

Scientific advances for parents to be

Scientists say they're on the verge of opening up a whole new world of DNA testing, promising to tell parents more, perhaps, than they need to know about their budding offspring well before birth.

The question everyone is asking, from doctors and scientists to theologians and ethicists, is whether this is even a good thing.

The Associated Press reports that scientists feel they can scan fetal DNA from a mother's blood, a technique which could be invaluable in predicting possible genetic problems and diseases.

"It's without question a major medical advance that promises to greatly improve current prenatal care," said Jaime King, a University of California law professor who studies the field, adding: "It raises significant practical, legal, ethical and social challenges."

Along with the benefits come some heavy baggage. Doctors might be able to predict everything from eye and hair color to height and the risk of developing diseases such as Alzheimer's. Experts wonder whether people might use this information to pick "designer" children, abandoning others.

In the view of many conservatives, both ethicists and ministers, that knowledge could be dangerous. Some wonder if parents could get "too much information." They might withhold commitment to a baby until they knew it was "good enough" to be born.

But who would decide what parents should and shouldn't know? Don't they have a right to decide that for themselves?

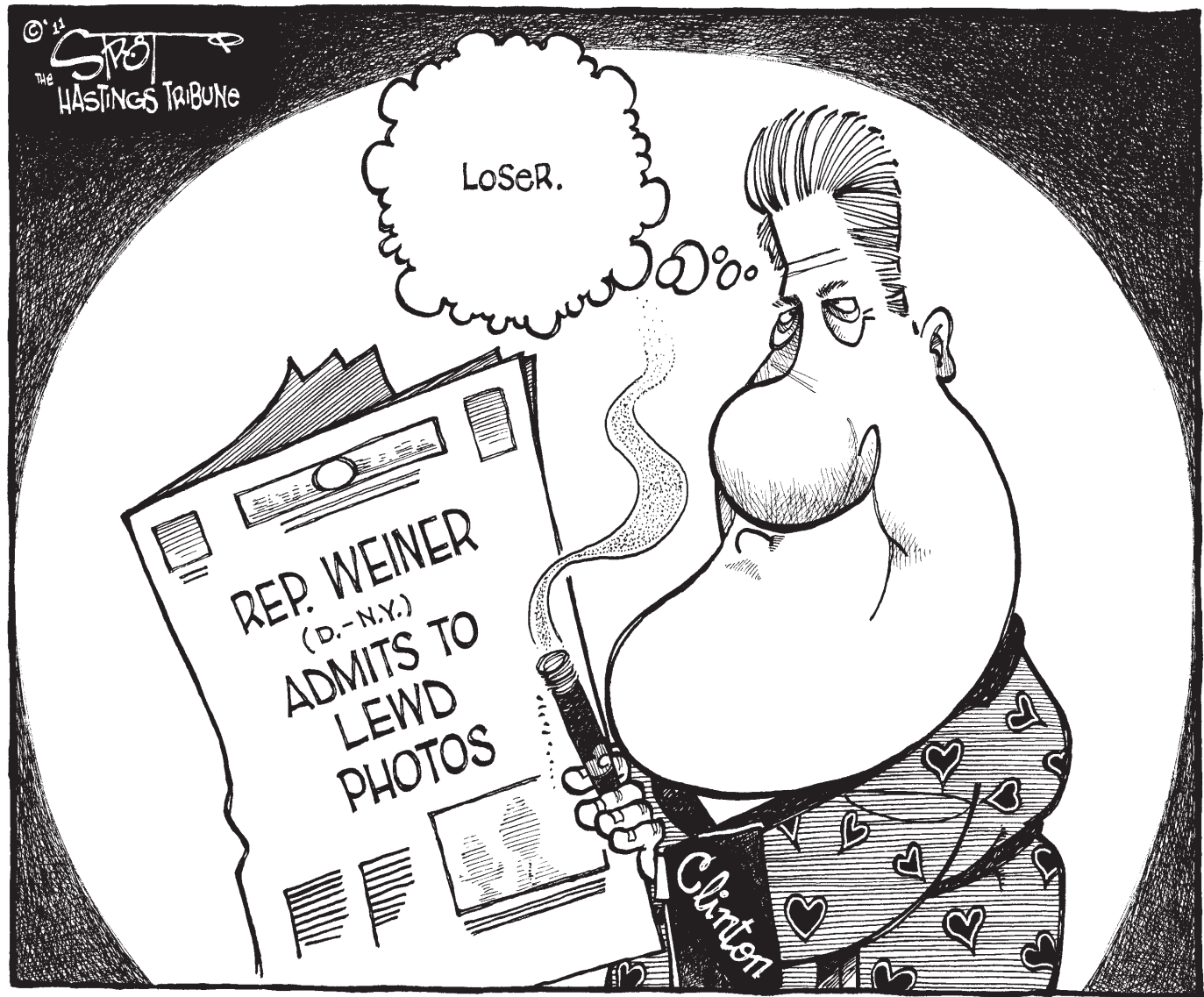
History shows us that science advances no matter what men think. And often, we fear any new advance, from the end of the flat-world theory the dawn of the nuclear age. But just as jailing Galileo did not make the earth the center of the universe, so restricting information that people might want won't keep things from changing.

While new information won't change the debate we see today, it may reframe the references. Some will demand new laws. Others will demand new information. The country, the world will be divided over what is right and what is wrong.

But as today, science will have to leave decisions on those questions to the church and the philosophers. People need to be educated about their choices, but in the end, each of us will have to make our own.

The information is going to be available, whether we like it or not. The church can and should teach us what is right and wrong. That is the church's job, not the scientist's. Science can only tell us what is possible.

And, for better or for worse, it will. — Steve Haynes



Everybody wins when recycling food products

I'm in a quandry. How can I justify giving someone else food I don't think Jim and I should be eating? Oh, it's still good in the "not spoiled" sense. Just, not so good for you. Should I really give it to someone else?

Since we learned of Jim's high triglycerides I've been meaning to purge my pantry. I immediately gave the new 10 pound bag of potatoes to son, James, but you can't believe how many boxes of macaroni and cheese and cake mixes I have. I've pulled out spaghetti (we eat the whole grain kind, now); boxes of Hamburger Helper; and pineapple ice cream topping plus lots of other stuff. Since I know a young family that could use the groceries, I'll let them decide.

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Recycling is nothing new. Most of us over 50 were "green" years before it became politically correct. We used to actually return our soda pop bottles for a refund and they would be cleaned, refilled and sold again. That was recycling.

Mothers washed cloth diapers and hung them on the clothes line to dry. That

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



was recycling and using renewable energy. Families usually had only one television or radio. Not one in every room.

Throw away food! Unheard of! Unthinkable! As much as I hated the "slop bucket" and detested carrying it to the hogs, it made sense not to waste food scraps. And, even though, I vowed I would never have one, I find myself putting spoiled food; dribs and drabs of leftovers; and eggshells in a covered, plastic, ice cream bucket for the chickens. The old girls mob me when I enter their pen with dinner. Chickens are not too discerning when it comes to food. They will eat anything and turn it right back into

something edible. That's recycling.

Kids were raised to eat everything on their plate. At least you tried it. We knew better than to say, "I don't like that" before we had ever tasted it. I ate some pretty weird things but, I ate them. The motto at our house was, "Take all you want, but, eat all you take."

My mother hardly ever threw away a good box. You never knew when you might need to wrap or mail a present. She also reused Christmas wrapping paper. But, even I, think that's carrying it too far.

-ob-

Jim's hand has made such progress that he was released from the occupational therapist. He does his hand and finger exercises faithfully and they are helping. The swelling is decreasing and flexibility is increasing. It's all good.

If I thought it was hard to "hold him down" before, it's downright impossible now. His response to my request to not work so hard is, "She said I was okay."

That's it. I give up. I raise the white flag of defeat.

"Feast of the Fields" completes a life long dream

Insight

John Schlageck

Betty said. "It's great being back in the country and seeing corn fields and eating in one with good food and good people."

Many of the urban guests voiced their pleasure with the quiet, country setting. They laughed, visited and looked forward to the upcoming feast.

About 5:30, appetizers were served in the form of lamb and pheasant. In addition to the lamb raised on the Mertz farm, pork and other locally grown foods followed throughout the evening. Manhattan chef, Scott Benjamin, and his staff prepared the food.

Yes, it was a long-awaited opportunity to raise interest in locally produced foods and a way to engage urban people in a rural setting. Husband, Bob, was ready and more than able to provide the guests a short history of the fourth-generation farm and present a short-course in Agriculture 101.

"We wanted to tell the story of what we do in a way that would connect with those unfamiliar with farming," Mary explained. "We wanted to provide a new experience. Serving a dinner of local fare

in a field where crops are growing seemed to be a great venue and the perfect way to bring it all together."

The natural backdrop complete with farm machinery, crops, big round bales and field art helped fill the bill. Incidentally, the field art was an irrigation pivot system directly to the north of the dinner table. Bob had purposely positioned the tall water towers at this location as a point of interest for their guests.

Throughout the evening the Mertz provided a running commentary for guests interested in learning more about their food and farming and ranching.

Many of the guests enjoyed the party so much they vowed to attend the next "Feast of the Fields." And the Mertz family relishes the idea of Mary's dream becoming a reality.

"I couldn't be more pleased with the turnout," Mary said. "So many people, so much interest in coming to something like this and their willingness to come to dinner out in a corn field. I can't think of a better setting."

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

Categorizing our Friends

Jess Lair once wrote, "If you have a good job, a family and five friends, you have all that you need." I score positive on all. But I've been thinking about my friends and how they seem

Life is Good

Rita Speer



rent television series about a trio of middle-aged men who have been friends since college. But just what is friendship? One dictionary tells me that friendship is an interpersonal relationship with a range of degrees of intimacy. Characteristics include trust, honesty, positive reciprocity and sympathy/empathy.

As I thought about that, I realized that I have friends all along the spectrum of the degrees of intimacy. Like many of you, I have a "best friend," who just happens to be my husband. We can talk about anything and everything, and he often says I can still surprise him and that life with me is never dull. That's quite a compliment after 48 years (next week of marriage!

I have thought about friends who have come and gone people with whom I went to high school or college, some neighbors and others with whom I worked. There is no doubt that we were close at that time. As our lives changed or one of us moved, the friendship withered. Others, like my nursing school classmate who now lives in San Diego, have continued to be friends, despite time and distance.

We all have many different kinds of friendships. Some are deep, some are close and others may be more distant and with less intimacy. But we all need these relationships and therefore should value each one for what it is.

There are a number of books about friendship. I have read books about the friendships of women. There is a cur-

friend I made when I was working. Although we don't see each other as frequently, we are still friends. There are my "church friends," people in the church to whom I have become close.

I have an "old" friend, a classmate from nursing school, with whom I maintain a long-distance friendship. I have one friendship that began electronically; we both belonged to a quilting group on-line. We continued to chat off the group and have been together in person several times. I just wish we didn't live 1500 miles apart. I have a "new" friend, a woman I sought out because I thought we could become good friends. We meet monthly to share and get to know each other better. I have made friends in my volunteer position. Like many of you, I have a number of facebook "friends." Some are truly friends, and others are acquaintances who may be interested in me because of how many "friends" they can have or because they knew me at some point in our lives.

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