

THE OTHER SIDE...

Spouses Describe Impact of Changes

"The stress was unbelievable," says Martha Enck, "Even the dog had problems." Moves are always difficult, and problems are to be expected. But lifestyle changes can create problems that surprise even the most prepared families. Martha Enck and Anne Katterhagen can testify to the feelings that set in after relocating to new homes and, for Katterhagen, a new job.

Martha Enck remembers "sinking into a funk" for about a week after putting their house on the market. Though she and her husband, Bob Enck, knew it was time for a move, they fought it mentally until the offer came from Riverside. "It was helpful to put all of the pros and cons on paper, and to look hard at the things that were keeping us from saying yes." Since the Encks had moved several times in the early days of their marriage, they knew they could preserve their close friendships but were concerned about being farther away from grandparents. Eventually, they decided they could manage the extra distance with better planning and continue the summer visits to her parent's cabin, which were so popular with the boys. But putting the house up for sale provoked an unexpectedly strong reaction from Martha.

"I was surprised by how bad I felt. We had completely renovated the house, and it was exactly the way we wanted it. A lot of me went into that house." Their stay in Binghamton, seven years, was the longest they'd ever lived in one place, and Martha recalls that though they hadn't expected to stay forever, she was reluctant to give up the close network of friends and community activities.

Anne Katterhagen was also concerned about leaving them behind, along with her children, though all are grown, her successful business, and deep roots in the Northwest. "We hadn't moved in 21 years, and we really didn't fully recognize what we were doing by moving," she reflects. She feels that they did not put enough emphasis on the strength of their roots in the community and the impact of leaving their daughters. "We all rationalized that the kids were moving off anyway and talked ourselves through the decision without dealing with reality. The fact is, in Tacoma, they could still drop in for weekends and holidays." Springfield visits cost more, require more planning, and make spontaneity difficult. "In some ways, it might have been easier if the kids had been younger and could have come with us," she says.

The move for the Encks was also complicated by a sudden IBM freeze on hiring, which virtually shut down the housing market in Binghamton. "The freeze was announced the day we signed the contract to sell the house," Martha remembers and "the house didn't sell for six months." So, the Encks relocated to their new house in Columbus, without resources needed to personalize it, and truly make it their home.

A series of problems, which began almost immediately after their arrival, complicated the situation. The refrigerator broke and couldn't be fixed for weeks, the dryer broke, the boys accidentally

locked themselves in their rooms, the hot and cold faucets were reversed in one bathroom and, subsequently, poured water behind the wall, and, while Bob was out of town, one son fell and cut himself, requiring eighteen stitches. "Less than two weeks in town and I'm in the E.R. looking for a doctor," she remembers. She still hasn't recovered from the weight she gained eating "fast foods" while the refrigerator was on the blink. "You can't possibly anticipate and prepare for everything. There are bound to be surprises."

Anne Katterhagen was particularly surprised by the emotional cost of her move. "It was much more significant than I had imagined. I went through the whole process of grieving and bereavement, which I feel was second in intensity only to the loss of a spouse." Katterhagen, who has been extremely active in the hospice movement, recognized the parallels, but the process has still taken close to a year, a normal period of bereavement.

A sense of dislocation or disorientation also emerges during a major change. "I was in a fog those first few months after the move and knew that I wasn't always as alert as usual but couldn't shake it," she remembers. Gale Katterhagen acknowledged a similar feeling, though not quite as intense. Both experienced a period of dislocation and mild confusion for about 2-3 months before the move and for 3-6 months afterward. Anne attributes an accident soon after the move to that period of confusion. She narrowly escaped serious injury when her car was broadsided, while she was returning home from a meeting late at night. "I was driving on an unfamiliar country road during a thunderstorm and missed a stop sign. I don't think that would've happened if I hadn't been less sharp than usual."

She also points out that moving and starting a new job are both known to be highly stressful events and together can pack quite a wallop. Next time, she vows to take more time off to ease the transition. She took a week off between jobs, while Gale literally stopped his work in Tacoma one day and started in Springfield the next.

Martha Enck says the relocation sent her into a "total tail-spin" and that she, too, went through a period of feeling disconnected. Fortunately, the Encks took the advice of a close friend and didn't move until a few days before school started. "It was great advice," says Martha. "We spent a few days unpacking, then the kids were off to school, Bob went to work, and I started organizing the house. The kids were busy from day one. By the end of the week, the kids were on athletic teams, and Bob was coaching hand touch football."

The only drawback was that Martha had little time for herself, and for a while, put her interests on the back burner. "I had to organize a whole new support system," she explains, "The people I need, the neighbors you can count on, the babysitters, the repairmen, don't come with resumes in hand." And to complicate matters, she had one son in kindergarten and, thus, had to

plan her schedule in three hour blocks of time. "It's hard to plan for such short periods, and you can't go too far," so she hasn't had much opportunity to get out and explore the town.

Katterhagen agrees that building a new support system is difficult and time consuming. "You don't realize how much you take for granted. Even the small things; we still don't have a dentist." Everything must be started from scratch, as there are no good friends to rely on for advice. Enck especially misses the feel of a small town, "that feeling of being known," but things are improving as she gets to know Columbus. Riverside Hospital also offered a special service for relocating families, and Enck feels it was a big help in speeding her adjustment. "They drove me through neighborhoods, showed me the shopping areas, arranged interviews with school principals, and helped me get oriented to Columbus."

Though life is now normalizing for Enck and Katterhagen, both have suggestions for families that are thinking about making professional and personal moves. Martha Enck highly recommends that families take advantage of any relocation or orientation services that may be offered to ease the introduction into a new city. She also thinks that, for families with school-age children, moving just before school starts helps get the kids settled in faster. "They were busy right away, and I didn't have to worry about trying to find them something to do in the summer after all the activities were filled or underway."

"It's never easy," she emphasized, "and don't expect that everything will go as planned." Though difficult, she feels change can be an important growth experience for the family, including the children. "They'll need to learn how to adapt to changes as they get older, and if they can start to learn to manage change, they'll cope better with it later."

A sense of humor is critical too, and Martha says it helped she and Bob keep things in perspective. She also advises that families make choices and clarify their priorities. "I know Bob has heard this a million times, but some things are urgent, while other things are important. You have to know the difference and learn to put them in two different categories."

Katterhagen also stresses the importance of determining priorities. "Analyze yourself," she said, "You need to be clear about what is really important to you, both in your home and your job, and at this particular time in your life. Priorities are different at different ages."

Once things are sorted out, she recommends that priorities be weighted heavily in the decision process. "Have a clear idea of how you are going to manage your personal priorities and your job and working relationships." Katterhagen's main priority was keeping her family together, and after reaffirming this feeling, knew the move was the right thing to do. She felt it was something Gale needed but explains that they would not have gone unless both jobs had been offered. "It was really innovative of Bob Clarke and Memorial to recruit both of us," she observed.

She was the chief negotiator for the pair. "Gale hates details, and because of my business, I had more experience in

working with lawyers and contracts." She was pleased with the final contracts and feels fortunate that their income allows them to fly

back to the Northwest reasonably often. "We didn't actually consider that at the time, but it should be a major consideration for anyone leaving family behind."

According to Katterhagen, it was particularly important to have clarified the details of their respective responsibilities and salaries before arriving in Springfield. "It would have been too much to have been working on details and possible differences of opinion while trying to get settled. There are enough other outside stresses." She urges that such details be negotiated and settled up front.

Katterhagen has also had to adjust to the professional change of working within a hospital administration, as she had not previously been on the "hospital side of things." In Tacoma, she had started her own non-profit home health agency, serving as CEO as it grew into a thriving business. Leaving her company to work at Memorial, she walked into an entirely new position as vice-president for Alternative Services and as the first female, non-nurse executive at Memorial.

The arrangement was also something of an experiment for the Katterhagens, who had never simultaneously worked for the same organization. Anne has encountered some fallout from the comparison of her activities to Gale's actions and hasn't reached a verdict on the 'experiment.' "We're not sure what the outcome is going to be," she says.

Recently, Martha Enck managed to find time to squeeze a course into her schedule and is happy to be pursuing one of her interests again. It's also had the added benefit of getting her out into the community and has helped strengthen her new 'network.' With the house in Binghamton sold, they are now able to begin personalizing their home, and in general, seven months after their move, things seem to have turned the corner.

And what about the dog? "Mollie got an Invisible Fence (a type of electronic fencing) to help her learn her new boundaries, and things are tolerable now," she says. It seems that everyone eventually adapts, but the trauma of changing careers and homes may be eased by considering the experience and advice of those who have gone before. Just ask the Encks and the Katterhagens. ■