

rites of passage, collegiate style

By Fred Hobbs

Over the span of a lifetime, everyone inevitably moves from one status to another. Helpless babies become curious toddlers. Cute moppets become headstrong and sometimes troubled teenagers. Adults launch and perhaps change careers or at least jobs, form relationships and, eventually if they live long enough transition into a life as seniors with its complications and privileges.

This process involves a number of what are called "rites of passage." My grandson Tanner experienced a major rite of passage last year by entering college. And now in his sophomore year he is about to transition into life for another experience, thrilling but also problematic. He is leaving dorm life to share a rental home with three other young men.

The house is unfurnished, so each occupant is expected to provide a bed, desk, chairs, etc. for his own room. Left unsettled at this point is the furnishing of the common areas. Tanner is providing an old couch from his parents' basement. A U-Haul was rented for transporting the couch and his necessary personal furniture items. He's not sure what the other roommates will contribute. Will the "guys" wind up with four couches and no tables or lamps? And what about a TV set? (His parents say they wouldn't mind if that item was missing from the living room.) Could actual reading of books and studying take place there?

The question of cooking, cleaning and other chores has yet to be resolved. What arguments and recriminations lie ahead on that score?

All of this kindles memories of my rite of passage from high school to college.

Late in my senior year of high school, my mother who had been widowed for almost 17 years re-married and moved to another state with her new husband. I stayed with a family of very good friends for the few weeks of high school remaining until the summer session at the University of Colorado began.

I lived alone in a dorm room for the summer, both a satisfying and somewhat scary rite of passage. In the fall, two of my best buddies joined me as roommates. After the mandatory freshman year stay in the CU residence halls, I first shared a basement apartment with two other students.

Everything was fine except we almost froze to death in the winter. The owners lived upstairs and were no doubt careful about expenses, such as gas for the furnace. We had no thermostatic controls at our disposal, so one of my roomies who was both resourceful and a shade dishonest discovered he could put a needle through the wires leading to the thermostat causing the furnace to run continually. When we heard the voice of the landlord saying he was going downstairs to check why it was 90 degrees in their living room, one of us would quickly

remove the needle and leave him dumbfounded when he noticed the furnace was no longer pumping heat.

Fortune later shined upon me when an about-to-graduate student colleague of mine told me about a wonderful couple named Bud and Helen Phillips who rented him a room, provided breakfast and dinner every day and did his laundry for \$50 a month. I took his place. And, that's where I spent the rest of my college days.

Tanner should be so lucky as his rites of passage continue to unfold.