



By Jed Kirschbaum — Evening Sun Staff

Dr. Craig Dufresne, assistant professor of plastic surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital, displays material used in operation that separated Siamese twins who had been joined at the head.

# Twins' physicians encouraged

## TWINS, From D1

geon who inserted tiny silicone balloons under the twins' scalp last June in Ulm so there would be enough skin to cover the post-separation wounds.

Between June and September, their scalp was expanded to the size of a small cantaloupe, but there was not quite enough skin left to cover Benjamin's skull, so fabric mesh was used. Within a few weeks, doctors hope to cover a 4-by-6-inch gap with skin taken from the buttock area.

At that time, or later depending on the twins' recovery rate, plastic surgeons will insert custom-made plates made of titanium under the skin, covering the new 6-by-8-inch portions of each twin's skull.

Their heads will then be completely reconstructed and Dufresne said he expected hair to grow normally on both boys' heads.

The doctors said they have discovered the twins have different personalities and are "clearly individuals." Patrick is described as "more active" than Benjamin.

"They have had differences right from the very start," said Wetzel. "When we first met the kids, they were different. They had two individual personalities. When they were anesthetized, they responded differently. They were clearly individuals."

But, he added, both are progressing at the same general rate and both are doing just as well.

Seventy doctors, nurses and technicians took part in the 22-hour operation that successfully separated the twins last weekend.

The babies were born with separate brains, but they shared a major blood vessel. Doctors used tissue from their hearts to reconstruct the single vessel into two separate veins.

During the surgery, the twins were placed on a heart-lung bypass machine and their bodies cooled to such a point they were in effect in "suspended animation." Their hearts stopped pumping and they had no blood pressure.

Doctors said yesterday that without the use of these techniques "we believe the twins would have had no chance of survival."