



(Left to right) Gabby with soulwatcher Kit Minton, Sheila with Risa, and Mimi carrying Sam

what not to iron," Sheila explains.

Sheila works 40 hours a week as a social service case manager for Multnomah County. "My co-workers have been very supportive. They gave Mimi and me a shower—a cake and some money. People from work have come and taken the babies to help me out because they knew that I needed to get the house siding done, or we were stressed and needed a break. In fact, yesterday, when I went for a walk I went to work. I knew they would take care of those babies. I just sat there and drank coffee."

Mimi does development work for Cascade Aids Project 30 hours per week. She divides her work time equally between home and office. "I don't think we could have done the pregnancy without CAP," Mimi reflects. "I ended up on six weeks of strict bed rest at the end because I was having early labor contractions. I couldn't get out of bed except to go to the bathroom. People from CAP organized an emotional-stability support team. Somebody came every day to cook me lunch and take care of me, clean up, do the laundry. At the same time we were trying to finish the addition upstairs. Sheila was busy putting up drywall and nailing nails, while people were here taking care of me. I was big as a house, pretty miserable, and having tons of contractions. There was a painting party. People from work came over to help paint the new room and the stairs. They had a yard-cleaning party, too. That was the day I had 17 contractions in an hour, because I kept wanting to sit outside and talk to everybody. These were people who had themselves been working all week and had families and whatnot as well."

Sheila adds, "They gave me my sanity."

We backtrack to talk about the conception. It was accomplished through alternative insemination. Mimi says it is a class B felony in Oregon for a woman to inseminate herself. The mothers-to-be chose a fertility doctor in Oregon and a sperm bank in California. "This time we went high-tech," Mimi says. "Selecting the sperm is like shopping through a Spiegel's catalogue boutique. The sperm bank sends you a list. It tells you the donor's height, weight, hair color, eye color, ethnic background, education..."

member, and a friend."

"These people have each made a life commitment to that particular child?" I ask.

Mimi and Sheila: "Right."

"What have they made a commitment to?" I wonder.

Sheila: "I wanted these people to be able to offer something really important to each child—"

Mimi: "That we couldn't necessarily offer—"

Sheila: "Time, or energy, or skill, or—"

Mimi: "Influence, faith—"

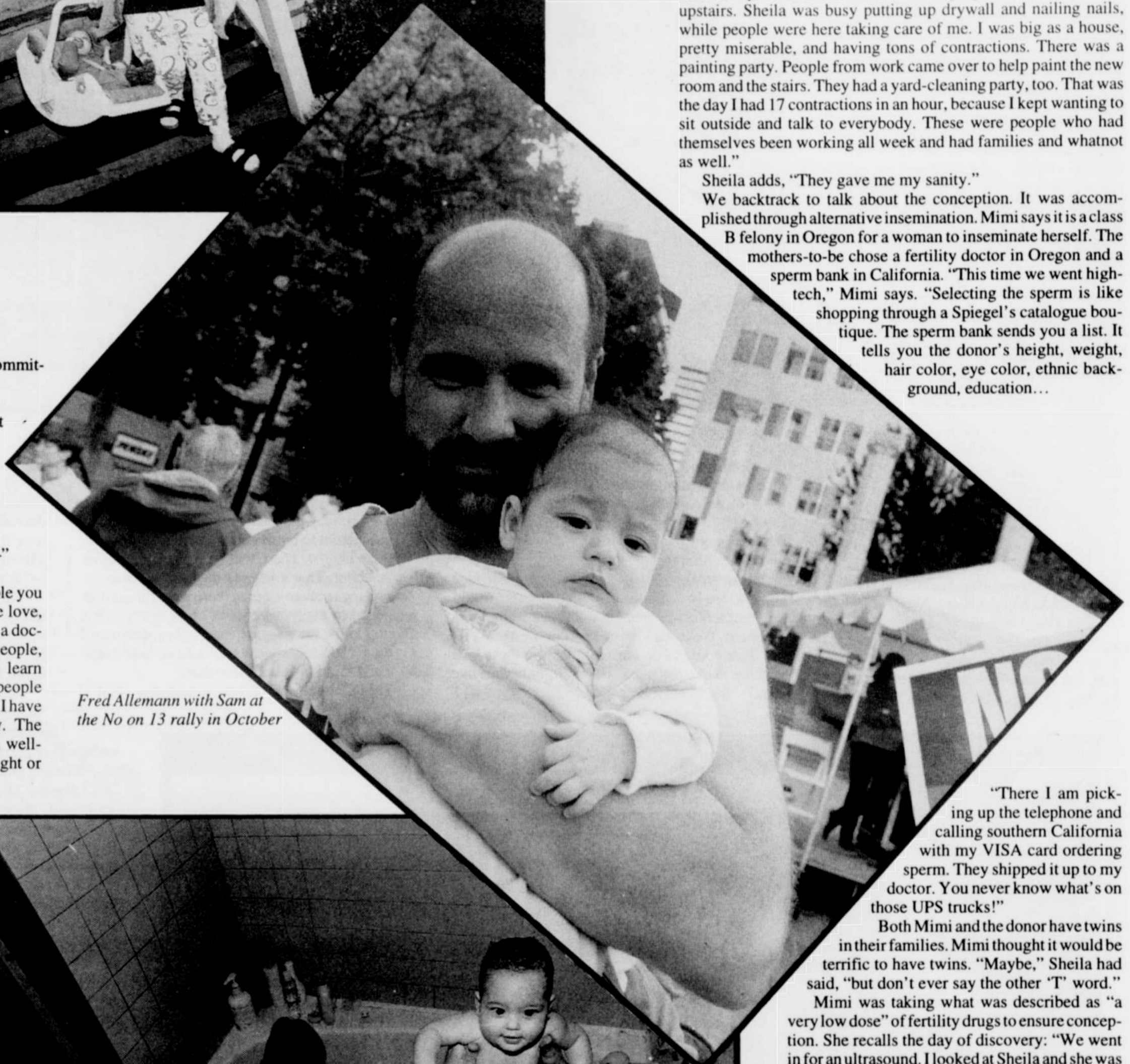
Sheila: "If you knew this group of people you would see that the energy is amazing. The love, the diversity—the group includes an artist, a doctor, an ex-Catholic priest, HIV-positive people, devout Christians...I hope the kids will learn about the religious world. There are other people who can teach that better than I can because I have some issues with traditional Christianity. The intent of the soulwatchers is to provide a well-rounded view of the world, whether it's right or wrong."

Mimi says, "Let's ask Risa's soulwatcher."

Julie joins in: "Basically I am to be there for her when she needs me. I'm sure she'll have questions when she gets older. Risa is supposed to be my baby, but I like to spend time with each one of them. When Mimi found out she was pregnant, everyone was just so ecstatic. I think if there was only one baby it would be really hard. Everyone's glad there's triplets because—"

"Because you don't have to sleep here!" Sheila interjects. Both mothers agree that even under the best of circumstances, having triplets means having little time to spend alone or with a partner. "In that way we're no different from any other couple having children," Mimi observes. "On the other hand, when we do get time alone together it's really, really special."

"I ironed and she told me



Fred Allemann with Sam at the No on 13 rally in October



Jan bathes Gabby while Buddy prepares Sam for the hand-off to Mimi

"There I am picking up the telephone and calling southern California with my VISA card ordering sperm. They shipped it up to my doctor. You never know what's on those UPS trucks!"

Both Mimi and the donor have twins in their families. Mimi thought it would be terrific to have twins. "Maybe," Sheila had said, "but don't ever say the other 'T' word."

Mimi was taking what was described as "a very low dose" of fertility drugs to ensure conception. She recalls the day of discovery: "We went in for an ultrasound. I looked at Sheila and she was staring at the screen, and I looked at the screen and I said, 'I think I see three.' I looked at Sheila and I said, 'Honey, do you need to sit down?' and she said, 'No, no, I think I'm OK.' At that point the doctor walked in and I said, 'Doctor, there's three,' and he said, 'I think I've got to sit down,' and he did."

"I was scared to death. I was afraid Sheila was going to leave me. I had had to convince her that it was OK for me to have a baby. I talked her into it. Now there were three. It was really scary emotionally, financially.... It got more exciting and more acceptable throughout the pregnancy."

The children were born by caesarean section. "There are threats to the health of the triplets and the mother," Mimi explains. "My doctors would

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