

## **Mark Arenz—This I Believe**

I believe in the power of P'tchew. It's the sound my 5-year-old son makes when he's shooting webs or lasers from his wrists while protecting our household from evil-doers.

Like a lot of parents, I sometimes watch my kids in weary amazement. We laugh and ask where they get all that energy, but I think we're missing the point. What really separates the creative adventurousness of children from their parents isn't their jacked-up metabolism but their firm belief in their own power.

Everything they've ever learned tells them that they can and will do great things. We think it's funny that children think they understand the whole of the world at such a young age. It's cute how they don't yet know what they don't know.

On the other hand, the rest of us really do know everything. We have jobs, mortgages, and cable TV. We know the limits of our own capacities, who we are and who we can never be. Right?

Last year, my 9-year-old daughter built a scale model of the White House from cardboard boxes and craft paper. When I first saw the massive thing stretching out across our kitchen table I felt bad for not remembering what school assignment that prompted it.

It turns out that she had made it for fun. She even included a tiny fountain made from a wad of plastic film and a rubber band, but what impressed me most was that she drew herself in the front window, waving and smiling.

The difficulty of making the thing (or the unlikelihood of becoming President) never occurred to her. She made it anyway, and I'm terribly glad she did. It's funny how our kids can teach us things they won't learn for themselves for decades. At this age, she still believes that she can do anything, be anything.

It pains me to think that one day she might feel differently. It doesn't have to end for her, or the rest of us I suppose. As adults, we become so afraid of failure and calamity that failure and calamity are the only things we can recognize in our daily lives. Somehow, we put more faith in our own ruts than in ourselves. How about a new career at 37 or even 67? Try something new and fail bigger than you ever thought possible. The world won't end.

The other day, my son told me he wanted to be Spider-Man when he grows up and detailed all the reasons for it. I felt it was my duty to inform him that super heroes weren't real people and that he couldn't just go down to an employment office and apply for such a position.

"I know, dad," he said, a little disappointed.

Moments later he was happily zapping bad guys in the car next to us. P'tchew!  
P'tchew!