

Baby Sandra

It was early morning on November 23, 1948, not yet light out. Meredith strained to look at the time. The short hand was near the "5." The pains announced themselves with no restraint—the baby wanted out. Meredith heaved her swollen body out of the bed and then nudged Jim.

"Jim. Wake up! Get me to the hospital!" she said, draping the favored muskrat coat over her nightgown.

"Wha—?" said Jim. "I thought you were getting an induction." He rubbed his eyes and glanced at the clock.

"So did I, but he's coming now."

Jim hopped out of bed. "You'd better get dressed," he said as he pulled on his jeans.

"No, I don't need to get dressed. Let's go!"

He urged her again, but Meredith insisted on going as is.

At St. Mercy's Hospital, Meredith refused anesthesia. She would not be afraid of giving birth. The hospital staff was confused and surprised.

The labor was exhausting but uneventful. At 9 o'clock in the morning, Dr. Meyer delivered her baby. "It's a girl!" he announced.

Surprised, Meredith attempted to sit up to verify the gender. She and Jim had been expecting a boy. Now they'd have to come up with a girl's name.

"Eight pounds, eight ounces!" called the doctor triumphantly before handing the little girl to a nurse. Meredith, foggy from the delivery and not accustomed to going through labor, fell immediately and gratefully to sleep.

Out of the six children Meredith eventually had, this baby would be recognized as Meredith's largest, though as a five-foot-tall adult, she ended up Meredith's smallest.

When Meredith woke at two o'clock in the afternoon, she called the nurse so she could see the baby again. She wanted to look closely this time and examine all her little toes and fingers.

"I'm sorry, your baby's sleeping."

Meredith started to sit up. "I want to see my baby."

Memoirs

"Stay in your bed, it's too early for you to be walking around." The nurse patted her on the shoulder. "You can see your baby when she wakes up." When Meredith tried to push herself up using her elbows, the nurse applied more pressure. "You must not get up yet."

"I want to see my baby!" But the pain in her abdomen stopped her from rising further and she slid back onto the bed.

"You'll see the baby soon," said the nurse calmly.

Her response angered Meredith, who rose up from the bed, now oblivious to the pain. "I need my baby." The nurse softly pushed her back onto the bed. "Bring me my baby!" said Meredith.

A tall, erect, red-haired woman walked in. "What is going on here?" She spoke with a voice of authority.

"Sister Superior," said the nurse in a deferent tone Meredith hadn't heard before, "this patient refuses to stay in her bed."

"She won't bring me my baby!" cried Meredith.

"Bring this mother her baby," demanded Sister Superior. The nurse left quickly to do her bidding, with Sister Superior right behind her.

The first thing Meredith noticed were the eyes. They were swollen shut.

"What's wrong? What happened to my baby?"

"Silver nitrate reaction," said the nurse.

Meredith looked at the small girl again. She looked different from her big sister. This girl had lots and lots of thick dark hair—and she had fingernails! Meredith was relieved to note that she had all her toes and fingers and looked perfectly healthy.

Sandra. Her name would be Sandra.