



Monday, August 11, 1975

Philadelphia Inquirer / EARNEST S. E

Farida carries Clara and the Rev. Louis Quinn holds Alta's hand in the hospital

THE TWINS

Even a Fever Is Cause for Fear

Seven months ago, the Siamese twins Altigracia and Clara Rodriguez returned to the Dominican Republic after their famous surgical separation at Philadelphia's Children's Hospital. This is the second of two reports on how the twins, now 2 years old, are faring.

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SAN JOSE de OCOA, Dominican Republic — A slight fever in a baby here usually does not cause great concern because most often the mothers are poor people who have other things to worry about.

But Clara Rodriguez is no normal

child. She is one of the famous Siamese twins. And one day last weekend her mother, Farida, was getting nervous because Clara was listless and her temperature was climbing. Farida thought her little girl might have diarrhea.

The disease is rarely fatal in the United States, but here, where the people are often malnourished, it causes 10 percent of all deaths. Among children it is the leading cause of death.

Diarrhea drains the water from the children's bodies and they become dehydrated. They begin to vomit, their skin loses its elasticity, and they die. Clara was particularly sus-

ceptible because surgeons had to shorten her intestines, through which the body absorbs fluids, in the operation that separated her from her twin sister, Alta.

Clara started vomiting, and a local doctor was immediately summoned.

It was only the second time that either of the twins had gotten sick since they returned from Philadelphia in January. A few months earlier they also had come down with diarrhea, but it was so mild that antibiotics weren't even required.

The doctor came and determined that Clara was not seriously ill, but told Farida that she could take her to

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Twins Get Medical Attention Fit for Celebrities

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Santo Domingo if she wanted to.

Farida has become very cautious about Dominican doctors. In San Jose they told her when her twins were born that they would die. And in Santo Domingo they said that the twins might live but that it was impossible to separate them.

Farida decided to make the trip to the capital. Orders were given to prepare both twins, and Farida decided that Marilyn, the 9-year-old who takes care of them, would go on the two-hour ride to the capital.

Quickly the twins were made ready.

All Dressed

Marlin put on her very best pair of slacks and top, combed her long dark hair for the seventh time, and waited with the twins for the "publico," one of the big Chevrolet sedans that ferry people back and forth to Santo Domingo.

It's not a comfortable ride because a dozen people, along with baggage and animals, are crammed into the vehicle, but it costs only \$2.50.

The publico was jammed when it arrived. There was room for only Farida and the twins. Farida got in and Marilyn handed her one twin. The other was placed in the lap of a woman passenger.

The car drove off and Marilyn returned to the porch of the family's new house and sat in the chair. The twins were gone, and the house seemed empty. There was nothing to do but watch the people walk by. She would change out of her best slacks and top later.

San Jose has 13,000 people, five physicians and a 50-bed hospital that cannot take care of serious medical problems. Severely ill people are taken to the capital if they can afford it.



Philadelphia Inquirer / EARNEST S. EDDOWES

Dr. Laboy, a specialist in pediatrics, examines Clara; Marilyn holds Alta's hand while trying to control a squirming Clara

Staff of Nuns

The San Jose hospital, where the twins were born two years ago, is staffed partly by a group of nuns from a Canadian order, the Religious Hospitalers of St. Joseph. They are a delightful bunch of women who do not wear habits and who enjoy their work.

Among them is Sister Mary Joe, a big woman who loves a beer with dinner, and the rare treat of \$2.50-a-half-dozen apples from the capital, as well as telling visitors about the time she marched down to the jail and freed one of the hospital employees who had been jailed for driving a motorcycle without a helmet.

Sister Ruth Rash is the leader of the group of nuns, but she is an unassuming woman who seems to be just one of the group. She runs a clinic for inoculations, and on this particular morning had seen 85 children. Sometimes she and one assistant will inoculate a couple of hundred in a day.

Sister Cecilia Smith is the nurse most closely associated with the twins. She did not really know them or their mother before they went to Philadelphia. But after hearing about the operation she wrote a letter to the surgeon, Dr. C. Everett Koop, offering her services. She explained that she was a pediatric nurse and would be only too happy to do what she could. Dr. Koop immediately accepted the offer.

The nuns were brought to San Jose a few years ago by the Rev. Louis Quinn, a remarkable priest from Canada who has served in San Jose for the last 22 years as a member of the Scarboro Foreign Mission.

Father Quinn is a tall, thin man of 47 who usually wears only a sport shirt over his pants and has long gray hair that curls behind his ears.

Frequently his sermons urge the people to work together and defy the "intermediarios" who are stealing the fruits of their country from them. The intermediarios are the big middle men, who drive the new air-conditioned Chevrolets and Mercedes. They buy rice and beans at low prices and then store it, in a country where people die from malnutrition, until the export price is advantageous.

Father Quinn's dislike for the intermediarios is matched by their dislike for him. The nuns are convinced that Lui, as they call him, eventually will be killed, as another Canadian priest was a few years ago. Father Quinn has gotten threatening letters, and he always tries to get home before the electricity is shut off throughout the town at 3 a.m. to conserve energy.

"Si Dios quiere," the people are always saying. "If God wishes." Father Quinn — or Padre Lui, as the people call him — is always fighting this fatalistic mentality. He fights it with his sermons and his meetings with the people and the colored pictures painted on the front of his church showing a little child with a pacifier working in the fields with a machete bigger than he is. And he has fought it by organizing a housing co-op and an agricultural co-op to help the people be independent.

Both Had Fevers

By the time Farida reached the capital, both twins had fevers. She went straight to the Central Birth Clinic, a private hospital in a new building, which is providing free medical care for the twins until they are 18.

When Farida comes to the capital, she stays with the twins in a private room in this hospital, sleeping on a cot. For two months she lived this way while the twins were being taught how to walk at the nearby Rehabilitation Center.

Each day the ambulance would

pick up the twins and take them to the center, where physical therapists spent an hour doing exercises with them to strengthen their muscles. Soon the twins were walking and everyone was delighted.

The twins' doctor in the capital is Dr. Nilda Nunez de Laboy, a stylishly dressed, urbane woman who specializes in pediatrics and has a file of letters and other records from Dr. Koop and Children's Hospital.

Dr. Laboy said the children were a little thinner than she would like and a bit shorter than normal, but all in all had been in excellent health. They don't talk much, but the doctors think it is because they are confused from being exposed to only English-speaking people for four months in Philadelphia.

No Love Lost

The Twins may have endeared themselves to the doctors and other professionals in Santo Domingo, but Farida has not. The physical therapists thought she yelled too much at her daughters when they didn't walk right away.

And Dr. Laboy doesn't like the way Farida is always challenging the things doctors here do because it isn't the way it was done in Philadelphia. Once she refused to let Dr. Laboy give one of the twins intravenous fluids, saying, incorrectly, that this was never done in Philadelphia.

Farida was forced to leave the room and the child was given the fluids.

Some say Farida isn't careful enough about changing diapers of the twins' cleanliness in general, though no one questions her devotion. For two full months she lived day and night in a single room with her beloved daughters, watching them constantly.

What the people even in Santo Domingo lose sight of is that Farida and the twins are in a very abnormal setting when they are in the city. Farida is always alone with the twins on such occasions. At home their grandmother and Merillin, their cousin, and a host of other people

are available to take care of the twins' slightest need.

There is no question in the nuns' minds or in Father Quinn's that the twins get constant and loving attention.

Treatment Begun

The doctors at the hospital in Santo Domingo immediately started treating the twins for diarrhea as their temperatures continued to climb. X-rays were ordered to make sure that they did not have pneumonia, and antibiotics were administered. Intravenous fluids were started for Clara. Their temperatures edged past 103.

But soon the twins' bodies mounted an attack against the virus that had gotten into them. Their temperatures started to drop and by last Monday were normal. There was still some diarrhea, but the vomiting had stopped and all the lab tests were good. Father Quinn drove Marilin in so she could be with her charges.

Farida had intended to give a birthday party in San Jose for the twins on Sunday. But that was only five days away and Dr. Laboy didn't want to release the twins until everything was normal for at least two days. She promised Farida a party in the hospital if they could not go home in time.

The twins are very special down here.

Dr. Laboy said she was assembling a team of surgeons and other specialists should the twins need care again. The idea was that at least one member of the team would be on hand in the hospital any time of the day or night if the twins should be brought in suddenly.

The doctors here feel that the girls may need more operations. One possibility they have discussed is installing a mesh to hold in Alta's bely (the separation left her with no abdominal muscles) so she would not be doomed to wear a corset all her life.

And they might operate on Clara to close her pelvis further and improve her walk. But these matters

will be decided next month, when the twins return to Philadelphia.

On that trip, underwritten by the Ladies' Home Journal magazine, which bought the exclusive rights to the twins' story, Dr. Koop and the other doctors will examine them and decide whether anything more should be done.

In addition to unanswered medical questions, there is the problem of the house promised to the family by President Joaquin Balaguer but not yet constructed. Farida's attempts to determine its status have been unsuccessful. An Inquirer photographer and reporter went to the palace to try to find out.

A score of people — old, poor and desperate — crowded around the gates to the palace, stopped from entering by the military men with machine-guns and carbines.

The scene is part of the way welfare is dispensed here. People send telegrams requesting help and then go to the gate to wait for an audience with someone important. Sometimes they get it.

The palace is a huge, beautiful rose-colored building with a long, graceful flight of steps and impressive columns. Inside, more soldiers with machine-guns and women clerks and secretaries in red uniforms and polka-dot blouses walked about. The Inquirers' appointment was with the president's

Room for Father

It would have three bedrooms, a living room, dining room, bathroom, kitchen, and a porch. The plans also included space for a store. Farida had never mentioned this, but apparently her husband, Salvador, can move his little store to San Jose from Las Auyamas, the twins' native village 10 miles away where he spends most of the week.

When will it be built?

"It's a modest, low-cost home," Dr. Quesada explained. "But it will have the important comforts so the girls will have a clean, comfortable house to live in. We in the Dominican Republic are very grateful for the humanity the American people have shown."

Do you intend to start building soon?

"The house will be completed by the end of the year," he said finally.

For the moment, at least, things look good for the twins.

The affliction that seemingly doomed them to a tragic life at birth has abruptly been turned to their advantage and to the advantage of their family.

The Dominican people, especially the poor country people, find it hard to understand why so many things have been done for the twins.

So often babies are born deformed and so often they die for petty reasons. The people wonder why an exception to life's cruelties should be made in this case.

Considering the good fortune it seems to bring, Father Quinn said, every Dominican woman wishes she could give birth to Siamese twins.

administrative secretary, Dr. Jose A. Quesada.

Dr. Quesada was sitting under a portrait of the president at a desk with a top covered by red velvet protected by glass. Three unsmiling men stood at the door, and a soldier with a pistol in a holster strapped to his waist stood at Dr. Quesada's shoulder. When the phone rang, the soldier would hand it to Dr. Quesada, then hang it up when it was handed back.

"The president is very interested in the two girls," Dr. Quesada said through an interpreter as soon as the visitors were seated. He said that the president had given them an allotment of \$150 a month for 18 years and saw to it they would get medical care at any hospital. And he offered to build them a house.

When? he was asked.

Dr. Quesada pushed a button and soon an engineer appeared, carrying an armload of papers and architectural plans marked "Urgente." These were the plans for the Rodriguez house.

The house will cost about \$11,000, according to estimates from the engineering office. Again he was asked when it would be built, but Dr. Quesada continued to discuss the plans, pointing out all the rooms that they called for.