

by Mark Treske

Joan Delaney, in one of her recent "Just Write" essays, recently spoke of becoming a grandparent for the first time, and ending with the question, how are our lives going to change?

Quite a bit. I ought to know.

Being a grandparent is in many ways a commitment in the same sense as parenthood. Whoever described it as "all the joy without the responsibility" didn't know what they were talking about.

First of all, vacations and long weekends disappear under birthdays and other significant days. The wife begins with "We have to be there for Maya's birthday in September." My suggestions that she go do that, I have 100 things at the office that no one else can do has no effect on her:

"The girl will only have one third birthday."

She's right, of course, and so I usually go. And when I get there, the nature of the commitment is clear: The comedian Dana Carvey once described kids as "need machines." They need food, changing, supervision and enter-

Reflections on being a grandparent

tainment. No parent – or two parents – can do it easily by themselves. And so you help as much as possible.

But it's not easy, especially if (as in my case) you got to be a grandparent without being a parent first. With particular horror I recall the first time I had to change a diaper by myself. Noah (the other grandchild) apparently saw the fear in my eyes, and allowed me to do the job without excessive wriggling or mess on myself or the furniture.

In the course of meeting all those needs, one must love them always – in spite of the fact that they are needy, irrational creatures with short attention spans. I spent the early years of my life thinking of kids as "miniature adults."

Try that strategy when having a difficult time with a small child having a complete hysterical fit because he/she is tired, poopy, cranky, all of the above, or none of the above (I once asked my daughter how she knew which was the case and she replied "what makes you think I always know?"), the best I've

been able to figure is to remember that they're kids and be as patient as possible and talk to them on their level without talking down to them.

One's TV viewing habits change radically with grandkids: I've become a devoted fan of "Go Diego, Go," "The Backyardigans," "Jack's Big Music Show" and "The Wonder Pets," as well as other kidvid classics (okay, I'm somewhat less of a fan of "The Wonder Pets" but never mind!).

It's quite understandable that parents often complain of the lack of adult conversation as one of the hardest things about kids. But if one can get on their

level, their sense of wonder and imagination is a truly awesome thing. A child can make a toy out of anything, from a \$100 doll to a packing crate to a kitchen pot. How sad that many of us lose that wonder and imagination on the road to adulthood.

The degree of commitment is different, of course – a grandparent gets to go home after a while. But we can enjoy the fact that we help in the building of young lives, that we can love and be loved unconditionally.

And that for a grandparent, the same as for a parent, love can overcome a lot of awkwardness.

at freeport library

Lunch and Travel

The Friends of the Freeport Memorial Library are sponsoring the popular Lunch and Travel slide/lecture series which continues on Friday, November 16, at noon, with "Bolivia: The Tibet of the Americas."

Conny Brunner and Doug Going will take you on a journey from mountains to mines as the stunning Andes merge with Bolivia's vibrant native cultures. You will also visit Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flats and Potosi, the world's highest city.

Bring a brown bag lunch and a friend; beverage and dessert will be served.

Shakespeare

The video courses with Bill Coble continue on Tuesdays at 2 p.m. with the plays of Shakespeare. Over the next three years the library will present the plays of Shakespeare in chronological order. The sessions for November 20 and 27 will feature the conclusion of the series on Henry VI (1591-1592)

Banjo society

On Sunday, November 18, 2:30 p.m., the Long Island Banjo Society will present a concert in memory of Albert D. Grover, banjoist, composer, teacher and inventor of banjo parts and accessories.

He founded one of the first banjo clubs in the country in 1883 and later formed the Boston Ideal Banjo Club which toured in the 1890s.

The program will be introduced by Al Grover, grandson and founder of a major boating concern in Freeport. He is also the first person to have crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a motorboat.

Organized in 1963, the Long Island Banjo Society is a group of men and women promoting "the preservation and entertainment of banjo playing." These talented players bring a beautiful sound to the art of banjo playing.

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