

Community Comment
August 1, 2004
Sam Pennisi

On Grandchildren

As we age, we learn to accept the aches and pains of stiff joints and sore muscles. Small injuries that a few years ago took only days or weeks to heal, can take double or triple the time. And it feels like it will never get better! Worse, we begin to realize that the day is coming when these pains will not get better.

The payoff for getting old is complex. We slow down our pace a bit and appreciate the important things more. We take stock of our life experiences and these memories become our reality. We put into perspective the successes and the failures and begin to see our life as a whole; not just in a moment by moment framework. Most of us can look at the journey of our life and see the contributions we have made and the impact we have had on those with whom we have traveled. If we have been married and if we have had children, these have been among our closest traveling partners.

And then there are grandchildren. At one point in my life, I saw myself as one who could choose not to bring children into an already crowded planet. As I matured and met my future wife, children became a desire and then a reality. We had two girls and thoroughly enjoyed their childhood; even the teen years. Watching them in their college days was the most fun for me. They were becoming adults and their lives were taking shape. They were talking about what they would do in their lives and how they would support themselves and how they would contribute to their community, country, and world. The last thing I thought of then was grandchildren. But then one got married and we all begin thinking about when she and her husband would think about starting a family of their own. Our first grandchild was born nearly ten years ago. Our second came nearly four years ago and just six weeks ago we met our third.

With a girl and a boy already in the mix, the parents decided not to find out what they were having so at birth we were all pleased to welcome another boy. His name is Collin Rhys Coriell. He is strong and healthy and he and his mother are doing fine. The birth center at Mad River Community Hospital continues to provide a great birthing experience for the whole family.

It's hard not to reflect on one's own life when your children give birth to the next generation. I certainly feel my age more. Not just the physical stuff, but the life experiences I've had. A career, while important for sustaining life and a feeling of worth and accomplishment, somehow begins to pale in significance to what kind of family life as a married couple we were able to provide our children. We think about what we were able to give them physically and emotionally. We think about the encouragement we

gave. Did we do enough that they could leave the nest with confidence and competence? Were they prepared to be on their own?

As we welcome baby Collin, and see the care they give him and the love within this young family, we think we maybe did ok. Grandchildren represent the future. Not just our families future but the world's. Let's hope they do better and let's help them.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.