

OPINION

When brother and sister relationships are more parental than sibling

Earlene Bohannon
Editor

There are times when a sibling is more than a sibling. Sometimes an older sibling, through circumstances out of their control, must take on parental responsibilities and the burden of care for younger siblings. When this happens, it can create an imbalance in the family that can have far reaching consequences. National Brothers and Sisters Day is celebrated annually on May 2nd. It is an unofficial holiday that recognizes the special bond between siblings. It is also a day to strengthen, or repair broken and strained relationships. The day was inspired by a woman named Claudia Evart, who realized after her sibling's death that she had never actually told her brother how she truly felt about him before he died.

I am the youngest of three siblings. I have a sister, Ann, who is nine years my senior, and we had a brother, Mike, who was nearly seven years old when I was born in 1964.

When I was a very little girl, I adored my sister. She was everything to me. Because of the dynamics of our family, Ann was not just my sister, she was the one who took care of me when I needed to be taken care of.

I do not have a singular memory of our mother washing my hair. However, I vividly recall me

lying prone on my back on the kitchen counter, feet stretched down the length of the cabinets, my head leaned back into the sink as Ann lathered my long curls and rinsed them using the handheld sprayer from the faucet.

She sewed clothes for me. When I was in first grade at Central Elementary, she was a sophomore at Meade County High School. That year's class photo shows me modeling a sleeveless white dress covered in a tiny red print, hair pulled into two ponytails above each ear and tied with bows made from thick red yarn. It was Ann that dressed me that morning and it was she who made sure I looked cute in the picture.

I am filled with a million memories of being her sister. Sleeping curled into the warmth of her body. Chattering non-stop as she hung clothes on the line. Starting in wonder as my first baby teeth fell out; somehow knowing it was she who made sure the "tooth fairy" came.

Although just five years old at the time, I have a clear memory of sitting with her on our couch watching the Apollo 13 saga as it unfolded. I remember looking to her for guidance on how I should respond. I was too young to understand what was happening, but I was not too young to realize the soberness of the situation.

Our brother was the consummate boy. Wild



The three Raley siblings out on Fairgrounds Road in Brandenburg, Kentucky in 1966. From left to right: Mike, Earlene and Ann.

as a buck, even from an early age. Although both were my siblings, that is where their similarity ceased. Our brother was a horse crazed, lizard and snake catching, tree fort building hot mess. He was forever getting himself into one scrape after another without pause. While he was huge fun, he was not the one I went to when I needed care. He was the one who got me bucked off horses, taught me how to smoke behind the barn (thank goodness that habit didn't take!) and gave me my first sip of beer. He was only fifteen years old the first time he was returned home in the back of Sheriff Marion Whelan's cruiser.

My siblings were definitely not cut from the same cloth.

Until I was eight

years old, Ann was my safe space; the one I believed would take care of me. She and I shared the same bed up until the day before she married and moved away. I missed her terribly and grieved for her daily presence in my life. I blamed her for growing up and leaving me behind. I childishly resented that she got to grow up and go away and that I had to be the one to stay.

Since then, throughout our lives, there has been a seasonal fluency to our complicated relationship. There were times when we were close to one another as well as vast periods of confusion when neither of us were sure what to do about each other.

A few years ago, during an especially challenging time wrought



Photos submitted by Earlene Bohannon | The Messenger
The two sisters shared a laugh on Doe Valley Lake in 2023.

with pain, I told myself that I was just going to love her. No matter what, I was going to love my sister. I did not want to go forward anymore without having the opportunity to love her. Somewhere along the way, I came to realize how, without her, I would not be who I am now. I had an epiphany whereas I began to understand that it was because of her loving attention towards me when I was young, and at my most vulnerable, that created in me the desire to love others. As I grew up and began my teaching career, I could see the differences between children who received love when they were young and those who did not. I also came to realize that the one who gives that love to young

children does not matter much as long as they receive it.

I know that it is because of her that I received that love during my baby and toddlerhood.

It was not her choice to be thrust into the role of caregiver at age nine. She did not have to do it. Our brother did not do it. Yet, she did it anyway. She fed me, changed my diapers, bathed me, and taught me good things.

Sometimes a brother or a sister is more than just a brother or a sister. I am grateful that I realized that before it was too late. Because of the example of Evart, I know I need to take the time to say I am aware of the sacrifices she made for me and to understand how fortunate I am that she did.

McPherson denounces Governor's veto of government contract efficient measure

Submitted Article:

Last week, Governor Andy Beshear vetoed provisions of House Bill 622 that would have reformed the way the executive branch paid contracts to community partners. HB 622 would have required the government to pay contracts within thirty days of receiving an invoice from a contractor. Representative Shawn McPherson of Scottsville released

the following statement on the Governor's veto:

"I am disappointed in the Governor's veto of this common-sense measure. Our state should promptly meet its financial commitments and understand a contract before it is released to the public for bidding. Despite the Governor's veto, I will continue to work with the executive branch and my colleagues in the General

Assembly to see this legislation passed again in the next session.

This year, I worked closely with Chair of the Appropriations and Revenue Committee Jason Petrie, State Budget Director John Hicks, and Secretary of the Finance Cabinet Holly Johnson to create legislation that would improve the way the government fulfills appropriations and help the executive branch and

its partners in the community. This legislation is not an issue of politics but of government efficiency. These policies can be placed in regulation by the executive branch, but regulations change with administrations. Law is the only way to ensure efficient government practices are followed by the executive branch, regardless of who is elected governor."



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The MessengerKY
Bridging Local Communities Together in Kentucky Since 1882

Issued Weekly: ISSN 0746-8113 and USPS 336-480

Member Of:
Kentucky Press Association
National Newspaper Association
W. Kentucky Press Association

Periodicals Postage Paid at
Brandenburg, KY 40108

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Publisher: Meade Media Group, LLC
Editor: Earlene Bohannon
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