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Reflections . . .

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Goodbye to Gabriel House

By Judy Horton

Soon our nearly three-year tenure at Gabriel House will be over. Michael and Daniel (aka “the guys”) will move to Timothy House to live independently. Cooking their own meals, cleaning their own bathrooms, making their own life. Help will be next door, but it’s a big step.

Daughter Kelly will move into Teresa House with two other young ladies and encounter life for the first time without Mom and Dad helping navigate the tricky rapids a young adult encounters. Sure, we’ll only be two houses away, but still...it’s feeling like a thousand miles.

Jerry and I will move into our own home, Benedict House, living together as a couple for the first time in 32 years of marriage. This change may call for the biggest adjustment of all.

When we first starting building the above three houses I began to daydream in earnest about having my own home, where I will come out in the morning and make my coffee the way I like it, and take it out on the back patio to watch the woods and listen to the birds, and commune with God’s creation.

I won’t have to search the odd nooks and crannies of the kitchen to see where the guys have hidden my favorite bowls, lids, and odd utensils after unloading the dishwasher before I begin whipping up breakfast for five. Surely Jerry and I will be able to reach consensus on where things should go, something I have never been able to impose upon the guys. Kelly can’t reach the cabinets to begin with so she just puts everything on the counter in plain sight.

When we move to our house I won’t have four (okay, five) people tracking mud into the house without regard for the fact that I just mopped the floor. I’ll only have one (okay, two).

Imagine! No Michael to use up an entire can of Pledge on the three pieces of furniture in his room! Or washing his clothes with reckless disregard as to whose laundry day it is!

And it will *have* to be quieter in the new house, too. No Danny whanging away on his guitar. No Michael practicing his trumpet. No Kelly singing *a la* Charlotte Church in the shower.

Mornings will be so tranquil! No me calling to Kelly “Wake up, Ladybird!” in deference to *Romeo and Juliet*. No Michael meowing for the sole purpose of irritating Kelly. Michael meows, very realistically and loudly, and Kelly pretends to hate it, although she loves the attention.

And the TV! I can only imagine the subtle drones of PBS taking the place of the current cacophony of *Sponge Bob Square Pants*, the *Brady Bunch*, *Full House*, and that annoying Australian who’s forever holding up and tormenting some hapless (and angry) reptile. Or finding Danny in a dark living room late at night, with a flickering TV showing NBA basketball playoffs.

We moved into Gabriel House when it was finished, about a year after 9/11. The economy had tanked and the country remained in shock over the attack. Charitable gifts were down and the future was uncertain, to say

the least. But it was time to start Village life, to begin the residential program, and at the last minute—feeling reluctant to have another couple come in to blaze this trail—we decided to take it on ourselves.

Like many other such undertakings, we discovered that we had—however inadvertently—chosen the better portion. Yes, in many ways it's been very, very hard to maintain and run a big household while simultaneously holding down demanding full-time jobs. As Jerry says, our "weekend" usually runs from 1:30 to 5:00 pm on Sunday.

But we'll never regret for a moment our time at Gabriel House.

For we have had the honor of witnessing our daughter's transformation from a pampered high schooler into a competent young woman with a good work ethic.

We've marveled at Danny's iron determination to learn to play the guitar and carry a tune.

We've howled with laughter at Michael's *faux* Italian opera renditions and have been touched by his concern and sweetness when Kelly was terribly sick.

Oh, the guys will come over for dinner on a regular basis, and I hope they'll return the favor. Kelly will stay some weekends and holidays with us.

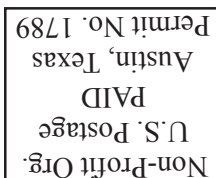
But it won't be the same at all, and I know it.

We all have new phases of our lives to begin, but this one must first draw to a close, and I'm paying attention in these last few months together to just how fine it is, and how fortunate we are to have experienced it. When we close the door on Gabriel House for the last time as Master and Mistress of the House I'm sure we'll shed more than a few tears.

So thank you Robert, Michael, Daniel, and Kelly. We could never in a million years have imagined the life we would wind up with, and if we could have, we would not have had the wit and grace to appreciate its possibilities. We're thankful for each day we have spent together, and will recall it forever as some of the most blessed years of our lives.

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Down Home Ranch, 20250 FM 619, Elgin, TX 78621



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