

Technology gives nature's ultimate pacifier for baby

By MARGARET MILLER

It was like a roar when you picked up the teddy bear and put it to your ear. The sound of a waterfall, perhaps, only there was a steady pulse underneath.

These who stopped by the special display in front of the Crowley's store wondered if that could indeed be what

is heard inside baby's first home, the mother's womb.
But then Sharon Johnson stopped, looked and listened.
"It sounds like it did in the doctor's office," said the Redford Township resident, who is in late stages of pregnancy and had been in for a checkup only the evening before. She had used her doctor's equipment to hear her baby's

heartbeat. "But I heard the heartbeat stronger," she added.
The teddy bear on display and causing many passersby to give a listen has a trade name, Rock-A-Bye Bear, because he is a special bear.
His innards hold a continuous play microelectronic circuit that plays a recording of intrauterine sounds, the mother's pulse sound and fluid motion.

The idea is to place the soft teddy in baby's crib when the small one seems unable to sleep.
"And it works," said one visitor to the Livonia Mall where the innovation was getting a demonstration. "My girlfriend said it really helped her baby sleep through the night very soon."

MARIE SHIELDS, who worked with Dr. William C. Eller to develop the bear in Fort Lauderdale, pointed out

that the device is for use with a colicky baby and is not a substitute for giving needed care.
"It will not help if the baby is hungry or wet," she told those who gathered around the table full of bears.
"But it is helpful when the parents have done everything they can and the baby still cries. I've been asked if crying isn't healthy for a baby.
"The answer seems to be that crying is a healthy means a baby can use to let you know it needs attention. Excessive crying burns up calories the baby really needs early in life."

"You put it next to the ear when the baby is crying loudly so it will draw out his roars," she said. "Then as he begins to quiet down you can make it softer."

The bear has another surprise value, she added. "We recommend that if Rock-A-Bye Bear doesn't work and there seems to be no reason why not, it's a good idea to have hearing checked," Ms. Shields explained.

THE DEVELOPER said the bear came into existence because she and her partner in a home construction business were looking around for a means of diversification.

They heard about the possibility of recording the sounds inside of a pregnant woman's uterus, and learned that research by Dr. Lee Salk had indicated this might be helpful in the life of a young baby.

Then Ms. Shields got together with Dr. Eller to see how the idea could be developed. "We found a woman having her second baby who was willing to

have the recording made," she went on. "That's what we wanted because first-time mothers tend to be tense."

The recording was made and proved effective in hospital nurseries, Ms. Shields said. It was available in the stores for home use, too, but somehow the radio-type device didn't catch the imagination of weary parents and givers of baby-shower gifts.

Then technology came up with a mini-microcomputer, Ms. Shields said, and that made the Rock-A-Bye Bear possible.

"The bear is made of non-allergic materials and has firmly anchored eyes and nose so it can be used as a toy later with the circuit removed," said Ms. Shields. "It has passed all the government safety tests."



Marie Shields holds the Rock-A-Bye Bear she helped develop to pacify babies. (Staff photo by Bill Bresler)

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