

30th Storyworth: How Has Your Relationship With Your Siblings Changed?

Originally, I guess I was like most siblings – I had my own interests and they had theirs. So we were never really close as kids. I was also more into my business pursuits, and since we were separated by about 18 months each for birthdays, it seemed reasonable that our interests were pretty different.

That started to change as we became adults, each going our separate route to that status. For my brother Franz, and last sister, Mary, that involved joining the Army. Veronica was the “least likely to become educated”, or so we thought, and so she went more the classic housewife and marriage with kids route. My own marriage would wait until I was finished with my Bachelor’s Degree in Mechanical Engineering, and the start of my career, but would not be pushed too far because Lynne graduated College with her Bachelor’s in Nursing at the same time I got mine, and we wedded in the following September, having met the summer between my sophomore and junior years at Clarkson.

Barb went to Nursing School, although never got her Bachelor’s degree, but became a nurse nonetheless. But she and her husband, Mickey, were the first of my siblings to actually start a business, which they still operate to this day; Newburg Rescue Supply. But oddly, each of the siblings eventually had their own businesses; mine was an engineering consultancy, Veronica’s became that of a Master’s Prepared Social Worker who still cares for private patients. Franz briefly dabbled with his second wife in data management, but eventually divorced her as he had his first wife after a horrific accident involving his daughter. He is now working as an independent contractor for DOD because of his military connections in communications. More on him soon. Mary became an NP in Psychiatry like Lynne, in fact from the same program at Sage College in Troy NY, but Mary chose to work via a Doctor’s practice while Lynne sought her own independent practice.

Once we sibs all became adults, a lot of things changed. Not least was their revelation to me that my sisters had been abused by our Dad, of which I had been unaware at the time. But as I learned more it made me more distant from him and eventually we became completely estranged before his death, as I observed he continued the bad practices despite being caught red handed. That also hurt my own relationship with my mother, but it brought me closer to my sisters, so I guess that was a positive.

Franz was a communications specialist with the Army, as he’d been a DJ with a local radio station, then was sent to Germany and Japan to manage Armed Forces Stations there, before returning to the USA. Eventually, following 9/11, he would ask me to coordinate his affairs here in the USA while he served as Liason for the Afghan Secretary for the Army, where he served for almost two years, while I continued to live from my home in Liverpool NY. He lives now in Falls Church VA, where he helped the son of his girlfriend from Ukraine to get his Bachelor’s in Computer Engineering, and Franz eventually got his MBA, like me, via part time studies while he was working. So surprisingly, all EXCEPT Barbara have Master’s degrees, something NOBODY would have predicted about us growing up.

I guess that education and life experience similarities has led to our closer bonds. We all have children; Barb and I have one each (Daughters) while Franz had one each natural and a pair of daughters adopted with his second marriage. One of each of those daughters was killed in horrific accidents and I don’t know how Franz has survived, especially now that he is divorced from both their mothers. But it has to have been tough on him.

Mary had a son born before any of the rest of our kids, and she did a fabulous job with Mark, who is very successful and most like me of the children. I have never met his Dad. Mary also had two other sons with her current husband Jim who raised all as his. Veronica had two daughters, but remains close only with Chrissy, while her divorced ex passed away some years ago.

Unfortunately, life demands and COVID interfered with our interaction over the past two years, but I hope to see my sisters later this month for the first time in three years, as we return from visiting my daughter Jess, along with her husband Tom and their only daughter, Ainsley, at their new home in New Haven CT where Jess is a PhD and Professor at UNH, and Tom is a consultant. I still frequently interact with Lynne, as well as her sister Bonnie, who along with her husband Jim, are Godparents for Jess. So we have remained in contact, something I gather is not a frequent occurrence following a divorce like Lynne and mine, from 2011.

I would guess that Veronica has been the most changed by external factors, having barely survived a serious road accident whose ONLY positive was it enabled her to obtain an education she might otherwise have never seen. But deep down every one of the sibs has been affected, to greater and lesser degrees, by factors which surprised us or were at best unexpected. All except Barb had relationships break up over time, and I believe only Franz and I have ever travelled overseas, although I know Mary's husband Jim spent some time with the Marines in some foreign location ;-)

Beyond that I am pretty much behind the eight ball so looking forward to upcoming opportunities to get back together with my siblings and catch up on what's been going on with all of us. I send all of them, along with a host of other people, copies of these various stories which Jess has requested from me, as well as making them publicly available on my website as well as the Storyworth library. So if you have missed any, you can download them as DOC files at <http://www.holzerent.com/pdfpages.htm> where they are listed in order with subject matter at the page bottom. Above that you can find my prior writings for the Porsche Club and below them my music recordings, all secure and available for download as shown.

Having met Dawn Clark online 28 months ago, we have hit it off well, and I look forward to introducing her to the rest of my sibs. She met Franz during our initial travel to what became our winter home in Florida just before COVID hit, which interfered with pretty much everything else since. So it will be nice to visit with Tom's parents again, and to see Jess & Tom's new home next week during our whirlwind tour. We just returned from a two day bus tour nearby them last week with the Canastota and Sylvan Beach Seniors, whose Facebook Group pages I administer, and Jess & Ainsley met us at the Mystic Aquarium for a great time together, watching Ainsley react to the Beluga Whales and other sea creatures.

It will be fun to spend some time again with sibs to catch up on all their goings-on, and show them pictures of our home in Florida as well as Dawn's home here in CNY. We are all suffering the ill effects of getting old (don't bother to try to tell me we aren't – I am too much data driven to be convinced otherwise ;-). But we are better off than a LOT of alternative possibilities, I suppose, and we do at least communicate electronically.

That is not to say we ALL do so regularly nor happily. Mary hates to read emails, and I do not know what I ever did BEFORE the personal computer. Just ask Dawn, who complains she never gets to see much of me because I am camped in the computer room, whether at her place in CNY or our place in Florida. I do still have my motorhome in Parish NY which was my residence for seven years before I met, and moved in with, Dawn, just over two years ago. But I am hoping to find it a new home soon once my investments stop going crazy and return to their prior value at least somewhat, but who can predict when THAT might happen!? ;-)

In the meantime, we will keep in touch by whatever means possible, which is part of why I am camped in at the computer, so I can help Dawn to keep her costs for TV to a minimum and still figure which remote she needs to do what to if she hopes to watch whatever, each time we lose power. I doubt my sibs can help me much with that, either. ;-)

Joe Holzer 7/19/2021