*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**The joys of watching grandchildren grow**

When old friends get together after they haven’t seen each other for a while, they’ll have so much to talk about.

How are the medications working out? What are they eating that agrees or disagrees with their digestive systems? Where they go shopping for a good bargain (for food and clothing) or any vacation trips that involve packing a week or two of clothing.

I would assume those conversations would be carried out in mixed company only. If amongst guys, the conversations would mostly be things like who would be the contenders for the Super Bowl (or the World Cup) and how many times they have gone to the bathroom at night these days. Give it five more minutes or so, at max, then the conversation would abruptly end with, “Oh, I’ve just got to show you these pictures of my grandkids which I took not too long ago.” So, thank goodness for our cellphones. We grandparents have a chance to flaunt our pride and joy.

Somehow, it is not one or two pictures that the grandparents are proud of, but 30 or more at one sitting, thanks to modern technology. So, we get to share with each other the precious feeding moments of our grandchildren and what they are eating; the moments they take their baths or take their naps; saying their first words (voice recording, of course); or taking their first steps. So very exciting indeed.

Yes, being a grandparent of three grandkids, I share those precious moments myself. It is indeed a joyous moment watching your grandchild taking his/her first step, knowing that in no time at all, he/she will be asking to borrow your car (or worse, asking if you can help purchase one).

I still remember the good old days every time we buddies (some since fifth and sixth grade) got together, we would flaunt pictures of our new guitar, our new bicycle, new car or, heaven forbid, our new girlfriends (I am talking about 50-plus years ago). How time has changed.

Even though most of my buddies are retired or are semi-retired, they claim that they are busier now than ever. Well, most of them are occupied babysitting their grandkids, with a smile of course. In a sense, it is good for the parents, as they have someone to watch their children while they are at work. As for the grandparents, it is such a comfort to babysit the grandkids. It is indeed a joy to watch them grow, learning new things every day.

When we moved to our new home, we used a couple of our door frames to mark the growth of our grandchildren. It is just amazing watching them grow right in front of our eyes. Just how can it be? Goodness.

My granddaughter, who just turned 6, is over 4 feet tall now. Watching all the markings on the door frame, I couldn’t help but become a bit emotional at times — thanking the good Lord for all the blessings. Not only can my wife and I enjoy the precious moments of them growing up but we also are able to share all the fun that they have given us, entertainment at its best. Who else would laugh when someone is picking your nose? Or worse, biting it?

I remember we were having family dinner at a fine dining restaurant when my granddaughter was 3 or 4. Suddenly, my son picked her up and smelled the diaper and decided that it was time for a change, and off to the bathroom they would go. A welcome change it was. It didn’t matter that it was a fine dining restaurant or not. How all the memories returned. Didn’t I just do that with my son not too long ago? Love the grandkids, they help us bring back memories and reality.

At another family gathering, our grandson was a little over 8 months old. While the family was enjoying dinner, the baby’s face suddenly turned red while he was making a loud grunting sound. Obviously, everyone stopped eating and watched the drama with anticipation. In less than a minute, the grunting stopped, followed by a sigh of relief from the baby. The whole family cheered and clapped. I am a sentimental fool, just wondering if anyone would cheer and clap for me one day when I’m in a nursing home?

Part of the joy of being grandparents is that we have a chance to babysit the grandkids, to play with them and spoil them. I remember a couple of cartoons that crack me up every time. The first one was a baby using his play phone calling his grandma. “Nahny, can I come to your house? Your daughter is driving me crazy.”

And the other cartoon consists of four frames. The first one was a grandchild calling grandma, saying “Granny, I’m hungry.” The second frame was grandma responding, “Sorry, honey, Granny is very busy right now.” The third frame was the grandchild saying, “But Granny, I AM REALLY hungry.” And the fourth frame was grandma hopping on a motorcycle, saying “Hold on, sweetie, Granny is on her way.” Even though I know that it is just a cartoon, once you are a granny, you will always be a granny.

I remember when my wife and I had our first babysitting assignment. Holy smoke, there would be a four-page written memo for us to abide by, stating what time the baby should be doing certain activities such as when to feed her and what she can eat, what time is appropriate to take a bath and what pajamas she should change into and, finally, when is bedtime and what books we should read to her. Ahh, how time flies.

The ritual lasted a couple of years. These days, the parents will greet us by the door with three magic words, “Thanks, see you.” And off they go. So, cookies for dinner? Fine. As long as we don’t tell Mom.

Looking at the pictures of our grandchildren, they bring a big grin to my face, as they have filled a big gap of my own growing up. I’ve found all the missing pieces and I’ll treasure each and every piece. Heavens, I will have a lot to show my buddies for many more years to come.