

# St. Mary's—'Hospitals Have Changed'

"Hospitals have had to change for the younger generation," said Margaret Donegan, RN, commenting on the maternity care program she supervises at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester.

What she's talking about, in part, is the hospital's changed attitude towards fathers.

"We don't treat fathers as visitors," says Miss Donegan. Not only are fathers in most cases allowed to remain with their wives during delivery, but couples can be together after the birth from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., a policy which sharply contrasts with practices of earlier years.

Among the few restrictions placed on fathers is the requirement that they wear surgical gowns in the maternity wing. A special dressing room is provided for them.

Gone is the antiseptic separation of mother and child which used to prevail in obstetrics wards across the country. This becomes quickly evident to visitors walking through the maternity wing of St. Mary's. New mothers are playing with infants lying in special wheeled cradles, learning to bathe them, or lying reading while the baby sleeps quietly by the bedside.

The declining birth rate in New York State means that "Most of the couples who come in here are young, in their later teens or early twenties," according to Miss Donegan.

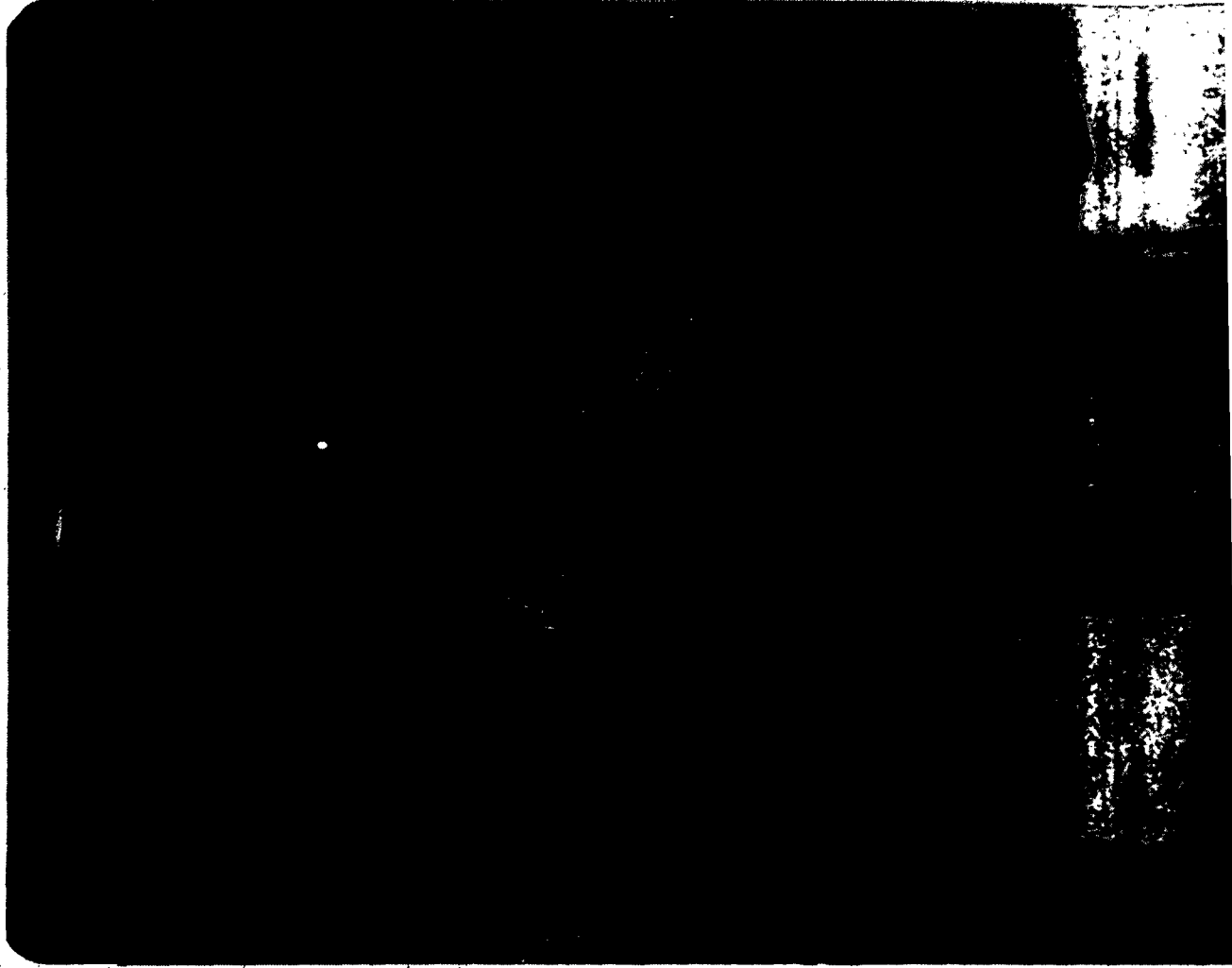
These young couples entering St. Mary's commonly want their babies to be born by what is called the natural childbirth method. "More mothers want to be awake," said Miss Donegan. "Everybody used to want to be asleep during the birth, but

now I would say perhaps half of them have little or no anesthetic."

This trend has increased the demand for the hospital's course training expectant mothers and fathers in the natural method approved by the Childbirth Education Association. This modification of the famous Lamaze method teaches breathing and muscle exercises that ease labor pains and speed delivery, even if the mother decides to use anesthesia.

"Family Centered Maternity Care," as the St. Mary's program is called, does not press parents to use the services offered. If, for instance, a mother feels after a hard labor that she does not wish to have the child with her for long periods of time, the nursery is able to care for the infant.

However, "Our job is not to take care of the mother and child so much as to teach her to be self-sufficient in caring for the infant."



Mrs. Patricia Holmes in her room with her baby, Christine Lvonna.



Mrs. Juanita Russell prepares to go home by using a hair-dryer which was installed by the hospital as part of its care planned to ease maternity stays.



Margaret Donegan, RN



Mrs. Nancy Weagley, RN feeds a premature in its Isolette cradle, specially designed for its need to be isolated from any kind of contact.