



\* **A BRIGHT SHINING GUY:**  
*Access coanchor Billy Bush*

The ten-year-old, rapid-fire, celeb-loving, movie-marveling **ACCESS HOLLYWOOD**  
still transfixes viewers with its relentless barrage of infotainment tidbits

BY MARGOT DOUGHERTY *photographs by jill greenberg*



**in your face**

**81**

APRIL 2006 LOS ANGELES





\*CARPET QUEEN:  
Coanchor Nancy O'Dell





# IN THE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

## NEWS, THIS IS A BIG DAY. IT'S NOT LONG

after dawn on the West Coast, and already Lindsay Lohan has accused *Vanity Fair* of misconstruing her words—she is *not* bulimic. George Clooney has been spotted at the Smoke House with Teri Hatcher. George Lopez razed a gum-chewing Jessica Simpson at the previous night's People's Choice Awards. And a shot of Kiefer Sutherland sprawled facedown on a European hotel lobby floor has made the tabloids. But juiciest of all is confirmation that Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt's globe-trotting paramour extraordinaire, is pregnant. *People* magazine has hit pay dirt with the free world's first irrefutable picture of the Bump on its cover. ¶ At *Access Hollywood*, the NBC show celebrating its tenth anniversary of disseminating facts such as these, this is uncommon bounty. By 8 a.m. the morning's third meeting is under way in the office of executive producer Rob Silverstein. Two dozen staffers have filled the room. They stand in the doorway, appropriate file cabinets, sit in chairs, on couches, and on the floor. The dialogue ricochets. "Are we going to do a 30-second on my man Kevin Federline?" "Do we need to get the ice-skating thing in today?" "Eminem filed for the [marriage] license." "Didn't we already have the license?" "No, we had the invitation." "Where does Clooney belong?" "Give me a Brangelina slam."

¶ At 8:20 the phone rings, and Silverstein, a dervish simultaneously cradling his receiver, tapping out e-mails, and engaging his staff with a volley of queries and commands, answers. The room goes quiet. Jon Voight, Jolie's estranged dad, is on the line. An *Access* producer in New York had called him earlier seeking a reaction to the pregnancy. From Silverstein's responses the gist of the conversation is clear. No, the producer didn't break the news; Voight had already heard. No, he's not in touch with Angelina. Silverstein speaks with a respectful familiarity. The actor went on the show in August of 2002, supplicating for a rapprochement with his daughter. Their fitful relationship had further deteriorated while Jolie was splitting with then-husband Billy Bob Thornton.


## "NO, JON," SILVERSTEIN SAYS SOFTLY, "I DON'T

think she has gotten married." The room becomes a helix of pity, disbelief, and elation. The poor man. Did he really have to ask us if his daughter is hitched? Fantastic! With the next breath Silverstein turns practical. "Jon," he asks, "do you want to give us a statement?" He writes and scratches out and writes again and reads the final sentence back to Voight twice to ensure he's got it right. "We'll get this message out for you," he promises. A publicist leaves the room to send a release to the news wires saying that Jon Voight called *Access Hollywood* to ask if Jolie and Pitt were married and gave the following statement: "Angie is my daughter and I am always wishing the best for her."

*Access Hollywood* airs weeknights at 7:30 p.m. in L.A. and has an hour-long weekend edition. Its mandate is to cover the worlds of movies, music, and television. Upbeat and chatty, it reports on the love lives, high jinks, work projects, and shopping habits of bona fide and reality stars. In TV parlance, it is an entertainment-news magazine, meaning it mixes glossy gossip and Industry happenings. This requires some collusion. It is not enough to say Angelina Jolie is pregnant. That's what a newspaper or a blog or a magazine does. A television show like *Access*, which will be seen by viewers who already know the facts, has to invigorate them. Ideally, it gets the stars themselves to appear—an arrangement that requires the show, like all media on the celebrity circuit, to put a happy spin on Hollywood. In addition to wrangling interviews, *Access* culls relevant footage from its archives. For the Brangelina story, it coughed up an old clip on which Brad says he wants to be a dad. Mention of Jennifer Aniston, his then wife, is eliminated. *Access* might also cross-pollinate and ask an editor from *People* or *Entertainment Weekly* to illustrate a story by speculating on what she thinks the stars think. Red carpet mini-interviews are a staple, and *Access* is on hand for every one with a guest list worth scanning. In sum, the show offers viewers access to celebrities and celebrities access to one another, a setup that makes viewers feel like part of the party.

If there is a shortage of stories, *Access* creates them. *Desperate Housewives'* Eva Longoria is a "friend of the show," appearing, it seems, on nine out of ten episodes. So on a slow day *Access* arranged for her beau, San Antonio Spurs guard Tony Parker, to surprise her just before the SAG awards. They filmed the besotted stars separately—she getting hair and makeup done in a hotel room and explaining that Parker was out of town with the team, he sending flowers via a luggage cart with a note saying he loved her—and then filmed Longoria's yelps of delight when Parker materialized before her. On another show, designer Vera Wang did an on-camera shout-out to skater Michelle Kwan, who'd planned to wear a Wang ensemble in competition at the Olympics. "I love you, Michelle," Wang said. "You are the best."

When it comes to information delivery, podcasts, streaming video, blogs, and BlackBerry blasts have changed the nature of "instant." Scanning a newspaper and turning its pages now seems laborious. Even though everything is happening faster and we should, having accomplished more in less time, find ourselves with unprecedented time to relax, the opposite is true. We are like lab rats whose hypothalamuses have been lesioned to destroy their satiety centers. Trained to press a bar in exchange for a chocolate chip cookie, they repeat the trick until their stomachs burst. There is no such thing as enough. We



are activity junkies. Even if we're watching TV, we're probably not *just* watching TV—we're also on the treadmill with headphones blasting Pink or Pink Floyd or we're making breakfast or we're texting the shopping list into our handheld. In the new world order, television is a cumbersome and intractable machine. Its survival depends on its ability to continue to engage our every sense, every corporeal cell, even when we're only giving it half of our attention.

Silverstein and company—150 staffers in L.A., another 20 in New York—transmute each day's news, along with stories already in the hopper and promos for those to come, into a 21-minute tornado of whirling graphics, popping strobes, peppy music, and dizzying edits. The morning of the Brangelina announcement they'll come up with 13 segments ranging from 25 to 190 seconds, which will be uploaded via satellite and grabbed by 200 stations throughout the country. The anchors, Nancy O'Dell, who has been on for all ten years, and Billy Bush—now in his fifth year, his second as coanchor—provide the show's fixed points. While episodic series usually have a regular cast with occasional guest stars, *Access* works on the inverse model: The ever-changing cast of guest stars makes up the bulk of the show, and the anchors and a handful of correspondents—Shaun Robinson, Tony Potts, Maria Menounos, and Tim Vincent—are the regulars.

## STAGE 1 ON NBC'S BURBANK LOT IS JOHNNY

Carson's old haunt, and his striped *Tonight Show* curtains still hang off to the side. They are an homage to a master who made celebrity interviewing a sophisticated pursuit. Now, though, the cavernous set, chilled to 65 degrees to suit the cameras, is a confabulation of gleaming white surfaces and suspended monitors. A 27-foot spiral staircase in a Plexiglas sheath glows, one color morphing into another, and a bank of white Macs, whose logos have been taped over, lines a wall. A back room for sit-down interviews has been done up like the den of an expensive home. Between takes, even during them, O'Dell and Bush banter, a brother-and-sister act. She is the grounded beauty, he the outspoken wild card; she looks like the grown-up version of everybody's favorite baby-sitter, he like the kid who might swing from a tree and moon oncoming traffic—which he indeed used to do.

O'Dell is tall and gracious, every strand of her highlighted blond hair obediently in place. Her dress code tends toward sleeveless, shiny Empire tops with plunging necklines, long chains with clunky bric-a-brac that dip into the tanned expanse, and dark slacks—sometimes knickers. “A lot of the jewelry comes from Target,” she says, the way a girlfriend would tell a girlfriend, unprompted and matter-of-fact. “On camera you can't tell.” A former Miss South Carolina and a Miss America contestant, O'Dell earned several Emmy nominations for local news earlier in her career and has fronted for more charities than can be counted. She is almost too good to be true—glamorous enough to mingle seamlessly with the stars (she, too, dated George Clooney), poised enough to hold her own with the first lady, down-home enough to bring her parents along on an interview with Robin Williams. The package could be off-putting, but O'Dell, who is 40, has a Southerner's earthiness—she's got a reputation for ending up barefoot on the



red carpet—and her low-burning humor gives her delivery some crackle. She works hard. Before the awards shows she watches movies of all the stars she's likely to encounter, reads their bios, and prepares her questions as though she's cramming for an exam. When she interviews Richard Gere, she visibly blushes. She may be standing in beauty pageant pose, and her teeth may be blindingly white, but self-awareness saves her from the land of caricature.

When Bush, who is 34, takes his place next to her on the illuminated circular platform, he stands half an inch in front so he doesn't look shorter. He volunteers this data. He generally wears a suit, often with a vibrant button-down shirt—lavender or magenta. With his cropped, wavy hair and wide-open face, he looks like the son of June and Ward Cleaver. But there is the impishness of an upstart in his smile. He is the Sonny to O'Dell's Cher. “Nancy is the face of the show,” says Silverstein. “Billy is the attitude—young, up-and-coming, and in your face.”

“That's a horrible shot,” Bush is saying, looking at himself on the monitor. “That camera should be down on me and shooting up. I'm a thick man!” Satisfied with the new angle, he begins his intro. “They couldn't hide it for long,” he says, his voice as usual just shy of a shout. “Angelina and Brad are having a baby!” The hallmark of *Access* is that it gives this sort of news with a wink, not a gush. *Those kids. Aren't they a kick? Don't worry, we're not taking this any more seriously than you are.* There is an element of personal pride in the attitude, too. The people at *Access Hollywood* are smart. This may be how they earn their salary, but they don't want anyone thinking they live and breathe this material.

Watching the show is a bullet-train ride through gossip and romance and box office and fabulousness. Just as you're digesting one *Access* tidbit and on the verge of being cognizant of its meaning, another is hurtling toward you, rotating on a cameraman's axis with a video in tow that pulses epileptically with the flash of paparazzi bulbs underscored by a clip of unidentifiable music and a voice-over giving a nanosecond's worth of caption material, and then poof, the screen has dissolved via some techno-forward graphic into another segment with another voice talking about another star who has a movie or a clothing line or an engagement ring or a baby who may or may not have been in a car seat in Malibu. Hours and weeks and months of interviews and set visits and tabloid grabs are chopped, blended, condensed, assembled, and unleashed. Even if you wanted to turn away, you couldn't. There's no time.





**READY SET:** (from left) Nancy O'Dell, executive producer Rob Silverstein, and Billy Bush; the space-age stage; Bush with Tom Cruise

## MAYBE OUR DELIGHT IN GOSSIP, PARTICULARLY

about the rich and famous, is primal. We used to dabble in it at the village well, but evolution has promoted the exchange to a billion-dollar business. It hasn't always been viewed as a respectable pursuit. Gossip magazines are colloquially "rags," and we often don't admit to reading them. Gossip columnists are at once pariahs and saviors, depending on the disposition of their aim. The introduction of *People* magazine in 1974 marked a pivotal turn. An extrapolation of a popular page in *Time*, *People* was an instant success, opening the floodgates for legions of like-minded magazines: *Us*, *In Touch*, and now the newly incarnated *Star*. *In Style* gives the celeb magazine an ingenious twist. It doesn't just interview stars; it is a tutorial on how to become them. Here's where to get their clothes, their mascara, their haircut, their Oscar dress, their lamp shades, their trainer, and their vacation rentals.

On the electronic front, *Entertainment Tonight*, which premiered seven years after *People* hit the newsstands, was the groundbreaker. Its first episode—with anchors Tom Hallick, an actor; Marjorie Wallace, a former Miss World; and Ron Hendren, a newsman—now seems dated but marked a seminal moment in television. Sitting on tall stools, wearing clothes that may have come from the *Dick Van Dyke Show* wardrobe closet, and looking uncomfortable, the trio set the formula for decades of entertainment shows to come; one blond beauty queen is still a requisite. Wallace was shortly replaced with Mary Hart, a former Miss South Dakota, who reigns to this day. Her legs became so popular they got their own lights and a desk designed to show them off. In 1994, Time Warner's television division introduced *Extra*. By the time *Access Hollywood* premiered, it was the hipper, faster, slicker chip off the old block.

The competition between the entertainment shows is rabid. *ET*, owned by Paramount CBS, is the Goliath, with 8 million viewers. *The Insider* is its two-year-old adjunct, hosted by Pat O'Brien, formerly coanchor of *Access*. Both also deal in nonentertainment matters. *ET*

featured a woman who could—and did—remove her magnetic nose. *The Insider* is the tawdriest, with screamers like "What You Haven't Heard About Tonya Harding's Drastic Weight Gain!" *Access* hits half of *ET*'s viewers, but they represent a more desirable demographic. "We have a younger, wealthier audience and a higher degree of college graduates," says Silverstein. "We're not going for the lowest common denominator."

When studios and publicists give *Access* time with their stars or on their film sets, they receive publicity that should generate money, through ticket sales and viewers, for their movies and TV shows. They get more buck from their bang by working with a higher-rated outlet like *ET*, but for many *Access* is a safer bet. "The people at *Access* tend to be nicer to deal with," says one publicist. "And they'll put together a better package—they'll spend more time on a piece and really talk about the movie." "The problem with *ET*," says another, "is that they'll use stuff for *The Insider*. None of our clients want to be seen on that." She drags her finger across her throat.

*Access* is part of NBC's news division. Silverstein, who was a producer at CBS Sports in New York, brings this up more than once. Born and raised on Long Island, he never wanted to go into his father's garment

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business. His high school yearbook pegged him as likely to become an *Eyewitness News* man. Silverstein's competitiveness is almost comical, but he is obviously well liked and respected by his staff. He has a decent perspective. The day before the Golden Globes the *Access* team assembled to brainstorm questions to pose to the stars on the red carpet. When Clint Eastwood's and Paul Newman's names came up, Silverstein shook his head. "Leave them out of this," he said. "They're way above this stuff. Let's respect them."

Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt starred together in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* when Pitt was still married to Aniston. By the time the movie was ready for release, speculation was rampant

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## In Your Face

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**B**USH, WHO STARTED as a New York correspondent on the show, has toned down since assuming the coanchor role. “We keep trying to soften Billy,” Silverstein says. “He’s young and excitable. When he was just a reporter, you saw him once or twice in the show, and he could blast in. Now you see him the whole show, so we don’t want it to be that energy all the time.” Sometimes it seems as though Bush is auditioning for his next job. He admires Regis Philbin and recently hired Philbin’s agent. “At some point,” he says, “I’d like to have a talk show—late morning or late night.” For now, Bush represents a new-style anchor—younger, riskier, more kinetic—for a new audience. While his contemporaries often seem stuck in a formatted TV persona—groovy young guys in tight suits glued to the *TéléPrompTer*—Bush is just an intensified version of himself on camera, which pleases NBC. “We started with a two-year deal,” he says, “but after the first year they saw that I had gotten it and said, ‘Okay, let’s do a new deal.’ So boom, we did. And that deal was going rocking, and before it was anywhere near up they said, ‘You know, you’re going to be the new anchor of the show. You’re coming out to

L.A., and we’re going to give you much more than double.’ It was more money than I ever imagined I’d be making. I said, ‘Whoa, oh my God, honey! We’re moving to California!’”

Bush, who took over the position when Pat O’Brien decamped for *The Insider*, was a relative rookie to television. He’d spent almost his whole career in radio, finally as host of *Billy Bush & the Bush League Morning Show* on WWZZ-FM in Washington, D.C. Then in 2001, he got a gig doing man-in-the-street interviews for WNBC’s *Today in New York* and caught the notice of top NBC executive Jay Ireland, who told Silverstein to make room for Bush.

The learning curve was steep. “Nobody stunk more than me,” Bush says. “I was terrible. I didn’t know what news entertainment was. Was I supposed to be mini-anchor guy with the hair helmet that gets attached? I was trying to fit into what I thought the mold was.” At Bush’s first Oscars show, emcee Billy Crystal spied him running down celebrities with such gleeful ambition, tripping over one to get the microphone up to another, that he called him “the most annoying man in show business.” DiCaprio went off on him in *Entertainment Weekly* because all Bush asked at the *Aviator* premiere was how it felt to do a naked-butt scene. In a *Conan* spoof of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, director Michael Moore claimed that Billy, whose cousin is the president, was the truly evil Bush. At least he gets noticed.

Laugh at him, laugh with him, okay, cringe a little, but give Bush credit for conspiring to bring some pep to the proceedings. “I’m always excited to hear I’m working with him,” says Chris Connelly, an ABC and ESPN correspondent who has covered the Oscar red carpet since 1989—twice with Bush. “I love the energy he brings. He’s always completely prepared, he’s funny, and he’s not a big-foot. To see a guy get that enthusiastic makes great TV.” Nobody else thought to ask Penélope Cruz if she could spell boyfriend Matthew McConaughey’s name. (She couldn’t—not in English, anyway.) To get the first interview with Britney Spears’s starter husband, Jason Alexander, Bush delivered an egg-and-cheese breakfast biscuit to his door the morning after a Louisiana State University championship game, assuming Alexander would be the worse for wear. He was, and appreciatively let Bush in. At the Golden Globes this year, in a booth where celebrities kissed pocketbooks for a charity event (the bags were later

auctioned off), Bush smooched with Jonathan Rhys Meyers, just a bit of plastic separating their puckers.

He and Donald Trump became so chummy over the seasons that Bush ended one segment telling the Donald he loved him. He later displeased Trump by jokingly calling him a liar when Trump claimed his third-season *Apprentice* ratings were “through the roof.” Not exactly the case. Word came back that Trump, who’d invited Bush to his last wedding, was “so mad he couldn’t see straight.” The next night *Access* ran a collage of happy Bush-Trump moments to the tune of “Up Where We Belong.” It was tongue-in-cheek, sort of. If *The Apprentice* hadn’t been an NBC show, viewers had to wonder, and Trump weren’t a man with so much influence, would such pandering have been allowed? On a show that flashes the badge of the NBC news division?

One of Bush’s best-known moments lasted an entire episode. Last May he landed Tom Cruise and turned the show over to a single interview. Cruise took the opportunity to glorify Scientology and excoriate psychiatrists, antidepressants, and Brooke Shields, who availed herself of both during a bout with postpartum depression. “I prepared wildly for that one,” Bush says. “I noticed the first movie he did was with her, *Endless Love*. And wait a minute, she had been on our show talking about postpartum and Paxil. Here he is talking about how all drugs are evil. The best way to challenge him is to personalize it. ‘Here’s someone you’re friends with. Are they wrong?’ I know his position on psychotropic drugs, but will he demonize Brooke Shields?”

Yes, it turned out, as effortlessly as he turned Oprah’s couch into a trampoline. “I was sitting next to Tom’s sister,” Silverstein says. “We had a big setup with headsets. Billy said, ‘What about Brooke Shields?’ and Tom went off. That was a good moment.” It fed the media maw for days. Matt Lauer did a follow-up interview with Cruise on *The Today Show*. “I don’t think I got enough credit,” Bush says. “Once Matt got in there, based upon my interview, there was more of a tête-à-tête. He got a rise out of Tom. It’s like in sports when the referee makes the call not when he sees the penalty but when he hears the crowd roar.”

Bush uses a lot of sports imagery. He’s a jock: an ice hockey player, a tennis player, captain of the varsity lacrosse team during his days at Colby College in Maine. He grew up in Manhattan and attended St. George’s, a

Rhode Island prep school, before heading to Colby. He was 26 and a disc jockey in Arlington, Virginia, when he met his wife, Sydney. "There were two new spaces at a beach house I shared," he says. "Right when she walked into the house, I said, 'Whoa, I'll take the brunet on the right.' I grabbed her bags—'Here, let me take these, I'm Billy'—and walked them right to the room next to mine to make sure the other vultures didn't get near her." He gets up and carries imaginary bags around the conference room in his Comfort Pedics, plush navy slip-ons in search of a Barcalounger. He wears them everywhere.

The two married less than a year later and now have three girls. "She's beautiful. She's Southern. She reads a book in a day," Bush says of his wife. "She can do a thousand-word puzzle in a half hour. She's the introvert, I'm the extrovert." Both are religious. When they met, Sydney was spending two hours in the morning reading the Bible and then writing what the verses meant to her. Bush has fond memories of going to church at the family's weekend home in Connecticut as a boy. "My brother and I had minibikes, and my father would let us follow behind the car," he says. "We drove for five miles through the woods on a dirt road to get to this little church. It was cool." He went back to his faith in his twenties. "I walked into a church, a single guy feeling empty with little pangs of anxiety—who am I, where am I going, what am I doing?" he says. "The typical angst."

Sydney and Billy read *The Purpose-Driven Life*, evangelist Rick Warren's best-selling self-help workbook. "You do 40 days, a chapter a day," he says. "We'd read a chapter and write our separate thoughts, then talk about them. We need to do that again." If he weren't on *Access*, Bush wouldn't be a bad televangelist. He's emphatic on the subject of faith. "I don't vow to Sydney," he says at one point. "I vow to God to honor Sydney. There needs to be something bigger than just two people saying yes to each other. My vow, my bond, is with God to honor her. And I ain't breakin' it with Him, you know?"

Faith is a motif on Bush's accesshollywood.com blog. "Sometimes you just want to say how you feel on certain things," he says. "Some of the material on the show, let's be honest, is very superficial. I guess I want people to understand me, and not as an entertainment airhead." After Hilary Swank and Chad Lowe separated, Bush wrote that he felt per-

sonally affected. "I've been married eight years, and it takes work," he says, echoing a blog passage. "A lot of work. When I see someone like Hilary Swank, with what seems like great resolve and simple values, and see the marriage fail, I feel like I've taken a small hit on it. I guess I'm old school, but every time my wife and I go through a bad period, the other side is better and brighter, better than it was before. Through bad comes good."

Bush's father, Jonathan, is a brother of George H.W. Bush and uncle of the current White House resident. It's written into Billy's NBC contract that no mention of the family ties can be made in press or marketing materials. "My cousin Jim Walker—you know, George Walker Bush—was a legendary correspondent for *World News Tonight* for 25 years," he says. "Nobody knew. He wouldn't stand for that. I'm the same way." Asked if he thinks the president watches *Access*, Bush looks like he's been electrified: "I hope not! If he did, I'd be very upset. I'd call him up and say, 'Turn that off now. Go back to what you're supposed to be doing.'"

**B**ACK ON THE SET, O'Dell and Bush are taping their dialogue. A giant video monitor shows a clip of Jessica Simpson singing "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'." "She's *awful*," someone wails. "She can't dance, either."

Through a rear door and down the hall, just past Jay Leno's dressing rooms, Silverstein sits at a raised console in the middle of a control room. More than 60 monitors cover one wall, but he watches O'Dell and Bush on a video inset in his computer. Still in motion, he is rapping his pencil, swigging water, and shouting out directions. "He's made of Red Bull," says a staffer. Silverstein shaves off seconds, minutes, whole segments, as a digital clock blinks the time away. A sampling of computer-generated baby faces intended to look like Jolie and Pitt's child-to-be have come out like monsters. "Kill that whole thing," Silverstein says with minutes to spare. "I hate it."

Jon Voight has called again. He doesn't want Silverstein to mention that he asked if Jolie and Pitt were married. The reference is eliminated from the Bump segment. The publicist has wired the wires, and they've deep-sixed it, too. Then, just after the clock hits one, the show is sucked up by satellite and *Access Hollywood*, the celebrity's friend, is in the air again. **LA**

## Blood Ties

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 91** » cord blood. "That's totally bogus," she said. "If your baby gets leukemia, you would never want to use its blood because that blood would likely be contaminated with leukemic cells." She also took issue with the industry's suggestions that cord blood can cure everybody in the family. There is only enough cord blood for one child, she said, because people need a certain quantity of stem cells per body weight, and there aren't enough in the blood of one cord for an adult. Kurtzberg, however, is a proponent of public banking. One of the proven wonders of cord blood, she said, is that it's half as likely to be rejected by non-related recipients as bone marrow, which means a publicly banked cord blood unit has a far greater chance of saving a life than one locked away in a private bank, where it will almost certainly never be used.

Sims allowed that Hale went overboard with his assertion that children with leukemia can be cured with their own cord blood. But, he said, critics are missing the point. First, he said, the odds of needing a cord blood transplant are not infinitesimal. According to Sims, they're closer to 1 in 2,700, but the odds improve significantly when you consider future medical breakthroughs and how many people in the family will have access to the blood over a lifetime. Scientists have grown heart muscle and brain tissue with cord blood stem cells. There is reason to be excited about all of these experiments, he said, even if they've only been done in animals so far, because cord blood is about what might happen tomorrow. "That's where we part company," Sims said of his critics. "They say because you don't have need today you won't have need in the future. But you don't buy fire insurance after your house is on fire. You buy it because you might have one. That's the premise of the cord blood banking industry, and if people want to pay for it that's their right. People spend money on a lot of things. They buy big-screen TVs."

After lunch the Del Mar baby show wound down, and one of Hale's associates said that the pregnant women had all gone home to take naps. "That's what pregnant women do," she said. By the end of the weekend Hale had collected a hundred or so names for the sales department to contact.