she studied Naturopathy at Pacific States Chiropractic College and earned the title of a naturopath. It was to aid as a cloak in her "cover-up clinic" that supposedly only dealt with "diseases of women." In Ruth Barnett's mind, an unwanted pregnancy was a malady, and one that she took pleasure in relieving the patient of. And, of course, she was richly compensated in doing so.

Doing away with her own . . .

Ruth Barnett's first encounter with abortion was her own around the year 1908. She was just 16, and having quit school at Washington High the summer before, she had practically fallen into a job as a dental assistant, or at least, "an assistant to a dentist." Her social life was changing and she had many male admirers. One of these, a young man named Frank, three years her senior, won her affection and she wound up pregnant.

When Frank was made aware of this development, he was at first sympathetic, then resentful. She could do something about it, he said, but what that "something" was, or where it was to be got, he said, was for her to find out. How did he know that he was responsible anyway? She had been around with other guys. After this encounter she was never to see Frank again.

At this time, Ruth was still living at home and somehow was able to conceal the pregnancy from her parents. She did not know the meaning of the word "abortion" or what it implied, yet she vaguely knew there were doctors in Portland who could do "something" for a fee. Who they were, what their fee would be, and not least of all, where she was to obtain the money for that fee, was unknown to her. All these things were revealed to her one day from a very reliable source—a prostitute.

Jane Kelly was a patient at the dental office where Ruth worked. During one appointment she was engaged in discussing a current relationship when Ruth questioned, "What if you get pregnant?"

The prostitute, sensing that she asked this out of more than just casual curiosity, responded, "You poor chick," before going on to tell of her own experience when she was Ruth's age and how she was helped by an "old Dr. Watts." His office was downtown in *The Oregonian* building.

Despite the crisis she was in as an unmarried pregnant teenager, she avoided recording her own pain and shame in her biography. Instead, feelings for her child and the humiliation she put herself through were carefully ignored in favor of more acceptable events and activities.

Ruth went to inquire of Watts and records in her book that she found him *"a charming man in his early fifties, with a gentle voice and a sympathetic manner."* Ironically, despite the reality that murders were taking place within the rooms, what she described as *"the antiseptic cleanliness and wholesome purity of his clinic"* impressed her. Here she revealed to him what she hadn't dared reveal to anyone else. Watts agreed that he would help her, although she had waited almost too long. Of course she would have to come up with a fee. *"Do you have, or can you come up with $85, by say, next Saturday?"* Ruth indicated she would have the money and be in his office at 2 p.m. the following Saturday.

In 1908 it was tough getting that amount of money together, but, without revealing how, she managed it somehow. And looking back at her own abortion while writing to justify her involvement in killing other women's children, Ruth Barnett recalled the experience with an unreal rosy glow. The abortion procedure was performed *"smoothly and painlessly,"* she insisted. Now, she would be able to be happy again, with the knowledge that her once terrifying "mistake" was now a closed book.

Though she kept the secret of her abortion to herself, she failed to see any harm done in the operation; only that one of mankind's man-made-laws had been thwarted, one that was, she felt, under certain circumstances, made to be broken. And apparently she refused to spend time thinking on any regrets she might have had about undertaking a plan that was intended to bring about the death of her own child.

There is no doubt that the aborting of her child worked to Ruth's harm. The hardening process of her heart, if not already begun, was greatly furthered as a result. It is already supposed that she was a "loose" young woman, sleeping around and doing things that would have appalled her parents had they known of them. She mentions at the beginning of her biography that her parents attended church, something she had no interest in and said she would do almost anything to avoid. She rationalized her wild behavior, complaining that they, for their part, never seemed to be much interested in what she was doing or involved in either.

When asked in later years if her pregnancy as a young girl had anything to do with her becoming an abortionist and making it her life's work, she admitted, *"It had everything to do with it."*

Less than a year after the death of her child, romance again came into Ruth's life and, partly to escape the job at the dental office, she married. Her employer, perhaps aware of Ruth's reputation as a promiscuous woman, had been making sexual advances towards her which had made the job troublesome.

Getting away with murder . . .

At this time, she met Dr. Alys Bixby Griff, a physician and surgeon of considerable prominence. She had been graduated from the Oregon Medical School in 1902 and was one of the earliest women physicians in the Northwest. Griff had begun by specializing in diseases of women, but so many were coming to her for abortions that she took less and less time for her legitimate medical practice. She befriended Ruth, now a mother with a little girl, and became to her an idol of sorts.

Not long after her marriage, Ruth and her husband moved to Seattle, but she made frequent visits to Portland to visit her family. In reality though, Ruth spent most of her time visiting Dr. Griff and watching her work. After work, she and Griff would spend hours in her hotel room discussing abortion because, from the time of Ruth's own abortion, her interest in it had grown. To Ruth, again avoiding the reality of what was actually taking place, *"it seemed to be the most wonderful work in the world."*

Looking back at her account in light of what she was really doing, one wonders what she could have found to be "wonderful." Obviously, there was the pay, and then there may have been the sordid thrill of breaking the law and getting away with murder. And too, Ruth was opposing the values of moral and religious society against whom she seemed to take an inordinate delight in scorning.

Not long after her introduction to the "art" of abortion, Ruth gave up on marriage and eventually sued for divorce. She and her daughter, Margaret, only about three years of age, moved back to Portland to live at her mother's home.

She needed work, and since the only experience she had was in dentistry, she decided to go to dental school, obtaining help to do so through her brother. Six months later she landed a job as a dental hygienist, employment that unfortunately lasted only briefly, as the state's dentistry laws soon changed and required more education than she had. So, left without enough money to go back to school, and the help from her brother no longer available, she once again began a search for employment. And who should call at this time but Dr. Alys Bixby Griff, inviting her to dinner.

It had been three months since Griff had seen Ruth Barnett, and in that time business had increased to the point that she was very busy. With World War I, having just ended, many women were facing unwanted pregnancies. *Would Ruth come and work for her? Of course, she couldn't be of any help for some time, and she wouldn't be paid much . . .*

According to Ruth Barnett, war had brought about a looseness in morals which she approved of, and the economy was beginning to improve.

"I don't care, I'll work for anything you say," she replied very obligingly. She confidently added, according to her biography, *"I learn quickly,"* and thrusting her hands and palms up, stated, *"My hands are steady."*

Dr. Griff smiled and looked at Ruth's heretofore unbloodied hands. She told her,

In the 1920's Ruth Barnett became friends with the abortion industry's biggest promoter, Margaret Sanger.

"Suppose I pay you fifty a week to start."

Ruth eagerly consented, saying, *"Starting as of now!"*

So, in 1918 Ruth Barnett began in earnest to learn the 'technique' of abortion. She also learned many other things such as what she referred to as the *"sordid."* Always avoiding painful reality, she did not specifically state what that meant, although undoubtedly, images of torn limbs, crushed skulls, babies born in pieces, the anguish of women undergoing the procedure, and bodily injuries suffered by some of the clients must have qualified. Small insight into the moral and emotional qualms that Ruth Barnett may have had only came to light years later when Margaret St. James revealed that her mother had cried while performing an abortion on her in 1931.

At first, working with Dr. Griff, she was only permitted to prep patients. Gradually she assumed more responsibilities, eventually assisting in difficult cases and finishing cases altogether which Griff, because of nervousness, was not able to complete. This was a responsibility Ruth was glad to assume. She was to work for the abortionist for 11 years, throughout the 1920's. The offices were located in the Lafayette Building at SW 6th and Washington, and both Ruth Barnett and Dr. Griff lived at the old Oregon Hotel in the heart of downtown Portland.

Ruth also developed a friendship with another notorious personality who lived in the hotel room next door. Dr. Marie Equi was a dedicated socialist and abortionist, who also spent time in San Quentin for her anti-war (World War I) protestations. Margaret Sanger, famous Planned Parenthood founder, was a friend of Dr. Equi, and during this time became one of Ruth's friends too.

Dr. Equi, as well as being a neighbor at the hotel was also their office neighbor in the Lafayette building. They worked hard during the day, emptying wombs, and partied every night at the roadhouses. These were prohibition days, and they often made their own brew which they heartily enjoyed despite the bugs that often festered in the vats.

Ruth and Dr. Griff eventually had a parting of ways. More and more, the abortionist was leaving difficult cases to Ruth. One day, after blowing up at her and becoming hysterical over what Ruth Barnett records as a minor misunderstanding, Ruth quit and wanted nothing more to do with Dr. Griff.

She tried her hand at the beauty business by purchasing a salon, and found she had more male customers than women, and they wanted more than just a manicure. She grew sick of their advances, and gave the salon back just six months later.

A sick mind, combining aesthetics and murder...

At this point, Ruth Barnett decided to seek out the old abortionist, Watts, who had moved his office to the Broadway building. She had a friend who wanted an abortion, and Ruth was referring her to Dr. Watts. More importantly, Ruth needed work; her daughter was in boarding school, and a second marriage was on the rocks.Talking with Dr. Watts, she argued that he needed a nurse and a "woman's touch" at his clinic. Eventually, though it took some doing, he was persuaded. She left his office only after he agreed to hire her that day.

During the first three years, Ruth claimed to have had little to do with the actual abortions. Her most immediate work involved redecorating the drab place by painting, adding pictures, and making the doctor buy new furniture.

Her memoirs are replete with descriptions of life that are a contrast to the heinous "work" she was involved in. While much of her over-all employment was consumed with assisting in the killing of unborn people, listening to women cry, examining body parts, and stopping the flow of blood, Ruth remembered, almost as though in emotional denial of what she had done, that *she decorated the office*. And, in addition to providing a salve to Ruth's conscience, no doubt, the process of refinishing was an aid to gathering more customers.

After a time Watts began instructing her in the details of his own technique. Both his instruments (he had solid bronze instruments, custom made for him) and his methods surpassed Dr. Griff's in efficiency. Ruth learned so quickly that it was at this time that Dr. Watts suggested she enroll in a college to earn a license as a naturopath. With this license she would be permitted to perform minor surgery where entry can be made through a natural body opening. This would also give her the right to practice as "Dr. Ruth Barnett."

Watts' prompting was for their mutual benefit. He recognized that he and Ruth had