

fed Hayes, 25, a graduate student at the yperbaric lab, monitors a sheep dive testing

fetal susceptibility to the bends.

Research continues in diving effects on fetuses

By CONNIE BURKE

search that a Texas A&M Uniity professor has been working or the last 14 years has provoked lemnation from a women's activoup, comment from a public cial and concern from thousands omen divers.

W.P. Fife, a research biologhas been trying to determine ther diving can harm the fetus of nant women. So far, his rerch has shown that diving can m the fetus while the mother ws no signs of decompression ess, referred to as "the bends. en years ago, a student working pregnant rats found the fetus when the mother had a lethal of the bends," Fife said.

But during a sheep dive later conted, the fetus was harmed when ing happened to the mother,"

conduct this experiment, Fife e of his assistants puts a sheep in compression chamber and then nulates the air pressure within the amber to different depths under er. This is what Fife calls a dive. ecompression sickness, more nonly known as the bends, is sed when nitrogen and oxygen bbles are trapped inside the body ter someone has been diving. If a son swims to the surface of the ter too quickly after a dive, bubcan form in the tissues, muscles bloodstream of the body. These bles can slightly effect a person anently paralyze its victim or

erned that a women may experi-nce no side effects from diving, but include more than public officials , research he has conducted on the pass confirmed his worries. by are concerned all fetus when diving. men to abort the fetus or give

birth to a deformed baby

Fife chose sheep for the experiment because the circulation of the that of humans than other animals.

Fife's research has had its share of attention. For example, his work was a sore spot to some women who advocated that Fife's research is the work of a male chauvinist. He said Nikki Van Hightower, a leader of a women's activist group, has accused him of conducting the research to limit work available to women.

calling me 'macho.' But I like to see women enjoy sports, too," Fife said.
Fife said he gets calls from women concerned about the effects of di-

They will say they just found out they are pregnant and that they have been diving. They want to know if the baby will be deformed and if they should have an abortion," Fife said.

Fife said he tells them he doesn't know for sure whether diving causes birth defects, but he thinks it is best to tell them not to dive if they think they may be pregnant.

A one-sentenced, off-hand remark by Gov. Bill Clements caused Fife's research to gain more publicity. Clements implied that scuba diving could be a swift, comfortable way to have an underwater baby abortion. This remark was repeated in newspapers, magazines and on radio and televison stations.

causing only a small amount of Clements made the comment when main on the job until she is no longer in. At other times, they can perhe was being quickly reviewed on all the research projects at Texas A&M University.

he fetus she is carrying may be and women activists. Women divers armed without her knowledge. So who are employed as professional di-

Fife said his research has not cre- ving duties.

ated any laws which forbid pregnant women from diving or from continuing their work. Every woman animal's placenta is more similar to may still decide for herself whether or not she wants to dive while she is pregnant, but his research may beemployer will have to give her time off work and possibly give her workman's compensation payments. Her employer may later decide it is more 'At first, I found women who were economical to hire only male divers rather than hiring potential compensation collectors.

While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis f sex, it does not resolve questions regarding the rights of pregnant

Employers have traditionally considered pregnancy as a voluntary condition that interferes with work performance. In such cases, an emloyer would not be obligated to pay her during the time she misses work However, payment could be col-lected if there was an employment agreement or union contract previously secured.

When Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the law changed to provide women with the same company policies relating to disability. The employer may not terminate the woman because she has reached "As far as I'm concerned, it was a harmless remark," Fife said. He said stead, she will be permitted to reto perform the work.

If she does physical work like diving and her employer has a policy of transferring the employees under medical disability to lighter assignments, then she will be subject to the same practice. Consequently, a vers or who frequently dive as a hob- woman who now holds a diving job by are concerned about dangers to a cannot be fired because she is pregnant and cannot carry out her di-

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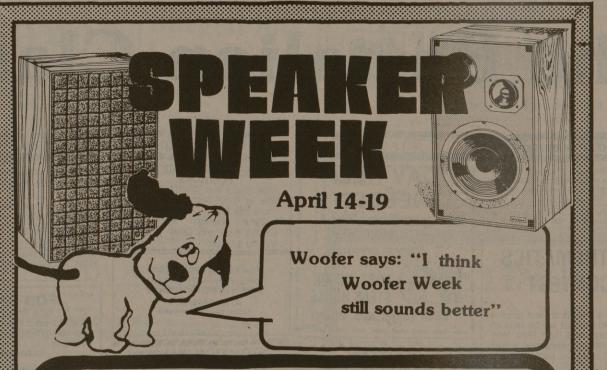
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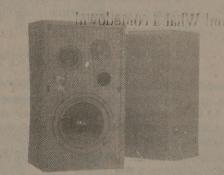
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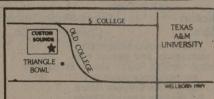
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