

# **DOWN HOME: Off to school ... for the 2nd time \_82503**

October 14, 2003

Posted: 8/22/03

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Some chores are easier the second time you have to do them.

Like taking your kiddo back to school: Joanna and I recently redeposited our oldest daughter, Lindsay, on the welcoming campus of our alma mater, Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene.

Last year, when we loaded her Papa's truck and moved her into the freshman girls' dorm, we cried a river of tears. This year, it was more like a bathtub of tears. OK, maybe a small swimming pool.

Crying is one of the things I've always appreciated about being the father of daughters. Several parents of boys I know have this thing about crying on or in front of their guys. Something about embarrassing them. Even the mothers seem to think they have to be stoic.

MARV KNOX <i>Editor</i>
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But with girls, you get to cry. In fact, I think they kind of like it, because they can actually see you really care. They hurt, and they take comfort in knowing you hurt with them.

If only they understood the half of it.

Sometimes, I think being the parent is harder than being the child because you've got a better idea what's coming. You know the changes that are taking place in your child's life. And, from experience, you know they may be incremental, but they're permanent.

Now, I have to admit my own sadness about the growth and maturation of my children is purely selfish. I love to feel needed. When Lindsay and her sister, Molly, were tiny, they depended on Jo and me for just about everything. With each passing year, they've needed us a little less. And the part of me that feeds off the nurture of their need finds that a little sad.

But besides raising children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord,” the most gratifying accomplishment I've known is watching my daughters grow in maturity and independence year by year. That's my job—first to help them know and love God, but then to be strong, wise, thoughtful Christian people.

So, as we drove home from West Texas in the dark, I thought and prayed about how Lindsay will take strides of growth this year. Surrounded by bright classmates, committed faculty and caring staff, she will develop and mature in ways that would not be possible if she remained at home, dependent on her mother and me to work out all the hassles and challenges of her young life.

I also thought about her dorm room, a tiny cinder-block cube she made uniquely her own in about five short hours. I'll always remember how she figured she could take extra curtain material and brighten up a side wall. And how she and I hung up “sno-cone” Christmas lights along the wall above her bed.

And I remembered how she felt in my arms as I hugged her goodbye. She's a strong young woman now. But, thank God, she'll always be my girl.

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