

Bye, Bye, Babies

May 2005

Nine years ago this month, I put a crib up in my house. A crib that would hold the little baby boy that we first met on the ultrasound screen. I met that little boy in person a few months later and immediately fell in love. I have vivid memories of his staring at me from the hospital crib. Memories of his first smile, first laugh, first diaper blowout. I remember my cheeks hurting at the end of a day with him and realizing they were sore from smiling at him. I remember trying to document it all on film (pre-digital age) so that we never would forget a thing. Something inside me told me to remember these moments, cherish these moments—they don't last forever.

My husband and I were so hooked on this baby thing that we kept the ball rolling—for six years. At first worried that we would not be able to love a second as much as we loved the first, but then soon realized that our hearts were designed for this love. Each child grew and left the crib to make room for his younger brother-- though each added their own signature milk splatter stains on the dark cherry rails. The crib and the nursery remained in place as each of the boys cycled through it.

Last week I took down that crib-- realizing that I did not take a crib from a baby—instead I gave a little boy a bed. And I knew symbolically that this baby era was over. For **nine** years I visited that crib in the wee hours of the night. I cleaned the rails and bumper pads of a variety of bodily fluids. I peered over the top rail to listen to the

congested sounds of a baby with a cold or just to look at the angelic face of a baby who cried himself to sleep. *Nine years* of babies in my house. But it did go fast!

They were all right.-- The mother of a former student who looked at my pregnant stomach then stared me straight in the eye and said to me, “It goes too fast. Take the time to enjoy it.” And my dad who said to me as I cleaned throw-up from a carseat in his yard, “These are the best times of your life.” I knew. They told me. They were right.

And I did take their advice. I did enjoy it and tried to slow it down. I would hold my babies in the middle of the night watching the *Insomniac* on TV and think “One day they will sleep through the night”—and they did. I would wipe throw up from my clothes and the carpet and think “Oh well, one day they will make it to the toilet.” And they do. I would clean up an explosive diaper and know that this too shall pass—and it did. I would sniff the tops of their heads just because I could and I would read *Goodnight Moon* three times in a row just because they asked

So now I tell you—those who still have a crib in your house or those who have put yours away as well. This time with young children does go fast—and it’s a package deal. Its tight hugs around your neck AND tantrums in public. It’s “I love you mommy” AND it’s “Your mean, mom!” It’s Carters footy jammies and it’s Play Doh in the carpet. But In hindsight, even the difficult parts take on a glowing wonder. A universal experience shared by all parents.

Each year I look forward to the lilacs blooming in the spring. There is nothing quite like walking by a giant lilac bush and inhaling deeply. But summer is just around the corner and new flowers will bloom-- equally as sweet—but different. And the lilacs

will be gone. As we sit here on the verge of summer, but still enjoying the beauty of spring, inhale deeply. Soak up the smells, the sounds, the sights and the feeling of spring. It doesn't last forever.