

THINGS IN MOTION...

All things are in motion and nothing is at rest ... you cannot go into the same (river) twice. —Heraclitus (540?-480?) B.C.

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I'M READY – FINALLY!

WHAT IS IT that drives us to continue our role as family leader long after we should have passed the torch to younger hands? I would not surrender the grill or the grilling to my children, either of whom could have done it just as well as I could have; perhaps better. On a trip with family members I took the wheel; we traveled in my car, and I picked the places we stayed at. It was not a conscious effort on my part—it was the way we had always done it. To my children's credit, none of them ever voiced a complaint that I know of, although I'm not fool enough to believe that everything I did as the family leader met with their approval.

It has finally become apparent to me that I need to take my proper place in the family hierarchy and acknowledge that the erosion of time has at last promoted me to an honorable spot where letting someone else take the lead in family activities is not only appropriate, it is the smart thing to do. At the age of 65, my father had remained the vibrant, take charge man of my youth, but during the six months between our visits during his 66th year, a tremendous change occurred, which both saddened and alarmed me ... he became an old man. How I hated to witness the decline of such a powerful force in our family! He would last for another six years, but the fire in his eyes and the spring in his step had deserted him. I am conscious every day of little failures that nibble at my own fabric; it's time to hand over the reins to younger hands and to do it with as much grace as I can manage.

THE FLOWER PIT

ONE OF the older features common to homesteads of earlier generations was the flower pit. This was a place in the backyard or in a side yard where an area of perhaps 80 to 100 square feet had been excavated to a depth of four or five feet, the walls carefully measured, the floor carefully leveled, and the entire pit was topped by walls three feet high. At the back, steps were built and inside the pit were benches of various heights. This is where the less hardy shrubs and flowers were kept during the winter months.

During the summer, flower pits were mostly empty—and offered adventurous youngsters a wonderful place to play. My cousins and I have spent many hours in flower pits—including a few times when it was very cold, although that was not allowed by any grownups who became aware of our unacceptable presence among the roses and other treasured plants.

When I mentioned that flower pits could no longer be found, a friend lamented that perhaps they had gone the way of the outdoor toilet—"the Johnnie" as it was often called. Actually, I think the flower pit's demise preceded that of the outhouse. It has been a source of amusement within my family, at least, to recall how the lowly outhouse was for years one of the most important buildings on a homestead. In addition to the homestead setting, those that were built at every school tended to become popular gathering places for students—and not for the obvious reasons; they served as social spots where boys could be boys and girls could be whatever girls chose to be in an outhouse. As plumbing was added to schools during the 1940s, use of the outhouses was discontinued, but kids continued to use the old facilities as a meeting place—the old outhouse died hard.

