

ABILENE, TEXAS, WEDNESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 3, 1977

# Many turning to childbirth with father, without drugs

## 'Fathers want to be a part of the birth of their babies'

**By NELL HILLS Staff Writer**

A young couple checks into the hospital. She is obviously there to give birth to a baby.

Not so obviously, the young father is there for the same purpose, although he does not look pregnant, he will have a different part in this significant event.

The couple decided some time ago that this would be their delivery and not just the mother's, and they are prepared.

At the beginning of the eighth month of pregnancy, they began taking lessons in preparation for natural, husband-coached childbirth. The father, who will be the main support of the life of his child from the moment of birth, knows as much about having a baby as his wife does.

Both are confident. They have learned how to cope with childbirth, and they are not afraid. There is no anxiety, because there are no unknowns. They are aware of all that is happening.

A hospital attendant takes them to the labor room where the father and mother begin what is ordinarily the hardest part of labor. He is not sent to a cold impersonal area to wait and wonder while she gives birth to their child. He is beside her from the onset of labor.

The mother has seen her doctor from the time she suspected pregnancy and she has followed his advice to the letter. Now she and her husband are ready to cooperate in bringing into the world a baby alert and eager for life, not drugged by the anesthetic his mother wasn't given.

When she is taken to her room in the hospital, the mother is not separated from her husband or child, and the baby is never out of the room. Brothers and sisters will be brought to the hospital as soon as possible. They will not be forced to spend days away from their mother, worried and puzzled by the strange turn of events, and they won't feel like awkward strangers when their mother and the new baby finally arrive home.

Not only will the siblings see their mother and father, but they will also share with him the closeness of their mother.

In 24 to 36 hours, if all goes well, the mother and father, and the baby, will be at home, beginning a time of sharing a new experience, one in which they shared from the start.

There is usually a way to manage at home, making a brief hospital stay necessary. Mother and baby can go home because the father has taken a few days from work, her mother or sister or aunt or friend has come to help out at first, or a good neighbor has volunteered to assist, and the doctor agrees she will be "just as well off at home."

The above description of a birth is not a familiar one for the great majority of modern families. The reasons are many, but the principal reason is that in most hospitals, it just isn't that way, and many physicians are reluctant to go along with it.

Natural, family-centered childbirth is gaining popularity, not only in the United States but in countries around the world. This is due partly to the International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA), to nurse Angela Blahak, a member of the board of the organization.



ANGELA BLAHAK, Childbirth teacher

An all-volunteer organization, ICEA is dedicated to teaching each individual parent a genuine interest in family-centered childbirth and to furthering the understanding and implementation by professionals and lay people.

Mrs. Blahak, who teaches natural childbirth classes in Abilene, is presently returned from an executive board meeting in Rochester, N.Y., where 25 board members and heads of committees from the United States and Canada reported on their areas of interest.

A registered nurse, Mrs. Blahak said she became interested in ICEA several years ago. She went to school to learn to teach the Bradley Method, Husband-Coached Childbirth, one of several childbirth courses endorsed by ICEA, she said.

She completed nursing school in 1958, a year after her marriage to Herman Blahak. "I didn't work long after I graduated," she said. "We bear our family and I stayed at home and took care of the children."

Three of the Blahak children were born in Texas, all in different towns, one was born in Oklahoma and one in Oklahoma. At none of the hospitals was she allowed to have natural childbirth, she said, something she requested each time.

Blahak was stationed at Dyess Air Force Base 15 years ago and they liked Abilene so much they decided to return here when he retired from the Air Force, she said.

For three years Mrs. Blahak has been teaching eight-week childbirth classes. Couples meet for two hours weekly during the last two months of pregnancy to learn the techniques of natural, husband-coached childbirth.

The method she teaches, Mrs. Blahak said, promotes unmediated mothers and babies, and the mother and father are involved together in the birth process.

The hospital and doctor must respect the couple's being responsible for their birth for it to work well, she said.

Several couples in her classes have told Mrs. Blahak that their observations are delightful; they are taking the course, "Doctors like to bring healthy, alert, undrugged babies into the world," she said. "The time a doctor can spend with each individual patient is limited, and it helps him for his present to be prepared for childbirth."

A number of childbirth methods are being taught in the United States and other parts of the world, Mrs. Blahak said, and ICEA is an umbrella organization dedicated to promoting family-centered childbirth.

There are 1045 ICEA members, who belong to 377 different groups. The Family Life Education Association of Abilene is a member of ICEA, and the Houston Organization for Parent Education is another. The Houston group alone has 8,000 members, she said.

Membership in ICEA is open to all interested persons, Mrs. Blahak said, and courses are available to those who wish to learn to teach childbirth courses. "It isn't necessary to be a nurse," she said. "Anyone can learn to teach the course."

"People are becoming more responsible and fathers want to be a part of the birth of their babies," she said. "Childbirth classes help prepare a couple to become parents. They find out how natural and normal it is and that it is important for them to have a good relationship so that the baby comes into a family totally responsible for his life."

The instructor benefit, Mrs. Blahak feels is that what happens at birth can affect the family relationship for the child, its parents and its siblings.



THE HAWLEY HIM ...artist's concept

## Potpourri

By CERALDINE SATTERSWILLE Staff Writer

### Biblical sources on the Him

Now we know. Howley — and imported — leathers, newspaper editors and just the generally curious, all nodding for a glimpse or a picture of the Hawley Him, have been going to the wrong sources.

Searchers combing the sherry oak and a newspaper staff writer who went along on one of the hunts with his camera at the ready all failed to sight the creature three reporters say attacked them early last month.

Hawley youngsters, most of whom know all about Him, were asked to draw the monster in space provided on their invitations to Hawley First Baptist Church's Vacation Bible School, and they came through enthusiastically.

Saturday was preparation day for the school. Monday VBS began and the kids arrived at 10 a.m. with sack lunches and their pictures. Tuesday the Rev. W.L. (Bill) Trice, VBS director, brought

astonished people stare, and crunched trees with his feet. Him is, indeed, fascinating, fierce and ferocious. Instructions on the invitation stipulated parcels of very young children could draw pictures for the little ones in color, but other children were invited to draw their own.

Dana Lovibander's terry blue monster, even bigger than the space allotted. Las a white hair with big blue spots for eyes, claw-like hands and big feet. Dana's a child-grasping brown with a darker brown fringe outline and big mouth with unpleasant expression.

Chad Montgomery, three, colored with lead pencil drawing made for him, and named Him name through as raggedly furry.

South-grader Tammy Epper, brown creature, his head right up there by a purple lion. Owar's a house, from which

Categories were two-and three-year-olds, four- and five-year-olds, first and second grades, third and fourth grades, fifth and sixth grades. Prizes, a first, second and third place in each category, were awarded Wednesday morning.

VBS is the current family project of the Trices, who have been at Hawley for about a year and a half, predating Him who reportedly arrived only a few weeks ago. Mrs. Trice teaches the first and second grade class with their daughter, Ruthie, six, assisting. The Him gimmick was an effective one. Tuesday's VBS attendance was 100.

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A hospital attendant takes them to the labor room where the father and mother begin what is ordinarily the hardest part of labor. He is not sent to a cold impersonal area to wait and wonder while she gives birth to their child. He is beside her from the onset of labor.

The mother has seen her doctor from the time she suspected pregnancy and she has followed his advice to the letter. Now she and her husband are ready to cooperate in bringing into the world a baby alert and eager for life, not drugged by the anesthetic his mother wasn't given.

When it is time for her to go to the delivery room, the mother does not go alone, the father goes, too. He wears a sterile cap, gown and mask, and is an integral part of the final stages of labor and delivery.

Both of the baby's parents are involved every step of the way. The father's presence is important to the mother in many ways. He breathes with her, lung, gentle breaths, and helps her stay completely relaxed. Without resistance from the relaxed abdomen, the uterus can contract and expel the baby naturally.

At labor progresses, the father is there to reassure, to remind her he came, to be a part of this important time in their lives. They move at each stage just what is happening inside her body as the baby enters the birth

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## Thoughts

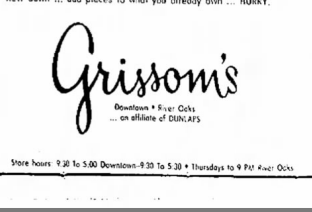
Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more this fruit increased the more itars he built; as his country improved he improved his pillars. — Hosea 10:1.

There isn't a plant or business on earth that couldn't stand a few improvements — and be better for them. Someone is going to think of them. Why not beat the other fellow to it. — Roger Babson, American statistician.

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## 1948 LBJ papers to be made public

AUSTIN (AP) — Some 5,000 pages of papers dealing with the 1948 election that sent Lyndon B. Johnson to the U.S. Senate will be made public Wednesday by the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, the director of the library said Tuesday.

Harry Middleton said the papers were being released because of allegations by a former Texas election official that he certified 300 fictitious votes for Johnson. Johnson won the election by 87 votes, equating himself the nickname "Landslide Lyndon."

"I don't know what they (the LBJ papers) are," said Middleton. "But because of the publicity we decided to go ahead and make them public."

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