

And Caroline makes five



My Generation
By HOLLY SPANGLER

SOME folks might think, for an Illinois farm family, having a baby in the middle of April doesn't make a lot of sense. And they'd be right.

Yet there are occasions when, despite our best-laid plans, God simply steps in and points us in the direction he intends us to go. And that would be how little Caroline Rachel came to join our family this past spring, bright and early on a Sunday morning, April 13.

I'll freely admit that while pregnant I was more than a little concerned about how this would all work out. Seriously, the second week of April? Could there be a more busy week in a corn grower's life?

Sure, harvest is consuming in its ability to keep everyone shuttling grain around. But planting season brings overwhelming worry: If you're not planting, you're worrying about when you'll be able to start. If you are planting, you're worrying about when you'll be able to get it all done. And if you're done planting, you're worrying about when or if it will come up. And then, of course, why did it not and, concurrently, when will we be able to spray it?

Even in a year when I'm not caring for a newborn and two preschoolers, spring-time contact with my husband, John, is limited to running errands, meals and kids to the buddy seat, and conversations at either dark end of the day.

So as much as I hate to even give voice to the words, I was a smidgen grateful for this past spring's wet weather. Cold, wet days almost made you forget how late it really was. We even spotted snow flurries outside our hospital window. This is, of course, selfish gratitude. A planter in the shed meant that I had help caring for a newborn and two preschoolers for a couple weeks before temporarily becoming a single parent.

Proud siblings

For her part, Caroline has settled right into the family. Her older siblings, 5-year-old Jenna, and 3-year-old Nathan, are thrilled with her presence, if a little perplexed by all the fuss.

"Baby in your tummy? Why?" Nathan asked, upon first being told of his impending big brotherhood. Whether those questions revealed more about his recent penchant to simply ask why or some innate knowledge that his inheritance was about to decrease, we're not sure. I am certain that Nathan never grew so much as he did when Caroline came home from the hospital. Overnight, his once-tiny hands seemed so big, so like a little boy's.

Jenna was simply excited. "Yay! We're having another baby!" she celebrated. She has become the helper of the house, holding Caroline, fetching burp cloths and singing "little baby songs."

Caroline has responded well to it all. Though big siblings zip past her in a flash, she does her best to keep an eye on them both, and saves some of her

best smiles for moments when Jenna slows down long enough to sit and have a little chat with her. I suppose it's the mark of the contented third baby — an answered prayer if there ever was one — that she'll patiently wait for them to take a moment for her, and that she'll amiably pack up and go whenever it's time to head out the door.


And so here we are again, grateful for our beautiful and blessedly healthy baby and in awe of how tiny she is, yet with greater appreciation for how quickly she'll grow into a running, jumping bundle of energy.

■ Comments? E-mail hspangler@farmprogress.com.



BABY LOVE: With Caroline's birth, Jenna and Nathan each got their wish for a baby girl.

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