



Journal and Courier



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Read the Happy Ads in Classified

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Jenny Looks to Future With Optimism

Fourth of six stories

(Editor's Note: Jenny, a Lafayette woman, has had an abortion in New York. Today: Her feelings afterward, potential complications, bad ways to get an abortion, and what's happening in Lafayette.)

By JOHN NORBERG
Staff Writer

With her pregnancy terminated, Jenny just wanted to go home.

"It hasn't sunk into me yet," she said while walking around LaGuardia Airport less than two hours after the operation. "Up until now things just haven't been normal," she said. "I'm just hoping everything can be the way it was."

Jenny was relieved. She had no depression, no pain, and felt very much like walking. Occasionally she stopped and talked with other women she had met at the abortion clinic. Some talked freely. Others didn't want to be recognized. One was limping, and said she felt terrible.

According to many physicians, the vacuum aspiration abortion method used on Jenny was safer than childbirth.

Pregnant Women In Conflict

Others say there are always inherent dangers in altering a normal process.

Abortion is not without danger, and the most common post-operative complication is bleeding.

While some bleeding is normal, excessive bleeding is not. Many things could cause a woman to hemorrhage after an abortion, but the most common cause is incomplete removal of the placenta (tissue the fetus grows from). Uncontrolled, this bleeding can be fatal.

The uterus is highly susceptible to damage during an abortion. The forced widening of the cervix can weaken it and leave it incapable of holding another pregnancy. The uterus can easily be perforated. This can be repaired, but a ceas-

arean section might be required for future deliveries.

Infection is also a problem. It can travel up to the ovaries and tubes, causing sterility.

An additional danger arises in the "salting-out" method. If too much of the salt solution gets into the blood, it could be fatal.

New York has reported a mortality rate of 4.2 per 100,000 legal abortions. Indiana's maternal mortality rate during childbirth was 17.1 per 100,000 during 1970, the latest figures available. The national average is 24.7 per 100,000.

Since most forms of abortion are minor surgery, many women think it's as safe as taking a cold pill every four to six hours. But it's not.

Midwest Alliance, the West Lafayette pregnancy counseling group that helped Jenny reach her decision, frequently talks with women who want to be promised the procedure will not harm them.

"We can't make them that promise," said MA counselor Patty. "It's not a frequent thing, but we can't promise they won't get complications.

"What we can promise," she said, "is to send women to the best place we know."

MA checks the New York clinic it sends women to with a personal visit four times a year.

Not all abortion clinics are good. Some are terrible. A few small facilities have done over 200 abortions in an eight-hour day.

A good way to find these below-par clinics is through advertisements in newspapers and magazines. While some can be trusted, many can't, and a person not in the know will not be able to distinguish between the good, the bad and the just plain ugly.

It's unprofessional for physicians to advertise, so most toll-free numbers in print are for abortion counseling groups.

There's a big difference between abortion counseling and pregnancy counseling like Midwest Alliance does. Abortion counseling groups are very often just referral agencies. They send girls to get an abortion. Pregnancy counselors help women explore their own feelings, advise them of all the facts they need to know concerning abortion and carrying through a pregnancy, and then help the women with whatever they decide to do.

Generally, women not counseled by professionals or para-

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Dark Side to Abortion Referral

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professionals before and after the abortion procedure are the most susceptible to post-abortion depression.

A group called Institute for Family Services operates a toll-free number out of Philadelphia, Pa. It advertises in the Purdue Exponent.

On a recent call, a Lafayette woman asked only for information. A man at the institute made her an appointment. She had no confirmation of pregnancy. He didn't ask her to get one. While her menstrual period was only a few days late, he was eager to sell her an abortion.

There might have been a reason for that. While the group advertises as non profit, it quotes a price for a 12th week abortion of \$235. The doctor it sends women to charges \$150. This situation is not unusual.

Another ad in the Exponent for a group called A.I.C. offers "the finest medical care at the lowest prices."

However, all abortions done through the agency are done under a general anesthetic, which can increase the risks. For a 12th week abortion A.I.C.'s price is about \$235. Jenny's was \$150, and there's no reason to pay more. Some clinics charge less.

Profiteering has taken over in many places where abortion laws have been liberalized. Some clinics in New York send out drivers to "hijack" their competitors' clients at the airports. This has also been done in Japan where abortion is legal.

Indiana has not yet liberalized its abortion law. There was a bill introduced in the House to change the statute, but it was killed in committee.

The legislation would have permitted abortion through the first three months of pregnancy, as long as it was done by a physician. He would have been allowed to perform it in his office. During the second three months, abortion would have been allowed, but only in hospitals. During the last three months of pregnancy, termination would only have been allowed to save the mother's life—as it has been in Indiana since 1905.

A similar abortion bill is anticipated in the Senate.

The defeated bill did not contain some elements supported by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. One thing the organization supports is abortion only in hospitals or facilities administered by hospitals or facilities licensed by the state.

The organization would also like to see the law state that no physician is required to perform an abortion, and no patient must undergo the procedure against her wishes.

Some Lafayette physicians would perform an abortion on demand. Some would not. Others would do the operation under broader circumstances than now allowed (only to save the life of the mother).

St. Elizabeth Hospital, by Catholic code, has never allowed abortion. There are no plans yet to change that.

Prior to New York's liberalized law of 1970, Home Hospital had averaged one or two abortions a year. For the past two years it has had none.

The law was closely followed in the abortions done at Home Hospital, but a few of the operations were performed on pregnant women who contracted German measles. This disease poses no serious threat to the mother's life, but can severely damage the fetus.

So, with Indiana's abortion law in limbo, women will most likely continue going out of state to men like Dr. Robert, who did Jenny's operation.

He said he's delivered 16,000 babies, but considers his role as an abortionist far more important.

"If you can justify abortion in incest and rape...if you can justify it under these circumstances," Dr. Robert said, "it opens up the whole field. What about the 18-year-old girl who doesn't want the child?"

... Or the woman in her 20s—like Jenny.

"I had the right to get this abortion," Jenny said before boarding the plane back to Lafayette. "And I used it . . . and I'm glad I did.

"Right now," she said, "I'm feeling wonderful. But you see, I wonder about things . . . I don't think I'll feel any different . . . but I wonder how I'll feel . . . tomorrow"

NEXT: A child is born. .

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