

Siblings
By Kathryn Cubalo

I was the second born in our family. My brother Frank, called Sonny, is just 18 months older than I am, so we were raised almost like twins. From the beginning, he seemed to be much more easy-going than I was. My mother says that when I was old enough, I would take his toys and he would just say, "Aw, sissier." He also used to ride his trike to the corner gas station and the attendant would give him two suckers. He would always bring on home for "sissier."

As we grew older, he started to school two years ahead of me, since his birthday was in the summer and mine, in December. I wanted badly to learn to read, so I learned to read his primers that he brought home. He had difficulty with reading (we now think he was dyslexic), so by the time we reached eighth grade in our one-room country school, we were both in the same grade and went through high school together. I loved having a big brother, and was very proud in our senior year when he got all A's in his industrial classes. He went on to GM Tech and became a process engineer. He worked at Buick in Flint until his retirement. He has a wonderful voice and has always sung in the choir at his church. He and his wife Nancy have 5 children and 10 grandchildren. I love all of them.

My sister Helen is more that 4 years younger than I am, so her birth was somewhat of a shock to me. I was no longer the baby. I remember the time when she was born in the little house we lived in at that time, called the John Beck house. Our mother had told us about a baby coming, but I think we forgot. My brother and I woke up one night hearing something strange. I said to him, "Maybe it's those cats fighting outside again!" This had happened a few nights earlier. "I don't think so," said Sonny. About this time, someone heard us talking, and came in to get us. The Doctor wanted us to see the baby. Someone was holding me (I was not very big for my age), and someone else showed me the Baby! About that time, she let out a cry and I gave a huge start.

I suppose I wasn't too impressed with the newcomer. As she got a little older, she got into my dolls and managed to punch the eyes out of my new Baby Buttercup doll. My mother wrote to Sears and they sent a new one. She also sort of fixed the old one with gum, so I had twin dolls. We tried to play together at times, but didn't seem to have much in common as we were growing up. We shared a room and that was a bit of a trial for me, as I liked things neat and she was messy. When we were both adults, we became good friends and have remained good friends throughout the years. She has been divorced for many years and has two children and one grandchild.

My youngest brother, John, was born when I was 10 years old. Daddy had decided not to go back to work on the freighter that winter and had a job at Besser in Alpena. On March 14, a Sunday, a winter storm came up and our folks decided that Mother should go to the hospital in case we got snowed in. Her labor had not started, but the next day, the doctor decided to give her a drug to induce labor. She later told that the baby started to come very quickly, but the nurse didn't believe her. She screamed and hollered, but she delivered the baby alone in the labor room. This was the only one of us delivered in the hospital. The rest of us were born at home with loving relatives around.

I must have been at the right age, because I thought the baby was wonderful. I took over taking care of him and felt it was my responsibility. He had colic for quite a few

months and we all took turns rocking him. My father was very nervous, so we tried to keep the baby from crying too much. I carried him around more than necessary. Once, I was holding him on the counter at a store and he fell off. We had to take him to emergency, but he was OK. Another time, he fell off an innertube at the lake. I froze, but my father ran in with his clothes on and rescued him. Any time he was hurt, I thought it was my fault. I guess I took my responsibility too seriously. According to my mother, he was the most difficult to raise. He had pneumonia about three times before he was one year old, and had to be rushed to emergency. He was a red head with a hot temper. My mother would just hold him down when he had one of his temper tantrums.

As an adult, he became a successful teacher and then administrator. His wife says he still has a temper, but he mostly controls it. He has been married to Carol for many years and they have three sons and five grandchildren so far.

All four of us feel very fortunate for our parents, our upbringing, and our family relationships. There is a lot of love in our family and we have learned to appreciate our differences. It is wonderful to know we have others who can care for us and will pray for us in good times and difficult times.

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