

## GUEST COLUMN

# Juggling is part of old, new lives

In my old job, there were a lot of vacations—Christmas, Easter, months in the summer. So even though there were intense times—piles of freshmen comps, yearbook deadlines, a newspaper to lay out, grades due—I always had this motivating TIME OFF to keep me going.

In motherhood, I'm finding, there are no holidays.

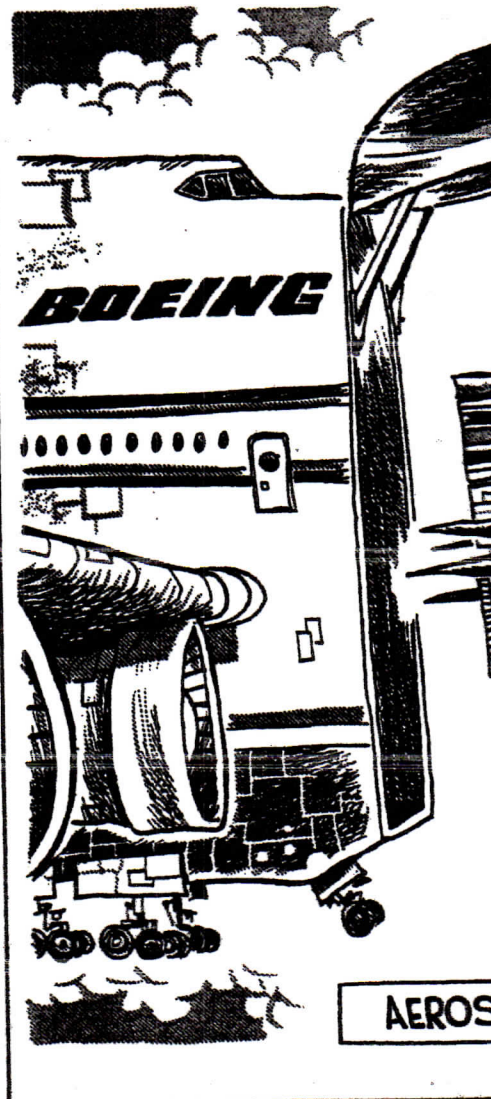
I mean, of course there are holidays. But somehow even on the fourth of July, Thanksgiving, *Mother's Day*, there is still the same old work. Diapers that need changing, laundry piling up in the closet, bottles in the dishwasher, little grubby hands and high chair trays to wipe. I can't exactly look at my daughter—as I often did my students—and say, let's deal with it Monday. On the other hand, there are some similarities between my old job and mothering. For example, leaving students with a substitute and leaving my daughter with a babysitter are equally exhausting. There is the readying: in the case of school, detailed, time-consuming lesson plans that I would never actually write out for myself. (My lesson plan book read "Discussion" for the most part.) Similarly, even if the babysitter is my husband, I feel compelled to explain in great detail our routine. ("She likes the green blanket next to her face and I leave the door open exactly three inches.")



Thea Rood  
*Housewife Life*

Returning is also equally challenging. My classroom was invariably a mess, piles of papers moved, computer disks misplaced, my clipboard gone, every student mad about something. ("That substitute was a psycho—he would not let us READ." "She told me to stop talking and I DIDN'T EVEN SAY ANYTHING." "Where WERE you?") And although my daughter is perfectly content with her father, the house is as chaotic as my classroom ever could be. Toys strewn literally from the basket in the den through the entire downstairs, empty bottles in between the couch cushions, her coat on the dining room floor, bowls in the kitchen hardening over with old baby oatmeal. He says sheepishly to me, "It's like things just start exploding when you leave."

There is also, in both milieus, the need to do many things simultaneously. I could, for example, number yearbook photos and give advice on a composition, edit a newspaper article and listen to the story of a terrible prom date, make notes for a lecture and mitigate a power struggle between two editors. In much the same way, I can now talk on the phone and feed my daughter lunch, cook dinner and carry on a conversation of vowel sounds, grocery shop and play peek-a-boo.



AEROS

## LETTERS TO THE I

### We work for grades

Dear Editor:

I am disgusted by the letter a person wrote to the paper regarding honor roll! I am a sixth grader at Folsom Hills and I received a principal's list award. I feel I worked hard for my grades.

I'm mad that this person thinks we are graded too easily. Getting your name in the paper doesn't mean anything to me. It's what I honestly did that counts and I believe I did an honest job getting this award. Some kids get money for good grades. I personally do not want money.

I sometimes work until 10 p.m. to get a good grade. Folsom Hills is a good school with hard working students. I don't think the author should write that, when they do not know how much we work for our grades.

Megan Cowley  
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Lastly, both adolescents and babies are delightfully unpredictable. When my daughter was quite small, she had a colicky period that began at 5:30 every evening. One night our neighbors had a party and urged us to come. I explained in somber tones that our baby's COLIC prevented us from any social activities in the evening, but my neighbor waved her hand. "Come anyway, a crying baby won't bother us." That evening, 5:30 came and went without a whimper, so we decided to stop by for a moment, rushing away like midnight-Cinderellas as soon as the howling began. Not only did she not cry, but she allowed the hostess to haul her around in one arm all night, happily waving her tiny fist and eventually falling into a deep and serene sleep.

Similarly, I had these two very squirrely freshmen boys in my second period English class—bright and funny, they were hard to keep on task and often, especially as my pregnancy progressed, exasperating. I had in my classroom a collection of old furniture—a couch, a couple of chairs—donated by journalism parents for those times near deadlines when many of us lived at school. My English students loved this, of course, and whenever I gave a reading assignment, they would fight over the comfortable seating. A particularly popular chair, manufactured about 40 years before these kids were born, was slowly coming apart, strips of upholstery peeling away, revealing this odd stuffing of horsehair and cotton.

My two troublemakers began taking this stuff and putting it everywhere: in people's lunch bags in the refrigerator, in the microwave, in the yearbook editors' work drawers, in the middle of literature books. Every time I heard a scream, or someone's face turned ghostly white in the middle of an assignment, I knew the stuffing wizards had struck again. On the day before my maternity leave began, these two said with huge grins, "Be sure to look in your office and see the surprise waiting on your desk." Well, I mean, what could I expect, but the grandest ball of chair stuffing ever? I went in prepared to roll my eyes and sweep the mess into the garbage can, but found instead a wicker basket filled with baby powder, shampoo, lotion, a rattle, and a card wishing me well.

## Should not raise academic standards

Dear Editor:

I'm responding to the letter about "academic standards" in the Dec. 18 issue.

I think the author is wrong because I'm a sixth grader at Folsom Hills Elementary School and I'm not an honor roll student and I try very hard. I came from a school with lower standards in West Sacramento, and it was very easy. I was getting all B's, then I moved here and was challenged. All last year, I had three B's and two C's. This year it is the same as last year. We invite you to come see our school and come see our level of standards. You might not find all 660 kids perfect, but 650 would be great.

We, at Folsom Hills, have good supplies. Our PTA tries very hard to get us tools that we can use to learn and we have plenty of support. The support comes from our teachers and parents. We also live in a great environment. I think we should not raise the academic standards, because a lot of students are trying very hard to do well.

**Steve Budelli**  
Folsom