

A PRIZE-WINNING BABY OF 1931

BY RICHARD M. CAPLAN

At age 15 months and 2 days, Fredda Ellen Sideman faced her competition—155 other “city girls,” ages 12 to 24 months.

Ellen (as Fredda was known) was a contestant in the Iowa State Fair’s Baby Health Contest in 1931. The categories were age, sex, and section (city, town, or rural). She placed second in her category, and she still has the medal (*above*) and her photo from the *Des Moines Register* to prove it.

Common at county and state fairs, baby health contests were actually intended to reduce infant and maternal mortality, educate mothers on child nutrition, build doctor/parent relationships for preventive medicine, provide practical and scientific information on early childhood, and determine whether the healthiest babies lived in rural communities, small towns, or large cities. Iowa’s first contest, in 1911, was perhaps the first in the nation.

In Iowa’s 1931 contest, a grand total of 521 babies entered (though today we would call them toddlers). The judging lasted from August 28 until September 3. In three-minute

intervals, each baby was examined briefly by one or more nurses and a physician. Points were assigned in these categories: mental and nervous; eye, ear, nose and throat; oral and dental; physical; measurements; and consultation.

Points were subtracted from a starting total of 100 for developmental milestones missed; nutritional defects; physical abnormalities; lack of vaccination for

smallpox or diphtheria; and other suboptimal details noted by the examiner.

Ellen was thought to have “slight conjunctivitis” on the day she was judged, which cost her 0.1 point and contributed to her reduced total of 98.20, as her score cards reveal here. The score attained by the girl who cost her a gold medal remains unknown, as do the ranges and means of all participants’ scores.

Historically, the score cards tell us some of the concerns of child-health reformers back then: whether babies were breast- or bottle-fed, what solids they ate, and whether they had a “daily sunning” and napped with a window open. Free hearing and vision tests were offered to older children

An interesting contest innovation allowed babies to be re-examined the following year under the same criteria, permitting them the opportunity to receive an “improvement score” and an associated prize. Regrettably in 1932 Ellen lost fractions of points for knock knees, flat feet, precocity (!), over-aggressiveness, an unspecified eruption, some detail involving measurement, and a final, sad loss of 0.2 points for a few swollen lymph nodes. Thus, her score declined from 98.20 points in the previous year to a still-not-too-worrisome 96.25.

Ellen’s reduced score may have been a harbinger of a downward trend, since she developed ragweed hay fever at age 8, asthma at age 74, and a few other episodes of minor, transient illness.

On the plus side, though, her fine beginning presaged the bearing of four healthy sons, graduating from the University of Iowa with a bachelor’s degree (including Phi Beta Kappa, perhaps to make up for



Fredda Sideman,
Des Moines, Second in City Girls,
12 to 24 Months



DUPLICATE
BABY HEALTH SCORE CARD

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Phone 6-6761 IOWA STATE FAIR Date 8-29-31
 Cat. No. 117 Name Sideman, Gracida College Sex F
 Section City Class No. 3 Age 15 Months 2 Days Score 98.20
 Father ... St. No. ... P. O. ...
 Age 33 Nationality ... Occupation ...
 Mother's maiden name ... Age 30 Nationality ...
 Is mother employed outside of home? Yes How? ...
 Birth: Carried 9 Mo. Condition at birth Normal Weighed 7 lbs. 7 ozs.
 Which child 1st Time after becoming pregnant physician was consulted 6 weeks Mo.
 Birth registered ... Where? ...
 Feeding: Entirely breast fed ... Mo. Breast and bottle fed 6 Mo. Bottle fed at 2nd Mo. Fed every 4 Hrs.
 Formulae Lactogen, Borden milk, Nestle's Maltin
 Present foods: Orange or tomato juice, began at 1 Mo. Milk, Cereal, Eggs, Scraped Beef, Vegetables.
 Hygiene: Sleeps alone ... Bed time ... Naps 1 Windows open ... Daily sunning ...
 Chair-broken at 6 Mo. Controlled urine, Days at 13 Mo. Night 15 Mo.

Figures on left show the relative value of points toward a perfect score.
 Examiners should draw a circle around the figure following any abnormal or pathologic condition listed.
 Please use, as far as possible, the same position, all entries must be initialed as above.
 Examiners may note in space provided, any abnormal or pathological conditions not listed in this section, to be reviewed and scored by the Consultant.
 The right hand column must not be filled in by the examiner, but is for the official scorer's use only.

I. MENTAL AND NERVOUS Examiner ...

10. General Mentality:	Retardation .5 1. 1.5 2. 2.5 Precocity .5 1. Sensory defects .5 Faults in perceiving .5 Concentrating .5 Expressing .5 Reasoning .5 Understanding .5 Imaging .5 Learning .5 Imitating .5 Defective or abnormal play tendencies .5 Linguistic peculiarities .5 Over-spontaneity .5 Over-inhibitiveness .5	Units	Tenths
3. Motor Aspects:	Inability to hold head erect, to sit, to stand, to walk, or to run at proper age .5 Faults in reaching .2 Pulling .2 Pushing .2 Stooping .2 Climbing .2 Grasping .2 Opposing thumb .2 Mono-dexterity .2 Tracing .2 Throwing .2 Catching .2 Other incoordination, weakness or mis-use of muscles .3		
2. Social Behavior:	Lack of cooperation with parent .5 or 1. Faulty attitudes and acts with regard to other persons .5 Undesirable personal-social habits .5		
1. Emotional Aspects:	Over-timidity .2 Brazenness .2 Apathy .2 Irritability .2 Other emotional peculiarities .2		
1. Personality:	Inferior presence and facial expression .3 Over-passivity .2 Over-aggressiveness Unattractive traits and habits .3		
3. Additional Tendencies:			
20.	Total Mental Score		

Notes to Consultant

II. EYE, EAR, NOSE AND THROAT Examiner ...

5. Eyes:	Abnormal size .2 Abnormal position .2 Crossing .6 Lids abnormal Inflamed 1. Conjunctiva inflamed .5 Keratitis 1. Discharge 1.
4. Ears:	Abnormal size .2 Abnormal shape .2 Abnormal position .2 Inflamed eardrums 1. Dull eardrums .5 Pus discharge 1.5 Wax .4
2. Nose:	Abnormal shape .5 Narrow nostrils .5 Discharge 1.
4. Throat:	Reddened .1 Inflamed .4 Rough .5 Tonsils enlarged .5 Tonsils disease Adenoids diseased 1.
15.	Total Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat

Notes to Consultant

the earlier loss of a half-point for precocity) and a master's degree, and working with pleasure as a high-school librarian while raising children and maintaining a happy marriage, to me, now in its 60th year.

Of course, her sterling (silver) attainment in the competition cannot by itself attest to the predictive value of the contest, but since there is no research suggesting otherwise, I'm delighted to have made my successful choice of a life partner without even having known that she was a prizewinner in Iowa's 1931 Baby Health Contest. ❖

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PROGRAM
 WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S
Baby Health Contest



1930 Iowa State Fair Champions

IOWA STATE FAIR
 AND EXPOSITION

August 26 to September 4, 1931

DES MOINES, IOWA

III. ORAL AND DENTAL Examiner ...

4.5 Mouth:	Mouth: Habitually held open .5 Under-developed .5 Tongue: Protruding .5 Coated .3 Lips: Pale .4 Fissured .3 Palate: Abnormal 1.	Units	Tenths
5.5 Teeth:	Teething: Slightly delayed .2 Seriously .1 Teeth: Discolored .3 Decayed 1. Enamel defects 1. Irregular .5 Malocclusion 1.5		
10.	Total Oral and Dental Score		

Notes to Consultant

IV. PHYSICAL Examiner ...

4. Head:	Head: Abnormal shape .3 Under-developed .5 Scanty .2 Brittle .2 Bald spots .5 Fontanelle abnormal size .5 Diseased .5 Features: Irregular .5 Receding chin .5 Scalp: Rough .1 Scaling .2 Lymphatic glands: Palpable .5 Seriously enlarged 1.5 Scarred .5 Thyroid gland: Enlarged .5		
3. Neck:	Chest: Abnormal shape (pigeon, barrel, funnel) .5 Asymmetrical .5 Ribs: Beaded .5 Flaring .5 Thymus: Widened 1. Heart: Irregular .5 Enlarged 2. Murmur .5 Lungs: Dull 2. Rales 1.		
9. Chest:	Postural curvature 1. Winged Scapulae .5		
1.5 Back:	Abdomen: Enlarged .5 Distended .5 Liver: Enlarged .5 Spleen: Enlarged .5 Hernia: Navel 1. Groin 2.		
5. Abdomen:	Arms: Asymmetrical .2 Epiphysis enlarged .5 Fingers: Clubbed .5 Nails: Defective .2 Discolored .1		
1.5 Arms:	Genitalia: Male: Adherent prepuce .5 Phimosis .5 Inflammation .5 Testicle undescended 1. Hydrocele .5 Female: Congenital defects .5 Inflammation of vagina .5 Inflammation of urethra .5 Vaginal discharge 1.5		
3. Genitalia:	Legs and Feet: Asymmetrical .2 Epiphysis enlarged .5 Bowed .5 Knock knees .5 Feet: Pronation flat .5 Nails: Defective .2 Discolored .1		
2.5 Legs and Feet:	1.5 Skin: Pale .5 Rough .3 Hairy .2 Eruption .3 Bites .1 Birth marks or moles .1		
1.5 Skin:	2. Posture and Gait: Posture: Fatigue .5 Spasticity .5 Gait: Abnormal .5 Pigeon-toed .5 Flabby muscles 1. Diminished skin turgor 1. Malnutrition 1. Adiposity 1.		
4. Nerves and Muscles:	4. Nerves and Muscles: Exaggerated reflexes .5 Chvostek sign .5 Paralysis 2. Incoordination 1. Bad temper .3 Lack of self-control .2 Unmanageable .5		
1. Department:	42. Total Physical Score		

Notes to Consultant

V. MEASUREMENTS Examiner ...

1. Height (Average height for age is 30 1/2 Ins.)		Ins.
2. Weight (Average weight for height is 25 1/2 Lbs.)		Lbs.
1. Circumference of head		Ins.
1. Circumference of chest (at nipple line)		Ins.
1. Circumference of abdomen (at umbilical line, standing)		Ins.
.5 Diameter of chest, lateral (calipers at level of nipple line)		Ins.
.5 Diameter of chest, antero-posterior (calipers at level of nipple line)		Ins.
.5 Length of arm (tip of acromion process to tip of middle finger)		Ins.
.5 Length of leg (greater trochanter to sole of foot)		Ins.
8.	Total Measurement Score	

Conditions that govern scoring of measurements:
 Do not penalize over height for age.
 Do not penalize underweight for age.
 Allow 1 inch under average height before penalizing.
 Compare the weight and all measurements with height.
 Allow 2 pounds over or 1 lb. under average weight before penalizing.
 Allow 1/4 inch before penalizing for all measurements of head, body, and limbs.
 Penalty in the right hand column must not exceed the score in the left hand column.

VI. CONSULTANT

4. No vaccination for Smallpox .2 Diphtheria .2	
4.6 Other abnormal conditions, or defects	
5.	Total Consultant Score
	Grand Total Score