

# Adult kids surprised at parent's divorce

Dear Dr. Brothers: My sisters and I are angry and nearly devastated by our parents' sudden decision to go their separate ways after all this time. The three of us are adults on our own, basically, although the youngest is in her last year of college. Our wonderful parents seemed content and relatively happy after nearly 40 years of marriage. We, their offspring, felt so privileged and proud. What could've happened to make them do this? Our dad might be interested in a widow who lived near us, and our mom hinted that she wanted to try to return to her former career. Have they lost their minds? What about us? We care. — R.F.

**Dear R.F.: I doubt either has lost his or her sanity, and they may not be as unusual as you seem to think. I'm sure you're all suffering some disappointment, surprise and shock, but try to understand the fact that although you may disapprove, they have a right to lead their lives and do what they wish. After all, they've been responsible parents who've probably made many sacrifices along the way. Also remember that no matter their chronological age, people today remain much younger and healthier than was possible in the past.**

**I suspect that this split might not have been as sudden as you think. Loving, dedicated parents frequently try to protect their families from any indication of marital problems, and sometimes when their obligations have been filled, they may agree to express some of their own longings and dreams.**

Dear Dr. Brothers: Both my husband and I are living through an exciting time that seems to be filled with emotional ups and downs, mostly because we're soon going to be parents of twins after spending years trying to have this happen. My



## Dr. Joyce Brothers

- Ask Dr. Brothers

doctor tells us that the good news is finally here. Most of the time we're ecstatically happy, but late at night we sometimes worry because we'll be older parents. I'm 47, and my husband's in his mid-50s. Young people — our nephews and nieces, for instance — often seem to have such a tough time. We start to feel guilty that we may be unfair to our children. — C.S.

**Dear C.S.: This is wonderful news! Start remembering that as older parents, you have a number of advantages — actual things that make raising babies easier, both for them and for you. Your maturity alone is going to help. At this time in your life, even though you may not have had any babies in your home, you're better prepared intellectually and psychologically to know what to expect. For instance, you'll hardly be surprised or irritated by the fact that babies cry and are on totally different sleep patterns from your own. You'll be emotionally and financially more secure. Your careers and the relationship between the two of you are more apt to be stable.**

**As I'm sure you're both aware, people today are living longer and staying healthier and younger than in the past. In fact, it's often difficult to separate the generations from appearance alone. Because you'll be less rushed, you'll have more time to devote to your family, and this is a huge plus, so enjoy, enjoy, enjoy.**

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# Small-town lawyer makes big time plans

By Ron Wilson

*Director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.*

Let's go to a hospital in Atlanta where a doctor is using an innovative medical device. The device is patented, of course, but where do you suppose the legal work was done to acquire that patent? Would you believe, a law firm out in the middle of rural Kansas?

It's true - and we'll meet the young rural lawyer whose specialty is patent work on today's Kansas Profile.

Meet Jeffrey Thompson, a young patent attorney based in rural Kansas. He grew up near the north central Kansas town of Scandia in Republic County. After graduating from K-State in agricultural engineering, he joined the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. as a patent examiner.

Jeffrey explains that, in simple terms, a patent is a legal document that defines an invention and its related property rights. His role as a patent examiner was to examine, evaluate and verify the legal claims on devices proposed by various inventors. Jeffrey's technical background in the engineering discipline made him well-suited for this position.

He worked four and a half years at the patent office, and in the meantime, decided to go to law school at night. I worked in Washington many years ago, and it seemed that lots of my coworkers were also going to law school at night. I don't think I could make it through law school in the day.

Anyway, Jeffrey happened to meet a young lady from Utah named Regine. Romance flourished and the two were married. Jeffrey attended George Washington University law school at night and, after graduation, joined a private law firm in D.C. as a registered patent attorney. Regine graduated from law school as well.

In 1997, as Jeffrey and Regine's young family was growing, they decided to move back to his hometown of Scandia, Kansas where the two set up the law firm of Thompson and Thompson. Regine now maintains a general law practice, dealing with estates and family disputes. Jeffrey specializes in patent, trademark, and copyright law.

Specifically, Jeffrey specializes in patent prosecution, which means

getting patents for inventors, and - to a lesser degree - patent litigation, which means protecting patents from infringement. He has worked with all types of mechanical and electrical inventions as well as chemistry and business methods.

Because of his specialty, he is outside counsel with law firms in Washington, D.C., New York, and California. Wow. Yet he remains based in the rural community of Scandia, Kansas, population 419 people. Now, that's rural.

How can an attorney in the middle of Kansas serve clients from coast to coast? Jeffrey says, "The only drawback is the inconvenience of not having an airport nearby. It's at least a three hour drive to the airport, but that is only needed occasionally." Jeffrey is using technology which enables him to be instantly linked with clients and the U.S. Patent Office.

He says, "We have high speed Internet, fax, and next day Fed Ex. It's as convenient as a law firm in downtown D.C. - no, it's more convenient, because our commute is seven minutes instead of the thirty minutes it would take to go five miles."

Then he talks about the many plusses of having his practice where it is. He says, "There are many benefits, such as cost of living, less expensive real estate, low overhead, the advantage of working with your wife, and the comfort of knowing the people around you." This is important to their young family. Jeffrey and Regine have two sons, Jack who is nine and Dane who is five.

There are only a handful of registered patent attorneys in Kansas and most of those are clustered around Wichita and Kansas City. Jeffrey says with a smile, "We're the largest law firm in Republic County. That means we have two lawyers and everybody else has one."

It's time to leave Atlanta where we found an innovative device whose patent work was done by an attorney in Kansas. We salute Jeffrey Thompson for making a difference by finding a way to practice his specialty in his rural hometown. I believe the benefits of locating such enterprises in rural communities is patently obvious.

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The mission of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development is to enhance rural development by helping rural people help themselves.



Debbie Schwanke/for Colby Free Press

Skip Sharp, left, vice-president of student affairs and marketing at Colby Community College and Eugene Robert, director of buildings and grounds, placed one of the two benches on the west side of the student union Wednesday in honor of Carl Adams, college athletic director. The benches were donated by the college's student senate. Adams, 53, died Dec. 22, 2006.



Adams

He played baseball at the college from 1971-73, returned to the school in 1984 and was involved in a variety of activities. He was named softball coach in 1987 and in 1999 was named athletic director.