

Will knowing of 'flaws' be dangerous to babies?

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 to 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 of 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

Summer mansions dazzle eye

Newport, R.I., was the summer retreat for the rich, famous and ambitious back in America's Gilded Age — that time after the Civil War and before the World War I, when fortunes were amassed and spent in wild abandon.

We were about as far from Kansas as ruby slippers or Amtrak could take us. In fact, a little farther. We had to drive the last few miles.

Each summer, the National Newspaper Association goes somewhere, picked by the president, for a board meeting. We've been to Mackinac Island, Mich.; Santa Fe, N.M.; Omaha; the Black Hills of South Dakota; and Las Vegas, Nev., where the temperature was 115 degrees.

This year's president is from New Jersey, and her mother and sister own and run a vineyard and winery near Newport. She wanted to show us this beautiful area.

To get there, you can fly to Boston or Providence, R.I., and drive out to the island.

Or you can take the train.

We got on the California Zephyr about midnight in McCook and headed east. At Chicago, we changed to the Capital Limited for Washington. In D.C., we changed again catching a fast train up the coast to Boston, where we rented a car and headed down the freeway.

In Newport, our hotel was beautiful. The Viking is a majestic, old hotel, built in the 1920s in a spate of community pride and boosterism. It's on the National Register of Historic places, an elegant old lady.

The itinerary included visits to two Newport mansions built by heirs to the Vanderbilt railroad fortune, a visit to the vineyard and a tour of the Tennis Hall of Fame.

Last summer, our trip to Macki-



Open Season

By Cynthia Haynes
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mac Island had shown us how the rich of Detroit got out of the city during the hot summer months and enjoyed an opulent lifestyle by Lake Huron. Newport was another peek into the life of the super rich in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The post-Civil War boom had made several New Yorkers immense fortunes as the country turned its attention to growth. Those who developed cutting-edge technology — railroads, in this case — could make a lot of money, just as Internet pioneers do today

Many of these mega-rich built summer palaces are on the beautiful shores around Newport.

First we visited Marble House, built between 1888 and 1892 for William K. and Alva Vanderbilt.

This summer cottage, as its name implies, is made almost entirely of imported marble and is supposed to look like a small piece of the Palace of Versailles transported from France to the U.S. One room is completely covered — ceiling and walls — in gold leaf. Talk about your conspicuous consumption.

The place looks hard and cold, and since Alva divorced ol' Wille, kept the house and married his best friend a few years later, I'm thinking maybe it wasn't a happy home.

The other house we visited was the Breakers, the crown jewel of

historic Newport homes. Built by Cornelius Vanderbilt II between 1893 and 1895, the Breakers is enormous.

With 70 rooms and huge gardens, calling this place a summer cottage is like calling the White House a hut on the Potomac.

However, the Breakers, for all its huge size and fanciness, seemed to have been a happier home to this pair of Vanderbilts and their seven children.

The bottom floor holds the public rooms — entry hall, drawing room, dining room and so forth. The next two floors contain the bedrooms for family and friends. Each two bedrooms share a bath, which contains a marble tub with four taps — for hot and cold running fresh and sea water.

It is said that each bath had to be drawn twice: once to heat up the marble tub and a second time for the bath.

The top floor of the mansion housed the army of servants it took to run the place. The whole thing was a marvel and we came away a little overwhelmed.

It's fun to see how other people lived, but it was great to get home again, where the worn old porcelain tub doesn't require twice filling and has only two settings — hot and cold.



OK to give 'bad' food away?

I'm in a quandary: 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 who could use the groceries, I'll let them decide if it's good for them or not.

—ob—

Recycling is nothing new. Most of us over 50 were "green" years before it became politically correct. We used to actually return our 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 line to dry. That 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 our scraps. And even though I vowed I would never have one, I find myself putting spoiled food,



Out Back

By Carolyn Sue Kelley-Plotts
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dribs and drabs of leftovers and eggshells in a covered, plastic, ice cream bucket for the chickens. The 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, I know that.

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 one to wrap or mail a present. She also reused Christmas wrapping paper, but even I, think that's carrying a good thing 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 OK."

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

From the Bible

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. Because He hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live.

Psalm 116: 1-2

Write

The Oberlin Herald encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of public interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

Mail letters to 170 S. Penn Ave., Oberlin, Kan., 67749, or by e-mail to oberlinherald@nwkansas.com.

By the 14th, you need stretch

I'd never been to the 14th-inning stretch before, but I can tell you, by that time, you really need another stretch.

We were high in the bleachers in deep center field, just east (right, looking from home plate) of the fabled Green Monster, the left-field wall at fabled Fenway Park in Boston.

Fenway, along with Wrigley Field in Chicago, is the last of the old city ballparks of a century ago. The fabled stadium celebrated its centennial in April, though it's a creature of many parts, built up and around over the decades, and jammed in among stores, bars and shops.

But there we were, sitting three or four rows down from the top of the bleachers, where only a chain-link fence kept fans from falling into Lansdowne Street, with its bars and burger joints hard by the park.

And we were sitting there for a good reason. If we'd have felt rich, we could have had tickets for the standing-room-only terraces atop the Monster itself, or atop the right-field pavilion, or down in the box seats by first base. But tickets that would cost \$35 in Denver go for \$110 and up in Boston, so we settled for \$55 bleacher seats.

Baseball is expensive at Fenway, maybe because the seating is limited, or maybe because the park is so famous.

I was beginning to wonder if it was our day. We missed the first two innings and most of the third after



Along the Sappa

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getting lost while trying to return our rental car. I did learn something, though: never trust a GPS. Seems Boston had two identical addresses, miles apart.

When we finally did make it, the Sox had a lead everyone thought would last.

And it did, until the ninth inning. Ahead 7-3, manager Terry Francona brought in his closer, Jonathan Papelbon. The Oakland A's proceeded to dismantle both Papelbon and the Red Sox lead. All-Star second baseman Dustin Pedroia missed a routine grounder which should have ended the inning.

After a hit that tied the game, catcher Jason Varitek had taken enough. He got tossed for arguing balls and strikes, rather heatedly at that, as Francona pushed his pitching star out of the way.

That lasted only a couple of pitches, though, as another close call prompted Papelbon to charge the plate. He'd been ejected before he got there, but the manager had to drag him away, cussing and screaming.

And we'd thought the game was all but over, a routine win for the

Sox. Ha!

Both teams scored in the 10th, leaving the game tied at 8. It wasn't until after we sang "Take Me Out to the Ballpark" for the second time that the Red Sox broke things open. Right fielder J.D. Drew, after coming in as a pinch hitter in the 10th, and striking out twice, singled to right, driving in the winning run.

And just like that, the game was over. By that time, we'd "upgraded" our seats, moving down to the lower 10 rows as others went home so we could actually see the plays. From on height, the ball was pretty tiny.

We filed out, happy with 11 innings of baseball and a long, loving look at a piece of history. We've only been to eight or nine of the 30 major league parks, but it's a hobby we could get more involved in, I think.

Cynthia was happy, having snared an 18-inch stuff doll of the Red Sox mascot, an, er, green monster named Wally.

Next year, maybe the kids can take us to Wrigley, which won't be 100 until 2014. Brad's from Chicago, after all.

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We want to thank Pheasants Forever and anyone else who participated in the creation of this trail system. We look forward to future visits and more time on these wonderful trails.
Carol Chappell, Broomfield, Col.

Visiting biker praises Sappa Park

To the Editor:

We came to Oberlin over the Memorial Day weekend to spend time with family and ride our mountain bikes along the country roads, something we've enjoyed in the past. During this visit, however, we discovered the trail system that has been developed in Sappa State Park.

What a wonderful surprise! The gently mowed swaths through the

trees and meadows surrounding the lake, the shelter house and the golf course were some of the best riding we've ever enjoyed. The signs were helpful in letting us know the names of the trails and the directions in which they were maintained.

Letter to the Editor