

Section C

Sunday

February 16, 2003

LifeStyle

Inside:

RELIGION 4C-5C
MARVA HAWKINS 3C
FOOD 8C

Marie Francis is photographed with nurses who came to visit the maternity ward to learn from the Sanford midwife.



Sanford's birth place

Marie J. Francis delivered more than 40,000 babies in her Sixth Street home

By Michelle Jerla
Managing Editor

For 30 years, many of the babies born in Sanford got their first glimpse of the world in Marie J. Francis' house.

For more than three decades starting in 1943, Francis was one of Sanford's prominent midwives. In a two-story house, still located at the corner of Sixth Street and Hickory Avenue, she built a maternity ward to serve the area's women.

"Some wanted a natural child birth, so they came to the Jones/Francis Maternity Hall," said Francis' daughter Daphne F. Humphrey. "She was the one that they trusted."

When Francis decided to become a midwife, she was following in her mother's footsteps.

"My grandmother was a very strong woman," Humphrey said. "She was a practical nurse, who wanted to help people. And, that was instilled in my mother."

Originally from Sarasota, Francis moved her family to Sanford, where her mother lived, in the 1940s. The state of Florida sent her to school to become a midwife, and she opened the maternity ward in 1943.

The ward had five beds, and once a soon-to-be mother was admitted, she stayed for at least nine days. The patient received three home cooked meals a day (Francis' sister did the cooking), and after delivery, was taught the basics of caring for a baby.

In the 1950s, the cost of the nine-day stay in the Jones/Francis Maternity Hall was about \$70. However, a woman wasn't turned away from the door if she didn't have the money to pay for her stay.

"My mother wouldn't turn anybody away," Humphrey said. "It didn't matter whether people could pay or not, she took care of them. That's just

breakfast on the table and that her children realized the importance of a good education.

"That was always instilled in us," Humphrey said. "We knew we had to go and be a success. That's just the way it was."

And, Humphrey did become a success. After completing college, she returned to Seminole as an educator. She taught at several schools before she retired a few years ago. She is also making sure her mother's legacy will not be forgotten.

From the certificates that recorded every birth at the Jones/Francis Maternity Hall, Humphrey created a book that contains the name — in alphabetical order — of each baby and his or her father. There are 41,820 names in the book.

"The book contains people of all nationalities — of all colors," Humphrey said. "My mother would help anybody. She was just trying to assist, and that's what she did."



Marie Francis inspects a bassinet in her maternity ward. Pictured **far right**, Francis' daughter, Daphne Humphrey, holds the book that contains the names of every baby born at the Jones/Francis Maternity Hall.

house that contained the maternity ward. The medical facility was located downstairs.

"We could hear the babies, but it never bothered me," Humphrey said.

Although Francis was a working, single mother, she always made sure there was

VALENCIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
P.O. BOX 3020 ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32802

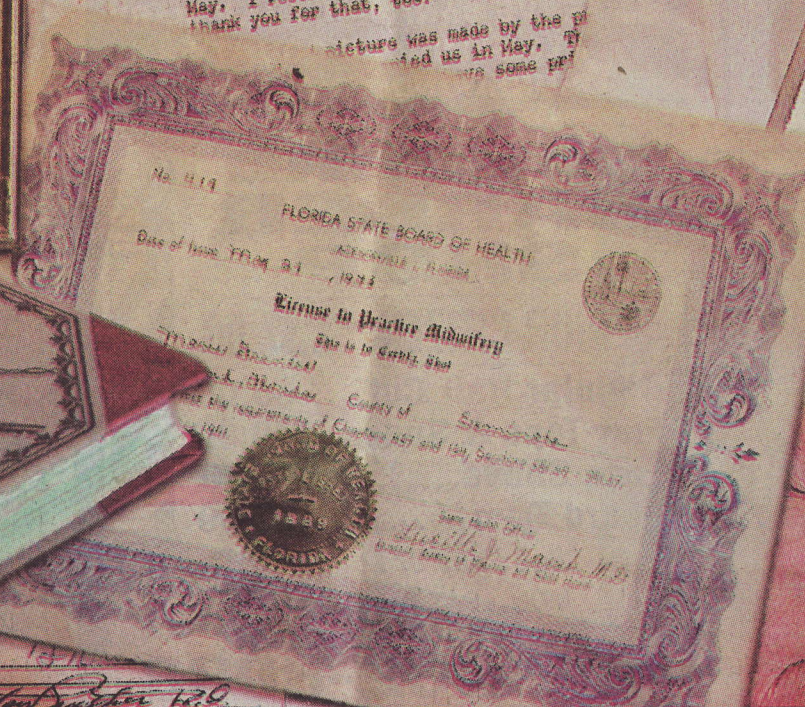
June 13, 1975

Ms. Marie Francis
621 East 6th Street
Sanford, FL 32771

Dear Ms. Francis:

Thank you for the memorable learning experience during visits to your hospital in May. I received the picture from the April 1975 issue of the journal. Thank you for that, too.

Picture was made by the
hospital in May. It
was some pretty



*Property of
Francis - Francis Maternity
621 E. 6th St.
Sanford, Fla.*

Photos by
Tommy Vincent/
page layout by
Michelle Jerla