Rescuers compel abortionist to leave and close clinic for the day

Claire E. Johnson

Chicago police remove CALL recuer from Centro Medico Pan Americo abortion center.

Chicago, IL—Twenty-two college students and pro-life activists with Collegians Activated to Liberate Life (CALL) successfully shut down an abortion center for one day in a lock and block rescue that took place in Chicago on October 23, 1993.

The rescue began just after 8:00 A.M. as two CALL members entered the Centro Medico Pan Americano for a false appointment. One of the rescuers bounded over a table into the receptionist's office to buzz open an inner door, allowing twenty other rescuers to file into the clinic.

"I had put my full faith and trust in God," he said, "and I knew that He would allow me to see clearly how to make sure that everyone could get inside."

Once inside, rescue leaders tried to quickly assess the best location for the lock teams and the other rescuers. One group locked down to block a hallway leading to the examination rooms. Four rescuers were locked together in an ankle lock, and a fifth was joined to them in a neck lock. A second team in the same lock configuration fastened down in a recovery room.

The remaining rescuers had time to find the actual procedure rooms. Four rescuers scrambled into one of the rooms, despite the abortionist's attempts to prevent them from entering.

In one of the days most remarkable events, the abortionist Carlos Baldocedas, who has had 13 or 14 malpractice suits filed against him, sat down with the rescuers inside the room. He listened to their witness and at one point picked up the Bible to read out of it. One of the rescuers who spoke to him at length said, "It was totally due to God's grace that he was willing to sit and listen to us confront him and urge him to repent. We could see that he was definitely affected by our words, and that he knew he was wrong."

Interestingly, one of the police officers entered the room during this discourse and asked Baldocedas if he was one of the rescuers. Upon learning that he was instead the abortionist, she asked him, "Are you going to change your practices because of what they said to you?" The officer later persuaded him to leave the procedure room so they could begin arresting the rescuers.

Meanwhile, three other rescuers entered a second procedure room and obstructed the door with a table, a suction machine, and other equipment. They turned out the lights and were able to sit inside undetected for some time.

After police and fire personnel arrived, they began first to carry away five non-locking rescuers who were outside the procedure rooms. They moved next to the first procedure room and removed the rescuers from inside. Then, using the Jaws of Life, fire personnel were able to dismantle the locks used on the rescuers inside the recovery room.

The remaining lock team and the three rescuers inside the second procedure room proved to be a frustration for police and fire personnel. They hoped to move the heavy ankle lock, the neck lock and the five rescuers all at once, but were unable to because of the risk of harming the rescuer in the neck lock.

"I never thought I'd use a neck lock," she said, "but I felt that God called me to be in that position, and it turned out to be key in preventing our removal."

The rescuers barricaded inside the darkened procedure room also posed a problem because of the obstacles against the door. "The killer saw his machine right in front of the door." said one rescuer, "and he didn't want the police to do anything that might damage it."

After an unsuccessful attempt to get into the room through the ceiling, police and fire personnel found themselves at a standstill with both the final lock team and the rescuers still inside the procedure room.

At this point, the rescuers told the police that they would let themselves out of the locks and the procedure room if they could be assured that the clinic would close for the day. In response, Baldocedas decided to leave and shut down operation for the day.

"Essentially, we told the killer that his mill was not big enough for the both of us, and he left," said one of the CALL rescuers. "We wanted to ensure that no children would die that day at his hands, and by God's grace, none did."

Reverend Patrick Mahoney, the national spokesman for Operation Rescue, witnessed the events of the day and said, "I've seen hundreds of rescues, and this is the first where an abortionist has agreed to leave."

After they were assured that the abortionist had left, the remaining lockers and those barricaded freed themselves, were arrested and taken away.

Pro-life supporters outside stayed on-site to ensure that the clinic remained closed for the rest of the day. In total, 11 abortion-bound women were turned away from Baldocedas' clinic that day. All were approached by sidewalk counselors, and many of them were given pro-life literature.

Joseph Scheidler, director of the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago was on-site and expressed his delight at the success of the rescue, "We were all so heartened; it is a real victory when the baby killer gets out and shuts down for the weekend." ■

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Chicago fireman behind abortuary prepares to dismantle ankle and neck locks.

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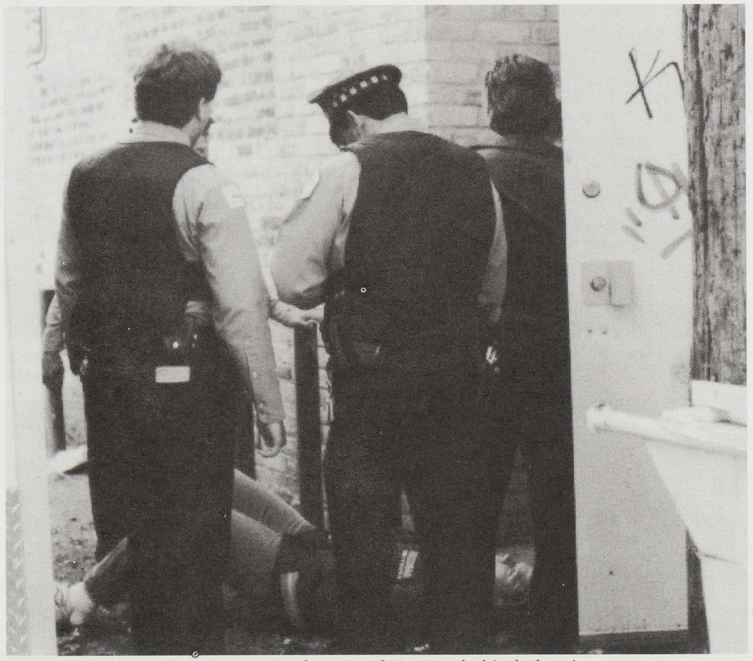
The Jaws of Life used to extract rescuers positioned in front of a biohazard dumpster where babies are discarded.



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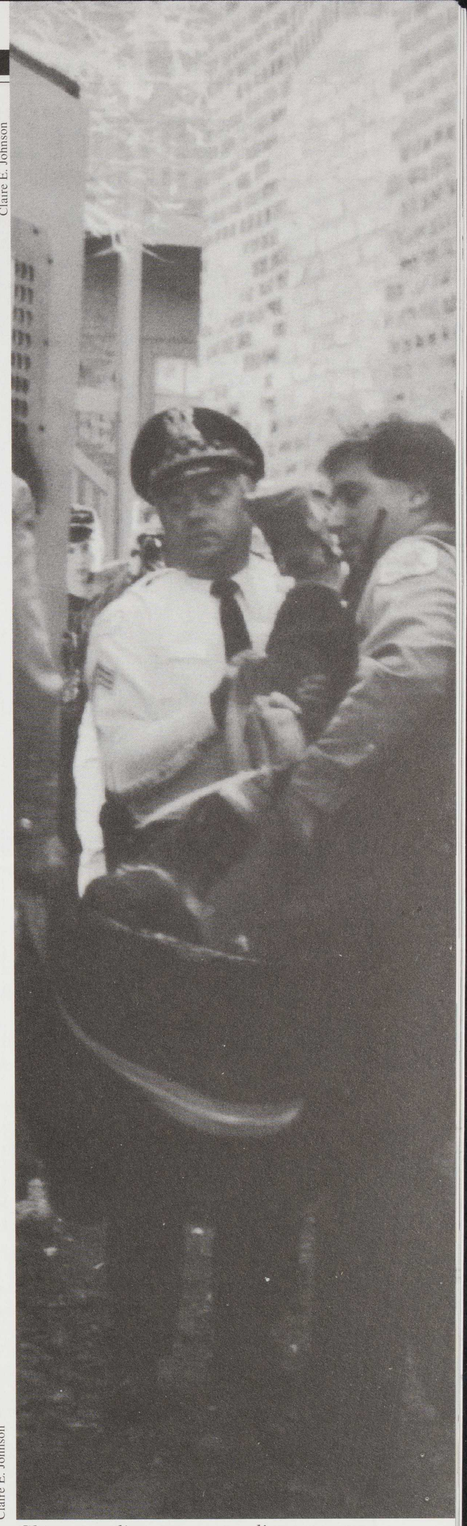
Chicago police congregate around arrested rescuer behind abortion center.



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Chicago police carry away limp rescuer.