



OPINION

Targeted killings and the rule of law



SPORTS

Amid outrage, NFL keeps counting its money



METRO

Finding ca 3 infants di

SUBURBAN DIARY

School starts anew as yet another year passes

By Nancy Shohet West SEPTEMBER 04, 2014



GINGER PERRY/WINCHESTER STAR VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE

The first day of kindergarten is a rite of passage, both for students climbing aboard the bus and for their parents.

My son was born in September.

In his first few weeks, I would lie in bed in the morning, overcome with exhaustion from a night of feedings and rocking, and hear the school bus stop to pick up the kindergartner next door, and I'd think to myself, "My child will never be in kindergarten. He will be forever here, fussing or nursing or sleeping in my arms, but needing my full attention, no matter which one it is."

CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

Needless to say, I was wrong.

The years gained momentum. A September did finally arrive when he was the kindergartner on the bus, and then one in which he was riding his bike to school alone, and then crossing town lines to attend our regional high school. Now it's a September sixteen years after that first one, and he is asking me whether I will be available on the afternoon of his birthday to take him to the Registry of Motor Vehicles to pick up his learner's permit.

Back-to-school time is like New Year's Day. It rolls around every 12 months, and each time feels in many ways the same but in some ways different.



RELATED ARTICLE

Beverly Beckham: I was the sun and the kids were my planets

Beverly Beckham's noted 2006 column about kids heading off to college.

When my two children were young, it seemed that hours of every week went into packing their lunches.

A year ago, believing that an almost-15-year-old and a just-turned-11-year-old were surely capable of arranging turkey and mayonnaise on bread and washing some grapes, I declared them responsible for making their own lunches. That part of the plan succeeded, and yet now it seems that almost as much time goes into reminding them to pack their lunches as I once spent doing it myself.

The back-to-school clothing ritual has also evolved slowly but never gone away. In those very first years of school, the focus was on ensuring that my children would be either warm enough or cool enough, as the forecast dictated. Now it is about making sure that my daughter's shorts meet the school's dress code for minimum length.

School supplies are another area. The annual jaunt to the office-supply super store has remained in place every Labor Day weekend throughout the past decade, but where once we busied ourselves finding the right box of crayons, now the scavenger hunt is all about the color-coded folders required for each of my daughter's middle-school classes. (Last year, one teacher actually rejected her choice of a green folder, telling her it was the wrong shade of green. Who knew there were so many shades of green?)

Much has changed in the nitty-gritty details of what back-to-school time means in our household, but what has not changed is how I feel when the buses pull away from the curb that first morning: grateful for the trust I have in our local school system; relieved that my children always go off to school with a smile; and yes, thrilled at the prospect of a quiet house for the next six hours.

In just a few short years, if all goes according to plan, saying goodbye to my son on the first day of school will mean leaving him at a college dorm, not waving farewell to the departing bus. But first he needs to pass driver's ed. And even though it seems like just weeks ago that I was worrying about potty accidents rather than parking accidents, it's

good to see back-to-school season arrive once again.

Freelance writer Nancy Shohet West waves goodbye to the school bus from her home in Carlisle.

0 COMMENTS

© 2014 BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA PARTNERS, LLC