

ONLY CYNTHIA/Cynthia Rush

Thoughts turn poignant when they're memories

My parents are moving. I feel so ridiculous about having this feeling of abandonment. Here I am, a great big over-30 woman who shouldn't care about these things anymore. After all, I haven't lived in that house for years.

In the beginning, they minded that I was growing up and making them feel like old people — the empty nest syndrome. Now my mother just had her 70th birthday and they are moving — making me feel somehow like a used-up Teddy Bear.

MY PARENTS are no longer middle-aged. I must be getting grown-up.

Just because my brother and I have spent the past 10 or 15 years making fun of the shrines my mother created of our rooms doesn't mean we didn't like it.

Where was the first place my brother came to stash his meager settlement after each of his two divorces?

And I — didn't I move back into my old room both times I dropped out of a college? Friends from cities long in my

past still know to track me through my parents and that farmhouse.

I HATED that house in the beginning.

We moved away from a nice, normal, built-in-the-'40s type of house in town where there were sidewalks and only one bathroom. But, you could walk to a friend's house.

Moving to the 1845 farmhouse happened just before I was old enough to fully realize what I was losing.

As a teenager, before I was able to drive and get myself away from that house, I was trapped by the sprawling acres of trees and grass. I wrote poetry — even though I hated poetry. What else can a melancholy teenager do when she feels left out by the whole world of 'cool' kids? — except, of course, talk on the telephone to another teenager about how awful it is.

But, often, my friends were walking or bicycling to each other's houses in town, having fun, thinking about themselves.

Not missing me.

I ADMIT, as a young child I knew the freedom of running through fields alone, going back into the woods and snuggling down into my favorite grass nests beneath apple trees where foxes sometimes played.

Parents worry less about a little girl playing independently in the solitary woods than they do if she goes to a heavily-peopled park alone. Being out in the country gave me the chance to test myself without grown-ups hovering over me.

THERE WERE THINGS that were different about living in an 1845 farmhouse than a 1940s town-type house. Walking into a room took longer. If you didn't shout, the people on the other side of the room couldn't hear you.

A child learns presence in a house that size.

I never understood the jokes people made about sharing bathrooms. Our house had more bathrooms than closets. I had a bathroom, my brother had a bathroom — only the dog was without her own bathroom. Actually there were several dogs.

We also had a pet peacock for awhile, and some chickens and a horse.

THEY AREN'T moving into a nursing home or anything. They are moving into a small, one-story house overlooking a golf course in town. They'll feel like they have a lot of space there without having to maintain the grounds.

I used to climb trees when I was a little girl. Once, in second grade, I was in love with a boy named Johnny McAllister. I climbed a maple in our backyard and carved my name with his into the bark. Not our initials, mind you, our names.

I've often wondered, in the years since then, why the poor tree didn't die. I'd love to climb up there now and see if the bark healed or scarred — whether the names still remain. But now I'm afraid to climb that high.

I was such a fierce little girl.

THERE'S ONE other thing about this moving business. I guess, until now, I'd never really thought much about the fact that I'm younger than

they are.

I'm going to outlive them.

Somehow I feel disloyal about that. Certainly I had never planned it that way.

Once, it was my mother who seemed to think that if only she could gather up all these little remnants of my past — the broken dolls, the worn out slippers, glasses I can't wear anymore — she could reassemble me.

Now, she'd like to give me family pieces of furniture. I have no room in my house for them, so she's trying to crowd them into that little golf course house and I — I want to reassemble her. I want to reassemble a time when tomorrow seemed a long way away from her.

My parents are moving, and certainly I'm trying to encourage them. The golf course house will be a good place for them to live. If they like it, maybe they'll hang around into their 90s.

I just hope I can survive growing. Boy it's hard.

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