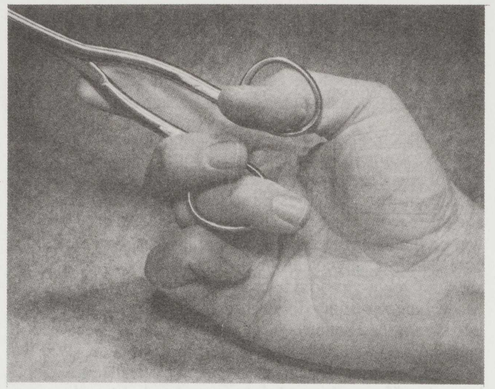
"God, if you'll forgive me"

by Nancy Sabot
with Cathy Ramey

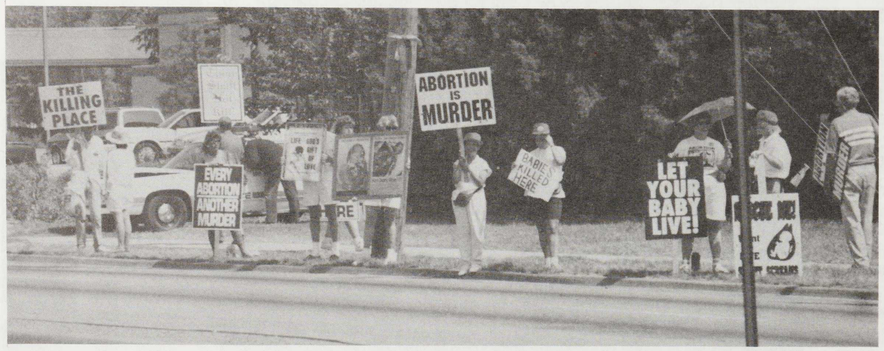


It wasn't an easy decision. My husband and I already had two children, and our marriage was shaky. We were separated, and I was living on a check that was sent to me by the state every month. In 1988 to be eligible for welfare you had to be divorced or separated from the children's father, a single parent, and the money that came in was my only source of income when I discovered that I was pregnant again.

The social worker that I was assigned to began strongly encouraging me to have an abortion right away. Later, she actually threatened to cut off my welfare grant if I didn't. Her reasoning was that my pregnancy would prove that I was still living with or had contact with the father of my children. The minimum, I was told if I didn't abort, was that my only source of income would be taken away, but she also warned me that she could pursue charges of fraud and abuse of the welfare system.

Feeling as though I had no choice, I finally agreed, and the social worker offered to have one of her friends take me to a clinic nearly 200 miles away. It would "lessen the burden and expense" for me, she said, if I allowed them to help me with transportation. And so I made an appointment for the abortion.

I later cancelled, talked to my worker who was angry that I hadn't followed through, and scheduled another appointment as a result of our conversation. The second appointment too was cancelled, and I was sent papers stating that I was being cut off of state assistance. The reason given was that I was "believed to be living with the father of my children." My worker knew it wasn't true, but this time the threat worked. I was scared and felt that I would have to agree to the abortion in order to continue receiving financial help for my children.



I WALKED PAST PICKETERS WITH PICTURES OF ABORTED BABIES AND WAS HORRIFIED.

On January 29, 1988 I was picked up at my house by a woman I had never met before and taken to the abortion clinic in Fargo, North Dakota. I walked past picketers with pictures of aborted babies and was horrified. "Is that what a baby looks like at my stage of pregnancy?" I asked the receptionist inside. "Disregard them! They're liars!," she replied. I was assured that the pictures were not truthful representations, and I proceeded on through the process that included having blood taken and talking to a counselor.

The counselor asked me how I felt about the decision I had made, and I told her I had religious conflicts and doubts. She didn't hear me, or maybe she just didn't care. Without dwelling on what my conflicts and doubts were, she kept talking as though to persuade me that having an abortion was the "right" thing to do. I would feel relieved when it was done, she said. Her private counseling was followed up with another woman explaining the procedure. She showed pictures of the uterus and said that they would suck tissue out. The funny thing was that they never showed a picture of the tissue they would be sucking out, the baby.

Twenty minutes after being put into an examination room the doctor came in. I asked, "Is it time?," and tried to stop myself from crying any more. His only response was to say, "Yes, now lay back," and two nurses eased me down on the table as he began the procedure with no anesthetic. "You've had other children, and this is much less painful than having a child. You'll be able to tolerate it," he told me when I asked about the pain medication that had been promised earlier. I wanted to say, "Yes, I've had other children, but never once without being given medication for pain."

As he began dilating my cervix I experienced terrible pain that increased to the point that I was screaming for him to stop. Yet he continued, and when the nurse said, "The blood pressure is dropping extremely low," he responded, "She's doing it to herself", and kept on working. Moments later, he stormed out of the room after complaining that he didn't have to "take this anymore," referring to my repeated pleas for the pain to stop. The nurses were left with the job of watching me until I was stable and then walking me to a recovery room.

I waited in the recovery room for a long time and finally asked when I would be able to leave. "I don't know. I don't think the doctor found all of the parts," the nurse replied. I looked up and asked her, "What do you mean, all of the parts?" "Baby parts. At your stage, you can see definite hands, arms, face." She totally contradicted what the receptionist told me after I had asked about the picket signs outside. After looking for the doctor and asking if he was finished with me, the nurse returned and took me to a bathroom where I could get dressed.

My ride picked me up and asked if everything was okay. I looked and felt depressed, and after telling her about how terribly the clinic staff had treated me she suggested that I would feel better if we stopped and got something to eat. She hadn't eaten all day, she said, so I reluctantly agreed with the promise that she would take me directly home afterwards.

The trip home was the most depressing ride of my life. The woman who drove kept trying to reassure me that I had done "the right thing" and that I should "cheer up." I just couldn't. In my mind I replayed the nurse's comment that the doctor hadn't found all of the parts yet, and a poster of a dead baby — one I had seen as I walked into the clinic — kept coming back to me. I still refused to admit that I had just had a baby killed, but I couldn't suppress the guilt I felt entirely.

Arriving home four hours later, I walked in to where my husband was baby-sitting the kids and started to cry. "Please don't leave me, I am so depressed," and yet despite the picket signs and everything I heard before I left the clinic I wasn't clear why I felt so bad. I didn't care what the welfare worker would think, I talked my husband into spending the night. I was in no condition to take care of my other two children and he agreed that he would stay while I needed him.

Later that day I felt so bad that I called an emergency mental health hotline and talked to a counselor for nearly 45 minutes. At four a.m., unable to sleep and wanting to be dead, I called again. That day, Saturday, was full of emotional ups and downs, and physical symptoms that were supposed to go away were getting worse. Abdominal cramping eventually became so bad that I was unable to sleep. At five a.m. Sunday morning I finally got up, took a shower, wrapped a towel around myself and walked into the kitchen to make something hot to drink.

I was standing by the stove when I felt something warm slide out of me. It hit the floor with a loud sound, and thinking that I had passed a large blood clot I reached for a paper towel and picked it up. Taking it into the bathroom, I lifted away the paper to see what I had passed and found myself staring into a pair of eyes that were part of a complete face. The rest of the "tissue" in the paper included tiny rib bones and arms, and I screamed for my husband to come into the bathroom. Looking at the tiny face in my hand, he became agitated and angry and insisted that we call the abortion clinic for help.

"You've passed it," the woman said speaking from the clinic. I was told that I wouldn't need to go to the hospital. "Take a hot bath and forget about it," she told me after instructing me to flush the pieces down the toilet. Instead I wrapped them up and called the emergency mental health hotline for the third time. The same counselor I had before listened while I explained to her what was happening and how bad I was feeling. Her advice was that I should take the baby and go directly to a hospital. Later in the day, after I started experiencing fever and chills I followed her advice taking what was left of my baby with me.

After two trips into the emergency room and medication that didn't seem to help, my husband urged me to go back. I was pale and clammy, and I was shaking with fever and chills. After the examination I was admitted for observation overnight. The next morning IV drugs were tried, and finally on Monday a D & C was performed. The pathology report indicated that they found more parts of my baby's body. The abortionist had basically gone into the uterus, cut my baby up inside of me, and left most of the body inside. All that was missing were the legs.

On the morning that my baby slid out of me, after my husband and I saw the "tissue" that was supposed to have been "sucked out," we both knelt on the floor in shock. "God, if you'll forgive me for what I've done, I'll do everything in my power to show people what abortion really is." Six months later I filed a medical malpractice suit against the Fargo Women's Health Center and their abortionist.

Editorial update: After four years of preparation Nancy Sabot vs. Fargo Women's Health Center *came to trial in April of 1992. Attorneys for the abortion mill and abortionist argued that Nancy's past problems (alcoholism, addiction to prescription medications, marital conflicts and family problems) were the cause of emotional trauma rather than her abortion experience. Seeing her baby's dismembered body and understanding that she had directly participated in the brutal death of her child was not a "substantial harm" according to the court. While Nancy Sabot did not prevail at trial, the case is being appealed on the basis of over 40 contested judicial errors.*■

MATERNAL DEATH FILE

Marla Anne Cardamone

In 1991 when Marla Anne Cardamone found herself pregnant and under the care of a psychiatrist at the same time, her life was suddenly turned upside down. Worried about the effect of prescription drugs on her unborn baby, she revealed her concerns to her psychiatrist and was warned that antidepressants could affect her child. Informed that her baby might suffer from cardiac and neurological problems, Cardamone went to Magee Women's Hospital to have her baby killed. In the end, neither mother nor baby emerged alive.

Deborah Cardamone, angry and shocked over her daughter's death, filed suit charging the Magee Women's Hospital and six physicians with "negligence, carelessness,recklessness and malpractice." Bacteria introduced during the murder of Marla's baby caused a fatal blood infection, septicemia, according to medical authorities who reviewed the records.

Mrs. Cardamone is seeking more than $20,000 from each defendant, and has demanded a jury trial. She states "I'm not afraid to go into court with this." Theodore Amshoff, Jr., a partner in a Louisville, Kentucky law firm that specializes in abortion malpractice, said, "This particular case won't decide the legality of abortion, but it certainly brings into question the safety of the procedure" for the mother even though the courts have refused to consider the life of the child.

Attorneys for those who killed Marla and her baby argue that the "safe, legal" abortion didn't come with a guarantee against "complication," and they contest whether Marla contracted septicemia through the procedure. The key to the case is finding the source of the bacteria that caused the fatal infection.

Knowing the source of the bacteria will determine the outcome of the case, but it will not bring back Marla Anne and her baby, nor will any amount of money repay Deborah Cardamone for the loss of her daughter.

Information for this article was taken from a news story by Tim Vercellotti, The Pittsburgh Press, September 26, 1991.

Life Advocate is seeking information for its Maternal Death File feature. Below are listed the data we have on four abortion deaths. However, we do not have enough to write a column about them. Can you help? Send us information on any of these deaths so we can expose another of abortion's victims.

- Margaret Davis, 33
  Died: July 15, 1972
  Windsor Hospital
  Los Angeles, CA
  Dr. Christopher Dotson
  L.A. County Coroner's Report
  No. 72-7646

- Marina DeChapell, 33
  Died: August, 1978
  Miami, FL
  Dr. Eduardo F. Elias
  8-18-78 *Miami Herald* article

- Synthia Dennard, 24
  Died: September 7, 1989
  Biogenetics
  Chicago, IL
  Dr. Inno Obasi
  Cook County Circuit Court
  Case No. 89L-13692
  5-3-90, 6-13-90 *Chicago Tribune* article

- Laniece Dorsey, 17
  Died: December 6, 1986
  Family Planning Associates
  Cyprus, CA
  Dr. Kenneth Wright
  Orange County Superior Court
  No. 510415
  Orange County Coroner's Report
  No. 86-0682■