

# Motherhood Doesn't Always Come Naturally

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EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.)—  
Mothers. Not a single one of us  
would be here without one of  
them.

So, for the past several decades,  
the second Sunday of May has  
been set aside as a day to remem-  
ber and honor our mothers. It's a  
day on which nationwide phone  
networks hum with calls, restaur-  
ants prepare for waiting lines of  
customers, and mothers are  
remembered with cards, candy,  
flowers and hugs.

Motherhood for most women  
comes as a matter of natural  
course, a part of womanhood, love  
and marriage. But, for some it's  
not that simple.

"You think you're going to  
grow up, get married, have chil-  
dren. Then you find out it doesn't  
necessarily work out like that.  
And, instead, you have to work at  
making it work out."

Those are the words of a Penn-  
sylvania farm woman. She says  
them with a sort of catch in her  
throat and longing in her voice.  
Though insisting she remain  
anonymous, she agreed to lay  
open her deepest feelings, frustra-  
tions and the jumble of emotions  
faced every day by a woman who,  
through a quirk of fate, has faced  
difficulty attaining what a majori-  
ty of women take for granted --  
motherhood.

Married for a decade, A. (for  
Anonymous) came from a large  
farm family. Even before mari-  
riage, she knew that she wanted to  
have several children. Since both  
she and her farmer fiance were  
older than many couples when  
they decided to marry, they both  
underwent fertility testing. And,  
while those tests showed some  
minor, but treatable, problems,  
physicians found no real barriers  
that were expected to prevent their  
ability to have children.

After several years of marriage  
and still childless, they sought  
help for their inability to conceive.  
What they found was the then still  
fairly-experimental technology  
known as in-vitro, or "test tube,"  
fertilization. Success rate for in-  
vitro pregnancies in the  
mid-1980s was fairly low, about  
16 percent.

An in-vitro pregnancy, with  
literally dozens of tests, surgery,  
hospital visits daily for weeks at a  
time, and endless injections,  
multiplies by several times the  
normal medical costs involved in  
childbirth.

"I was working where insur-  
ance would cover most of the in-  
vitro costs, so we decided to try  
it," says A. Soon doctors told her  
she would have twins.

The couple's ecstatic anticipa-  
tion of two babies was short-lived;  
she lost one of the twin embryos  
within a few weeks. But the  
remaining one was healthy, and  
the couple became the parents of a  
baby girl.

Delighted with the success of  
in-vitro and their baby daughter,  
they again began the lengthy in-  
vitro process. That attempt was  
not successful -- nor were several  
more. With insurance paid out  
almost to the maximum allowable,  
plus spending thousands of dollars  
of their own, A. is trying to cope  
with the possibility of mothering  
no more natural children.

"Every time you go through in-  
vitro it's like being on an emotion-  
al rollercoaster. It doesn't seem  
possible, with the technology  
available today, that someone can-  
not get pregnant," she sighs. "No

matter what age you are, I think  
you must go through the same  
emotions when you want children  
so badly."

What spurs her on to try almost  
anything -- "I got 66 needles at  
one sitting during one in-vitro ses-  
sion" -- is that she desperately  
wants more children, and espe-  
cially feels a desire to give her  
husband a son.

It's a hope of great intensity,  
with reasons that are buried deep  
within her own feelings and the  
rural tradition of farm families  
passing land down from father to  
son.

"I'm not under any pressure  
from my husband; I just don't feel  
complete. I know that sounds self-  
ish because we have a beautiful  
daughter that we love so much.  
But my life just doesn't feel com-  
plete and I'm not sure at what  
point I'll feel that it is.

"Sometimes I think I'm in con-  
trol and then something happens  
to bring it all rushing back. At  
some point I may feel ready to just  
give it up, but I don't know when  
that may be.

"I'm sure farm families will  
understand that I'd like a son. It's  
just one of my hopes for my hus-  
band," she confides.

Well-intentioned, but unknow-  
ing, friends only added to the  
emotional frustration with com-  
ments about starting a family or  
having more children.

About five years ago, the cou-  
ple began looking into adoption  
possibilities.

"First thing that happens is that  
you are put on a waiting list  
wherever you apply. And, if  
you're on some sort of fertility  
program, you're told to call the  
agency if you become pregnant.

"We were on the waiting list for  
three years. After I got pregnant,  
we had to reapply and start all  
over on the waiting list."

Another agency "guaranteed" a  
baby in a year if they were  
"approved."

"What they didn't tell us right  
away was that we would have to  
go on a list to become 'approved,'  
and just getting on the list would  
cost \$2,000. It took a whole year  
to even get them to send an appli-  
cation; they kept saying they were  
re-doing their applications. And a  
total cost to adopt a baby through  
that program was between  
\$22,000 and \$30,000."

According to A., normal adop-  
tion procedures require the adopt-  
ing parents to pay all legal and  
medical costs involved, but which  
may be much less with one agency  
than with another.

"I keep thinking if I put all sorts  
of 'feelers' out, then something  
will happen," says a hopeful A.  
That means having tried newspap-  
er ads, letters to doctors, even  
looking into the possibility of a  
surrogate-mother arrangement.  
"I've even considered calling ads  
run by other people, just to see if  
they ever got any results." Adop-  
tion possibilities of both older and  
foreign children have also been  
considered.

Dr. Vincent Berger, psycholo-  
gist for Adoption Services in  
Camp Hill, said their waiting list  
for adoptions is three to four  
years. He adds that some agencies  
have waiting lists as high as 10 to  
12 years.

Adoption Services places most-  
ly Caucasian, and occasionally bi-  
racial, babies. Birthmother ser-  
vices are provided, and they are  
given extensive counseling to  
make certain that they wish to pro-  
ceed with adoption.



For some, motherhood doesn't come naturally.

Pennsylvania law allows both  
agency and private adoptions, Dr.  
Berger explains. Agency adop-  
tions are through non-profit orga-  
nizations, such as the one he rep-  
resents, while private adoptions  
are "everything else." That  
includes adoptions arranged  
through attorneys, physicians, or  
just "someone who knew some-  
one, who knew someone."

He adds that most agencies pro-  
vide a foster-parenting period for  
adoptive babies, from two to six  
months after birth, in which time  
the birthmother can terminate the  
procedure. Others like Adoption  
Services use "legal risk adop-  
tions," in which the newborn is  
placed directly with the potential  
adopting family, offering a bond-  
ing period. The legal risk to the  
adoptive parents, however, is that  
the birthmother does have a period  
of time in which to terminate the  
adoption.

have begun giving serious consid-  
eration to applying for the foster-  
parent program. Would-be foster  
parents are screened on require-  
ments similar to those for adop-

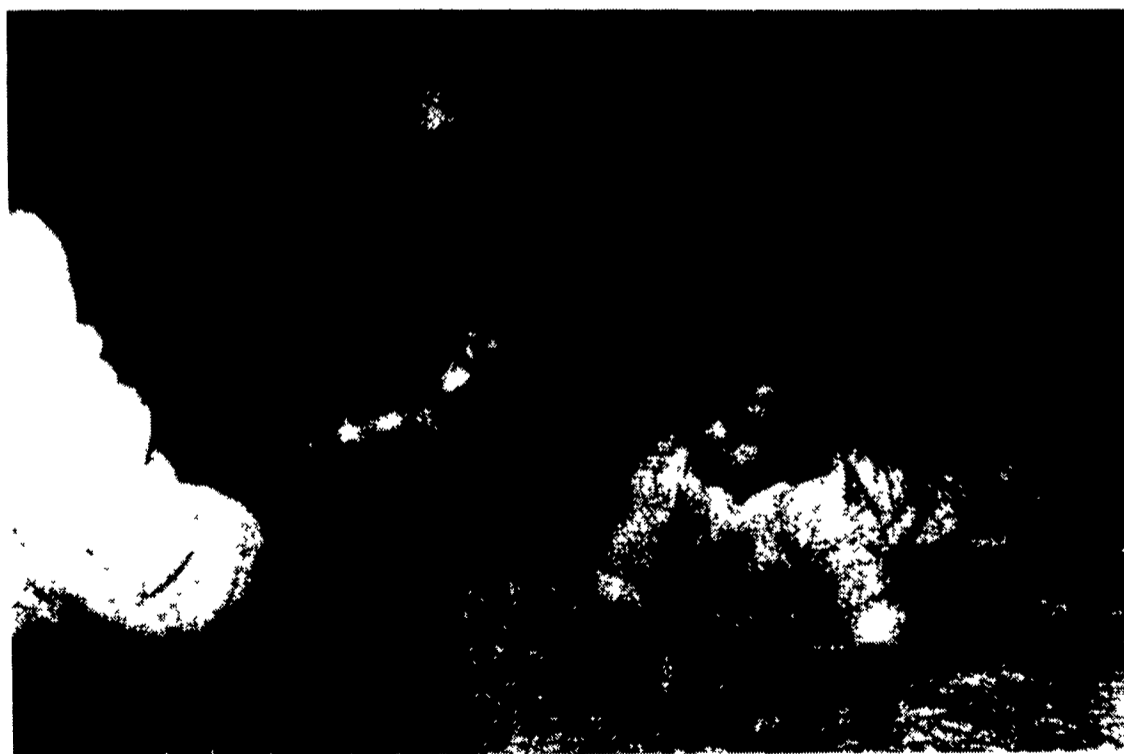
tion -- personal interviews, train-  
ing classes, assessments of hous-  
ing facilities, meeting fire codes  
and space requirements, back-  
ground checks for child abuse and  
police clearance.

To fill their desire for lots of  
children, A. baby-sits several  
youngsters and includes young  
friends and relatives in their daily  
and special activities.

"Sometimes just looking at our  
child, or at families doing things  
together, brings the emotions all  
rushing back. Sometimes I can  
talk about it, but other days it's  
really difficult. I've heard that as  
many as one-third of marriages  
have problems with being child-  
less; who knows why it has to be  
that way.

"I just want other people to  
think about the emotions of want-  
ing children and not being able to  
have them."

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through in-vitro it's  
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For some, this baby's smile brings pain to their hearts — because they do not have a baby to call their own.

Cost, according to Dr. Berger,  
may vary greatly depending on the  
adoption route taken, ranging any-  
where from \$2,000 to \$15,000. He  
knew of none in the immediate  
area who charged up-front fees.

Another adoption agency listed  
in area phone books, Adoption  
With Love, replied when con-  
tacted that they preferred not to  
talk with newspapers. A spokes-  
woman gave New England as  
their location.

Recently, A. and her husband

## Homestead Notes