



It's all about women. It's all about you.

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## Goodbye, It Was Nice Raising You

By Sue Mayfield-Geiger



I don't think it ever occurs to any mother who first lays eyes on her newborn how short a time she will really have with him or her. Our bloated bellies and swollen ankles become forgotten memories when we see the pink bundle with fuzzy hair screaming and kicking and capturing our hearts.

We ooh and aah and cuddle them close as we bond with these tiny creatures. The connection is loving, but also fierce. We vow to protect them, take care of them and guide them.

As the years go by, the perils of child rearing test our patience and endurance. Often times, we ask ourselves, "What was I thinking when I decided to have kids?" Other times, we cherish the moments of all the "firsts" we encounter: first words, first steps, first tooth, first homerun, first date, etc. We melt when they hug us; we cry when they fall; we marvel at their progress.

The pre-teen years prepare us, the teen years exasperate us, and the preparing for college years drains our bank accounts. They go miles away to get a higher education, join the military or simply become productive members of society.

We keep their rooms just as they left them until it's time to convert them into a hobby room or extra bedroom. We don't really face the reality that they may be gone forever until they are actually – well, gone forever.

Many of my friends have children who never left town. They went to a nearby college, married their high school sweetheart, bought a house two miles away, appear every Sunday for dinner and have presented them with picture-perfect grandchildren. Hooray for them, I say. But there are pangs of jealousy when I see them at the park, digging in the sand with their second generation flock.

The smaller majority of my friends (including me) were not so lucky. Their children left for college and never returned. Oh, they popped in during summer and Christmas vacations, but for the most part, they were no longer permanent residents of the place that cradled them.

Both of my sons left their South Texas nest right out of high school. They chose colleges far away due to scholarship offers and freedom. In some ways, I was happy for them to have this opportunity to be on their own; to understand what it meant to separate the darks from the whites when doing laundry, to realize that food did not just appear out of nowhere when they were hungry and to understand the meaning of the word “budget.”

My older son met his wife in college. Then they moved even farther away. Today, they live a thousand miles from me as do my five grandchildren.

My younger son chose an acting career which took him to college in Chicago, then a move to Los Angeles, a move to New York and a move back to Los Angeles. It paid off because I get to watch him on television every day (he's a soap star). No wife, no kidlets (yet) but the new girlfriend looks promising.

My sons do keep in touch with me, sending photos, emails and text messages (their all-time favorite way to communicate). I am very proud of both of them as they have achieved success in their respective careers, lead happy and productive lives and are remarkable human beings.

They have their own lives now and find solutions to their problems. They own houses, cars, furniture, campers, golf clubs; they make their own decisions. They live with the ups and downs that life has to offer. And they do it all really well without me!

I know this is the order of things. I am at peace with the transitions we all must face in life. But every now and then I miss hearing that little boy voice asking at bedtime, “Just one more story, mommy, please! Just one more story!” Of course, I would always give in to the request. Next would come the big bear hug before the final goodnight.

I can still feel it.