



## One Woman's Mission to Save Babies

By Bonnie Rochman



Photo: Jessica Todd Harper

**Even when Lynn Page felt she'd lost everything, she still had something invaluable to give. Bonnie Rochman tells the story of a mother's devotion and the little-known network of medical miracle workers that's quietly helping the babies who need help most.**

Lynn Page was 37, and a pediatric psychologist—old enough for things to go badly with her pregnancy and informed enough to know it. So during her first ultrasound, when the doctor's face suddenly fell and he told her she could get dressed, her heart was hammering as she asked, "What's wrong?" This was November 2006. Lynn was alone at the appointment. She and her husband, Chris, live in Norfolk, Virginia, but Chris, a 19-year navy man and chief petty officer on the submarine USS *Boise*, was underwater somewhere in the Pacific. When Lynn had learned she was expecting, she'd sent off a package to his next port, in Japan: licorice, M&M's, and a dad's guide to pregnancy called *My Boys Can Swim!*

If the doctor was about to give her horrible news, she wanted Chris with her.

But the doctor surprised her. "There's nothing wrong," he said.

"There's just three."

Three! Lynn didn't know what to say. Triplets was a possibility she'd never considered. Twins, sure; she's a twin herself, and there were others in her family, on both sides. No one in her family had ever given birth to triplets, though. As the doctor began describing how hard it would be to carry three babies in one body, Lynn tried to keep her shock from turning to panic. There was scant hope that she would carry a full 40 weeks. Triplets are more likely to be delivered around 32 weeks and are at greater risk for serious health complications.

Despite the risks, though, Lynn and Chris convinced themselves that everything would be all right. Maybe it was a necessary defense mechanism, or maybe willful naïveté, but they decided to be optimistic. In mid-February, the navy sent Chris home to be with Lynn. Lynn started shopping, cautiously picking out onesies. And at an appointment on March 5, when she was just past 20 weeks, it seemed their optimism was well-founded. "You're doing great," the doctor said.

But before two weeks had passed, Lynn began having back pain. She went straight to Portsmouth Naval Medical Center, where she discovered that the pain was actually contractions. Five days later, on March 22, 2007, her water broke. She was 23 weeks pregnant, barely halfway there.

Seth and Rowan, brother and sister, were born first. Within 24 hours, both died, of "extreme prematurity," yet Lynn and Chris hardly had time to grieve. They had a third baby—Reese Magdelyn—to worry about.

In her work, Lynn treated children with serious medical conditions, and had often counseled families whose infants had landed in neonatal intensive care units. She had helped parents deal with the stress,

the high highs and low lows. It was different when it was your own child, though.

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