later, when I went to college thinking that I would become a radio reporter covering a government beat, I reflected on my father's impact in Brattleboro and his satisfaction with doing public work at the most accessible level, and this significantly affected my decision to pursue a career in local government. Nevertheless, during my very public adolescence, I resented having to overcome being viewed as my father's appendage. My sisters had similar experiences, and our parents understood our frustrations. In fact, my mother, who was a respected educator in the community, also was frustrated by being identified routinely not as Babs Elwell but as Corky Elwell's wife.

Thus, it delighted all of us when the tables were playfully turned one day. I had developed an interest in



Three members of the Elwell family attended the 1994 ICMA Annual Conference in Chicago: (left to right) Peter Elwell, assistant town manager, Palm Beach, Florida; Wendy Harrison, partner of Peter Elwell, and recycling and collection administrator, Martin County, Florida; and Corwin "Corky" Elwell, ICMA Range Rider for the state of Vermont.

radio after spending two days working at a local station during a high school career days program. Over the next few months, I volunteered at the station, obtained my FCC license, and became a part-time employee. After making friends with some of the staff, I shared with them my frustration at having to fight to establish my own identify.

A few days later, when my father arrived to discuss town affairs on a midday call-in show, the news director provided what became a favorite family story when he flashed a wry grin and said enthusiastically, "You must be Peter Elwell's father!"
—Peter Elwell, assistant town manager, Palm Beach, Florida, son of Corwin Elwell, ICMA Range Rider, Brattleboro, Vermont

As one of the handful of second-generation city managers in the country, I am constantly challenged as to why I would go into such a crazy business! I have to admit that my father was influential in my decision. My father, Buford Watson, former city

manager of Lawrence, Kansas, and past president of ICMA, was a person of rare character and believed strongly in the profession and the Code of Ethics. For nearly 20 years, he led the Lawrence community through good times and bad. As a high school and college student, I read about what my father was doing each day and attended many of his public activities just so I could spend some time with him. Something must have rubbed off somewhere!

Growing up with a city manager was fun, particularly during those teen years. As I look back, I remember when my father used his "official" position to impose discipline on an impossible teenager. It seems that I was still a few months under the age limit to drink, but I had found a local tavern to bend the rules. When my father found out, I had to make the choice whether he would use the full weight of the city government to see whether the owner would comply with city ordinances or not! At the same time, it was nice to have that "official" side there if you needed help or got into trouble.

When I took my first manager's

job in 1981, my father changed his role into that of a mentor and fellow professional. We became even closer because of our commonalities. He would identify the problems he was having, and we would work through them together. At the same time, he would help me by giving me "helpful hints" on typical problems.

I always remember one tactic he used, which I have called upon on several occasions. Lawrence had selected the site of an old flour mill for its new city hall. All was in order until the eleventh hour, when a local historical preservation group decided the mill was part of the town's historical skyline. They would seek a restraining order in 48 hours, just before construction was to start. Buford told the contractor to begin demolition immediately and make the site look like a "war zone." By the time the activists were back, the mill looked so bad it had to be demolished. The city hall is now the landmark. This was decision making at its finest!

One of the difficulties faced by the offspring of managers in the profession is identification. We constantly are identified as "the city manager's kid," someone who might get preferential treatment in school or college, or as "Buford's son." We have had to work hard to establish our own reputations. This was one of my reasons to move to Texas to start my career. Kansas couldn't handle two Watsons in the same state. After a time, though, I found it really didn't matter, as I was accepted for who I was and the city I represented. As my father put it about the changing profession, "One day, I will come to the ICMA conference and be identified as 'Mark's father.'"

My father died in 1989, nearly five years ago. I lost a mentor, friend, and father at one time. In recognition of his efforts, the Lawrence community has honored him in many ways. This, too, was a lesson. We should not take for granted that we always will be

here but must make the most of our professional and family lives. The city always will be there, but your family may not. We must make the most of our private times together because our lives in many ways belong to the public as their leaders and managers.

The local government management profession is one of the most exciting careers around and will be even more so as local government goes through these present turbulent times. I believe the values expressed by my father through me and through this profession will provide a foundation for the future and perhaps even a third generation of managers! —**Mark Watson, city administrator, Billings, Montana, son of Buford Watson, city manager, Lawrence, Kansas, 1970-1989**



Mark Watson, City Administrator, Billings, Montana

My father is a township manager in a small rural community in Pennsylvania. He has been a local government manager for as long as I can remember, and he always has instilled in me a strange measure of both pride and embarrassment.

When I was a teenager, my father was horribly embarrassing. Of course, all teenagers think this but I had it worse. My father actually came to school once a year to give the social studies classes an introduction to local government. I would curse the fact that fate had placed me in a public servant's family. It wasn't bad enough that my father was physically present in the school and talking to my classmates—a horrific idea to begin with—but my father thought that he was entertainingly funny. (Despite my arguments to the contrary, he still believes this.) I knew that he would actually *make jokes*. About *local government*. I couldn't imagine a worse fate. The scars of this run deep.

As I got older, and theoretically matured, I became aware of the additional responsibilities that being the

son of the township manager entailed. One of the many crosses that I had to bear was to try to explain the council-manager form of government to classmates. Fortunately, many didn't ask, since there wasn't much discussion of public administration on their Metallica albums. (This is not to say that Metallica has ignored all such topics. The song "... And Justice for All" contains the line, "Unfunded mandates are going to kill the dream of government of, by, and for the people." I think.)

Nonetheless, I also knew that, as the son of the manager, I had a civic responsibility to provide a good example to my fellow youth. I knew that if I did anything wrong, not only did this reflect poorly on me, but on my father, the township, the form of government, professional local government administrators across the country, and quite possibly the future of democracy in America. This was a lot of responsibility for someone whose main concern at the time was if his clothes looked exactly like everyone else's.

My twenty-first birthday was a traumatic one. I was beginning my last year in college without a clear idea of the kind of career that did or did not

await me after graduation. I had come to the conclusion that reaching the age of 21 meant that birthdays would no longer be a celebration of attaining an established goal or milestone in life, but a reminder that I was one year closer to death. With these cheery thoughts in my head, I looked forward to having my family visit me on the Sunday after my birthday.

We took a walk to the Lincoln Memorial and sat by the reflecting pool on a beautiful late summer day. My father suddenly got quiet, took a deep breath, and calmly stated, "Well, I was fired." I was shocked. I knew these kinds of things happen to managers, and that it comes with the territory. But not to my dad. Not to us.

I was convinced that my dad was the best manager that ever existed, and the fact that the elected voices of the people felt differently floored me. Everything seemed to be going so well. Everyone in the community knew that he was doing a great job. But it didn't matter. It was a "political" decision. And just like that, my father was deprived of the job that he loved. Even now, two years later, it still doesn't make sense to me. And it still hurts.

But this bittersweet story of hurt and loss has a happy ending. Dad has been appointed to a new position as township manager of Monaghan Township, Pennsylvania. The sparkle in his eye has returned as he talks about his new job and "his" community. I have stayed in Washington to work at ICMA to protect the future of professional local government management in America and to spread its good news to all parts of the world.

(Now, the tables are turned. When Dad reads this, I will have embarrassed him!) —**Jason Woodmansee, research assistant, ICMA's International Municipal Programs, Washington, D.C., son of W. Lee Woodmansee, township manager of Monaghan Township, Pennsylvania** 