

Michael & Myrna Lapres - Starting Over in Georgia

Cabot W. Peterson
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ATLANTA - It's not easy to pack up and move 2,000 miles from the home you've known and raised your children in for 24 years. That's exactly what Michael and Myrna Lapres found themselves doing last July when Michael's employer deemed it necessary to transfer him from California to work out of their main office in Atlanta.

Giving up their home was one thing, but the Lapres had been involved in a variety of activities in their community and their church, and were such an integral part of both that to sever the many relationships they had fostered would be an even bigger challenge.

Raising three boys, all of whom were active in Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts - with each obtaining the distinction of Eagle Scout - offered Michael, a computer consultant who holds a degree in Systems Design Engineering, the opportunity of being a scoutmaster for over ten years.

Holder of an NRA (National Rifle Association) certificate as a range master, he also taught gun safety and supervised shooting ranges in the Bay Area. In addition, he worked together with Myrna on the Venture Crew, an outdoors co-ed adventure program for young adults of high school and college age. Both Michael and Myrna supported adult leadership training programs for scout leaders as volunteer staff for the Boy Scouts of America.

Myrna, meanwhile, served as the Sunday School Director, worked with the youth ministry, helped organize and run workshops, served as an assistant Pastor, was chairperson for the Church Council, and helped start a women's group through which she was able to do outreach... all the while raising her three sons.

One of Myrna's key activities was her involvement with One Heart Camp, a church summer camp for youth located in the San Bernardino Mountains between Los Angeles and San Francisco. Started in 1988, the program is dedicated to the ideal of offering a place, 'for youth to come, enjoy their time together and build their faith in God.'

Their move to Atlanta, came at a most opportune time. With their children now grown and having moved on with their lives, the "empty-nesters" were ready for a new start and anxious to see what new challenges lay ahead.

They were also anxious to discover what new challenges God had in store for them.

"We made it an adventure," said Myrna. "We just packed whatever we could fit in the car (the rest was sent with the movers) and Michael and I drove to Atlanta. Moving from California I had to figure out what I was supposed to be doing."

Unsure where to start or exactly what she should be doing, Myrna knew she wanted to make a new start in a critical area of her life and faith: her relationships.

“In California most of the work I did was with people in our own church,” said Myrna. “Since coming to Atlanta I’ve been working on making connections and developing relationships in the community.

“Michael and I both want to do tribal messiah work so we bought a house with a big living room. We want to host things together. We want to do church gatherings, but we also think a good way to do tribal messiahship is to develop friendships with people and the community.”

Not one to sit still long, Myrna joined a yoga studio and has recently joined a local pop band where she plays the flute. She has also been a speaker at youth programs in their church, with an emphasis on understanding the value of sexual purity in their lives. The current program is scheduled to be completed at the end of this month.

“My personal goal is to learn how to be friends with people and to develop relationships with people centered upon God. I’m looking for direction, but I also want to have relationships that are authentic and real.”

In relationships, however, the ones that present the greatest and often most difficult challenges and obstacles are the ones we face within our families. It’s a journey fraught with disappointment and heartache, but also filled with tremendous joy and love. And, once the journey begins, it never ends.

It is this type of challenge that Myrna finds the most fulfilling. Over the past two-plus years she has been a parenting facilitator for Love and Logic, an organization now in its fourth decade with the express purpose of giving parents an alternative way of communicating with their children, and teaching children to be responsible for their choices and their resulting consequences.

“It’s about parents learning how to empower kids to solve their own problems,” said Myrna.

She’s also working with her church to develop the program into a webinar series entitled: “Parenting As Spiritual Journey,” with topics that include, “What Does It Mean - Family as the School of Love,” “How to Raise a Toddler/Preschooler Without Losing Your Mind,” “Surviving the Teen Years,” and others.

“It’s my passion,” said Myrna. “I see parenting as a spiritual journey and the family as a school of love. Parents model what we want our children to achieve. I want to invest my energy in working with families.”

In keeping with the emphasis on family and friends, Myrna has also helped organize a women’s circle, something she was involved in during her time in California. She recently became active in a group called “Global Humanitarian Summit,” which just held its most recent gathering in Atlanta (see attached story).

“A lot of what I’m learning,” said Myrna, “is about making better connections amongst ourselves. We have to learn how to be friends with people and how to find peace within ourselves.

“When we find peace within ourselves then we can be a model for the world.”