

CIYG DIGEST

This is an occasional compilation of messages from the Cryonics Institute's Yahoo Groups Digest and Cryonet.

In the last issue, Marta Sandberg referred to Bob Nelson as a "con man." ("Chatsworth" was the cemetery in which Nelson had his storage facility.)

Could someone point me to some contextual information about "Chatsworth?" It appears to refer to a controversy in the cryonics movement. I'm interested to know more.--**Brian Wright**

In my recent email about 'long life' I said I would say something about con men in a separate email. In writing this I am aware that I am still relatively new to cryonics. When I was first considering signing up for cryopreservation, one of the first things I read was the open letter 'Dear Dr Bedford' by Mike Darwin on Alcor's website: This letter describes Robert Nelson as 'a pathological liar and an outright fraud' in reference to the events at Chatsworth. What then was I supposed to believe when I saw in the July-August 2006 issue of 'The Immortalist' a photo of Robert Ettinger and Robert Nelson arm in arm?!

I surmised that there must be two schools of thought regarding the events at Chatsworth: Some people believe Nelson was a fraud while others believe he was doing the best he could in a difficult situation.

Shortly after signing up I got a 'welcome' email off-list from another cryonicist. I brought up the aforementioned problem with her. Surely, I said, Darwin's description of Nelson would be actionable and she agreed with me. She said she would ask some old-timers for their opinion and get back to me, but she never did. I told her I was thinking of posting an email like this one but was worried about making waves. She told me not to worry about waves and 'PLEASE POST IT!'

Why doesn't Nelson sue Darwin? I think I know the answer. Even if Nelson isn't a fraud, the case would give the cryonics movement negative publicity which it needs like a hole in the head.

I also, recently, sounded out another cryonics person (of long standing I gather) about all this. He told me he was 'alarmed' when he saw the photo. I am also puzzled that Marta apparently isn't worried about being sued.

Maybe there is a simple explanation for all of this but if so I have so far failed to discover it. I also don't know why nobody else has sent emails in similar vein to this one. Maybe they are worried about making waves, or maybe such emails *have* been sent but they are not being allowed through to the list (in which case of course this one won't be either)--**Chris Manning**

Yes, there are widely differing views regarding Bob Nelson. I am convinced, based on information both public and private, that the worst he was guilty of was poor judgment. Certainly he reaped no personal profit from any of his activities, and suffered much personal harm. He was then out of cryonics for many years, getting his life back together, and in recent years has again been trying to help, including visits to CI and SA--**Bob** (Ettinger)

As someone who was around and involved in cryonics in the 1960's, I would like to add my two cents worth to what Bob has said. Until Nelson came

along, we were all talk and no action. Freezing the first person was a huge step which mobilized a lot of people. There was to be a big spread in Life Magazine, illustrating what was done and essentially treating the whole episode favorably as a major advance in the application of science to human aspirations. As the article went to press, three astronauts were burnt up on the Apollo launch pad. Life pulled the cryonics piece and substituted the much bigger story of a space program disaster. Nevertheless, we were all greatly heartened by what Nelson had done. It was a very difficult thing to do and he deserved a lion's share of the credit for making it happen. Thus, I view him as one of the heroes of our movement and I hope he can be encouraged to sign up to join us on our trip to the future. I remember that the first Super Bowl was playing in the background as we met at what must have been one of our first meetings. Many who were there on that date are now waiting in the dewars.

Ron Havelock

There are a variety of opinions about Chatsworth. But it was a long time ago. Back then, some were overly optimistic about the potential growth rate of cryonics. It was thought that people could pay as they go, with growth helping to take up the slack. Chatsworth should never be forgotten. It provides a clear example of how not to run a cryonics organization. But it was a long time ago, and Robert Nelson probably does not currently pose a threat to anyone. Also, to suggest that Nelson sue Darwin seems a bit pointless and overblown.--

Jordan Sparks CI Board Member

For this (the last) issue, I have a great concern about the front cover, where John has lines of text in the lower right corner which help give a short summary of the magazine contents. One of those lines says "God Wants You Dead".

"God Wants You Dead" is the title of a book co-authored by CI Member Sean Hastings Robert Ettinger wrote a review of the book in the latest issue of long life and this is the reason John Bull featured

the title on the front page of the magazine. Bob expressed the opinion that "At the worst, it will inflame the inflammable and make passive enemies into more active enemies, but I think this unlikely." I think that Bob, Sean and many others underestimate the danger to our survival that is represented by presenting cryonics as an atheistic alternative to religious salvation. It also represents a threat to the survival of religious people who might otherwise be open to the idea of extending their lives by being cryopreserved. That is the main reason why I campaigned (unsuccessfully) to have the name of the Immortalist Society changed. I think that Sean Hastings has taken the exact wrong approach with the title of his book -- which is like waving a red flag in front of a bull. It is counter-productive to the goal of survival.

My most immediate concern, however, is having "God Wants You Dead" on the cover of *long life*. Our editor said that he thought it would be eye-catching, but I think that it could be much too eye-catching. I have already seen one religious person go into a rage upon seeing the magazine. I was afraid that this might happen at the post office when I took the magazine for bulk mailing, but the clerk evidently did not notice. I hope that other postal employees who sort and deliver do not allow the magazine to be "lost" after seeing the title.

Once the magazine does reach Members and subscribers I hope that it does not cause family problems. John Besancon -- who labels the magazine for bulk mailing -- expressed concern about what his wife's reaction could be if she saw "God Wants You Dead" on the front cover. I have heard terrible stories about family problems caused by the fact that some family members believe that cryonics is anti-religious.

Please be careful about the sensitivities of others when you receive the latest magazine. Be careful about where it is displayed. I have not decided against mailing this issue to prospective Members, but I am seriously considering that option.--**Ben Best**

Some of us are Mormons, some of us are Catholics, some of us are atheists, some of us are libertarians, some are Ron Paul boosters, some of us are science fiction addicts, some of us believe in peak oil and doomsday, and some of us are gay. I happen to have only one of the above identities and I won't bother to explain which one in this post. Yet, at frequent intervals, some members, with perfectly good intentions, want to identify our group with or against various other identities and belief systems. It doesn't work and it shouldn't. When we do, it unnecessarily alienates more people than it pleases. Thus I believe that the cover story of *long life* was probably a mistake though not a major one. In private conversation we should all be free to parade our prejudices around, but in public discourse, cryonicists talking about cryonics should stick to the subject. It is too damn important for all of us to do otherwise.--Ron Havelock

After reading these messages and reflecting on how important religion is in many people's lives, in the future, we will be more careful in the use of catch phrases. To the few that were offended; I apologize.
John Bull

I was intrigued by the line, (God Wants You Dead.) but only from an Islamic perspective as I have been trying to get to the core of Islamic opinion of cryonics for some time. Most of the objections have been at the simple level such as "no one can bring the dead back to life" etc.

But to some extent, maybe this has already been done, depending on the definition of death. For example the accidental child freezing etc., cooling of the brain in times before anesthesia, or even from CPR, to some degree this could be said to have been done. --**P.Akhter**

What is the closest approach so far achieved for successful revival from cryopreservation of a human brain? e.g. Has anyone demonstrated function of

individual human brain cells following cryopreservation and re-warming?
Chris Manning

Dr. Pichugin's and Dr. Fahy's vitrification of rat brain hippocampus -- vitrified at -130°C and re-warmed with retention of viability -- is probably the most impressive demonstration of research that has been published in a peer-reviewed journal.--**Ben Best**

Cryopreservation of embryos of many types of animals and revival of these embryos from liquid nitrogen storage has been a common practice for decades and this even includes human embryos.

Although these embryos are only a few cells: strong critics of cryonics often demand as evidence of workability the reanimation of a cryopreserved adult mammal, such as a mouse. I expect that if this was accomplished, critics would deny it was possible until done for an adult human.

At least the demand for a mouse indicates SOME capacity to accept indirect evidence. Science relies on indirect evidence; otherwise there could be no belief in protons, neutrons or electrons -- or estimations of the effects of global warming in the next 50 years. I think that the strongest indirect evidence for the potential of cryopreservation that has been established to date has been the cryopreservation of a rabbit kidney at -135°C-- followed by the re-warming of that kidney, transplantation of the kidney into a rabbit and the ability of that kidney to sustain the life and health of the rabbit as the sole functioning kidney.--**Ben Best**

I seem to remember reading that there is something special about kidneys or kidney cells that makes them especially amenable to cryopreservation and successful revival (which if correct would mean that kidneys may not be a good predictive example). **Chris Manning**

