

The World's Largest Family

(From S. Heyer "Even More True Stories")

Mr. and Mrs. Albina don't know where all their children are living now. Some are in Argentina. They aren't sure how old all their children are, either. Ask them, for example, "How old is your daughter Susanna?" and they say "We're not sure." They might even say "which Susanna?" But this is understandable. After all, they have 64 children.

Mr. and Mrs. Albina, with 64 children, have the world's largest family. Not one of their children is adopted. How is it possible for one woman to give birth to 64 children? The answer is simple: Mrs. Albina only gave birth to twins and triplets.

The Albinas married when Mrs. Albina was 12 years old and Mr. Albina was 30. The oldest Albina children are in their thirties and forties. 18 of the Albina children still live with their parents.

The family lives in a two-room shack in Colina, Chile. The shack has electricity but no toilet or running water. The children wash in a small bowl in the dusty backyard.

Sometimes there is very little food in the Albinas' small house. When there is not enough food for everyone, Mrs. Albina makes sure the youngest children do not go hungry. "The smallest eat first, and then the bigger ones. We've always done it that way," she says. Obviously, the Albinas do not have enough money for their big family. Why, then, do they continue to have children?

The Albinas do not use birth control because it is against their religion. They could let other people take care of their children, but Mrs. Albina will not allow it. "When my two brothers and I were babies," she says, "our mother left us at an orphanage. I was heartbroken. I promised myself that, even if I didn't have much money, I would always take care of my children myself."

So, the Albina family continues to grow. Mr. and Mrs Albina have so many children that they had to give some children the same name. For example, there are three Susannas, three Miriams, two Estrellas, and two Soledades.

Will the Albinas stop at 64 children, or will there be more? Mr. Albina is 79 years old, and Mrs. Albina is 61. "I'm getting old," she says with a smile. "I would like God to consider my age. But, if God sends more children to me, yes, there will be more."

Runner-up:

<http://thenewshole.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2007/08/04/303831.aspx>

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