San Antonio Rescue Saves Life of Baby

by Richard M. Speer

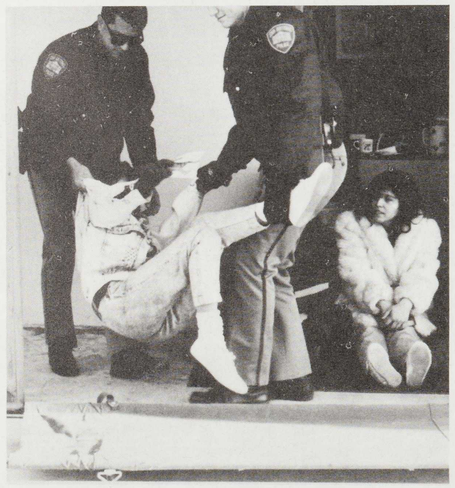
San Antonio, TX—A Texas pro-life group marked the 18th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion with a protest and rescue at a local abortion clinic.

On January 22, over 100 people from San Antonio Rescue Operations prayed and blocked doors at A to Z Women's Health Services in an effort to persuade and prevent pregnant women from entering the clinic to have abortions.

At least one baby was confirmed saved from death and a number of women were seen driving away from the clinic, some after listening to sidewalk counselors describe the truth about abortion.

The day's effort started early as pro-lifers began gathering at 6 a.m. Last minute instructions were given and, based on "intelligence" information obtained on the number of appointments scheduled at the various clinics, the A to Z clinic was chosen as that day's target. The group prayed before leaving for the clinic.

Immediately upon arriving at the clinic, about 40 to 50 people took positions in front of the three doors to the building and waited for the women scheduled for abortions that day.



Teenager Leslie Neel is arrested at abortion clinic. She was later released at the scene to other pro-lifers. (Photo: DJ Speer)

Soon, a number of San Antonio police arrived in response to calls from the clinic staff. Because there were no women at the clinic yet, the rescuers pulled back from the doors but 31 rescuers returned moments later when the first of the scheduled patients came.

All of the door blockers, including two teenagers, were immediately arrested and charged with criminal trespassing. Fifteen of those arrested were first-time rescuers. Police posted guards to watch the door blockers until the paddy wagons could arrive.

Veteran rescuer Jack Devault is singled out for arrest at A to Z Women's Health Services. (Photo: DJ Speer)

The police department's Special Operations unit normally responds to reports of pro-life rescues at abortion clinics. This unit, also known as the department's SWAT team, has a reputation for handling pro-lifers in a professional manner. However, the first officers to arrive this day were regular patrol officers, inexperienced in dealing with this type of situation. The door blockers were not given the usual notice to depart and allowed the option of leaving the doors, but were placed under arrest almost immediately after police arrived.

About this same time, a tow truck arrived and began to hook up to a rescuer's car which was parked partially in a "No Parking" zone. Although pro-lifers appealed to the police that the car was not causing a safety problem on the wide and little used side street and the owner offered to move it, the officer refused to just ticket the car and ordered it towed.

A third problem occurred when a police officer ordered the sidewalk counselors not to talk with the women waiting to enter the clinic. This was especially disturbing to the rescuers. A lawyer representing the rescuers identified himself to the officer and pointed out that the officer was interfering with the free speech rights of the counselors. The police officer responded that "the counselors' constitutional rights end at my ear."

While the police were waiting for the paddy wagons, members of the Special Operations unit started to arrive and Lt. Bill Anders took command of the scene. He ordered that the towed car be brought back and left in a nearby parking lot and the counselors were allowed to talk to the waiting women.

Lt. Anders then directed his men to begin the process of removing the door blockers. Because each rescuer went limp and refused to voluntarily get on the stretcher, the police lifted them to the stretchers and carried each away from the doors. This was done in a very slow and deliberate manner to minimize the potential of injury to the rescuers as well as to the police.

The arrests of two young people blocking doors, each resulted in an emotional scene. The first arrested was a teenage girl. After being carried from the door, her stretcher was placed on the ground next to her father, who had also been arrested. The father tried to convince her to accept being released to other pro-lifers, but she was determined that she should go to jail like the rest of those arrested. It was only after appeals from several pro-lifers that she had already stood in the gap blocking the doors as long as she could and going to jail was unnecessary, that she finally agreed to the police offer of release at the scene.

A little later a teenage boy, just before he was arrested, made an appeal to other teenagers to "become like David" and "help defeat this Goliath." He called on his peers

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Doctor In Abortion Case Told To Pay $25 Million

Reprinted from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1/30/91

Springfield, MO—A jury has issued a $25 million judgment against a St. Louis-area [OB/GYN and abortionist] in a suit brought by the family of a woman who died during an abortion.

The damages were set January 28 against Dr. Scott Barrett Jr. He operates clinics in Chesterfield, Cape Girardeau and Springfield.

Stacy Ruckman, 23, died in 1988 of excessive doses of lidocaine, a local anesthetic, after an abortion at the Central Health Center for Women in Springfield, Missouri

A judgment against Barrett previously had been issued by Circuit Judge J. Miles Sweeney. The only issue for the jury was to determine the amount of damages. Barrett could not be reached for comment.

Ruckman's death was recounted in a petition filed last February 23 by the State Board of Registration for the Healing Arts. That petition and another filed against Dr. Bolivar M. Escobedo, who operates the Women's Health Center of West County, were the first stage of a legal process that could cause both doctors to lose their medical licenses. A hearing date is yet to be set in the Barrett case.

Both doctors are accused of negligence, gross neglect, misconduct and violation of state laws that require abortion clinics to be licensed and physicians who perform abortions to secure hospital privileges in case of complications. Each doctor also is accused of misusing prescription drugs.

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According to the state, Ruckman was 13 or 14 weeks pregnant when she asked Barrett to perform an abortion.

In the complaint, the state said that Barrett administered a toxic dose of lidocaine into Ruckman's cervix to prepare her for surgery. The state charged that instead of injecting the lidocaine into Ruckman's cervical tissue, Barrett improperly injected it into her bloodstream.

While still on the operating table, Ruckman developed seizures, stopped breathing and went into cardiac arrest. Barrett had no resuscitation equipment available, and Ruckman died, the state said.

At the time the state made its allegations, Barrett denied them in the petition and said the state was using the charges in an attempt to "further eliminate [abortion] providers."

The award included $25 million for aggravating circumstances and $330,000 in actual damages to the woman's parents, Larry Ray Ruckman and Judith Kay Ruckman of southwestern Missouri. ■

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to forgo drugs and immorality and "show the world" by joining in on the battle against abortion. He was not released at the scene but was transported to the juvenile detention center where he was released after being held about an hour.

Altogether, it took over an hour to remove the 31 door blockers who were arrested. During this time, sidewalk counselors talked with many of the women waiting to enter the clinic and several drove away. No rescuers were handled roughly or injured.

Clinic staff stayed inside the clinic during the rescue but were seen several times through an open door laughing and joking about the activities going on outside. As police were removing the last of the door blockers, three women, each appearing to be several months pregnant, were seen entering the clinic.

The adults arrested were transported to the drunk tank at the city magistrate's office and later transferred to the county jail. They were all released on personal recognizance bonds ranging from $400 to $2400 after being held about 14 hours.

While in the jail, the rescuers had an opportunity to talk with the other inmates and one woman prisoner accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior.

The A to Z Clinic, located near the University of Texas Health Science Center, has been the target of scores of pro-life pickets and rescues in the past. ■

Report From Rio

by Joe Wall

In a recent letter to your Rescue Outreach correspondent, Monsignor Ney Affonso de Sa Earp of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, reported on the progress of pro-life activities there.

He informed us that "a sum total of 474 pregnant women have been turned away from abortion through sidewalk counseling and rescues in Rio since the beginning of our efforts with Kathleen Essex, Kathie O'Keefe, Richard Regan and John McCarthy last year. Many babies have been saved and their mothers look very happy and proud at the monthly picnics we organize for them. Only God knows, however, how many among the others persevered in their good disposition, though we try to follow up the greatest number we are able to visit.

"Right at the present moment we are preparing ourselves for a different kind of march in the center of Rio on Holy Innocents Day (December 28th). It consists also of public prayers and is meant to attract attention of the media and convey the pro-life message through them.

"The greatest number of Catholics is still unaware of the holocaust and of their responsibility to stop it. But the rescue movement is taking shape to save the babies and awaken the people by the same stroke. Pray for us!"

Our Rescue Outreach team visited Brazil in April 1989 at the invitation of Monsignor Ney. They traveled throughout the country, talking to pro-life organizations and taking part in their activities, including Brazil's first rescue. Subsequently, Richard Regan and John McCarthy spent several months working there with Monsignor Ney and his group. The pro-life rescue and sidewalk counseling movement is now on a firm footing in Brazil. Its example has prompted pro-lifers in neighboring Chile, Argentina and Uruguay to explore the possibility of rescues in their countries. ■