

# Inside story of city's pro-life movement



**THE ABORTION PROFITEERS**

'The idea is (for us) to make them more upset. Ask them how they feel when they know they are taking a human life.'

By Pamela Zekman and Pamela Warrick

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They were standing in the middle of a coffee-splattered hallway outside "the abortion chamber."

They were Christians, they said, and they had come to the abortion clinic this gray Saturday morning to "stop the killing."

They marched around the clinic, swinging their rosaries, screeching Hail Marys and howling the Lord's Prayer.

Among them was Sun-Times reporter Pamela Warrick—the only marcher without rosary beads. Armed with a pseudonym and a prayerbook, she joined Chicago's pro-life movement to get an inside look at the hard-core opposition to legalized abortion.

AFTER SEVERAL weeks as a volunteer at the Illinois Right-To-Life headquarters and a weekend showing gory movies on the group's traveling Life-Mobile, Warrick was referred to the office of Joseph M. Scheidler—considered one of the most radical and powerful U.S. anti-abortion leaders.

Her first contact with Scheidler's Friends for Life was through the Shield of Roses—a Catholic prayer group that stages Saturday morning vigils outside abortion clinics.

One Saturday in September, Warrick joined the group outside the Michigan Avenue Medical Center at 30 S. Michigan. Before the vigil, a Shield of Roses officer warned her what to expect.

He said: "We like to call them prayer vigils. Instead of pickets, [though] I guess most people would call it a picket. We carry signs and that sort of thing."

"This [picketing] is rough. It takes a lot of strength. You're under a lot of pressure to stop these girls . . . You can tell which ones are going into the clinic for abortions. Mostly, they're teen-agers, and they look guilty."

"Sometimes, they'll go ahead with the abortion no matter what you say. It's wrenching . . ."

OUT ON THE prayer picket line, Warrick found it was wrenching indeed—but more for the women entering the clinic than for



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**PICKETING WITH PAM:** Sun-Times reporter Pamela Warrick (second from right), who infiltrated Chicago's anti-abortion movement for a close-up look at its tactics, joined Friends for Life members when they staged a demonstration at the Midwest Population Center, 100 E. Ohio, last September. The protest fizzled when the abortion foes showed up as two large groups and were quickly locked out of the clinic. Chanting anti-abortion slogans to overcome the clinic's background music, the protesters were led away without incident by police.

Last in a series

the protesters trying to stop them. The demonstrators endured cold stares, catcalls and passers-by who screamed, "Who's going to support the babies? You!"

But clinic patients endured worse.

Two Shield of Roses "street counselors," as they call themselves, cornered a young woman and her boy friend near the clinic entrance. The counselors quickly brought the boy friend around to their way of thinking. The young woman, who said she would have to quit high school to support the baby alone, was not so easily persuaded.

"You have a responsibility to that little baby," the pro-life pair told the woman. "Do you want to live with the baby's blood on your conscience the rest of your life?"

They showed her grisly color pictures of what they said was a "baby" dismembered by an abortionist. And they showed her equally ghoulish photos of mangled babies who survived abortions.

Finally, after nearly an hour of grilling, the woman pushed the anti-abortion people away from her. "I ain't havin' no baby," she said and rushed into the clinic. Her boy friend stayed to chat a few minutes and then abandoned his girl friend, leaving her to find

her own way home after the abortion.

Many of the anti-abortion street counselors got their training from Scheidler. His Friends for Life organization operates out of a plush suite of offices at 180 N. Michigan, ostensibly to "assist the media with stories on the life and death issues of abortion and mercy killing."

But the group does far more than advise the media.

"Yes, ma'am," Scheidler told Warrick when she appeared on his doorstep. "This is where the action is."

OVER THE NEXT month, Warrick would see plenty of pro-life action with Scheidler's band of followers: demonstrations, invasions of abortion clinics and anti-abortion strategy sessions that sent volunteers armed with spray paint out to vandalize.

Warrick's pro-life training began with a lecture from Scheidler.

When women go to abortion clinics, he said, most of them are very upset. "The idea is [for us] to make them more upset," he said. "Ask them how they feel when they know they are taking a human life. Remind them of how the women who've had abortions live the rest of their life with that ghost from their womb."

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Abortion, he told Warrick, "is no different than taking a bunch of 3-year-olds; cutting all their little heads off and throwing them in the trash . . ."

Warrick was soon chosen to join what Scheidler called his "Red Alert"—a group of carefully selected "activists" who would do more than stuff envelopes and picket.

During a Sept. 16 meeting with the "Red Alert," Warrick saw how Scheidler persuades his followers to "do God's will."

"You all know why we're here?" Scheidler asked.

The followers nodded solemnly. They were there to plan the most ambitious assault yet on Chicago's abortion clinics.

"OUR PURPOSE," said Scheidler, "is to save lives. We will use the Truth Team approach . . . we need at least two teams of two persons each in each clinic. At a given time, one of you will stand up in the clinic and make your statement . . ."

"You will say this is a sit-in to save lives and you will not obey the clinic officers. . . If they lock the doors or bar your exit, tell them you will file kidnap charges. If they touch you, it's assault. Make them afraid of you!"

"Our purpose is three-fold. Education, which we'll do by counseling the people in the clinics waiting for abortions. Disruption—we will probably stop everybody from doing their jobs. And publicity. This is going to get attention. We'll call the papers and the television crews as soon as you're inside the clinics."

But, Scheidler added, "This is not an official Friends for Life activity. The board does not want any liability. This is the PEACE organization. We're only meeting here at Friends for Life because it's convenient."

PEACE stands for People Expressing A Concern for Everyone. Although PEACE has been credited by the national media with invading and vandalizing abortion clinics throughout the country, there is no such organization. It is only an alias.

AS SCHEIDLER explained to a newcomer, "PEACE is purposefully set up for this [sit-in] sort of thing. No one can contact anyone in the organization because there is no board of directors."

Scheidler also issued another disclaimer that day: "I have to state something right now," he told his activists. "We are not conspiring here to break the law. We are conspiring to save lives."

"What we want is a very well organized

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sit-in from within. We're not looking for arrests this time. We've had our arrests." But, he added, "If anyone gets arrested, great!"

One of the followers interrupted. "I have a moral question," she said. "To get into the clinic in the first place, I'll have to make an appointment for an abortion. That would be lying."

"You don't have to lie to do this. You have to deceive," said Scheidler. But the woman with the conscience was not satisfied.

Scheidler got up from the table and went into the next office where the Rev. Charles Fiore, a Jesuit priest who works full-time for Friends for Life, had been sitting behind a closed door.

**A FEW MINUTES** later, Father Fiore walked into what the group now was calling "the war room" and gave this advice to the troubled woman:

"Jesuits," said the priest, "are very good on moral reservations. I do not like to lie. I don't want to and I won't, but whenever I need to . . . *prevaricate*, I will. . . ."

"Like if I don't want to use the name I am generally known by . . . my mother's maiden name is Walker. One of my [priestly] names is Paul, so I am Paul Walker. *That is not lying*," said Father Fiore.

"Go ahead," he told the woman, "make your appointment."

"Then you can go to . . . confession!" giggled another follower.

With the clinic invasions on the drawing board, Scheidler went on to the next order of Red Alert business: defacing placards on the CTA.

Scheidler flicked a bit of dried black paint from under his fingernails. "This is from our

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little crusade last night," he said.

He explained how he and another Friend for Life had vandalized posters put up by abortion clinics and referral services at CTA elevated platforms.

**BUT THE TASK**, Scheidler said, was too great "for just the two of us. There are so many of these ads. We need your help."

Scheidler said he already had prepared a press release denouncing the CTA for reneging on a 3-year-old agreement not to post the abortion clinics' ads, unless pro-life groups were allowed to post anti-abortion placards.

"This may be a big news story," said Scheidler. "If they send photographers out to get pictures of the ads, I don't want them to find any intact. We have to work fast."

At the end of the meeting, Scheidler handed out cans of spray paint and maps of the CTA L-routés—copied by Father Fiore.

Before the Red Alert left on its CTA mission, Scheidler issued this warning:

"If you're caught, you're on your own. If anyone asks, tell them you're an irate citizen or something . . . do not implicate anyone else, or say you got this stuff from Friends for Life."

Father Fiore apologized: "I know it sounds cold, but we have to do this because we would lose our federal tax exemption if we engage in any political activities."

Defacing CTA signs is but one of the pro-life pranks pulled by Scheidler and his band of followers. Some of her Friends for Life colleagues said they let Warrick in on a few of the other tricks they use to discredit and harass their "enemies."

A few followers bragged about calling abortion clinics and referral services and making fake appointments to disrupt patient schedules. Other times, they said, they call clinics and hang up. "We can tie up their phones all night if we try," said one Lifer.

**ONE WOMAN** said her favorite trick was calling abortion clinics and blowing a whistle into the phone receiver. "Drives 'em nuts," she tittered.

A Scheidler confidante told how he and Scheidler sent "some really grisly, gory post-cards" of aborted fetuses to the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court after their landmark decision legalizing abortion.

The message on the back of each card began "Dear Daddy," he said, and closed with, "See you in Hell."

In March of this year, a dozen of Scheidler's followers, under the banner of the PEACE group, were arrested following a sit-in at a Chicago abortion clinic.

On Sept. 6, all were found guilty of criminal trespassing, and given a one-year conditional discharge. The group is appealing.

**SCHEIDLER CALLS** those who were arrested at the March sit-in "my 12 apostles." And most of them, it seems, were not deterred by their brush with the law.

Several of the "apostles" were among those who gathered at the Friends for Life offices one late September weekend to make final plans for invading four Chicago abortion clinics.

The plans were carefully prepared. One woman visited one of the target clinics the week before the invasion to, as she put it, "case the joint and get a feel for the physical layout of the place." There was also a full rehearsal of the sit-in two nights before the attack.

**DESPITE SUCH** pains, however, the well-planned take-over of the Midwest Population Center at 100 E. Ohio was a bust.

Although the police didn't arrest anyone, the dozen demonstrators—Warrick, among them—also didn't stop many, if any, abortions that day.

It was a gray and rainy Saturday when Warrick arrived at the clinic. She was chosen to be the first one in. "You're very brave," the other demonstrators told her.

The take-over was to begin at precisely 9:28 a.m. But at 9:48, Warrick was still waiting.

Finally, the others arrived, but in two suspiciously large groups. The Midwest clinic receptionist caught on quickly.

"I think we've got a sit-in here," she yelled to other clinic workers.

No sooner had the demonstrators locked arms in a hallway outside what they decided was the "abortion chamber," than the clinic staff had locked the doors behind them.

**FOR THE NEXT** 10 minutes, the demonstrators chanted, "All we are saying is give life a chance." A clinic staffer came into the hallway, now splattered with coffee carried in by one of the demonstrators.

"Who made this mess?" he asked.

"Mess, mess?" the demonstrators screeched. "It's your mess. You're killing the babies. You're a mess."

About 20 minutes into the demonstration, the police arrived. By then, the clinic staff had effectively masked the protesters' presence from patients by locking the group into the hallway. And they had effectively drowned out the marchers' voices by turning the clinic sound system up to full volume.

But as the Muzak got louder, so did the marchers. They screamed their Hail Marys. They shouted the Lord's Prayer.

**FINALLY, THE THREE** police officers who responded to the clinic's alarm gently informed the sit-in leader that if the group did not leave, the clinic would file trespassing charges.

"You are trespassing," one officer said. "But you may go outside if you want and picket there as long as you want. Just don't touch anyone or block the entrance."

As the police escorted the demonstrators into the elevator, one of the clinic physicians stood, arms folded, in the hall.

As the elevator doors closed, the sit-in leader yelled at the doctor, "We'll be back. We will be back."