

OSTM: LN2/NY JULY 13 78

MSG: FIL

TO: TIME SCIENCE, MEDICINE

FROM: LONDON BY: WHITE

SLUG: TEST TUBE BABY

CLOSE: 7/13

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Western Mail Press

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EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO THE STORY AND PICTURES OF WHAT IS BEING CALLED THE WORLD'S FIRST "TEST-TUBE BABY" HAVE BEEN SOLD BY THE FAMILY TO ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPER GROUP LTD'S SYNDICATION SERVICE. THE BRITISH AND WORLD RIGHTS PACKAGE IS REPORTED TO BE WORTH SOME 300,000 POUNDS. HOW MUCH OF THAT THE FAMILY WILL GET IS UNKNOWN, BUT AN ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS ANNOUNCEMENT SAID THE BABY'S FINANCIAL FUTURE IS SECURE. THE KID WILL BE BORN RICH.

ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHES THE LONDON DAILY MAIL, WHICH HEADLINED: "OUR MIRACLE BABY." THE STORY SAID: "THE MOTHER OF THE WORLD'S FIRST TEST-TUBE BABY TALKED LAST NIGHT ABOUT HER 'MIRACLE.' 'I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DOCTORS KNOW THE SEX OF MY BABY,' SHE SAID. 'BUT I HAVE BEGGED THEM NOT TO TELL ME. AFTER WAITING FOR YEARS FOR THIS WONDERFUL THING TO HAPPEN, I DO NOT WANT TO BE CHEATED OF THE FINAL THRILL.' (PRESUMABLY, THE DOCTORS SAMPLED THE AMBIOTIC FLUID TO DETERMINE SEX).

THE DAILY MAIL IDENTIFIED THE WOMAN AS MRS. LESLEY BROWN, 32, OF BRISTOL, WHO IS MARRIED TO A VAN DRIVER EMPLOYED BY BRITISH RAILWAYS, JOHN BROWN, 38, WHO HAS A 16-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER BY A PREVIOUS MARRIAGE. LESLEY BROWN'S FAILURE TO CONCEIVE WAS TRACED

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TO A FAULT IN HER FALLOPIAN TUBES. SHE WAS TOLD SHE COULD NEVER HAVE A BABY IN THE NORMAL WAY. IT WAS THEN SHE WENT TO GYNAECOLOGIST PATRICK STEPTOE, OF OLDHAM GENERAL HOSPITAL, LANCASHIRE, WHO, ALONG WITH DR. ROBERT EDWARDS, A CAMBRIDGE PHYSIOLOGIST, HAS FOR A DECADE BEEN RESEARCHING THE TECHNIQUE OF TAKING AN EGG FROM THE MOTHER, MIXING IT WITH THE HUSBAND'S SPERM, AND THEN AFTER ABOUT THREE DAYS REIMPLANTING IT IN THE MOTHER'S WOMB.

THE TECHNIQUE HAS BEEN USED BY STEPTOE-EDWARDS ON OTHER HOPEFUL WOMEN IN RECENT YEARS, BUT NONE OF THEIR PREGNANCIES LASTED LONG. THIS TIME, WITH MRS. BROWN, IT SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED. THE DAILY MAIL SAID SHE IS IN OLDHAM HOSPITAL WHERE HER CHILD IS DUE TO BE BORN AT THE END OF THIS MONTH--'THE FIRST HUMAN BEING CREATED OUTSIDE ITS MOTHER'S BODY. ALL TESTS SHOW THAT THE BABY IS WELL.'

THE BROWNS HAVE BEEN MARRIED NINE YEARS (1969). THE DAILY MAIL QUOTED MRS. BROWN: 'WE HAVE BEEN TRYING ALL OUR MARRIAGE TO HAVE A BABY. THREE YEARS AGO WE WERE TOLD THAT THERE WAS NO CHANCE THAT I COULD EVER CONCEIVE. FINALLY, WE GOT IN TOUCH WITH MR. STEPTOE. HE WAS MARVELLOUS. HE NEVER LET US GIVE UP HOPE. WE WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO THANK HIM ENOUGH. HAVING THIS BABY IS THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING EVER.'

THE IMPENDING BIRTH HAS BEEN KNOWN TO THE PRESS FOR MONTHS, BUT STEPTOE REQUESTED REPORTERS TO LAY OFF THE FAMILY, ESPECIALLY THE MOTHER, BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF LOSING THE CHILD. BRITISH AND FOREIGN REPRESENTATIVES, NONETHELESS, HAVE BEEN MAKING OFFERS FOR THE STORY RIGHTS, AND WHEN IT BECAME APPARENT THAT ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS HAD SEWED THEM UP, THE DAILY EXPRESS RAN A PAGE ONE STORY TUESDAY, WITHOUT NAMING THE MOTHER (EXPRESS

HEADLINE: "'BABY OF THE CENTURY.'" NEXT DAY, THE DAILY MAIL IDENTIFIED MRS. BROWN. NEWSPAPERS REPORTED THAT THE PARENTS HAD ENTERED INTO THE ARRANGEMENT WITH ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS ON STEPTOE'S ADVICE; STEPTOE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING: "'THERE WAS A DOUBLE PURPOSE IN THIS. FIRST, TO TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF THE PARENTS, AND SECOND, TO SECURE A FINANCIAL FUTURE FOR THE CHILD.'" FAR AS IS KNOWN, STEPTOE-EDWARDS ARE RECEIVING NONE OF THE STORY-RIGHTS MONEY.

DR. STEPTOE, 65, AND DR. EDWARDS, 52, ARE AN EFFICIENT AND TIGHT-LIPPED TEAM. STEPTOE WAS QUOTED IN THE EXPRESS AS SAYING THAT "'WHAT I WANT TO DO IS HELP MOTHERS WHOSE CHILD-PRODUCING MECHANISM IS SLIGHTLY FAULTY.'" MEANING BLOCKED OR OTHERWISE FAULTY FALLOPIAN TUBES.

THE DAILY MAIL REPORTS DR. STEPTOE "'PERFECTED THE TECHNIQUE OF REMOVING THE EGG, AFTER LOCATING IT WITH A LAPAROSCOPE, AN INSTRUMENT WHICH ALLOWS INTERNAL EXAMINATION THROUGH A SMALL INCISION. THE PROBLEM THAT BOTH DR. EDWARDS AND DR. STEPTOE HAVE FACED OVER THE YEARS OF RESEARCH IS SUCCESSFULLY FERTILIZING THE EGG IN AN INTRICATE PIECE OF GLASS LABORATORY EQUIPMENT. ONCE THIS WAS ACHIEVED, THE NEXT PROBLEM WAS GETTING THE FERTILIZED EGG ACCEPTED BY THE WOMAN'S BODY. IN CASE AFTER CASE, THE EGG WAS REJECTED, USUALLY AT THE TIME OF THE FIRST PERIOD. BUT AFTER EACH FAILURE THE TEAM WOULD VARY ITS TECHNIQUE. IN PARTICULAR, DR. EDWARDS WOULD READJUST THE FORMULAE IN WHICH THE EGG WAS KEPT ALIVE FOR THREE DAYS AFTER BEING FERTILIZED UNTIL DR. STEPTOE CARRIED OUT THE EMBRYO TRANSPLANT.'" "

THE DAILY MAIL QUOTED DR. EDWARDS: "'THE KEY FACTORS IN OUR TECHNIQUE INCLUDE VERY PRECISING TIMING WHEN EXTRACTING THE EGG, KNOWING THE SECRETS OF FERTILIZATION AND THEN THE VERY

CRITICAL TIMING OF THE REIMPLANTATION. IT HAS TAKEN US ABOUT TEN YEARS WORKING WITH EXTREME CARE AND ONE STEP AT A TIME. WE WOULD NOT HAVE ACHIEVED WHAT WE HAVE WITHOUT MR. STEPTOE'S ADVANCED USE OF THE LAPAROSCOPE. HIS SKILL WITH THIS INSTRUMENT HAS BEEN A VERY IMPORTANT, INDEED ESSENTIAL, FACTOR IN OUR TECHNIQUE.''

STEPTOE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING IT IS VITAL THAT THE LAST FEW WEEKS OF MRS. BROWN'S PREGNANCY BE TRANQUIL AND UNDISTURBED.

THE EXPRESS REPORTED THE BABY WOULD BE DELIVERED BY CAESARIAN (THE DAILY MAIL, TO WHOM INQUIRIES ARE BEING REFERRED BY FAMILY AND HOSPITAL SPOKESMEN WEDNESDAY, HAD NOTHING TO SAY ON THIS POINT). MRS. BROWN IS SAID TO SPEND HER TIME WATCHING TV, KNITTING, DOING JIGSAW PUZZLES AND TALKING ON THE PHONE TO RELATIVES. THE EXPRESS SAYS SHE STILL HAS AN OCCASIONAL CIGARETTE, ALTHOUGH STEPTOE URGED HER TO STOP SMOKING ENTIRELY DURING THE PREGNANCY.

NEWSPAPERS REPORTED STEPTOE REMOVED EGGS FROM MRS. BROWN'S OVARIES IN NOVEMBER, AND EDWARDS FERTILIZED ONE WITH MR. BROWN'S SPERM, AND IT WAS THEN IMPLANTED AS AN EMBRYO IN THE WOMB.

ONE REPORT SAID ''THE KEY TO SUCCESS IS A REVOLUTIONARY SURGICAL INSTRUMENT CALLED A LAPAROSCOPE. IT IS A FLEXIBLE TELESCOPE WHICH ALLOWS INTERNAL EXAMINATION OF PATIENTS THROUGH ONLY A TINY INCISION... (AFTER REMOVAL) THE EGG IS KEPT IN A TEST TUBE FILLED WITH A SECRET SOLUTION UNTIL CHECKS ON THE MOTHER DETERMINE WHEN REIMPLANATION IS MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED. REIMPLANTATION REQUIRES NO SURGERY. THE FERTILIZED EGG IS SIMPLY PLACED BACK IN THE WOMB USING A LONG SYRINGE-TYPE INSTRUMENT. BUT FOR MANY WOMEN HEARTBREAK COMES WHEN THEIR NEXT PERIOD

ARRIVES ON TIME AND THEY HAVE TO FACE THE FACT THAT FOR THEM, THE OPERATION HAS FAILED."

SIR JOHN STALLWORTHY, PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD OF SCIENCE AND EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF GYNAECOLOGY AT OXFORD UNIVERSITY, SAID THE BIRTH OF THE BABY WOULD BE GREETED WITH ACCLAIM WHEN IT IS PROVED THAT THE MOTHER COULD NOT HAVE HAD THE BABY IN ANY OTHER WAY. BUT THE TECHNIQUES INVOLVED WERE CLEARLY VERY COMPLICATED, HE SAID, AND IT MAY BE YEARS BEFORE THE TECHNIQUE BECOMES WIDELY AVAILABLE. HE CAUTIONED AGAINST RAISING THE HOPES OF COUNTLESS WOMEN TOO SOON.

ANOTHER GYNAECOLOGIST SAID A KEY QUESTION FOR DOCTORS ONCE THE BABY IS BORN WOULD BE WHETHER THE TECHNIQUE COULD BE REPEATED AND WITH WHAT SUCCESS. A GYNAECOLOGIST WHO USES SURGICAL METHODS TO TRY TO REVERSE INFERTILITY IN WOMEN WITH BLOCKED FALLOPIAN TUBES, SAID: "IF THEY ARE GETTING A 20 PERCENT SUCCESS RATE WITHIN A YEAR OR SO, THAT WILL BE QUITE EXCITING."

HOW MANY WOMEN HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE STEPTOE-EDWARDS EXPERIMENTS SO FAR IS NOT KNOWN (THE DOCTORS WON'T SAY), BUT IT APPEARS TO BE SCORES OR EVEN HUNDREDS (ONE PAPER SAID 400). ONE PAPER, CITING NO SOURCE, SAYS "THERE ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE AT LEAST ANOTHER SIX WOMEN EXPECTING LABORATORY PRODUCED CHILDRE IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS." WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO CHECK THIS.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION SAID THAT, USED RESPONSIBLY, THE TECHNIQUE HAD NO ETHICAL DIFFICULTIES FOR DOCTORS.

LARGELY UNSPOKEN, OF COURSE, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION OF ALL: WILL THE BABY BE BORN HEALTHY? MIGHT IT BE DEFORMED BY THE TECHNIQUES USED TO MIX THE SPERM WITH THE EGG? EVERYBODY IS

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TALKING AS IF THE BABY IS BORN, AND QUITE OKAY, BUT ONE DOCTOR
SAID: "THE BABY ISN'T HERE YET. LET'S HOLD THE CHEERS UNTIL
THEN."

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