

# HOW AN ABORTION AGENCY FUNCTIONS

By KATHY MORAN

The deep, soothing voice at the end of the telephone line answers with three letters, "L-A-W."

To a desperate woman, those letters may seem like the last hope.

The initials stand for Legal Abortions for Women, an abortion referral agency with four branches in metropolitan Detroit, including Livonia.

The agency began a "couple months ago," according to "Henry Barton" (an alias) who says he's in business to help desperate pregnant women. What he does is arrange trips to New York for abortions. It's his full-time occupation.

"I serve a very important function," he says. "It's very soul-satisfying for me."

A call from a nervous woman typically goes like this:

Barton asks for the woman's first name and last initial and asks questions to determine just how far the pregnancy has advanced.

"We don't moralize here," he told one hesitant girl. "I just lay the facts on you."

After he determined that the caller was in her second month of pregnancy, he began assuring her that at that stage she was not carrying a "baby."

"Don't start identifying with it as a baby, by no stretch of the imagination is it a baby. It is just a late period."

That particular woman was told she could be "instantly depregnantized" by a method known as vacuum curettage in a "plush, fully-equipped medical center in Manhattan."

"You will be treated at the finest center in Manhattan by the top gynecologist who heads the department," Barton added.

"You will be given the red-carpet treatment with a private operating room and private dressing room."

"Incidentally, it makes for a nice trip. You will be in the center of Manhattan near the shopping area near Saks Fifth Avenue and Central Park."

Though he declined to give the name of the hospital or doctor, Barton told the girl that it was a safe, simple procedure. She could leave by 8 a.m. the next morning and be back by 3:30 p.m. in the afternoon.

"We're a well-greased operation, geared for action - it's our business to get you to the hospital as safely, quickly and cheaply as possible," he added.

The vacuum curettage method is used for pregnancies up to 10 weeks at a total charge of \$175 plus plane fare, Barton said. Women under 21 can fly to New York for \$58 stand-by, and those over 21 fly for \$90 round trip with a reservation. The agency's charge is included in the hospital fee, but Barton declined to say how much it is.

After the operation, the woman can rest in an adjoining room and then go shopping before catching the return flight at 2 p.m., he said.

Later when talking with this reporter, Barton said he refers about 15 to 20 girls to New York each week, most of whom are under 21 and many of them single. He said he averages 20 to 30 phone calls a day.

So far his only advertising is by personal contacts, leaflets he distributes in parking lots, and radio ads on WRIF-FM and WABX-FM.

"We're a legitimate business; we're not underground by any means," he said, adding that his agency is one of four LAW offices in the area including one in Birmingham, Harper Woods and east Detroit.

When talking to a woman who is within 20 weeks of pregnancy, Barton says, "I never refer to it as a baby - it isn't a baby. It is an embryo with no size, shape or identity."

"But as the biological time clock ticks on, it becomes a baby."

In the 11th and 12th week, he said, the abortion is performed by a D. and C. operation in which the embryo is scraped from the uterus. Between the 13th and 20th week, a saline solution is injected into the uterus and the fetus dies and is passed out.

"The closer a woman gets to that state (1 to 20 weeks), the more I begin to lean the other way and try to discourage them," he said. "I begin to hedge a bit then."

Barton tried to discourage one woman wanting an abortion in the 24th week. Instead of telling her she could have the abortion that late in pregnancy, he gave her a "gory description in raw language of what happens," he said.

"That way I didn't stick her with a baby she didn't want, but I made her want that baby

so bad that she was protecting it as if she were holding it in her arms."

He stressed that "warm, personal" attention given to each woman at the Manhattan hospital "from the time the doorman opens the cab."

He asks each girl who goes there to call to assure him she has returned safely.

Barton said he uses an alias to protect his wife and five children from crank calls, which he said are "in a minority."

Before the girl leaves Detroit, she has to meet with Barton at a mutually convenient place "like Big Boy's" so they can sign release papers.

But he said he doesn't keep a file on the women and destroys any record he has after each one returns.

Since abortions are illegal in Michigan, it is probable that "Henry Barton" and other referral agents will continue to profit from sending women to New York where the operation is performed quickly and legally.



## m. m. memos

A pair of birthdays officially marked in our house last weekend were too momentous to pass without a mention.

Our two January girls have their birthdays on successive calendar dates, so there's always a lot of celebrating. Especially so this year, because one became a teen-ager and the other became an adult.

The new Miss 13 is so pleased with her status that she didn't even mind when a friend solemnly offered me his condolences because we have three teens in the family.

And that occasioned a bit of calculating. No, we'll never have four teen-agers, we decided, because the oldest will hit 20 before the youngest can get to 13.

Miss Now 18 took advantage of a day off from her part-time job and headed for the city hall to register to vote. She also enjoyed a birthday dinner beer as another mark of adulthood.

We even managed the family celebrations on successive evenings - rather unusual for us because of evening working hours - so there was a lot of present-opening going on.

That led our youngest to wish out loud that her birthday, many months away, would come a little sooner.

Somehow I couldn't agree. It seemed to me birthdays are rushing by awfully fast and there must be a way to slow them down a bit.

-Margaret Miller

## DeLano LWV Speaker

Fred DeLano, editor of the Plymouth Mail & Observer, will give background information on the proposed city of Plymouth Heights to members of the Plymouth-Northville League of Women Voters Thursday, Jan. 20.

He will speak at a meeting at 8 p.m. in the home of Mrs. William McNamara, 1417 Palmer, Plymouth.

The group also will discuss the question of recreation in Plymouth and the roles the city, the township, the Board of Education and other groups should play in its planning.

A consensus vote on both questions will be taken after discussion.

Women interested in joining the group should call Mrs. Charles Ayers, 511 Reed, Northville.



(Observer photo by Bob Woodring)

## WSU Women Plan Film

Two - in - one servings of "Civilisation" will be dished up by Women of Wayne Alumni and the Livonia Public Library beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 20.

history of the cultural life of Western man will be shown in the conference room of the Carl Sandburg library, Seven Mile between Middle Belt and Merriman.

The rest of the series will be offered the next six Thursdays, said Mrs. Betty Heitman, president of the Farmington - Livonia club of the Wayne State University organization.

On Feb. 24, when the final episode of the series is shown, commentary from Prof. Richard Bilalitis of the WSU fine arts faculty is planned.

Women of Wayne are supporting Prof. Bilalitis in his work of cataloging the university's art collection.

Mrs. Heitman said "Civilisation" is being shown two segments at a time so that those interested may see the entire series in a shorter time.

"We set the hour early in the evening so that students may attend without being out too late," she added. "The two films shown each evening will amount to a program approximately two hours in length."

Stanley Bien, director of libraries in Livonia, said the library was glad to have the opportunity to participate in the showing.

Members of the Great Books Club, which regularly uses the conference room Thursdays, are planning to join those watching the "Civilisation" series.

The first two segments are titled "The Frozen World" and "The Great Thaw."



WOMEN OF WAYNE president Betty Heitman and Stanley Bien of the Livonia Public Libraries plan a Thursday evening "Civilisation" series. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring)

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