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backtalk



By Tanna Guthrie

Changing of the Guard

My sister Nica was the one who called, letting me know that Uncle McKee had died. Another death update from home. Three months ago, it was Uncle Ernest. The year before, Aunt Margie. I come from a big southern Indiana family with 40 first cousins on my father's side. It's inevitable that those calls will come more frequently.

The passing of my elders reminds me of my middle age. I don't want to be the grown-up. I still want to be the kid, not the responsible one.

Mr. Everest, my 84-year-old neighbor, and I have become close since the passing of his beloved wife. During one of our daily walks, I asked him when he first felt like the responsible one. He said it was when his mother died. A moment of clarity.

I call my mom. She said she broke down and cried when she got her first social security check. That was the first time she really felt old. It's not that the end for her is near but, at 73, it's a lot closer than it used to be.

It's an odd feeling to realize that you're older than the president. I should be smarter, wiser. I wonder if he feels the same. Maybe even Methuselah had doubts. He lived 969 years. Did he die knowing all the answers? As comedian Steven Wright put it, "I intend to live forever. So far, so good."

I dread the day when the complimentary issue of *AARP* magazine will arrive in the mail. Is it mandatory that I subscribe? And what of the senior citizen discount? When I become eligible, do I take it?

The call from my sister leads to a call from me to the florist in my hometown. I find myself doing the grown-up thing: ordering flowers from the family for my uncle. That's something my mother always did. Now it's my turn to be the responsible one.

Tanna is the afternoon host on 98.1 KUDL. She's also a charity fundraising auctioneer and co-heads the Auction Properties Division of Prudential Kansas City Realty. She can be reached at 913-568-4888, unless it's the Grim Reaper calling. For now, put him on hold.

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