

Investigate the Abortion Industry

by Eve Tushnet

Marla Cardamone smiles shyly from her photograph. Christi Stile is laughing in hers. But beneath their pictures, their mothers testified to the pain and grief of having a daughter killed or gravely injured by abortion. Cardamone died at age 18. Stile, 26, has been in a coma for eight years following a botched abortion. They are two of the reasons Priests for Life President Father Frank Pavone called for a "full investigation of the abortion industry," in full-page advertisements that ran in the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. The advertisement charged that abortion is "one of the most unregulated surgical procedures in the nation," and called on pro-abortion groups like Planned Parenthood to join Priests for Life in investigating and regulating the industry.

The ad described the events that led to the imprisonment of Dr. John Biskind of Scottsdale, Arizona, who was convicted of manslaughter after LouAnne Herron bled to death following an abortion Biskind performed. In yet another case cited in the ad, an abortionist failed to help his patient when his staff called saying the woman's life was in danger. The abortionist, David Benjamin, was found guilty of murder in 1995 and received a sentence of 25 years to life. Father Pavone offered to provide documentary proof of his charges to anyone who wrote in to Priests for Life and requested it.

Christi Stile had her abortion in 1993, a day after she turned 18. Her mother Kay said, "We were told by the clinic staff that the only possible risk was heavy bleeding, and that the clinic had everything on hand to deal with that situation should it arise." But when Christi began to hemorrhage, Kay said, "We found out that the way they take care of hemorrhage is to put you in a car to the hospital, and that if you died between the clinic and the hospital, they were not liable." Christi went into full cardiac and respiratory arrest, and then slipped into a comma from which she has never awoken. Kay said, "It angers me to hear people say that legalized abortion profits women. It doesn't profit women. These young women and these young girls put their lives on the line every day they walk into a clinic to have an abortion. What they don't know is that they may never walk again... like my daughter."

Deborah Cardamone's story is even more heart-rending. Her daughter Marla "had planned to put her baby up for adoption." But a medical-social worker convinced that Marla's use of anti-depressant medication had damaged her baby, "pressured Marla to have an abortion." Deborah kissed her daughter goodnight and left the hospital room. At 9:15 the next morning, I received a call from the intensive care unit," she said. "The nurse said, 'Something went wrong. It's very serious.'" Cardamone raced to the hospital and consulted the doctors. She was not taken to see Marla. Suddenly, she recalled, "the room filled with white coats. A doctor sat in front of me and held my hands. 'My daughter is dead isn't she?' Cardamone asked." The doctor nodded. After Marla's death, Cardamone discovered that the social worker that persuaded Marla to have the abortion had never even seen Marla's sonograms. The sonogram report read, "No abnormalities detected." Marla's baby would have been born healthy. Cardamone challenged women's groups like the pro-abortion National Organization for Women: "Why are they so quiet?"

Who's Watching the Abortionists?

It's extremely difficult to get accurate information on injuries and deaths to women who abort. Pro-abortion groups often claim that abortion is "safer than childbirth." But in 1998, the August 26 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* noted that "some states – Alaska, California, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Oklahoma – neither collect nor report abortion-related information to the [Federal Center for Disease Control]." And "some state health departments lack information on 40% to 50% of abortions performed in the state." So Father Pavone and other groups have compiled listings of known cases of malpractice or abortion-related deaths. The listings only cover cases that made it to court or showed up in reports of women's deaths.

The Priests for Life ad has provoked a sharp response from pro-abortion activists. New York State Senator Eric Schneiderman wrote to the *Journal* protesting the ad. Schneiderman wrote of his "outrage at [Priests for Life's] dishonesty and hypocrisy." In his view, the ad was "an astonishing effort to turn the truth upside down." He charged that Father Pavone's views, by making abortion illegal, would lead to a world in which women are killed or injured from botched, bloody abortions performed by unskilled practitioners."

Many authors have debunked the claim that when abortion was illegal, countless women died of "back alley abortions." Bernard Nathanson, a founder of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League who later became pro-life, has admitted that he and other abortion advocates simply made up numbers of women who

had died from illegal abortions. In 1972, the year before Roe v. Wade, 39 women were reported to have died from illegal abortions. Yet representatives of Planned Parenthood and other pro-abortion groups have claimed that 1,000 or even 8,000 women died per year from illegal abortions. Schneiderman wrote that "advocates for legal abortion have saved the lives and health of countless women." Deborah Cardamone and Kay Stile respectfully disagree.

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