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LAWS AGAINST ABORTION
KILL WOMEN

One Woman's Experience in Eugene

ASPIRATION

On March 12 I had performed on me an aspiration abortion. It was the culmination of several weeks of emotional and physical strain. On February 22, approximately 49 days after my last period I has a negative pregnancy test at the Women's Clinic at White Bird. Despite the negative test, I knew I was pregnant: I was feeling nauseated most of the time, having to pee a lot, and (I'm embarassed to admit) had cravings for strange foods. About a week and a half later I had a positive test at Family Planning. In the interim, a woman friend had told me several things that the women at Women's Clinic neglected to tell me could affect the test: most importantly, that the hormone, gonadatropin, which shows up in the urine in a positive test, would not be present as early as 3-4 weeks after conception. I was disturbed that I hadn't been told this, and so decided to go to Family Planning.

At Family Planning, I told the nurse who tested me that I wanted an abortion. She shared with me her impressions of the Eugene doctors who perform them. I found out that not only are they all men, but there is only one female gynecologist in town and she works only through the University Health Service. The nurse recommended Drs. Jacobson and Gosch. Dr. Jacobson could not see me for at least a week, so I decided on Dr. Gosch.

$150 COST

I called his office and the receptionist made me an appointment for my preliminary exam. The fee payment is simple: $150 in cash, prepaid. The exam included a pelvic, a bloodtest, a VD test, and a description of the abortion procedure. Also included was a Pap smear, which was mandatory and cost me an additional $6. I could have had it done at Family Planning for less money, but no one told me this. Dr. Gosch's nurse, Dale, was the person with whom I had the most contact during the exam and throughout my time there. She answered all my questions, did most of the tests, gave me what little emotional support I got, and actually performed the whole abortion except for the aspiration itself. At the end of the exam the doctor came in and reassured me that during the abortion he would tell me everything he was going to do before he did it. He then checked the size of my uterus and pronounced me 7-8 weeks pregnant.

SELF HYPNOSIS

The purpose of my second visit three days later was the insertion into my cervical canal of a twig of lamenaria, a type of seaweed. Because of its salty composition, the lamenaria draws moisture to it and expands, thus dilating the cervix. The first thing I did was put myself under self-hypnosis, a technique I use sometimes to help myself minimize muscular and emotional tension. After inserting a plastic speculum, Dale put a clamp on my cervix to hold it straight. She then cleaned the cervical canal. None of this hurt. When she inserted the seaweed I had a moment of intense cramping, very similiar to when I had an IUD inserted. She then put in some packing to hold the seaweed in place, and removed the clamp. I rested a few minutes giving myself post-hypnotic suggestions to energize and relax me later. These suggestions helped me to spend a pleasant afternoon and evening with little anxiety. Before I left the office, Dale gave me pre-operative instructions, one 5 mg. Valium in case I couldn't sleep that night, and a packet of one 5 mg. Valium and atropine, which dries up the mucous membranes, to take before the abortion. I was disturbed to find out that no one besides the doctor and nurse could be with me during the abortion procedure.

We arrived at Dr. Gosch's office at 8:15 the next morning. Dale called me almost immediately. The examination room I had been in the day before had been transformed into a frightening operating room, filled with piles of sterile towels, rubber gloves, and glittering instruments. Once I was on the examining table and had put myself under self-hypnosis, Dale gave me an injection of 7½ IV units of Valium. I hardly ever use chemical drugs of any kind and I felt like I was sinking under the heavy impact of the injection. After putting a clamp on my servix and removing the lamenaria, she gave me two shots of zylocaine, a local anaesthetic, directly into my cervix. It takes about ten minutes to take effect. Instead of asking me whether I wanted her to stay or leave the room during that time, she left without asking. I was very hazy from the Valium, and scared. I needed human contact at that time almost as much as I did during the actual abortion, and it was denied me. Dr. Gosch came into the room with Dale and told me he was going to further dialate my cervix with graduated steel rods. I had been told about this procedure before. Several rods were inserted and removed. Suddenly he turned on the machine used for suctioning. I felt angry and betrayed because *he hadn't told me before he started.* It's hard for me to describe what the suctioning felt like: it was an intense pulling cramping sensation deep inside me. It hurt. After three minutes of this Dr. Gosch used a cutterage to scrape the walls of my uterus. Then suctioned again for about thirty seconds.

ABORTION

GUILT FEELINGS

I had started to cry. A lot of my tears were from relief, some were from pain, some were from guilt feelings I had (have) about what I was doing. The Valium let me lose control, so I cried loudly and without restraint. Dale hastened to assure me it was a natural reaction and proceded to try to shut me up by hurrying me into my clothes. Dr. Gosch left the room without saying anything. I wanted to be held and/or touched and I wanted time to recuperate. Dale was intent on getting my up and out. I was given no time at all to recover, something I thought was standard in all medical procedures. She helped me sit up so I could get dressed. She then left the room, leaving me in my drugged state to struggle into my clothes. I was outraged that I received no help. I got dressed and was still weeping when Dr. Gosch came back into the room. He said, "The nurse tells me you're upset. Do you want to tell me what you're upset about?" His lack of interest was obvious to me from his tome of voice. I told him I had guilt feelings. He patted me on the shoulder and said cheerfully, "Don't worry. Now that you know you can get pregnant, you can have a baby next year, if you want." I was flabbergasted. I didn't want to hear anything about having babies at that point. I wanted support for having an abortion. Dale helped me out of the office. Instead of going out the way I came in, she took me out the back door of the clinic, where she had instructed my friends to wait. It was as if the staff at Fairfield didn't want other patients to know that abortions are being performed there.

I went to a friend's house to sleep. I woke several times and she fed me nutritious foods. I was feeling pretty good by that night, though the next day I was tired. I started to bleed moderately the day after the abortion and continued to do so for more than 2 weeks. I was told to avoid penis/vagina contact, baths, and tampax for a week. Other women I talked to had been told to abstain from one to six weeks. There seems to be no consistency in what different doctors advise.

FOLLOW UP

I went to my follow-up exam, planning to speak very forcefully about the areas which I thought had been lacking. To my surprise, I had to force myself to speak up. I found myself thinking I should be grateful that I got an abortion at all and not find fault in the treatment I received. The doctor checked the size of my uterus, said I was okay & was out the door in two minutes. If I hadn't called Dale back, I wouldn't have gotten a chance to say anything at all, including asking any questions I might have had. I felt more comfortable talking to Dale, anyway. The doctor seemed like a phantom head of government, who made his appearance at key times, leaving others to do the actual work.

I would like to pass on to women considering abortion some of the things that eased the way for me. The most important thing I did in the weeks prior to my abortion, was to totally indulge myself. A lot of this took the form of eating. (For others it may be something else.) I allowed myself to eat more than I usually do, more sweet things especailly, and to go out to eat frequently. I also let myself get a lot of emotional support from friends. I sought out the people who would let me cry when that's what I needed, or just talk seemingly incessantly about my physical sensations.

POSITIVE PREGNANCY FEELINGS

I was surprised to discover that I had many strongly positive feelings about being pregnant. There is a part of me that felt enormously excited to see and feel the changes my body was going through. That part of me wanted very much to have a baby, to be able to experience my pregnancy as a continuous flow from beginning to end. By working on thise feelings I was able to experience the excitement and pleasure without losing sight of the reality of not wanting to take care of anyone at this particular time.

I would like to see abortion reform happening in Eugene. Legalizing abortion is only the beginning. Thoughtful consideration must be given to the emotional side of abortion and a supportive atmosphere provided. Women gyneocologists must be recruited to come to Eugene. Health care is right, not a privilege.

I am interested in hearing from sisters who want to share their abortion experiences and getting feedback. Call Karuna at 344-4885.

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WP Staff Note: we'd like to add here that many of us feel far too much money and energy go to abortions, rather than exploring safe and effective birth control methods. We encourage women to explore other methods, as well as encouraging their male partners to take more responsibility for birth control.

Ford Vetoes Children

Gerald Ford, in his 47th veto since coming to office, rejected a measure that would have provided $125 million to enable daycare centers to

national

meet federal standards. Unless the centers meet the standards by July 1, they will be disqualified from future federal funding.

According to a spokesperson for Workers and Parents United for Daycare, the veto could mean the disqualification of at least 25% of the nation's federally funded daycare centers which provide childcare for over 1 million children. Daycare centers in the South are in the greatest danger of failing to meet the standards.

Velma Denlinger of WPUD said that the effects of hundreds of daycare centers throughout the country closing would be "disastrous." "There is just no alternative for a single parent," she said. "Private daycare costs are now up to $35 a week per child and ther there is just no way a low-income person can make it. It actually comes down to forcing people to quit their jobs and go on welfare."



Marcia Salo Rizzi

I AM A WOMAN GIVING BIRTH TO MYSELF.