

Guess you could call them a super-duper mess They were a good bunch of people

My home is a wreck. It wasn't this big of a mess when I had three children at home.

After refinancing the house last year, we decided to do a little re-decorating. We've lived here for 10 years and have only painted one room — actually the children painted it and it's a lovely blue.

The rest of the house, however, needed an overhaul, and with 10 years of equity and a lower interest rate, we were able to talk the bank into some remodeling money.

We are in the process of painting three bedrooms, a sitting room, the living room, the dining room and two bathrooms. We've also decided to do the kitchen but not until everything else is done.

The painters have been in and out for the last two weeks. They have finished our bedroom and it is in pretty good shape. I was worried that we wouldn't be able to sleep there for the two nights that it was being done, but the fumes were minimal and it hasn't been too bad.

The rest of the house is a different matter. We couldn't use the downstairs bathroom for two days and that drove me crazy both because that's where the tub is — upstairs we have a shower — and because like a little child, I'm used to rushing in the back door at the last minute and now I had to run all the way upstairs.

While our bedroom is usable, the other three are not, that includes the one the kids painted last year. Two of the bedrooms are full of furniture that belongs somewhere else and the third is the repository of all the painter's equipment.

The sitting room is getting back into shape, but I still can't find half my stuff and there is a two-wheeler sitting under one edge of the couch. That worries me a little.

The living and dining rooms are total disasters. Please, please don't visit me. The only way to get



Cynthia Haynes

Open Season

through the house is to walk sideways.

The dining room table is sitting in the middle of the living room and the china cabinet and cedar chest are in the middle of the dining room.

At the same time we've had electricians putting up a new light fixture in the dining room. At the moment the old fixture is stored in the basement and the dining room ceiling has a bare bulb.

To add to the mess, we had wallpaper in both bathrooms and the dining room that had to be removed.

I can't wait for the painting to be done. Then the crew will come in and pull up all the carpeting.

I know everything will look great when the painting and carpeting is done and we have a new light fixture. Then everything will go back in its place and we'll be back to our normal messiness instead of this super-duper mess.

Harry Higgins' daughters asked for recollections and stories about their father for his funeral.

I couldn't think of one single story that would tell you about Harry, which is odd, because I've known him all my life.

Where do I start? Harry and his wife Betty were part of a circle of friends who lived their lives, raised their children and enjoyed each other's company in Emporia, in eastern Kansas.

Harry decided that he wasn't getting enough from dialysis treatment to make it worth the pain and suffering. He told the doctor he was going home and having a shot of scotch.

That was Harry. He loved his scotch, and he knew when to fold. I'm sure it wasn't an easy decision. Betty had a stroke several years ago and is in a nursing home.

The last day, he waited until the girls could bring their mom up to see him before he let go. Everyone figured he just wanted to say goodbye.

My folks were part of that social



Steve Haynes

Along the Sappa

group. Their lives and their families were intertwined over the years in a unique bond that almost defies description. They all led middle-class lives, striving for the American dream in that GI-bill era after World War II.

Harry and Betty had come down from Kansas City, Kansas, as my folks had. Harry was a salesman, my dad a lawyer. There was Lamar and Zelma Dee Markowitz; Lamar profane and funny, a contractor who built a good business but always talked like a ditch digger.

None of the wives, in those 1950s-Leave-It-to-Beaver, days, had an regular outside job. They thought raising kids and keeping

house was work enough. The group wasn't constantly together. I don't remember that many times when all four couples were in one place, and there were others who came and went.

There were other couples who joined, but those four were eternal. My brother said the thing he remembered was when they got together, they were having fun.

There wasn't a jerk in the bunch. They were all nice people, honest, hard-working, successful. Their children turned out the same way.

There was never a divorce. If there was infidelity, it must have been awfully discreet.

As the years went by, three of the four couples bought cabins at the city lake, and the social life shifted out there. It was a great place to be, but as pre-teens, we hated the isolation.

There are times when I'd give anything to go back to those simple days, though. Harry was the successful sales manager of a successful local firm. Then the company changed and they bought him out. That was hard, but as things turned out, maybe for the best.

He and Betty lived well in their retirement as they watched the others die off one by one.

That era is pretty much gone. Rare is the marriage where both partners don't work.

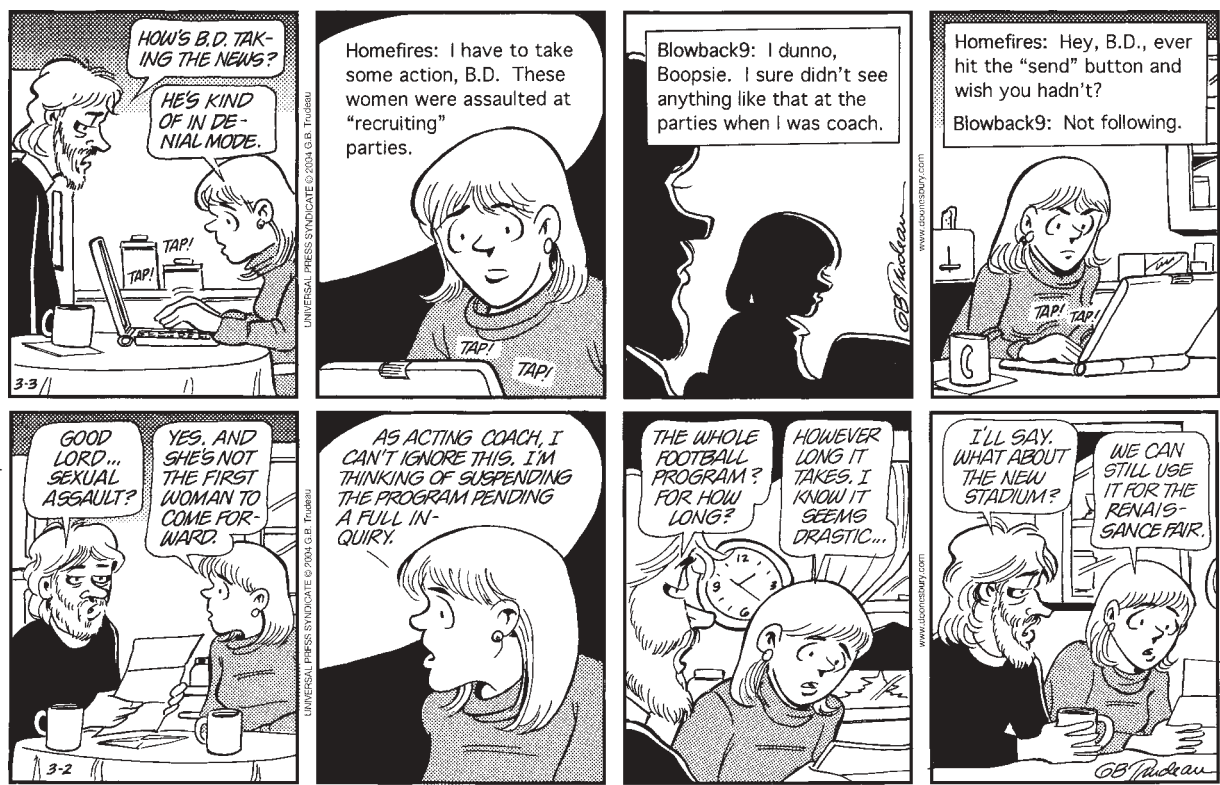
There may be people who form that kind of lifelong bond, but the way we move around today, I think it's harder.

More of us live in cities, and the social structure is different. But that was a time, and that was a gang. I miss them all.

Steve and Cynthia Haynes are owners of Nor'West Newspapers, including the Colby Free Press.

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