

THINGS IN MOTION...

All things are in motion and nothing is at rest ... you cannot go into the same (river) twice. —Heraclitus (540?-480?) B.C.

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FAREWELL TO THE OLD

FOR ME, autumn has always signified the ending of something; a year, a season, a way of life or some other change in established routines. This autumn is no different—while I'm enjoying cooler weather, shorter days and an occasional colorful tree, my mind presents an awareness of differences in my life that reveal not only the full blown rose, but also the thorns that lie beneath.

Our children add dimensions to our lives that no other source can supply. We grow along with our offspring, adding patience and wisdom far in excess of what we knew before; understanding at last why our own parents did the things that mystified us at the time. As our children mature they become ever more our pride and joy—and as they begin lives of their own, we feel enormous satisfaction to see them display those practices that we worked so long to instill in them. Then, in time we anticipate the arrival of our grandchildren, and in certain ways, the process begins again. Along with all the wonderful love and devotion shared by us, our children, and our grandchildren, another sort of flower begins to grow in the family garden.

That no two people are likely to enjoy exactly the same things is axiomatic, yet it is easy for parents to expect that their children will want the same things as themselves. The child who has always been close; a constant part of their family circle, creates an upheaval by making the choice to move to another city, perhaps many miles distance away. Regardless of the

benefits, such a move has awesome results for the parents and siblings of the departing person. Visits may lessen the pain of empty chairs, yet those empty chairs are always just behind the curtain of disbelief that we erect, and we feel a measure of sorrow everyday—eventually learning to shut out most of our disappointment but never fully accepting what we consider the loss of our child. Perhaps it is most difficult for us to realize that our child does not consider himself lost to us; and he fully accepts the fact of his absence from our old, familiar circle as a natural progression in his own life.

Some people view life as a process of losing, and certainly there is some logic in that argument, however logic also exists in the opposite position. The final determination of how events affect our lives is a matter of individual choice and offers proof that no two people are exactly alike. The child who chooses to live far away from his parents may well consider himself to be taking control of his life, while the parents see only the empty chair at gatherings and mourn the loss of a child—never understanding that the child feels smothered by his parents.

I find no easy way to accept the fact that I am unable to see my child and his family as often as I wish. I recall my youth and the customs of families during those days—and I wish those customs were still in vogue; children growing up and living out their lives near the place where they were born; families caring for their own from birth until death; families united in mutual support of each member.

Common sense dictates that in today's world such a system cannot successfully exist. There is such diversity in all phases of life and career that the family unit itself is hard-pressed to exist. We, the older generation, must put aside our outdated concepts of what the relationship between parents and children should be and live in the here and now of today's reality. I, for one, do not like to see my easy-going ideas of love and family changing like the leaves in autumn, but I have to accept that autumn has come to my generation—change is occurring; and just over the distant hill is ... the end. #

-- Hugh Singleton