

Situation calls for mutual understanding

Economy forcing more grads to return home

United Press International
Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they go to take you in.

The poet Robert Frost wrote that more than 60 years ago, but more and more college graduates are finding the words apply to them today as they leave campuses in search of jobs and security, financial and emotional.

A tight job market, rising rents, inflation and unrealistic expectations are forcing many students to return home with their diplomas, often after four or more years of living on their own in dormitories or off-campus housing.

The arrangement saves money, but parents and children alike pay the price in other ways, say researchers and counselors who work with family members on both ends of the returning suitcase.

"It can be traumatic for everyone, especially if things aren't worked out in advance," says Elizabeth Wiegand, a consumer economist for Cornell Cooperative Extension and professor emerita in the New York State College of Human Ecology.

"It's like being caught in mid-air above a hurdle," says Greg Magin, 22, a January graduate of Hamilton College. Magin moved back into his parents' home to work at "an interim job" while saving money to live in New York City.

"You've left school behind, but you haven't stepped out into the real world" yet," Magin says.



Wiegand calls the trend "the re-filled nest syndrome," a twist on the term coined to describe the period of loss and loneliness many parents are said to feel when the last of their children has moved out of the house.

"Now a lot of parents who dreaded an empty nest may not even experience it," Wiegand says.

There have always been young adults who have used their parents' homes as way stations between college and jobs,

graduate school or marriage. But in the past, the economy has generally been flexible enough to render those stays temporary.

Today, home visits often last months, or even years, while graduates wait to land jobs, often under the obligation of paying back hefty education loans.

Steven Wexler, 24, moved back into his parents' New York City home last May after living away for six years, first at Princeton University, where he earned

a bachelor's degree in music, and then at the University of Miami.

"I was certain I would have a place of my own by now," says Wexler, who is trying to break into the music writing and production business. "Even though my parents try to be accommodating, I'm used to having independence and privacy, and that makes it tough."

"He's a nice person to have around, but tensions do arise," says Steven's mother, Evelyn Wexler. "I think it would be better for everyone concerned if he were independent."

It's important for all members of a family to realize their situation will change considerably when a child moves back after having lived away, says Dr. Arthur Hitchcock, Professor Emeritus in counseling psychology and student development at State University of New York at Albany.

"You do have to readjust," agrees Evelyn Wexler. "It's hard not to slip back into parent-child roles. I find myself giving the same advice I did before Steven left home — drive carefully, put on a sweater, things like that."

Trying to juggle job-hunting with rent and loan payments can seem overwhelming to recent graduates, Hitchcock says. "Many times they're not able to connect with the job market, and they need the time at home to assess where they're trying to go."

Ms. Wiegand observes that many returning students are graduates who may have aimed too high and feel they've failed when they don't land jobs immediately in their chosen fields. But going home is not always an act of desperation.

Mary McLaughlin, 22, had a verbal agreement with her parents that they wouldn't sell their home until at least a few years after she had graduated, so she would have a place to live while she paid back her school loans.

When she did move back into her parents' suburban Albany County, N.Y., home after leaving the state university at Geneseo, she brought a houseguest — her husband, Mike.

"It was stifling," she says. "Just being home again makes you more dependent; I was a lot less confident in my own deci-

sions than I had been away at school.

"And I think it's worse to move back home when you're married. You have very little personal privacy. It's hard to be somebody's wife and somebody's daughter at the same time," said Mrs. McLaughlin.

While most graduates go home because they can't find jobs, some who are employed choose to return to the "nest," preferring the company of their families to being alone or living with roommates.

Mary McCombs, 22, a radio newswoman who returned to her Rochester, N.Y., home after graduating from Syracuse University in May 1981 said: "I'm not the type of person who can live alone, and sharing a place with a roommate can be awkward no matter how well you get along."

Though Ms. Wiegand warns

that parents and children may become too dependent upon each other if the child moves back home, Ms. McCombs says she and her mother are only as close as they need to be.

Hitchcock stresses that emotional support of live-at-home children is perhaps even more important than financial help. "Parents have to realize their kids are going through a new experience — they have to find their way," he says.

Although she recommends most grown children should be discouraged from living at home indefinitely, she says that only as a last resort should parents kick the child out of the house.

"If they look like they're getting too cozy and they're not making an effort at independence, then parents might have to take some drastic action," she says. "Otherwise, if everyone just talks to each other, they'll probably get through it."

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Fees for each plan are as follows:

7 Day	\$195.00	May 31 through July 1
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May — Kegs by the pool

June — 2nd annual watermelon extravaganza

July — Games picnic

August — End of the summer celebration

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