



From Left: Noeline Camboni, secretary; Glennis Anderson, president; Linda Hall, treasurer.

THE BRAIN-CHILD OF A LOWER HUTT MOTHER OF TWIN DAUGHTERS, THE GEMINI CLUB WAS STARTED EARLY THIS YEAR TO GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO MOTHERS OF TWINS

Club eases problems for mothers of twins

BY HELEN CRICHTON

PICTURES BY RAY PIGNEY

SUFFERING feelings of inadequacy because friends with only one baby had beds made, dishes done and washing on the line by nine each morning, Mrs Glennis Anderson, mother of year-old twin daughters, remarked to a friend that she wished she knew another mother of twins so that she could make comparisons.

"Why not start a club for mothers of twins?" her friend asked, and so began the Gemini Club, which Mrs Anderson thinks is the only club of its kind in New Zealand. "Since beginning the club I have heard of others in America," she said.

"With every baby chore multiplied by two, it was often lunchtime before I could sit back to watch the washing blowing on the line. As I had

done my Plunket training and was also an experienced midwife, I wondered how other mothers of twins — with no previous experience of children — were managing.

"One day I spoke on the telephone to Doreen Kelso, who runs Wellington's Person-to-Person Session. Other mothers of twins began telephoning and it became apparent that a number of mothers, who were having the same difficulty in keeping up with the mothers of only one baby, were feeling, as a consequence, less efficient.

"I also put an advertisement in the local newspaper," Mrs Anderson continued, "and the club had its first meeting in my home last March.

"We have 27 members from all over the Hutt Valley, all

with twins under five years of age. Each member will take a turn to have the meeting in her home, because we feel this is more intimate than holding meetings in a hall. Each of us brings a plate of home-baked cakes to eat at supper time.

"Sometimes we have a guest speaker but, usually, we prefer just to chat about incidents that crop up while caring for twins. It is surprising how small little difficulties become when you can talk them over with someone who has perhaps experienced the same trouble. There is always someone to help and encourage anyone who has run into a problem."

As well as club meetings — members will visit mothers of twins temporarily housebound

because of sickness in the family.

"There is a lovely feeling of comradeship," said Mrs Anderson, "and this helps tremendously — particularly where the mothers may be living in an area that is new to them and away from relatives and old friends. This can cause great loneliness, but the club helps to offset this."

Members are kept in touch with each other through a newsletter sent out each month.

One of the guest speakers at the club was a psychologist and the father of twins.

Another speaker was Mrs Sorenson, the mother-in-law of one of the members. Mrs Sorenson had three sets of twins in a row in addition to three other

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*Hazel Bennett
Roburua.*



Back row: Louise van Campfort with Paul and Dean; Sylvia Slater with Paul and Robert; Kitty Boyle with Kirsten and Michael; Irene Rook with Tania and Catherine; Glennis Anderson with Andrea and Megan; Ngaire Bates with Jacqueline and Mark. Centre row: Sue Watterson with Andrew and Peter; Linda Hall with James and Robert; Pauline Thompson with Kelly and Katrina; Joy Sinclair with Rachelle and Danielle; Lorraine Robertson with Caroline and Blair; Sheila Eyles with Sarah and Jane; Hazel Bennett with Alex and Terry. Front row: Bev Preston with Susan and Marie; Noeline Gamboni with Nicola and Johnathon; Ruth Powell with Adrienne and Judith; Julia Hill with Janine and Andrew.

children, so was able to give some most helpful advice.

Among the difficulties encountered is having to buy double sets of clothing, but the club has a Bring-and-Buy stall where mothers can purchase good outgrown clothing.

With two children identical in age, petty jealousies sometimes occur and parents have to be careful to treat each child similarly, although members had conflicting views on dressing the children alike. Some favoured the idea, but others did not bother to do so. Not many of the members had identical twins and several sets included a boy and a girl.

Another club service is buying paper patterns and hiring them to members at 10 cents a time. Since paper patterns cost about 75 cents each in the shops, this service is much appreciated.

The club has also organized a free baby sitting service. Each time a club member baby sits for another — she is awarded a point which, in turn, entitles her to the services of a baby sitter.

"It works particularly well," said Mrs Anderson, "because you know that if you take your twins to someone else's home to be looked after, there will be two high chairs and two cots available."

Members, however, do not know all the twins belonging to other members. In fact, the club is organizing a barbecue to get to know each other's husbands, and is preparing a children's party. Members are busy making baskets from egg cartons and covering them with crepe paper, to hold sweets which the members will make themselves.

Club discussions have revealed that twins are often slower than single children to reach the milestones of talking and walking.

"If one twin progresses more quickly than the other, it is surprising how many people will comment on it," said Mrs Anderson. "This can be particularly worrying if a well-meaning friend suggests that as one twin has been walking for several weeks there may be something backward about the one who hasn't made its first faltering attempt. The club is most helpful in dispelling worries of this kind."

Another difficulty is having two bottle-fed babies perhaps on different milk strengths. All the mothers agreed that breast-feeding was better and quicker than bottle feeding.

"The theme song for a mother of triplets would have to be, 'Put another nipple in,'" said Mrs Louise van Comfort, which brought a burst of infectious laughter from other members. If they had had any worries before coming to the club that evening, these had evidently been dispelled because a happier, livelier group would be difficult to find.

One member, Mrs Hazel Bennett, laughed when she told me she had been given 726 tins of baby food by a chain of grocery stores because her twins were born on July 4.

"I also received a free dryer," she said happily.

Mrs Julia Hill looked a little rueful. "I missed out by only two hours," she said.

Well, next time, she may be luckier. ●