

Surrogate mom has regrets

Dreads day she must explain 'selling' son

AP — A surrogate mother, saying she dreads the day when she'll have to explain to her son why she "sold him" for \$10,000, urged a Michigan Senate panel to outlaw the practice.

"The emptiness grows as the child grows, and it won't go away until we're reunited," said Elizabeth Kane, 44, of Pekin, Ill.

"I am a natural birth mother. I am not a surrogate. That means substitute. I am not a substitute. I am the mother of that boy."

Kane, a surrogate mother who gave birth six years ago, urged the Senate Health Policy Committee to ban such arrangements, rather than just placing heavy restrictions on them.

THE OTHER side of the story came from Randy Brakeman of Franklin.

He said he and his wife became good friends with the 21-year-old woman who bore them a daughter three months ago. "We're talking about the very simple gift of life, complex as it is, and the sharing of that gift of life," he said.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, would prohibit women from being paid for more than medical costs in such arrangements. It also would ban surrogate mother contracts and bar anyone from arranging them.

A woman who entered into such an arrangement for money would face a \$10,000 fine, a year in prison or both. Someone who put together such an arrangement would face a fine of up to \$50,000 or a five-year prison term or a combination of both.

In most surrogate arrangements, the surrogate is artificially inseminated with the sperm from the husband of an infertile couple. The surrogate mother bears the child, which is half hers, and gives it to the couple after it is born.

The committee took 2 1/2 hours of testimony, but adjourned without voting on the bill. Further consideration was scheduled for next week.

"PAYING A mother to relinquish a child is an abomination," said Binsfeld, Michigan Mother of the Year for 1977. She has five children.

Randy Brakeman of Franklin told the other side: He and his wife became good friends with the woman who bore them a daughter. 'We're talking about the very simple gift of life, complex as it is, and the sharing of that gift of life.'

Kane said that while she would like to see an outright ban, eliminating the fee, usually about \$10,000, would almost have the same effect. "I really think you're going to have difficulty finding women who will do this for nothing," she said.

Marilyn Johnston of Gaylord said she'd carried two children for an infertile couple, the second after her husband became concerned that the first would be "spoiled rotten." The two families became "very close," she added.

Johnston pointed out that she decided to become a surrogate mother before she knew that any money was

involved. She said she and her husband decided to take the money because "that was something they couldn't do for themselves that I could."

JUDGE DONALD Owen, chief of Ingham County Probate Court, urged senators to approve Binsfeld's bill, saying the practice reduced some women to "breeding stock" and carries "tremendous potential for rich men to exploit poor women."

Kane agreed, saying the effects of being a surrogate mother might not surface for several years and aren't

confined to women.

"It's been a horrible experience for me and my family," she said. "It's like looking at the aftermath of a tornado. There's so much damage."

"I did not realize I would be trading the emotional stability of my family for \$10,000," said Kane, who'd had three other children before becoming a surrogate mother.

PROFESSOR Cyril W. Means Jr., who teaches constitutional law at the New York Law School, said he believes surrogate contracts violate the Constitution's 13th Amendment, which bans slavery.

He said he expects the New Jersey Supreme Court to overturn the ruling in the celebrated Baby M case, which upheld surrogate contracts.

Means said surrogate contracts were becoming more widespread "because of the decline of morals, where people have decided again that it's OK to buy and sell human beings, something we thought we'd outlawed 120 years ago."

OCC to excavate mastodon again

The Highland Lakes Campus of Oakland Community College again will offer a summer class called "Excavating a Mastodon" in cooperation with Wayne State University.

The popular geology field course (OSC 240) begins on July 6 with a three-hour background lecture on topics such as fossils, Michigan's geological and ecological history, and a summary of discoveries from archaeological digs held previously. Excavation procedures will also be discussed.

A mastodon was a post-Ice Age mammal, which looked like a modern elephant.

FOR THE balance of the 7 1/2-week semester, students will receive hands-on experience at the excavation site, just northeast of Clarkston.

Work will consist of excavating, sifting materials, preserving and assisting with classification and storage arrangements.

Jeheskel (Hory) Shoshani, director of both the WSU Asian elephant dissection project and the Highland Lakes mastodon project, will again serve as instructor and principal investigator. Shoshani received his doctorate in biological science last spring from Wayne State University.

One to four hours of credit may be earned, depending on the number of contact hours a student selects. The course may also be audited, for no credit. Students may arrange to work at the dig site from 27 to 117 hours.

REGULAR REGISTRATION for OCC's summer session will be Wednesday, July 1, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Late registration continues July 6 and 7.

For registration information on "Excavating a Mastodon," contact Charles Nelson at OCC's Highland Lakes Campus, 360-3174.

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Insurance case goes to court

Attorney Jerry J. Kaufman will be in Oakland Circuit Court May 22 asking Judge Gene Schnetz for a permanent injunction to freeze the assets of an insurance agency which he alleges was bleeding a mutual insurance company.

The target of his class-action lawsuit is Michigan Educational Employees Mutual Insurance Co. (MEEMIC) and MEEMIC Insurance Agency, which share offices in Elingham Farms.

"They diverted \$9.3 million in double salaries and excess profits," he said last week.

THE BASIS OF Kaufman's case is the charge that the agency had exclusive sales rights to MEEMIC policies, that agency expenses were charged off to the insurance company, that officers took double salaries, that agency salespeople had their commissions cut and that policyholders of the mutual insurance company were denied premium reductions by the bleeding process. Chief plaintiff is his mother, Fayanne G. Kaufman, a 13-year Farmington High art teacher. The attorney, an unsuccessful candidate for the Supreme Court last fall, said his mother has had insurance with MEEMIC for more than 10 years.

Kaufman said he is working with the Michigan Education Association and Michigan Federation of Teachers in a class-action suit. He's seeking \$25 million in compensatory damages and \$10 million in punitive damages.

THE STATE Insurance Bureau will hold a hearing to decide if the financial arrangements were illegal. Kaufman said he had met with the Oakland County prosecutor's office, which is "digesting" the documents to see if criminal charges should be filed.

The Insurance Bureau staff has recommended that officers of the company and agency be removed and their licenses to sell insurance be revoked.

Stanley Prokop, an attorney for the company and the agency, reportedly issued a three-page statement denying charges that officers took excess profits. He was out of his office for several days when contacted by this newspaper for detail.

MEEMIC specializes in selling auto insurance to teachers and other educators, most of them in metropolitan areas. The company sold \$28 million in insurance coverage in 1986, according to state records. The company also sells home, commercial, and life insurance.

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