

Determining sex of children debated

Ethicists, parents split on sperm-sorting

FAIRFAX, Va. (AP) — Monique Collins really wanted a baby girl.

The 33-year-old mother hoped her third child would turn out to be a little sister for her two bouncing baby sons.

But Collins didn't just wait around for the inevitable. She went to a group of fertility researchers who say they have found a way to segregate sperm cells that produce boys from those that produce girls.

The result was little Jessica Collins, who just turned 2.

"That's what technology is here for today, so we can make these choices," Collins said Wednesday. "It just goes to show how much she's loved, that mommy and daddy went to a lot of effort to have her."

Some scientists and ethicists are unconvinced and worried about the moral and medical implications of fiddling with the practice of artificial insemination.

The Rev. Philip Keane, a medical ethics specialist at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, said using technology to choose the gender of a child without a medical reason is immoral.

"More and more, we're beginning to construe our children as products to be planned rather than as mysteries to be held in awe and wonder," Keane said. "The more you technologize the process, the more you lose the radical and mysterious dignity of the child."

The debate stems from a study in the September issue of the journal Human Reproduction, which reported that researchers have found a technique to separate sperm cells that carry the Y chromosome — which produces males — from those that carry the female-producing X chromosome.

Researchers were able to produce samples in which 85 percent of the sperm cells had an X chromosome. If they targeted Y-bearing sperm, the result reportedly was a sperm sample in which 65 percent of the cells contained a Y chromosome.

In human trials, the institute reported that 29 women who wanted to have girls became pregnant. So far, nine of those women have given birth to 11 healthy baby girls, including two sets of twins, the institute said. The oldest girl is 2½ years old.

Seven of the women had miscarriages and one of the women still pregnant is carrying a boy, said Dr. Edward Fugger, the lead researcher. Results of a study of couples wanting boys were not as successful. Exact results will be released later.

The results of the human trials — which included Collins — were met with skepticism by some scientists, who said

"More and more, we're beginning to construe our children as products to be planned rather than as mysteries to be held in awe and wonder."

REV. PHILIP KEANE
medical ethics specialist

the data from the Fairfax institute was not conclusive.

Dr. Jamie Grifo, director of reproductive endocrinology at New York University Medical School, is apprehensive about the way the institute is using the sperm-sorting method.

Grifo, who has been using a different technique to determine the gender of an embryo since 1992, said NYU applies the technology only to prevent gender-based diseases such as hemophilia and Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which afflict only males.

"They're doing very important research, but it's a matter of what they're using it for that worries me," Grifo said. "I don't think we should be doing sex selection."

The technique involves staining sperm cells' DNA with a fluorescent dye and then shining laser light on the cells to make the dye glow. The amount of fluorescent light produced indicates the amount of DNA present in each cell. Y-chromosome sperm cells contain about 2.8 percent less genetic material.

Fugger was unapologetic about giving families the option of choosing their child's gender.

"It tends to balance sex ratios in families," Fugger said. "There shouldn't be an ethical issue with skewing ratios or anything like that."

Still, Dr. Robert Stillman, medical director of Shady Grove Fertility Centers, in Washington, D.C., said the institute's research sample is too small to declare success.

"It's really a series of anecdotes," said Stillman, a board member of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine. "A bigger study might put this in the wastebasket where many other attempts at sex selection have gone."

RHA members debate residence hall funding

RHA from page 1

"I think we have an obligation to make this event bigger and better than it has been before," he said.

Kotil said the individual Harper-Schramm-Smith residence halls are also being asked to pitch in to help defray the cost of the event. The complex association will donate \$750.

RHA also tabled a \$330 request from Cather-Pound residence halls to allow 40 Cather and Pound hall residents to pay \$15 instead of the full \$28.25 to play paintball at an upcoming hall retreat.

The senate tabled the request until finding out how much the Cather-Pound residence halls will donate.

With funding requests at its last two meetings, RHA needs to keep track the amount of money allocated, Speaker of the Senate Larry Willis said.

Willis proposed a resolution that would make it easier for RHA to

keep track of allocated funds halls don't use.

The resolution, which was tabled because senators said it was not clear, stated that RHA money should be used after funds from other sources have been depleted.

Wallace said if RHA and a hall each contributed \$150 for an event, but only \$200 was used, the remaining \$100 should be returned to RHA.

The resolution also would require an expense record to be turned in within two weeks of the event.

In other RHA news:

■ Wallace announced that Residence Hall Week kicks off Wednesday and goes until next Tuesday. The week includes such things as game shows, a bowling trip and a personal safety course.

■ The senate also passed a resolution stating proposals seeking RHA funds must include an itemized budget and list of incoming funds and their source.

Tourists flock to Canadian crash site

PEGGY'S COVE, Nova Scotia (AP) — The tourists arrive in Peggy's Cove by the busload, cameras in hand, to climb on the rocks along the coast and snap pictures of what locals claim is the most photographed lighthouse in all of Canada.

But the deaths of 229 people aboard Swissair Flight 111 have cast a pall over the picturesque fishing village. And 11 days after the plane crashed into the Atlantic 5 miles off the coast, life here has only started returning to normal.

Alongside the tourists are victims' relatives who came here to mourn. Dozens of police and military personnel still search for remains and investigate the cause of the crash.

Most of the tourists had planned to come here months before the Geneva-bound MD-11 plunged into the sea on Sept. 2 after taking off from New York.

Some visitors, like Carol Ambrozy, 59, of Athol, Mass., had considered skipping this part of their Nova Scotia tour after the disaster.

"Your first instinct is to avoid it, and that's not right," she said, fighting tears. "There's a need for people to acknowledge what happened and to pay their respects."

In the days after the crash, the tiny town, accessible only by a road

"There's a need for people to acknowledge what happened and to pay their respects."

CAROL AMBROZY
Peggy's Cove visitor

off a coastal highway, was closed off to tourists. The locals had to prove residency to get to their seaside cottages.

On Tuesday, the town was reopened, and more and more people have been arriving.

Business is usually booming this time of year, said Diane Waters, the hostess at the Sou'Wester, a local restaurant and gift shop with a water view from nearly every table. But on Saturday, only five tour buses stopped in, less than half of what's typical for September.

"Slowly, it's getting back to normal," she said Sunday as she rang up customers' breakfast bills. "It's going to take a while, but we'll get back."

The signs of the crash are still everywhere. At the base of the lighthouse is a memorial to the victims: teddy bears, Bibles, flowers and notes reading "God be with you."

Meanwhile, Swissair confirmed

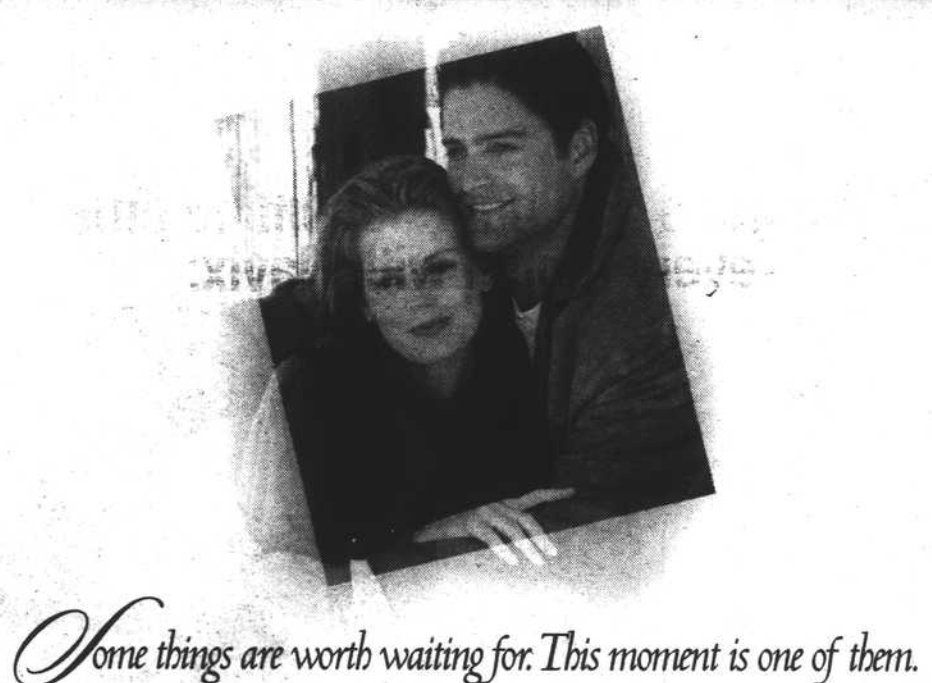
reports Sunday that the plane was carrying a locked box containing possibly millions of dollars in currency and gold. The airline, which frequently transports money in and out of Geneva, would not give a dollar figure or say to whom it belonged or where it was going.

Out at sea, divers searched for human remains from U.S. and Canadian boats, and a salvage vessel prepared to hoist pieces of wreckage from 180-foot depths.

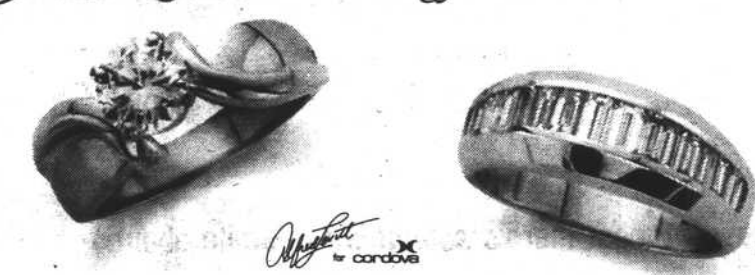
Many of the tourists said they felt a connection to the crash by being in Peggy's Cove.

Mauro Cusce, 70, of Yorktown, Va., said prayers and sang "Amazing Grace" as he and 40 others pulled into Peggy's Cove on their tour bus.

The place mats and refrigerator magnets he bought from the Sou'Wester on Sunday "have meaning now, rather than (being) just a trinket."

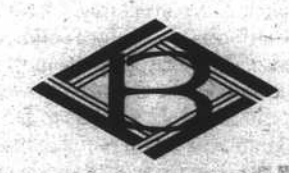


Some things are worth waiting for. This moment is one of them.



Borsheim's
Where lifetime relationships begin.

Exceptional selection of engagement and wedding rings, extraordinary values and passionate service.
For a complimentary Engagement Package, call 1.800.642.GIFT



BORSHEIM'S.
*Fine Jewelry and Gifts
A Berkshire Hathaway Company*

Regency Court, 120 Regency Parkway, Omaha (402) 391-0400 (800) 642-GIFT
www.borsheims.com mail@borsheims.com