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Letting go at the Katy Rice Harvest Festival

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Special to the Times

Certain events measure our year, they provide milestones that allow us to make note of our children's progress. The Katy Rice Harvest Festival is my favorite milestone.

The area may be changing, moving away from it's agrarian past, but the Rice Harvest Festival provides a bridge back to that past and ensures, that in a changing world, the things that make Katy special, remain the same.

Your experience with the festival often starts when you become a parent, and you push that stroller; big enough for all the baby gear, and conveniently also holds all the purchases you make.

Your babies can't walk yet, but the sounds and the smells and the activity gets them excited and their eyes are everywhere.

Later the strollers disappear and your toddler walks unsteadily beside you, dancing and clapping to the music. Soon you are at the little kid's carnival.

I love that we have a special area, where all the rides for little people are gathered, away from the bigger kids, and the crowds so that you have the room to let them wander a bit and burn off that surplus energy.

A few years go by and you find yourself standing and watching your children on the big kid rides, they often bring or meet up with a friend. They want to ride again and again.

You love to see their faces, the wild eyes and the big grins. The food becomes important, and they overdose on their annual ration of funnel cakes.

More years pass, and you have teenagers. Your live is consumed with driving your kids to practices, telling them to do their homework, and wishing they would clean their rooms.

Festival time comes around and when you remind them about it, you start noticing that while they still are excited to go to the festival, but they seem sort of hesitant.

Then it hits you; they want to go with their friends.

That's a difficult moment for a parent because it reminds us that they are growing up, and they will someday leave us.

Bringing your teenager to the festival and letting them explore it with their friends is a big step, you've always delighted in their reactions to the festival, and now you will miss that.

But you do let them go. You have to.

You walk through the antique shops, kind of relieved now that you don't have to hurry as you did last year when your kids waited impatiently at the door. You enjoy it in a way you haven't since before you had children.

You are of course a little concerned, as you always are when they are on their own. You check your phone for messages and scan the crowd from time to time, hoping for a glimpse.

And then you see them, your child and their friends, off in the distance laughing and eating something on a stick. It's not only comforting to know that they are alright, but it makes you feel good in another way.

Your children are doing well, they are finding their place in society, they are going to be all right. You can't help but smile.

The Katy Rice Harvest Festival is a lot like Katy itself. It's perfectly sized: big enough to have a little something for everyone, small and safe enough to be able to let go and give your children their freedom in stages, as they are ready to accept it.

Tonight why don't you pull out the pictures that you have taken at the Rice Festival over the years you'll see what I mean.



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-420.87 (-6.95%)

S&P 500 896.78

-58.27 (-6.10%)

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Sandi Yoakum wrote on Oct 22, 2008 1:59 PM:

" Our two daughters have been attending the festival since they were in a stroller. And now at 21 and 22, they couldn't wait to come home from Austin for the festival. As they sat with their dad and I listening to The Grateful Geezers Sunday, we watched small children dancing with their moms as they did 15 years ago.They have such wonderful memories of the Rice Harvest Festival. Enough that they return every year and look forward to bringing their children to the festival one day. "

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