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Don't blink

A few weeks ago, I held my newborn daughter in my arms immediately after the emergency cesarean section, and gave her the first drink of water to test her ability to swallow. Don't blink...

She is now one of three people in the public relations department at Ben & Jerry's in Burlington, Vt. By the way — do not call to ask me for coupons.

Healthcare reform, Ren Square, the New York State Senate debacle, T.O. at Bills Training Camp, tornados and the latest attempt by the U.S. Congress to expand concealed weapons permits all fell by the wayside, as I tried to determine what to write about for this column.

On a recent morning, my wife also mentioned a number of topics in an attempt to assist me, but the one that really hit home involved a thought I touched upon in my last column, and that is the fact that we're both dealing with my son packing for college, as he also moves to Vermont.

It's difficult to know how to react to the variety of emotions that accompany such times, when to let go, when to push away and how to deal with separation in general.

That morning, my wife and I reminisced about our conflicting feelings when the little baby I mentioned in the first sentence first headed off to college in 2003. To some extent we were elated and worried, simultaneously enjoying the fact that we would have more time to ourselves, and fearful of the times when we would miss her. But at least our son was still living at home at the time.

Now we laugh as we revisit many of those feelings, and when the fact that soon both of them will be in Vermont is called to mind.

My daughter won a prize for a photograph she took when she was in kindergarten. It depicted her younger brother greeting me at the door as I came home from the office in my suit and tie, briefcase in hand. It was universal to some extent, since you could see his back and only up to my shoulders in the picture. She titled it, "Daddy's Home." It really could have been a picture of any son greeting his father.

As I look over numerous other pictures, I can't help but think about how, despite the many months and years we spend raising our children, when we look back it all seems to have gone by in a split second. When I see parents with very young children, I tell them jokingly that it seems as though my daughter was a newborn just a few weeks ago. I smile when I tell them, "Don't blink."

Looking at old photos, I also wonder occasionally whether I missed certain events while taking those pictures for posterity. Perhaps I did not fully enjoy those moments instead. Either way, looking at the pictures as the kids grew older makes me smile as nothing else can.

As an aside, in response to the feedback I have received from some of you who read this column regularly, I want to say it keeps me going. Usually, as I try to decide on a topic, I wind up writing about what's on my mind most intensely at that moment. Accordingly, the topic for today's column was inevitable. When I started to write a regular column for *The Daily Record*, I had some fleeting thoughts that I would spend most of the time discussing legal topics. But readers tell me they read plenty of information about the law in various other ways. They say they enjoy my column most when I discuss personal stories or just take an off-beat approach to an otherwise normal topic.

As much as I appreciate the feedback, I must confess that the additional deadline continues to be an ever-present stressor, especially in light of the fact that I don't want to let down the same people who have taken time out of their day to talk to me about their reaction to what I write. I can honestly tell you that I would appreciate your help: Any suggestions for other column topics, comments or even criticism are more than welcome. Please e-mail me at brenna@brennalaw.com as you deem appropriate.

In the meantime, as I await your advice, I'll be spending just a little bit more time observing the moment, and taking one or two less pictures. My wife and I will figure out how to deal with our empty nest, and will take additional comfort in the fact that we'll now be able to get two visits for the price of one trip. We're also grateful that Vermont and Rochester are on the same planet, even though sometimes it doesn't feel that way.

Did I mention that a few weeks ago ...

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