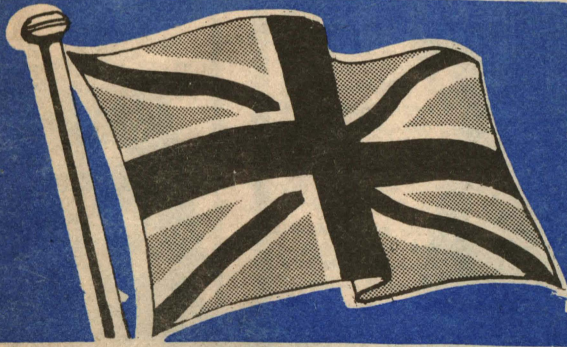


The proud father who could never be this

baby's real life dad



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FOR FOUR YEARS the world has known them as Mr. and Mrs. Osborne.

HE, dark - haired, always immaculate, usually in a neat three - piece suit. Always doing things about the house.

SHE a vivacious young housewife busying herself with cooking, cleaning and washing.

What more natural than the day the happy couple announced proudly that Mrs. Osborne was going to be a mum.

Except that there is no Mr. Osborne: the Plymouth couple are both women.

A cruel trick of nature denied 'Mr. Osborne' the tiny shift in hormone balance that would have made him a complete man.

Extraordinary

The story of what happened when the Osbornes decided to make their little council house family complete by adding a child to it is truly an extraordinary one.

They have chosen to let the Sunday Independent tell it. You can read it on Pages 26 and 27 TODAY.

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Behind these homely pictures — a truly extraordinary love story

IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW their secret, these pictures would seem a perfect example of scenes enacted in a million homes. A young couple, near the beginning of married life, excited at the prospect of their first baby.

The husband as proud as punch, posing for a snapshot in the garden and jokingly drawing attention to the obvious... helping with the washing up so the mother - to - be doesn't get over - tired.

But as we told you on Page One, this is no ordinary couple. And their's is a truly extraordinary story.

The baby 'Mr. and Mrs. Osborne' can hardly wait to see could not possibly be his.

Because he is technically a woman: robbed of manhood by a tiny shift in hormone balance though in every other sense a man.

Jockey

Only one thing was missing from the Osborne's £12.31 - a - week council flat home in Plymouth — the baby they both longed for to complete their family.

They chose the Sunday Independent to tell the astonishing story of how they solved the problem. We have not paid them a penny for it: they would not have dreamed of asking

By Clive Cooke and Rorie Smith

MR. OSBORNE — as the neighbours know him — was born Sharon Patricia Osborne in Belfast 23 years ago.

Sharon never knew her father, moved to Plymouth with her mother at four, was taken into council care and then went to a foster home until she was 17.

She worked as a farm labourer and in a factory and for a short spell went back to Northern Ireland to train as a point - to - point jockey.

She never knew the happiness of a family really her own.

'Mrs. Osborne' — as she is known — was born Sandra Lena Doreen Irvine in Plymouth 20 years ago and went first to Moricetown Primary School, then Honicknowle Secondary.

She started work as a waitress at just about the time Ossie was saying goodbye to his even - ore - troublesome girl's rage.

Tomboy

Ossie took up the story: 'Even at 10, I knew I was somehow different.

'But what was different didn't really begin to register until I was 13.

'I HAD FOUR foster - brothers and one foster - sister and I always wanted to do the things the boys did. I was a tomboy through and through.

'At 17 I knew for certain that I should have been born a man. I realised that though I had been brought up a girl it was a sham.

'I went to the hairdresser's and had all my fair hair, which came well past my shoulders, cut short and dyed black.

'I got rid of all my dresses and make-up and started to wear sweaters and slacks for casual wear and a man's suit for best.

'Then I met Sandra at a friend's house.'

Curly - haired Sandra took up the narrative: 'That was about four years ago,' she said.

'My relationships with boy friends had not been very successful.

'WHEN I REALISED Ossie and I had begun to feel genuine love for each other, I was absolutely petrified. But as the bond developed, I realised it was the real thing.

'Our next step was to set up home together, so we found a bed-sitter. We decided that Ossie should be known as Mr. Osborne and I would call myself Mrs. Osborne.

'Ossie would be the breadwinner, and do all the things a man does around the home — changing fuses, decorating and fixing things.

'I looked on myself as the wife, working and cleaning, mending and ironing.

'My parents have been very good about it. They accept the relationship.'

WITH HIM going out to work and HER staying at home, the Osbornes came to regard themselves as an ordinary married couple.

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS know their secret, but the world outside did not.

One thing was missing to complete the domestic scene.

A BABY.

'We were happy,' Ossie went on. But we were both longing for a child to make us a complete family unit.

'Specially me. A real family of my own was something I had never known.

'We talked for weeks about how we could go about it. Obviously we could not hope to adopt a child.

Jealous

'Sandra wanted to have only AID (artificial insemination donor), but I was absolutely adamant that this would not be acceptable.

'We wouldn't have known who the father was or what kind of child would result.

'SO FINALLY it came to us that there was only one solution: Sandra would have to choose a father and bear his child.

'I hated the idea. I was madly jealous. But there was no other way.

'We talked about the idea into the early hours.

'Finally, we agreed we would seek out a good - looking 'donor', preferably with blond hair.

'Sandra would bring the father - to - be home so I could see if I approved of him and if I did I would go out and leave them together for a couple of hours.'



SO MRS. OSBORNE set about her extraordinary task of finding a man she could never care for and who she would never want to see again — but who could make her family complete.

'I went out with friends and we spotted a man who seemed to fit the bill,' she said.

'I got a friend to approach him and ask him the straight question, would he co-operate?'

'He had fair hair and was very good looking, so he seemed ideal.

'My friend impressed on him that it was a serious matter and that afterwards he would have to go out of my life for ever — with no strings attached.

'He came over to where I was sitting and kept asking me over and over again if it was a send-up

or whether I was really serious.

'I told him I didn't even want to know his name. Finally, he agreed and I took him home to meet Ossie.

'Ossie was satisfied with his appearance, but we weren't sure about his personality.

'A nice personality was something we were really looking for in the father of our baby.

'We had reservations, but we decided to go ahead and Ossie left us together.'

THEN THINGS went wrong. Sandra did not become pregnant, and the man wanted to go on seeing her.

A second potential father was chosen, and he stuck to the never - to - be - seen again bargain. But again no pregnancy resulted.

'I suppose you could call it third time lucky.'

said Sandra. 'We met a man we knew was due to leave the country very soon.

'A few weeks later the doctor confirmed I was pregnant.'

Ossie vetted the third candidate too. Tall, handsome and with a pleasing personality, he was perfect, except for one thing — he was dark - haired.'

Said Ossie: 'The day Sandra broke the good news to me that she was pregnant, I was absolutely ecstatic.

'I couldn't believe it at first. I had never been so happy in all my life.

'And when the council gave us this flat a couple of months ago, we were really over the moon.'

SANDRA WILL have the baby in Freedom Fields Hospital, Plymouth. The couple are hoping for a boy, which they would call

Stephen. If the baby is a girl, she will be Leanne.

The Osbornes have been excitedly getting together everything a baby needs.

'And I'm going to do my share in bringing the baby up,' said Ossie. 'I think it is only fair for husbands to help.'

'I can't see any real problems in a couple like us bringing up a child. I shall expect him to call me dad.

'Of course I'm not silly enough not to expect difficulties later.

'We will probably tell the child the truth about us when he is 10.

'IT WILL BE A difficult thing to do, and of course, it will be an extraordinary

thing for a child to take in, but he will have to be told at some stage.

'Now we almost have a baby there is the question of marriage to consider.

'We both want to go through a form of marriage.

'Then we would really be Mr. and Mrs. Osborne. 'But I'll tell you something: we want a normal happy, healthy child.

'It would break our hearts if he or she had to face the sort of problems we have faced.'

Then Mr. and Mrs. Osborne returned to the task of preparing for baby Osborne, due on or about Thursday November 18.