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Editor's Notebook: The Last One To Go

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

THE LAST ONE TO GO

Being a parent of three girls in this fast-paced, peer-pressured, consumer-overkill society we live in has certainly posed a supreme challenge to this worry-wort of a father. Fortunately, my wife and I have been blessed with three wonderful daughters, who have grown into beautiful and accomplished young women. But one of the most difficult times for a parent is when the child says goodbye and moves out of the house. Whether off to college or a new job or just to be independent, the sight of your baby leaving home is a gut-wrenching experience. You know they will be back, you know they will keep in touch, but there is a sad sense of finality that sets in.

I have become something of a pro at this separation process, since Laura and Kathy went away to school, graduated and now are pursuing their careers. The youngest, Annie, is still home, but not for long. She too will pack her bags and head off for college in the fall. Having experience at seeing our daughters go out on their own, however, will not make it any easier the third time around. In fact since Annie is the last one to go, this father will likely join that huge international club of empty-nesters who must adjust to a new life without children.

There are, of course, many benefits to joining this club – rooms in the house become available for new purposes, the noise level associated with sibling rivalries is dramatically reduced, the hot water heater is not drained to

capacity every morning, and the time spent traveling from track meet to theater production to dance rehearsal can be re-channeled to other pursuits. The empty-nesters club proudly boasts that life without children at home offers wonderful opportunities for peace, quiet, and that old standby, self-actualization.

But when Annie is the last one to go our house will not be the same. No matter the downside of a house full of girls, being a parent is the richest experience anyone can imagine. I personally will miss the supper time banter over who's hot and who's not, the impromptu visits from friends to hang out and watch a movie, and my favorite, the unexpected hugs and kisses. Some things are irreplaceable.

Like card-carrying members of the empty-nesters club my wife and I already have plans for life without the

girls. There is a sense of excitement as we anticipate living a life that is more focused on us. We also know that being an empty-nester in the 21st century means welcoming back the prodigal daughters for a month, or a year or God forbid longer. Hopefully there will be grandchildren and the laughter and the noise and the commotion will return, at least for awhile. Being a grandparent is like holding an advanced degree in motherhood and fatherhood but without the pressures and the anxieties. It is in many respects that best of both worlds. But despite the prospects of moving to a new level of parenthood, the fact remains that our life will never be the same again.

Surprisingly, being a parent for nearly twenty-five years with all the hustle and bustle of raising three daughters has gone by as a blur. You are so busy being a parent that you never have the time to sit back and think of what it all means. Thankfully there are the pictures and the videos and the school projects and the report cards as reminders. What all these memories reveal is that being a parent was the best time of my life. I'll miss it.

Michael Kryzaneck is Editor of the Bridgewater Review

