

Wine*From Lake Erie
to California*

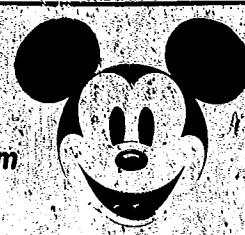
CHICAGOSTYLE

**Healer***Johnnie Coleman
banks on God*

LIVING

**Mickey***He's 50 now and
Ebert interviews him*

SHOW

**CHICAGO**
Sunday Sun-Times★★★★★
Final

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November 12, 1978

60¢

The Abortion Profiteers

Making a killing in Michigan Av. clinics

**By Pamela Zekman
and Pamela Warrick***Copyright, 1978, The Chicago Sun-Times*

Behind the Tiffany tinsel and Gucci glitter, the abortion business is booming on the Magnificent Mile.

In the shadows of shoppers bustling from store to store, anxious, desperate women make their way to appointments at Michigan Av. abortion mills.

Some are pregnant; some are not. It doesn't matter. Most of them will be sold abortions.

For the abortion profiteers, there is money to be made and no time to waste.

The women don't know it yet, but they are about to put their lives on the abortion assembly line.

FIVE MONTHS AGO, The Sun-Times and the Better Government Assn. began the first in-depth investigation of Chicago's thriving abortion business since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion on Jan. 22, 1973. We found:

- Dozens of abortion procedures performed on women who were not pregnant and others illegally performed on women more than 12 weeks pregnant.

- An alarming number of women who, because of unsterile conditions and haphazard clinic care, suffered debilitating cramps, massive infections and such severe internal damage that all their reproductive organs had to be removed.

- Incompetent and unqualified doctors,

Grand jury probe starts

Other officials scramble to react

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including moonlighting residents, medical apprentices and at least one physician who has lost his license in one state and faces revocation here.

- Doctors who callously perform abortions in an excruciating 2 minutes, when they should properly take 10 to 15 minutes, and doctors who don't even wait for pain-killing anesthetics to take effect.

- Referral services that, for a fee, send women to a disreputable Detroit abortionist, whose dog, to one couple's horror, accompanied the nurse into the operating room and lapped blood from the floor.

- Clinics that either fail to order critical postoperative pathology reports, ignore the results or mix up the specimens.

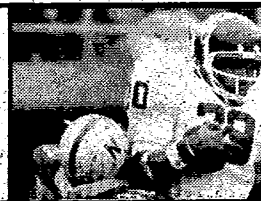
- Dangerously shoddy record keeping by aides who falsify records of patients' vital signs and who scramble or lose results of crucial lab tests.

- Counselors who are paid not to counsel

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*'Some are pregnant; some are not. Most will be sold abortions.'*

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**Carter
vetoes***President deems 3 bills
inflationary; Page 7***Heart
stopper***How Tommy's life was
saved 35 times; Page 9***Oklahoma
upset***Wisconsin ties Purdue;
Notre Dame wins; Sports*

Life on the abortion assembly line: Grim, grisly and greedy



THE ABORTION PROFITEERS

'Look, no matter how you put it, we're in the business of selling abortions.'

Continued from Page 1

but to sell abortions with sophisticated pitches and deceptive promises.

WHILE WOMEN SEEKING abortions still can find competent and compassionate medical care at a number of Chicago's 13 clinics, investigators working undercover in four Michigan Av. clinics have exposed a grim—and sometimes grisly—side to the legal abortion trade.

In the days to come, this newspaper will document how women are deceived, maimed, crippled and even killed by abortion profiteers.

Reporters and researchers worked in six clinics where more than half of the 60,000 abortions in Illinois clinics were performed last year, according to state records and BGA estimates. In four of those clinics, women's reproductive systems—indeed, their very lives—are endangered every day.

Those four clinics, according to the BGA estimate, account for more than one out of every three abortions performed last year in the state. The four are:

- Water Tower Reproductive Center Ltd., 840 N. Michigan.
- Biogenetics Ltd., 520 N. Michigan.
- Chicago Loop Mediclinic, 316 N. Michigan.
- Michigan Avenue Medical Center, 30 S. Michigan.

We also looked inside abortion referral services and a laboratory that does work for two of the four Michigan Av. clinics.

According to the nation's most reliable record-keeping agencies, at least 5 million women in the United States have obtained legal abortions since 1973. That is 1 out of every 11 women of reproductive age in the country.

In that time, more than 200,000 women have had abortions in Illinois, state health officials say. Because of the high cost of hospital care, the moral controversy surrounding abortion and the 1973 state law prohibiting doctors from performing abortions in their offices, state records show that more than 80 per cent of Illinois' abortions last year were performed in clinics.

The clinics are licensed and inspected by the Illinois Department of Public Health. But, our investigation showed, the state's regulation of these clinics is so slipshod that at least two clinics have been permitted to operate without valid licenses.

The health department allowed a third clinic to open even while another state agency was amassing evidence that the clinic



WOMEN SEEKING abortions can still find competent care, but many are deceived and crippled by abortion profiteers and their lack of concern for patient care and comfort. At Biogenetics, Ltd., where above photograph was taken, a trembling 14-year-old girl was hustled from

the recovery room so the clinic could close. When an undercover BGA investigator searched for a place for her to lie down, the investigator was told: "Don't put her in bed. They've all been made up. . . and you can't mess them up again."

Copyright, 1978, The Chicago Sun-Times; Sun-Times Photo by Perry C. Riddle

"Bring on the reforms"—an editorial in Views, Page 5.

owner had charged the Illinois Department of Public Aid for "abortions" on women who were not pregnant.

Although the department can quote statistics on the age, race and marital status of every woman who has received an abortion since 1973, it does not even know how many have died from their abortions.

But from federal sources, court suits and our own investigation, we learned that at least 12 women apparently have died following abortions in Illinois clinics—two of them after abortions in clinics we investigated.

Most of the state's clinics are in Chicago, and their clientele, according to state statistics, is as diverse as the city.

Some of those seeking abortions are children—as young as 10 years old. Others are grandmothers. But most are in their early 20s, single and seeking their first abortion.

Some are affluent. Others are poor. Some pay the \$150 to \$250 abortion fee in cash. Others use bank credit cards and some, on welfare, pay with their Medicaid cards.

WHATEVER THEIR reasons—health, money, career—they all want medically safe abortions. And many don't know where to turn.

Some eventually turn to newspaper ads—the ones that ran in bold type at the back of

the classified sections of this newspaper and others. (See accompanying note to readers on this page.)

Although there are dozens of phone numbers listed for abortion information and referrals, most of them ring at the same few places. In this newspaper alone, the Water Tower clinic ran nine different ads a day, with nine different numbers and nine different names.

At clinics such as Water Tower, the telephone is the most valuable single tool of the abortion trade.

At the Chicago Loop Mediclinic, which ran

'He didn't wait five minutes. He started right in. I was screaming, and squirming all over the table. I asked him to stop until the anesthetic took effect. . . .'

three ads under three different names, an administrator told women answering phones: "We have to corral the patients. . . . Our fiscal year ends in September, so go the extra mile."

FOR THEIR EXTRA efforts, clinic workers get \$5 cash bonuses for each abortion they sell over the phone.

Other ads promoted hot-lines and referral services that steer patients only to clinics that give them a cut of the abortion fee.

At a referral service that operates three hot lines, undercover BGA investigator Julia Rockler was admonished for not selling hard enough while working as an employee there.

"Look," said hot-line operator Valerie McCullough, "no matter how you put it, we're in the business of selling abortions."

"Use a positive approach. It's not, 'Do you want a termination, but when?'"

To make sure their telephone sales force is positive enough, McCullough and her twin sister, Victoria Sanders, who runs a competing hot line, pay commissions. They sell abortions like other hucksters sell food freezer plans or slick magazines.

the Michigan Av. abortion clinics.

Patients may wait hours in crowded waiting rooms just to get to the reception desk to pay their fees, before sitting down again to wait for consent papers and other forms.

The patient may be greeted by a clinic "counselor." Under state regulations, clinics are required to counsel abortion patients. Some clinics take time with patients to probe their motives, fears and misgivings.

But some of the Michigan Av. clinics make a mockery of their mandate. At least one offers no counseling at all. Others make feeble attempts at counseling groups of 10 or more in three minutes or less.

AT THE BIOGENETICS clinic, BGA investigator Michelle Young was ordered by her supervisor to stop counseling a distraught patient and get back to the reception desk.

"We don't have time for [counseling]," the supervisor said. "We're much too busy."

When staff members do have time to talk to patients, they are under orders not to say anything to scare the women away.

"Don't tell them it hurts," our undercover counselor was told. "Don't answer too many questions because the patient gets too nervous, and the next thing you know they'll be out the door."

Are they pregnant?

In the mills on the Magnificent Mile, women may never know. Only a careful internal examination by a doctor and carefully controlled laboratory tests on samples of the woman's urine can confirm pregnancy.

But some doctors begin abortions without telling patients whether they are pregnant. And at the Water Tower clinic, employees who tell patients the results of their pregnancy tests risk losing their jobs.

When tests are inconclusive at quality clinics, patients are asked to come back later for more tests. But at Water Tower and Biogenetics, employees may withhold pregnancy test results and sell the confused women a procedure to extract the menstrual blood—or worse, an unnecessary "abortion"—"just to be safe."

LAB TECHNICIANS in some clinics complain that they have so many tests to per-

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orm, they can't wait the two minutes it takes to obtain results.

At Biogenetics, our investigator saw the clinic thrown into chaos when doctors discovered they'd already performed at least two abortions on women who were not pregnant.

They blamed their "mistakes" on the lab technician, who attributed his errors to the rush of patients and "one helluva hangover."



'The doctors race each other. Especially on Saturdays, they compete to see who can get the most patients done.'

Abortion peril greater before 1973 legalization; story on Page 6.

Medical Center, there isn't even time for that. Investigator Felkner reported:

"I tried to get the blood off the floor from the first girl. While I was bent over trying to wipe it up, the next girl was brought in. There was still this bloody towel on the table. I hoped she wouldn't see it. . . ."

Even the doctors don't have time to clean up themselves in some clinics. Investigator Mindy Trossman watched Dr. Arnold Bickham go from one abortion to the next at his Water Tower clinic without washing his hands or donning sterile gloves.

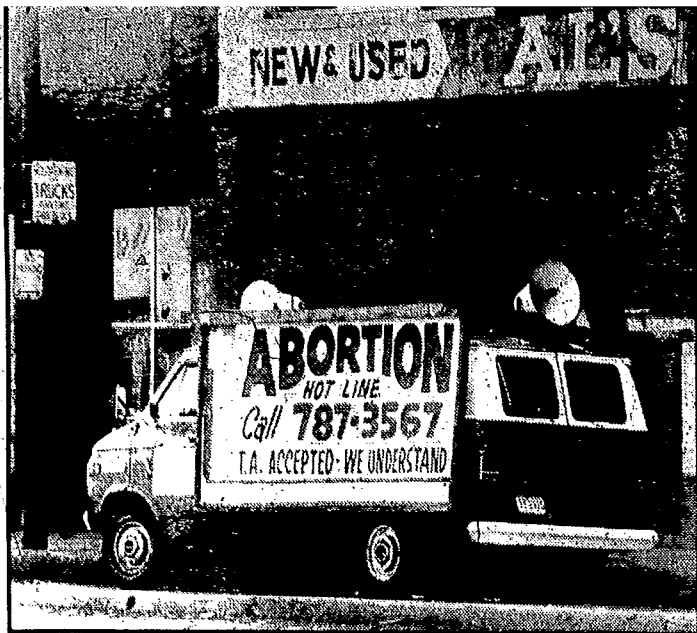
According to experts, a safe and relatively pain-free abortion should take about 15 minutes from the time the doctor meets the patient to the time the doctor completes the procedure. It is not a complicated operation and need not cause great pain. Some doctors and patients have described the discomfort as nothing greater than a cramping sensation.

Complications may occur even in abortions performed by the best physicians, taking the greatest care—but that is rare, medical experts say.

A doctor properly begins with a manual examination of the woman's uterus to determine how long she has been pregnant. Using an instrument resembling a shoe horn, the physician opens the vagina for a clear view of the cervix—the mouth of the womb.

The doctor grasps the cervix with a pair of tongs and administers at least one pain-killing injection to the mouth of the womb before beginning the actual abortion.

As the area grows numb, the doctor gen-



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BORROWING a technique often employed by merchants to hawk special deals or discount goods, an abortion referral agency uses a sound truck to hype abortions. Such commercialization and other blatantly deceptive practices were widespread in referral agencies investigated by The Sun-Times and the BGA.

tly inserts a series of rods, each slightly wider than the one before, to stretch the mouth of the womb slowly open. Then the doctor uses a vacuum-suction machine to remove the inner tissues of the womb—including the tiny fetus.

Finally, the doctor carefully scrapes remaining tissue from the uterine walls. Any uncollected tissue could cause infection. If the doctor is not careful, the womb may be punctured, causing serious damage to it and other organs.

AT THE MICHIGAN AV. abortion mills, doctors do all this in just two to five minutes. And, if his own records are to be believed, Dr. Ming K. Hah at the Chicago Loop Mediclinic is quick enough to perform two abortions at the same time.

In staff meetings at the Loop Mediclinic,

employees complain that they can't keep up with the doctor's frenzied pace. "The doctors race each other," said a former Mediclinic nurse. "Especially on Saturdays, they compete to see who can get the most patients done."

Doctors there, and in at least two other clinics, are paid by the abortion. They reduce their patients to a row of pencil marks on their surgical suits. At the end of the day, they count the pencil marks to find out what they're owed.

In their haste, some doctors miss tissue that should have come out.

Doctors' haste also may account for their failure to wait the few minutes it takes for anesthetics to take effect. But since it can actually take longer to perform an abortion

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A note to our readers

A five-month investigation by The Sun-Times and the Better Government Assn. has disclosed fraud and other abuses in some referral agencies and clinics providing abortion services in Chicago.

These findings are documented in the accompanying stories and others to follow. The Sun-Times series also will report on clinics and hospitals where safe and compassionate medical care for women is available.

But this newspaper has decided that it cannot determine safe and sanitary condi-

tions at all the abortion counseling services and clinics which advertised in our classified pages. Thus we are ceasing publication of such advertisements at this time.

Reliable abortion counseling should be obtainable from family physicians. Other organizations that are prepared to respond to women's health questions are:

- Planned Parenthood Assn., 55 E. Jackson, 322-4240.
- Health Evaluation Referral Service, 2757 N. Seminary, 248-0166.

Saturday is the busiest day of the week at

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Life on abortion assembly line: grisly, greedy

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on a woman screaming and squirming in pain, one medical expert has suggested doctors who don't wait for the patients to grow numb are simply sadistic.

AT LEAST ONE doctor working in Michigan Av. clinics has been known to give no anesthetic at all. "The pain was unbearable," said one patient. "I don't think he gave me an anesthetic. It happened so fast."

Women who scream are told to shut up. Others thrash around and are held down by aides. Even when they ask for additional pain-relievers, some doctors don't wait.

A 21-year-old secretary paid Biogenetics an extra \$50 for an injection of the tranquilizer Valium as well as an anesthetic. "They gave me the shot just seconds before the doctor appeared," she recalled. "He didn't wait five seconds. He started right in. I was screaming, and squirming all over the table. I asked him to stop until the anesthetic took effect. It was killing me. I continued to

scream."

The Valium and anesthetic finally took effect... in the recovery room.

The recovery room in some of the Michigan Av. clinics is the place where women recover fast. They have to. After 15 minutes, they are told to get out.

Medical experts consulted by The Sun-Times and BGA say a patient should rest at least 30 to 60 minutes after an abortion. But on the assembly line, there's no time for such "luxuries."

A 25-year-old rape victim waited from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. for her abortion at the Chicago Loop Mediclinic. When she finally saw the doctor, it was for just four minutes—the time he took to perform the abortion.

"I was very weak and woozy in the recovery room," she recalled. "I was lying there about 15 minutes when the lady said, 'You aren't going to get any better sitting there sulking. Get up and get dressed.'"

"I couldn't stand. I had to lie down on the dressing room floor for another half-hour." Six weeks later, her private physician told her she was still pregnant.

At Biogenetics, a 14-year-old, who had been pushed out of the recovery room so the clinic could close, slumped on the floor of the waiting room. BGA investigator Young searched frantically for a place where the

girl could lie down. "Don't put her in a bed," Young was told. "They've all been made up [for the next day] and you can't mess them up again."

Postoperative care, say the experts, is absolutely essential to safeguard against serious infection and other life-threatening complications that may follow abortions.

Money, say some Chicago abortionists, is essential first.

At the Water Tower clinic, Dr. Bickham demanded \$25 from a woman who came to him to complete the abortion he had performed on her daughter.

The girl had received a \$110 abortion on Wednesday—Bickham's bargain day, when he drops the price \$15. But dead tissue apparently had been left inside her during the discount abortion.

The girl was only 17. She sat doubled over in a straight-backed chair, sobbing. Bickham told his receptionist he would not treat the girl for less than \$25 cash. But the mother didn't have the cash, so she stood by the door to the operating rooms for five hours, pleading with anyone who came out, "Please. Is the doctor busy? I must talk to him."

Finally Bickham came out. "He wanted to know what he could do for me," said the mother. "I asked him to help my daughter.

She's in pain."

"Do you have \$25?" he asked the mother. She asked if he would take a check or send her a bill later. He wouldn't.

Bickham told the mother and daughter to get out or he would call the police. They refused to leave. Bickham placed the call and waited only long enough for police to escort the mother and daughter away.

Then he closed the clinic for the day.

NEXT: Meet the people who profit from women's pains.

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