

STEPFAMILIES

A Quarterly Publication of the Stepfamily Association of America

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Summer 2000

STEPFAMILY WEDDING STORIES

Creative Community Cajoling of a Reluctant Teen

By Beth Warner, Ed.D.

My 13-year old son was not keen on my remarriage. It entailed a probable move, away from his friends, and a re-negotiation of the visitation schedule with his biological dad. Understandably, he was in “protest” mode. However, I wanted a wedding that included my children and my new husband’s as well. My younger daughter and step-daughters were no problem in this regard – they were very excited about a wedding and were happy to participate. They sang together prior to the ceremony.

I had enlisted a friend of mine to help write and perform the ceremony. Feeling guilty about my son’s feelings, I did not press him to participate. On wedding day, I struggled to persuade my son to wear a suit (he relented); but, he refused the boutonniere. I figured that this was the best I could do without a major meltdown from him. I felt miserable. My good friend would not have my son sulking on the day of the wedding, however! He simply marched up to my son, pinned on the boutonniere and said, “All the men wear these.” He also had inserted in the ceremony (without my knowing about it) a lovely candlelighting ceremony, wherein each one of us (myself, my husband, his 2 girls, and my 2 children) lit a candle to signify the new, union of our stepfamily. My son participated beautifully, when it was clear that this was the community expectation of him, and since he didn’t have time to “stew,” about it ahead of time. The struggle of his participation was removed from the mother-son arena... he even appeared to have a good time for the rest of the afternoon with his cousin and several of his friends.

Of course his feelings were (are) a very real expression of his distress at this sweeping change; and, as our journey has progressed I have had to listen and help him with his disappointment and confusion. But the help from my community of friends on wedding day was invaluable. It reminded me that I don’t have to do this challenge, this stepfamily business, alone!



An Auspicious Beginning

By Pat Estess

Gene and I chuckle now, 23 years later, when we reflect on the evening of our wedding, but few of the guests chuckled then. Although we thought we had done the necessary spadework in preparing the children for the union, we didn’t realize how much more had to be done before even an acceptance of one another could grow.

We were so happy we weren’t really conscious of the way the children cast a pall over the event. They eyed and stared down everyone who seemed to be enjoying the occasion. That’s the reason, no doubt, that guests began their own countdown, glancing at watches and waiting for the appropriate moment to make their getaway.

Other couples might have endured the day by dreaming of their honeymoon. Not us. We had cancelled ours. I reasoned, unilaterally, that the children needed us around after the wedding to help them adapt. What’s more, I was practical; a honeymoon would have meant beginning our married life in debt. Instead, our married life was preceded by a week of angry silence because my husband-to-be refused to share my horror over the idea of an enjoy-now-pay-later honeymoon.

(A money lesson I learned: The philosophy of the Scarlet O’Hara School of Financial Planning – I’ll worry about the bill tomorrow – is not one I endorse. However, on infrequent occasions such as honeymoons, Scarlet may have been on to something.)

Finally, everyone went home. The two of us – aglow with love for each other and for the rest of our tucked-in Brady Bunch – tumbled into bed. As we clicked off the light, we heard a knock on our bedroom door. “Mommy, I don’t feel well,” my youngest child announced as she trotted in uninvited. She wasn’t faking. She vomited on our bed. So ended our wedding and began our marriage.

FROM THE EDITOR

By Jean McBride, M.S., LMFT

Welcome to the Summer Issue of STEPFAMILIES. In keeping with June's tradition, our theme in this issue is stepfamily weddings. We have two great stories from our readers Beth Warner and Pat Estess to start things off. In her "Stepfamilies and the Law" column, Laura Morgan discusses the topic of interfaith marriages and stepfamilies. Our president, Marge Engel, continues the theme by sharing her thoughts about what she calls encore weddings. Look for our newest contributors, Jim Hibbard and Mary Siebe, in their column "Stepping Up!" Please send them your questions and/or comments for further discussion. They tackle the sometimes-tricky issue of who does give the bride away in a complex stepfamily. To round things out, Patricia Estess reviews the book "I Was My Mother's Bridesmaid: Young Adults Talk About Thriving in a Blended Family."

In Stepfamilies for Professionals we are delighted to present Barb Perlmutter's second column devoted to developing a stepfamily clinical practice. In this issue she discusses stepmother support groups. Kay Pasley, Ed.D., reviews the latest stepfamily research by Drs. E. Mavis Hetherington, Sandra Henderson and David Reiss. Our clinical chair, Dr. Scott Browning, offers an article for clinicians about helping remarried couples successfully make the transition between dating and remarriage.

Starting with this issue, our children's pages will be a pull-out section in the middle of the newsletter. Michele Diamond presents stepfamily bingo for the whole family to enjoy. We also have a delightful story, "Dear Diary" by Patti Trampe. Our section for children is still developing. Let us know what you'd like to see here.

All of us at SAA wish you a wonderful, relaxing, fun-filled summer. Enjoy your families! Oh, and in looking ahead to the fall, please set aside September 16 to celebrate National Stepfamily Day.

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Helping Parents Help Kids

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The Children's Rights Council is a non-profit, tax exempt organization strengthening families and assisting children of separation and divorce.



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Editor: Jean McBride, MS, LMFT

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Margorie Engel, MBA, Ph.D.

“You want to hear about our wedding?”
Miriam laughed out loud. “This was the third marriage for each of us. We don’t have any children. Matt and I walked down the aisle together while the organ played, ‘I have often walked down this street before...’”

(Speaking of music choices, the symbolism is bad in Wagner’s Lohengrin from which we have taken that over-worked favorite, “Here Comes the Bride.” Hasn’t anyone else noticed that Lohengrin leaves Elsa in the third act?)

Although the percentage of people who remarry has been on the decline in recent years, about 75% of divorced men and women are continuing to do so. And in about 65% of those remarriages, unlike Miriam and Matt, at least one of the partners brings a child or children from a previous relationship and a stepfamily is formed. Unwed mothers whose first marriage is to a man who is not her child’s biological father and remarrying parents who are widows and widowers also create stepfamilies. More than half of Americans today have been, are now, or will eventually be in one or more step situations. Clearly, we are an important type of family in our society.

And society continues to sit up and take notice. I knew we had crossed an important visibility line when *Boston Magazine’s* “Elegant Wedding” asked me to write about encore weddings based on my book, *Weddings A Family Affair: The new etiquette for second marriages and couples with divorced parents*. And Hallmark has created cards that can be used for the occasion in its new TiesThatBind line that can be found in their stores throughout the country.

Last spring, editor Beth Reed Ramirez produced her first quarterly edition of *Bride Again*, the only magazine designed for encore brides.

Of course, it contains the requisite columns about rings, honeymoon locations and the like. It is also chock full of meaty articles (several of them by SAA board members) about things such as preparing children for your remarriage, deciding what your stepchildren might call you, potential changes in child support and visitation schedules, the government’s role in your remarriage contract, and remarriage ceremonies that include children. In fact, many of the articles are relevant to stepfamilies during their first few years of togetherness so it’s a “keeper” magazine and not a throw-away. I think it’s a great idea and format – just wish more of the models in wedding gowns were larger than a reed-thin size 6-8 and older than 20-something.

In addition to our own web site at www.stepfam.org, SAA is the content provider for stepfamily information on the web at www.lifescape.com.

One of the topics requested was a discussion about stepfamily weddings.

And when NHK, Japan’s public television station, was filming a documentary about stepfamilies in the United States, they wanted to tape stepfamily weddings.

The Japanese producer was particularly interested in the Family Medallion. This gold, sterling silver, or pewter medallion has three raised circles on its face. Two represent the marriage union while the third symbolizes the importance of children in the marriage. It represents family love in the same way the wedding ring symbolizes conjugal love. You’ll find it in our catalog of resources.

“I noticed that children often experienced anticipation and excitement before the wedding started, but afterwards, they were confused and felt left out,” says Dr. Roger Coleman, a Christian church minister and SAA board member. To help remedy the problem, he created the Family Medallion and wrote *Celebrating the New Family*, a ceremony booklet for including children in the wedding service when parents remarry.

During the ceremony, a Family Medallion is given to each child, symbolizing the new family. A reading on the importance of children is then given, followed by a prayer for the children. Through this gesture the bride and groom are saying, “We care for you and you have a special place in our lives.”

From the viewpoint of family and friends, “What do we give to a couple who probably already have two of everything?” is a logical question when the encore wedding announcement is made. While most of them probably privately conclude that the big gift they selected for your first wedding should be your quota, they usually do chose to send a small token because it serves as a symbol that they approve of the new union.

These gifts are often of the creative variety such as tickets to sports events, theater productions, or movies; a special bottle of wine; perennials for your garden; a restaurant gift certificate; exercise equipment; or a coupon for an evening of free child care – typically nothing monogrammed. One encore couple reported, “Our guests gave the children wedding gifts instead of giving them



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STEPFAMILIES AND THE LAW

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

In this article, we'll take a look at an issue that faces stepfamilies with increasing frequency: not just the blending of families, but the blending of religions as well by interfaith marriage. Today, interfaith marriage is a fact of life. Jews marry non-Jews at a rate of 50% or more. (See Steven C. Reuben, *Raising Jewish Children in a Contemporary World* (1992).) Catholics also marry outside their faith at a rate of 40%. (See Eileen Ogintz, *A Marriage of Two Faiths* (1988).)

When planning an interfaith marriage, a wonderful resource is *Celebrating Interfaith Marriages: Creating Your Jewish/Christian Ceremony* by Rabbi Devon A. Lerner (Henry Holt & Co. 1999). Rabbi Lerner suggests focusing the celebration on the partners' love for one another, for rejoicing with family and friends. He also suggests ways of including elements from the religious heritage of both partners. The Jewish elements may include having the traditional chuppah (wedding canopy), the blessing over the wine, the breaking of the glass under the groom's foot, and the traditional Jewish marriage contract, a Ketubah. The Christian elements may include a New Testament reading, preferably Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter 13, which speaks of the nature of love, and the lighting of the Unity candle. Finally, Rabbi Lerner's book contains sample wedding ceremonies and readings.

Once the partners are married, an excellent resource is *The Intermarriage Handbook: A Guide for Jews and Christians* by Judy Petsonk and Jim Remsen (William Morrow and Co. 1988). This book provides good practical advice on such matters as holiday celebration, making family traditions, and raising children.

Raising children in an interfaith home presents unique problems. Some couples have sought to allay those problems by providing that any children of the marriage will be raised in a particular religion. It should be stressed that such agreements are NOT enforceable in most states. The majority view is that such agreements violate a parent's religious freedom, a freedom that is inalienable; thus, contracts that attempt to deprive a parent of that First Amendment right are not enforceable. Some courts have also held that enforcement of such agreements would cause excessive government entanglement in the religious affairs of families, an entanglement that is expressly forbidden by our Constitution.

In cases from the 1930s through the 1960s, the courts in Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania all stated

that a court could not be called upon to enforce a religious upbringing agreement, because to do so would be forcing the court to choose between two religions: the religion in the agreement, and the religion the custodial parent wishes to follow for him/herself and the children.

More recently, in 1990, a Pennsylvania court in the case of *Zummo v. Zummo*, set the tone for more modern cases regarding the enforcement of religious upbringing agreements. In *Zummo*, the court stated that enforcement of such agreements encroaches upon the fundamental right of individuals to question, to doubt, and to change their religious convictions, and to expose their changed beliefs to their children. Thus, a parent cannot bargain away the right to change his or her religious views and to inculcate his or her child with those views. Since the case of *Zummo* was decided, courts in Colorado, California, Illi-

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President's Message

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to us." Whatever gift you select for an encore wedding, be sure to include the new couple's first year membership in the Stepfamily Association of America.

I've noticed that encore weddings often have an element of humor and fun attached to them along with a serious commitment to the new stepfamily.

All newlyweds should have a wedding cake. This is the time to cater to special style and flavor whims. Ellen said that she and Clifford made a joint decision about the cake. "I chose a chocolate cake with chocolate frosting. Cliff got to choose the top decoration. He picked Superman and Wonder Woman!"

And, don't we all know at least one encore couple who could have sent this invitation:

*Michelle "Once is enough" Sullivan
and
Bradford "I'll never marry again" Lodge
invite you to join them
in "eating their words."*

Stepmother Retreat September 15-17, 2000

Mark your calendars now and register early for StepTogether 2000, our first annual Stepmothers Retreat. Located this year at Snow Mountain Ranch in the Colorado Rockies, you can participate in a weekend gathering of 100 special stepmoms who are willing to band together and support one another. This rustic retreat setting is only 90 minutes from Denver International Airport.

Special guest speaker is Sue Patton Thoele, author of *The Courage to be a Stepmom*.

Sue is a veteran stepmom and author of more than seven books on women's emotional well being. She brings her warmth, wisdom, and enthusiasm to our first annual retreat. Says Sue, "You are fulfilling a lifelong dream of mine" by bringing together

stepmoms from all walks of life to learn from one another.

Registration is limited!

For more information contact Astrid Scholz at

Phone: (415) 924-3606
or

e-mail: ajscholz@socrates.berkeley.edu



Interfaith Marriages

Continued from page 4

nois, and Louisiana have also held that religious upbringing agreements are not enforceable.

On the other hand, there are some states that will enforce religious upbringing agreements. There are cases from Indiana, Maryland, Minnesota, and New York holding that religious upbringing agreements are enforceable.

Given this case law, what can parents, especially non-custodial parents, do to make sure their children are exposed to the religion of their choice? The same principles of law that make an antenuptial agreement unenforceable, that is, that parents have the right to choose their own religion and expose their children to that religion, also guarantee parents the right to expose their children to your religious beliefs in the event of divorce and remarriage by the custodial parent.

This means that while a noncustodial parent can't force the custodial parent to take the children to a synagogue on the Sabbath or church on Sunday, the noncustodial parent can expose the child to the religion of his or her choice, and the custodial parent cannot prevent that. For example, the New Hampshire Supreme Court stated that a visitation schedule with the father that precluded the mother from sharing her religious beliefs could not stand.

Similarly, an Indiana court held that the custodial parent couldn't make the noncustodial parent take the child to church during the noncustodial parent's visitation time. In other words, both parents must have the opportunity

to expose their children to their religious beliefs, and can't force the other parent to do their work for them. Courts thus look quite favorable on requests of a noncustodial parent to expose a child to his or her religious beliefs.

There are a few exceptions to these general rules, however. First, if the children have been enrolled in religious school for a few years prior to the divorce, the court might decide it's in the best interest of the children to continue in the same religious school for the sake of continuity and stability. Thus, if the children were enrolled in a Yeshiva, and the court found it was in the children's interest to stay there, the custodial parent could be ordered to continue their education there.

Second, a court will always consider the best interests of the children when considering custody and visitation orders. Thus, if exposure to divergent religious views palpably harms a child, the court can order that such exposure cease. For example, parents have been restrained from exposing their children to particular religious views when the child becomes so confused and upset that it causes physical harm to the child, like bed-wetting and nightmares.

Whatever happens after divorce, it is important NOT to put the children in the middle of any disagreements you may have with an ex-spouse. After all, their best interests are the heart of the matter.

BOOK REVIEW By Patricia Schiff Estess

I WAS MY MOTHER'S BRIDESMAID: YOUNG ADULTS TALK ABOUT THRIVING IN A BLENDED FAMILY

By Erica and Vanessa Carlisle

For all those parents and stepparents who wish they could read their child or stepchild's mind, here's an opportunity to hear it from the kids.

I Was My Mother's Bridesmaid (Wildcat Canyon Press, \$13.95) is an open dialogue among young adults mostly aged 18 to 25 who grew up in stepfamilies. Because the children in this book have grown up and left home, they have a longer and perhaps more objective perspective on their families.

Here's their theme... and their conclusion. Despite the difficulties and time it took to adjust, kids, their parents, and their stepparents can, at best, become a family and grow to love each other and, at worst, can get along productively if they treat one another respectfully.

The voices in the book are much more forgiving of us, their parents and stepparents, than we might think. (But who knows. Maybe our own children will give us latitude some time in the future!) These young adults give us the right to make mistakes and concede that most of our mistakes are forgivable, and don't portend the end of the world. As one young woman says, "Probably the best measure of a parent is whether or not their child has the capacity for enjoyment, the capacity for love and kindness, whether they are happy and whether they are good. I am all those things, so they (her parents and stepparents) couldn't have screwed up that badly."

Though not quite sure how it happened that they grew up to be happy, productive, and caring individuals, these young people share what worked and what didn't in their stepfamily journey.

They like the people who make their parents happy, and they don't want their parents to be alone, but it hurts if the parent's new relationship develops at their expense.

When their parent's new partner is genuine and candid and makes an effort to get to know them individually, the relationship can work. They actually enjoyed the opportunity to learn lessons that they can't learn from their parents alone.

Kids realize that when they move between two sets of parents that the rules differ in each household especially when stepparents are involved. Not to worry, though. "Adaptability becomes second nature to most of us, and

we develop an acute understanding of what behavior is and is not acceptable in each of our families," says one participant. But, they also hate the idea of mediating, translating or relaying information between households. They don't want to be allies on a particular side of a continuing divorce battle.

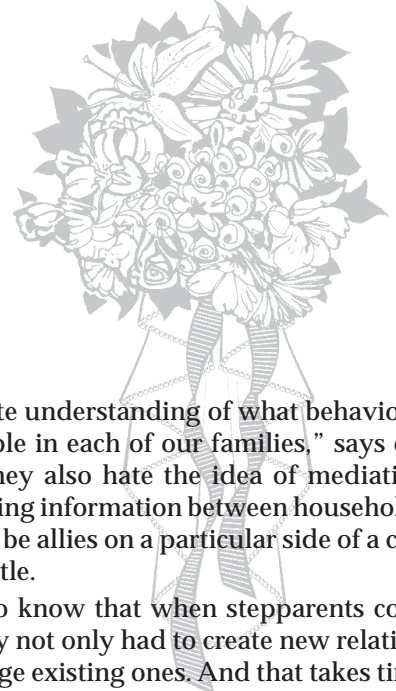
They want us to know that when stepparents come into their lives, they not only had to create new relationships but also change existing ones. And that takes time. "Don't move in too quickly," they warn stepparents over and over again. "We need to grieve the end of our old family before we are ready to accept a new configuration. We need to trust that our stepparent is a good person before we will accept any authority from them."

They say that they've grown very close to some stepparents over time. Says one, who never got as close to his stepfather as he did to his stepmother, "It's not the structural problem of an outsider coming in and taking the place of another person or inserting themselves into your life. It's the content of the person, not the form of the situation." He goes on to make a point that society as a whole sometimes misses: that genetic ties don't determine a family. "I don't think there is anything structurally weird about that type of relationship for the children."

The young people remind us that change is a slow process, a two-step forward one-step back journey that can be very hurtful to everyone involved at times. Says one young woman of her stepdad, "He thought I was more influential in our family situation, and he didn't recognize that I really was an upset girl. There were mean names flying out of his mouth, things that shouldn't have been said to a kid. So, of course, I said things that you shouldn't say to anyone."

Finally, they let us know that "our families are normal to us." Say the authors: "We are flexible, especially as young children. We are resilient and able to weather enormous transitions in our families. Our arrangements are second nature to us, even if they are not the ideal." ("Idealized" might be a better word here.)

Do the ideas and the observations of young adults in this book resonate for adults? You bet. Let's hear it for the kids.



STEPPING UP!

By Mary Siebe and Jim Hibbard

Welcome to *Stepping Up!* This article is the first in a series that will hopefully provide a practical and light-hearted look at stepparenting. As stepparents ourselves, we have lived (sometimes barely) through an accumulation of twenty-nine years of “trial and error” stepparenting and various stepfamily relationships. We did it right, we did it wrong and we learned from both. Our purpose in this column is to bring a real world perspective to stepparenting, offering our insights and experiences related to specific topics and readers’ questions.

JIM: My first wife and I were married at age nineteen. After twenty-two years I found myself suddenly divorced and dealing with two children, Craig (age fifteen) and Jacy (age thirteen) by myself. As Mary and I began our life together, my perception was that all I had to do was to remarry and resume my “normal” life. How wrong I was!

MARY: I was married and had my daughter, Jamie, when I was eighteen. My first marriage ended and my ex-husband remarried and had two boys. For several years, I was a single parent until I met Pat, my second husband (you know, the one, who was going to help me make everything all right after my failed first marriage?). We were together during the years Jamie was growing up, and out of the house. After Pat and I divorced, I was alone, for a time until I met Jim, the love of my life. Although I had dealt with stepfamily issues as a biological parent for over eighteen years, little prepared me for the role of stepmother.

JIM: We were lucky. Shortly after we got together, we attended an excellent 10-week class on stepparenting.

MARY: And I almost didn’t make it down the isle because of it!

Which brings us to the topic of weddings. It is divorce and remarriage that produces stepfamilies. No matter how amicable or hostile, whether you are in the same town or geographically separated, the one event that will bring all the parties in stepfamilies together is the wedding of a child. Weddings in themselves are usually stressful events. Add stepfamily dynamics and you’re in the “step dimension.” Step amplifies every decision made about the wedding and makes every small detail a potentially huge decision. Who to invite, where to have it, who gives and attends showers, who is in the wedding party, who gives away the bride... Wait a minute, there is a good one... Who gives away the bride?

When Jamie got married, that question loomed larger-

than life. In all, five biological parents and stepparents were present, complete with various sets of aunts and uncles, grandparents and stepsiblings.

JIM: “It felt like it was a powder keg just waiting for someone to light the fuse.”

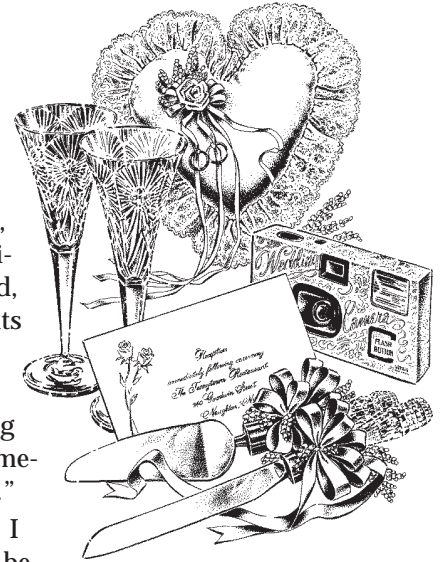
MARY: “And I looked forward to being with two ex-husbands and my ex-in-laws and friends about as much as I like going for a root canal. None of my ex’s or their families had ever been very friendly with one another.

Jamie was walking a thin line, holding her breath hoping that nothing would happen between the various families that would spoil her wedding day. And then, suddenly, there was a short, hushed conversation between Jamie’s biological parents.

MARY: Jamie’s dad came up to me before the wedding. While in the past it had been hard for him to appreciate my other husbands, on that day he finally realized how important Jamie’s stepparents were in her life. He felt it was important to acknowledge them in the ceremony and wanted my help. So together we worked on what he might say.

The result was shining in its simplicity to all in attendance. During the ceremony when the minister asked, “Who gives this bride,” Jamie’s father replied, “Her stepfather Pat, her stepfather Jim, her stepmother Maureen, her mother Mary and I.” With this one simple, healing statement of inclusion, the entire atmosphere changed, and everyone was able to be their “best selves” at the reception. Later, when all her parents were dancing arm-in-arm in a circle around her and her new husband to the song, “I’m Everything I Am Because You Loved Me,” it was clear in Jamie’s smiling eyes and in her joyful tears that all she ever wanted was for her parents to get along. And on this day, we were all touched by that magic.

To submit your stepfamily questions or stories to “Stepping Up!” send them to: Stepfamily Association of America, 650 J Street, Suite 205, Lincoln, NE, 68508.



CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

By Gloria Clark, B.A., Chapter Development Chair

On April 7 & 8th in Philadelphia, PA, SAA held its first ever Professional Training that included chapter leaders. There were eleven Chapter leaders and spouses attending. I spoke to several of them to find out how the training was and what they took away with them.

Catherine Dudley of the South Jersey Chapter was there and felt that it was "fabulous," and she was awed by the amount of information that was available. She also was glad to have the opportunity to talk to so many people from different orientations in stepfamily life. She hopes to take it again.

Margaret and David Ridderheim from the Indiana Chapter felt that they were there from two different perspectives. Margaret is a therapist and related to it professionally and David, stepfather of 8 years (9 children between them), was most interested in the stepfathering aspect. The Riddenheims felt that the research from Kay Pasley gave a good look at the scope of stepfamilies in our society, they enjoyed talking to other people and sharing not only the problems of stepfamily life but also the joys.

Madeline Warns is on the SAA Board and she and her husband Doug are starting a chapter in New York. They also held a workshop on fundraising, which is their special expertise. Doug thought it was a good overview of

the stepfamily situation but had hoped that there would be more specifically about how to run a chapter. Madeline especially liked the exercise that simulated what it was like to be in a stepfamily. She felt that the research was "sobering when you realize that we're 1/2 of the population of this country and for the most part we're not on anyone's radar scope." She would like to see policy changes in all levels of society, especially school systems and courts to better serve stepfamilies.

Dr. William Combs of Peabody, Massachusetts is a minister. (He became a stepchild when his mother remarried when he was three.) He realizes that over half of his congregation is either divorced or remarried. He is in the process of starting a chapter and came to the training to learn more about stepfamilies. He said, "I didn't know as much about stepfamilies as I thought I did." He enjoyed the training sessions and felt that talking to other people both in stepfamilies and who were chapter leaders was very helpful. He was relieved to learn that the chapters were support groups and that he wouldn't be required to do counseling.

I wish that I could have been able to contact more of the attendees but it's fair to say that it was a good experience and we hope that in the future other chapter leaders will be able to come to these trainings. The next one will be in Houston, Texas, on October 6th and 7th. If you think that you might be able to come call Claudia at the 1-800-735-0329 for details.

After talking to Madeline Warns about policy changes I was reminded of something that chapter leaders can do that will be a help to their members. Many times in recent meetings the subject of schools and their policies for dealing with the non-custodial parent has come up. Many of the parents, primarily the fathers, feel cut off from information about their child and also the activities that the children attend.

It is helpful for chapter leaders to have information on how the parent can get to know about parent/teacher conferences and can request and get a copy of the child's grades. These policies vary from one school district to another but the best advice is for the parent to become visible. They can contact the school, attend PTA meetings, become known to the teachers. If there is a conflict with the x-spouse that would make it difficult to attend with the other parent at the same time, the non-custodial parent can make an appointment with the teacher and ask for a separate meeting. Many parents have become involved with after school activities like sports as coaches or referees. There is evidence that children need and welcome this kind of participation from their parents.

Are You Moving ??

If you've moved recently or are planning a move soon, please tell us of your change of address. Every mailing results in paying at least \$25-30 dollars in address correction charges to the Post Office, plus the additional remailing costs. Please complete and return the form below to SAA, 650 J St., Ste. 205, Lincoln, NE 68508 or you may FAX this to (402) 477-8317.

NAME _____

Old Address _____

City/State/Xip _____

NEW ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

NEW PHONE # _____

Thank You!

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Larry Kallemeyn

"Am I getting my money's worth through my membership in SAA?" This question was recently posed to me by one of our long time members. My answer was an immediate and unequivocal "Yes."



The question however, did make me realize that we have not done a good job of marketing ourselves or helping individuals understand the true value of membership in SAA.

The Stepfamily Association of America is the only national not-for-profit organization dedicated to stepfamilies. It is our vision that all stepfamilies in the U.S. and Canada will be accepted, supported, and successful. We have taken the following three-tiered approach to accomplishing this important vision.

I. Education and Support of Individual Stepfamilies SAA strives to provide individual stepfamilies and stepfamily members with educational resources and other supports such as those provided through our chapters and through our Professional Affiliate Program. We recently expanded these efforts through our web-based services. Come visit us at www.stepfam.org.

II. Education and Training for Community Professionals SAA has established training programs to educate local professionals about stepfamilies and stepfamily living. Within this area, we have expanded our efforts beyond professional counselors and therapists to include clergy, school personnel, attorneys and financial planners. SAA recognizes that only when the day-to-day beliefs and practices of local professionals within our communities change that stepfamilies will begin receiving the type of service and support they truly need.

III. Stepfamily Advocacy Within this area the Stepfamily Association of America has taken the lead to encourage national and state government officials, business, and the media to examine policies and practices that deter successful stepfamily growth and positive identity. Many of the issues and concerns are based in myths about family life and mistaken perceptions about stepfamilies. Although this is a difficult, and at times, controversial task, SAA feels strongly that these issues must be addressed to ensure stepfamilies and stepfamily members receive the recognition and support they deserve.

To be successful in our endeavors the Stepfamily Association of American Board of Directors recognizes the need to approach these important issues on a systemic basis. For that reason we have expanded our services and programs to address stepfamily issues with all levels of our society.

It is important to note that on a cost basis, membership

fees pay for only about 40% of the actual costs of the programs and services we provide. The remainder comes from sales of books and materials through our resource catalog and from individual gifts and donations. To meet our goals to continue our efforts in these three areas, we must raise \$50,000 in gift support during this year.

The next time you receive a membership renewal notice or a request to contribute to SAA, I hope you will be better able to recognize the true value the Stepfamily Association of America provides.

SAA AT THE CHAUTAUQUA INSTITUTE CHAUTAUQUA, NEW YORK

JULY 3 – 7, 2000

*Chautauqua is a summer community dedicated to
education and recreation
between Buffalo & Jamestown, New York*

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED

- ♦ Understanding the remarriage territory
- ♦ Transition from divorce to remarriage
- ♦ Weddings for couples with divorced parents and for couples planning a second marriage
- ♦ The emotional stages of stepfamily development
- ♦ Working together as a couple
- ♦ Money management in families complicated by remarriage

PRESENTERS

Margorie Engel, Ph.D., *SAA President*
Jerry Devine, M.A. & Helen Devine, Ph.D.
Marriage and Family Therapists
Gloria Clark, SAA Board & John Clark, Ph.D.
Chapter Leaders

For further information call

1-800-836-ARTS

Web site: www.chautauqua-inst.org

STEPFAMILIES IN THE NEWS

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL STEPFAMILY

Seminar – Ron Deal
Teague, TX

PARENT HANDBOOK ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Families First
Spring 2000

OMAHA WORLD HERALD

Living – Healthy Stepfamilies Conference
May 12, 2000

BRIDE AGAIN – The only magazine designed for
encore brides. Summer 2000 Anniversary Issue

Personalizing Your Wedding – by Roger Coleman
Do I Have an Obligation to Support My Stepchildren? – by
Dr. Margorie Engel
Attorney Talk – by Laura Morgan

BRIDE AGAIN, Spring 2000

Celebrating Remarriage – by Dr. Roger Coleman
*The Third Party in Your Remarriage Contract:
The Government* – by Dr. Margorie Engel
Attorney Talk – by Laura Morgan

FAMILIES FIRST, Spring 2000

Parent Handbook on Divorce and Remarriage

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY

March/April 2000
Divorce?

DAILY JOURNAL – Manassas, VA

February 12, 2000
Leisure – *A New Life, Step by Step*

POST TRIBUNE – Gary, IN

February 17, 2000
Lifestyle – *Uniting Families*

PRACTICAL LIVING

January 2000
Creating Holiday Traditions with Your Stepfamily

SAGINAW NEWS – Saginaw, MI

January 5, 2000
Second Marriage a Challenge

NORTHVIEW – North Fresno, CA

April 2000
The Family Wedding Is An Idea Whose Time Has Come

FLORIDA TODAY – Melbourne, FL

April 7, 2000
Blended Families Seal Union with Medallion

DR. JOEL LIVE” KLVZ RADIO – Ft. Collins, CO

April 18, 2000
Interview with Margorie Engel

THE PARENT’S JOURNAL RADIO SERIES

– by Livy Morris Productions
April 2000
Interview with Margorie Engel about stepparents and
stepchildren

STEPFAMILY DAY CELEBRATION!

*September 16 has been
established as Stepfamily Day
in 40 states.*

THIS IS A NATIONAL EVENT!

*For more information or to express
your support,
you may e-mail Christy at:*

stepfamilyday@aol.com

Couples Planning to Remarry

- Boost your sense of humor
- Attend to business details (financial agreements, choice of bride's last name, religious rules and procedures, etc.)
- Address children's interests and concerns
- Adapt wedding ceremony rites and reception festivities for a family (not just a "couple" this time)

The Wedding Bills

Even if your parents forgot to say, "Okay, I'm done. You're on your own now," after your first wedding, this one is on you. Parents are not expected to pay for an encore wedding. (But that doesn't mean that you must turn down offers of help!)

Your Ex and Remarriage

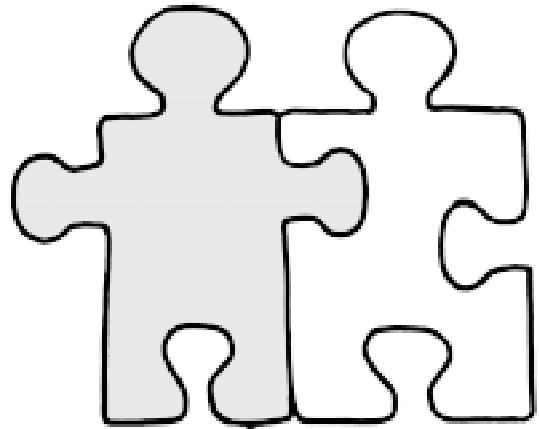
Ladies, you can pick your first husband and you can pick your second husband, but you do NOT get to pick your first husband's second wife!

*Stumped for a
Wedding Gift?*



*Give your friends a
membership in the
Stepfamily Association
of America
and start them off
on the right step.*

*Just complete the membership application on the
back page and we'll send notice of the membership to
the new couple with an acknowledgment to you.*



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Steps to Stepfamily Success

Plan to have family meetings at least once a month or, if problems arise, more often. Establish guidelines to follow.

Educate Yourself! Read! Participate in stepfamily workshops and SAA chapter support meetings.

Time alone as a couple is valuable. Spend at least 20 minutes of relaxed time alone with each other every day.

Strengthen the couple relationship. Use good positive communication skills. Develop leadership as a couple. Fight fairly!

And the smartest step to stepfamily success is to join SAA now! Complete the application form below.

SAA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

PHONE # _____

Send Checks to: SAA, 650 J St., Suite 205, Lincoln, NE 68508
Or use your VISA or Mastercard and call 1-800-735-0329.

One Year Membership in SAA = \$40.00 (which includes the book, "Stepfamilies Stepping Ahead")



**STEPFAMILY ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA**

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Lincoln, NE 68508

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