

TWO OF THE FAMED DIXIE CHICKS MUSICAL GROUP—SISTERS MARTIE MAGUIRE AND EMILY ROBISON—TALK ABOUT THEIR LONG AND ULTIMATELY HAPPY JOURNEY TO PARENTHOOD. EVEN WHEN YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL, TALENTED, AND SUCCESSFUL,

IT DOESN'T ALWAYS COME EASY.

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**TAKING
THE LONG
WAY...TO
MOTHERHOOD**

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BY BETH WEINHOUSE





The Dixie Chicks: From left, Natalie Maines, Emily Robison, and Martie Maguire

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Top left: Martie and Gareth Maguire with their twin daughters, three-year-olds Eva and Kathleen. Below: Emily Robison and her twins, two-year-olds Julianna and Henry. Right-hand page, top: Emily Robison with son Gus, 4. Bottom right: Martie Maguire

Fertility—or infertility—is hardly the first thing that comes to mind when people think about the Dixie Chicks. Terrific music, absolutely. Gorgeous women, definitely. Outspokenness and honesty, of course!

But now two of the Dixie Chicks—sisters Martie Maguire and Emily Robison—are taking their group’s characteristic outspokenness and honesty and applying it to a subject that so many women can relate to. While the Dixie Chicks’ lead singer Natalie Maines had no trouble getting pregnant with her two children—7-year-old Slade and 2-year-old Beckett—both Emily, the group’s guitarist and banjo player, and Martie, who plays fiddle and mandolin, wound up using in vitro fertilization (IVF) to start their families. And they’re not embarrassed to talk about it and share their thoughts on what it’s like when it doesn’t come easy.

In fact, far from being embarrassed, the group actually wrote and recorded a song about it. “So Hard,” is on their latest album, *Taking the Long Way*, which won an impressive five Grammy awards this year. The song, about various difficulties in relationships, includes the lyrics:

*It felt like a given
 Something a woman is born to do
 A natural ambition
 See a reflection of me and you
 And I’d feel so guilty
 If that was a gift I couldn’t give
 And could you be happy
 If life wasn’t how we pictured it*

The sisters vividly remember the lyric-writing session. “Sometimes a title dictates what a song is about,” says Emily. “It was a hard day, and we were having writer’s block. Natalie said, ‘It’s so hard when it doesn’t



come easy,’ and we went from there. It started out as a relationship song, but then we decided to apply it to our own situation and get very personal about trying to conceive, and how hard it is on your relationship when you have problems.”

When this writing session occurred several years ago, all three Dixie Chicks were already moms. Natalie had her two sons. Emily had Gus, now four, and was pregnant with her twins Henry and Julianna, now two. And Martie had her twins, Eva and Kathleen, who are now three. “I don’t think we would have been strong enough to write the song while we were in the throes of [infertility],” says Martie. “We felt more comfortable writing about it once we had success.”

The sisters said they’ve had a great reaction from the public, and especially from women who relate to the infertility aspect of the song. “I do think it crosses a lot of boundaries,” says Emily. “And the people who know what it’s about with us and infertility write us letters. I think our fans appreciate that we’re real women going

IT’S SO HARD WHEN IT DOESN’T COME EASY: WORDS & MUSIC BY EMILY ROBISON, MARTIE MAGUIRE, NATALIE MAINES, DAN WILSON © 2005 WOOLLY PUDDING MUSIC (BMI). SCRAP- IN’ TOAST MUSIC (BMI). CHRYSALIS MUSIC, SUGAR LAKE MUSIC (ASCAP). ALL RIGHTS ON BEHALF OF SUGAR LAKE MUSIC ADMINISTERED BY CHRYSALIS MUSIC (ASCAP)

through what real women go through. And now they have a song.”

Both sisters say they always knew they wanted children. And both were surprised when it didn't happen quickly and easily. There was nothing in their family or health history to suggest there would be problems. And they had watched lead singer Natalie Maines simply decide to be pregnant and start her family. They figured it would be just as easy for them.

Emily, now 35, the younger of the two sisters, started trying first, while she was still in her twenties. Married to country singer Charlie Robison, the couple had decided to be married a couple of years before having children. “We definitely had a plan,” says Emily, “but we were under the naïve assumption that once we started we'd be pregnant the first month. When it didn't work that way, I was in shock.”

In fact, it took more than two years of fertility treatments before Emily and Charlie became parents. “After about six months of trying naturally we were aware there could be a problem,” says Emily. “We had the basic tests done, and everything was normal. So we started slowly at first, trying artificial insemination to up our chances.”

After another year without success, the couple got more aggressive. Emily had a laparoscopy to try and rule out any problems. She was found to have mild endometriosis, “but nothing that would have kept me from getting pregnant.” Another six months went by. “Then we were ready to just go for it,” she says. Son Gus was born after Emily's fourth round of IVF. “I have nothing but praise for the San Antonio Fertility Center. They walked us through every step,” she says. Sister Martie was in the delivery room with her, videotaping everything.

Martie had found it heartbreaking to watch her little sister struggle and suffer through fertility treatments. But she still never really thought she'd experience the same kind of problems. Her husband, actor Gareth Maguire, comes from a family of six children. “So we were going to meet in the middle and have four or five,” she says.

As with her sister, testing found some mild problems, but nothing that should have prevented pregnancy. “All my paperwork said ‘unspecified origin,’” she says. “We spent three years of active trying before we went to IVF. First I went on Clomid. Then I had some dye tests and found I had a collapsed tube, so I had laparoscopic surgery; the tube wasn't blocked, just spasming. We did three IUIs [intrauterine insemination], and then decided it wasn't worth doing a fourth, and we'd go on to in vitro fertilization.” And that did the trick; Martie got pregnant with her first IVF cycle, and gave birth to twin daughters.

While the musicians' fertility stories may be easily recognizable to many women who have also struggled to get pregnant, the two Dixie Chicks faced additional difficulties. For instance, how do you schedule doctors' visits when you're touring across the country? Even more challenging, how can you make sure you have your injections at the same time every day—and that they're always refrigerated—when you're on an international tour.

Emily went first, and her in vitro cycles occurred

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during one of the group's national tours. "I'm by nature a very modest person," says Emily, "but by the end of that tour, everyone had seen me naked. You'll do anything when you're wanting to have a baby. I can laugh about it now, but I called that the gynecological tour across the United States."

When it was Martie's turn, the group was touring Europe. "I had to take the shots on the road and see different doctors in different countries," she says. "That was hard. I remember once in Scandinavia there was a doctor whose examining table—with stirrups—looked like it was in the middle of his personal office. It was the dustiest, dirtiest, non-sterile environment for a check-up.

"Other things were hard that most people wouldn't think of," she continues. "Some of the fertility medications and shots have to be refrigerated, and can't be in the light. I had to make sure that I had a mini-refrigerator in whatever country I was in. And if I ruined a batch of medicine, I had to find a 24-hour pharmacy. Also, you have to have the shots within a certain time period, and sometimes we were on a plane then. So I'd have to carry a pack with ice in it. Luckily I had my husband with me the whole time. He was the note-taker and the organizer, and he gave me the shots, too."

Throughout the sisters' pregnancy attempts, bandmate Natalie Maines was sympathetic and supportive. "She got pregnant with her son so easily, I think she almost felt guilty watching us," says Martie, "but I don't think women should feel guilty."

When Gus was almost two, Emily and her husband decided it was time to try again. "The second time was a lot easier," she says. "We went straight to IVF. We had some leftover embryos, so we did a couple of frozen cycles, but they didn't take. Then we did another fresh cycle and put in three embryos. And I got pregnant with twins." This time, the band wasn't touring, and Emily was able to stay in one place while she

was trying. Of course, at that point she had a toddler at home to take care of, too. "Natalie was always able to say, 'Okay, we have nine months off. I'm going to get pregnant.' And she did," says Emily. "But Martie and I had to start hoping we'd get pregnant, and then it would take a while and we'd be back in the work cycle."

Both Martie and Emily realize how lucky they are. Even though they weren't able to get pregnant as easily as their bandmate Natalie, they know they had advantages that aren't available to all women. Because of their successful careers they had access to high-tech medical treatments and the money to pay for them. "I really have a problem with the fact that insurance companies don't see infertility as a medical condition requiring coverage," says Martie. "I do want there to be some pressure on the insurance companies. It's such a strong drive for women, knowing you were meant to be a mom. We would have gone into debt, done whatever, exhausted all the options, to get there. But a lot of women

since I was 12 and she was 10. We can't help but wonder, did we stay in a hotel near a power plant? Did we drink the same bad water? Maybe there's a link."

Right now the band is taking some time off, and one of Martie's projects is to add another child to her family. This month (August) she'll be trying IVF again. "Last time we had three embryos left over. I had all three implanted, but none were successful. So now I have to go through the whole retrieval process again. I started with twins, and now I think I only want one more child, maybe two."

Martie says her friends tell her that now that she's been pregnant once, it will be easier this time. But having one child has also made her concerned about another issue: what to do if there are embryos left over this time. "Now that I have children, I see those embryos as possible children. So I have to think about what my options are if there are leftovers again. I could keep them in storage, and maybe they will help my

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have to give up on that dream because they can't afford it."

Emily concurs, and adds that "probably half our friends are in some sort of therapy for infertility, whether it's just artificial insemination, or all the way through in vitro," she says. "We kind of feel like it's epidemic at this point with our generation. And we all have our theories on why that is."

The sisters have thought a lot about why the two of them had such difficulties getting pregnant. They called their mother, but she said she got pregnant easily. And no one could remember any aunts, grandmothers, or any other relatives having problems. "We have an older sister who gets pregnant easily," says Martie. "So Emily and I think there may be an environmental cause for our problems. Neither of us were very old when we started trying. But we've lived very parallel lives. We've been in a band together

children some day. Or I can try to donate them to stem cell research. I don't think I could give them to another family," she admits. "I would always worry: what if it's an abusive family? What if they don't get enough love?"

In spite of these kinds of concerns, Martie and Emily feel overwhelming gratitude toward the advances in reproductive science that helped them become parents. "Thank God I live in a time when I can get some assistance," says Martie. Adds Emily, "In the beginning I felt such a stigma about it, but then I found out how many people are affected by infertility, and what a beautiful thing it is that there's this technology and science out there to help couples have children. The more people talk about it, the less stigma there is. I never want anyone to feel that it's not as beautiful a way to have a child as any other." ■