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## A&M physiologists transfer genes

Development may lead to crops with greater disease resistance

**By Sherri Roberts** 

STAFF WRITER

Two Texas A&M plant physiologists have developed a technique of transferring genes to plants — a process that may be the key to developing crops with greater disease and insect resistance.

Dr. Roberta Smith, a professor of soil and crop sciences, and Dr. Jean Gould, a Texas Agricultural Experiment Station scientist, succeeded in transferring foreign genes into a corn plant which they developed from the shoot apex, or growing tip of the plant, in cell culture. The gene was inserted into the plant cell by the soil bacteria, agrobacterium.

"This technique is a real break-through because it opens up the possibility of putting genes into any plant," Gould said.

Smith said the technique could

#### Deaf teenager awaits arrival of parents

old deaf Vietnamese girl who also is going blind due to a nerve disease oped for a dream to come true Tuesday with the anticipated arrival fher parents to the United States.

Thao Phan was placed on a boat by her parents, who hoped their then 7-year-old daughter could be reated in the United States for Usher's Syndrome, a congenital nerve lisease that took away her hearing and is robbing her of her sight.

It took two years for her to reach uston, where two older brothers

Thao now has a sight range of only 15 inches. Her dream has been o see her parents and three brothers and sisters again before she goes completely blind.

Geri Konigsberg, a public rela-ions spokesman for Houston Lightng & Power Co., took a personal inerest in Thao's plight after she was ontacted by school officials two years ago to see if the utility could arrange for clothing donations for

When Thao told of her wish to see the rest of her family, Konigsberg leaned on U.S. Rep. Mickey Leland, D-Houston, to use his influence to opefully trim the red tape that sually stymies for years the issuing of exit visas that allow Vietnamese to come to the United States, which has o diplomatic relations with Viet-

Leland, who visited Hanoi last minister about Thao's family and mentioned the girl again when the minister later visited New York.

cause a decrease in the use of pesticides because insect- and disease-resistant genes could be transferred

Although gene transfer is not new because scientists have practiced the procedure on tobacco, tomato and petunia plants, the process has not successfully been performed in corn, wheat, rice and other monocot plants, Gould said.

In addition, gene-transfer, which was effectively completed, has been limited to certain varieties of plants, (using the plant's shoot apex) has worked on all plant varieties we've tried," Gould said.

Smith said the technique's strength is its ability to generate plants from tissues in culture. Many scientists have been able to transfer foreign genes into cultured tissues, but the tissue has not generated into to farmers only after plant materials intact plants, she said.

Smith emphasized that she and Gould did not develop genes, but rather the technology to transfer genes to certain plants. Universities and take years, she said.

A&M officials have filed two patents and the said.

"Our technique of gene transfer and chemical companies such as Du-Pont and Monsanto have isolated and own various genes, she said.

Arrangements with those who own genes of agricultural impor-tance would have to be made before the technique can be tested in plant breeding programs, Smith said.

in the plant breeding programs had been evaluated, a process that could

### Issue of grave robbing involves hobbyists, Indians, legislature

Texas, this ancient woman with the hole in her forehead and the sassafras root growing through her chest, the teen-ager turned to his parents

"He wasn't excited. There wasn't any whooping and hollering. He said, 'Mother, let's get down and pray about this thing. If it's the Lord's will, we'll keep going on,' "
Estelle Jones Stanford says of the afternoon more than 30 years ago when her son discovered the 700year-old remains of an Indian

Those relics of a childhood hobby may rest peacefully in the backyard museum, but they are playing a commanding role in an emotional and complex drama that has pitted Indians and scientists against Sunday-afternoon hobbyists and their commercial counterparts, the pot hunters, those collectors who earn thousands of dollars selling not only Indian pottery and points, but also

The controversy has spilled over into the Texas Legislature, where lawmakers are considering a bill that would outlaw "grave robbing" and

tists and the collectors is not utmost in Stanford's mind when she opens dian Museum.

Stanford is extremely proud of her son's collection, and she has a hard time understanding many Indian groups who are angry and up-set that their ancestors have been pulled from the ground and put in glass cases. Some of those groups want the remains reburied, but that stand is one Stanford, herself part

Cherokee, can't support.
"I think that's foolish," she said of the re-burial proposal. "Buddy's purpose was to preserve this (history) before it was destroyed."

But she's even more offended by the commercial relic hunters who dig willy-nilly through the Texas countryside in search of valuable burial objects they then sell to collec-

While those commercial hunters typically go for the fine pots and special arrow points often buried with Indians, they also sometimes take the human remains to sell, archaeologists say. "Hundreds and hundreds of human remains are being traded here in Texas," said Curtis Tunnell, executive director of the Texas Historical Commission. know of auction sales where human skulls have been sold. Those without teeth usually go for \$50, and those with teeth go for \$150."

Those remains can be found at gun and knife shows, at artifact auctions and in advertisements such as the one found in a gun magazine that offered a mummified female, artifacts and a custom oak display case, all for \$4,500.

Still, Stanford, like many other collectors, is not totally comfortable with the legislation that would outlaw grave robbing. The proposed law, called the Human Burials Protection Act, would make it a felony to disturb, damage or destroy burial or to remove human remains or burial objects from that site. The bill's primary focus is protection of unmarked burial sites on private property, but it also establishes a committee to advise the state archaeologist on the proper disposition of human remains when they are dis-

In those sites considered scientifi-Commission would be granted temporary jurisdiction over the burial, although the landowner would have

the first really big telescope built in this country," Smith said.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of McDonald's 107-inch the largest telescope at the mar say on the discovery.

The need for such legislation is critical, said state archaeologist Robert Mallouf, who estimates that because 5,000 and 8,000 archaeologisms. cal sites are damaged or destroyed each year in Texas by zealous relic collectors and commercial pot hunters. Many of those disturbed sites include burial grounds. "This is rampant. We're estimating that in another five years, all the cemeteries will be gone," he said.

"What this means is that science

has lost a massive amount of critical information," Mallouf said. "Every time they destroy one (archaeologi cal site), they rip out a page of the state's history."

Even more important, however, is the fact that the law would extend the same protection to unmarked graves that currently is afforded

Scouts who tour her small Caddo In- burnals in designated or marked ce-

Opposing the legislation are collectors such as Stanford. The law protecting burial sites is merely the first step, many collectors say. Be-fore long, they warn, it will be against the law to pick up an arrow-head in "your own back yard."

While the law would not affect existing collections or surface hunting, opponents are suspicious. Stanford, like other collectors, indicates she is quite ready to do whatever is necessary to protect her son's collec-

Yet, it's not the Estelle Jones Stanfords that cause the greatest worry to Indian groups and professional archaeologists. The commercial hunters, who have developed a precise, if indelicate, technique for finding graves, are a much more menacsource of destruction, some involved in this issue say. Often using something called a "pokey stick," a steel rod about five feet long, the collector probes inside the suspected burial sites until he finds a sample of

Frequently the collectors will then move in with heavy equipment to strip the site of the upper layers of soil, Mallouf said.

Although some East Texas collectors contend it is impossible to make a living by pulling pots from graves and selling them, Mallouf says otherwise. "We know of a number of such pot hunters who desecrate human burials on a full-time basis, and who make over \$100,000 a year selling human skulls and burial artifacts, Mallouf said.

#### 120-mile chase ends in arrest of Texas man

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) - A Texas man who led state troopers on a 120-mile car chase was charged Monday with resisting arrest and possession and transportation of 75 pounds of marijuana.

Robert Carrasco, 32, of El Paso, was jailed under \$200,000 bond. A preliminary hearing was set for May 16 in Greene County Associate Circuit Court.

Carrasco was stopped for speeding shortly before 11 a.m. Sunday on Interstate 44 near the Springfield city limits, the highway patrol

He allegedly gave officers permission to search his 1981 Chevrolet one-ton truck but sped away before the search.

Speeds reached up to 100 mph as the chase continued on I-44 to St. James, where the suspect turned east on Missouri 8.

Carrasco was captured when he ran out of gas, the patrol said.

# AUSTIN (AP) — When he found her in the Piney Woods of East

with a simple request.

The answer to those long-ago prayers is now found lying quietly in a glass case inside a small private museum set up next to the family home in Longview. Although the teen-ager, Buddy Calvin Jones, has grown up and moved away, his mother faithfully cares not only for the skeleton with the hole in her head, but also for 2,000 pots, hundreds of arrowheads, 20 human skulls and two other full skeletons found by her son in his 16 years of artifact collecting in and around

human remains.

seriously restrict the activities that filled Buddy Jones' teen-age years.
But that battle between the scien-

her doors to schoolchildren and Boy

#### 1989 marks 50th anniversary of UT's McDonald Observatory

AUSTIN (AP) — The director of he McDonald Observatory says he opes the famous observatory of the University of Texas someday will have extended facilities elsewhere in and out of — this world.

"I dream of the day when McDonald instruments will be on the Moon," said Harlan Smith, who will retire this summer after 26 years at

In a speech at the university on Monday, kicking off two weeks of events to honor the West Texas observatory's 50th anniversary, Smith recounted its beginnings and research history

It opened for research on Mount locke in the Davis Mountains on May 5, 1939, after being built with a \$500,000 bequest from an East Texas banker and amateur scientist named William Johnson McDonald. At that time, Smith said, most of the "facts" in astronomy textbooks McDonald's first telescope, the 82-inch reflector, was a wonder. "It was

built six years after Smith left Yale University to take the McDonald directorship.

When he was hired as director, Smith said, UT was considering closing the observatory.

Instead, it was expanded, and to-day McDonald is known not only to scientists but to radio listeners of the Star Date astronomy program around the nation.

"McDonald, in fact, has contributed more to the understanding of stellar evolution than any other observatory in the world," Smith said.

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