



ANTHONY DELMUNDO

Paraplegic Ken Kunken counts his blessings — one, two, three! — with boys he fathered through in-vitro fertilization: Joseph (waving, front), Timothy (r.) and James (on Dad's shoulders). Ken and wife, Anna, say treatments let couples like them “achieve their dreams.”

Miracle × 3

‘I thought that’d be impossible,’ sez quadriplegic L.I. dad of triplet boys

BY JULIAN KESNER
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KEN KUNKEN NEVER thought in his wildest dreams that he’d be able to celebrate Father’s Day as a dad.

Then, his dream came true — not once, not twice, but three times over.

Almost completely paralyzed from the neck down in a 1970 football mishap, the 55-year-old Nassau County assistant district attorney and his wife, Anna, had their dreams come true last year when she gave birth to triplets, thanks to a relentless urologist and the miracles of modern medicine.

Dr. Bruce Gilbert of North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, L.I., harvested sperm from his quadriplegic patient through a testicular biopsy, then cryogenically froze it until the Kunkens decided they were ready to try having a child through in-vitro fertilization (IVF).

In IVF, a sperm and egg are fertilized in a laboratory and then transferred to a woman’s uterus, in hopes that it attaches to the uterine lining.

Miraculously, all three of

Anna Kunken’s fertilized eggs “took” on the first attempt, resulting in triplets Joseph, James and Timothy — aka “Joley, Jimmy and Timmy” — being born Jan. 24, 2005.

“We didn’t really have our hopes up for the first time,” said Anna Kunken, 36, who is originally from Wroclaw, Poland. “We just got lucky.”

While an undergrad at Cornell, Ken Kunken was injured during a football game against Columbia. The injury didn’t prevent the Oceanside, L.I., native from graduating from Hofstra School of Law and living life to the fullest.

Still, Kunken had resigned himself to never being a father until he married Anna on June 14, 2003.

“When Anna and I were talking about getting married, she told me that she’d like to have

a baby,” he recalled. “At the time, I thought that’d be impossible, because I’d been paralyzed for more than 30 years and was in my 50s.”

The couple contacted a spinal-cord-injury organization in Florida, which put them in touch with Gilbert, who has helped a dozen such men coping with paralysis become fathers.

“For people who think that they’ll never be able to be a father, there are treatments available that can allow them to achieve their dreams,” said Gilbert, who first consulted with the Kunkens in 2002.

On Sunday, the family will “do a lot of celebrating with these boys,” said Ken Kunken.

“He’s just great,” said his wife. “He has so much fun carrying them around on his wheelchair, talking to them, singing with them — it’s just amazing.”

As for Dad’s favorite things about his sons: “Their smile, their giggle, the way they’re so active and happy,” he said, “and all the love they give to us and we give to them.”

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