

“The Bow and Arrow”

As a female growing up in the Fifties, I was reared at time when little girls were expected to wear dresses and act like “little ladies”. Someone once convinced me if I could kiss my elbow, I would turn into a boy! The prospect of the privileges accompanying that idea caused me to spend a great deal of wasted time bringing my right and then left elbow extremely close to dislocation as I desperately attempted the impossible feat. As I am now happily married with grown children and precious grandchildren, I, praise God, was obviously unsuccessful!

There was a time however, I truly envied my older brother (by sixteen months) who was often granted privileges that led to great adventures simply because he was born male!

One such occasion was the day he rode his bicycle way farther than the half mile Mother allowed us to roam at will. His quest down the country road was in search of the perfect materials to make his now famous bow and arrow. Back then, children had to be imaginatively creative to fill the seemingly endless summer hours without the “help” of noisy electronics. Complicating life for country kids was the fact we had to find ways to communicate with our siblings as they would probably be the only playmates we would see most of the week!

That said, I spent much of my time thinking of ways I could get Gaylon to play with me. He almost always had more important business to attend, but occasionally he would semi-grudgingly help me build one of my playhouses in exchange for playing cowboys and Indians with him. Roy Rogers and Dale Evans come to mind. The Indians were usually the milo stalks or some other imaginary foe!

Truly, there is no way I can convey how much fun it was to play all those “make believe” games. There was so much wonderful dirt and freedom during that glorious time in our lives! We had school clothes and play clothes. As long as we were in our play clothes, we could get as dirty as our hearts desired!

Also, there is no way I can convey how special I felt when my brother took time to play with me! This, the day of the bow and arrow, was one of those times!

Gaylon had spent all day gathering his supplies, whittling, shaping each weapon to the best of his ability. I don’t remember, but I am told when our dad arrived home from work he even helped perfect my brother’s daylong efforts.

What I do remember was Gaylon’s excitement in testing his prowess with the newly completed, better than “store bought” bow and arrows. In my neediness to be a part of his great adventure, I was reluctant, but conservatively willing to hold up a silly piece of cardboard that refused to stay upright by itself! Anyway, Gaylon “PROMISED” he would not shoot me! In my heart, I knew my brother would never shoot me on purpose, but even at the tender age of five I realized he really had had no practice!

Standing as far from the cardboard as possible, I held the target steady with my left hand. I think I may have even closed my eyes. All I know is one minute I was a happy participant, the next I was a screaming sissy little girl as the homemade

arrow ended its virgin flight, landing not in the intended target, but in the flesh between the thumb and first finger of my left hand!

In retrospect, I wish I could relive the next few moments of my life as they were a frenzied blur of tears, harsh words, and over reactive actions all flying toward my precious brother! I carry the scar on my left thumb today, but I carry a deeper scar in my heart for the fact that my tears and silly scream over a wound, that did not even bleed, caused such sorrow for my brother!

Dad broke all the arrows and the bow my brother had worked so hard to complete! Looking back now through the eyes of a parent, our dad probably felt somewhat responsible for my flesh wound and ensuing tears. Still, the thought of that scene brings tears to my eyes!

Hopefully, from that day forward I was a bit more careful about my reaction to childhood injuries. Praise God... time heals all wounds of the body and heart! My brother and I continued to have grand adventures on the farm! I finally was allowed to wear jeans instead of a dress, and I was a worthy enough companion to my brother that he and our cousin Benny would make up "Tomboy Tests" for his sister, Janis and me! A "Tomboy Test" was a feat of bravery one had to complete, or be called a "Sissy"... but that's another story!

Brother,

May you know I love you, and may you know God's love and blessings through me, today and always. Thanks for playing with me, especially the times you really didn't want to!

Your sister, Ann

Ann's story written Feb 20, 2007

~Ann Stamps Beddingfield