



Tom Maynard (left) said being a good father depends on the quality, not quantity, of time spent with children. He shares much of his time with Kelly (on lap) and Shannon, and also saves time for himself. (Staff photos by Doug Bauman)

Moms and pops switching roles

By SUSAN B. TAUBER

Fathers aren't what they used to be. They're no longer the isolated parent who goes to work during the day and disciplines the children when they return.

They're becoming active participants with their children, according to clinical psychologist Mary Sue Larsen, who is the associate director of Oakland University Counseling Center.

There's a change that's coming about very slowly," said Ronald Hanson. "Fathers are much more involved in raising their children. They are more nurturant, more affectionate and are spending more time with their children." Hanson is an assistant professor in social psychology at OU.

Bob Arnold, Bob Fiorletta and Tom Maynard fit the mold of the new emerging father. Though they don't know each other, they share a common interest—being the best father they can be to their children.

"I LOVE my children!" said divorced father Arnold of Rochester. "My two sons are very important in my life."

Both my life and my former wife's life have circled around the children."

Being a father means being a good parent to the three men. Being a good parent means doing whatever needs to be done, whether it's changing diapers, attending teachers' conferences or taking the children on vacations. It's something they said can be done regardless of when they work or whether they're still married to their children's mother.

"It's not when you're home that makes you a good father, it's the quality of time you spend with the children," said Maynard. He and his wife Barbara live with their daughters, Kelly, 5, and Shannon, 3, in Avon Township's Hampton townhouses. Mrs. Maynard is pregnant with their third child.

Having a close family life was some-

thing the Maynards agreed about before they had children.

"We're involved in community services and working in the evenings on our own business. Barbara works right at my side," said Maynard.

And his working the day shift at Ford Motor Ulica Trim gets him home by 3 p.m. in time to pick up Kelly from school.

"My folks were divorced. I don't remember my dad. But I became a father young enough that I realized what I would have wanted my dad to be like," Maynard said.

The basic things he's concerned with as a father include "the constant realization that children are nothing more than small adults. They are capable of making their own decisions and have to be allowed to do so as often as possible."

MAYNARD also stresses to his daughters that he and their mother love them and don't care what they do as long as they tell the truth.

Being a modern-day father means listening, Maynard added.

"Their day on the playground is as important as my day at work."

Fiorletta views today's father as an

active participant. His job as Midwestern regional manager for Amplicon, a used computer leasing company, permits him to try to be the type of father he wants to be.

Fiorletta, the father of two daughters, works at home. His office is a spare bedroom in the family's Avon Township house. He used to drive into Southfield to work.

"The neighbors think I'm strange because I'll cut the grass at 3 p.m. But I may be working at 9:30 p.m.," Fiorletta said.

He's also around to greet Chris, 11, and Laura, 8, when they come home from school. If his wife Carol needs help during the day and he's reached his goals, he helps her out.

"I get to see what my wife does during the day. She gets to see how nerve-wracking my job is and the discipline it takes to work at home. The children have seen me at my best and at my worst."

AN ONLY CHILD, Fiorletta said he was aware of the roles his parents had. His father was the traditional breadwinner, performing any jobs that required his mother lifting more than 20 pounds, he said.

Fiorletta sees himself and his family as nontraditional, although he is performing as studies indicate all fathers may some day.

"Being a father implied the major duty of providing for my family. The girls give us a tremendous amount of pleasure."

"As they get older, I see my role as preparing them. I don't believe in leaving education and discipline to schools alone. I see my role as educator and trainer," Fiorletta said.

These roles were what Carol and Bob agreed to when they were married.

"We didn't know they would work so well," Mrs. Fiorletta said.

Bob Arnold found himself in the role of a divorced parent nine years ago. But being out of the home didn't mean he was out of his role as a father.

When his sons, Mac, 14, and Joe, 12, lived with their mother in Birmingham, Arnold participated in family life whenever he could and whenever he was needed.

"The most difficult thing when I left was leaving the children and facing the fear of not being able to see them. I found I could see them as much as I wanted."

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