Seven Questions for a *7th Heaven* Dad

Interview with Actor Stephen Collins

**1. You are the proud father of a 12-year-old daughter, Kate. How has fatherhood changed you?**

Fatherhood has changed me in more ways than I could imagine. It changes everything, as every parent knows. They say the definition of a conservative is "a liberal with a teenage daughter," and I do find myself getting a little more conservative as my daughter grows up. The pop culture is ruthless about pushing kids, especially girls, to grow up maybe a little too fast. As a parent, it's my job to make sure my daughter gets to be a kid during those all-too-quick short years of childhood. There's plenty of time to be a grownup, but movies, magazines, TV shows, and commercials tend to trigger a kid's desire to grow up faster than what's natural or what may be in the kid's best interest. Kids might disagree, but parents know what I'm talking about.

I find I plan for the future more, like starting a college education fund for Kate, as well as thinking about things like how to make sure she would be provided for if anything were to happen to me. I watch a lot of kids TV and listen to a lot of music that I wouldn't otherwise be exposed to, and the good news is that it keeps me young and more in touch. I think it's important for parents to really know and experience what their kids are watching and listening to. Sometimes it's important for me to let my kid know that I don't think much of a certain TV show or CD; not that I necessarily have to keep her from listening to it, but it's important to register my opinion. It's important that she knows that I have an opinion. She might often disagree, but at least she knows that I care.

**2. What does your daughter think about your role as a TV dad?**

Happily for me, Kate loves "7th Heaven," which I appreciate because she won't necessarily watch a show or movie just because I'm in it. We all watch the show together every Monday night. But she doesn’t like it much when Catherine Hicks (who plays my wife on the show) and I have a screen kiss. She knows it's make-believe, but kids don't really like to see their parents kissing other people.

I choose roles differently now that I'm a dad. There are certain things that might be fun or challenging to take on as an actor but which also might be disturbing for my kid to see. I turn those roles down now, where I might have accepted them before Kate was

born.

**3. What activities do you enjoy doing with your real-life family?**

Simple things. We have dinner together almost every night. Riding bikes. Decorating the Christmas tree or putting up silly, scary Halloween decorations. I love taking my daughter to school and picking her up when I can, and helping with her homework (when she'll let me). I like watching TV with my wife and daughter, reading out loud together, going for walks, making pancakes. We go to Hawaii together once a year and that's an annual highlight. We go to a very quiet, big, sprawling family place and just hang together. To me, it doesn't have to be a big event. As Stephen Sondheim wrote in his Broadway musical "Company," "It's the little things you do together that make perfect relationships."

**4. How realistic do you think the Camdens are as a family?**

Just realistic enough for people to believe in. Our audience understands that the Camdens are maybe a bit more perfect than most real life families, but I think the writing and acting on "7th Heaven" have enough real life stuff that our audience goes along

with us. And I think people relate to the fact that everybody in the family has a sense of humor and they don't take themselves too seriously, even under pressure. All I know is that people out there seem to want to know what's going to happen to the Camdens next, which is the greatest compliment.

**5. How are you and Eric Camden most alike?**

We're both pushovers. Like Eric, I get teary-eyed pretty easily in real life when it comes to family things, and I like that I get to use that on the show. Eric is a lot more patient than I am. I think I'm basically a forgiving person, and Eric is, too. I mean, if we don't forgive people, how can we expect them to forgive us when we screw up?

**6. What is your favorite part about being a (real-life) dad?**

Again, it's the simple things: making breakfast in the morning, driving my kid to school, hosting sleepovers, taking her to ballet rehearsals, watching her grow into a creative, beautiful, smart, funny young woman.

**7. Eric Camden now has seven children! Are there any more children in your**

**future?**

We'll see. Kate wants a younger brother or sister.

###