4 blessed events in just one day for Stark couple

 Married since 1989, the Cliffords suddenly have a very big family

BY GEORGE W. DAVIS Beacon Journal staff writer

Be careful what you ask or pray for. You might get it — and more.

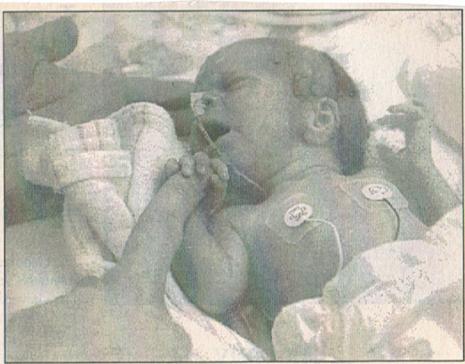
That's what happened yesterday to Stark County ministers Steven and Cheryl Clifford. The 48-year-old Christian education director at First United Methodist Church in Canton gave birth to quadruplets at Akron City Hospital — about eight weeks ahead of schedule.

The births are the first for the Jackson Township couple. They were married six years ago after being introduced at a denominational gathering.

Steven Clifford called the births, which he witnessed, "incredible and fascinating — a miracle."

The new mother was in stable condition yesterday but not ready to meet the media, who gathered around the still stunned father and

Heidi Lynn
Clifford holds
onto her father's
finger shortly
after her birth
yesterday at
Akron City
Hospital. Heidi is
one of four
bables born to
Cheryl and
Steven Clifford
of Stark County,
who are both



MIKE CARDEW/Beacon Journal

three of the babies in their incubators.

ministers.

Paul, Ruth Marie, Heidi Lynn and Robert were delivered by Caesarean section between 2 and 2:03

The largest child, Paul, who weighed 3 pounds, 10 ounces, was in critical condition at Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron, where he was transferred shortly after birth because of respiratory problems.

Ruth Marie, born at 2 p.m. and named for both grandmothers, was the smallest at 2 pounds, 13 ounces. Heidi Lynn, who weighed 3 pounds, 6 ounces, was named for Cheryl's sister. Robert was the youngest and weighed 3 pounds.

Steven Clifford said it was evident by "by the look of joy on her face when they brought Ruth and then Paul into the recovery room that motherhood is wonderful."

The three babies at City Hospital are expected to go home in three to five weeks, according to registered nurse Debbie Seiber.

"We've had thousands praying for us and we've had a great deal

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BABES

Quadruplets will live in five-bedroom house

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of help from the Stark County Mothers of Twins club, who have far more experience than us," said Steven Clifford, who is between church assignments while operating his Belden Village tax and accounting business geared toward ministers and their churches.

The Cliffords talked about having a child about a year after their wedding during a drive home from Connecticut, where they had visited Cheryl Clifford's family.

Eggs from Cheryl's sister Heidi

Kuchta, 28, were implanted in Cheryl in March through in vitro fertilization at Akron City Hospital. The babies are the fourth set of quadruplets at the hospital in the last five years.

For the last 2½ months, volunteers have brought meals for Cheryl Clifford while she rested in bed. The Cliffords have a five-bedroom home, and just last month Cheryl's mother moved in to help

out

Clifford said his wife's age was never considered when they learned it was possible for them to have a child.

"She was in excellent health, and we never joked about her becoming pregnant," he said. "We both realized we were comfortable having married, and one child would be a blessing. We never dreamed of four."