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Second Time, Alice Chooses To Keep Baby

Fifth of Six Stories \

(Editor's Note: Jenny, a Lafayette woman, considered all the alternatives when she found out she was pregnant. She decided to get an abortion. Today: "Alice," another Lafayette woman, learns she is pregnant, but makes a different choice.)

By JOHN NORBERG

Staff Writer

This was Alice's second unwanted pregnancy, and she was not yet 20 years old.

The first time, she was raped after attending a night class at an Indiana university.

Alice was walking near the union building when two men jumped out at her. One held her arms while the other slugged her in the face, knocking her unconscious.

At the student health center later that night, the doctor told Alice she was all right.

"Two weeks later my menstrual period started," she said, "so I just didn't worry." Twice more her period came, but she had morning sickness and dizziness.

She went back to the health center and learned she was pregnant.

Pregnant Women In Conflict

"The first thing I thought," she said, "was 'My God, how can I tell my parents?'"

She found a way to avoid that. She decided to get an abortion.

An obstetrician-gynecologist gave her the phone numbers of two abortion clinics—one in New York, the other in Washington, D.C.

She called both. Each wanted \$400 in advance, a price she wouldn't pay before reaching the clinic.

Finally, a minister connected with the university made arrangements for her to get an abortion in California. She was 11 weeks pregnant.

Alice got the operation on the grounds that it would hurt her mentally to carry the child, but she was never counseled

on her decision.

Today, Alice doubts that going through with the pregnancy would have affected her psychologically at all.

"I just wonder," she said, "if I had been counseled, if I would have made the same decision."

Alice got pregnant again last spring . . . and this time she was counseled.

She had been dating Jim, a Purdue student, for about two years, and transferred to the West Lafayette campus to be with him.

"When I told him I thought I was pregnant," Alice said, "there was this gleam in his eye and he started making plans for getting married."

But Alice wasn't ready for that, and when summer vacation came, Jim went home to northern Indiana where both their families live, and Alice stayed on campus.

"Then one day he just called and said he was in love with another girl," she said.

The other girl was Alice's best friend.

A physician confirmed Alice's pregnancy in August. She called Jim right away to ask what he wanted to do.

"I don't care what you do," Jim said. "Just do what you want."

So she did. She was 15 weeks pregnant and she decided to get an abortion and send him the bill.

"I was mad," Alice said. "Abortion was the first thing that entered my mind."

She called the Lafayette Crisis Center and was given the phone number of Patty, a member of Midwest Alliance, the West Lafayette pregnancy counseling group that helped Jenny reach a decision on her pregnancy.

"I need abortion information," Alice told Patty over the phone. "And I need to go tomorrow." They got together that afternoon.

On Jan. 17, 1973, Alice gave birth to a six-pound, nine-ounce girl.

"I've never regretted that decision," Alice said, "not even once." And she is keeping the child.

Midwest Alliance was founded on Mothers Day, 1970, to help pregnant women in conflict. Its purpose is to make sure a pregnant woman in conflict is given the opportunity to make a decision based on her own feelings together with all the information needed to make that decision.

About 35 per cent of the women counseled by MA do not

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Alice Chooses To Keep Baby

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get an abortion—either because they were not pregnant after all, or because they decided to continue the pregnancy after being counseled. In 1972, there were 160 babies born in Tippecanoe County to unmarried mothers.

An organization similar to Midwest Alliance, is Kokomo-based Birthright Indiana (Tel.: 800-382-8860), a pregnancy counseling group which specializes in alternatives to abortion.

"There is no doubt that abortion is the quickest, cheapest, easiest way out of a difficult situation," said Joe Sandman, of Birthright Indiana.

A pregnancy takes nine months. Abortion may take 10 minutes. A pregnancy might cost \$800. An abortion, about \$150. When a woman is pregnant, everyone knows. When she has an abortion, no one can tell.

But easy as it can be, abortion is not for everyone. In addition to the potential physical dangers of the operation, there is also the danger of psychological problems. Many women have reported bad nightmares and guilt feelings after an abortion. The major reason for this, is that these women felt abortion was morally wrong and the operation weighs heavily on their conscience.

Pregnancy counseling is to bring the inner feelings of the woman to the surface before she gets an abortion, not afterward when it's too late to make a different decision.

One of the reasons women get an abortion without fully thinking things out is that abortion appears so easy. Many women also know far more about how to get an abortion than they do about the services available to help them keep the

child. And very often, women are pressured into abortion—by the man, by his parents, or by her parents.

Pregnancy counseling is to put those pressures aside.

Both Birthright Indiana and Midwest Alliance will help the woman no matter what she decides to do—as long as the decision is the woman's own.

However, Birthright Indiana will not make abortion arrangements. Instead, it refers women who want an abortion to groups like Midwest Alliance.

While Patty has counseled many girls who went on to get an abortion, she would not get one herself.

"But," she added, "I am not opposed to abortion provided it is clearly the best decision for the woman."

Other MA counselors have had the operation, giving them first hand knowledge of the problems pregnant women in conflict face.

When Alice went to see Patty, she had made up her mind to get an abortion. All she wanted was the arrangements set.

Patty explained all the steps of the abortion procedure. She explained all the risk and costs involved. She helped Alice explore her feelings toward her pregnancy, toward abortion. She told Alice about all the services available to help her keep the child, and asked if Alice thought abortion was morally right or wrong.

"I'd much rather go through with the pregnancy," Alice finally said. "But what can I do?"

Patty had the answers to that question. But she helped Alice realize something far more important—that her pregnancy wasn't unwanted after all.

Tomorrow: The unwed mother—a little help from her friends.

