

DOWN HOME: Teenagers don't live here anymore

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You never know when lightning will strike, thunder will clap and you'll realize nothing will ever be the same again.

This happened in church the other day.

(I know; novel idea: Life-changing revelation in a Sunday-morning worship service.)

Actually, it happened while our pastor made the announcements.

(Stranger still: "And, ladies, don't forget the Woman's Missionary Union pot-luck luncheon and planning meeting Tuesday." Ka-boom! "You know, Honey, I suddenly feel called to missions in the Congo.")

Quite unexpectedly, it happened during an announcement that didn't even have anything to do with Joanna and me. At least not anymore.

Stephen, our pastor, was telling all the parents of teenagers about a special training session on how to be parents of teenagers when he announced the date, "... next Sunday, Nov. 12."

Right then and there, it hit me: "On that Sunday, Nov. 12, Jo and I no

longer will be the parents of a teenager."

We became parents of our first teenager 10 years and three days earlier. That's when Lindsay, our oldest daughter, turned 13. Molly, our youngest daughter, turns 20 and transports herself from teenhood this year on Nov. 12.

People joke about teenagers all the time, but I'm going to miss those teen years.

Not that all was rosy. There were days—probably when the girls were about 13 or 14—when I wondered if I could just freeze-dry those darling daughters and thaw them out when they turned 20. That seemed like thoroughly logical ruminations for a father facing the foibles and frustrations of those years between childhood and adulthood.

But for the most part, we had a fun ride.

When they entered their teens, both Lindsay and Molly resembled children. They looked to their mother and me for daily provision as well as for emotional and spiritual support.

But by the time they both reached the Big 2-0, they had blossomed into thoughtful, self-reliant young adults. Even more important than how they excelled in school, learned to cook and clean, realized they need to pay attention to basic car maintenance, and chose friends wisely, they both became far more spiritually mature than I was when I was their age. I'm trying to think if anything about parenthood has been more gratifying than that fact ... and nothing comes even close.

During their teen years, we made memories that will last our lifetimes: Trips to the beach. Halftimes at football games, as they danced with the Farmerettes drill team. Teaching them both to drive. Proms. Graduations. First days at college. A host of fantastic moments.

Of course, parenting never is “over.” I realize that when I talk to my grandmother about my mother. But the teen years have come to an end. As a parent, I can paraphrase the prayer of Dag Hammarskjold: “For all that has been, thanks. For all that will be, yes.”

— *Marv Knox*

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