



**Times Remembered Betty A. Young**  
BYoung505@Windstream.Net

It is that of year again ... back to school. Some will be going away to college and leaving home for the first time. Many parents will be facing the powerful pangs of separation as millions of freshman head off to college this fall. "Empty Nest Syndrome" is the name given to a psychological condition that can affect parents around the time that one or more of their children leave home.

I remember August 1993 very clearly. It was an experience that thousands of men and woman across the country experience ... a unique form of heartache ... it was the bittersweet act of sending my daughter, Tara off to college.

My constant companion of nine months emerges with her eyes wide open. She's placed on my chest. I feel her heartbeat reverberating through mine. All I could see then was beginnings. Friends told me that time would past fast and that she would grow up faster than I could imagine, and to savor every moment. But I guess I didn't hear them, I thought my child has just arrived. She's so beautiful: the beautiful brace-let like creases in her tiny wrist, the way she sounded like a little lamb when she cried. I'm filled with a renewed sense of purpose, of hope, of love. The first few months after she's born are topsy-turvy ... day is night, night is day. When sleep finally returns, so does work. I though, Oh! how wonderful it would be to sleep all night; she woke up every two hours until she was nine months old. I walked around in a daze, I was so sleepy.

First smiles, teeth begin to appear at four months, and baby bottles soon turned to solid foods. Sounds of first words were music to my ears. Soon she was walking, skipping and making angels in the snow.

Then it was story hour at the library, play dates and pediatrician appointments and the tooth fairy arrived as she lost her first tooth. Then it was time for kindergarten, off to school; where has five years gone?

I volunteer at school: bake cupcakes, cut, paste, read, nourish, fund-raise, chaperone and host slumber parties. Next comes countless sporting events. She plays baseball, basketball, and runs track. She falls head over heels for basketball. It is basketball camps and

practice now. She loves Michael Jordan, wears his basketball jersey number, develops crushes, friendships and fevers.

Now we are fully engaged in high school sports of basketball and softball. Our vacations are spent at basketball camps, and softball tournaments in North Carolina, Florida and state competition in Kentucky. Life's a ballgame!

She gets her drivers license, a part time summer job as a life guard and earns her first paycheck.

There are parties, sleepovers, dances and proms. She learns to do laundry, scrub the bathroom, and cook pasta. She turns 18. She votes for the very first time and she is receiving college letters with offers to play basketball...her lifetime dream. There are decisions to make and applications to process. High school graduation is nearing; then off to college.

I had defined myself as a mother for 18 years. I thought, who am I now as I looked in the mirror. In my quest to help her grow wings, I forgot to grow some of my own. Could I find a new sense of purpose, re-channel the love?

Before I was a mother, I was a daughter, full of energy and always thought my parents would always be there. But I can't be a daughter again. I definitely felt the sadness and loss that parents experience when their child no longer lives with them or needs day to day care. We want our children to have the best possible college experience and are genuinely happy for our child, but letting go is not easy and is not always appreciated when others tell you, in an effort to be encouraging and upbeat: "Think of all the time you will have for yourself now."

Some studies say that the move to college is even worse than the empty nest syndrome when a child grows up and moves away completely. This is largely due to the fact that Baby Boomer generation parents are ultra-invested in everything, from the first day of preschool, to weekend soccer leagues to the last day of tutoring before SAT's. College administrators use the term "helicopter parenting" to describe a mother and/or father that hovers to the detriment of their child's personal growth. I know this is not a term most parents appreciate because it feels like a criticism to be an involved parent. Your child needed you to watch over them when they were younger and now college administrators say it is time to stop and let your child navigate for her/himself. This might feel abrupt. They are right that we should avoid excessive involvement, and you know it intellectually. But emotionally how do you prepare yourself for all the feelings of loss that you experience at this time? I believe allowing yourself to feel and talk about the sense of change

# Letting Go

and loss you are experiencing is the beginning of taking care of yourself and moving forward, which is essential to personal growth.

It's natural to feel some sadness when a child leaves home. As an empty nester, you have the loss of normal routine caused by the absence of your loved one. When a child leaves, your everyday events and responsibilities change from being the primary caregiver to feeling a loss of purpose. More than ever, for many parents, raising children has become life's main preoccupation. When the time comes to let your child "fly" alone, the accompanying loss of control and sense of displacement can be frightening and unsettling to parents. I was lost and it took time.

When children are young, we teach them to tie their own shoes, fix their own sandwiches and eventually how to drive a car and do their own laundry. Parents spend time teaching children so that they will be independent, productive young adults. But, amid all the day-to-day care and feeding, it can be easy to lose sight of this goal. Some parents have conflicting feelings when their kids begin to venture out on their own. A mother may feel a sense of uselessness. She may find herself searching for what to do with the extra time that was spent on chauffeuring, attending school functions, hosting slumber parties, and so on. Additionally, spouses might find they have little to talk about since their children have been the focus of conversation for so many years.

It is quite normal to cry now and again or go into your child's room in an attempt to feel closer to them. I felt sad and lost and could not go into her room or look at her pictures for two or three weeks without crying. And there are parents who delight in their children leaving home, which doesn't make them uncaring parents. Everyone is different, we are a culturally diverse country, and for some, adapting to the North American style of acculturation of their children is often challenging, especially if you remained at home until you married.

I believe we as parents want to see our child succeed and be happy. We live in a society that focuses on attainment and often loss is seen, even in today's world, as taboo to talk about or quickly dismissed. Loss is not only about death. Throughout life we will experience many losses that we need to mourn for our emotional and physical well-being.

Our children leaving home and gaining independence is bittersweet. How can you spend eighteen years of direct caretaking and not feel a void when your child moves away? Parenting is a balancing act. You do not want to upset your child by making her/him feel guilty for "growing up," but it is healthy to let your child know they will be missed. Walk through this transition together. The honest communication between the parent/child strengthens the relationship that will pro-

vide a continuing relationship throughout your lives. You may think your son or daughter can't wait to get to college but keep in mind that your son or daughter is trying to take a significant step in life, without you. If your child is frightened and lonely as s/he is away from home for the first time, resist the temptation to go and rescue your child. Instead, encourage, support, and believe in him/her so that she can do it. Even from a distance your child still needs your support as s/he negotiates this new stage in his/her life. It is normal for children to experience "homesickness" and it requires a nurturing parent to tolerate the fears and to further teach your child coping skills. We have spent years teaching our children in hopes they will grow into independent, productive young adults. It's enormously important that you know you aren't losing a child. Instead you just won front row seats to observe a superb performance; you're watching your child turn into an adult.

Once you grieve the sadness of missing the young voices and the activity of kids going in and out, it is time to take care of yourself. Find friends that are supportive; that may be going through the same life transition as you. If you are married, this is the time to focus on each other and renew the intimacy you once shared before children took priority. Take up a hobby, go back to school, travel. It's a good time to reappraise your own self-esteem. Perhaps you only identify yourself as "mother" or "father" rather than as a distinct person in your own right. Your child seeing you move on with your life will help the child adjust as she/he moves on in her/his life.

If you experience severe symptoms such as feeling your life has ended without your child at home; you are crying excessively; you feel so sad you don't mix with friends or go to work and it has lasted more than a week, seek professional help. It is not uncommon that when a woman is at this stage in life when her children are leaving she may also be going through other major changes, such as dealing with menopause or elderly parents. It can be a difficult time, and there is no shame if you need help to get through it.

Don't forget that your child going away to college is not goodbye forever. Just because things are different, doesn't mean they can't be good. The following is a wonderful analogy from Erma Bombeck, "I see children as kites. You spend a lifetime trying to get them off the ground. You run with them until you're both breathless ... they crash ... you add a longer tail ... finally they are airborne, but they need more string so you keep letting it out. With each twist of the ball of twine there is a sadness that goes with the joy, because the kite becomes more distant, and somehow you know it won't be long before that beautiful creature will snap the lifeline that bound you together and soar as it was meant to soar, free and alone."

## CHURCH NEWS

Church News is published as a free service. The Estill County Tribune. Call your announcement to (606) 723-5012; fax it to (606) 723-2743; or E-mail it to <News@EstillTribune.Com> or mail to 6135 Winchester Road, Irvine, KY 40336

**Wednesdays @ 7:00 pm**

### Prayer Meeting at Harg Church

Harg Church of God is now having prayer meetings and worship services at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, which started on July 24, 2013. Pastor Forrest Turpin and congregation invite everyone to attend.

**Friday, August 2nd @ 7:00 pm**

### Special Singing at Harg Church

Harg Church of God will be having a special singing on Friday, August 2, 2013 starting at 7:00 p.m. Special singers will be The Praise Singers. Pastor Forrest Turpin and congregation welcome everyone to this special singing service.

**Saturday, August 3rd**

### FREE Clothing Give-Away

Irvine First Church of God, 199 Broadway, will be having a FREE Clothing Give-Away on Saturday, August 3rd. Many sizes are available from kids to adult. Everyone is welcome to come by.

**Saturday, August 3rd @ 7:00 pm**

### Pine Hill Baptist Special Singing

Pine Hill Baptist Church will be having a special singing this coming Saturday, August 3, 2013, starting at 7 p.m. Special singers will be New Harmony from Hazard, Kentucky. Everyone is welcome.

**Sunday, August 4th, 3-7 pm**

### Irvine Nazarene VBS Program

The Irvine First Church of the Nazarene, 280 Broadway, Irvine, will be having its VBS program this Sunday, August 4, 3-7 p.m. Everyone is invited. Ages are Pre-K through the 5th grade. There will be Bible stories, music, snacks, recreational games, carnival games, and even pony rides! Need a ride? No problem! Just call either 606 723-7641, 606 643-6241, or 517 719-2238. See you there!

**Sunday, August 4th @ 10:00 am**

### Back To School Extravaganza

Ravenna Church of the Nazarene will be having a "Back To School Extravaganza" this coming Sunday, August 4th from 10:00 a.m. until 3 p.m. Sunday school begins at 10:00 a.m., followed by morning worship service at 10:45 a.m. "Back To School" festivities will continue after church services at Ravenna's Veterans Memorial Park, across the street, with free food, inflatables, a dunk tank and other games. Don't miss it!

**Friday & Saturday, Aug. 9-10 @ 7:00 pm**

### Gospel Meeting At Cobb Hill CC

There will be a gospel meeting at Cobb Hill Church of Christ with Bro. Chris Coffey on Friday and Saturday, August 9th & 10th, 2013, starting at 7:00 p.m. each evening. Sunday Bible study begins at 10:00 a.m., followed by worship service at 11:00 a.m. Come, hear some great lessons from God's Word. Everyone is welcome!

**Friday-Sunday, Aug. 9-11 @ 7:00 pm**

### Three-Night Revival At Ravenna

Ravenna Church of God will be having a three-night revival, August 9-10-11, 2013 with evangelist Ronald Jene Johns. You will not want to miss this anointed man of God's powerful preaching and singing! Friday & Saturday nights' services begin at 7:00 p.m. Sunday services begin at 10:45 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Pastor Willie Hargus Gordon and congregation invite everyone to attend. For further information, call 723-2898.

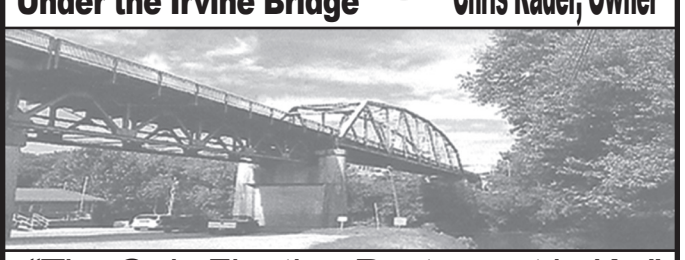
### RAVENNA YARD SALE

The City Of Ravenna will be having a city wide yard sale on August 2nd, 3rd and 4th. There will be a charge of \$5.00 for anyone wanting to setup and participate. Yard sales will be set up throughout the community. If you would like to buy a permit and participate please come by Ravenna City Hall.

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