

• parent perspective •

Boy or girl: Does it matter?

A mother of two sons and one girl tells all

BY CATHAREN KANN

Do you know if you're having a boy or a girl?" Anyone who is pregnant may quickly tire of hearing this question over and over. We can't resist asking because the boy/girl mystique intrigues us so much. Does it

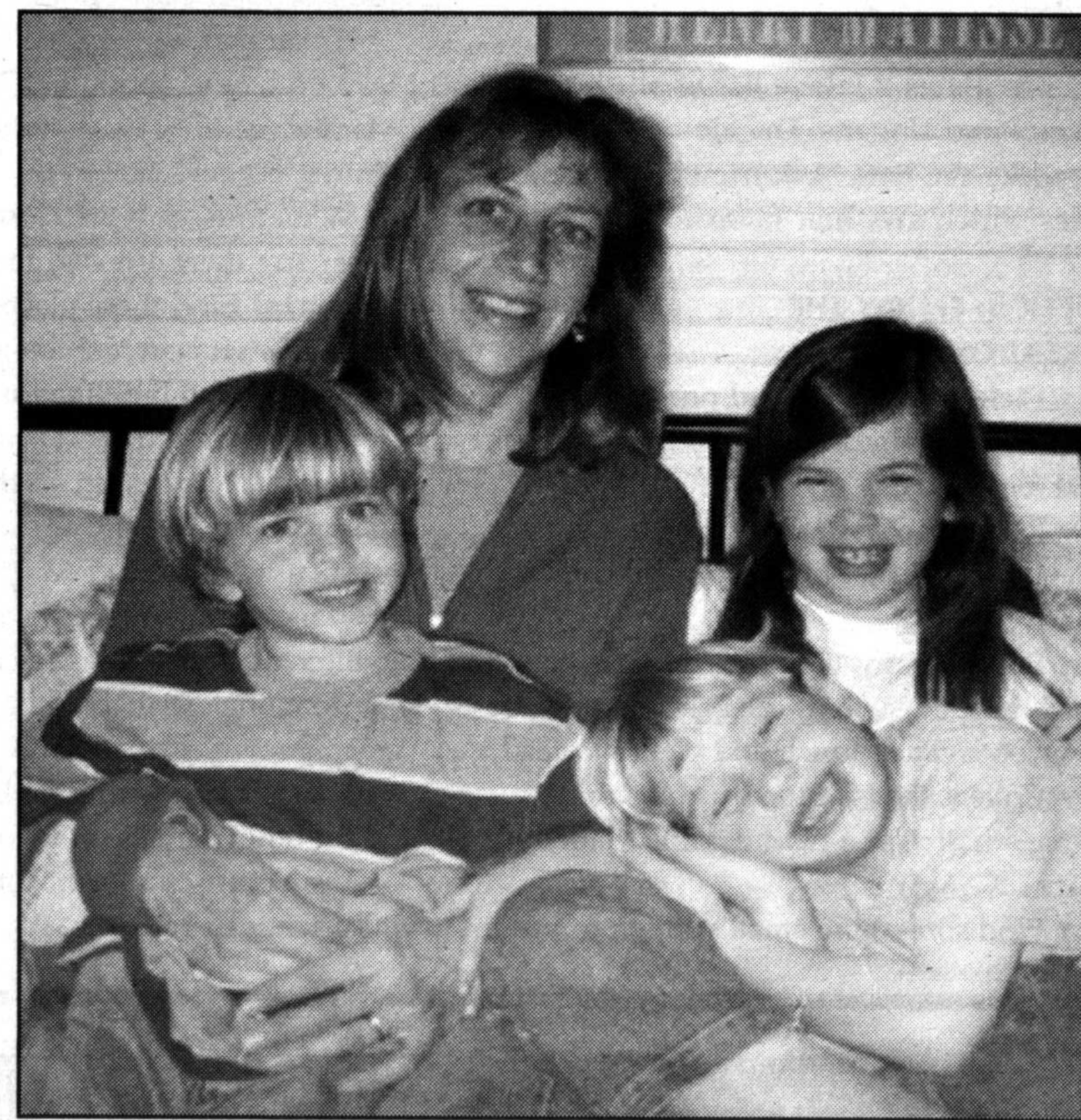
really matter what you are having? In a soothing tone of voice, well-meaning friends and relatives will tell us it does not.

Frankly, it does. Your life will be different if you have a boy or a girl. That's especially true if you have all girls or all boys. Don't get me wrong, I love my sons as much as I do my daugh-

ter, but most women, upon learning they are having a son, have felt that fleeting sense of panic, wondering if they will

continued on page 15

Catharen Kann of Newton, is a freelance writer and mother of three.



Catharen Kann with her three children.

www.townonline.com/parentsandkids

JULY 2005 • WEST OF BOSTON • PARENTS AND KIDS 15

PARENT PERSPECTIVE

continued from page 14

have anything in common with their opposite-gender offspring.

Luckily, I have discovered that personalities are more dominant than the sex of the child.

My older son is very physically active. People tell me he is "all boy." My youngest son is more thoughtful and cautious, and was never one to plunge off a sofa. Both boys love to bake muffins. My daughter is feminine, yet tough and assertive. She loves reading and art, and excels in mathematics.

Physically though, compared to her brothers, she is cautious.

My children have all enjoyed playing with the same toys, but often in different ways. One such toy is the pink doll stroller. Everyone loves to wheel it around with a beloved item inside. For my daughter it was always a stuffed animal or a doll, while for my sons, it

would be a piece of train track or a favorite truck. Similarly, my sons will sleep with a hard object. Nevertheless, as I have watched my sons sleep, clutching their beloved wrench or metal truck, I have observed that their affection appears as strong as my daughter's affection for her doll.

I suspect it is women who have all daughters who most believe that it doesn't matter. They have never experienced shopping for boys' clothes. It appears that about two-thirds of the clothes in the children's department are for girls, and boys clothes seem to have been made as an afterthought. When my son at age four requested red socks, I was unable to comply. Cranberry, perhaps. Around age four little boys' socks stop coming in bright colors and can only be found in cranberry, navy blue, tan and white.

In addition, women with all

daughters have never had to skip making that flowered wreath in Mommy and Me art class, while their son spends the entire hour pounding on play dough.

Other challenges for moms of boys include the physical hardship. A mother once commented to me that she has noticed that mothers of boys tend to be thinner. That may be true. Perhaps mothers of boys do more running, when playing with their sons or trying to keep their sons safe. Some people say that girls whine more and are pickier. In our family, my daughter would get the whining award, but my oldest son would get the pickiest award. Again, individual characteristics trump the differences between the sexes.

Every woman I know has always longed for a daughter. Women talk of that mother/daughter bond. My experience tells me that this

bond is based partly on reality, and partly on myth.

In temperament and personality, for instance, my daughter and I differ more than we are alike. She has an energetic, direct 'take charge' personality, whereas I am quieter and more diplomatic. My calm temperament most resembles that of my youngest son.

So what are women with all daughters missing? Part of the answer is some things around the house. There are a myriad of fascinating building and construction toys available these days. And everyone loves a well equipped pirate ship. My sons make sound effects and have battles with ours, whereas my daughter organizes the ship in detail before her crew sets out for a voyage.

Similarly, women with all boys should not neglect toys your sons would enjoy, such as beads for them to string or glue, and dolls or little animals

with changeable clothes. Miniature houses with miniature furniture (ie. yes, a "doll" house) are fun, too.

So if you have a boy, will your life be different? Yes, but do not panic. Your son will delight you in other ways. Just the other day when my brother-in-law turned a young 35, I lamented, "I wish I were turning 35." My five-year-old son piped up, "Don't worry Mommy, you'll be 35 soon."

Your son may keep you running and baffle you with his masculine ways, but you can also make sure he turns out sensitive, sweet, considerate, and kind. He will beg his Dad to buy you the biggest, most beautiful batch of flowers in the grocery store. He will be your pride and joy. If you are still not convinced, I will whisper you one last secret: Girls may adore their mothers, but boys worship theirs.