

Special delivery

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In 1965, while a fifth-year medical student, I was doing a locum for the intern on a gynecologic ward in Scotland. The emergency room had just sent up a young girl for admission as a threatened abortion. I was preparing to do a pelvic exam when a couple of feet appeared, followed by a bottom and, very quickly, by an entire baby boy. At that time I had not done my obstetrics rotation, had not attended a birth and the only delivery I had witnessed had taken place in a movie. All I could remember from the movie was that the doctor held the baby upside down by the ankles.

I called for the resident and the junior nurse called for the senior nurse and the baby then spontaneously let out a healthy cry. At that point there was a heavy thump from the corridor outside. The young girl's father had hit the floor after fainting. The gynecologic resident arrived and looked very bewildered to find me still holding the baby upside down by the ankles, but he quickly took over, severed the

umbilical cord and delivered the placenta. It turned out that this had been a concealed pregnancy that wasn't uncovered until the girl came home complaining of abdominal pains after completing a full day of work in the woollen mills.

In this old hospital the Obstetrics Department was in a separate building, so we wheeled mother and baby outside and up the hill to the delivery room in the maternity building. She had a full eclamptic seizure while her laceration was being sutured. Unfortunately, no one had remembered to take her blood pressure in the midst of all the commotion — they had certainly not shown that step in the movie. Regardless, the end results were satisfactory. Mother and baby did well, and her parents seemed to accept the outcome. They took their daughter and grandson home with them. A special delivery indeed.