



I am a 66 year old man. I am a father of four and grandfather of seven. I am from, that generation, you know the one that has a wife that stays at home and I go out & earn the keep. I would come home & dinner would be organized washing and ironing done and the house kept clean. I would have to look after the outside & all the "blokey stuff". We had our roles & worked really well together.

I have watched my three daughters and son grow up and have children & WOW have things changed.

I remember the day my wife first told me that she was pregnant with our first child. It was 1966, I had been at work and come home, no mobile phones back then to text me, and was greeted by my wife who told me news that she was pregnant. I knew that she was going to the doctors to check as she had not been well. There was no chance of me going with her – that was definitely not allowed back then & quite frankly I didn't want to know about those "women's problems". I was so excited I had a smile on my face and couldn't wait to tell everyone. We headed to Taree that first weekend to tell my wife's parents.

The pregnancy was quite uneventful, as far as I was concerned anyway. When the time was getting close to having the baby I would drop my wife to my mother's while I went to work. When my wife went into labor, the day she turned 21, she was at my mother's & her water broke & she was taken by ambulance to the local hospital. On arriving home from work my mother told me what had happened. I went straight up to the hospital and was only allowed to stay for a little while with her then as was the practice I was sent to the waiting room. There was no progress that night so I went home & after calling the hospital the next day I went to work. That afternoon I went back to the hospital and was once again only allowed to visit for a few minutes. Back to the waiting room ...

Twenty-four hours later my first child, a daughter was born. I was allowed to go and view her through the glass window when she was taken to the nursery. I had to hold up a card with our surname on it so that the nurse could bring the right baby to the window. My first hold of the baby was not until she was taken home a week later. I could visit my wife straight after the birth for approximately 10 minutes.

We, the other dad's, would all line up like cattle to view the babies then sit with our wives for 1 hour daily. The bell would ring & we would be told 'OUT'. Some men were able to visit twice a day due to their availability in the afternoon but I was at work during this time.

When I brought my wife home she carried the baby in her arms in the car, no baby capsules back then.

We had the bassinet set up in our room. The child was breastfeed 4 hourly to a routine, whether she wanted or not, or needed more in between.

My role was to go to work & come home & let my wife know if I thought the baby needed changing. I would enjoy standing in front of the mirror admiring myself rocking the sleeping baby. I was a proud father. But being proud didn't mean that I had to get involved. It just wasn't done back then. It was all cloth nappies and a copper to boil the nappies in, layers of clothes & no all-in-one suits. I didn't change a nappy until my now seven year old granddaughter needed to be changed when I was babysitting her at around 6 months of age.

I did, on occasion, my wife will say rarely, feed the child a bottle. At this stage she was then 6 months and my wife was 3 months pregnant.

The subsequent births of my other children really didn't change much – as males we had no role to play in the births and visiting was once again very strict as to the hours we could stay. The children were all kept in the nursery and only brought to my wife for feeding. All children were first nursed by me when they were brought home. I did however have lots of play time and we went on good holidays and outings together.

All of my children are very special but there was nothing like the birth of my son, the feeling that my name will carry on to another generation. He was born in 1974, but as I have stated, even then I was not allowed participate in the birth, or even hold him until they were home. My wife spent 3 months in hospital pending the birth of our son during this time my mother looked after the 3 girls and myself. I took the girls to see their mother every afternoon after school. My mother stepped in here looking after the children as I my wife would have.

There was no prenatal training or any communication with the Doctor, men were seen but not often talked to.

I am amazed at the changes. My daughters, their husbands, my son & his wife all went to lessons about what to expect in the labor and when they come home. The men could all go

to the birth & not only that were expected to be there and play an active role. They got to cut the cord and usually nursed the baby before the mothers.

I have watched my three son's-in-law take a very active role in the up bringing of the children. Back in my day all the day-to-day up bringing was dealt with by my wife & I was only ever called up when things got out of hand. My daughters can go away and know that the children would be taken care of by their partners in the same manner that they would.

I retired in 1998 and have probably had more to do with the looking after of my grandchildren then with my own. It is not that I wasn't there for them or that I didn't actually do things back then, the male was not expected to do much in that regard.

What do you think the new dad's miss out on now that you had back then? I used to love to come home and smell the evening meal cooking and the children and my wife greeting me at the door. I guess with both working and the roles changing that that would be called chauvinistic.

What do the dad's have now that you would have liked to have been involved in? Seeing the changes of today I would have liked to have been more actively involved in the birth of my children. I am not saying that I would have enjoyed changing nappies and the rest that goes with the maintenance of looking after babies but it might have made me more aware of what was needed in the running of a home.

Our son is a father now and is on paternity leave to care for his 9 month old son. He is very capable of running the household as well as caring for his son, he cooks, cleans washes etc. The roles certainly have changed. He works one day a week while his wife works four. Eventually he will go back to full time work and his wife will work three days while their son goes to day care.

I have been actively involved with the raring of my grandchildren, in particular one of my granddaughters. Her father took ill when she was 18 months old and I used to mind her by myself (my wife worked a few hours a week). This was a full time job, I did not realize how much time & care was needed for one so small. However, I survived, probably because at the end of the day I could hand her back.

Now we travel as much as possible, we have brought a caravan that is suitable for just the two of us and we are off spending the kids' inheritance! (Or their SKI account).