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Editor's Notebook: Grandma and Grandpa

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Editor’s Notebook

Grandma and Grandpa

It is said that life is a series of stages, periods of change and transformation that direct and shape the human experience. My wife Carol and I are now entering one of those stages—grandparenthood. Our daughter Kathy and her husband Jim brought into the world Grace Irene Sabo on June 4th. Grace weighed 9 pounds and was 21 inches long. Grace has deep blue eyes and those classic Polish-American chubby cheeks. Mother and Father and Grace are all doing fine, except for the usual parental sleep deprivation. But it is the grandparents who are also doing fine, without the sleep deprivation.

Everyone that we talk to says pretty much the same thing—being a grandparent is the best stage of your life, with the accent on life, new life. There of course is a bit of ego involved as the baby represents part of you and continues the family line forward. But this matter of heritage is minor compared to the excitement and joy of holding a newborn right there on your shoulder with tiny fingers wrapped around your own and with that incomparable baby scent—pure, sweet and natural.

Grandmothers are perhaps the most outwardly excited about the new arrival as they shop for baby clothes, offer sage advice to the nervous mother and look forward to the opportunity to feed, bathe and yes, change the diapers of their grandchild. Grandfathers are less expressive about babies, but take it from me; there is an inner pride and quiet glow that melts the heart when that first smile appears through sleepy eyes.

Being a grandparent is all about watching a young life grow up right before your eyes without the tensions and second guessing that you experienced as a parent. As many of our fellow grandparents say, being a grandparent means all the happiness of seeing your offspring grow without the responsibilities of parenthood. It is basically a free ride full of joy minus the stress of the first fall, the first fever, the first trip to school, the first report card, and the first date.

Probably the most difficult part of grandparenthood is trying to recall how you did things as a new parent thirty years ago. Times have certainly changed as a whole industry has evolved to make sure that baby and parents have everything covered. What that means is trying to get used to all the new fangled devices that are out there now to make life with baby easier—the baby monitor (now with camera, not just sound), the strollers that are ready for any road challenge, and all those car seats, jumping seats, eating seats and play time seats. Parenthood was a lot less complicated back in the day.

What grandparenthood also does that warms the heart is bring you even closer to your children and their spouses. Sure they ask you to babysit, so they can keep their sanity for an evening or a weekend. But it is the holidays and birthdays that become special as the baby has the power to make the family more of a family; that little life becomes the glue that seals the bonds of family life. It doesn’t get any better than that.

Now Carol and I are sure that being grandparents will also have its times of worry and distress. Besides the concern over our own kids that never seems to go away, grandparental concern will now spread to the new kid on the block. Yet whatever problem may arise, it is likely to be a minor one and will certainly be overshadowed by the unannounced hug or the little hand reaching out or my favorite, sitting on grandma’s or grandpa’s lap to read a book. Of all the stages in my life, this is the one that we have been waiting for.

—Michael Kryzanek, Editor, Bridgewater Review.