

## Epilogue

While we were writing this book we became mothers again. But this second time the outcome was completely different. Judy gave birth to Shira in June, and Susan's daughter, Laura, arrived from South Korea the following January at three months of age. The time of waiting for their arrival was difficult for each of us, as it is for any parent who has lost a baby. Once again our experiences differed, but once again we shared similar feelings, this time ones of relief and delight.

Judy:

During the first few weeks after our baby Elana died I was completely in a daze. I cried going to sleep, and each morning as I woke up the reality of what had happened struck me all over again. There were visitors, our families and friends, offering distraction and comfort. Their presence was much more important than their words. But no one could take away the hurt.

I returned to work gradually. I was doing my work as I had before, and I would guess most people thought that I was getting quickly back to normal. No one saw the tears that appeared when I was alone in the car, driving to and from work. And no one knew how often the thought passed fleetingly through my mind to drive off the side of the road. There were some very bad moments then. But Barry was wonderful at cheering me up. And the knowledge that our baby had been healthy until the birth sustained me for a while. Later it would make me angry, but now

I held onto it as the hope I needed that the next time we would be successful.

The idea of being pregnant for another nine months was frightening. Yet many people encouraged us to get pregnant again immediately, citing examples of others who had lost babies and now were happy because they had another child. Sometimes it seemed like I was being told that it was like falling off a bike—if only I got right back on and started riding again, I would forget how badly my knees were scraped. I listened eagerly for the stories but didn't really believe them. I also felt pressed for time; at my age I didn't have the luxury to wait very long to have more children.

Three months after the baby's death I was pregnant again. I felt elated, and momentarily lifted out of the terrible depression which had been weighing me down. But I also began nine months of worry and anxiety. First I worried that it was too soon. Would the baby be okay? If something went wrong again, could I stand the guilt I would surely feel for having conceived so quickly? Sometimes my husband and I felt that the anxiety was too much to bear, that we would never survive those nine months. Yet we knew more certainly than ever that we wanted a child.

Inevitably we compared this pregnancy to the last one. We were much more cautious in every way, conservative in activities and reluctant to expect too much. We made no preparations for a baby's room and barely practiced the Lamaze techniques which we had studied so carefully a year before. When the day came on which I had decided I should feel kicking, and it went by without any movement appearing, I began to panic. I was sure something was wrong. But when the baby began to move, and the kicking was more vigorous and frequent than the first baby's, I was greatly relieved.

Of course I still worried that something would go wrong. And I was beginning to feel as though I had been pregnant forever, that I would always be huge and awkward and going to the doctor.

Right on schedule, Shira was born, and it was the beautiful, exciting, labor-room birth I had hoped for. But, more important, this time a baby was born who was alive and healthy. I had been sure that I would cry, but I didn't. I just kept saying, "I can't believe it" over and over again. I didn't even bother to look or ask if it was a boy or a girl. All I wanted was to hear a cry, to see the baby breathe. She cried and she breathed and she was healthy. It felt like a miracle had happened.

Later I did cry for Elana, for I knew what in my worst pain I

had not fully understood a year earlier—how wonderful it is to hold a living baby, to nurse her and rock her and love her. So I mourned once again for the baby who wasn't there and delighted at the same time in the one who was. It was a confusing time, tied up with all the normally intense emotions after birth. But it was mostly a time for great joy and celebration.

People who see me doting over Shira and being entranced by my wonderful baby probably tell others now what they told me then—she was unhappy but then she had another baby and forgot all about it. I still grieve for Elana, and I am still angry about her needless death. But I also cannot imagine not having Shira. I hope she will not be hurt by my hurt. But surely our lives will always be different because of it.

Susan:

I had gone through seven and a half months of a very difficult pregnancy. I had given up my job when my back pains became unbearable. Then I watched my first-born baby die. And now what was left? For two months I was confined to the house from complications after my Caesarean. I felt that I had failed at everything I had tried so hard to accomplish—a career and motherhood. Those days were empty and lonely for me as I watched my husband leave for work each morning. Life seemed to continue for everyone but me.

As time passed I felt I would have to start all over. Yet I didn't have the energy for the awesome task of looking for a new job, and I was unsure that a second pregnancy would end any differently. Somehow, after what seemed like forever, I was beginning to recover from the physical effects of the birth. As I started to go out of the house and see people, I would tell them what had happened, even if they didn't ask or even if I hardly knew them. I realized that I must have seemed crazy, but it was a way for me to work out my feelings.

I also talked to Judy often. We would talk constantly about our feelings—unlike others, we were never bored by hearing the minute details of each other's experience over and over again. More than that, we could understand each other's feelings and even laughed together at the inappropriate remarks some people had made to us. Soon after, we started writing this book and continued our talks even more frequently.

Judy was pregnant at the time. For the first three months after Shira was born, she brought her along while we worked. As I listened to her talk about her new daughter and saw her cuddle

and kiss her, I believed that I would never be so lucky as to have an infant.

Even so, I certainly was going to try to have another baby. Certain that we wanted a healthy baby as quickly as possible, and unwilling to go through a second pregnancy so soon again, my husband and I decided we would adopt our next child. Since our only niece was adopted from South America and we love her very much, adoption seemed like a very natural step. We began by contacting adoption agencies around the country. Our initial attempts were met with frustrations. We found out that many agencies were closed or lists were full. It took persistence until we found an agency that had children available and would accept us.

The adoption procedure seemed endless. We were interviewed at length about our lives, our relationship, and our families, our feelings about having a child from another country, and our son Daniel's death. We completed applications and financial statements. We obtained marriage and birth certificates, photographs and letters of recommendation. We went to the police station to be fingerprinted and to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for a visa. All of these were part of the long process.

It seemed unreal to think that all of these bureaucratic activities would produce a child for us. But her picture finally arrived. Laura was one month old, looking healthy and content. We knew at first sight that we wanted her. We signed more documents and were told that she would be coming by the end of the year.

Now we were frantically beginning to get ready for her. We painted the room, set up the crib, bought some clothes, and found a pediatrician. Last-minute changes in the paperwork, the assassination of the South Korean president—all caused panic. Would she ever be here?

Christmas came and went, then New Year's and still no word about Laura's arrival. Then, finally, in mid-January the phone call came. Laura would be in New York in two days.

A year after our son Daniel's death, Laura arrived at Kennedy Airport from Seoul, South Korea. There wasn't a cloud in the sky that day. My stomach was jumping as we went to the airport. She arrived at 11:30 at night and smiled as she was given to me. She seemed so healthy—sturdy, happy, and beautiful.

She still smiled as we changed her and fed her. All of a sudden we were parents. We left the airport with her, expecting somehow to be stopped and asked whose baby we had taken. But to everyone else, we were just another family on our way home.

In the spring of 1979 we wrote the accounts of our experiences that appear in the prologue. It was spring again a year later as we wrote this epilogue. A much happier spring. Our work was interrupted by anecdotes of our daughters' growth and accomplishments and much less often by the memories of our first babies' deaths. We exchanged toys, clothes, and helpful advice rather than remembering the moments of sorrow and anger. We struggled harder to recapture the feelings of those first days and months of terrible pain. The memories were still there, but we had new memories too, the joyful thoughts of Shira's and Laura's arrivals, the incredible experience of watching them grow.

It is spring once again, eight years later, as we meet to revise this book. During that time, we have each given birth again. Susan's daughter Margo, born prematurely after a difficult pregnancy, is now a thriving five-year-old, and Judy's daughter Ariella is a terrific three-year-old. Both pregnancies were filled with anxiety; we knew too much about all that could go wrong. As we watch our four girls play together now, we are very aware of how precious they are. Yet we still often wonder what our lives would be like if Daniel and Elana were here too.

We have spent these years talking with families and professionals about loss and writing a book on infertility. We know that our own reactions—how we felt then and how we feel now—are shared, with variations, of course, by countless other families.

Our "unblessed events" are just two among the millions that occur each year throughout the world. Insignificant in the scale of history, two statistics for the government's records. But for us they will always be important. And those little babies will always be part of us.