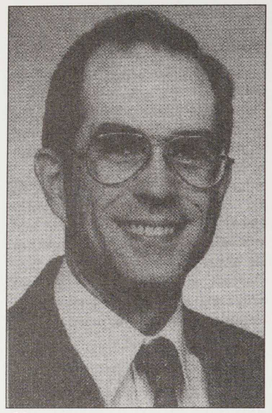


Glasow

RU-486 to be tested as "emergency contraceptive"

San Francisco, CA — Doctors at San Francisco General Hospital are undertaking the first U.S. study of the effectiveness of the French abortion drug RU-486 when used as a "morning after" pill.

The drug was designed to end a pregnancy once a woman is aware she is pregnant, up to seven weeks after conception.

RU-486 has been tested in England as a morning-after pill up to three days after sex. The California study will test its use up to five days afterward, and at a lower dose to reduce side effects such as disrupted menstrual cycles.

The test marks the first time in North America that RU-486 has been tested as an "emergency contraceptive," Dr. David Grime, who will oversee the study at San Francisco General Hospital, said.

Richard Glasow of the National Right-to-Life Committee in Washington said calling RU-486 an emergency contraceptive instead of an abortion pill is a smoke screen because the drug doesn't prevent conception, the union of egg and sperm.

The San Francisco trial will begin as soon as at least 150 volunteers are available, and should take a year, Grimes said. It is part of a 14-nation international study of 2,100 women organized by the World Health Organization.

In a related story, a New York abortion rights organization signed an agreement with an overseas manufacturer to produce a generic equivalent of the RU-486 abortion pill.

The duplicate drug could be ready for human trials by the end of the year, said Lawrence Lader, president of Abortion Rights Mobilization. He refused to identify the company.

Abortion opponents have fought to keep RU-486 out of the United States. The drug's maker, Roussel-Uclaf of France, began negotiating a year ago to make the drug available for testing in the United States through the Population Council, an international research organization.

But the negotiations dragged on and Abortion Rights Mobilization announced in April 1993 that its researchers had duplicated the drug. The organization spent the last year raising money, finding a manufacturer and consulting with the Food and Drug Administration, Lader said.

"We hope to have dosages for testing ready in five to six months," Lader said. "The animal tests should be two months later, then the FDA is supposed to make a decision within a month, and with luck, we'll begin human testing by the end of the year." ■

Federal judge tosses Washington state's anti-euthanasia law

Seattle, WA — A federal judge in Seattle ruled on May 3 that Washington state's law banning assisted suicide is unconstitutional.

U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Rothstein ruled against the state law in the nation's first federal court challenge to bans on assisted suicide.

The state law wrongly tried to limit how terminally ill patients end their lives, Rothstein ruled. She wrote that the reasoning in reproductive rights cases such as *Roe v. Wade* that legalized abortion should also apply to end-of-life decisions.

"This is evidence of the slippery slope pro-lifers have been warning about for years," said Paul deParrie of Advocates for Life Ministries in Portland, Oregon. ■

Chorionic Villus test said to pose danger

London, ENGLAND— A prenatal "search and destroy" test used to help detect conditions such as Down's Syndrome and cystic fibrosis slightly increases the risk of limb abnormalities in babies, British doctors said on April 29.

A study, published in the British medical journal, *Lancet*, and authored by Dr. Helen Firth confirmed initial research that she conducted in 1991 examining the safety of Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS).

Firth, of the Oxford Regional Genetics Service, and her colleagues analyzed more than 25 studies published in Britain and other countries up to December 1992 of limb defects after CVS and found 79 cases of variable severity.

The researchers said the findings indicated the CVS test slightly increases the risk of limb deformities in babies above the "background rate" of 1.8 babies born with abnormalities from all causes per 10,000 live births.

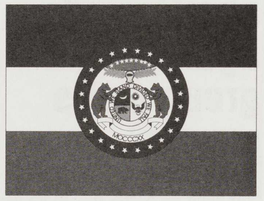
Doctors found that the earlier the test was performed during pregnancy, the greater the severity of the abnormality.

The CVS test, which involves taking cells from the placenta, performed 56 days into pregnancy was found to lead to increased cases of missing limbs, while tests done at 72 days left some babies with finger and toe abnormalities.

Limb damage is thought to correspond with the pattern of the child's development and the study said there was a possibility that CVS could interfere with the blood supply to recently formed structures and cell populations in the children.

CVS is often used to show abnormalities in children so that mothers may chose to abort them rather than care for a "defective" child.

Several pro-life spokesmen found it ironic that the very procedure used to select and destroy "defective" children could also be the source of other defects. ■



Missouri Senate defies fed

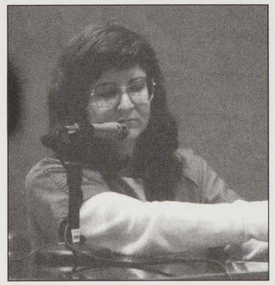
Jefferson City, MO — The Missouri Senate on April 8 was in defiance of federal rules mandating that states pay for the abortions of poor women who are the victims of rape or incest.

The Senate voted 30-1 to enforce a state ban on using public money for abortions, except in cases where they are necessary to save the life of the mother.

The Senate attached the measure to a Medicaid appropriations bill and sent the package to the state House.

Aides to Governor Mel Carnahan said the governor believes Missouri must follow the federal policy or face losing $1.2 billion in Medicaid funding.

Officials in at least seven states have said they will disregard the federal order. Montana, Utah, Arkansas and Louisiana have refused to comply. ■



Shannon

Shannon sentenced

Wichita, KS — On April 26, Judge Gregory Waller handed down a maximum sentence for Shelley Shannon, convicted of shooting abortionist George Tiller last August.

Waller noted Shannon's "lack of remorse" and told her that "Two wrongs don't make a right."

Shannon answered softly that she had done nothing wrong.

The sentence, nearly 11 years, can be reduced by about three years for "good behavior."

Prosecutor Nola Foulson failed in her attempt to get the judge to "deviate upwards" from the state sentencing guidelines. She was asking for a double sentence.

Shannon has said that she doubts she will be out of jail as she expects a federal indictment on "other good works."

She has said that the total sentences for those other activities would amount to "more than a life sentence" if she is convicted. ■

Non-doctors to perform abortions

Montana — In November of 1993, it became legal in Montana for a physician's assistant, supervised by a physician, to perform abortions.

Governor Marc Racicot wrote in a letter, "A physician's assistant who is certified by law, approved by the Board of Medical Examiners, and supervised by a licensed physician may perform abortions."

U.S. high court lets $12.5 million Lovejoy judgment stand

Washington, D.C. — A petition to the U.S. Supreme Court to hear an appeal from a $12.5 million judgment against Oregon pro-lifers was rejected on May 2.

Klass

The 1991 case involved a nuisance and trespass suit by Lovejoy abortuary in Portland, Oregon against Advocates for Life Ministries and 37 individual activists.

The court's decision not to hear the case leaves the judgment intact.

Allene Klass, the clinic owner, said, "The value of the judgment is that people who want to protest know that they can have a financial setback."

"That's the tragedy of this case," replied Paul deParrie, one of the defendants. "But it will also be true of protesters from other causes — Greenpeace, Earth First!, or ACT-UP. Free speech and assembly have been dealt a heavy blow."

The decision by the federal court does not set precedent, so the issue could be raised again in another case. ■

Vermont pro-lifers send a moving message

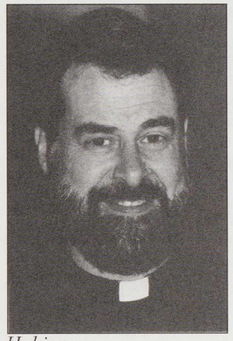
Burlington, VT — A small group of Vermont pro-lifers found a way to spread their message all over town — with one sign.

The group purchased the advertising space on the back of two buses that carry the large signs everywhere they go. The signs read, "It's a child . . . not a choice!"

"It's like a mobile billboard," said one pro-lifer.

The group received a $2,000 gift for the signs. One of the local group, a sign painter, made the signs, which were quite complicated to produce.

The bus company charges about $60 a month per sign. ■



Habiger

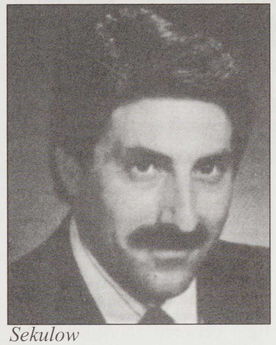
New president named for HLI

Irvine, CA — Fr. Matthew Habiger has been named president of Human Life International (HLI) by its founder and leader, Fr. Paul Marx.

Habiger, 52, has been with HLI since 1991 and has traveled the world with a pro-life message with Marx.

Marx founded the organization in 1981 and it now has 84 branches in 56 countries. HLI trains priests and laity on their responsibilities and roles in the pro-life movement and publishes books and literature for pro-life organizations to use.

HLI is also familiar to many pro-life groups for producing large, graphic posters of aborted babies. ■



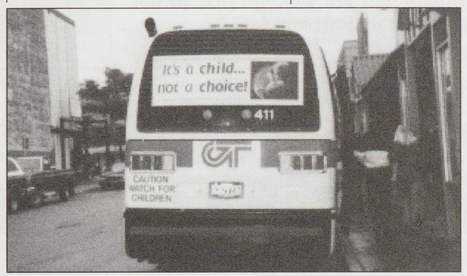
Sekulow

Suit against pro-life printer dismissed

St. Alabans, VT — A Vermont state Judge has tossed out a lawsuit against Regal Art Press, a printing company owned by a pro-life couple, Malcolm and Susan Baker.

In January 1990, because of their convictions on abortion, the Bakers refused to print pro-abortion literature for Linda Paquette, who represented Vermont Catholics for Free Choice. The Bakers are Catholic. Paquette sued under a state anti-discrimination statute.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) represented the couple in defending against the legal action which sought to compel the Bakers to print the material.

"It's wrong when anti-discrimination laws are used to discriminate against people of faith," said Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel for ACLJ. "Those who have deeply held religious beliefs must not sacrifice their First Amendment right of free speech."

Superior Court Judge Linda Levitt agreed with the assessment and dismissed the action. ■