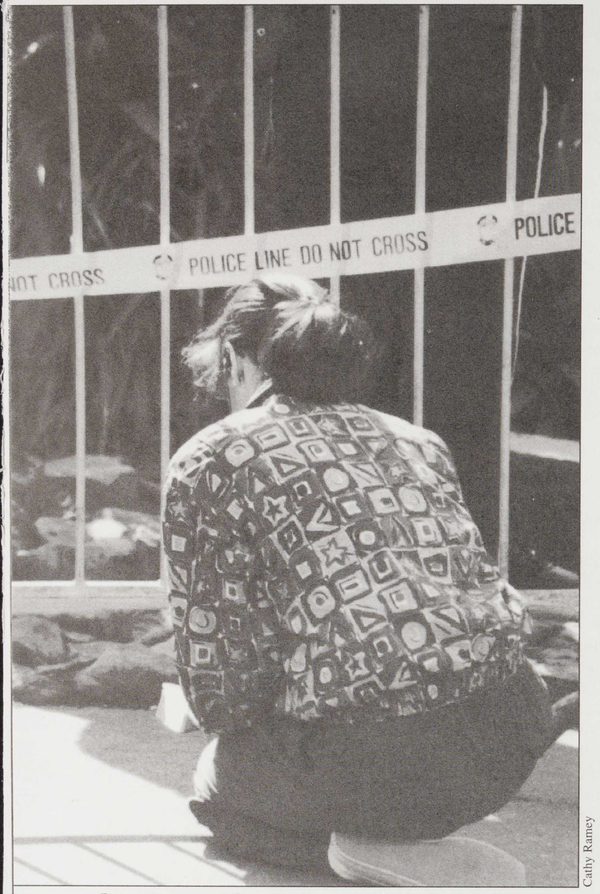


Cathy Ramey

Protester prays by a police-guarded fence during a series of protests outside Tucker's Birmingham mill in April 1994

Drug problems

In addition to changing records, Tucker staff routinely filled out drug prescription forms that were pre-signed by Tucker.

Charles Breeland and G.W. Robbins are medical board inspectors assigned to investigate allegations against Tucker. During an on-site survey of one Tucker facility they report that they found hundreds of pre-signed and undated prescription forms in an unlocked drawer.

In addition to allowing staff to prescribe by using his forms, Breeland and Robbins found that narcotics — controlled drugs — were kept in an unlocked area, and many drugs could not be accounted for.

One former employee testified that Tucker's method of reconciling his drug count and his records was to order staff to document the drugs as having been "dropped and broken" or contaminated and destroyed.

Suspension

In light of the charges against him, the sanctions finally ordered against Tucker lend credibility to those who claim that the medical board has been slow and inept at processing complaints.

Thomas W. Tucker was found guilty of gross negligence and malpractice in Mississippi on 32 of 34 counts filed against him. The medical board brotherhood voted unanimously to sanction him by suspending his license for five years. It then suspended four years from his "sentence." Tucker is without a license for one year but then may resume practice with a number of restrictions imposed that are in theory intended to hold him to a higher standard of accountability.

Because Mississippi and Alabama have reciprocity, the state of Alabama has given Tucker a "summary suspension" revoking his license to practice. The suspension is temporary until June 22 when he will have a full hearing on charges that apply specifically to that state, including a more in-depth review of the death of Angela Hall in Birmingham.

New civil suits

In addition to medical board charges, Tucker is continuing to battle numerous lawsuits. Only days before losing his license another woman filed suit claiming that Tucker permanently injured her during the course of an abortion.

Christal Morgan Fuselier of Petal, Mississippi claims that Tucker performed an unauthorized abortion upon her in which he perforated her uterus, severed a main artery, and lacerated her bladder [see *Life Advocate*, May 1994]. The 19-year-old woman claims that as a result of the procedure she is now permanently sterile.

Morgan claims that on three separate occasions during the procedure she requested that an ambulance be called to take her to the hospital. Instead she was walked out of the facility and placed into a private car. From there she was transported to the hospital.

In March of 1994 a university student, Joycelyn White, also filed suit against Tucker claiming that in December of 1992 she was scheduled to have her child killed by Tucker.

Ardith Cooper of Chicago, talks to police about Tucker's "business" of killing babies.

Instead an unlicensed employee performed the abortion. Her suit claims the abortion was "unsuccessful."

A suit is expected to be filed on behalf of a 14-year-old "Jane Doe" who was given an abortion on April 7 of this year. According to her mother, the girl experienced pain and fever, developed an infection, and possibly had her uterus perforated by Tucker. She was taken from the facility to an emergency room where it was also discovered that parts of her child were still inside her.

But on April 7, 1994, the 14-year-old girl appears to have been the lucky one. Her injury occurred first. Twenty-one year old Michelle Jordan followed her as a Tucker client later in the day.

Jordan was scheduled to have a Norplant contraceptive/abortafacient implant removed from her upper right arm. Speculation among Tucker opponents and ex-employees is that the abortionist wasn't even at the facility as the device was being removed from her arm.

What is known is that Michelle Jordan was placed under general anesthesia for a procedure that normally would not require it.

Tucker rejects arguments that he was away from the premises and having an employee do the procedure. He explains the use of general anesthesia — putting Michelle Jordan to sleep for a very minor procedure — as necessary because "she was nervous."

Apparently Jordan began having respiratory difficulties just at the end of the two minute procedure to remove the Norplant sticks. Tucker claims that aggressive efforts were undertaken to help the woman breathe; medications were given, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was done, oxygen was made available, but in the end Michelle Jordan appeared to be dying.

An ambulance was finally called. But here Tucker's history calls into question whether or not the woman was given help immediately. Detractors suspect that Michelle Jordan was left gasping for air in order to allow the abortionist enough time to arrive at the facility in order to give the appearance that he had placed Jordan under anesthesia and performed the procedure.

Records indicate that Jordan was finally transported to the University hospital in Birmingham sometime between 2 and 3 p.m. April 7. She was resuscitated by emergency room personnel but never regained consciousness. Four days later she died.

Criminal investigation

Most reports surrounding Tucker's financial status indicate that he is uninsured and unable to pay heavy judgments against him. It has been cause for some delay in the filing of civil suits against him as plaintiffs looked at the possibility that they might prevail in the courts but never see enough reimbursement to even pay for the cost of an attorney.

In light of that fact there are likely to be those who have been injured but were unable to pursue Tucker through a civil lawsuit process. However, Tucker's problems don't end with medical board sanctions and civil suits. It is expected that criminal charges will also be brought against the abortionist in the near future.

A DeSoto County grand jury has been involved in hearings for several months now over claims that Tucker crushed the skull of a baby girl born alive after his efforts to kill her in an abortion failed.

According to Joy Davis in a sworn deposition, "There was a live birth in Southaven," formally licensed as the Tri-State Women's Health Center.

"Tucker had sent me to Southaven to talk to the people there and calm them down," Davis says. "And Dr. Tucker told me prior to that that there was a live birth, and he told me the situation; told me what he had done and how he had crushed the skullcap."

Other ex-employees who testify that they were present have corroborated the sworn testimony given by Davis.

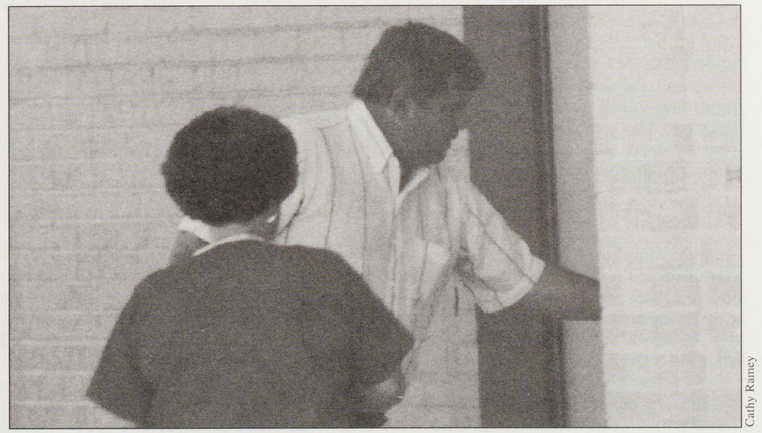
District Attorney Robert L. Williams of Hernando, Mississippi said, "I can't confirm or deny anything under investigation by the grand jury," when asked for details on the allegation that Tucker might be charged with having murdered the infant.

However, Police Chief Tom Long confirmed that the investigation is going forward.

"I can only say this," he responded, "We believe we have a good case and our investigation and that of the grand jury is continuing."

Long indicated that the scope of the investigation is broader than whether or not a baby girl was killed as alleged by several ex-employees. There is speculation that Tucker may be charged with violating other laws that limit the age at which a child can be killed in a free-standing mill.

Mississippi law requires that abortions done on babies after the second trimester must be performed in a hospital. Testimony of at least one ex-employee indicates that the little girl whose skull was crushed was over the "legal limit" for Tucker's facility. ■



Cathy Ramey

Tucker enters his Jackson mill with an employee. Unlicensed employees gave drugs, inserted laminaria, and performed abortions according to sworn testimony.