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-Bob Bell, '65

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Paid for by the Committee to elect Bob Bell Brazos County Judge Judith S. Bell, Treasurer, 202 Carson Street, Bryan, TX 77801

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This Study Abroad Program is especially recommended for undergraduate health profession majors.

For Additional Information come to one of the following informational meetings:

- Fri. Oct. 21 at 11:00 in 251 Bizzell Hall West Tues. Oct. 25 at 1:30 in 251 Bizzell Hall West Wed. Oct. 26 at 10:30 in 251 Bizzell Hall West Fri. Oct. 28 at 2:30 in 251 Bizzell Hall West Mon. Nov. 1 at 12:00 in 251 Bizzell Hall West

Study Abroad Programs Office 161 Bizzell Hall West 845-0544

THE AGGIE GAMES

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STUDENT GOVERNMENT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

A question of ethics

Genetics advances ask society to confront difficult decisions

"The genetic revolution is going to change the idea of who we are," says Dr. Arthur L. Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Genetic engineering raises many questions concerning the ability to alter genes.

The five-year goal for the Human Genome Project, which began in October 1990, is to have a complete map of human genes. Also part of the five-year plan is a goal to develop programs that will address the ethical, legal and social aspects of the project.

The ethical questions raised range from simple to complex. However, none of them has a straight answer.

Should we use genetic engineering to test fetuses for diseases?

Those in favor argue that gene testing of unborn babies, usually done through amniocentesis, will be able to detect diseases such as Huntington's, Tay-Sachs, and cystic fibrosis. Once these diseases are discovered, then potentially, genes could be altered to cure the disease before the child is born.

On the other hand, gene therapy will probably not come cheap. Much more expensive is a trip to a clinic for an abortion. A handful of countries perform abortions on the basis of the sex of the child. If a child was to be born with a crippling disease, then why would a middle-class family who cannot afford a lifetime of medical bills choose to have the child?

Granted, for serious diseases, such as anencephaly, when babies are born without the front part of their brain, the pain of labor would best be foregone because there is not much future for the child. But the gray area between serious and tolerable diseases widens as methods of gene therapy improve.

Should genetics be used to select

for a child with specific physical and mental traits?

The fast food drive-thru image comes to mind: "Yes, I'd like a brown-haired, brown-eyed girl please. And can you get rid of the family history of liver cancer, too? Nine months? Great. Thanks."

Once again, geneticists are faced with a gray area. It seems silly to raise the question, but there is no regulation concerning traits. Current regulation leaves gene therapy to the geneticist's discretion. As more is learned about the human genome, then more control will be possible.

The gray area widens into other fields as well. If a 67-year-old woman was able to be artificially inseminated with the sperm and egg of white donors at the woman's request, then what is the future for genetics?

If geneticists can make people live longer, should it be done?

Texas A&M distinguished professor and Nobel Prize winner Derek Barton brought out the lighter side of the issue.

"If people are going to live longer and be healthier, then the only way they will die is by accident," Barton said. "We'll simply have to arrange for more accidents."

Here the Darwinian argument arises. If our world follows a "survival of the fittest" pattern, then the consequences of an entirely healthy population needs to be examined.

Adam S. Wilkins, biologist at the University of Cambridge, argues that the answer to genetics questions can be found through education of the public. If people are aware what can be done, then the public will decide how far genetics can go.

Along with this, however, is regulation. "Geneticist's discretion" is not incentive enough for all geneticists who have made a career out of knowing genes. If we are going to become a perfect and healthy world, it should be by natural selection and not what we can make ourselves to be.

Local restaurants respond to possible smoking ban

By Katherine Arnold

Local restaurants have mixed reactions to the recent federal proposal to ban smoking in public places. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration began hearings last Monday on a proposal to improve indoor air quality standards.

Cliff George, manager of the Chicken Oil Company, said the establishment has two non-smoking sections and one smoking section. Approximately a year ago, smoking was allowed in the entire restaurant. "If smoking was banned in restaurants it definitely would affect our business," George said. "A lot of people come in here to sit around and visit, and they can't smoke they probably won't come."

Lee Jaymes, manager of Tom's Barbecue in College Station, said he does not think a non-smoking ban would affect business.

"We do have a smoking and non-smoking section, but during busy times, like after football games, we do not allow smoking," Jaymes said.

Jaymes said Tom's four-year-old policy would be for a ban.

"It might affect a small amount of our customer base, but not a very significant number," Jaymes said. "Most of the concern comes from the effects of second hand smoke. According to a report from the American Cancer Society, 3,000 cases of lung cancer a year develop in non-smokers because of their exposure to second hand smoke."

The 46 million smokers in the United States face more harsh risks. Smokers have a much higher risk for diseases such as emphysema and several types of cancer. There are approximately 434,000 smoking-related deaths each year.

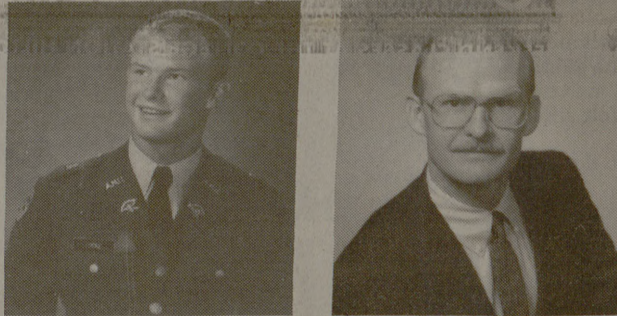
Within 24 hours of quitting, a smoker's chances of heart attack decreases, according to a Cancer Society report. Within three months, a smoker's lung function increases by 30 percent, and within five years, the death rate for someone who quits smoking is half that of a smoker, the report states.

All these factors have led the government to attempt to enforce stricter smoking laws. Julie Sherrier, president of the Texas Restaurant Association, said that the law is a direct attack on small businesses like restaurants. "There are hazards everywhere you go," Sherrier said. "Focusing on smoking is a public social policy being supported by many special interest groups. We don't think the government should be involved."

The law banning smoking would be the first federal attempt to ban smoking. Smoking laws in Texas vary from city to city, Sherrier said.

"Restaurants want their customers to tell them what to do," she said. "They will follow the wishes of their patrons."

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