

THE INSIDE TRACK

MAGLEV Coming To Pittsburgh

Technology May Spur Local Development

By GEOFF BECKER
Associated Press Writer
PITTSBURGH (AP) — A Pittsburgh-based business group's agreement to license German technology brings western Pennsylvania closer to manufacturing guideways for trains that ride on a magnetic field.

The agreement announced Monday will allow MAGLEV Inc. to convert the German technology into a form that can be used by U.S. manufacturers. For example, domestically available steels could be developed to meet the tolerances required in magnetization guideways.

"We'll adapt it to meet American codes and standards and for the climate of the eastern United States," MAGLEV spokesman Jay Weinberg said.

Weinberg said the agreement

was announced in Bremen, Germany by U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter, who visited a factory in Lathen, Germany and rode the 260-mph Transrapid train.

"This agreement promises to bring state-of-the-art steel fabrication technology — and the jobs that go with it — to an area of Pennsylvania known for its historic leadership in steel and transportation," Specter said in a statement.

Weinberg said the licensing deal spurs MAGLEV's expense of reinventing the sophisticated guideways developed over 25 years by Transrapid International at a cost of about \$2 billion.

"It is the only existing certified-for-commercial-use magnetic levitation system in the world. This is a major breakthrough, believe me," Weinberg said of the licensing agreement.

MAGLEV and Transrapid will share in any new patents that arise from the licensing deal, Weinberg said.

Transrapid is building a 180-mile long route in Germany for a maglev train that will travel 310 mph between Hamburg and Berlin, Weinberg said.

Trains using maglev technology reach high speeds by riding above rails on a magnetic field that is considered environmentally friendly, energy-efficient and easy to maintain.

Even with the licensing agreement, MAGLEV is still several years and many dollars short of its goal to establish a factory in western Pennsylvania to build a maglev system.

The factory would cost \$70 million, he said, and take three to five years to build, Weinberg

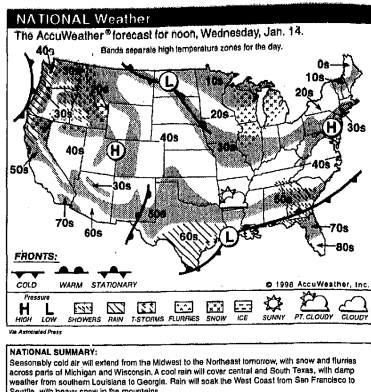
said. Developing U.S. standards of the German technology would require about \$6 million, he said.

Weinberg said his group is working with Specter and U.S. Rep. Bud Shuster, R-Pa., to include money for maglev when the Interstate Surface Transportation Efficiency Act, or ISTEA, is reauthorized by Congress.

MAGLEV also wants to build a demonstration line for trains from Greensburg in Westmoreland County to Pittsburgh and to the Pittsburgh International Airport.

The line could be expanded to east Harrisburg and Philadelphia, and north to Youngstown and Cleveland in Ohio, Weinberg said.

"If we're manufacturing the guideway in Pennsylvania, that's a lot of jobs and a tremendous amount of economic activity," Weinberg said.



Richard Seed:

Pioneer Of Cloning, Or Its 'Dr. Kevorkian'?

By SHARON COHEN
Associated Press Writer
CHICAGO (AP) — The first time Richard Seed made public his plan, there were some titers and amused looks. He told a scientific panel he was about to take one giant step forward for mankind: He would create the first human clone.

"Clones are going to be fun. I can't wait to make two or three of my own self," he blithely announced as he stood in the audience at a Chicago law school symposium on reproduction. That December day, his words stirred little debate.

The next time Richard Seed announced his plan, the world gasped.

The 69-year-old physicist's declaration last week on National Public Radio that he would open a human cloning clinic in the Chicago area unleashed a furor from

the White House and Capitol Hill to the halls of academe and the editorial pages.

President Clinton has denounced Seed's plan and urged Congress to pass the bill he sent there last year after Scottish scientists cloned the adult sheep Dolly; the measure would ban similar procedures on humans for at least five years.

And on Monday, 19 European countries signed an agreement to prohibit cloning, reflecting global concerns about the issue. The New York Times has weighed in with an editorial about the physicist titled, "The Bad Seed."

"He's the Kevorkian of cloning," declared Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania. "He's a figure on the fringe. He fulfills people's nightmares of what would happen if the wrong people got their hands on cloning."

Seed's older brother, John, a doctor in Princeton, N.J., said he is "violently opposed" to the plan and thinks while cloning is technologically possible, his brother is going about it the wrong way.

"He's bombastic and boastful," John Seed said in a telephone interview Monday. "He doesn't make a good impression on people. He's not one to assuage emotions."

Seed, who has no medical degree, no money and no institutional backing, remains undeterred. He claims the same medical opposition as the physicist test-babies, and that in time, science will embrace cloning as a legitimate treatment for infertility.

"New things of any kind — mechanical, biological, intellectual — always tend to create fear and abhorrence," he told reporters who gathered last week outside his modest brick home in suburban Chicago.

"Then the subject becomes tolerated ... and enthusiastically endorsed," he added. "I think the same thing will happen with human cloning."

But Seed's record makes him an unlikely candidate to play godfather to a revolution in human reproduction.

The son of a prominent surgeon and brother of two medical doctors, Seed has for decades been speaking at conferences, writing papers, conducting animal experiments and pitching money-making ventures that often didn't get off the ground.

He and another brother, Randolph, a Chicago surgeon, did pioneer a human embryo transfer technique during the 1980s, but their for-profit company fizzled.

John Seed also said his brother once developed a plan to use lasers to cut sandpaper that did the job beautifully, but he was unable to convince people his invention worked.

Seed, by his own admission, has lost millions in bad investments. Last summer he and his wife Gloria were forced out of their Victorian home when a bank foreclosed on his mortgage.

His latest scientific experiment — a small project at the University of Illinois-Chicago testing the immune systems of mice undergoing skin transplants — failed last year.

Those disappointments don't seem to faze him.

With three Harvard degrees, including a Ph.D., the bearded, lanky, 6-foot-4 physicist boasts he is "brilliant" and a "near-genius."

It was how he presented himself in the 1980s when he met with a venture capitalist to propose a \$35 million project to corner the world's fish meal market. He was rejected.

"He said, 'I'm the world's smartest man,'" recalled Walter Corbett III, who heads a Chicago area investment banking firm. "In Richard's case, what made it unusual was, he wasn't kidding."

1997 Inflation Smallest Since 1986 Oil Crash

WASHINGTON (AP) — Inflation all but disappeared in December for a second consecutive month, holding consumer price increases for all of 1997 to just 1.7 percent — the best performance in 11 years.

Prices edged a seasonally adjusted 0.1 percent higher in December, the same as in November, the Labor Department said today.

The annual rate fell to slightly more than half the 3.5 percent increase of 1996, thanks to the sharp decline in energy costs in six years and the smallest increase in food costs in five years.

Inflation hasn't been milder since 1986, when a plunge in oil prices held the rise in the overall Consumer Price Index to 1.1 percent.

Economists have been predicting for months that inflation would start accelerating, but it hasn't happened. Demand for labor is strong and analysts had thought that would mean higher wages followed by higher prices.

Instead, competition from abroad has forced manufacturers of basic goods from cars to appliances to hold the line or even cut prices. And improved productivity from the rapid spread of computer and other high-tech goods has allowed many employers to offer slightly larger wage increases without passing the cost through to customers.

A key price decline — prices minus the volatile food and energy sectors — underscores the improvement in 1997. These so-called core prices rose 2.2 percent, down from 2.6 percent in 1996 and the lowest since 1995.

With cheap goods expected to pour into the country from Asian nations whose currencies have been devalued and with oil prices still falling, economists aren't expecting inflation to take off any time soon. They're looking for an increase of about 2.2 percent this year.

In December, energy prices fell 1.6 percent. For the year, they're down 3.4 percent compared with an 8.6 percent increase the year before. The decline last year was the largest since 1991.

Gasoline cost 6.1 percent less than a year ago. Fuel oil fell 11.7 percent for the year and electricity 1.3 percent. But, natural gas costs rose 3.3 percent.

Food fell 0.1 percent in December and rose 1.5 percent for the year, the smallest increase since 1992, after rising 4.3 percent in 1996. Poultry cost 1.6 percent less than a year ago; pork, 1.5 percent; beef and veal, 0.7 percent; dairy products, 0.5 percent, and fresh fruit, 4.7 percent.

However, coffee shot up 16.9 percent over the year and fresh vegetables cost 13.2 percent more.

Prices excluding food and energy rose 0.2 percent in December. For the year, their increase was restrained by a 0.9 percent drop in new vehicle prices, a 3.1 percent decrease in auto finance charges — thanks to lower interest rates — and a 1.4 percent decrease in airline fares. The drop in vehicle prices was unmatched since 1971.

The cost of medical care rose 2.8 percent. While somewhat higher than the overall inflation rate, that's the smallest increase since 1965. The inflation rate for medical costs has become smaller each year since registering a 5.6 percent increase in 1990.

The cost of tobacco bucked the trend, rising 7.2 percent last year.

Second Young Adult Dies In Less Than Two Weeks

INDIANA, Pa. (AP) — A lethal combination of alcohol and muscle relaxants may have killed a former Indiana University of Pennsylvania student, Indiana County Coroner Thomas Strems said.

If so, 21-year-old Garrett Bozylinsky would be the second young adult in less than two weeks to die from alcohol-related poisoning in the small west-central Pennsylvania town.

Bozylinsky, who was registered in the 1996-97 academic year at IUP, died Sunday afternoon in his off-campus apartment.

Earlier, IUP freshman Lorraine Hanna, 18, was found dead of alcohol poisoning after drinking beer and vodka at a New Year's Eve party. Her blood alcohol level exceeded by more than four times the state's legal limit for driving.

People who drink vast amounts may feel safe thinking they'll vomit when they have had too much. That's a potentially fatal thought, Strems said Monday.

"If you drink too much too quickly, you could be unconscious before you have a chance to get sick," the coroner said.

Bozylinsky had been drinking wine at an AFC championship football party next door the night before the game, Strems said. Friends at the party told investigators Bozylinsky also was taking muscle relaxants.

Both are depressants, and the combination may have been lethal enough to kill Bozylinsky, Strems said. His blood-alcohol level was from 0.12 to 0.18 — not far above the state's legal limit for driving of 0.10 and not enough to be deadly on its own.

Monday's autopsy was inconclusive. Results of toxicology tests will be released later this week or early next week, Strems said.

Bozylinsky, who was 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighed 140 pounds, was healthy, Strems said.

Michelle Fryling, IUP spokeswoman, said the school would offer counseling even though Bozylinsky was no longer a student.

Bozylinsky's father had been an associate provost for information technology at the school, she said, and left about a year ago to be associate vice president for information technology at Northern Iowa University in Cedar Falls, Iowa. The younger Bozylinsky stayed in Indiana.

"These kids just rip their parents apart," Fryling said. "Alcohol is a dangerous, dangerous drug. It's just so tragic when these things happen."

State Briefs

Body Found After Two Months

ROCHESTER, Pa. (AP) — The body of a man who fell from a hovercraft more than two months ago was pulled from the Ohio river 180 miles from where he vanished.

The body of Chris Campisano, 21, of Tidoute in Warren County, was found Monday near an industrial facility in Rochester, Beaver County.

He was last seen operating a one-person hovercraft on Oct. 21 on the Allegheny River near Tidoute, 90 miles north of Pittsburgh. The Allegheny winds south from the New York border and joins the Monongahela River at Pittsburgh to form the Ohio.

Campisano's hovercraft was found upright and undamaged, its motor still running. Authorities believe Campisano fell overboard and drowned.

Foul play is not suspected. Campisano could not swim and was not wearing a life jacket, said William Martin of the state Fish and Boat Commission.

Divers from a Warren County rescue squad looked for Campisano for three days immediately after he vanished and periodically afterwards when weather permitted.

"Now the family has some closure," Martin said.

Woman Charged In Attack

RIMERSBURG, Pa. (AP) — Genieve Snyder took offense when her boyfriend playfully butted her head, saying the Pittsburgh Steelers would defeat the Denver Broncos in the AFC Championship game, police said.

The Steelers lost 24-21, and Ms. Snyder, 40, of Rimersburg in Clarion County responded with rage to her boyfriend's gentle headbutt.

She butted her boyfriend's head three times, threw cups of hot coffee on him and scratched his neck, gouging two bleeding wounds more than an inch long, state police said.

Ms. Snyder was charged with domestic violence.

Thief Steal Animals

NEW CASTLE, Pa. (AP) — Police were looking Monday for two snakes, nine birds, a family of hedgehogs, an alligator and the robber who stole them from a Lawrence County pet store.

The animals were taken sometime over the weekend from the Animal Jungle in New Castle, police said.

Owner Michelle Phillips said the animals are not dangerous because they are accustomed to human handling, but she feared they could be harmed by an inexperienced caretaker.

"None of them will survive this weather," she said.

The thief probably was somebody familiar with the store and its animals, Phillips believes.

"They didn't take money out of the cash register," she said. "They took only the animals they knew were tame."

Three baby hedgehogs, born just last week, and their mother were among the stolen animals. Phillips said the mother might reject her babies if they have been touched by a human.

Phillips said the animals, worth about \$2,100, were not insured.

Man Charged In Scam

PITTSBURGH (AP) — A Colorado man faces up to five years in prison for his role in an \$18 million Medicare scam involving the marketing of surgical dressings and skin cleansers to nursing homes.

Hugh McEwain, 51, of Longmont, Colo., pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to commit Medicare fraud, U.S. Attorney Linda Kelly announced.

Last fall, Dr. Vladimir Sklarov and Omega Reimbursement Concepts Inc., formerly based in Pittsburgh, admitted their role in the scheme.

Current Quotations

By The Associated Press
"We think it's very important that Saddam Hussein be constrained. As I've said, we have our forces in the Gulf; we have not ruled that option out." — Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, after Iraq's leader threatened Monday to block an American-led U.N. weapons inspections team.

"Ex-presidents are a tremendous asset to this country and it's a small amount of money to allow them to do things like respond to mail." — Carrie Harmon, a spokeswoman for Jimmy Carter, one of four former presidents who had their lifetime allowances for staff extended by Congress.

"I like the challenge of it. It's not that I have a macho image to keep. A lot of people have forgotten how to live like this." — Scott Croteau, one of thousands of storm-ravaged Mainers coping without power Monday by using wood stoves.



Jerry Potts Jr.

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