

## REPOSITORY FOR GERMINAL CHOICE

7/17/07	<a href="http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3595">http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3595</a>
<p>&gt; {Note from Wendy: there were no Nobel Prize winners actually used &gt; at this sperm bank}.</p> <p>Unless we are talking about different sperm banks, I am pretty sure that William Shockley donated his sperm to it. Here is a good article from SLATE: The "Genius Babies," and How They Grew Help Slate tell the story of the Nobel Prize sperm bank. By David Plotz Posted Thursday, Feb. 8, 2001, at 3:00 AM ET</p> <p>Twenty years ago, on an outbuilding of his Southern California estate, tycoon Robert K. Graham began a most remarkable project: the Repository for Germinal Choice, a sperm bank for Nobel Prize winners. Part altruism, part social engineering, part science experiment, the repository was supposed to help reverse the genetic decay Graham saw all around him by preserving and multiplying the best genes of his generation. By the time Graham's repository closed in 1999, his genius sperm had been responsible for more than 200 children. What happened to them? This is the beginning of a journalistic experiment to find out, an experiment that—as I explain below—needs your assistance.</p> <p>Robert K. Graham was a eugenicist. He was a pessimist about humanity's future. And he was a can-do, self-made multimillionaire. Those qualities fused to inspire the Repository for Germinal Choice. Graham, who made his fortune by inventing shatterproof eyeglasses, feared mankind was in danger because natural selection had stopped working on human beings. He explained his views in a muscular 1971 book, <i>The Future of Man</i>. Over millennia, nature's brutality had strengthened the human gene pool, allowing the strong and smart to reproduce, while killing the weak before they could. But once man mastered his natural environment, Graham argued, he jumped the evolutionary track. Better living conditions allowed "retrograde humans" to reproduce. In modern America, thanks to cradle-to-grave social welfare programs, these incompetents and imbeciles were swamping the intelligent. This dysgenic crisis would surely bring communism and the regression of mankind. All that could save us, Graham warned, was "intelligent selection": Our best specimens must have more children. Hence the Repository for Germinal Choice.</p> <p>...</p> <p>[see link for full article] <a href="http://slate.com/id/100331/">http://slate.com/id/100331/</a> [from moderator ML: 3-5 Nobel prize winners donated for the bank, but no children were conceived using their donations. ]</p>	

7/17/07	<a href="http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3581">http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3581</a>
<p>Isn't that the Nobel Prize donor one? If it is, it's mostly just further proof of the general superiority of scientists.</p> <p>Not that I'm biased or anything...</p> <p>PS - just kidding. Seriously, if it is what I think, it's not quite a fair comparison because it is such a specialized donor population.</p>	

7/17/07	<a href="http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3577">http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DSR_Discussion/message/3577</a>
<p>Unpaid donors come forward more often!</p> <p>I was browsing through the registry this afternoon when I stumbled across a remarkable finding. The Repository for Germinal Choice, a tiny sperm bank which didn't pay its' donors a single cent and had very high standards, has proportionately the most sperm donors registering.</p> <p>Out of 13 listings, there are eight donors registered!</p> <p>Doesn't that demonstrate something significant?</p>	

1/19/05	<a href="http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DonorSiblingRegistry/message/3970">http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/DonorSiblingRegistry/message/3970</a>
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There must be almost as many variations of how one became a sperm donor as there have been donors, but not having seen this discussed to any degree I will give it a try. While working at my desk at a defense company in 1985 I had a call from the reception center telling me that I had two visitors in the lobby who were in the process of receiving their visitor's badges. I frequently had such visitors and thought nothing of this, but when I got to the lobby I realized that these were two women whom I had never met. However, an application had been submitted to obtain a higher security clearance that I would need to work on a new assignment, so my first thought was that these women might have been sent by the FBI to conduct an interview.

After escorting them to my office, they told me of having come on a recruiting assignment from a sperm bank. This news rendered me speechless and caused my mouth to drop open until a jumble of thoughts finally made their way into my mind. I would never have thought of such a thing on my own in a lifetime. I asked why on earth they would have come to see me, and I was told that they had received requests from two different persons suggesting that they see me and ask if I would consider becoming a donor. This may or may not have been true, as I later learned that potential donors were sometimes told what the recruiters thought might best be received.

I had no intention at the time of doing this, but they had gone to some trouble to visit me and not wishing to be abrupt I told them that I would need to think about this, discuss it with my wife, and then get back to them in a few weeks. These few weeks stretched into months during which time I was mailed copies of letters that the bank had received from new mothers requesting that they be passed on to the appropriate donor. Most of these letters were from professional women---doctors, lawyers, and such -- who were nearing age 40 and had never had children, and they said things like: "No one in my whole life has done as much for me as you have, not even my parents." These were so carefully written and were so sincere that one could not doubt that they were genuine and heart felt.

Finally, a woman from the bank called and asked about coming by my home and meeting my wife. When they came they brought a gift for my wife, along with a 3-foot tall container of liquid nitrogen and asked if they could leave this in case I decided to freeze a test sample to see if I might be a suitable donor. They also told me that fewer than 10% of those tested turned out to be acceptable donors, based both on sperm counts that were too low and more importantly on the poor survival rate of sperm after freezing that occurred for many men who had quite acceptable fresh sperm counts.

Still not persuaded to become a donor, I told myself I would give this a try and if it was not meant to happen then I would simply fall within the 90% plus of unsuitable donors and that would be the end of that without the need to make a decision at all. Much to my surprise they told me in about a week that I was at the very top of the charts in both sperm count and viability rate after freezing. They said that all that remained to have me come into their program was to take a complete physical exam and have comprehensive blood work done at their expense to see if I could pass that hurdle, still without any commitment to become a donor even if I satisfied their physical requirements. I had not had such an exam in over ten years, so I thought why not? I go into all of this preliminary detail to indicate that it is not always just a one-time decision to become a donor that is made, but rather it can be several smaller decisions made over many months during which one is slowly drawn toward a final decision.

After passing my physical and having my wife say that she would leave this choice up to me, I kept thinking about this for another month or so. What happened next sounds so much like a Hollywood script that I hesitate to include it, but it was a key step in deciding to go forward. Because all of this was on my mind, I suppose, I had a very vivid dream in which my great-grandfather who died in the Civil War appeared to me and told me that most of his friends had volunteered to go into the war at its beginning, but that he was newly married and waited a year before going in at the last opportunity before being conscripted. He said by doing that he was able to leave a baby son whom he was never able to know, but without whom I nor any of my relatives with his name would have been born. He then said: You now have that same opportunity.

I called the sperm bank the next day and told them that it would be all right to bring another liquid-nitrogen tank by my home. I prepared all of my own specimen vials and never visited the sperm bank for that purpose. Indeed, I visited the sperm bank only once to visit with a child, which I will discuss later. A tank would remain frozen for about 45 days and toward the end of that time someone from the bank would call and arrange to come by on a particular day and pick up the tank that was left on the front porch as I left for work. I was never paid a single penny for specimens or for their preparation.

An extender was always added to a sample to minimize sperm damage during freezing in liquid nitrogen, which I later learned was mostly glycerin with other additives that were considered proprietary to the bank. Then 1-cc vials were filled and loaded into holders to be slowly lowered into the liquid nitrogen. Obviously, this was an honor system of sample collection that would not likely be allowed by sperm banks

today, as there was no strict chain of accountability for samples, but I never heard of any lack of care by any donor in this regard. This had the advantage of allowing much more flexibility to the donor and did not require that sample collection be a solitary process, provided that one's wife took the same medical tests as did the donor.

Toward the end of my days as a donor, I had a call from the sperm bank one morning telling me that a recipient was back in town trying for another IVF procedure and that a baby girl would be available at the sperm bank for at least an hour that afternoon. My wife and I quickly set out, only taking time to stop by a toy store to buy a doll on our way, and when we parked the office manager was standing outside holding a lovely, 9-month old, blond-haired, blue-eyed, baby girl. As I approached to within perhaps ten feet she began to hold our both arms to be taken, and when I took her she remained perfectly contented as long as I held her. After going inside and continuing to hold her for some time, I sat her down on the carpeted floor to see how she would get around. She could stand just fine, but mostly crawled to where she wanted to go. Her stroller was sitting on the floor against the wall on the opposite side of the room, and she quickly headed for it, pulled herself up, and began to try to step up into it. It was a big step and she was having trouble stepping that high, so I went over, picked her up, and sat her inside, whereupon she began to show irritation for the very first time. I quickly lifted her out and let her again try to get into the stroller, which took some time and effort, but she was perfectly satisfied after having done this on her own.

My much younger sister, a college professor at that time, had always been the very same way, wanting to do everything on her own. In addition to looking a great deal like my sister as a baby, her determination to get into the stroller on her own made me turn to my wife and say: I think that we have ourselves another college professor here. This was undoubtedly one of the shortest hours of my life, but we had to be gone before her mother returned, so saying a silent prayer that she would have a good life I handed her back to the office manager and we left. I would have taken her with me in a New York minute except for fear that the police would have stopped me before I reached home.

After we left and the mother returned, the office manager told her the story about the dream about my great-grandfather. It turned out that they lived nearby to a Civil War battle field in the East, and shortly thereafter a reenactment of a battle was scheduled to take place there. They attended and the mother asked a man at random who was fully dressed in a soldier's uniform to hold her daughter while a photograph was made. When the sperm bank forwarded this to me my hair literally stood on end as I looked at this and saw how much this man looked like my great-grandfather. I took this to be a sign that I had not made a mistake by deciding to become a donor.

Although it seemed impossible at the time, when I gave this child back to the office manager I had the strong feeling that I would be able to see her again, and about 12 years later this came to pass in a very unlikely manner. I suppose that one could say in a way that I owe all of this to Mr. Bill Gates of Microsoft fame. He had funded an online magazine called slate.com, and a writer there (David Plotz) was searching for novel ways in which to take advantage of capabilities of computers to do research on subjects not easily investigated by other methods. He decided to see what he could find out about the sperm bank with which I had been involved, and a request was posted asking for information on a confidential basis.

The mother of the child with whom I had visited some 12 years earlier saw this posted request on slate.com and wrote in right away to tell her story. I knew nothing about computer search engines at that time and it was perhaps a year later that I learned of one and typed in the name of my sperm bank. I was shocked beyond belief when the very first item in a long list of hits was: "Mother searches for Donor White."

Since then, we have visited in each others homes several times, where in her home I was shown the doll quickly purchased so many years ago. We exchange e-mail almost weekly, and I greatly enjoy the video tapes that she sends of dance recitals, band concerts, and the like, as well as creative handwork of all kinds that she does and sends me for Father's Day and Christmas. I never did anything to deserve such kindness, but I am very grateful to her mother, my great-grandfather, Bill Gates, David Plotz, and unbelievably good fortune to have made my belief come true that I would one day see her again. By the way, her straight-A report cards still make me think that she is a college professor in the making.