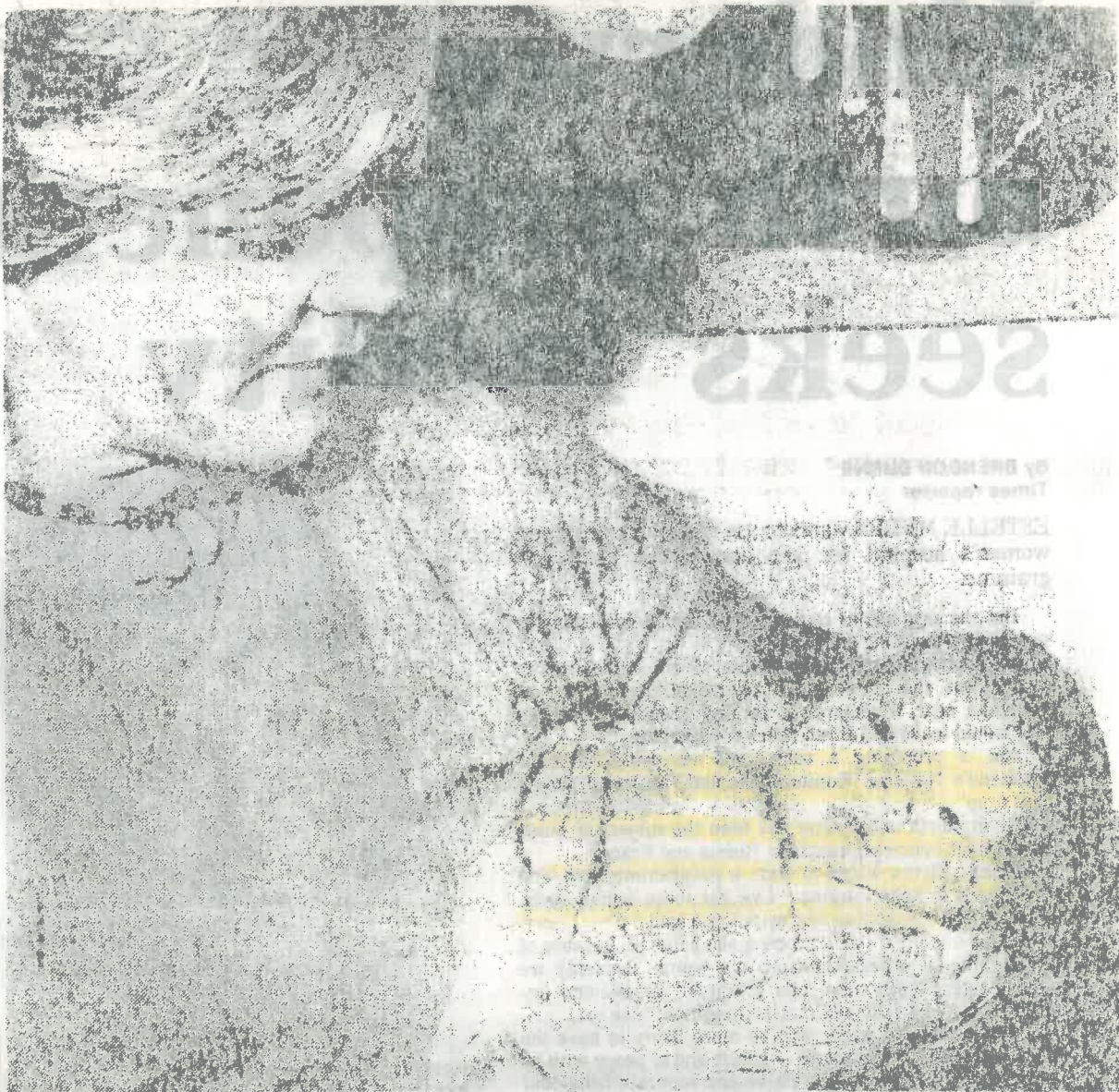


MAR 18, 1982

The New Zealand Herald



The midwife, Isabelle Smith, with baby Zhanna at Tutukaka last night.

## Baby Born in Bathtub

Staff Reporter

Whangarei

The first New Zealand underwater birth took place in a Tutukaka bathtub yesterday morning—a week before it was planned.

The bathtub baby, a 3.6-kilogram boy named Zhanna, was due on March 25.

But at 7.32 am yesterday he became what is believed to be the first baby born underwater in the Southern Hemisphere.

Underwater births have taken place in Russia, the United States and France.

The New Zealand birth was carried out at the Rainbow Dolphin Centre where an Australian dolphin researcher, Miss Estelle Myers, has set up a childbirth clinic.

Miss Myers said yesterday that Zhanna's mother, Suzanne, had been in labour for nearly three hours. She had been in the bathtub for an hour before the birth.

A midwife, Isabelle Smith, a nurse, two friends, and six children had been present at the birth.

Zhanna had been born into 37-degree Celsius

water and then placed in a washbasin where he had floated for 10 to 15 minutes, Miss Myers said.

Zhanna was Suzanne's fourth child and she had been given a clean bill of health before being allowed to go ahead with the underwater birth.

Miss Myers said they would stay at the centre for several more days and would be living in the area.

The birth had taken place exactly nine months to the day after Miss Myers had given a 500 deposit on the 16th of pro-

perty where her birth clinic now was.

But she said the birth had been planned for next Thursday when representatives of the National Women's and Whangarei hospitals could have been involved.

The medical profession was interested in the "less violent" method of birth, Miss Myers said. It was officially recognised as a home birth at which a registered midwife had to be present.

There was nothing "irresponsible" about the method.

2 on 2  
That is my commitment to the  
of the future. What if I have  
medical & other that I have  
EXPERIENCE TO HELP  
1982-83



58 PM, 21 JAN

# Underwater birth proponent seeks facility

NZ HERALD  
JAN 18 82

By BRENDON BURNS  
Times reporter

ESTELLE MYERS wants to use the country's largest women's hospital for her underwater birth programme.

But she says babies can easily be born in something as simple as a paddling pool.

"It sounds a little crazy," Miss Myers is the first to admit. But this 45-year-old Australian, now living at Tutukaka near Whangarei, is forging ahead with energy that would leave Bill Birch miles downstream.

She is preparing a submission on water birth to Auckland's National Women's Hospital "to see if they'll pick it up".

Giving birth underwater has been the subject of much experiment overseas, mostly in Russia and France.

Estelle Myers wants to start a programme here, and says there is keen interest. "I've got more babies to be born than I know how to deal with," she said.

Earth-birth is a shock process, she believes, because of the trauma of separation from the womb. Suddenly we face oxygen deprivation, and gravity. "We become immediately like a stranded marine mammal," she said.

A baby born in water will be more likely to have the nature of a dolphin or whale — gentle and at peace with its environment. "All our aggressive and separate behaviour comes from the impact of our birth," said Miss Myers.

Water birth is also quicker and less painful for mothers, she says.

Much of her information is based on the work of a French obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr Michel Odent, who has supervised numerous water births, including some in paddling pools.

But Miss Myers says she wants to work with a major hospital to set up a research programme. She says Dr Odent is prepared to come out here in July to supervise the start of such a programme. What she needs is "an open-minded doctor" to work with her.

Conventional medicine has proved sceptical.

"Of course they are. But once upon a time the experts told Columbus, 'You can't sail round the world — you'll fall off mate!'"

Estelle Myers says she is prepared to be ridiculed and rubbished, but she has a tough hide.

A former Rupert Murdoch "heavy duty executive" in New York, she hosted her own television programme there.

Earlier she had produced a daily women's show in Australia for Channel 7.

Her life direction changed in 1978 when she was commissioned to write a book in laymen's language about positive thinking. This began an interest in the supernatural and the paranormal.



ESTELLE MYERS . . . water births mean less aggressive humans

A magazine article suggesting man was once amphibious started her affinity with water — and dolphins and whales. Estelle Myers believes man has much to learn from these mammals.

"There is enough millions of dollars of research to show they are super-intelligent beings."

Wherever she goes in the world, they turn up. Even at Tutukaka. "I've been out six or seven times on local fishing boats and each time been buzzed by dolphins and whales," she said.

"I think it is a mind-to-mind contact that can be achieved."

With 30 million years on planet earth compared to man's 30,000 years, dolphins and whales are more developed than we are, Estelle Myers believes. "They're very gentle, very loving beings," she said. "We're not the supreme beings."

Estelle Myers hopes for the day when there will be a generation of water-born babies — and a less aggressive, more peaceful earth.

The day is a long way off. Though one of her own daughters is to make her a grandmother next month, an earth birth is planned.

"I can't convince her to have an underwater baby," she said.

I am \$80,000 IN DEBT —

That is MY COMMITMENT to the children  
of the future! What of those souls —  
Medical & otherwise that felt it NOT POLITICALLY  
EXPEDIENT TO HELP!!



Water birth woman says:

# 'DON'T MAKE US THE SCAPEGOATS'

7.8.82 8 O'CLOCK

LEGAL ACTION over Auckland's bathtub delivery that ended with the mother and child being rushed to hospital would be totally unwarranted, underwater birth pioneer Estelle Myers insists.

Ms Myers claims she and midwife Isabel Smith and underwater birthing are being made the scapegoats for a situation virtually thrust upon them.

Ms Myers helped in the birth, which has triggered questions in Parliament, a Health Department inquiry and risk of a court prosecution.

The incident of birthing did not mean the medical emergency, she says "absolutely not".

She believes there is a ground for a court case over the incident was a technical one — in that midwife Isabel Smith practised outside her authorised zone.

Says Ms Myers: "There was nothing negligent or criminal."

All the midwife did was what any doctor would do in such an emergency, she says.

"There's no way Isabel stopped to consider being out of her zone. She just did what had to be done."

And the ultimate responsibility for the situation that led to the 18-year-old mother being rushed to hospital about night hours after having the 3.9kg baby is a Caster Bay bathtub, rented with other people, containing the young woman and her mother.

The bathtub, that Wellington woman had agreed to borrow to have a water delivery, was the first in a New Zealand hospital for the woman.

But when the baby was

nine days overdue, she decided to travel by car with her mother and brother — to Auckland.

Ms Myers, the founder of the Rainbow Dolphin Centre in Tutukaka and organiser of an international conference there next month on water birthing, says she spent about 20 minutes on the phone trying to dissuade her from making such an "unwise" trip.

Nevertheless, the young woman phoned her, crying, late on Thursday night. She was in labour and experiencing labour pains every five minutes.

"I approached the girl, been having labour pains all the way from Palmerston North."

And when a doctor

By WAYNE MUNRO

refused them to refuse to perform an underwater birth she found a friend prepared to "open up their house to them" and left with the midwife to drive to Auckland.

Ms Myers to still convince Auckland hospital to perform the birth underwater were forgotten when, on arrival, they found the baby was almost due.

She says the labour was "quite, quite beautiful" and that "I cannot believe some of the things said about what happened."

The home in which the baby was delivered was "a beautiful luxury home" despite references it was "a sort of squat".

place. "Later the ambulance was sent and a doctor arrived as a result of his seeing our journey while in labour, Ms Myers believes.

The girl, her mother and brother were still talking of all the things "they had to do" in Auckland that day — "primarily advice because they left for a motel that the young woman needed complete rest, under supervision, possibly even a doctor to check her."

Says Ms Myers: "I read that the girl was looking very, very well. The potential danger to the baby was gone. We all they had to do was get down and have two hours."

Although the ambulance was placed on standby, on water birthing in jeopardy, Ms Myers believes the water-birthing revolution will not be permanently dented.

## Homebirths

I WISH to correct any impression that homebirths and underwater births, such as the recent Caster Bay birth are in any way associated. 5th Dec 82

The Homebirth Association promotes planned birth at home, which involves careful preparation. The midwife attends during labour and delivery and the doctor who has the ultimate care is present for the birth to assist if necessary.

Bathing is used only as a source of comfort in strong labour. During the delivery, the mother is in a position allowing her comfort and

giving the midwife a good view of the baby's head as it emerges. The perineum is massaged with oil, and stretches as the baby is born. The midwife's skill and the mother's control both enable the baby to be born without cutting or harmful tearing of the perineum.

Homebirth is recognised by many parents and professionals as being a valuable option enabling safe, family-orientated, natural birth.

P. A. FROUD

Member of Homebirth Association

## Water Birth Investigation

Press Area Wellington

The Nursing Council is investigating a complaint about the conduct of a registered midwife at a recent Auckland "underwater" birth, says the council's senior nurse adviser, Miss P. Carroll. N.Z.H. 31.8.82

The complaint has been referred to the panel cases committee which, under the Nurses Act, has to investigate complaints and decide whether a charge of professional misconduct should be laid, she said yesterday.

"It has also been referred to the midwife concerned for her comment."

## Hitch With Second Birth In Water

Press Area Whangarei

A second incident involving a woman who had organised by the Rainbow Dolphin centre in Auckland has resulted in the mother's unexpected need for hospital treatment. N.Z.H. 14.7.82

The first, in an Auckland bathtub about a month ago, is now the subject of an inquiry by the New Zealand Nursing Council. N.Z.H. 13.9.82

The second incident occurred at the centre itself, at Tutukaka, last week when a young Hamilton woman required stitches but no equipment or facilities were available.

An American midwife was at the birth but she had no suturing materials.

At 2 pm, two doctors in the area were telephoned by Ms Estelle Myers, who runs the centre, and asked if they would go to the centre to stitch the woman.

The doctors, who were not approached about the birth beforehand, arranged for the woman's admission to hospital.

They refused to attend the centre, after first ensuring the woman was not in a state of shock, because of inadequate conditions and because they did not wish to give work to the centre.



# Questions asked about latest underwater birth

AK STAR 2-8-82 FRONT PAGE Home Delivery Extra

An underwater birth in a Castor Bay bathtub is being investigated by National Women's Hospital.

A report on the birth is being sent from National Women's to the North Shore medical officer of health, Dr C. E. Anderson.

The baby boy was delivered in the bathtub of a private home early on Friday to an 18-year-old Wellington woman. She had gone into labour and contacted the head of the Rainbow Dolphin Centre, Ms Estelle Myers.

The woman's mother said her daughter had become fired with enthusiasm for water births after meeting Ms Myers at a seminar in Wellington.

The baby was scheduled to be born under water at Wellington Hospital, but was born on land, and the young mother decided to come to Auckland to farewell a brother who was going overseas. Then she went into labour and was directed by Ms Myers to go to the Castor Bay address.

The woman's mother said there were up to six people in the bath when the baby was born.

"But thank God I was there," she said that every time her daughter was told to bear down she could not get herself into position to push and her head would go under the water.

After the birth, the mother said, her daughter was taken out of the bath and lay down on the bathroom floor where the midwife inserted about 15 stitches.

The light was so poor that a torch had to be held close to where the midwife was working.

The woman said her daughter could not walk unaided after the birth. She went to sleep on a mattress. When she woke up her daughter looked "like something out of a 19th century novel when a woman bleeds to death after childbirth. She was white and her hair was a lead grey colour."

She said she took her daughter to a nurse from where she called North Shore Hospital, and was referred to National Women's Hospital.

A flying squad medical team from National Women's arrived at the motel about 1pm.

A hospital spokesman said the young

mother was pale but conscious when they arrived at the motel. She was dizzy when she tried to stand, and had a rapid pulse.

She was given an intravenous drip, two bottles of plasma and some ergot to make the uterus contract. Once at National Women's, she was found to be losing a little blood.

"We were unable to determine how much blood she lost at the birth. Because it was in the water, there was no way of knowing."

She was examined under general anaesthetic and products of conception were removed from the uterus and some "quite big" lacerations were sutured.

Since then the woman has continued to improve and is well, the spokesman said.

The woman's mother said today she had nothing against water births in general, but believed they should not be performed in unsuitable conditions.

Estelle Myers did not have time today for comment.

## Questions about home birth

WELLINGTON, Today (PA).— The Health Department has questioned Australians Mrs Estelle Myers and midwife Mrs Isabel Smith about the circumstances of a bathtub birth in Auckland last week.

Mrs Myers started the underwater birth movement in New Zealand and runs the Rainbow Dolphin Centre in Auckland. Mrs Smith works at Dargaville Hospital and is also a domiciliary midwife in Northland.

Mrs Myers said department officers had been to inspect the Castor Bay house where the birth took place.

## CALL FOR CAPE AFTER BIRTH IN TUB

While women can have their children wherever they choose, a bathtub birth on the North Shore has prompted warnings of the need for common sense and responsibility.

Commenting on the report of a young Wellington woman who gave birth in a bathtub at a private home in Castor Bay, a spokesman from National Women's Hospital said he would like to see a more responsible attitude, not just to underwater births but to home births in general.

On the whole, however, people taking part in home births seemed to have been responsible, he said.

An obstetric flying squad from the hospital was sent to the woman after she gave birth in a bathtub.

The spokesman said the woman was in shock and required treatment.

When the squad arrived, no professional person was there to tell it what happened.

A report on the birth has been sent to the North Shore medical officer of health, Dr C. E. Anderson.

The mother said she reported to be progressing well.

The president of the Auckland branch of the New Zealand Home Birth Association, Alison Jones, said the association had nothing to do with underwater births.

She said the association had stringent guidelines for home births and had a clear history of safety in New Zealand.

She said that, in the past six or seven years, there had been 1500 homebirths and six deaths.

An Auckland obstetrician and gynaecologist, Dr E. B. Nye, said the idea of babies being born without bright lighting made a lot of sense but being born underwater was a "bit of nonsense".

## Prosecution likely after bath birth

A prosecution is expected to follow last week's birth-in-the-bath at a Castor Bay home and a question on the incident will be asked of the Minister of Health in Parliament tomorrow.

An 18-year-old Wellington woman gave birth in water to a boy last Friday morning. Afterwards, she was lifted on to the bathroom floor and a midwife greeted her by torchlight.

The young mother was later taken to National Women's Hospital and after urgent treatment her condition improved.

A report on the birth has been sent to the Department of Health's director of clinical services in Wellington, Dr J. S. Phillips, by the medical officer of health for the North Shore, Dr Cecil Anderson.

Dr Phillips has sent a memorandum to Mr Malcolm outlining regulations concerning midwives.

It is understood that questions have been raised whether the Castor Bay bathroom was within the authorised zone of the midwife who attended the birth.

Questions have also been asked whether any doctor agreed to accept responsibility for the young mother and her baby.