

Community Comment
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Leaving a Legacy

Getting away from a home business is not easy. Many of you know this all too well. Especially if that business involves overnight guests that may have booked a room months ago. For many years, we took separate trips to visit family in Southern California or in Michigan. Then we graduated to short trips that a trusted friend or relative could cover. This worked ok but it seemed we were running the Inn thru a third person which took the fun and relaxation out of a vacation. We got better at finding people over time but two years ago we found a real Innkeeper. She was a recent HSU graduate and had done some limited work for us throughout the year. She is young but smart and hard-working and has a genuine interest in having an Inn of her own someday. The last two summers, she has allowed us to get away and know that the Inn was in good hands. This was a gift that allowed us to not think about the business but, instead, focus on our family.

The benefit of getting away for our family is we get to be together in a way that the work-a-day world doesn't allow. This summer, when both of our daughter's and our three grandchildren joined us in Michigan, I couldn't help but think about what this time together means to us. I think it falls under the idea of leaving a legacy.

All of us will leave a legacy whether we think about it or not. We think legacies are those things that rich or famous people leave to their children or next of kin. An actor may leave a body of work on film or a great deal of money. A rich person may leave a business. These surely are legacies. But a legacy can be far more and far more simple than these. In a very real sense, a legacy is what people remember us for or what they learned from us. Our friends see us leaving our small cottage to our children as our legacy. Or maybe they see us leaving our business as our legacy. These material things may be part of our legacy but they are not the important part. When we focus our time together, we play together, we talk about ideas and dreams and opportunities lost and realized. We laugh together and our kids increasingly ask about our younger days. They want to know about our parents and grandparents. They want to know how they and we got to the place we are now. They tell us their aspirations and frustrations at work and as parents or their role as a very close aunt.

These times together allow us to leave our thoughts and ideas in an atmosphere that is not parental. Instead, we can give them the benefit of our experiences and trials and successes in casual conversation. I spent some time fishing with my 11 year old granddaughter. Knowing nothing about fishing, we mostly just talked. I mostly just listened and then answered questions. I'm sure she will remember when she and her papa fished on our lake. But very little fishing actually occurred.

Think about the legacy you want to leave to those who are close to you. Your legacy may be money or things. If so, good for you. I think a far richer legacy is one that leaves the benefit of ourselves to those we care about. I would love to know just what kind of people my great grandparents were. I hope my grandchildren will know full well who we were, what we did, and what we cared about.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.