

My View – “Big Blue Van”, Eileen Needham

I patted the hood of Big Blue before I opened the door and hopped inside. Some family members think Big Blue is a truck. It has been used for many family moves and construction projects. Actually, Big Blue was our 2005 Honda Van with extensive miles and memories.

I vividly remember when we first purchased Big Blue. It was two days after one of our teens, who will remain nameless, totaled the first Big Blue while driving to school. Apparently, the “keep your eyes on the road” rule wasn’t quite obeyed, especially with lacrosse teammates as a distraction.

I sat in the driver’s seat and adjusted the rear-view mirror. The reflection in the mirror caused me to pause. There was no more bantering of young boys traveling to hockey, soccer, lacrosse or basketball. I listened for the sound of teenage girls, talking about prom dresses, colleges or their latest crush. Yes, the van was void of the happiness it once hosted.

I took a deep breath. There was no odor of hockey equipment, lacrosse bags or chlorine from a swim meet. The emptiness consumed me as I turned the ignition and backed out of the driveway. No, I was not traveling to Canada for hockey, Rochester for lacrosse or Clarence for soccer. Instead, I traveled down a few country roads to a dear friend’s greenhouse.

As I pulled down the stone driveway, I was greeted by a grin from Kevin. He laughed when I got out of the van and snickered, “I thought you downsized.”

“We did!” I answered, then added, “Downsized the house but never the gardens.” He chuckled as we loaded up Big Blue together with marigolds, geraniums and a host of other flowers.

As I drove back home, I was surprised to see who was already in the driveway. The new owners of Big Blue had arrived early. The handsome young man was helping his pregnant wife out of their small Nissan with two little boys standing by his side. As I got out of the van, both boys shouted my favorite word, “Grandma,” as they sprinted to see me.

Isaiah, with all the wisdom of a 4-year-old, announced, “We came to get Big Blue, Grandma, because we are having another baby and need room for more car seats.” Edward, his 3-year-old brother, nodded in agreement, as he did with almost anything Isaiah declared. “And Grandpa made sure everything works on Big Blue,” Isaiah added, beaming with pride over his grandfather.

“But first we are having lunch,” Edward added, then whispered, “and we can eat some of your chocolate chip cookies too!” Then Isaiah added softly, “And when we leave, Grandma, you don’t have to cry. We are only five hours away. We can visit you anytime.”

My heart stopped, and I held back the sadness as I answered with all the enthusiasm I could muster, “I know! We can see each other whenever we want.” Both boys smiled in agreement, but I knew the truth. It was time for my son and his family to travel on their own journey.

After they left, I planted all the flowers in my garden. I kept busy until the sun went down, then I sat on the porch that night to reminisce about the days gone by. I smiled thinking about all our wonderful memories that took place in Big Blue.

For I know the truth, each chapter of life is filled with abundant joy, along with some limited heartaches. We must always continue to plant seeds of love and hope for the next generation.

Eileen Needham, a retired social worker from Hamburg, is a grandmother of five.

