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Charles Dean Taylor and Brenda Tonnessen with Lauren, left, and Megan

Fight rages over twins with different dads

By Hipolito R. Corella
The Arizona Daily Star

They are 10 months old, twins and half-sisters.

The infants, Lauren and Megan, have blonde hair, blue eyes and wide smiles.

And they are a biological oddity - fraternal twins with different fathers - whose upbringing is in the hands of a court system lacking legal precedent to help decide their fate.

Last week, in a secret court order, a Pima County Superior Court commissioner took jurisdiction of the infants' custody case from a Colorado court.

Commissioner Joseph McDonald will decide who gets custody of the twins, and his decision promises to bring to Tucson the worldwide media attention that has hounded the family since May.

That was when details of the case were leaked to a television station in Colorado Springs.

Brenda Tonnessen, the infants' mother, lives in a two-bedroom apartment on Tucson's north side with her boyfriend, Charles Dean Taylor - a car salesman and Megan's father.

Lauren's father, Peter Trygve Tonnessen, 43, is a family law attorney in Colorado Springs.

In May, a Colorado judge ordered Brenda Tonnessen, 33, to trek more than 800 miles with Lauren so the infant could visit her father.

On the fourth weekend, Peter Tonnessen had the option to visit his daughter, the Colorado order continued.

Brenda Tonnessen was ordered to make the trips three weekends each month at her own expense.

And Peter Tonnessen was ordered to give his estranged wife \$408.75 in monthly child support. But he never paid it, according to court documents.

The unusual visitation orders were to last until Judge Richard Hall, of Colorado's El Paso County District Court, decided a final custody arrangement for the infants.

Hall's decision was expected in October.

But after Brenda Tonnessen made six trips, the legal wrangling that started before the twins were born made its way to the Pima County Superior Court.

McDonald ordered that court documents in the case remain sealed inside a vault on the first floor of the Superior Court building downtown. He also kept secret his decision Wednesday to hear the

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Twins

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case.

And in a closed hearing July 6, McDonald issued a gag order to keep the Tonnessens and their attorneys from discussing the case.

The Arizona Daily Star, however, obtained copies of the files.

According to the documents, Brenda Tonnessen's Tucson lawyers argued that it was unfair for their unemployed client to pay her way to Colorado Springs — at a cost of about \$1,700 since mid-June.

The attorneys, Kathleen McCarthy and James Stroud, also challenged the Colorado court's authority to decide custody of the twins because the infants never lived in the state.

And they contend that Brenda Tonnessen was unaware she was pregnant when she and Taylor, her boyfriend, moved to Tucson, the records show.

Stroud refused to discuss the case Friday, but he confirmed that McDonald agreed to determine custody of the twins.

Stroud also said they have asked McDonald to lift the gag order they requested last month to comply with a gag order in Colorado.

Brenda Tonnessen, her estranged husband and Taylor refused to discuss the case last week, citing gag orders in both states.

And attorneys involved in the case in Colorado either refused to discuss the case or did not return telephone calls throughout the week.

The court documents and interviews with friends and acquaintances this week gave Brenda Tonnessen's side of the custody dispute.

Brenda and Peter Tonnessen married in June 1991 and lived in Maryland about two years before moving to Monument, Colo., where two children from his previous marriage live with their mother.

Peter Tonnessen, a former Navy pilot and graduate of the Georgetown University law school, was accepted into the Colorado state bar in October 1992. He has a private practice in downtown Colorado Springs.

Brenda, who graduated from St. Mary's College in Maryland with a bachelor's degree in journalism, worked as a sales representative for a pharmaceutical company.

She has not worked since having the twins.

The Tonnessens' marriage soured in 1993, about the same time that Brenda Tonnessen met Taylor at a Dale Carnegie self-improvement course she taught.

The Tonnessens separated in November 1993,

and she later filed for a divorce, friends say.

In January 1994, Brenda Tonnessen has told friends, she went to the home of her estranged husband to discuss a divorce matter and visit his two children.

Brenda Tonnessen says she put his children to sleep and was raped by her estranged husband as she tried to leave the house, according to court records.

That is when Brenda Tonnessen believes Lauren was conceived, records show.

Peter Tonnessen has denied forcing sex on his estranged wife.

Brenda Tonnessen produced two eggs during her menstrual cycle, and according to friends she believes she was impregnated by Taylor hours before the alleged assault. She never reported the incident to police.

Soon after, Tonnessen and Taylor left Colorado Springs. The couple stayed in Maryland about three weeks before moving to Tucson early in 1994.

According to court documents, Brenda Tonnessen was unaware she was pregnant when they moved into their Tucson apartment.

While Tonnessen and Taylor hoped the divorce would be settled so they could marry, Peter Tonnessen filed suit in Colorado to ensure his parental rights to the unborn child, friends said.

He also tried to get a court order to keep Taylor from being in the delivery room when his estranged wife gave birth.

The twins were born in a Tucson hospital on Sept. 2. Lauren weighed just over 4 pounds and Megan about 3.

A Colorado judge ordered DNA testing after both Tonnessen and Taylor claimed paternity.

Neither Taylor nor Tonnessen has challenged the scientific findings that they each fathered one of the girls.

A hearing scheduled last Thursday in Colorado was canceled after McDonald, the Pima County Superior Court commissioner, took jurisdiction of the custody case.

And Brenda Tonnessen did not make the trip this weekend for Lauren's scheduled visit with her father.

McDonald has yet to decide whether to enforce, alter, or create a new temporary visitation arrangement.

He also has to decide whether to lift the gag order.

Although custody of the children will be decided in Arizona, the Tonnessens' legal fighting in Colorado is not over.

Extra eggs are not unusual, UMC doctor says

Dr. Timothy Gelety, director of reproductive endocrinology at University Medical Center, said the production of more than one egg during a woman's menstrual cycle is not as uncommon as many people suspect.

He was unable to find statistics on the number of twins fathered by different men, but Gelety said the chances of having fraternal twins — two eggs fertilized by separate sperm — is about 1 in 67.

The odds of having identical twins — one egg that splits in two after fertilization by a single sperm — is 1 in 200 to 300, he said.

Gelety said sperm remains viable 48 to 72 hours after intercourse, making impregnation possible up to three days after sex.

"It's not terribly unexpected," he said of the possibility of two men fathering fraternal twins. Such cases might not be discovered because most women have a single sexual partner and paternity is not often challenged.

Gelety also said the production of more than one egg during a single menstrual cycle is believed to be an inherited trait.

TWINS: ONE WHITE—THE OTHER BLACK

... BOTH FROM THE SAME BLONDE,

BLUE-EYED MOTHER

Legal Battle Rages As Husband Refuses To Support Them

By Peter Jorgenson

ONE IS BLACK ONE IS WHITE

THEY WERE BORN IN THE USUAL MANNER OF TWINS BY THE SAME WHITE MOTHER.

Swedish court is considering the problem of the rarest set of twins in the world.

The action, which was brought before the courts in Stockholm on June 6, involves the alimony plea of Inga Bjoerlen.

She wants more money from her husband, Klev, to support herself and the strange twins—only one of which could possibly be his. "This is an outrage," said the 28-year-old carpenter. "I divorced her when she had the babies.

"Why should I have to support somebody else's child just because he was born as a twin with my own son?"

The blonde, blue-eyed

mother has admitted to the court that she had a dark-skinned lover at the time she became pregnant with the twins.

The Swedish justice who is hearing the case was amazed at the sight of the boys and the announcement from the mother that they were twins.

He didn't think it was possible.

But medical experts, called to testify in the hope of clarifying the confusing situation, say that it is.

"A WOMAN CAN HAVE A BLACK AND WHITE

SET OF TWINS," said Dr. V. K. Fronj.

"But it can only happen when the woman has intercourse with two different men in very short succession.

"She is only susceptible to impregnation for an hour or so. If this woman had relations with her lover, then went home immediately and took part in relations with her husband, it could happen.

"AND WE HAVE PROOF IN THESE TWO CHILDREN THAT IT DID HAPPEN."

Mrs. Bjoerlen would not

divulge the name of the lover who fathered the dark-skinned child.

"He is no longer in Stockholm and no longer able to help me," she said.

"These twins were born while I was still married to Klev and legally they are both his children.

"He should be willing to give us more support for the sake of the little ones."

Mrs. Bjoerlen said the little boys couldn't care less about the color of their skins.

"They are so much alike, except for this one little

THESE BOYS ARE TWINS and are now the center of a legal battle in Stockholm.

thing," she said.

"They cannot stand to be apart from each other for a moment. And I would not think of having them grow up as anything but twin brothers.

"It is so rare in this world to have someone who will stand by you in all things and understand all that happens to you.

"BUT THESE BOYS ARE PART OF EACH OTHER AND ALWAYS WILL BE."

Mrs. Bjoerlen said outside court that she sometimes regretted what had happened because of the difficulties the children face now and will face in the future.

"But what was done, was done," she said. "I am not ashamed of what happened.

"One of the men was my husband and had a right to be with me. The other man was one I loved and could not be without.

"I have the best of both of them in my children."



WHILE WE WERE STUDYING — THEY WERE MAKING

There's nothing more wholesome than a couple of teenage boys camping out around a fire in the still of the night.

Think of the fresh air.

Think of the open sky and the stars.

Think of that still of the night — because the police said it could turn out 30 gallons of booze a week.

The two teenagers were arrested as moonshiners March

5 by Dade County sheriff's deputies who found the do-it-yourself distillery in the Florida brush.

"It was one of the neatest operations we've ever seen," said Sgt. Louis Lebbe.

He identified the youths as Norman Leach, 18, and Larry Pearce, 17. HE SAID THEY PUT THE STILL TOGETHER FROM PHOTOGRAPHS OF OTHER SUCH OPERATIONS.

Pearce is a chemistry student.

"He claims this thing was

just to help in his studies," the police sergeant said.

BUT IT WAS CAPABLE OF TURING OUT ENOUGH ILLICIT HOOCH TO EARN THE BOYS \$130 A WEEK IN SPENDING MONEY.

The sheriff's officers said there was no problem in selling good moonshine.

"It's cheap and powerful," they explained.

Leach and Pearce were charged with illegally operating a still and released on \$1,500 for trial later.



SHE GIVES BIRTH TO



Yvette Landru poses with her multi-colored triplets.

TRIPLETS

*One white,
One black,
one yellow!*

Medical history was made in France last week when Yvette Landru, a 26-year-old Marseilles prostitute, gave birth in glorious technicolor, so to speak. At a city hospital, Yvette was delivered of "triplets" — one white, one Negro and one Chinese!

In commenting on the bizarre blessed event, a hospital physician said he believed it was a medical "first." But he said the triplets are the result of the fertilization of three separate female eggs by three separate men, rather than from the splitting of a single egg as in the case of the usual multiple births.

The only logical explanation for the three-way "rainbow" birth is that Yvette must have had intercourse with the fathers of all three infants in rather close succession. But all Yvette would say when interviewed by re-

porters was:

"On the waterfront, where I work, there are many men from all over the world — and who knows who the father is? I take out all kinds of men, they have the money and they have the nerve to have a night."

Meanwhile, a foundation in Paris has made a formal offer to take over the support of the children in order to use them in genealogical research. They have also offered Yvette a substantial monthly payment if she accepts the offer.

She probably will accept it.

"I," she said, "am now probably the most famous hooker in the world. But that won't help me buy the groceries, will it?"