Robert A. Brothers

Andrea Taylor holds a check for $250 after getting the refund from the Brandywine Valley "discount" abortion clinic when she decided to keep her baby during a rescue.

Cities of Refuge makes its mark

Contributors: Robert Brothers, Andrew Burnett, Cathy Ramey, Stephani Placek, Jack DeVault

by Paul deParrie

With a backdrop of the federal government trying to make res cue a federal offense, Opera tion Rescue National (ORN) launched its 10-day long Cities of Refuge campaign from July 9 through 18 in seven U.S. cities. The name of the campaign, derived from the cities of safety found in Old Testament law, was indicative of the attempt to make those cities "safe" for the unborn, according to organizers.

"Anyone in the continental U.S. will be within a day's drive of a rescue," said ORN's Wendy Wright

The cities of the campaign were Cleveland, Ohio, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, San Jose, California, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas, Jackson, Mississippi, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and several cities in central Florida.

In preparation for the campaign, several cities enacted bans on residential picketing, sought court injunctions, built fences around abortuaries, and built "tent cities" to house what they feared would be thousands of arrested rescuers.

ORN, on the other hand, appeared to have toned down their confrontive tactics. In the past, Operation Rescue events were mostly rallies and rescues. Massive arrests were the earmark of their visits. The Cities of refuge campaign, on the other hand, placed rescue along side several other strategies like picketing abortionists' homes, literature distribution, and rousing rally speeches by Randall Terry, Keith Tucci, Rev. Johnny Hunter, and Pat Mahoney. Rescues were minimized. The exceptions appeared to be the Philadelphia and California campaigns.

The preparations for mass arrests were in vain, as the campaign, divided among many cities instead of focusing on one, drew smaller crowds than a single national event might have. Local people in each city played a significant role in the activities.

The Refuges

Philadelphia, PA — The most active of the Cities of Refuge, Philadelphia seemed to retain more of the flavor of early Operation Rescue events. Six rescues were scheduled during the 10 days of the project.

Three hundred blocked the doors at the Brandywine Valley Women's Center in Penny Hill, Delaware, a newly opened clinic of five weeks "gestation." A contingent of protesters was sent to a local Philadelphia mill as a decoy while the rescuers bussed to the neighboring state. The ruse worked.

The Delaware clinic is the first in the country to offer discounts on abortions — 25% off for mothers under 18-years-old and another discount for out-of-state mothers.

Andrea Taylor had paid $250 in advance for her discount abortion, but the rescuers prevented her from entering and Christina Elliott, a sidewalk counselor, talked her out of the abortion. A policeman escorted Taylor into the clinic where she emerged minutes later with her $250. A second baby was also confirmed saved.

"I didn't save the baby," Elliott said, "God did."

During the rescue, abortionist Eric Harrah, 25, owner of the clinic, became so enraged that he began striking Joseph Roach and others of the 20 rescuers at one door. Linda Beckman, one of the rescuers described him as "a demonized man." The wooden floor of the porch then suddenly collapsed under him and he fell three feet to the ground.

There were 125 arrests that day — 115 the day before at Upland Boro near Philadelphia. By the end of the week there had been 347 arrests from the Philadelphia campaign.

Operation Rescue National director, Keith Tucci, was arrested after speaking in Philadelphia on a warrant from Florida (see sidebar on page 14).

Prior to the Cities of Refuge campaign, Edmond Tiryak, a pro-abortion attorney, sent a warning letter to the Valley Forge Hilton Hotel claiming that because of a federal injunction secured several years ago, it would be liable for contempt of court charges should it allow ORN and the Cities of refuge campaign to hold rallies at their hotel.

Cathy Ramey

Police, pro-lifers and pro-aborts face-off in San Jose during one of three rescues.

Jackson, MS — With temperatures and humidity both in the 90s, both sides squared off in front of the Mississippi Womens Medical Clinic on Terry Road. Oddly, the clinic had long shared a parking lot with a next door string of offices — the majority of the lot belonging to the other property. Operation Rescue and local pro-lifers rented one of the offices from the new owner, a local pastor, and have officially forbidden the clinic workers from coming on the property.

The only other Jackson abortuary had closed for the week.

Under normal circumstances, patients drive through the pro-life controlled property to get to the clinic and are often stopped by sidewalk counselors before they cross the bright yellow line into the clinic's domain. During the Cities of refuge campaign, however, police set a row of metal barricades over the line and around clinic property. The driveway entrance to the clinic was reduced to a 10 foot wide area that was clogged with police, pro-aborts, and picketers.

The large number of pro-aborts made rescue difficult for the first half of the campaign. All doors were continuously blocked with pro-aborts. Several rescuers were arrested as women were being brought in after they vaulted the barricades and got on their knees in front of the mothers begging for the babies lives.

One day of pickets at the homes of abortionists and their accomplices brought a restraining order prohibiting pickets of individual homes. However, none had been scheduled after the first ones.

On Saturday July 17, rescuers again went over the barricades at 5:30 a.m. after seeing two mothers enter the clinic. Three dozen rescuers took positions seated in front of the pro-aborts at the three doors.

Initially, police moved the rescuers away from the main door to a grassy area — some were even left without handcuffs.

After several rescuers persisted in returning whenever mothers were being brought in, police finally removed them in vans and a bus. Still, another dozen rescuers covertly mingling with pro-aborts behind the battle lines revealed themselves by twos and threes by blocking incoming mothers.

Through the week, more than 50 rescuers were arrested. Faint justification for the tent-city erected at the police shooting range with a capacity of 2,000.

(Continued on next page)

Pro-life press jilted in Jackson

During the Cities of Refuge cam paign, Jackson, Mississippi police issued press identification to all media personnel desiring to cover the event. The requirement was that a letter on the news agency's letterhead, with the name of the reporter or photographer, be presented.

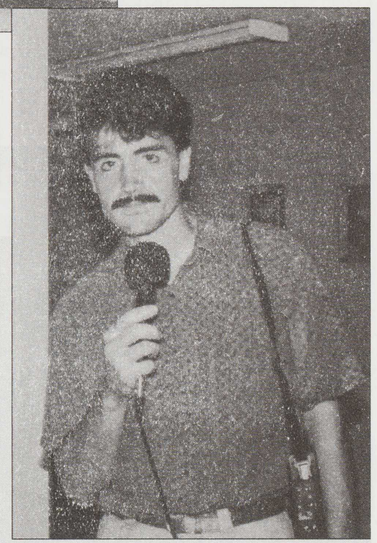
However, when John Riley, a reporter from American family radio, a Tupelo, Mississippi-based network, began asking "harassing" questions, Gwen Harmon, Communications Director for the Jackson Police, literally and summarily snatched away the credentials he had been issued.

His questions, as recorded on his tape machine were, "Should abortion remain legal, and, if so, why?" and "Some people say that it is a baby — what do you say?"

After the incident, a *Life Advocate* reporter, Paul deParrie, trying to get the local press identification was refused because of his pro-life affiliations.

Harmon said she had to "clear" issuing the official identification with the clinic owner.

American Family Association Law Center Counsel General, Benjamin Bull, will file suit on behalf of Riley and deParrie against the City of Jackson for discriminatory practices. ■



John Riley