

Sperm bank provides cash, nousey questions

I was perusing the Battalion classified one day last spring. I was hoping to find a personal ad saying something like: "Blonde swimsuit model, 6' 2", measurements 36-25-36, looking for companionship, recently blinded in an industrial accident." No luck though. Frustrated and disappointed, I was about to slip the Batt back into the woman's purse I had gotten it from, when my eyes lit upon the words: healthy, male and semen. My interest piqued, I looked closer, searching for the 1-900 number and the rate per minute. The phone number was local, though. Finally, I broke down and read the whole ad. "Healthy males wanted as semen donors." Wow! I couldn't believe it! I thought sperm banks were just in big cities and episodes of "Night Court," but here was one right in the heart of Bryan, and they were practically begging for healthy males.

Although I considered myself a healthy male (I had survived one — sometimes two — double cowpies with cheese a day for years; how could I be anything but?), I just couldn't imagine lowering myself to such a point as to sell my own sperm. Later that same day, as I lay on my back with a needle in my arm at Westgate Plasma Center, I got a chance to reread the ad. "Excellent compensation" the ad said. Well, what the hell. Any place with a name like Fairfax Cryobank couldn't be too sleazy.

I went by the Fairfax office and picked up an application, and what an application! The thing had its own index. I was determined, however. So, I sat down, pushed my physics homework and other less important stuff out of the way and got to work. I had to tell them everything: my mother's maiden name, any illnesses the family dog might have had in the last seven years, my third cousins' affinity for women's hosiery, everything. They even wanted to know my sexual history. All I could think of was a game of truth or dare in the back of a school bus in eighth grade, but I couldn't bring myself to write it down, even if I changed the names to protect the innocent. I was just too ashamed.

Finally, I got to the last page. It said I would be paid the healthy sum of \$40 "a shot." It also had tips on raising your sperm count, such as wearing loose underwear and staying away from Madonna videos. Then, down at the bottom of the page, in great big

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letters, were the words: NO SEXUAL ACTIVITY FOR 48 HOURS BEFORE DONATION. This was something I hadn't expected. Not that this would put a crimp in my sex life; if things worked out, I was hoping the sperm bank would be my sex life. It was just that 48 hours of abstinence before every visit to the Cryobank put a new slant on things. What if I was at one of those wild college parties I hear so much about, and a girl tried to pick me up (who's laughing?), I would be forced to choose between a night of fun and cash from the sperm bank. I would begin assigning every girl I met a dollar figure and consider sex with only those over 40 bucks; and if rent were due — forget it.

After finishing the application, I made an appointment. I arrived at the Cryobank office trembling with anticipation as the nurse showed me to my room and wished me luck. The room was very white and very cold. Everything looked so clinical; I definitely wasn't feeling romantic. Then I looked up and saw a cabinet with a sign on it reading, "Please return all Cryobank reading material when finished." I threw the cabinet door open and spread before me was a sight that would have made Jesse Helms turn communist. It was a virtual cornucopia of corrupt literature, a plethora of pornography. Then I turned around, and there in the corner of my sterile white room was possibly the sleaziest brown couch I had ever seen. That was obviously a love seat built for one.

After consummating a very short relationship with a clear plastic cup, I was told to wait in the doctor's office for the personal interview. This was the big one. This interview would allow the doctor a chance to determine if I told the truth on my application and whether I was sperm bank material. The doctor was very busy, and I had to wait quite a while. The longer I waited, the more nervous I became. What if he found some of the half-truths? I began to sweat. What if he found out about something I had left out?

Then the doctor came in. He sat down and stared coldly into my eyes, "There seems to be something missing from your application," he said. It was too much. I broke. "I'm sorry! They made me do it! How was I to know what big kids do in the back of the bus? I didn't want to kiss Angela Hurston! I was only 13-years-old!" The doctor's expression didn't change, "I just need your middle name." "Oh," I said, and told him it was Schwarzenegger.

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ROADKILL

Raccoon



Squirrel



Rabbit



MARGULIES
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NEW JERSEY

MAIL CALL

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Program serves Border's needs

EDITOR:
We live in a paradoxical world. Medical science can cure illnesses that would have been fatal just a few years ago, yet many of our neighbors don't receive routine health care.

The challenge that confronts the citizens of Texas is to develop a strategy to insure that Texas prospers in a changing environment. That strategy is embodied in the South Texas/Border Initiative, a far-reaching effort to enhance educational opportunities, health care and economic development from Brownsville to El Paso, and reaching as far north as Corpus Christi.

Initially funded by the Texas Legislature in 1989, the South Texas/Border Initiative created both health and academic cooperative programs that draw on the strength of institutions of higher education across the state to meet specialized local needs. Many of the programs are housed at U.T. Pan American in Edinburg, U.T. El Paso and the U.T. Health Science Center at San Antonio, while others involve non-U.T. partners such as Laredo State University and the Corpus Christi Independent School District.

These programs enhance health care services; expand undergraduate and graduate education at South Texas campuses; and provide information, research and technical assistance to further the competitive position of the region's economy.

A landmark event for South Texas occurred recently with the opening of the University of Texas System Valley/Border Health Coordination Office, which is addressing the serious lack of health care services along the Texas-Mexico border. Headquartered at U.T. Pan American in Edinburg, this office is now the focal point for health education, research and community service programs in the region.

The Texas HETC, also known as the Health Education

and Training Center Alliance of Texas (HETCAT), is guided by representatives from many institutions of higher education. They include: the Texas A&M University System, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Tech Health Sciences Center, the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine and the University of Texas System. Various state agencies are also associated with this important effort.

Many needs still exist. The border area has a higher-than-normal rate of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis A and typhus. In addition, many residents are not aware of the risk factors and warning signs of illnesses such as cancer, so they are less likely to receive effective treatment. The South Texas Health Research Center, a project of the U.T. Health Science Center at San Antonio, has created education and prevention programs to confront these problems.

There also are critical shortages of medical and allied health professionals, ranging from physicians to physical therapists. A statewide initiative has been implemented to increase the supply of trained health professionals along the entire border. Expansion is underway to provide greater educational opportunities for registered nurses and to increase the nursing manpower in the area.

These programs are an indication that the effort is on track, but the train must keep rolling. We must continue collaborative efforts with other universities and agencies. This is the only way we can enhance the health education and research programs and related community service efforts along the entire Border.

No single program can solve the educational, health care and economic needs of the border area. However, by drawing on expertise and resources from throughout the state, the South Texas/Border Initiative provides a practical framework which has already proven valuable.

Charles B. Mullins, M.D.

Free trade agreement with Mexico will mean exploitation, pollution

Michael Worsham

Columnist

What does Kodak being among the EPA's top five polluters in the United States have to do with the proposed Mexico-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA)?

According to the head of Kodak, arguing for the FTA on the MacNeil-Lehrer Newshour, nothing. Kodak's atrocious record — in 1989, 113 increases in emissions of ozone-depleting freon, and its New York plant lead New York state in toxic spills — was not mentioned during the program.

This example suggests part of what's wrong with the FTA. The FTA will address legitimate trade issues like farm subsidies, but worker safety and consumer and environmental protection are being avoided.

A confidential cable written by the U.S. ambassador in Mexico and published in the Mexican weekly Proceso on May 13 read "The FTA process can also be helpful in dealing with environmental, labor and 'flank' issues but within carefully defined limits. ... In discussion of these issues, I think we face two dangers. One is promising too much in the way of progress on 'flank' issues."

The cable supports the claim of Mexican ecologists that President Bush's goal of "trade without barriers" refers more to freedom from labor and environmental legislation than to national protectionism, which Mexico has already unilaterally dropped. Underneath the ivory tower rhetoric,

free trade is about allowing multinational companies to exploit human and natural resources with as few restrictions, however reasonable, as possible.

U.S. free trade with Mexico already exists in the maquiladoras. Maquiladoras are factories located on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border, which, using tax-free imports and exploiting cheap Mexican labor and lax environmental enforcement, make tax-free exports.

Maquiladoras have created about 50,000 jobs, but in conditions former Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower says "make you want to cry," and sometimes at the expense of U.S. jobs. They have also created an environmental and public health nightmare.

A General Motors subsidiary dumped hundreds of barrels of toxics within two miles of a public beach in Matamoros, Mexico. Many border areas are pumping groundwater 20 times faster than aquifers can recharge it. One-third of the children under eight in San Elizario, Texas contract Hepatitis A, an infectious disease associated with contaminated drinking water, with similar statistics applying to the Mexican side of the Rio Grande.

In 1990 the American Medical Association reported 12 million gallons of raw sewage flowing annually into the Tijuana River near Baja California and called the border region "a virtual cesspool."

The proposed FTA would extend the

border region's distorted "development" to the rest of Mexico, already suffering from poverty and poor sanitation. These conditions have contributed to 327 cholera cases this year. Air pollution in Mexico City is so bad that oxygen is sold on the streets.

Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, Harvard educated and a devout free trader, counters these grim realities by citing Mexico's new environmental policies. However, Mexico City's "one-day-without-a-car" program for Mexico City has been sabotaged by corruption. The promised shutdown of polluting factories is restricted to, in some cases, only the polluting section of a plant, or even an individual machine.

According to SEDUE, Mexico's EPA, only one-third of the maquiladoras generating hazardous waste comply with reporting requirements. Mexican environmental laws are strong, but SEDUE only has a \$3 million annual budget and a total of 140 technicians to cover the entire country.

The United States must pay for damages resulting from illegal disposal in Mexico. A \$9 billion estimated cost to clean up the border area is possibly more than the maquiladoras have generated. The EPA-SEDUE border strategy plan released last week does

not guarantee necessary funding from the United States or Mexico.

Maquiladoras will continue to pose specific problems for Texas. Law requires U.S.-owned maquiladoras to recycle their hazardous waste or export it to the United States. Proximity suggests Texas will become the legal dumping ground for these maquiladora wastes, in addition to illegal dumping. Vehicles waiting to cross the border generate significant air pollution, as do the maquiladora factories.

The U.S.-Canada FTA of 1989 further illustrates the results of free trade. A January 1991 Canadian Labor Congress report said over 226,000 Canadian jobs were lost in the first two years of the FTA, while over 100 Canadian firms moved to Mexico or the United States.

The reason is obvious. Manufacturing wages in U.S. dollars per hour are \$12.13 in Canada, \$10.71 in the United States and \$.84 in Mexico. If the FTA is ratified, U.S. jobs will move south in droves.

Additionally, Canada is a victim of the biggest threat and ultimate goal of free traders, the usurpation of a nation's sovereignty by multinational corporations. British Columbia chose to abandon reforestation programs that were challenged by the U.S. forest industry as representing unfair subsidies.

U.S. sovereignty is at risk, too. In 1991, the Mexican tuna industry will kill close to 50,000 dolphins, which forces the United States under its

Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to embargo Mexican tuna imports. Nonetheless, citing the international version of free trade, the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade, Mexico has challenged the MMPA as a non-tariff trade barrier designed to protect U.S. fishing interests.

Mexico is succumbing to the same fate. Mexico's constitution reserves direct ownership of Mexico's large oil reserves to the state. However, creative arrangements are already being developed to bypass the constitutional prohibition and include oil in the FTA.

Free trade was designed by and for stateless corporations whose only loyalty is to money, not people. It's Bush's New World Disorder in a nutshell — multinational corporations headquartered in the world's more-industrialized Northern Hemisphere controlling the resources of the less-industrialized Southern Hemisphere, with the environment, worker health and safety, and even national sovereignty sacrificed on the altar of free trade.

The U.S. Congress has granted Bush authority for fast track FTA negotiations, and now can only vote for or against what will be a complex FTA treaty with no amendments. Unless FTA negotiators do a dramatic turnaround, Congress must vote against Bush and the free trader's New World Disorder.

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