

# "Here's the story... of a man named Presley..."

No, I didn't mess up the words to one of the most well-known theme songs in television history. I am just singing the newest version of the story. Haven't heard it yet? Well, I'm not surprised, as not many people have. But I will be more than happy to share it with you, as it is near and dear to my heart.

This new version starts out with a man named Mike, who is the father of three boys. And this man meets a woman who is the mother of three daughters, and they fall madly for each other. That part is just like the old version. However, in the new version, the children are much older when the story begins, there are other households with former spouses involved, and the woman in this story is me. I am Carol Brady.

Well, actually, I am Ami Presley. I was a divorced mom of "three very lovely girls" when I met Mike in 2007. We had instant chemistry, and blended our families before the year was out, creating a brood that included Kristen, 17; Jordan, 16; Michael Jr., 15; Steven, 14; Kevin, 9; and Chelsie, 7. Our mantle was quite full of stockings at Christmas time, as you can imagine.

We set up house originally in Toledo, Ohio, our hometown. It was the eight of us in a three bedroom house with one bathroom. Talk about some adjustments! Luckily, the children also have other homes – the boys lived with their mom most of the time, while the girls split their time with their father. So, we weren't all together all of the time. I credit this as our saving grace. The kids weren't constantly on top of

each other, so they didn't usually get on each others' nerves, and Mike and I were able to have nights when we had the house to ourselves. But, there were also nights when our very large dinner table was full, and there were arguments over what to watch on television, who was sitting in whose spot on the couch and whose turn it was to play Guitar Hero. Our weeks were filled with school functions, sports activities, family functions, trips to the



mall and the park and the store... it seemed like we were constantly picking someone up or dropping someone off. It was wonderful.

As you can imagine, having this many people in the family can be, to put it nicely, a bit of a financial challenge. We started having some issues, and Mike and I were at our wit's end trying to figure out what we would do. This was about the time that he was offered a job here in Brunswick. It sounded great, but what would we do about the children? Shared parenting in the same

town is one thing, but how would we make it work across the country? After much deliberation, a very tough decision was made. Mike and I would go ahead and move to Georgia, and leave the children in Toledo with the other halves of their families. We would have to endure long-distance relationships with them until we could get set up here in Brunswick, and then they could have long visits in the summer, when they weren't in school.

This new chapter in our family adventure just began at the end of August. I don't know how it is going to end yet, but so far we are surviving. It is very difficult on both Mike and I to be so far from our children. Thank goodness for the Internet and unlimited long-distance phone service. It also helps that we are going through "kid withdrawal" together, and have each other for support. For me personally, the hardest part is missing the every day stuff, like packing lunches for school field trips or helping with unruly hair on picture day. I even miss the stomping of growing feet around the house, and the constant reminders about taking out the garbage and not slamming the screen door. We are really looking forward to bringing the kids down here and having our house full again. That's the way it should be. That's something we've known since that one day when this lady met that fellow. We knew that it was much more than a hunch. This group would somehow be a family. And that's the way we all became the Presley bunch.

Now if I could only find an Alice ... ■