

It's Not You, It's Me

By Nancy Fawson

EDITORS NOTE: *Introducing SMMC Mom Nancy Fawson! Nancy will be alternating with a native Marin Mom writer to give us different perspectives on this wonderful place where we live.*

Nervous. Definitely nervous. But about what? Wasn't this what J and I had been hoping for? A dramatic move across the country, out of the busy city to a picturesque town by the Bay. After over two decades of living in Manhattan we had both grown tired of the sharp elbows, the noise, the constant grind of non-stop work just to keep a modest roof over our heads and the kids in good schools.

I had always loved everything about NYC. Ever since I was a little girl growing up in New Jersey I knew that Manhattan was where I was meant to be. I felt a sense of freedom and belonging. I loved the noise, the grit, and the action. There was always something going on and I felt that, unlike in suburbia, here everything was possible. When college application time rolled around, there was no question as to where I was going—NYU was the only school for me. I wanted to be smack dab in the middle of it all. From the moment I moved into my dormitory in 1990 I rarely left the city for longer than a school break. I eventually went to law school, worked as an attorney and became a mother in the city. But after 22 years in NYC, my husband and I felt that perhaps it was time to make a change. I had taken a break from law to raise our children and J's work schedule had become more and more relentless. So when an opportunity for J in San Francisco came along, we went for it.

Marin seemed like the perfect place to settle down. It was surrounded by natural beauty and a stone's throw from a world-class city. We visited for the first time one weekend in March, immediately leased an adorable little house and set a date to move. I already knew that the kids

would love it here. S, my sweet four-year old girl was happiest barefoot, running through the grass. L had always preferred the peace and quiet of a still night over the sirens and traffic that had been the constant backdrop to his five-year life. J was definitely ready for a change. His work schedule had become grueling and, as a Utah native and country boy at heart, he'd take a nice hike through the mountains over an afternoon walking around the city any day. There was no doubt that this was the right move for our family—but was I ready?

It was exciting, even romantic, to think about starting over somewhere new; meeting new people and exploring a different area of the country. But moving in on that rainy day in May made my heart sink. I missed my family, friends and city more than ever. I didn't know a soul here, had no idea where the grocery store was and hadn't driven in over two decades. Still, Marin was undeniably beautiful. The kids squealed with delight when we discovered a hummingbird sitting atop her eggs in a nest on a nearby branch of our orange tree. If this was not a fortuitous sign—I don't know what is. I knew I had to make a go of things here; for everyone's sake.

J and I really wanted the kids to love their new home because they were California kids now. We threw ourselves into exploring our new area. Over the next few months, each weekend we packed up the kids and hiked through Marin, hung out at the many Bay Area museums and started to explore San Francisco. The kids were loving it. J was loving it. I was.....liking it. Sort of. Why was I the only hold out?

I tried to think about what it was about Manhattan that I couldn't let go of. What did I miss the most? I realized that it was the city itself. One of my favorite things to do in NYC was walk along the streets. I loved to be amid all of the life and explore different neighborhoods,

duck into little boutiques and stop at new and interesting restaurants for a bite to eat. I always felt energized and happy after such a day and I looked forward to any time I could spend in this way. But after starting a family, such days became fewer and farther between. So, when a recent opportunity to take a solo trip to NYC came along, I jumped at the chance. As I expected, it was wonderful to see my family and friends again. But something unexpected happened on my visit as well. After spending several days walking around the busy and bustling streets, I found myself mentally exhausted from the constant activity. At the end of the week, all I wanted was a quiet place to gather my thoughts. I missed the peace and beauty of Tiburon, I missed my new home.

This was a big! I returned home more confident in the belief that moving to Marin was the right choice for me. In the eight months since our move, I had grown to love spending time outside hiking, walking along the Bay and enjoying nature. Each day I sit in the yard in my "office" and write in the sunshine. I feel more peaceful and creative here than I ever did in NYC.

I will always love NYC. It is part of my fiber, my identity and, in some ways, it has been like a first love. But, at this stage in my life, were we really still good for one another? Had NYC become like the boyfriend that I couldn't let go of even though he was no longer right for me? I think it might be time for us to see other people. It's not you it's me. We'll always be friends, okay?

Nancy Fawson is a former corporate attorney who moved to Marin from NYC where she lived for over



two decades. She lives in Belvedere with her husband and two children and chronicles some her discoveries as well as her insights into what it's like to be a New Yorker in Marin on her blog, "www.nycgirlbythebay.com".