

LIFE

6 babies in 7 years. 8 kids total. Why this Louisville woman put her motherhood journey in God's hands

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Terri Paige, and her husband, Carl, had been parents for more than half their lives and could see their childrearing days ending.

Their son was about to go to college, and their daughter was a vibrant 10-year-old. They were just a few years away from emptying the nest they'd unwittingly started as teenagers.

Then, Terri gave birth to six more babies in seven years.

In her 43 years as a mother, Terri has been both a terrified 15-year-old mother and a 30-something who unabashedly put the size of her family in God's hands.

She raised her first son between high school and college classes and gave birth to her final child while homeschooling their siblings. At various points in the past four decades, she's been a successful business owner, her family's primary provider, and a patient on her last nerve with her own dwindling health care.

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But she was always a mother.

Ahead of Mother's Day, Terri took a few moments to reflect on the journey that brought her eight grown children and led her to co-found the [Medical Transformation Center](#) in Louisville.

"I think we all do the best that we can at the time with the information that we have, but it's a shame there has to be a first kid," she said. "Our (first) son just basically grew up with us. ... With the (younger children) there was more intentionality."

'The energy underneath is very determined'

When Terri's eldest daughter, Emily, now 36, was growing up in the 1990s, she always thought of her mother as glamorous and successful.

Terri had an undeniable ability to enter a room prepared to tackle any task or meet any person. Emily watched her diligently train for and finish marathons. Her mother threw the best parties with exciting extras like smoothie bars and elegant touches like floating candles. She confidently made small talk in the grocery line and could walk away from almost any situation with five new friends.

Her mom had a superhero quality to her.

"She's a very strong woman, and very determined," Emily said of her mother. "If she has a goal, she will try to achieve that goal. The goals might change over the years, but the energy underneath is very focused, very determined."

Motherhood didn't always feel so powerful to Terri, though.

Terri didn't plan her first baby, Emily's older brother Jason, the summer before her senior year of high school. Terri and Carl were high school sweethearts in Muhlenberg County in the late 1970s when she got pregnant. Raised Catholic, she says she felt a deep sense of shame around her pregnancy at the time.

But she didn't let that stop her.

Even while raising Jason, Terri graduated second in her class at Greenville High School, and then immediately set out to find the cheapest apartment she could near the University of Kentucky for college.

She was insistent on attending college even though she was a new mom, but her first semester at the University of Kentucky was a “disaster” as she balanced inopportune class times, child care, working to pay bills, and raising a toddler.

But the Paiges had a plan. Terri’s 18th birthday came early in her second semester, and she and Carl married two weeks later. She wanted to power through a corporate accounting degree so she could support her young family while Carl attended medical school to become an internist and pediatrician. She dreamed of opening a private practice together, where she would run the business side and he’d care for patients.

“I was the business operations, and he was really the blood and guts,” she said. “We have very complementary skills that work well together.”

Terri graduated and began working as a corporate accountant in Lexington. As their life somewhat stabilized in their early 20s, they chose to do something that’s only happened once in their four decades of marriage — they planned for a baby. Emily arrived right on time during Carl’s fourth year of medical school.

When Carl matched with the University of Louisville for his residency, they packed up their life in Lexington and bought a home in the Highlands. But they struggled financially throughout the early 90s. It took Terri months to secure a new job, and in those months, they relied on credit cards for groceries. Carl’s meager paychecks, which amounted to about \$16,000 a year, didn't stretch far.

She eventually landed a job as an internal auditor and business manager for retail banking at PNC.

After Carl's residency, the Paiges moved to a farm in Oldham County. They found an office in Crestwood, painted the walls, and waited for the patients to come.

Their dream had finally become a reality.

As time passed, the practice grew and added partners, and Terri took a step back from the business in her early 30s. She'd kept some health issues at bay throughout her life, such as depression and gastrointestinal issues, and so she always had an emphasis on a fit and healthy lifestyle. She trained for those marathons, and at one point, she considered buying a gym. With her newfound leisure, she made lunch dates with other women in the community and joined a book club.

Terri has always been goal-orientated, but for the first time since she'd started her family 17 years before, she wasn't sure what came next.

“Sometimes when we go and go, and go, and never stop, and then you stop — it kind of hits you,” she explained. “That’s really what had happened my whole life. I think I'd been running on adrenaline up to that spot.”

'You have got to figure this out'

As that adrenaline fizzled out, Terri felt an overwhelming desire to “get quiet.” She felt a pull toward her faith, but it was bigger and more intentional than simply going to church.

“Most people when they're teenagers and young adults, that's where they develop who they are and their core values ... and their identity,” Terri said. “I kind of skipped that part.”

Terri wanted to understand what she believed.

While the Paiges had baptized Emily and Jason, and celebrated their first communion through the Catholic Church, up until this point, faith was more about ceremony than practice.

So Terri began attending Bible studies from a variety of Christian denominations. She read the Bible cover-to-cover, and then she read the Catechism of the Catholic

Church, which outlines the faith's doctrine, too. At that point, she'd been on birth control pills for nearly 18 years, which goes against the teachings in the Catechism.

"I just felt like I couldn't take these anymore," she said, of the contraception. "I felt like I dived into understanding the teaching there."

Once she stopped taking the pills, she became pregnant with her third child, Lily, in a matter of weeks.

Nonni, Joseph, Grace, Gus, and Marcy joined the family, one by one every year or so, for the next six years. Perhaps, more children might have followed, too, if a complication during Terri's final birth hadn't led to a hysterectomy.

Quadrupling the number of children in the family certainly shocked Emily in the beginning, she remembered, but now it's impossible to imagine life without her younger siblings. Her glamorous mother shifted from a successful, business-driven socialite and turned her attention to growing her family. Terri dove into cooking and filled her kitchen table with homemade breads and pastas.

She started homeschooling Lily and added each young child into the mix once they became old enough for lessons.

All the while, Terri struggled with her health. She's had issues before, but they became unbearable after her eighth and final child was born. Terri's autoimmune system and metabolism were shot. She struggled with chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, and spastic colon. She'd gained 60 pounds, and shingles outbreaks ravaged her face, neck, and shoulder.

A regiment of traditional medications helped manage the increasing discomforts, but to Terri, it felt more like she was masking the problems than finding solutions for them.

"Look, here it is again," she remembers telling Carl, frustrated at another round of shingles.

“Well, did you take your pills,” he questioned.

She wanted to scream.

“I didn’t work so you could go to medical school for you to tell me ‘to take a pill,’” she told him. “You have got to figure this out.”

That’s how the next major addition to their life, the Medical Transformation Center, was born.

Medical Transformation Center opens in Louisville

Carl began exploring how lifestyle, genetics, and other factors impact illnesses. He researched cellular medicine as a method of treating inflammatory, autoimmune, cardiovascular, and gastrointestinal diseases. By uncovering and managing cellular inefficiencies, Carl could strengthen and optimize individual cells. The idea was to support her whole body from its basic unit up.

Terri’s health improved dramatically.

Carl and Terri launched the Medical Transformation Center in 2014, which initially operated as part of his general practice. In 2021, they expanded to a state-of-the-art medical center in Kentucky where they focus on helping patients with healthy aging, optimization, longevity, and restorative care.

For Terri, growing that business, helping other patients, and maintaining her longevity is wildly important.

Now her youngest child is 17, and while most of her children are approaching a point where they could leave home, she assumes she’ll never truly have an empty nest. Her fourth child, Nonni, has [Down syndrome](#), and she expects she’ll, at least, always be at home with them.

Her family will continue to evolve. She has three grandchildren, and she's excited for more to come as her children build families of their own. She’s already had the

surreal moment when she moved her second youngest child, Gus, into his dorm room at the University of Kentucky.

Sure, Terri studied on that campus, but she missed the whole dorm experience.

“I walked these streets, these lanes, as a mom living off campus and figuring it out,” she said. “It was weird. It really did bring a lot of that emotion back.”

Those lanes, streets, and other decisions led her through four decades of motherhood and three decades of running a business with her husband. While the portrait of her family, her faith, and her career have certainly changed over the decades, her philosophy hasn't shifted much since she was a 15-year-old student carrying her first child at Greenville High School.

“You just do what you need to and move through it,” she said.

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