

THAT WAS THEN...



Amalia, Zachary & Sophia all home from the hospital!

Sophia, Zachary and Amalia were born at 34 weeks gestation on April 26th, 1996 at 10:12am, 10:13am and 10:14am. They were all good weights - the smallest weighed 4 lbs 5 ounces - but we were struck immediately by the fact that they were all so different. Amalia had a shock of red hair, loved to be cuddled, and quickly became sturdy. Sophie was dark haired and slight, had trouble with apnea and bradycardia, and screamed whenever Dad picked her up. And Zach, who had seemed so big and robust at first, became our "five pound hero" having three general anesthetics and two major surgeries in his first four days to remove a half pound tumor, 10% of his body weight.

They each came home from the hospital at different times, and with the addition of each new child to our household our lives became more chaotic. As with all preemies, they had to be fed small amounts and often. There were extra complications from the surgery on Zach's neck, so once the third child came home it would take us three hours to feed and diaper them - and they needed to be fed and diapered every three hours! We took turns sleeping: Dad from 10pm to 2am, Mom from 2am to 6am.

The first year is a blur to us now - a mixture of sweetness, exhaustion, diapers, bottles and love. We had a series of misadventures: Mom broke her foot, Dad broke his ankle, we were evicted from the house that we were renting when it was sold to a new owner, and Dad lost his job. But we were sustained by friends and family, the kids themselves thrived and grew, and in many ways their combination of need and love was the glue that held it all together.

Raising triplets is half like being a parent, and half like running a daycare. We realized early on that on the bad days, where

parents of single children get a chance to hold their babies when they stop crying, parents of triplets have to put down the comforted child to pick up the next one that's crying. On the other hand, the good days are without equal: there's nothing like rolling with your own three toddlers out in the sun, or wrestling in a puppy-pile on the living room floor. There's nothing like going exploring with your pack of 4-year-olds, or discovering a new bakery and eating chocolate chip cookies on a winter afternoon, or playing tag at the playground until everyone is tired enough for a nap.

When our children were first born, another triplet parent told us that it doesn't get easier as they get older, it just gets different. Our experience, though, has been that it does get easier - and that it gets different! That first year is daunting with its newness, constancy and sheer exhaustion, but the next ones really are easier, though they're easier because the challenges have changed rather than because they've gone away. Diapers are replaced with learning to use the toilet, which is replaced by remembering to flush. Bottles are replaced by high chairs, which are replaced by setting the table, and then by lunch boxes for school. And laundry is replaced by - yes! - more laundry.

Our children are in sixth grade now, the big kids in the elementary school with middle school looming next year. They each have their own interests and passions, from soccer to science and horses to poetry.

When they were little, it sometimes felt like we were conductors trying to orchestrate each day for the benefit of the kids. Now that they're older, they've started to play their own music, bringing home experiences and friendships and skills that we couldn't have hoped for more. The challenges are certainly still there, but changed.

And the "I love you" that an 11-year-old says, sometimes shyly now, is a reflection of all the diapers and laundry loads, cuddles and cookies and endless "one more stories" of a decade. 

by Jonathan Leamon
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(4/96)



Sophia, Amalia & Zachary Leamon today!

...THIS IS NOW