

Former House Of Lords Member Shares His Dad's WWII Stories | Pop Wisdom | Dad Saves America

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SUMMARY

Matt Ridley, a member of the House of Lords, biologist, and journalist, discusses parenting, masculinity, and optimism in this episode of Pop Wisdom. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing progress in the world and shares personal anecdotes about his experiences as a father, the lessons learned from his children, and reflections on his own upbringing.

- *Ridley identifies as a rational optimist, believing that while not everything is improving, many aspects of life are getting better.*
- *He admits to spoiling his children but expresses pride in their development.*
- *He reflects on dangerous childhood experiences, including nearly drowning and risky activities at boarding school.*
- *Ridley defines masculinity as natural male behaviors and interests, such as enjoying sports and action films.*
- *He learns humility from parenting, realizing that children shape their own personalities.*
- *He shares fond memories of his father's wartime experiences and the lessons learned from him.*
- *Ridley enjoys cooking simple dishes and feeding dogs, which he finds rewarding due to their affection.*
- *He recommends the book "My Family and Other Animals" by Gerald Durrell as a cherished childhood read.*

- He's a member of the House of Lords in the UK Parliament. A biologist and a journalist, but he's probably best known as the world's forth most optimist grounded in reality. His book, The Rational Optimist, made a huge impact on me personally. And it's a must read for anyone navigating the constant messages of fear dominating our times. - I'm not here to say everything's getting better but I am here to say a lot of things are getting better.

And why don't we tell the young people about that? - Oh, and did I mention his most distinguished title? He's a dad. Matt Ridley, welcome to Pop Wisdom. (upbeat music) How have you most damaged your kids, either physically or mentally? - By being too nice to them. No, I can't say that, can I? - You certainly can, no, elaborate. by being too nice to them. That's an acceptable answer. - Probably by indulging them too much.

- Do you have spoiled brat kids or did they turn out okay? - They're great, but they're also spoiled. (laughing) - [John] What's the most dangerous thing you've ever let any of your kids do? - Run along a path near a cliff top. - [John] Is this in the like Scottish Highlands? Was it somewhere amazing? - Yeah. - You know, there's these danger parks that started in England. Maybe you should check 'em out, maybe for your grandkids.

- Right, exactly. - [John] Use power tools, burn stuff. - Yeah, no, it's good ideas, yeah. - [John] So what's the most dangerous thing you ever did as a kid? - There was so many, it's hard (laughing) to choose. I've sort of suddenly thinking of getting out of my death when I couldn't swim and very nearly drowning. And knowing that everyone was just sitting having a picnic 10 yards away and hadn't noticed. - Almost drowning is maybe the scariest of the dangerous things we let our kids do.

Is there a number two? - Yeah, I went to a boarding school where we divided into gangs and disappeared into this forest every day. And you know, you were supposed to climb the trees and there was a thing called "Dead Man's Leap," which was letting go of one branch and trying to catch another on the way down. And I eventually plucked up the courage to do it. And I'm here to tell the tale. - Anytime it's dead man's anything, you know you're on the right track.

(laughing) What does masculinity mean to you? - Masculinity just means males being males, doing things that come naturally to the male of the species. - Spoken like a true zoologist. (laughing) - That's true, yeah. - [John] Continue, I'm sorry. - And masculinity means everything from enjoying football, watching football, not doing it. (laughing) to preferring war films, to relationship films.

(laughing) - [John] What's the most valuable thing you've learned from your children? - Humility. (laughing) That it's very difficult to be a good parent. (laughing) - Was there one particularly humiliating humility? - I'll tell you what, I think I've got a better answer. The most valuable thing I've learned from my children is that I'm not in charge of them. I'm not shaping their personality, they're shaping their own personality. They're gonna make their own way in life.

- That's a really good lesson. What's your favorite dad jokes or shticks that you play with your loved ones? - I don't know, the problem is when your kids are 28 and 24, you stop being a dad. You just, you know, it's just a family. Do you know what I mean? - [John] Sure. - I'm not in dad mode anymore. - Do you have any grandkids? - Not yet, not yet. - Well, granddad can reactivate that, a new form of that dad brand.

- There's a lovely granddad saying I like, which is a bumper sticker. "We love the grandkids, we wish we'd had them first." (laughing) - I like it. Do you have a favorite video or board game? - Chess would be my favorite board game. - I knew you were gonna say chess. (laughing) - I don't play very often, and I'm not very good at it. - [John] If you could relive one memory with your dad, which day would it be?

- I would like to have talked to him about his experiences in the war before he got very old, when it was difficult to talk to him about it. Because I've since read his diaries and his letters from the war. And they're very moving and upsetting in some ways, but he never portrayed it that way. - Was your dad a stoic? - Yeah, he had a stiff upper lip. But he was a guy in charge of a troop of three tanks, aged 19, on the border between Belgium and Germany.

I can't imagine doing that at that age, can you? Seeing people brew up, as they said, when the tank caught fire. - It is hard to imagine today that that greatest generation were all kids. They were 18, 19, - They were very young 20 years old. If or when you competed against your dad, did he let you win or did you have to earn it? - Yeah, okay, I'd have had to earn it. He was, for example, chess.

He wouldn't let you win just for the sake of it. - You had to do it, you had to prove your medal. What did your dad teach you about God? - That if you whistle a hymn while gardening on Sunday, you don't have to go to church. - And thus your path to agnosticism was set in motion early. (laughing) What sound, noise or smell do you love? - The sound that I love is the song of a bird called a curlew echoing across the hills of Northern England.

- Can you reproduce that sound? (whistling) - Anyway, it goes on like that. - Another zoology feeling answer. - That's how I like it, I like it. - [John] What challenges your patience the most and how do you overcome it? - Lots of things. (laughing) - You can't say all of Twitter, it has to be slightly more specific. - Challenges my patience? - Yes. - Delay. Anybody who just delays, you know, whether it's delayed train or somebody who's late for a meeting or something, that challenges my patience, I get impatient.

- A video shoot that runs late. - Yes, right, yeah, exactly. - A slightly tautological answer, but I'll accept it. What's your favorite dish to cook? Do you cook? - I do cook, and I'm not very good at it. Stir fry, some kind of stir fry. - It's not fish and chips, I can't make some kind of - Anything where the whole ignorant American statement?

- thing is in one pot. - Chili con carne, I've got quite good at that recently.

- [John] What's your favorite household chore and why? - Feeding the dogs. - Why? - Because they love me for it. (laughing) - It's true, whoever feeds them gets the most bonding. - [Matt] Exactly. - [John] Do you have a favorite children's book? - A book called My Family and Other Animals by Gerald Durrell. I was asked by the BBC to bring a book to a program and talk about it. You know, that meant a lot to me and I can't remember how old I was when I read it, but probably 10 or 12.

And it's a magical book. It's about a boy growing up in Corfu in the 1930s. And it's his memories of mainly the animals that he looked at but also his mad family. It's an extraordinarily well written book. - I'm gonna have to check that out. That sounds wonderful. Last question, what do you want written on your gravestone? - I know the answer to that, someone's disliking me at the moment and he put in an official complaint to the House of Lords about me.

And it described me as a pimple on the scrotum of Lord Voldemort. I want that on my tombstone. - You know, for those of us in the United States that think our incivility in politics has reached new levels. - He's an American. - Of course, all right, I take it back. We're exporting all kinds of -- - He's not a politician, he's just a nut case, but anyway. - All right, that's it, that's all my questions.

- Fantastic. - Thanks for watching. If you want to hear more from Matt Ridley, check out our full episode of the Dad Saves America show and be sure to like and subscribe to our channel for more videos dedicated to celebrating the heroic spirit of dad. (upbeat music)