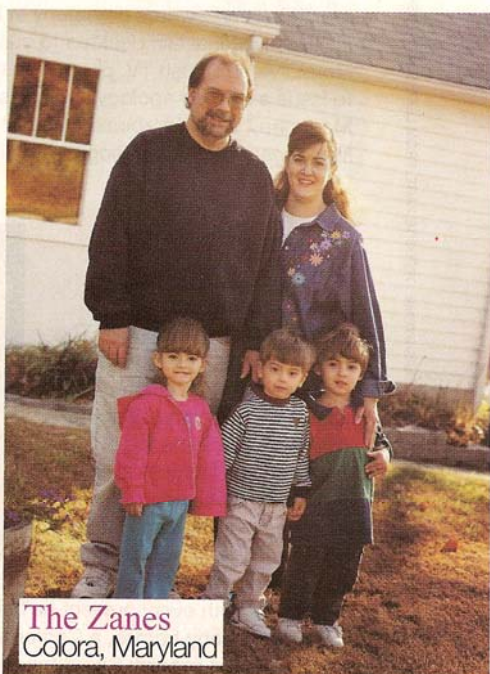
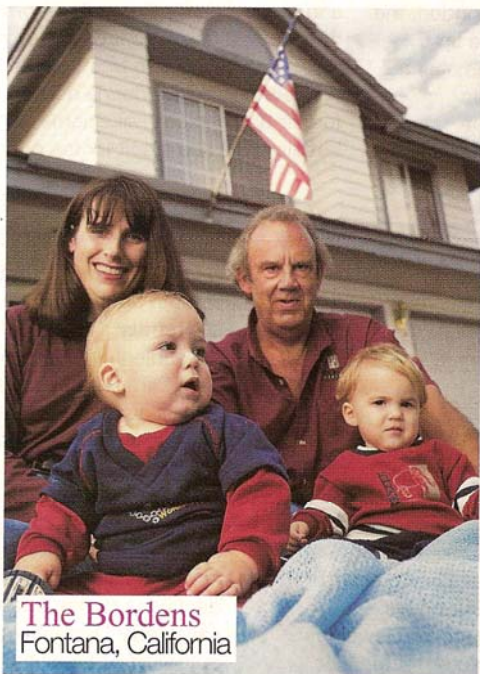


# The world's most

WHAT DO THESE FAMILIES HAVE IN COMMON? YOU'LL BE AMAZED BY CYNTHIA HANSON



**O**n a Saturday afternoon in the Fontana, California, home of Lucinda and John W. Borden II, the couple's fraternal twin sons are doing what most 10-month-olds do after a nap and a bottle: exploring their environment. Luke, whom they call "Turbo" for his speed, bounces a blue rubber ball and climbs on his father's lap. Mark, nicknamed "Tank" due to his strength, pulls himself up on the coffee table.

Suddenly, Mark scrambles across the living-room floor and stops at the foot of the staircase. Moments later, he hoists himself up the first step.

"John," yells Lucinda, "get the video camera."

Mark slowly crawls up the second step; then the third; then he topples over, landing on his bottom. He grins, as if he knows he's reached another milestone. His parents beam proudly, savoring a precious moment they never expected to experience.

By 2 o'clock on a Sunday, triplets Parker, T.J. and Amanda Zane have already enjoyed a jam-packed day. Their parents, Donna and Timothy, have read them *101 Dalmatians*. They've romped on the jungle gym in the sprawling backyard of their Colora, Maryland, home.

They've lunched on sandwiches. Now, the 2-year-olds are showing off their latest tricks. Amanda, the leader of the group, gets down on all fours, puts a stuffed pink mouse in her mouth and prances across the floor. T.J. mimics his sister, a terry-cloth rattle dangling from his teeth.

Next comes Parker, the most aggressive and inquisitive of the three. He heads straight for the coffee table and inspects a tape recorder perched on the edge.

"They were cute when they were little, but they're a lot more fun now that they're walking and talking," says Donna, smiling at her toddlers.

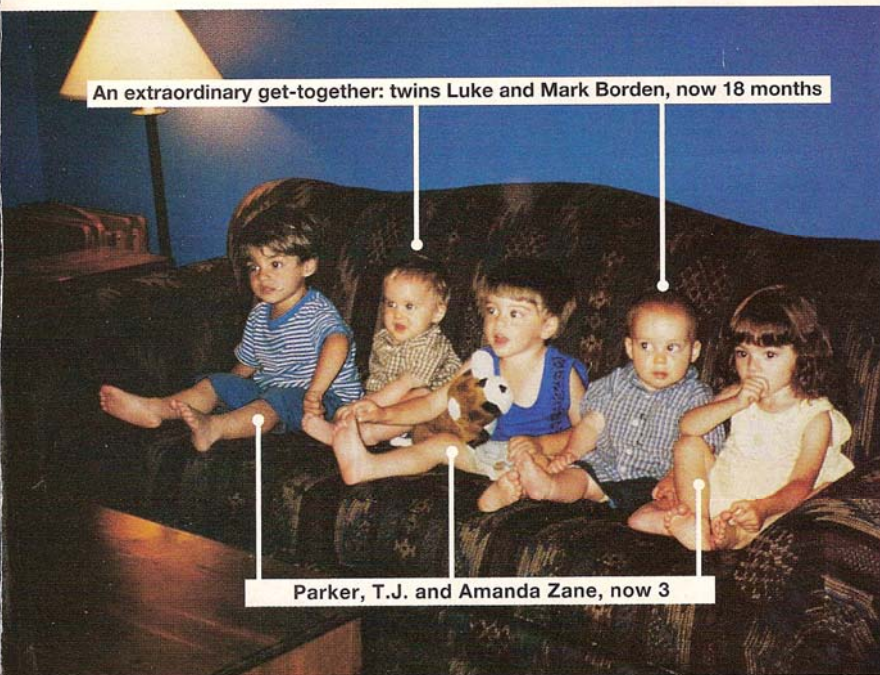
The Zane triplets and the Borden twins appear to be typical children, with no more in common than any two sets of children growing up on opposite ends of the country. But, in truth, they share a profound bond: They are the offspring of the same genetic parents. The Borden adopted Luke and Mark, but in a most uncommon way—as embryos.

The couples were introduced through Snowflakes, a novel embryo adoption program run by Nightlight Christian Adoptions, in Fullerton, California. The only known agency of its kind, since 1997 Snowflakes has helped pair couples—one looking to donate leftover embryos that are

PHOTOS: THIS PAGE: AXEL KOESTER, OPPOSITE PAGE: CHRIS HARTLOVE

# unusual adoption

An extraordinary get-together: twins Luke and Mark Borden, now 18 months



Parker, T.J. and Amanda Zane, now 3

frozen as part of an in-vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment, the other willing to take the chance that at least one of the embryos transferred will implant in the adoptive mother's womb. To date, 48 couples have donated a total of 402 embryos to 34 families through Snowflakes. From these embryo adoptions, 11 babies have been born and 10 are on the way (an additional 34 genetic parents are waiting to place a total of 261 embryos).

For many of the donating families, the decision to turn to Snowflakes was not an easy one. Currently, an estimated 100,000 embryos are said to be stored at fertility clinics nationwide. Policies vary, but most couples can store their surplus embryos for up to three years before they're asked to determine the embryos' fate. For those who've completed their families, it can be a wrenching dilemma: Should they donate these embryos to research? Discard them? Pay to leave them in storage indefinitely? Or donate them to another infertile couple? (Aside from Snowflakes, some fertility clinics do facilitate anonymous embryo adoptions, but the practice is not widespread. A 2000 survey of 108 fertility programs, published in the journal *Fertility and Sterility*, found that just 37 percent had transferred donated embryos.)

Linda D. Applegarth, Ed.D., director of psychological services at the Center for Reproductive Medicine and Infertility at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, in New York City, says that while many couples contemplate embryo donation, most choose another option. "It's such an emotionally complicated decision that it usually never comes to fruition," says Applegarth. "Some couples donate their extra embryos to research or discard them, but the bulk probably leave them in storage indefinitely."

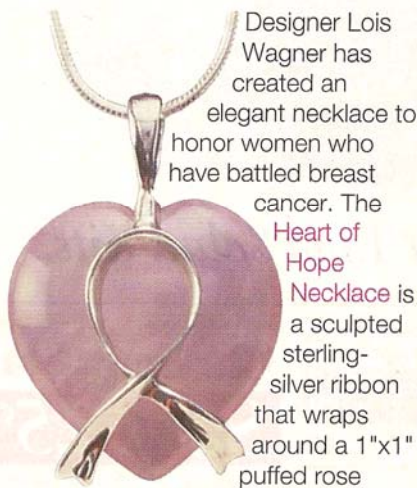
Still, Snowflakes reports that an increasing number of couples have been approaching its organization, especially since the stem-cell research debate made embryo disposition part of the

national conversation last summer. "Nobody else was helping these children find homes," says JoAnn Davidson, the program's spokesperson, articulating the view of the agency—and many political and religious conservatives—that frozen embryos are already human beings. "Somebody needed to offer a way for them to get from freezer to family."

Experts say there's a growing market for donated embryos, especially among those who are considering a traditional adoption. "Some adoptive parents are concerned about whether the birth mother will take good care of herself during the pregnancy," says Jeffrey Nelson, D.O., a reproductive endocrinologist with the Huntington Reproductive Center, in Pasadena, California. "Embryo donation allows an adoptive mother to have a hand in the baby's development and [establish] a prenatal relationship."

In many ways, Snowflakes' process is identical to a traditional adoption agency's. Both the genetic and adoptive families provide comprehensive biographical information; the genetic parents select the adoptive parents based on their own requirements. The adoptive family submits to rigorous screening, (continued on page 152)

# Give the gift of hope



Designer Lois Wagner has created an elegant necklace to honor women who have battled breast cancer. The Heart of Hope Necklace is a sculpted sterling-silver ribbon that wraps around a 1"x1" puffed rose

quartz heart. The elegant pendant hangs from an 18" sterling-silver snake chain. An exclusive collection by Shube's, the Heart of Hope Necklace sells for \$53.95; additional are \$47. The matching Heart of Hope Earrings measure approximately 1/2" and sell for \$42.95; additional are \$37. Each is boxed with a gift card.



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## UNUSUAL ADOPTION

*Continued from page 95*

including an FBI background check. Both parties sign a contract, in which the genetic parents relinquish their rights to their embryos and the adoptive family assumes legal responsibility for them. The embryos are then shipped to the adoptive family's fertility clinic. As part of its standard policy, Snowflakes also stipulates that the adoptive family must agree not to abort any of the fetuses under any circumstances.

The arrangement, reports Davidson, is seen by both families as nothing short of a blessing.

### The Zanes: An urge to give

Before their 1990 wedding, Donna, an only child, was candid with Tim Zane about her family plans. "I missed the brother-sister relationship," says Donna, now 36. "I always wanted at least two children."

In 1991, the Zanes started trying to have a family, but it wasn't until 1997—after numerous treatments and tests and a two-year break to jointly pursue accounting degrees—that they decided to consult a fertility specialist. Finally, the doctor performed a laparoscopy, an out-patient surgery, on Donna and found not only that her right fallopian tube was malformed but also that her left tube was too narrow for an egg to pass through. IVF, the doctor told Donna and Tim, was their only option. In July 1998, Donna took fertility drugs and produced 26 eggs. Eighteen fertilized with Tim's sperm; six embryos were immediately frozen. Of the remaining 12 embryos, four developed enough to be placed in Donna. "The extra embryos gave us peace of mind," she says, "because we planned to try again if the first cycle failed or if we only conceived one child."

When Donna's pregnancy test came back positive and her hormone level indicated multiples, the Zanes assumed they'd conceived twins. A few weeks later, a routine ultrasound found three fetal heartbeats.

But Donna's difficulties didn't stop after the good news. At 22 weeks, she was advised to stop working and climbing stairs to prevent premature labor. Severe contractions sent her to the hospital twice. Medication was used to keep her contractions at bay—until February 25, 1999, when the triplets were delivered by emergency cesarean at 34 weeks. Amanda, the first to arrive, weighed 3 pounds, 1 ounce; T.J. came next at 4 pounds, 13 ounces; and Parker was the largest at 5 pounds, 6 ounces.

For emotional and financial reasons, the Zanes decided their family was complete. But what to do with their six frozen embryos? The options presented at their clinic—giving the embryos to research, discarding them or keeping them in storage—didn't feel right. Their belief that embryos are potential life, not yet human beings until implantation, led the Zanes to consider an alternative. "We said, 'It's a shame we can't help someone like us,'" recalls Tim. Adds Donna: "I couldn't stop thinking about the black-and-white pictures of the embryos that [the doctor gave us] on the morning of the transfer. That's how life starts. I couldn't destroy our embryos or donate them to research."

Initially, Donna and Tim figured they'd offer their embryos to a local couple they'd choose themselves. But they soon realized that decision could later haunt them: What if they walked into a grocery store, saw children who resembled their triplets, and wondered, "Are they related to us?"

In July 1999, Tim went online, hoping to locate an organization in another part of the country that facilitated embryo donation. His Internet search led him to Snowflakes. "We felt confident that the agency knew what it was doing," says Donna. Through Snowflakes the Zanes believed they'd find a couple who met their criteria: financially secure enough to raise multiple children; educated, with college degrees; and practicing some form of religion. Three months later, they found out the Bordens fit the bill.

# Which one of these fibers is 100% soluble?



## The Bordens: A change of heart

After she married John Borden—a widower 19 years her senior and the father of three grown sons—in August 1994, Lucinda, now 37, hoped to become pregnant immediately. “I wanted four children,” she recalls. “John said, ‘I’ll give you two.’ It seemed like a good compromise.”

But Lucinda, a chief financial officer for a school district, soon realized that even two children might not be possible. Over the next few years her periods became increasingly infrequent. Her doctor eventually prescribed Clomid, a drug that stimulates the ovaries, but she still failed to conceive. Unwilling to pursue more sophisticated infertility treatments such as receiving a donor egg or having IVF due to her religious convictions, she gave up hope of getting pregnant. She also ruled out an alternative for many infertile couples: adoption.

Adopted as an infant, Lucinda had long grappled with abandonment issues and questions about her biological family. She desperately wanted to meet her birth mother, but her adoptive mother vehemently opposed the idea. In 1997, a decade after her adoptive mother’s death, Lucinda hired a private investigator, who located her birth mother in Missouri. When the two finally met, Lucinda got the painful answers she’d long awaited: She was the product of an extramarital affair, and her birth mother’s husband had insisted Lucinda be given up for adoption.

The reunion, it turns out, erased her fear. “It gave me a clear understanding of who my real mom was—and that’s the woman who raised me,” says Lucinda, who has since developed a close relationship with her birth mother and three half-sisters. “I realized that if I adopted a child, I would be the real mother. Parenting

is about raising a child.”

After Lucinda’s change of heart, the Bordens contacted five agencies, including Nightlight, which had facilitated Lucinda’s own adoption in 1965. Nightlight sent them information about its infant adoption programs as well as Snowflakes’. At first, Lucinda wasn’t interested in embryo adoption, because she didn’t want to go through even half of an IVF cycle. But John urged her to keep an open mind.

Soon, the Bordens decided to adopt a newborn. They chose Nightlight, paid the \$4,500 program fee and began the screening process. Then Lucinda heard a radio interview with the first Snowflakes’ adoptive mother and reconsidered her position. “I started to think of adopting embryos as just adopting at an earlier stage,” she says. The belief that an embryo is already a child waiting to be born ultimately outweighed Lucinda’s opposition to IVF. *(continued)*

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## UNUSUAL ADOPTION

*Continued*

When filling out the Snowflakes' questionnaire, the Bordens disclosed their views on everything from child-rearing to religious upbringing. They also submitted a four-page autobiography and photos. "Although we have busy schedules," they wrote, "our family is our main focus."

The first couple to receive the Bordens' materials rejected them because Lucinda intended to continue to work and send her children to day care. Confident another couple would feel differently, she consulted infertility specialist Jeffrey Nelson to find out what her chances of getting pregnant from a donated embryo were.

Nelson explained that while his clients under age 35 have a 55 percent pregnancy rate with fresh embryos, that number drops to 40 percent if the embryos are frozen. In addition, only 70 percent of frozen embryos survive

the thawing process. Still, the odds didn't dissuade Lucinda from the decision she'd made.

Meanwhile, Tim and Donna Zane reviewed the Bordens' application, the first they'd received. Impressed by the couple's relationship with John's sons and happy that they lived in another part of the country, the Zanes chose Lucinda and John as the adoptive parents.

In December 1999, the couples signed the adoption papers; a few weeks later, Lucinda began taking estrogen and progesterone to prepare her uterus to receive the embryos. The transfer took place on January 31, 2000.

Three of the six embryos survived the thaw and were placed in Lucinda. On Valentine's Day, her pregnancy test was positive; later that month, a routine ultrasound found two heartbeats. Lucinda's pregnancy was blissfully uneventful, and on September 27, 2000, the twins arrived. Luke

came first, weighing 5 pounds, 13 ounces; Mark was born two minutes later at 6 pounds, 3 ounces. Lucinda had beaten the odds.

## Friends and family

From the moment Lucinda became pregnant, the Zanes regarded the babies as the Bordens' children. "I know that genetically they're ours," says Donna, "but I didn't go through the pregnancy. I didn't see their heartbeats on the ultrasound."

Still, the Zanes were apprehensive about looking at the baby pictures the Bordens e-mailed them. How would they react if one or both babies resembled their triplets? Would it damage the couples' budding friendship? Might they regret having donated their embryos?

Ultimately, the images of the twins offered the Zanes some relief. Tim even thought Luke and Mark looked like they could be John's genetic children.

The Bordens agree. "Mark resembles John's eldest and youngest sons," says Lucinda. "Luke resembles John's middle son."

For the next two years, the Zanes and the Bordens continued to forge a friendship over e-mail, regularly swapping snapshots and parenting tips. Their geographic distance, they concurred, provided a comfort level that wouldn't exist if they were neighbors. And they agreed that one day the twins would be told the unusual story of their conceptions and births.

Then last summer, Lucinda took a bold step. Because of their adoption experience, she and John planned to testify before Congress against federal funding for research on human embryos. Since they would be in Washington, D.C., she suggested that the families get together.

The Zanes were stunned. "It was inevitable that one day we'd meet, but I didn't think it would be so soon," says Donna. After considering the idea for a few days, the Zanes agreed to the meeting and invited the

Bordens to their home.

As it turned out, the evening felt more like a reunion of old friends than a gathering of strangers. The more the couples talked, the more they realized how much they had in common, right down to their old record collections. Says Lucinda: "It was like meeting people I'd known forever."

And the Zanes weren't fazed by meeting the twins. "The joy and happiness that Luke and Mark brought to Lucinda and John reinforced our belief that we'd made the right decision," says Tim.

Now the Zanes and the Bordens look forward to the future. "I'm curious about what's going to happen down the road," says Tim. "The children will be raised in two different environments, but will they parallel each other in any way?"

One thing is certain to both the Zanes and the Bordens. "We have the ideal situation because both families had the outcome they wanted," says Lucinda. "Everything really worked out for the best." ■

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