

In the News From The Riverfront Times



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The Egg Man

Dr. Sherman Silber says he can extend a woman's fertility by decades. He just needs to freeze her eggs or even a piece of her ovarian tissue.

By Chad Garrison
The Riverfront Times

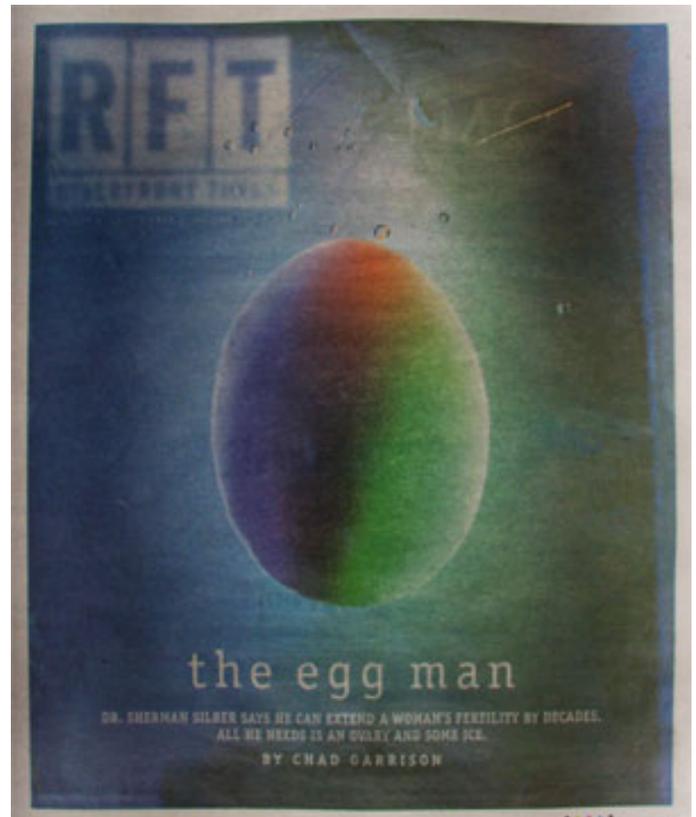
On Monday, August 27, Ashley Perkins got the news she feared most: The lump that surfaced on her neck this summer tested positive for lymphoma. The 23-year-old Perkins will need immediate chemotherapy, but first her oncologist suggests she consult the highly esteemed [Dr. Sherman Silber](#).

So it is on this last Friday morning of August that Perkins, a graduate student at Missouri State in Springfield, finds herself curled up in a chair inside St. Luke's Hospital in Chesterfield. At 9:30 a.m. a nurse enters the room where Perkins and her mother, Cynthia, wait in anxious silence. In an operating room down the hall, Sherman Silber and his team are ready for surgery. If all goes according to plan, Perkins will wake 50 minutes from now with no visible changes to her body, save for a slight incision below her waistline. The cancer wrapped in a stranglehold around her throat will still be there, but in a sense Perkins will have a new lease on life.

In a procedure that a few years ago might have seemed as outrageous as the cryogenic freezing of Ted Williams' head, Dr. Silber and his assistants will [remove](#) one of Perkins' two ovaries, dice it into sections no bigger than a thumbnail, and store it in liquid nitrogen. Years later — after Perkins has beaten cancer and is ready to have children — doctors will attach the thawed slices of organ onto her remaining ovary. The frozen tissue will recharge the ovary that's been rendered sterile from chemotherapy. Following the transplant, Perkins should begin ovulating normally within a few months. What's more, the amount of ovarian tissue Silber plans to freeze today will theoretically allow Perkins to become pregnant far past the age most women become infertile.

"I've had patients tell me in hindsight they're glad they got cancer because now they control their [biological clock \[see video\]](#)," offers the 5-foot-5-inch Silber, whose diminutive stature belies his towering reputation in the field of [fertility treatment](#). "In 2022, if Ashley wants to have a child at the age of 38, her ovary will still be that of a 23-year-old."

At 9:33 a.m. Perkins enters the fluorescent glow of the operating room. Minutes later, her pale blue eyes surrender



Cover story on the Riverfront Times



Sherman Silber, MD,
Director of the Infertility
Center of St. Louis at
St. Luke's Hospital