

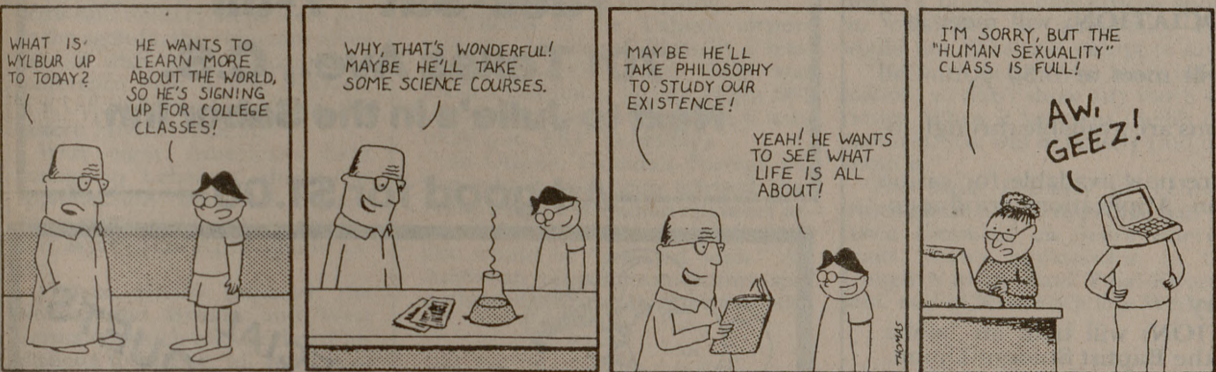
Warped

by Scott McCullar



Waldo

by Kevin Thomas



# Official: Proposals fall short of halting delivery dangers

## Course not enough to train lay midwives

HARLINGEN (AP) — Legislative proposals that would require midwives to undergo minimal instruction fall short of eliminating the dangers of untrained people delivering babies, a public health official says.

The Rio Grande Valley, with one of the nation's highest birth rates and one of the youngest population medians, is one of the country's poorest regions. As a result, officials say, a large number of midwives serves a population of about 500,000 on the U.S. side of the border.

That number could be closer to 1 million considering the number of Mexican women who cross the border just to give birth in the United States, and who also are dependent upon lay midwives, said Dr. Charles Wilson, medical director of the Hidalgo County Health Department. Children born in the U.S. are automatically citizens.

Holly Scholles, executive director of the Association of Texas Midwives, said one-fourth to one-third of the 400 lay midwives in Texas practice in the Rio Grande Valley.

According to Wilson, anyone can practice midwifery now by registering with a county clerk and paying a \$25 fee. He said the Legislature appears to be sidestepping the real issue of licensing midwives with bills that solve only part of the problem.

Sen. Bill Sarpalius, D-Canyon, introduced a bill this week that would require lay midwives to attend train-

ing courses by the Texas Department of Health.

Scholles said the course provides introductory information that is insufficient to train lay midwives.

"It's very basic," she said. "It's not an obstetrics or midwifery textbook at all."

Scholles said her association instead supports a bill to be introduced

*"It's fine if they want to allow them to administer eyedrops, but where is the training. . . . You can allow someone to fry chicken, but if they don't know how to cook, they'll probably burn it."*

— Dr. Charles Wilson, Hidalgo Health Department medical director

by Sen. Hector Uribe, D-Brownsville, that would authorize midwives to be certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation and to perform newborn screening tests.

Local health departments would be required to provide medical and laboratory support services to midwives' patients, Uribe said.

The bill would require midwives identify themselves to the state health department yearly and would allow them to administer state-required prenatal blood tests and eyedrops to newborns that prevent infection.

"It's fine if they want to allow them to administer eyedrops, but where is the training for them — if they don't know how to do it or when to do it," Wilson said. "You can allow someone to fry chicken, but if they don't know how to cook, they'll probably burn it."

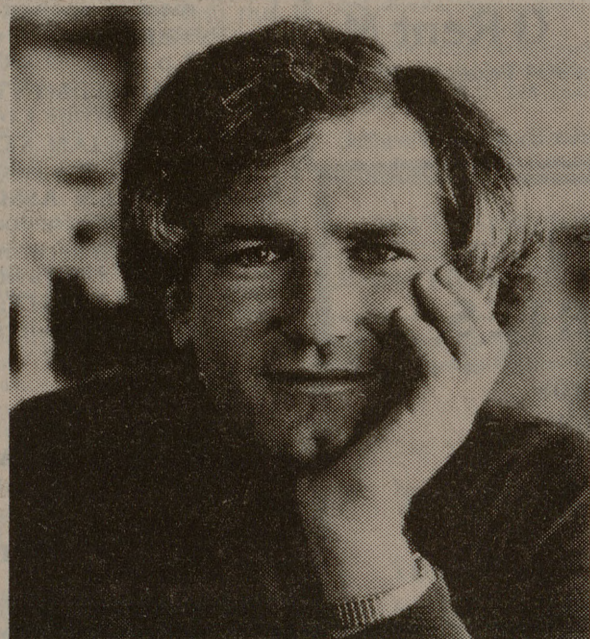
Wilson said training and licensing should be required and violators should be prosecuted.

Wilson said lay midwives in the Rio Grande Valley receive between \$250 and \$500 for delivering a baby — compared with the \$3,000 cost of an obstetrician's prenatal care and a hospital delivery.

Risks associated with untrained midwives include fetal brain damage, postpartum hemorrhaging that could threaten the mother's life, and infections to the mother or baby, Wilson said.

Most midwives in the Rio Grande Valley are women who have no more experience or training than what they receive delivering babies in their homes or in the patient's home, and others are Mexican doctors who can't make a living in Mexico, so practice as midwives in the United States, Wilson said.

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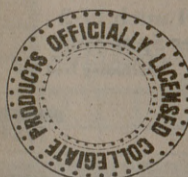
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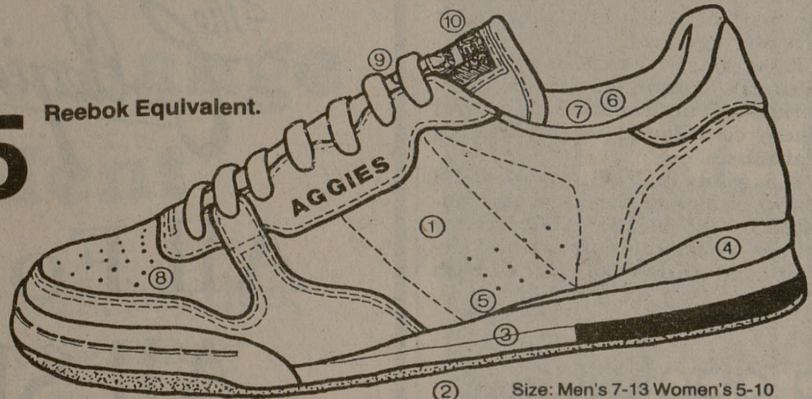


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