

# PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

## Carl finds raising a kid is expensive

“WE need to talk,” Carl said to his 16-year-old son Toby.

“What now?” thought Toby, pulling his hoodie up over his head.

“You owe me thirty grand,” Carl said.

Toby kept his eyes focused on his PlayStation “God of War.” “I’m busy dad,” he said.

“And that’s just for this year,” said Carl.

Toby killed a Titan.

“I’ve done some calculations,” Carl continued, “on the amount of money I’m spending each year to raise you. Here in Palo Alto it comes to about thirty grand a year.”

“That’s ridiculous,” said Toby, “I don’t have a car. I don’t have an Apple

This is part 71 of a 72-part fictionalized serial written by John Angell Grant with sketches by Steve Curl.

Watch. I don’t have anything my friends have. We’re poor.”



CARL

Carl scratched some notes on a paper.

“And I need a new pair of sneakers,” said Toby.

Carl had grown up in foster homes; and he figured no one did anything for him when he was growing up; so why should he do anything for anyone else. His rough calculations showed the cost of raising his son, to date in Palo Alto, was in the \$300,000 range. And that included him throwing in a bunch of freebies.

Back in 1960 it cost \$25,000 to raise a child to the age of 18. “This is crazy,” thought Carl, “What is the world coming to?”

“Your food alone this year is three grand,” Carl continued to his son. Toby ignored him.

Carl further crunched the data. In a town cheaper to live in than Palo Alto, a family with a modest income of, say \$90,000 a year, might raise a son for \$150,000. Carl shook his head. Since when did an income of \$90,000 become a modest income?

Carl remembered as a teenager hearing of a peer whose father earned \$30,000 a year, and thinking that his family was so rich.

“What am I doing in Palo Alto?” Carl thought. “I’ve got to get out of here. These people are all wealthier

than me, they are smarter than me, they have better educations than me, and now they are increasingly younger than me.”

Carl envied the buff 30-year olds in Starbucks, huddled four to a table, all on their laptops, conferencing with Singapore, or Geneva, or wherever they were conferencing with.

“If there ever was a loser,” thought Carl, “It’s me.”

He returned to his calculations. If he could put his son to work, and turn him into an income stream, that would help.

“It’s time that you learn to be responsible,” Carl said to Toby.

Toby rolled his eyes and pulled his hoodie farther down over his face.

**Tomorrow: The finale.**