

'No vacancy' signs in some empty nests



Shirlee Iden

Overhead in a local store:
"Last week we went to my son's college graduation and this week he moved back home — he's planning three years of law school in town and I lost my sewing room."

A friend who recently welcomed her divorced daughter and child home also had to readjust to living with a toddler after seven years in an empty nest.

Let's be honest, with all the bemoaning of the empty nest, one does adjust. It doesn't take long for Dad to take over a kid's room for his hobbies or Mom to move the sewing machine in.

More and more, some nests are turning into more cuckoo-like nests with "no vacancy" signs not evident but implied.

Now husband Jack and I rattle around in a four-bedroom house as we have for eight years. And we love it.

I've taken over extra closet space and so has he. And there's never a traffic jam in the bathroom.

Doors are always open for our son Bruce to spend a week of spring vacation from law school in his old digs, and daughter Tzivia leaves the horses in Ann Arbor but brings her dog Shada when she visits. Best of all, married daughter Elaine and Alex bring Maya and Arki for their occasional visits.

DESPITE the fact the Iden household has been known to expand to the need of many extra guests, both temporary and semi-permanent, it looks as though our nest is empty for good.

Not so for many others. The phenomenon of the "not so empty nest" is happening all around us and for varied reasons.

Author Phyllis Feuerstein, who has written a book about it, says some kids "have an emotional need to go back to where all good things come from."

Others, she points out, come home after losing a job, gaining a divorce, to get another degree, to save money until marriage or just because of hard times.

"The Not So Empty Nest" was written by Mrs. Feuerstein and Carol Roberts who interviewed 250 families nationwide. This was accomplished easily because Seymour Feuerstein is a traveling salesman and his wife travels with him.

Though it's her first book, she has been a journalist for 12 years, working for a local newspaper and

then as a feature writer for the Chicago Tribune. She always stayed in the nest, writing from home.

WHAT'S MORE she's the mother of three grown children and writes from experience. "My son said to me, 'I'm going to do to you what Christina Crawford did to Joan' when he came home," she quips.

But she decided she wasn't alone in the filling up of her once empty nest and did some research.

"I found it was a common problem and presented the idea to a publisher who bought it immediately," she says. "They wanted it fast so I got Carol Roberts to help with the research."

That's how a woman from Olympia Fields, Ill., came to write about a problem not unfamiliar to more than a few people who live near you and me.

The authors call the returnees "home-ing pigeons" and they come in both sexes, assorted sizes and ages, and with many problems.

"After all, it's not so easy to be someone's kids again when you've been away," Mrs. Feuerstein says. And problems with parents as well as siblings are common.

DOES ONE charge room and board to a returning prodigal or just hand him the car keys and a regular allowance?

It's not easy figuring out how to live with your kids after they've lived someplace else.

What's obvious is most parents won't turn a returning offspring away though some have been

known to sell the house and move to smaller digs. (Even this doesn't always work.)

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Tim Richard

The job ahead at Schoolcraft

Voters will need to be especially critical June 8 when they vote for two Schoolcraft College trustees.

One reason is that the seven-member board of trustees must pick a new president this year to replace C. Nelson Grote, who is leaving for a big job in Spokane. Selecting a president is the most important decision a board makes, because the president sets the tone of the administration and recommends college policy.

Grote was selected in 1971 because of his strong vocational-technical background. The board saw a need to expand offerings in that area. Grote delivered, and also provided strong leadership in community services and state financing.

Trustee candidates, then, should be prepared to demonstrate they have both formal knowledge of, and experience in, picking personnel.

The selection process must be as open as possible, both because state law requires it and because public confidence must be maintained. Dick Headlee and the secretive bunch of trustees at Oakland University brought in President Joseph Champagne under a cloud with their clandestine dealings. No tax-supported institution can afford that.

A SECOND reason voters need to be careful is that program cuts may have to be made.

For several budget years, Schoolcraft has been scraping by, cutting the daylight out of non-essentials to save faculty and program.

At some point — if not this year, then next — there will no longer be any non-essentials to cut. It follows, then, that Schoolcraft will either have to reduce quality or else reduce the quantity of its offerings, preserving the best programs intact.

I suspect the same kinds of decisions will have to be made at Schoolcraft. Being a trustee will require tough decisions by persons who can look an unhappy audience in the eyes and politely say, "Sorry, no." A trustee who plays to the gallery will hurt the college.

WHAT KIND of persons would add balance to the current board?

Incumbent trustee Mark McQuesten, whose term is expiring, is a seminary student and will get flak from his religious superiors if he continues a political career. He could conceivably give up plans to be a priest, however, and seek re-election.

McQuesten is the only former Schoolcraft student on the board and was a student representative on the screening committee when Grote was hired. If he leaves, it will help to have a Schoolcraft graduate on the board.

Richard J. Hayward, whose term is also expiring, has a quarter-century in the structural steel business under his belt. He came onto the board when it was in need of industrial people to balance the high number of educators. Hayward is uncertain about seeking re-election.

AMONG THE FIVE holdover trustees, there are two educators, two from industry and one from small business.

The Michigan Education Association likes to see educators serving on elected boards, where budgets are made and contracts written. Without reflecting on the two Schoolcraft incumbents, I have serious reservations about educators moonlighting on school boards. Certainly the balanced Schoolcraft board doesn't require more educators.

Geographically, the five holdover trustees include four from Livonia and one from the Plymouth-Canton School District.

There's also one from Clarencville (which includes southeastern Farmington Hills and a slice of Redford Township), Garden City or Northville school districts. Petitions are available now from college secretary Clara Rousseau to get on the June 8 ballot.

Candidates will need at least 50 but not more than 200 signatures. Filing deadline is 4 p.m. Tuesday, April 21.

There's no pay, but you get fed pretty well. Schoolcraft's culinary arts department is almost too good.



MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

Joseph Subic Jr. (left) and his wife Allison talk with Bishop Thomas Gumbleton at a dinner last week. Both men have seen what Gumbleton called violations of human dignity.

Must men still live as beasts?

"Time was when men lived as did the beasts. In those days of man's beginnings, no vision of goodness, no dream of justice or mercy had as yet been born within the human heart."
— from "Israel's Quest."

Do men still live as beasts when a president is struck down in an assassination attempt, another fights for his life and his reason, a missionary is murdered — his body wrapped in a red and black guerrilla flag.

Do men still live as beasts when a group of American Nazis protest the "despicable" Jew, a former American hostage says his mental scars will never heal, an 80-year-old man is felled and millions around the world are victims of poverty, hunger and despair?

"Israel's Quest" was often quoted in 1973 when a band of Arab terrorists wiped out 11 strong men in Olympic Village, Munich. They were 11 more martyrs whose blood soaked the pages of Israel's history.

BUT TERROR knows no boundaries. It is everywhere in the streets of cities and in nations. Terrorists are spurred to bolder acts of violence by permissiveness and disregard.

It's not only up to world leaders to act decisively. It is up to every individual who cries out in protest against the tragic waste of human lives and erosion of human dignity.

Events of last week again shattered dreams of justice and visions of goodness and mercy.

On Monday, Southfield Mayor Donald Fracassi received a letter from the Security Services Action Group — a Westland and Dearborn Heights-based affiliate of the National Socialist Party of America better known as Nazis.

John Reich, leader of the group wrote that members will demonstrate against the May 10 Israel Independence Day parade in Southfield because "to allow the despicable Jew to steal the birthplace of the Palestinian people is a crime which should not go unpunished. Heil Hitler."

THE SS ACTION Group offered this quote, purportedly from Thomas Jefferson:



Jackie Klein

"There is great danger for the United States of America. This danger is the Jew. I warn you gentlemen, if you do not exclude the Jews forever, your children's children will curse you in their graves."

On that same Monday, Fracassi showed me a letter from his friend Ron Ravensbergen, a Wycliffe Bible translator in Bogota, Colombia. Bible translator Chet Bitterman was taken hostage Jan. 19 by a terrorist group called Coordinadora Nacional de Base of the M-19s, the letter said.

This happened when the band of heavily armed men and women broke into the Wycliffe Group House in Bogota, tied up the occupants, cut telephone lines and stole two-way radios, written records, mail and valuables.

On March 7, Bitterman's body was found in a hijacked bus wrapped in a red and black guerrilla flag. "Let's pray expecting God to do great things and to bring ultimate good out of a situation originally intended for evil," Ravensbergen wrote.

On Monday, March 30, this nation was stunned and angered over the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan by a young, sandy-haired gunman waiting for him in a crowd outside a Washington hotel.

A radio in our office blasted the news that Reagan wasn't a victim of any of the six shots fired on that gray, rainy day. But we soon learned he was wounded by a .22 caliber bullet which missed his heart only by several inches.

WE COULDN'T help recalling the bleak November day when President John Kennedy was murdered. And with that dread feeling of deja vu, it was hard to believe favorable radio reports about Reagan's condition.

We shuddered when we heard affable White House press secretary James Brady was shot through the brain, and his life was in danger. The hours of surgery on Reagan and Brady seemed interminable. Nobody got much work done that day.

John W. Hinkley Jr., accused of trying to kill the president, is reportedly a former militant member of a Nazi-affiliated group of the Nationalist Socialist Party of America.

A branch of that group plans to stage a protest against the Israel Independence Day Parade in Southfield in May. It's the same group that has popped up in Livonia, Plymouth, Westland and elsewhere in the metropolitan area.

At an awards ceremony I attended Tuesday night, former hostage Joseph Subic Jr. of Redford Township told us that Iranian terrorists held a gun to his head. He is under psychiatric treatment but claimed his mental scars will never fully heal.

AT THAT same dinner, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton talked about the destruction of human beings, violation of human dignity, ragged children with tiny heads, bloated stomachs, open sores and running eyes suffering the ravages of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, families eating the excrement of animals.

The hopelessness and suffering of these people in developing countries is the result of immoral political choices in America and man's inhumanity to man, Gumbleton said.

On Wednesday, 80-year-old Jacob Kofender of Livonia was struck down by an armed bandit at Norland Shopping Center when he refused to turn over his car keys. The gunman finally wrestled the keys from the old man who is in the hospital with a fractured hand.

"But even as the spirit of God hovered over chaos, so it moved through the confused souls of primitive men. The divine within them stirred. They could not; forever remain content with brutality. Slowly, faintly, they groped toward a better way of life."
— Israel's "Quest"

And so be it for all men.