

THE FAMILY CIRCLE

DR. MARTIN A. COUNEY . . . has cared for 8,000 premature babies in 45 years, has saved 6,500 of them. The smallest weighed a pound and a half. (With him is his 160-pound daughter Hildegard, once a premature baby herself.) Dr. Couney discusses preemies in "Beginner's Luck"

DOROTHY LAMOUR . . . has a kind of role that is new for her in "Disputed Passage," which argues for the existence of a power in healing that is greater than medicines and surgical skill. John Howard is the doctor who holds that belief and Dorothy supports him in it. See reviews, page 18



SUZANNE SILVERCRUYS . . . is the only sculptor of the Dionne Quintuplets. She has also sculpted Katharine Hepburn, Herbert Hoover, Jack Dempsey, and many another notable. (She is shown here with her image of her mother.) Stewart Robertson tells of her varied life and work in "Head Woman." See page 14

the condition of the life of the fetus within the womb.

"Dr. Budin sent me with six incubators to the Berlin Exposition of 1896 to show the world what we had done. I borrowed my preemies from the Berlin Charity Hospital, and although we had intended the 'Child-hatchery,' as the Berliners called it, to be a purely scientific exhibit, the general public got wind of it, and the result was that we outdrew even the Congo Village. Everybody wanted to see the babies. I handled several batches that summer, bringing each preemie up to five pounds before turning it back to the hospital, and I never lost a single one.

BEGINNER'S LUCK

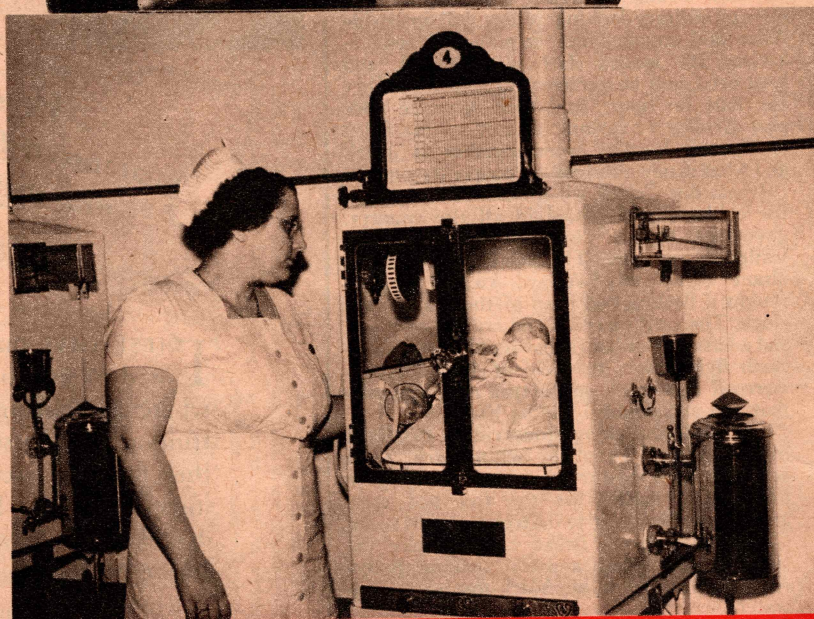
Hildegarde Couney and two assistants hold six preemies at the World's Fair exhibit. They handle them as little as possible and with great care, which increases their chance of survival. Most parents handle their babies far too much, says Dr. Couney

"ALL the World Loves a Baby" is the slogan Dr. Martin A. Couney had painted across his infant incubator exhibit at the New York World's Fair, and it's a sentiment with which most of said world will agree. The dissenting votes would come, in a chorus of extremely feeble wails, from a fresh crop of citizens known as preemies who stood no chance of care a la Couney, or its equivalent. And in case you're wondering, a "preemie" is a prematurely born infant—one which arrives before the normal nine-month carrying period has elapsed.

"When I was a young man at the Hospital of the Child Jesus in Paris," Dr. Couney told me, "preemies were looked upon as having only a slight chance of surviving. And the same was true everywhere. A strong preemie which hadn't arrived too early might pull through, but what about the tiny, bird-like creatures brought into the world with their organs not properly formed? Like all other hospitals, we lacked the proper equipment to save them, but we did have Dr. Pierre Constant Budin, and he led us in the work of developing the incubator."

"Was there anything particularly intricate about it?" I asked, looking around the doctor's spotless blue-and-white exhibit with its gleaming glass-and-nickel incubators, in each of which a baby tightened its little fingers on the thread of life.

"No, the work of developing the incubator wasn't intricate," said Dr. Couney, who is a dignified, forthright gentleman of 76 years. "It came from the heart, perhaps, as well as the head. It helped smash the tradition that took the death of most preemies for granted. It helped conserve France's dwindling birth rate, for this was back in 1893, when we were feeling the losses of man power from the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. No, there was no great mystery about the incubator, nor is there now. What it does is simply to simulate as closely as possible



Dr. Martin A. Couney (above) is so highly regarded by doctors that those nearby send him all the preemies they deliver. (Below) Miss Couney and individual incubator

"And then," continued Dr. Couney, "I was asked to bring the incubators over to the Earl's Court Exposition in London, but when I got there, the English doctors wouldn't lend me any preemies. So I hurried back to Paris for a supply. I lined several washbaskets with hot-water bottles and blankets, filled them with preemies, and carried them across the

**PREMATURE BABIES (ONE IN 20) USED TO BE THOUGHT DOOMED—
BUT THAT WAS BEFORE DOCTOR COUNEY'S TIME • BY JOHN PROCTOR**

Channel without any bad effects. We were a great success in London, and when I came over to America the next year—to the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha, Nebraska—I knew that the incubators would not only interest people but would make them aware that preemies could be saved. Americans needed that knowledge the same as Europeans, and after I had exhibited at Omaha, Buffalo, and Montreal, I decided that I'd stay here and carry on the work."

And thus Dr. Couney found a career in which he meets no competition. Many physicians have come to him for instruction, notably Dr. Julius Hess, head of the pediatrics department of the University of Illinois. Dr. Hess has established America's finest premature-baby station, in Chicago's Sarah Morris Hospital, but in the exhibition field Dr. Couney is supreme. Besides showing at 22 expositions, from Rio de Janeiro to San Francisco (1915), he maintained an exhibit at Coney Island from 1903 to the present year, when he closed it in favor of his World's Fair enterprise. In fact, during one lush season Dr. Couney operated two shows at Coney, one each at Luna Park and Dreamland Park. When the latter caught fire, his preemies were hurriedly rescued and rushed down Surf Avenue to double up with their buddies at Luna.

The doctor runs his exhibit only half the year, taking the other six months off to rest

from the arduous 24-hour-a-day duties, for it is necessary for him to be within call of the preemies at all times. Probably no other physician ever stayed so closely and continuously on a job, and to facilitate matters, the doctor built living quarters for most of his 35 employees right behind his World's Fair exhibit. He showed me proudly through what amounted to a small hotel, including his own suite and the garage containing the ambulance made especially for preemies. It is equipped with an incubator heated by hot-water coils connected with the radiator, and that enables the doctor to make dashes of as much as 300 miles into the countryside and bring back a preemie in perfect safety.

The new arrival at the World's Fair exhibit would encounter five lecturers addressing the fascinated crowds, but this would fail to bother him, because a preemie doesn't see or hear anything for many weeks. He would find 15 nurses working in three eight-hour shifts to watch over him, and five wet nurses to supply the milk he needs so much. These wet nurses express their milk by hand several times daily, and this item alone costs Dr. Couney \$250 a week. However, if he were forced to buy the milk from the New York Welfare Federation, it would cost almost triple that sum, and even then the doctor would have no control over the diet of the mothers who provide it, as he does with his own staff. The fact that the average preemie can absorb six dollars' worth of mother's milk a day makes raising one an expensive proposition, and this, coupled with the cost of special equipment, extra nurses, and so forth, is the principal reason why so few hospitals have an adequate

premature-baby station. They simply cannot afford it, yet it is surely a branch of hospital work that richly deserves a generous endowment. (Tell your local millionaire about it.)

"**W**HAT should be done when a preemie arrives in the world?" I asked, looking at the immaculate, doll-like babies swathed in white and adorned with pink bows.

"It should be kept warm," advised Dr. Couney. "Only the other day a doctor out in a small Connecticut town telephoned to ask for instructions on a two-pound, two-ounce baby, and I told him to put it in a basket or a dresser drawer and place covered hot-water bottles around it and a blanket over the top. I also said to give it a few eye droppers of water in order to irritate the bladder a little and make it urinate. It is well not to feed a preemie for the first 24 hours, for gas might develop and it would turn blue. That is what we term cyanosis, and it's generally caused by poor circulation of the blood, which in turn may be caused by the heart's being improperly formed.

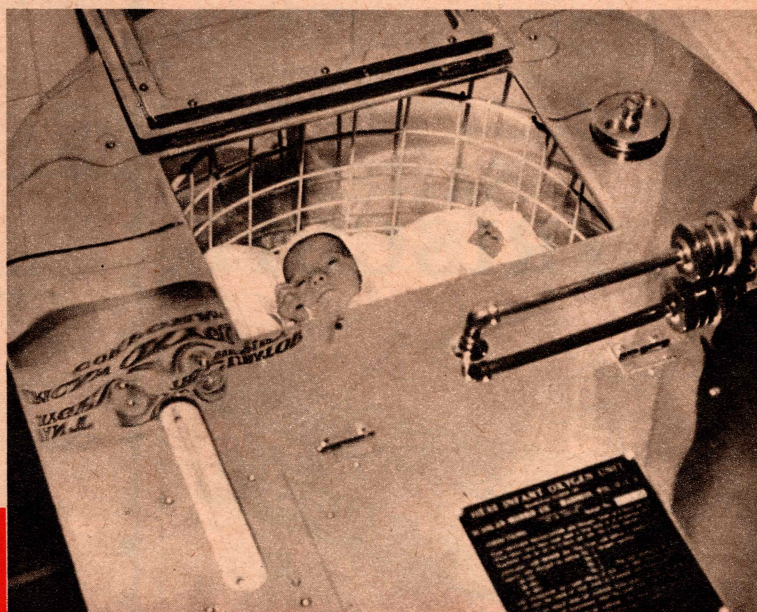
"I don't concern myself with babies weighing more than three pounds, for the larger ones have a better chance of survival," Dr. Couney went on. "The lightest baby I have ever treated weighed 705 grams, which is 1.55 pounds, and the smallest was nine inches long. But remember this—when you read a news story about a baby weighing ten or 12 ounces, don't take it seriously, I have investigated several such reports, and all were untrue. As for age, the average preemie that lives is about a six-month baby; the five-month ones seldom make the grade. Do I get more boys than girls, you ask? Well, it seems to me that they come in cycles. Just now I have 17 girls here, and not a boy in sight. All told, I've cared for about 8,000 preemies, and lost about 1,500 of them, or only 18¾ percent. At this Fair I've handled 50 with only five losses."

I examined the incubators which are Dr. Couney's own invention, with their gas-heated hot-water coils, thermostatic control of the desired 90° temperature, and the ventilator that changes the air every five seconds. The

(Please turn to page 16)



World's Fair visitors file past incubators, each containing a preemie. Some want to adopt the babies; others follow their progress by coming to see them regularly



Preemies need plenty of warmth, get it in this oven bed designed by Couney-trained Dr. Julius Hess. The window was momentarily opened for our photographer


Thanksgiving Greetings




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IT COMES IN MODERN

Cream Top
BOTTLES

SOLD IN ALL

"SANITARY FOOD STORES"

BEGINNER'S LUCK

(Continued from page 11)

doctor watched me for a few moments and then clapped me warningly on the shoulder. "Don't get the idea that the incubator does it all," he said. "It's only a part of the whole. The main thing is the intelligent care and interest of the nursing staff." He indicated a spotless white room where five pretty nurses were busying themselves with baby clothing, bottles, tubes, droppers, and other paraphernalia. One nurse deftly wrapped a wizened preemie and deposited it in a Hess oven bed, invented by Dr. Couney's former pupil. The Hess oven bed, used for babies that are too weak and ailing to make good displays, is simply an incubator in which the infant is almost concealed from view. However, by looking into an inverted mirror above the small window, I could see the strained features of the mite as it lay sleeping its way toward health and safety.

"I give weekly prizes of silk stockings to the nurses whose charges make the most gain," said Dr. Couney, "and I'd like you to observe the way in which they handle the preemies. No waste motion, no unnecessary pawing. The average infant gets far too much of that from its loving parents, who are too filled with pride to realize that they are wearing their child out. My nurses fall in love with the preemies and hate to see them leave for home. In fact, I become attached to all the little ones because a baby never fails to do something to my heart."

"What about the patrons?" I inquired. "Does anyone ever take a fancy to a preemie and want to adopt him?"

"I have that request almost every week,"

Dr. Couney replied, "but, of course, the babies belong to their parents, not to me. The preemies are here as my guests. I make no charge for taking care of them, nor do the parents receive anything from me. But plenty of visitors think that I have the right to sell them or otherwise dispose of them. Childless couples ask most frequently, although there are many requests from single women. I always refer them to the institutions that have babies for adoption. Some people who visit the exhibit may fall in love with one preemie, and then they may return several times a week to inspect 'their' child and ask about its weight and chances for life. And they may give the little tyke a name of their own so that it will seem closer to them. After the baby leaves the incubator, they may not return, but sooner or later many come back to admire some newcomer and go through the ritual all over again. Then there are people who seem to find an answer to the mystery of life by looking at the preemies without singling out any particular one. One woman like that was a steady visitor at Coney Island for 35 years."

"**WHAT** do the parents do while their child is with you?" I asked.

"They come to see it every day at first, and when they see the change in the child, they stop worrying so much, and their visits grow less frequent. As the time approaches when the preemie will be healthy enough to go home, the parents sometimes fear that the change in surroundings will cause a relapse, and so, to keep the child here longer, they don't come at all. In such cases I sometimes have to send them several messages, and oc-

asionally I've had to wrap up a preemie, drive home with it, and walk right in and put it on the bed before the astonished parents. I must do that, because there's always another weak little soul who needs our care."

"Where do you get the preemies?" I asked.

"I never have to look for them, I assure you," said Dr. Couney. "So many physicians know me that when they deliver a preemie they get in touch with me, and I hurry out with the ambulance. Sometimes the preemie is brought to me by parents who have heard of me through friends whose children got their start here. You know, in a way, preemies are pretty hardy, and sometimes they have to be in order to combat their parents. In the case of one preemie that was brought to me, the odor arising from it was so overpowering that I said to myself, 'Is this infant rotting?' But on examination I found that it had a necklace of garlic, and when I questioned the mother, who was an Armenian, she told me she had placed the necklace there to make the baby strong! I exchanged it for the small bead necklace I always put on every baby for identification. And by the way—if an adult comes visiting here with one of these necklaces, he gets in for nothing. I once called for a preemie in a Swedish household, and I arrived to find the grandmother pulling it through the leg of the father's trousers. The old man was very strong and healthy, she told me, and she wanted to insure the same state for the child. I'd hate to guess at what havoc superstition causes to preemies that we never hear about."

"What happens to preemies when they grow up?" I asked Dr. Couney. "Do they become regular-size people?"

"I was waiting for that," chuckled the doctor. "And in reply, I'd like for you to meet this young lady." He indicated a buxom, smiling, dark-eyed nurse who had come into the room. "My daughter Hildegard," he said proudly. "One hundred and sixty pounds and sound as a dollar, yet she was a preemie and spent several months in one of my incubators. Does that answer your question, or do I have to remind you that Napoleon, Voltaire, Newton, Victor Hugo, and Darwin were preemies? A preemie usually catches up with other children in size by the time he's three years old. Three of my preemies fought in the World War, and one of them won the Croix de Guerre. It distresses me to think how many of them must be in uniform today. I have sustained life in future doctors, lawyers, telegraphers, schoolteachers—almost every vocation—but no convicts. One of my preemies grew up around Coney Island and finally fell in love with one of my nurses and married her. I don't believe I've developed any geniuses, and I'll be truthful and say that in some cases, such as when a preemie suffers from intracranial hemorrhages, it may make him a bit mentally retarded. He can't be a college professor, perhaps, but he can do good work with his hands, so the social balance is still maintained."

JUST then a father and mother bustled up to tell the doctor that Irving was making good as a commercial artist, and Dr. Couney beamed. "You see?" he chuckled. "Maybe I'm the godfather to a future great illustrator! Why, this year I've already attended 11 commencement exercises where my preemies graduated, and it's an exalted moment for me when they come up for their diplomas. Yes, my friend, preemies get to be

normal people, and often they're a bit bigger than most, because their parents think that on account of their having been preemies, they must still be weak, and consequently they stuff them with food."

Dr. Couney has no difficulty in telling the religion of a premie's parents. The Catholic babies invariably wear a miraculous medal, the Jewish ones have a red arm band as protection against the evil eye, while the Protestant preemies come completely unadorned. Preemies often come in multiples. When I visited the Fair exhibit, there were three sets of twins in the incubators. The doctor has had 18 sets of triplets, but in almost all the cases of triplets there is one extra-small premie that seldom has a chance for life.

One premie, Dr. Couney told me, was practically thrust upon him. At the first American exposition at which he exhibited—in Omaha—a man carrying a hatbox approached him as he was closing the doors for the night and asked for the doctor. Having been exposed to sundry dynamic American salesmen, Dr. Couney replied that the doctor wasn't on hand, and then he hastily went back into the building. First thing in the morning up came the stranger, again asking for the doctor. This time Dr. Couney admitted his identity. "I've got something for you," said the visitor, opening the hatbox. "My wife gave birth to this baby yesterday, and we thought you should have it. That's why I've been sitting up on a park bench all night." That premie pulled through in fine shape, and if he or she reads this article, the doctor would appreciate a post card.

When Dr. Couney was at the Chicago Century of Progress in 1934, he missed the biggest chance for publicity that ever came his way. A certain amazing news item so interested William Randolph Hearst, the publisher, that he wanted to fly Dr. Couney, some incubators, and nurses into the northern wilds. After thinking it over, Dr. Couney turned down the opportunity. He felt that his first duty was to the preemies at his Chicago exhibit. And furthermore, he didn't think that the babies whose birth had been reported in the papers would survive. But they fooled him; they were the Dionne Quintuplets.

I asked Dr. Couney what causes premature births (which amount to about one in every 20 births). He sighed and shook his head. "If women who are expectant wouldn't try to hang curtains, it might help a little," he said. "But seriously, remember that primarily it's not the baby who is ill, but its mother. Premature birth is a precipitation, a sudden dropping. Why? Well, yours is not a medical publication, but the most frequent reasons are multiple pregnancy, syphilis, and toxemia of pregnancy. The first two speak for themselves, and the last is a condition caused by the presence of toxins or other poisons in the blood which bring on pernicious vomiting, convulsions, and inflammation of the kidneys. There are many other causes, of course—far too many for the safety of children."

When Dr. Couney is resting at home, his chief hobby is breeding dogs and horses. Occasionally his daughter Hildegard persuades him to go to the movies. Once there, the doctor succumbs to the comfort of the seat and the banality of the film and proceeds to fall into a quiet snooze which is like a sound-proof anteroom to the distractions of the world. He is contented and he is oblivious to everything. In fact, he then becomes very much like one of his preemies himself.

THE WIT OF THE WORLD

Mrs. Johns: Doctor, what can I do to reduce?

Doctor: Take the proper kind of exercise.

Mrs. J: What do you recommend?

Doctor: Try pushing yourself away from the table three times a day.

—*Rammer Jammer*

"Oh, look, Mummy. There's a cow tossing Daddy in the air!" cried Tommy excitedly.

"Not a cow, dear," his mother replied calmly, "—a bull." —*Log*

To a gold digger, any John with jack is jake. —*Midas*

"I hear she's going to marry again. And she's been led to the altar three times already."

"Led! Why she knows the way with her eyes shut!" —*Widow*

"What animal am I imitating—99-klonk, 99-klonk, 99-klonk?"

"I give up."

"A centipede with one wooden leg." —*Lynx*

A party of hikers decided to camp in a certain attractive spot and sent one of their number to go to a nearby town for provisions.

At last he returned carrying six bottles of beer, a bottle of wine, a bottle of whiskey, and a loaf of bread.

Taking stock of his load, one of the party exclaimed, "Good boy! He's even remembered the birds."

—*Sour Owl*

"I think I'll have a September Morn sandwich."

"What's that?"

"Cold chicken without any dressing." —*Flox*

Hotel Clerk: Why don't you wipe the mud off your shoes when you come in here?

Hillbilly: What shoes? —*Bored Walk*

Ephraim, the Negro horse trainer, was seated reading a letter, and Lige was standing behind him holding his hands over Eph's ears.

Horseman (noticing them): What kind of horseplay are you two fellows up to?

Ephraim: Lige got dis here letter dat his gal writ him, boss, but he kain't read, so he gets me to read it fo' him. But he stops mah ears up so's Ah kain't hear what Ah's sayin'. —*Voo-Doo*

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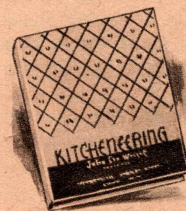


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