

WHAT WE KNOW NOW THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW THEN

ROE v. WADE

By Christina Quick

Norma McCorvey, who lived for years as the anonymous Jane Roe, was 21 when she became the lead plaintiff in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* court case that challenged Texas' anti-abortion statutes.

The tough-talking high school dropout never had an abortion. With the case tied up in appeals en route to the U.S. Supreme Court, McCorvey gave birth to a daughter, her third child, whom she gave up for adoption.

The court ruling that followed nonetheless altered the lives of millions of people not only in Texas but also around the country. That decision more than three decades ago touched off a political and ethical maelstrom that continues unabated.

More than 40 million babies have died in abortion facilities across the United States since

abortion became legal throughout the country 33 years ago today: January 22, 1973. Yet, in an irony that demonstrates the shifting dynamics of the abortion debate, the woman who started it all no longer views abortion as a fundamental right.

McCorvey, who says she became a Christian in 1995, now heads a Dallas-based pro-life organization she calls Roe No More Ministry.

"It wasn't until I had a regenerated heart that the truth of what abortion does could find a place in my intellect," McCorvey says on her Web site. "Once that truth took hold, there was no turning back."

McCorvey's perspective isn't all that has changed in the intervening years. In 2006, experience and scientific knowledge reveal evidence few people considered when the high court first issued its 7-2 ruling.

What science has shown us

The question of when life begins served as one of the key points of contention in *Roe v. Wade*. At the time, the court acknowledged that medical science didn't know a great deal about fetal development. Rather than relying on science, the justices attempted to project social tradition and philosophical theory on the question before them.

"There has always been strong support for the view that life does not begin until live birth," Associate Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in the majority opinion. "This was the belief of the Stoics. It appears to be the predominant, though not the unanimous, attitude of the Jewish faith."

Today, unborn babies can be viewed and photographed in three-dimensional detail. Early in the development process, organs can be

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identified, fingers can be counted and heartbeats and brain waves can be monitored. Delicate surgery can be performed months before a child’s birth.

Dr. Jean Wright, a Christian pediatrician and anesthesiologist with the Mercer School of Medicine in Savannah, Ga., says there are few serious scientists or medical practitioners who can deny that the unborn are human beings.

“In 1974 when I was still a medical student, for all I knew an unborn child was a blob of tissue,” Wright told TPE. “In 2006, with the technology and information that’s available, I find it difficult to believe that anyone in the medical community really thinks that. If we were debating a *Roe v. Wade* case today, no one would even go down that path because it would look foolish.”

Wright, who has given expert testimony on three occasions before congressional committees, says scientific evidence demonstrates that abortion not only ends human lives, but also inflicts horrible pain on unborn babies in the process.

“Over 25 years ago most of the

neonatologists, pediatricians and other doctors who dealt with preemies or the unborn had no idea these children could feel pain,” Wright says. “Yet those of us who practice pediatric anesthesia have had to change our practice because we’ve realized that not only do these babies feel pain, there is evidence they might feel it three times more strongly.”

Wright says pain receptors in unborn babies appear as early as six weeks after conception. By 12 weeks, there are clear connections between these receptors and the brain and spinal cord.

When unborn babies receive blood transfusions via a needle inserted in the liver, they withdraw from the painful poke, says Wright. Chemical pain indicators also become elevated.

“We can’t even look each other in the eye anymore and say these babies don’t feel pain,” Wright says. “Yet it seems that many peoples’ hearts are dark, and they don’t want to know the truth.”

A recent study published in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood* showed that babies even cry in the

womb in response to loud noises — a finding that researchers stumbled across by accident.

Video-recorded ultrasound images showed babies opening their mouths, depressing their tongues and taking several irregular breaths before exhaling and settling back down. Researchers even observed the babies’ lower lips quivering.

“Now that technology allows us to see the child growing in the womb, that has reframed the debate,” says Dorothy Timbs, legislative counsel for the National Right to Life Committee. “When *Roe* was decided, the debate centered on whether we were dealing with an unborn child. Now it’s about what is best for women.”

What experience has taught us

But when it comes to advancing women’s causes, *Roe* seems to have failed the test of time on that count as well. There is no evidence to support the notion that abortion has improved either the health or status of women.

“At one point people thought

it was an empowering thing for women,” Timbs says. “What we’re finding is that abortion cripples women. Women should not believe the lie that to be equal with men they have to be willing to kill their unborn children. Women who have had abortions and suffered from that are speaking out.”

Studies have shown a marked increase in depression and suicide rates among women who have had abortions.

In a 2004 poll by Americans United for Life in Chicago, more than 60 percent of respondents called abortion a negative thing for women.

“Our 33 years of understanding the impact of abortion on women seems to confirm that it is not good,” says Daniel McConchie, a bioethicist and director of public policy for AUL. “They said abortion would provide an opportunity for women in poverty to put off childbearing. Yet it did not solve the poverty question.

“They said it would create a safe environment for women. Yet women still die from abortions, they’re still maimed, and they still suffer lifelong consequences.”

What witnesses have told us

Before 1973, few people understood the realities of the abortion procedure. Although a few states allowed abortion to be performed on a restricted basis, many abortions took place in illegal settings and the people involved maintained low profiles.

Today, a number of people who have left the abortion industry are speaking out about what takes place behind closed doors.

Dr. Beverly McMillan, a Jackson, Miss., gynecologist who performed first-trimester abortions in the late 1970s, says she always considered the fetuses she removed to be living beings.

“We always knew it was a baby, a human life,” McMillan says. “We just chose to write off the baby’s rights, the baby’s life, in favor of the

mother’s preferred lifestyle.”

McMillan says the turning point for her came when she examined the dismembered body of an aborted 12-week-old boy. At the time, she had three young sons of her own. When she saw the tiny, perfectly formed arm, it reminded her of her 4-year-old son who enjoyed showing off his bicep.

“It just kind of slammed me,” McMillan says. “Here was this beautiful little baby who had been destroyed. I thought, *What am I doing?*”

McMillan, a born-again Christian, now serves on the board of Pro Life Mississippi, one of the most successful anti-abortion groups in the country. By pushing for legislation restricting abortion, the group has helped shut down all but one abortion clinic in the state.

What’s at stake

Though opinion polls show a majority of voters oppose overturning *Roe v. Wade*, abortion appears to be on the decline. Informed consent laws and other restrictions, which pollsters say the public generally supports, have led to a decrease in the number of abortions performed.

In addition, many abortion facilities are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit medical personnel willing to participate in the practice.

Pro-life groups concede, however, that the battle is far from over. One in four pregnancies in this country still ends in abortion, and one-third of women will have at least one abortion in their lifetime.

McConchie notes that Planned Parenthood is expected to turn a \$32 million profit this year from performing abortions. “They won’t give up that practice easily,” he says. “For them there is a great deal of money that’s at stake.”

For people like McConchie, there is something far more valuable at stake: the lives of unborn children. **tpe**

CHRISTINA QUICK is staff writer for *Today’s Pentecostal Evangel*.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

“There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God’s forgiveness.

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:13

B. Believe in Jesus

(put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

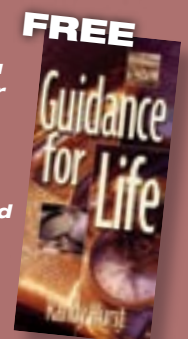
“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

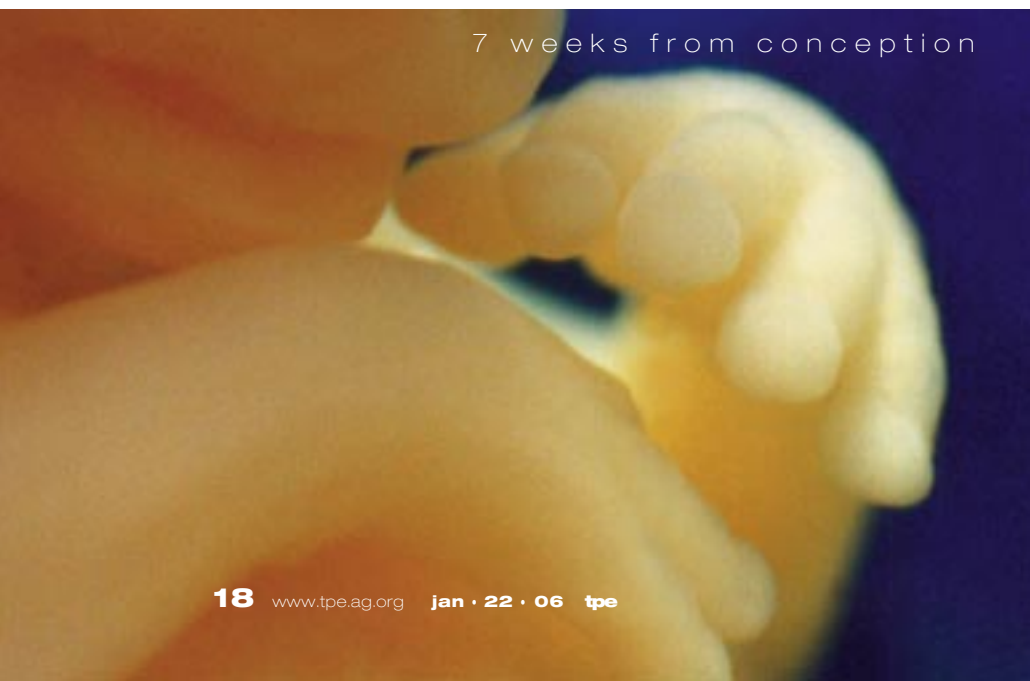
If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:



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