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# LOST, LOOKING AT THE WEATHERVANE

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Our son, Ian, at age three, promised me that he would never grow up or get any bigger. I even recorded him as he said it!

I was thinking about that seemingly so long ago, wonderful moment (and so much more) as

Ian, now 21, drove away from our house in a Ryder moving truck headed for his new apartment on Sunday, August 31, 1997 (the same day Princess Di would be killed in a horrible car accident).

Ian being a part of our daily lives was already feeling like a million years ago. At the



same time, it really didn't seem like very much time at all had gone by ... not twenty-one years anyway ... and, now with a "blink of an eye" Ian was leaving home!

Throughout that day so much of what filled in the distance from Ian being born to him leaving home erupted in my mind as flickering, glimmering, rapid-fire imagery.

There so many visions "exploding in my mind" of "our kid" as Ian, now a man, filled the truck with everything he owned.

There was so much flooding my mind ...

- Ian building his trike that we gave him for his second birthday (and doing a very good job of it).
- Ian riding the rocking horse, Jewelbelly, that I had made for birthday #4.
- All the times we watched sunsets at the breakwater in Santa Barbara.

- So many memories of Yosemite - including he and me climbing Half Dome August 5, 1995 as well as Diana coming up with the “If he dances without music it means he has to go potty” title for a column a wrote after we went to Yosemite when Ian was just two.
- Ian gardening so many different times.
- Ian sitting at the foot of our bed, just talking to us as a day would end.
- Taking Ian into the Supreme Court Chambers in D.C. when he was just five
- Ian on the set of Lou Grant with Edward Asner



There was so much flooding my mind as we worked all morning loading the truck.

What we carried and lugged into the truck sparked even more memories of different times and places that had been so long ago relegated to wherever it is that things you hope you never forget try to occupy permanent, but obscure

spaces amidst so much other mental clutter. But on this day, lots of memories were welling back up, vivid and quite detailed.

Looking at the brown, well worn hide-a-bed squeezed in among boxes, I thought about a little kid at age one, leaning against it and holding on to it as he walked and wobbled along it. There were so many times, after his baths, Ian would sit on the cushions looking at his favorite books.

As we tossed the beanbag “chairs” on top of the hide-a-bed I thought about a time before Ian was a part of our life - when Diana and I couldn’t even afford regular furniture. Somehow those beanbags had survived Ian’s childhood and were now going to be back in the limelight again. I couldn’t count how many times we came so close to taking those beanbags to the dumps ... now they were going to be a major part of Ian’s life (and living room “furniture!”)

More than anything else, it was our old bookshelves we gave to Ian that brought back

dozens and dozens of memories from his childhood. I think the reason for that was because from the time Ian could sit up, books were all around him. Diana and I even read to him while she was pregnant!

We always read to Ian (Dr. Suess was our favorite) and Ian knew he could take any book down from the shelves and look at it whenever he wanted. Right from the beginning, he knew how to handle books mindfully and he loved to look at the pictures as well as carefully thumb through the text, eyebrows raised and lips moving as he pretended to read.

All of a sudden, even though we had helped him plan for it, Ian would now no longer be a part of our daily lives. A child leaving home is the one moment, no matter how much you think you are ready for, that you suddenly are jolted with the realization that you are, most certainly, NOT ready for it.

Even though Ian protested, I took yet more pictures as his final day at home unfolded. When

I took a picture of the truck in the driveway I noticed that the truck was partly in the shadow of Ian's tree house that I had built for him.

I think that instant was the biggest jolt of the day for me. Ten years earlier I had started out to build a platform in an ancient fig tree so Ian could have a lookout spot in the yard. However, as the project progressed, up went the walls, then the roof, then sliding windows with screens, and even a skylight in the roof.

There was a point where I came to realize that what I was really doing was building the tree house I had always wanted. Ian just happened to be in the right place at the right time, so to speak. By the time I was done, the tree house had electricity and running water, complete with a sink (tiny though it was).

Now as I stood there, having just snapped a picture of the moving truck near the tree house, I was transfixed, thinking about the hours and hours, over several years, Ian had spent up there

in that tree house (including many, many nights with his friends).

I blinked several times as Ian then called out to me, asking for help to get the final stuff on the truck. It was only a matter of minutes before he was gone.

As Ian drove out of the driveway, I stayed behind to snap that one last picture of the truck



heading away from the house. Then I looked up again to the tree house and I noticed the weathervane pointing in the same direction that Ian headed as he left.

I took a deep breath and noticed this sick, nagging, lost feeling in the pit of my stomach. Indeed, I was truly happy for Ian, as he now ventured out into the world on his own to etch out an existence on the fragile slate of life. But I couldn't help but feel something would be forever missing in our lives.

And, I knew things would never be the same.  
Oh, it wasn't like it was the end of the world  
(well, maybe it was for awhile), but truly, a new  
era had begun - for him and us!

