

by Lynda_Hirsch

Q: The return of Phillip Spaulding on "Guiding Light" is exciting. I seem to recall he had an unusual birth. What were the circumstances surrounding his birth? " Lexie, Baton Rouge, La.

A: Alan Spaulding's first wife, Elizabeth, had tried to have a baby for several years. After 10 years, she and Alan finally conceived. Sadly, the baby died at birth. Alan, always a man to get what he wants, brought a newborn child. He took the infant into the birth room. Elizabeth had undergone a c-section, so she was not aware of what was going on. Alan placed the baby in Elizabeth's arms. Until Phillip was a teen, Elizabeth always believed he was her natural son. In fact, it turned out he was the son of Justin Marler, who moved to Springfield. When Justin learned Phillip was his son, he decided to keep the secret, as he did not want to shatter Phillip's life. Eventually the secret came out. Phillip had always felt pressured to live a life Alan wanted for him. Learning about Alan's treacherous trick, it was several years before he would have anything to do with his "father."

Q: Is it true that a story line on "Guiding Light" saved many lives? " Angelina, South Bend, Ind.

A: Yes. In the mid-1960s, the show's creator, Irna Phillips, worked with head writer Agnes Nixon on a plot based on a real-life friend who had died from cervical cancer. The friend's life might have been saved had she undergone a pap test. At the time, pap tests were not a regular part of a woman's checkup. It was decided to have Bert Bauer, the show's Mother Earth character, have a pap test. The test showed some cancer cells. Bert underwent a minor surgical procedure and her life was saved. The show was praised for this story line by many medical societies. At the time, a spokesperson for the American Medical Association said women's requests for pap tests shot up by 15 percent. To summarize: Many lives were saved because of the plotlines. If a special on "you and your pap test" had aired, few would have watched the program. Because a beloved soap character had the procedure, thousands of women, many who had never heard about the test, asked their doctors to perform a pap test.

Q: Is it true that an actress on "Guiding Light" had to undergo an amputation and allowed the show to tell the story of the amputation and her recovery? " Jacqui, Harrisburg, Pa.

A: Charita Bauer, who played Bert Bauer, had a leg amputated due to diabetes. The actress was determined to return to the show after she was able to walk with her prosthesis. She went to the show's head writers and insisted that they write in her plight. Bert underwent the operation; although, she did it out of town and did not inform her family. When she returned, her family learned of her struggles. The actress was able to walk, but the character was shown recovering, dealing with the ramifications and showing that life could be full even after undergoing a drastic procedure.

Lynda Hirsch on Soaps: This week's Q&A dedicated to "Guiding Light"™ by Lynda_Hirsch