

June 4, 2008

www.CapeMayCountyHerald.com

A45

Joyride III

By Keith Forrest



I can live with the diaper changes. I don't mind performing the same tasks as the wait staff at a diner. I can reconcile my duties as a chauffeur as I usher kids to and from school.

I admit it. I am a flip flopper. No, I am not running for a higher office. But I am running after my two-year-old twins.

A week ago, my wife Kris and I flip flopped roles. She started an important fulltime job at a fortune 500 company. My semester as a communication professor at ACCC came to a crashing halt, launching me into a summer as Mr. Mom.

Kris had been home with our four kids for most of the last few years. I am a very hands-on dad and I had been in the muck with my kids many times. But doing it all day every day is different.

During this past week, there were occasional moments without a crisis. I just don't remember any of them.

When Kris arrived home from a Saturday volunteer event, she found me on the steps of our house futilely trying to contain the chaos. My two-year-old twins Madeline and Elijah kept trying to dart into the street as I ran around after them.

There was a rare break in the mayhem so I had retreated to the steps of our porch for a respite. "When did you get back from Iraq?" Kris asked.

I think the implication was that I looked like I was suffering from sort of post-traumatic stress disorder. I probably was.

But my ability to cope starts to slip away under the constant auditory barrage. The fact that kids are loud is not exactly news. But however loud you think they are, mine are much louder.

I have four kids with big personalities and even bigger lungs. "He hit me," appears to be the most common sentence in their vocabularies.

I felt like a hillbilly this week as I began to think, "So hit him back!" One week with four small children and my pacifist credentials were crumbling.

The week was a transition for all of us. As twins Madeline and Elijah appeared to be in a constant tug-a-war for my attention, I noticed that my wife was walking around with a perpetual smile on her face.

All of her descriptions of her new corporate job sounded more like she was working in heaven's central office. At first this seemed like a bit of hyperbole. But after a week of doing Kris' old job, I would have been happy flipping burgers.

Keith Forrest is an assistant professor of communication at Atlantic Cape Community College. His late mother Libby Demp Forrest Moore wrote the Joyride column for this newspaper for 20 years.

