

Single Mom Diaries: And Baby Makes Two

By Tracy Connor

I'm what they call a single mother by choice, but at the time, it didn't feel like I had any choice at all. There I was at 37, with not even a Mr. Maybe in sight and a biological clock about to pop a spring. A glimpse of any baby left me dizzy with lust; I found myself resenting pregnant women.

One night, I had a heart-to-heart with my mother, who was dying of lung cancer. I told her I wanted a baby. Her eyes lit up, and she told me, "Having kids is the most important thing I ever did." I thought my father, a blue-collar tradesman in Brooklyn, would be a harder sell. But he didn't hesitate: "I can babysit!"

It was nice to have family support, but I was still daunted, afraid it was unfair to bring a child into a one-parent home. Would there be enough money, enough time, enough love? My mother put it in perspective. "What would you do if you were married and had a baby, and one day your husband walked outside and got hit by an anvil?"

I kept the pregnancy a secret for months to avoid questions. I shouldn't have; barely anyone asked, although there was an awkward e-mail exchange with an ex-colleague.

My pregnancy wasn't much different than anyone else's, although I went to a lot of doctor appointments alone and had to fetch my own ice cream and pickles. But friends filled the void left by my imaginary husband. One went to my first ultrasound; another won the coin toss to be in the delivery room.

When my daughter, Charlie, was born in June 2006, I thought to myself, I'm a mother. Not a *single mother*. Just a mother. The joy I felt was overwhelming, although when I looked at my baby's face, I wished desperately that my own mother, who'd died three months earlier, could have been there to see her.

In the first six months, the only time I gave my status much thought was when I applied for a passport for my daughter. In the box on the form for the father's name, I wrote "none." The clerk at the crowded post office couldn't fathom it. "Every child has a father!" she kept insisting. Finally, I shouted back, "Well, mine has a sperm donor!" The room fell silent.

Occasionally, when someone learns I'm a single mom, a note of pity creeps into their voice. But in some ways, I think I have it easier. There are no arguments about feeding, sleeping, or discipline. Of course, I haven't read a book or seen a movie — much less been on a date — in 18 months. But those frustrations fade every morning when I go to my daughter's crib, and she smiles and says, "Mama!" In those moments, all I can think is, I may be single, but I'm not alone.



Photo By: Gail Albert Halaban taken at **apple seeds**