

Father's Day is an after-thought tradition. Mother's Day was started in 1860 by some peace-and-reconciliation-loving mothers and Woodrow Wilson made Mother's Day a national holiday in 1916, but it took another 50 years of sporadic local Father's Day declarations until Nixon (Nixon!) made it officially a national holiday. Why comparatively late? Florists and perfume sellers sat out the father recognition effort. But there is a little profit in selling ties, barbeque tools, and golf balls even if duck decoys and tobacco pipes are in decline. Like dads-to-be at Lamaze classes, Father's Day is an add-on tradition that is generally sweet--but we all know who does the heavy work.

I remember the year a liquor company gave free ties with New York Times Sunday deliveries that featured stylized sperm. More than gauche, it was reductive. In this era of non-binary roles and gender fluidity, there is a need to celebrate the partners for primary care givers, and we should honor fathers as the symbolic standard-bearers for an extended family and family of choice—the stepparents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and various adoptive relatives who provide necessary support and guidance for the young. A huge source of stress during the pandemic has come from kids being at home, doing school on Zoom, while both parents are trying to work from home. Most of that still fell on primary care givers but there has been more sharing of responsibility than in past typical years. So, we should rename this day as Partners Day, to honor all those who were not the Primary Care Giver but nevertheless are essential supports, supportive decision makers, and contributory nurturing sources. Any primary care giver who has had to do it alone will tell you that having a trustworthy, sensitive child-rearing reality-checker, go-fer, do-er, empathizer, and emotions modulator is extremely valuable. Therefore, Happy Partners Day!