

# People, etc.

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## Surrogate Mom: Children By Proxy

### 9-Month Womb Renting Has Some Justifications

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**T**HERE ARE justifications — of sorts — for renting wombs for nine months for several thousand dollars.

For one thing, there are 6 million American couples who have tried, unsuccessfully, to have children the "natural way." In their cases, for unknown reasons, this does not suffice.

Secondly, there are millions of American couples who want to adopt babies but have to wait three or four years until one is available — thus giving rise to, in some quarters, a black market in unwanted babies.

And there is a proved demand for babies, with thousands of women being artificially inseminated with the sperm of anonymous, presumably well-matched donors because the husbands turned out to be infertile. But whether they opt for adoption or artificial insemination, childless couples have shown a willingness to try anything new, to make any sacrifice, to sidestep their masculine or feminine machismo images in an effort to have a baby of their own.

And, except for some rude jokes and slight trepidations about artificial insemination — primarily from religious groups that feel the method of donating, masturbation, is wrong — there have been no doubts about the system and the ability of these parents to love and raise the children in their care, regardless of where the genes came from.

Money isn't a factor until you talk about surrogate motherhood.

There is a growing market for surrogate mothers — women who will rent their wombs for whatever price the mar-

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ket will bear, and provide a child which has at least half the chromosomal characteristics of the parents-to-be. It is the male equivalent of artificial insemination — except that these are made-to-order, bought and certified, contracted and raised, artificially inseminated children.

There is no love or commitment involved in the making. There are no shared La Maze classes; no joint trips to the obstetrician; no fretful attentions from relatives; no periods of joy at hearing, for the first time, that light, rapid-fire heart-beat; and no waiting for the day when one can feel that first butterfly kick somewhere around the navel.

These events do occur, after a fashion, but the pregnant woman is single, alone and cared for under contract. There is no family contact.

And when it is done, a notice is sent to the contractor and the baby is brought to the office. It is the 20th century equivalent

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### —Witherspoon—

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of letting the stork do it.

But is it wrong?

There is a firm in Philadelphia called Surrogate Mothering Ltd. which promises to provide a bevy of different types of mercenary moms to those who seek this alternative.

The motive, as explained by candidate "Marlene," who is seeking \$50,000 to rent her womb for the duration, is simple: "I'm a single woman and in all probability I will remain one. Financially, I am not in a position to afford a house of my own and I would like to have one.

"I want to own something. A house is what I want. There is nothing wrong about how I will get it. . . . I am not child-oriented or mother-oriented. There is nothing wrong with that."

She said it was just a "job" like any other. Except that it pays a bit more. It is like painting a picture, or crafting a sculpture, or baking a cake to order for a customer — if that is how one wants to view a child.

But perhaps she is right. What is the difference?

Will the contracting parents love the child any less? Can anyone say that a couple which goes \$20,000 or more into debt to obtain a child that is — genetically, at least — emanating from half the marital team, want or love the child any less than a stranger's child who is adopted, or the child resulting from the union of a woman and the frozen sperm of an anonymous donor?

The monetary issue is, in the end, no issue at all. There are healthy, intelligent women who can bear children who do not want to raise them. They should not have to. There are parents who want children and cannot have them through the traditional route. If they wish to get together for their mutual benefit, then it is a matter to be settled between the husband, the wife and their dreams for their future as a family.

And as for the profiting merchants of motherhood, their role is best judged by another power at another time.