A NEW LIFE FOR CLARA AND ALTA

Siamese Twins Undergo Surgery

By DAVID M. CLEARY

Clara and Alta Maldonado, 13-month-old Siamese twins who were born joined at their lower abdomens, are undergoing separation surgery today. The two of them were once indistinguishable as a single child.

The operation, scheduled for today, is the first in the United States to attempt the separation of Siamese twins joined at the lower abdominal region. The twins have already undergone several preliminary operations to prepare them for the major procedure.

The operation involves cutting through the abdominal muscles, separatinng the two children from each other. The surgery is expected to last for several hours, and the children will require intensive care afterward.

The twins are being separated because their parents believe it is the best option for their future development. The separation will allow each twin to lead a normal life and pursue their own interests.

Siamese Twins Being Separated in Philadelphia

8-HOUR OPERATION SEPARATES TWINs

The operation is scheduled to last for about 8 hours. The twins are expected to recover well after the surgery, and they will be able to return home within a few weeks.

If everything works out, each girl will be a whole person.
The Siamese twins were brought to the operating room at 5:45 a.m. and were positioned on foam rubber wedge-shaped cushions which were pulled back as the youngsters were separated. Pre-operative preparations took four hours. Clara and Alta were ready for surgery at 10:10 a.m. Dr. Josephine Templeton (above), anesthesiologist, comforts Alta during pre-operative preparations.

The twins shared a rectum which was given to Clara at separation. However, Dr. Koop was able to build a new rectum for Alta using another muscle as a rectal sling. Omphalocele

Since the twins are joined facing each other both had a large abdominal wound after separation. By breaking the pelvic bone, pulling the hips around and suturing the pelvis together, the wound was closed in Alta. Clara had enough skin to close the wound so that no artificial skin was needed to bridge the gap in the abdominal wall.

Trans Ureteroureterostomy

In the twins, the ureters were crossed and drained into the other ureter. They had to be resected. This technique is different from the usual implantation of ureters into the bladder and was chosen in order to avoid entering the bladder and making another opening.

Two full surgical teams worked simultaneously. Twenty-three members of the O.R. staff were needed for the separation procedure. Dr. John J. Downes, Jr., headed the anesthesiology team. Dr. John W. Duckett, Jr., headed the urology team. Orthopedic surgery was performed by Dr. Stanley Chung, Children's chief of orthopedics. Dr. Koop was assisted by Dr. Louise Schnauter, associate surgeon, and chief surgical residents Dr. Edwin Hatch and Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr.
Actual separation took place at 12:37 p.m.

Though the separation of the Rodriguez twins received world-wide acclaim, Dr. C. Everett Koop, surgeon-in-chief at Children's, notes that each procedure performed on Clara and Alta is performed many times a year at Children's Hospital. The separation of the twins was unique because it involved all of the procedures at once.

"For example," Dr. Koop explained, "we build several rectums a year at Children's because some infants are born without a rectum. Many are born without abdominal walls.

"None of the techniques used on the twins was new to us. We just had to decide the order in which we would make the repairs."

Dr. Koop continued, "This is where our planning sessions were crucial. I estimate that 100 man-hours went into the planning of this operation.

"We had to consider everything that could go wrong and decide how we would handle each crisis.

The anesthesiology team had a tremendous responsibility. They were responsible for the life sustaining devices during surgery. Dr. John J. Downes, Jr., headed the Anesthesiology team.

"I can honestly say that everything went right during the operation. The skull sessions paid off. Surgery was completed successfully at 5:10 p.m.," Dr. Koop concluded.

Dr. Koop spoke to the media after the operation to report that the twins were doing "very well."
Clara, the larger twin, was taken off the respirator 48 hours after surgery, 24 hours before her smaller sister. When Clara woke up she was placed in her sister's crib. On seeing Alta she became very quiet, then reached out to touch Alta's hand. The youngsters remained in the same bed while at Children's Hospital. At first nurses observed that the twins constantly sought each other out. They clung to each other's nightgown strings while sleeping.

Before separation Clara had been the dominant twin. Because she was larger she always won the squabbles. But after surgery Alta acquired a more aggressive personality of her own.

Both children were put on soft diets seven days after surgery. On the twelfth day they began to eat solid foods. Nurses reported they were eating well and gaining weight. It wasn't long before the girls were smiling again. They learned to wave and Clara called "Bye-Bye" to everyone leaving the Intensive Care Unit.