

THE STATE

WHEN CHILDREN HAVE CHILDREN

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By *DEBRA-LYNN B. HOOK*, Staff Writer

Memo: First of two parts

Caption: 1. When Tammie couldn't get a ride to Professional Training Institute, she took the bus. By car, the training institute was 10 minutes away. By bus, an hour and 15 minutes. "I hated riding the bus because it took too long. It was hot and there were so many stops and I would fall asleep."

2. Taking the children for vaccinations at the health department took up a full morning. James used to help Tammie a lot more with the children, before she got pregnant the third time. "I was waiting at the health department. I think they were getting their shots. I was ready to go home."

3. When she didn't have anybody to take care of Qwan, Tammie had to take him with her to prenatal checkups. "Qwan said, 'Get your hand off Pammy.' He couldn't say Tammie."

4. In the hallway of the now defunct Professional Training Institute where Tammie was learning to become a nurse's aide during the summer of 1989, her best friend, Rosa, teases her about her protruding belly. "I was saying 'Leave it alone and get your own.' "

5. Amid Qwan's folded underwear, Tammie lies hot and exhausted on her bed. She's seven months pregnant, living with her mother in an apartment with no air conditioning. "I was tired."

6. Tammie's mother, Marilyn, was the only person who stayed with Tammie through the delivery of her third child, Jazmine. "Ugh. That was one of those pains. That was just one of those contractions I was feeling. I wished James was there, because when I'm in pain, he comforts me more."

7. With a final push, Tammie brings Jazmine into the world. "The only thing I think compares to childbirth is -- this might seem real dumb -- I'd rather be in pain having a baby than having heartache from James."

8. At Richland Memorial Hospital, Tammie shows off newborn Jazmine to a family

friend. "This is Jazmine. My God, the child looked different. She was an ugly baby."

9. In her new apartment, Tammie cooks supper. "I know I shouldn't be holding her so close to the stove, but she'll cry if I put her down."

10. Tammie likes to cuddle babies. "I love 'em when they're this age. (They're) too sweet. Jazmine loves attention. She's like me. She likes to be pampered a lot, just like her mommy. They don't pay me much attention, the older ones. Qwan doesn't have time for me. Trinity's a little loner."

11. Making sure her children are clean and well-groomed is a priority with Tammie. "Qwan was 1 when I started brushing his teeth. This is when he was 2."

12. James Tammie and 5-month-old Trinity after Thanksgiving dinner at Tammie's mother's house in 1988. It was right around this time that Tammie got pregnant for the third time. "James is just one of those people that always likes to get close. I was probably in one of those sometime-ing moods, when I just don't want to be bothered. There, I was probably more in love with him than he was with me."

13. Tammie and her mother, Marilyn, watch as Trinity takes some unsteady steps to Tammie's sister, LaGwana. Everyone helped take care of Tammie's children. "Trinity is learning to walk. I'm probably saying 'Come on Boo.' "

14. At the kitchen table in her mother's house, Tammie struggles to stay awake. "I'll be glad when she's finished with this bottle so I can go to sleep. At that age they mostly just eat and sleep. Once she got to sleep, I could get the other two to sleep and I could get some rest."

15. In an emergency waiting room at Richland Memorial Hospital, a tearful Tammie waits to find out if her youngest child is going to be OK. Jazmine, 7 1/2 months old, had been thrown to the floor and punched by Tammie's boyfriend hours earlier. "I can't believe that it happened and I'll be glad when it's over. I'll be glad when it's put behind me, when it's just a memory."

16. Tammie disciplines children like she was disciplined. "Trinity cries for no reason. Qwan don't pay me no attention. I can beat him all day and he still won't pay me no attention. It's a waste of breath."

17. At a Halloween party at the King Memorial Park in 1988, Qwan,2, wears a ghost outfit his mother made from a sheet. "I was enjoying Qwan enjoy himself and at the same time I was going back to when I used to come here when I was younger. We used to come dressed up, not in costumes, but just in things people would make, like a cape or a sheet. (Now) I felt like a parent. I felt like an adult. I felt superior."

18. Tammie sometimes hated taking the children out to play because they got their clothers dirty. "I guess I was just thinking to myself how silly he is, 'cause he's quite silly. I guess he inherit that part from his father. Look at that silly boy."

19. Tammie, Qwan, Trinity and James sit at the kitchen table in her apartment while Jazmine has supper on the couch. Photos by Linda *Stelter*. Linda spent one day a week for the past year and a half documenting Tammie's life.

Tammie Anderson started having sex when she was in eighth grade. She started having babies two years later.

"I wasn't forced," Tammie, now 18, said of her decision to sleep with boys before she could drive.

"I wasn't tricked. I never did it because a guy had a nice car. I never did it to show gratitude. I think it was just something I wanted to experience. I think I wanted to experience it just as much as anybody else."

For the longest time, birth control was of no concern for Tammie.

"I always thought birth control was for someone older. My cousin had used condoms, and I thought they were for the boy to get. I didn't know about any other birth control."

Tammie had her first baby when she was 15. She had her second baby when she was 16. And on the afternoon of Aug. 17, 1989, while other 18-year-olds packed for college, worked at McDonald's, got ready for the summer-ending high school football Sportsarama, Tammie pushed her third baby into the world.

Jazmine LaMarilyn Sade Anderson weighed 6 pounds, 1 ounce, almost 1 1/2 pounds underweight for the average American baby but a good size for a high- risk, teen mom's baby.

"She's heavy," Tammie told her mother, Marilyn Anderson, as the new bundle was placed in her arms.

The only other friend or family in the room during Tammie's labor and delivery was Tammie's best friend, Rosa, who came for a few minutes to sit by the birth bed. Rosa, unmarried too, once was pregnant at the same time Tammie was.

The only man in the room for the birth of Tammie's third child was one of the doctors.

"I want my tubes tied," Tammie told the nurse.

"You can't get your tubes tied. No ma'am. You can't get your tubes tied," Tammie's mother said.

"You have to be 21 if you have Medicaid," the nurse said. "There are other things you can do."

"I'm going to get an IUD then. Don't worry, I ain't coming no more," Tammie said, smiling the soft, flirty smile that Jazmine's father said attracted him to her.

Tammie and her mother chatted about how good Tammie always looked after giving birth, about how Tammie would have a cake waiting for her when she got home. Tammie had messages for her mother's boyfriend, her youngest sister and her firstborn, Qwan.

"Tell Qwan he has his baby," Tammie told her mother.

Tell Qwan, age 27 months, waiting at home in his grandmother's hot apartment in the projects, that he has two sisters now, one 14 months old, another 1 hour old. Tell Qwan he has an 18-year-old mother with no job, no husband, no high school diploma and a difficult future ahead.

Tammie's is one of thousands of such stories that could be told every year in South Carolina.

In 1988, 13,928 girls between 13 and 20 got pregnant. Of those, 4,593 had abortions, and 105 had stillbirths or miscarriages. The other 9,230 gave birth: Forty-five percent were white babies, and 55 percent were non-white. That was 37 babies for every 1,000 white teenagers and 72 babies for every 1,000 non-white teenagers.

Teenagers have been getting pregnant for centuries. But there's a fundamental difference between teenagers of other generations and those bearing children now.

"They are having more babies out of wedlock, that's the difference," said Dr. Joanne Fraser who has been studying maternity for two decades and helps oversee sex education in the state's public schools.

"There's a delay of marriage and school."

The number of out-of-wedlock births keeps rising. In 1988, 65 percent of the teenagers who gave birth in South Carolina were not married, compared to 54 percent in 1980.

Health educators, statisticians, school nurses, teenagers, doctors and academicians in South Carolina and elsewhere offer an even clearer picture of the typical teenager

who gets pregnant today: She often is the product of a "single, female head of household." She has idle time on her hands. She conceives between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Often, she doesn't know her own father.

And often she is a girl with low self-esteem who thinks that owning a baby is the best thing she ever did for herself.

She may engage in other bad habits, like drinking, smoking and doing drugs. She doesn't use birth control.

One teen *pregnancy* often begets another. In 1984, of the teens under 18 who received prenatal care from public health clinics in South Carolina, 673 were pregnant for the second time; 117 for the third time; 17 for the fourth time; and two had been pregnant more than four times.

Teenagers have a higher incidence of premature birth, Cesarean section, low-birth-weight babies and infant mortality because they delay prenatal care, or don't seek it at all, and because their bodies sometimes aren't mature enough to handle *pregnancy*.

If teen *pregnancy* means an aborted high school education, it also means the increased probability of poverty for offspring. Teen *pregnancy* costs taxpayers money.

South Carolina is not unlike the rest of the country in that teenage *pregnancy* is a problem here. The United States has the highest teen *pregnancy* rate of any Western nation. Half a million babies are born every year to teenagers in the United States.

But among the 50 states, South Carolina ranks high. In 1986, 16.6 percent of all South Carolina births were to women and girls under 20, making this state ninth highest in its ratio of teen births to all births, according to an ongoing Children's Defense Fund survey.

Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky, Alabama, West Virginia, Georgia, Tennessee and Louisiana -- states also known for high poverty and low basic academic skills -- scored poorer than South Carolina. Mississippi, which reported 20.5 percent in the same survey, scored highest. Minnesota, which reported 7.3 percent, scored lowest.

Throughout South Carolina, government, churches, private groups, educators and legislators struggle to keep children from having children, and failing that, to help them to have healthy babies and productive lives.

Prenatal-care clinics offer after-school hours. Maternity homes, like the Florence

Crittendon Home in Charleston, offer a place for unwed teens to stay during *pregnancy* while maintaining their education. In some counties, the health department will send an experienced mother into a new mother's home to talk with her about good baby care.

The S.C. Health and Human Services Finance Commission, in a substantial move last year, lowered its requirement for pregnant girls and women needing financial help, so that a pregnant girl living with one other person can have a household annual income of \$19,536 and still qualify for Medicaid to pay for prenatal care, labor and delivery and one year of baby checkups. Six years ago, the cutoff was \$2,500.

As for getting to teens before the fact, Planned Parenthood finds "role models" to hold meetings in housing projects. Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity talks to groups of boys about male responsibility in sexuality. Churches sponsor teen activities. Legislators passed a law in 1988 requiring students to take sex education in schools.

For all the effort, there's concern that one county has a lot of programs and another has few, that the rate of teen *pregnancy*, particularly teen *pregnancy* out of wedlock, is continuing to rise.

One hope among experts is that some agency will find the money to re- create, in all 46 counties, a community-based, pilot program that substantially reduced teen *pregnancy* rates in Bamberg County. One health educator coordinated other health educators, parents, churches, schools and government in a unified effort to reach teens in all socio-economic groups in the county.

The program, begun with federal money in 1982, initially reduced teen *pregnancy* rates in the county by 50 percent -- a large enough margin to win national recognition and calls from officials who want to use the program as a model in their states, said the inventor of the program, Dr. Murray Vincent of the University of South Carolina's School of Public Health. The program is now funded by the Health and Human Services Finance Commission and costs \$50,000 annually.

The commission talked this spring about taking the program statewide. But the idea was abandoned because of budget problems.

In the midst of talk, the *pregnancies* keep happening.

At Dreher High School, 17 girls reported being pregnant this school year. At Spring Valley High School, 18 girls reported the same. At Keenan High School, 27 girls reported being pregnant. At Lower Richland High School, 30 girls reported the same.

And at C.A. Johnson High School, out of an enrollment of 465 girls this year, 58 girls

reported they were pregnant.

Tammie's favorite subjects in 10th grade were English and chorus. She made A's and B's in those subjects. She sang in school recitals and dreamed about being a professional singer. She also got suspended for fighting. She made a D in math and a worse grade in advanced physical science. She drank and smoked cigarettes.

Tammie's mother tried to talk with her daughter about sex.

Marilyn was born into a difficult future, too. When she was 6 months old, her parents split up and Marilyn went to live with her grandmother. Her mother moved away, to Charleston and then to New York. There was nobody to talk to about birth control. And at 17, Marilyn had a child -- Tammie -- and no husband.

She eventually got married to a man other than Tammie's father, had two other girls, now 9 and 16, and got divorced. She brings home \$520 a month from her job at the Holiday Inn where she supervises maids and cleans rooms. A boyfriend, who lives with her in a three-bedroom, government-subsidized apartment near Richland Memorial Hospital, helps with money, and although Marilyn says she deserves food stamps and Medicaid, she doesn't get any because her household income is too high.

Inside Marilyn's apartment, in the living room where the TV is on whenever anybody is awake, there are pictures of children on the coffee table, a decorative display of beer and liquor bottles on the bar and a copy of the Lord's Prayer hanging on the wall.

"All the time, I used to ask Tammie was she having sex," Marilyn said last summer, before her third grandbaby was born. "I used to sit her down, tell her that if she was having sex to let me know, I would give her birth control. I tried to explain it to her."

Tammie had no formal sex education. The state had not yet passed its Comprehensive Health Education Act, which, in part, requires high school students to take three weeks of reproductive health and *pregnancy* prevention education. Tammie said a teacher occasionally brought up the subject in class.

Tammie talked a lot with her best friend about sex. She talked to her first sex partner about sex, once.

"He asked me if I had ever indulged in sex, if I was afraid, how did I feel toward it," Tammie said. "I told him I was afraid, and no, I hadn't. I really wasn't ready. I was afraid of getting that close."

Afraid, not ready, but driven to do it anyway. The boyfriend used a condom.

Sometimes.

The month after Tammie turned 15, just as 10th grade was beginning, her belly started poking out. She refused to believe she was pregnant until, at six months, she could deny her bigness no more.

Tammie's mother was infuriated and called her all kinds of names, Tammie said. Marilyn said she thought she taught her daughter better.

"She just cursed, then she cried, then she hugged me and kissed me and said everything would be OK," Tammie said.

Luckily, since her baby didn't come until late May, Tammie was able to stay in school for all but two weeks of her first *pregnancy*. She worked, too, alongside her mother at the Holiday Inn.

Luckily, she was able to beat the odds against premature birth for so young a woman getting prenatal care so late in *pregnancy*.

And on May 18, 1987, luckily, 15-year-old Tammie was able to give birth to a full-term, 6-pound, 9 1/2-ounce baby boy, VaLente Pierre DeQwan Anderson, the boy she calls Qwan.

For awhile, luck continued. Marilyn, who put her ill feelings aside, paid a sitter so Tammie could return to school. But the reality of children caught up with Tammie. At 16, she had to quit school because she didn't have a baby sitter.

"My intentions weren't to drop out, but I think I had been through four baby sitters in my 11th-grade year," Tammie said.

In South Carolina, students who have ever had a child, who have ever been married or who are pregnant are not required by law to stay in school.

There was no support -- physical, financial or emotional -- from Qwan's father. He was long gone. The family of five got by on Marilyn's salary, on the money Tammie made at her after-school job, serving tea and Cokes at Quincy's, and on the eggs, cheese, milk and cereal that Tammie got from the health department.

And then four months after Qwan was born, Tammie met James A. Pearson.

James, 24 now, worked a job here and there -- in housekeeping at the Ramada Inn, as a security guard in the projects, as a carpenter, a bricklayer. He'd quit one job because he didn't like the hours or because the job didn't pay enough. He always

got another one.

James also liked having babies. He already had a daughter by one woman, and he had tried to have babies before with another. One time that girlfriend miscarried, the other time her baby died at birth.

"I kept trying and trying," James said.

When Tammie met James, she got pregnant again and then again.

She'd gotten prescriptions for birth control pills by then, but they'd make her stomach hurt or she'd forget to take them. James said he couldn't use condoms because they made him "break out."

Tammie thought about aborting both babies. For her last *pregnancy*, she even "got up on the table" at the abortion clinic. James gave her the money. But the doctor determined she was a week too far along. In South Carolina, clinics must be specially licensed to perform abortions beyond the first trimester. No clinics have such a license. Tammie didn't have a car and couldn't afford to go out of state.

Throughout the *pregnancies*, James continued to live with his mother, and Tammie continued to live with hers.

Tammie said James tried to give her money for support, but she refused it. He wanted to marry her. Sometimes marriage sounded like a good idea to Tammie, sometimes she was afraid.

Sometimes, too, she'd think about filing for child support against Qwan's father. Then she'd change her mind.

"A man is going to be a man, regardless. If he's going to do it (provide support), he's going to do it. If he doesn't?" She shrugged. "I can do it without him."

On June 28, 1988, Tammie delivered her second full-term baby, by Cesarean section because the baby was breech. Trinity MyRel DaVe Anderson weighed in at just 5 pounds, 8 ounces.

Tammie tried to go back to school while she was pregnant and then again after Trinity was born. She quit. She took odd jobs, one ringing up doughnuts at a bakery, another at Radio Shack.

The February before her third baby was born, Tammie, with Marilyn's help, decided to fight the odds again. Marilyn baby-sat the two children, while Tammie, armed with a government grant and a loan, went to night school at Professional Training

Institute to learn to be a nurse's aide.

It was during those months that Tammie sounded like an a typical teenager looking forward to her future.

"I'm glad I got into nursing," she said one morning while she waited at the clinic for a prenatal appointment. "Through nursing, I'll get a chance to communicate. The best thing to do is listen. If I can just sit there and listen, they'll talk and talk. They'll say 'Thank you for helping me,' and all you did is listen.

"I like working with babies, I want to work on the fourth floor (maternity ward) at Richland, or pediatrics, since I have kids."

Tammie hated going to the prenatal clinic at Richland Memorial. Her mother's insurance paid for labor and delivery, but never prenatal care. So she had to go to the health department, where she could get free care, or to the clinic, which accepted Medicaid, which Tammie qualified for.

To get there, she'd have to take the bus, usually dragging both children with her. Then she'd have to wait two or three hours to see the doctor. Nurses and social workers would ask questions and give advice she didn't want. She skipped appointments and wouldn't do what they said to do.

Twice during her *pregnancy* with Jazmine, Tammie experienced premature labor.

She was given pills: Breathine to stop the contractions, Vistaril to take away the nervousness brought on by Breathine.

She didn't take all the pills she was supposed to. Premature delivery was dangerous, but Vistaril made her sleepy. If she was sleepy, she couldn't concentrate in school.

And she had to make it through school. She had to beat the odds.

The odds fought back.

She took enough of the Breathine so that, once again, she was lucky enough to carry a baby to term. But on her 18th birthday, 10 days before Tammie gave birth the third time, Professional Training Institute closed because of financial problems.

Today, nine months after Jazmine's birth, Tammie has moved out of her mother's house and lives with the three children and sometimes with James in a three-bedroom, government-subsidized apartment off North Main Street. She keeps the apartment neat and attractive. Beds are made every morning. Dishes are washed.

There are two TVs but no air conditioning.

Away from her mom and sisters, there are no more built-in baby sitters. There's no more built-in support from Marilyn. But Tammie has her freedom. She doesn't have to listen to her mother belittle James anymore.

If Tammie's mother was angry about the first *pregnancy*, she saw red with the second and third.

"This time," Marilyn said about the third *pregnancy*, "I felt like choking her. I felt like killing her because she let him do it to her again. Tammie is a smart, intelligent girl. She needs to not let James sweet-talk her. I think eventually she'll wake up and see what it's all about. That fellow's on an ego trip, a big ego trip, with those other girls, too."

James sees the situation differently.

"Her mom makes it seem like it's all my fault," James said. "Like I told my mother, I did not put no gun to Tammie's head to tell her not to take no birth control. I did not put no gun to her head and say 'Open up your legs.' I can't make her do what she doesn't want to do. It's not no man's job to do birth control."

Tammie doesn't blame anybody. For there to be blame, there has to be a problem.

"I used to smoke and drink occasionally. After I got pregnant, I stopped doing that. I hate to be around it now," she said. "I figure if I hadn't got pregnant, maybe I'd be one of the ones out there drinking and running around and doing drugs."

"I love babies," Tammie said.

Tammie loves babies so much that she wants to have more. Not now. For now, she practices birth control; soon after Jazmine was born, she was fitted with an IUD she got at the clinic.

Tammie is the kind of mother who is meticulous about the daily bathing, grooming and feeding of her children. She tells them to say "thank you" when somebody gives them something. She especially loves children when they're little, like Jazmine, and she can kiss and cuddle them. When they get older, like Trinity and Qwan, they don't pay attention to her, she said.

Tammie also is the kind of mother who yells at and slaps her children a lot with a belt she carries with her wherever she goes. She says she has to discipline them hard, or "they won't grow up with any values."

James has his own way of disciplining.

On Good Friday, he threw Jazmine on the floor and punched her because the 7 1/2-month-old wouldn't stop crying, Tammie said.

At the hospital, where Tammie sat five hours to find out that Jazmine was OK, Tammie said she was leaving James.

"He's going to jail," she said, holding the wide-eyed baby on her hip.

But Tammie loves James.

When her mother comes down too hard on James, Tammie defends him. When he didn't show up for Jazmine's birth, she passed it off, saying he was too scared to come.

It took Tammie more than a month to sign a warrant against the man she loves. First she tried to kill herself.

Two weeks ago, she stood in her kitchen and took 13 Tylenol and 6 ounces of beer while James sat in the next room. Tammie called the ambulance herself. She went to the hospital and had her stomach pumped. And after she got out, she signed a warrant, charging James with assault and battery with intent to kill Jazmine.

Nothing keeps Tammie from loving James. He's in jail on \$10,000 bond, accused of abusing one of her children, and she says she's open to taking him back when he gets out. Her eyes soften when she talks about him.

"It's in my heart," she said. "I just love him too much. I think it's beyond love. Maybe I'm possessed with him. He's like a piece of butter on a hot surface. When he's around I don't have to open my mouth to the kids. They give him more respect than what they give me, and when he's around I get a whole lot more peace."

Just like the teenager she is, Tammie is always sure about what she's going to do next -- for the moment.

One day, she talks about going back to school, maybe this fall when Qwan is old enough to go to one of the preschools sponsored by the Department of Social Services. One day she's going to be a cosmetologist, the next, she's going to "do something with fashion," the next, she's just going to get her high school equivalency. She talks, too, about going back for her nurse's aide certification. She had gone to one of the other vocational schools in Columbia for awhile. She quit. She said she didn't like the administration.

For awhile, she worked for a man who hired her out as a nurse's aide, even though she wasn't certified. She found a baby sitter nearby to keep the children for \$8 a day. But Tammie quit the job. The man was cheating her out of pay and charging \$5 to drive her three miles to her job, she said.

Tammie found another job, making \$4.35 an hour as a maid at the Quality Inn. She quit. She didn't have transportation.

Her latest financial plan is to file for child support from Qwan's father. She's been getting food stamps and staples from the government. But she has no intention of filing for welfare. Welfare is for lazy people, she said.

Tammie says she's glad she got pregnant. And then when she talks about why she agreed to this story, she fumbles with her words.

"I don't know why I did this story. Maybe it's to educate other people in my situation. . . ."

"I think it's probably to prevent this type of thing from happening. . . ."

"It's just to hear another story of how a teenage mother gets by. . . ."

"I guess it's amazing to find somebody with three kids and trying to do so many things at the same time. . . ."

"Maybe it's for the admiration?. . . ."

"Whether you can do this or not, it just depends on how strong you are, it depends on your willpower, your situation. . . ."

"I try not to think about it, you know, and let it go, 'cause if I think about how I'm making it day by day, it'll just be hard. . . ."

One morning earlier this month, as Tammie was going through the morning ritual of bathing and dressing the children, the phone rang. Tammie loves dressing her children in the pretty clothes that James bought or that somebody handed down, greasing their hair and putting bows and barrettes on the girls.

The caller asked how she was doing.

"Tired," Tammie said.

Qwan, who had just turned 3, was sucking his thumb and crying. Trinity, who will be 2 in June, was playing in a basket and getting slapped for playing in it. Jazmine, who

will be 1 in August, was whimpering for something. Something.

Tammie kept going through the motions, laying one child on his back to start the bathing, dressing and greasing process, leaning over to pick something up off the floor, holding a threadbare robe against her stomach.

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