

BETTER OR WORSE ?

by gary constantine

BRUNS: How long did you stay at the home in Toronto?

EDNA: I stayed at Humewood House for three months. That includes a week in the hospital (Women's College), and a week back there after I had the baby.

BRUNS: What was the general background of the other girls in the home?

EDNA: There were exceptions, but on the whole they were girls from middle class families. There were one or two from very wealthy families, and there were a couple of working girls. On the whole they all came from a fairly good family background.

comfortable and the food was fairly good.

BRUNS: Was there any type of laughter or joviality between the girls?

EDNA: There were two floors to the home and the floor I was on consisted mainly of girls my own age and from the same background as myself, and we had a ball. Because we were all in the same boat we were not prepared to let anybody see that it had affected us anymore than it had affected anybody else. We laughed and I would say that there was more laughter than there ever was tears. There were moments when we wanted to be alone but these were rare and you had time alone when you had to be in bed at ten-thirty at night and you had to have a nap in the afternoon. You were alone then with your thoughts and that was enough.

to anesthise the abdominal area. I didn't take effect and so they had to give me gas. This whole time I wasn't afraid. I was more curious as to what was going on. Then I went down for the count and when I woke up I was still bearing down and the nurse had to tell me that it was over and I could stop.

BRUNS: Did you see the baby immediately after birth?

EDNA: When I woke up they were cleaning the baby off and when they brought it over to be weighed all I can remember thinking was, "heavens she's long".

BRUNS: What did you think when you saw the baby for the first time?

EDNA: I was just glad that I was (thin) again. I didn't think about the father at all and all I can remember thinking about the baby was, "heavens she's long".

BRUNS: Did you see the baby anytime after the delivery?

EDNA: I had to see the baby once. I was under an obligation to identify the baby in order to put it up for adoption. My social worker, who had tried her damndest to try and get me to keep the child, whether I was able to or not, since she was coming I asked the nurse to bring in the child for its regular feeding and I saw her every day for the feedings for the next three days.

BRUNS: Did the father come at all to see the child?

EDNA: Yes, the father came and saw the baby on the following Saturday. He missed the afternoon viewing because we were talking and so saw it that night.

BRUNS: Was he willing to help you in any way?

EDNA: He couldn't do much, he was still at school. His family couldn't do much, they weren't rich as my own (family). His father had died about a month before the baby was born.

Toronto has the highest rate of illegitimate births

The father himself could do nothing. His mother offered great moral support and did offer to pay something, but my parents refused at that point.

BRUNS: Why did the social worker want you to keep the child so badly?

EDNA: Toronto has the highest rate of illegitimate births in Canada, and there are a great many children handed over to the Children's Aid Society every year and they were trying to alleviate some of the problems because they didn't have enough homes for them. This is fine but they were also trying to persuade twelve and thirteen year old girls to keep their baby, which as far as I am concerned is silly; it's assinine as a thirteen year old cannot possibly care for a child properly Even myself, and his is the main reason that I did not keep the child, I didn't feel that I was prepared to be a mother and could not be a good mother. I didn't feel that I could be a good mother at that age, but the Childrens Aid Society tried to persuade you that you were. I remember being very resentful at the time that they wouldn't take my word for it, and that I planned to finish my university career, and that I didn't figure that I could care for the baby properly, and the best thing I could do for the child was to give her away to someone who could care for her properly.

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given classes in the breathing, etc. etc. few people went to them. Our diet was very closely and the food for the most part was fairly good. I lived here for three months and had the baby in early April and the obstetricians were concerned because the mother had no stigma or shame attached to it. They had seen so much of it.

BRUNS: You sound bitter about being forced to go to the hospital about the interns making remarks.

This chart lists the various methods of birth control in order of effectiveness (top to bottom). The figures for the right are estimates based on average in some areas the pill, the intrauterine device, and other birth control aids are available free, or at a reduced cost, in clinics.

METHOD	POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS	DOCTOR'S VISIT REQUIRED	COST
Operation performed by physician			Cost of operation
Weight gain, usually ending after several months		Must be prescribed by physician (periodic checkup advised by most physicians)	\$1.75 - \$2.50 a month (plus physician's fee)
Irregular bleeding, discomfort beginning		Must be inserted by physician or trained technician (yearly checkup often advised)	Minimal (physician's fee includes device)
Jelly nose minor irritation		Must be fitted by physician (a return visit may be required)	\$3.00 - \$5.00 (plus physician's fee; plus cost of jelly, \$1.00 a month or more)
None if used (acceptive)		No	10¢ - 75¢ each
Psychological effects		No	None
Misconception		No	\$1.00 - \$3.50 a month (tablets generally least expensive, aerosol foams most costly)
None (greatly effectiveness)		Physician may assist in determining "safe days"	None (unless thermometer and/or physician are used)
None (greatly effectiveness)		No	\$3.50 - \$5.00 (for douche apparatus)

I felt like I was having bearing-down pains.

BRUNS: Tell us about the last day before you went to have the baby.

EDNA: I went in the hospital very early Monday morning, so my last day at the home was Sunday. That week at the home I had been assigned dishes which meant cleaning up the dishes for 26 girls and 5 staff members. Early Sunday morning I had what I now know was a "show" which is a small spot of blood in the discharge. I didn't know what this was at the time and it was so small that I didn't pay much attention to it. Sunday was my due date but they give you weeks on either side because they're not exactly sure when the baby was conceived. About twelve o'clock that night I woke up with a pain, but didn't think anything of it and I went back to sleep and about ten minutes later I had another one and I thought nothing of it so I went back to sleep. After this had gone on for about half an hour I finally figured out that I must be starting the early stages of labour.

BRUNS: What were you thinking before during and after you had the baby?

EDNA: I went into the hospital about six Monday morning and after the nurse prepped me, which consists of shaving the groin area completely, and I was given an enema. The doctor came in and examined me and explained that I was in the early stages of labour. I went downstairs then and I was installed in a bed. I spent most of that day walking around. About three that afternoon I started mild labour pains. About five I started to have heavy labour pains and they were much closer together. I got into bed then and since I hadn't gone to too many of the child-bearing breathing exercises I didn't practice this method of reducing the pressure, so I was lying there in bed in great pain when one of the nurses came in and seeing that I was having a contraction placed her hand on my stomach and told me to push it up, which is the principle involved in the child-bearing breathing exercises, which did help a great deal. Later I was taken up to the delivery floor and I was told that I was on my own. All of the nurses and doctors were very calm cool and collected and very reassuring. I was getting tired by this time as the labour pains were sapping my strength so I lay down and went to sleep and the pains kept waking me up and then I would fall right back to sleep. About nine o'clock I felt like I was having my bearing down pains, and, for those of you who are uninformed, you feel like your going to have a bowel movement. The pains were about two minutes apart at this point. I was sleeping between the contractions so they never appeared to get any worse. About nine-thirty my water bag broke and they put me on a stretcher and moved me into the delivery room. So there I was in the stirrups bearing down and they gave me a spinal needle which was suppose

BRUNS: I pictured this home as some little bleak hole in the wall with everybody sitting around feeling sorry for themselves. Is this what it was?

EDNA: No. It was actually quite a nice home. The front part was fairly old but comfortable. The part where the girls had their bedrooms was modern. There were game rooms, there were sitting rooms, and there was a tv room. The only thing was that we had specific hours we could do things and specific hours we could not, and we all had to be in bed by ten o'clock at night with the lights out by ten-thirty. To some people this was extremely annoying; myself being one of them, but it wasn't a hole in the wall by any means. It was quite

EDNA: I can't help but think of a particular case I had who was very rude. At least it bothered me but I did laugh about it afterwards when I was talking to some of the girls at the home at the time he seemed to be trying to make me and I was in no mood to be bothered. He was fairly well along in my pregnancy, and was due to have

There were girls in the...
the child in two weeks. He was quite upset that I had been taking any pills and did his best to urge me to go away and leave my doctor in;