



The woman who saw it all, Mrs. Kirchgasser, proudly displays the piece of bed sheet that records the exact birth times and manner of the quint's delivery.

A nurse who was in the delivery room and who later took care of the Fischer quintuplets tells the whole dramatic, heart-warming story

**By MRS. ALFRED KIRCHGASLER
as told to Del Griffin,
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I HAVE A PIECE of bed sheet to remind me of the momentous Saturday when I cared for five very famous newborn babies—the Fischer quintuplets.

On that cloth are written the sex, the arrival time, and the manner of delivery of each of the quint's. But even without the cloth, I am sure I could never forget that morning when I placed identification bracelets on the arms of those pink and crying babies!

I have been a registered nurse for 25 years and worked in the maternity section of St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen, S.D., for four years before becoming a clinical instructor six years ago.

As the assistant clinical instructor for the maternity unit of the Presentation School of Nursing, I supervise the hospital experience of the students and instruct them in the procedures on the maternity floor.

Mrs. Andrew (Mary Ann) Fischer came to St. Luke's Hospital Wednesday, Sept. 11, three days before the birth of the quint's. I assigned one of our students to take care of her, and I saw her often during the following days.

She is a remarkable person—just the right kind of mother to have quint's. In spite of all that has happened, she still is beautifully composed.

If I were to describe Mrs. Fischer, it would be as a woman who is humble, calm, and capable of handling any situation. She is steady and strong—physically, mentally, and spiritually strong. One of her first requests the morning of the births was that Sacred Heart medals be placed on the isolettes which housed her infants.

On the day she entered the hospital Mrs. Fischer learned that quintuplet births were expected. She was surprised; she had realized that multiple births were possible, but she did not think there would be that many! During the next few days, I felt she was concerned about the future. She was, I think, apprehensive that the babies might come early and not survive. She

was more concerned about them than herself.

When I first heard of the impending births, I felt it was unbelievable—a miracle—that something like that could happen in Aberdeen. I am always thrilled each time a baby is born; each is a miracle; each is a thrill. It happens every time I am in the delivery room. We all wait for that little cry, and then we are relieved. Each birth is a miracle, but this would be a miracle five times over. I felt privileged to be there, and I asked to be called when the births occurred.

The hospital notified me at 1:45 a.m. that Saturday, Sept. 14. I left immediately, picked up another nurse, and arrived in the delivery room between the time the first baby was delivered and the time the second baby came.

Mrs. Fischer, delivering without anesthetic, was beautifully calm and composed. She is physically capable of such delivery. She never screamed or cried out all the while I was there.

No Sedation or Anesthetic Was Used

The births were not "natural" in the sense the word is often used. There is a procedure for natural childbirth in which the mother is given training in breathing and relaxing and other things before the delivery. This was not the case with Mrs. Fischer. But the births were natural in the sense that she delivered the quintuplets without the aid of sedation or anesthetic. All premature babies here are delivered without anesthetic to protect the infant from depression resulting from lack of oxygen.

There was an anesthetist in the delivery room. He administered oxygen to the mother to reduce the chance of an oxygen shortage in the babies.

My piece of cloth gives this account of the births: 1:58 frank breech—girl; 2:03 LOA—girl; 2:14 double footling—girl; 2:39 double footling—boy; 3:01 double footling—girl.

The "double footling" description means the babies came with both feet first; "frank breech" means the baby came with legs folded on the

abdomen, knees under the chin, and buttocks first; "LOA" (left occipital anterior) means the baby came head first (normally).

The babies came in pink and crying. With premature babies—the quint's were born at about seven months—this is not always the case. The infants were, in my opinion, wonderfully developed for the shorter gestation time.

Dr. James Berbos delivered the quint's. Dr. Albin J. Janusz worked with Dr. Berbos in the actual delivery, and Dr. B. F. King took charge of the infants and brought them to the nursery.

I went to the nursery to take care of the babies. Despite the short time between deliveries, the task of caring for them went smoothly, much like a single delivery. The situation always was under control, and everything was well organized. I don't think any of us really felt the excitement until the next day.

Dr. King put the infants immediately into isolettes, machines which control the humidity, temperature, and oxygen and which have wrist-let "portholes" which allow a person to reach inside the unit without letting in any outside air.

Babies "A" and "B" were put in one isolette. "C" was put in another, and "D" and "E" were placed together in a unit. They were later transferred to individual isolettes.

The infants' umbilical cords were not tied immediately because of the short time between deliveries. Later, in the nursery, I assisted Dr. Janusz in tying the cords.

Identified by Letters—A to E

The identification bracelets, which all babies at the hospital wear, carried the letters to identify the infants. The babies, of course, have since been given names. "A" is Mary Ann, "B" is Mary Magdalene, "C" is Mary Catherine, "D" is James Andrew, and "E" is Mary Margaret.

The babies were in good condition. The boy appeared stronger—and he was noticeably heavier. The girls all appeared to weigh about the

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