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# WHO ARE ROE AND DOE ?

## Duo now fight for life

Norma McCorvey and Sandra Cano have spoken together before. But this year's scheduled joint appearance at the March for Life in Washington, D.C., has a special significance.

Jan. 22, 1998, marks the 25th anniversary of the two U.S. Supreme Court decisions that, combined, legalized abortion through the full nine months of pregnancy: *Roe vs. Wade* and *Doe vs. Bolton*.

McCorvey was Jane Roe. Cano was Mary Doe.

But while as "Roe" and "Doe" they helped to make abortion legal, the two are now outspokenly pro-life.

The stories of how they came to be tangled in the two cases—culled from interviews and written accounts—are tragic blends of desperation, ignorance and deception.

As Cano told the *Catholic Courier* in a Jan. 9 telephone interview, "*Doe vs. Bolton* is nothing but a lie. ... I never in my entire life thought about having an abortion."

### Troubled beginnings

McCorvey entered the world as Norma Nelson Sept. 22, 1947, in Lettesworth, La. Cano was born Sandra Bensing Feb. 16, 1948, in Atlanta, Ga.

Both would live troubled lives.

McCorvey's mother hit her and constantly belittled her. At age 10, while living near Dallas, McCorvey robbed some money from a gas station and ran away. She was caught and sent to a boarding school where she was seduced by a woman. She then lived at a state school off and on until she was 15.

Raped at age 15 by a man, McCorvey got married at 16. Her husband was arrested after beating her when he learned she was pregnant. After she gave birth to a daughter, McCorvey claims in her 1994 book, *I am Roe*, she signed some papers her mother brought her—discovering after the fact that she had given the baby up for adoption.

There followed several years of confused relationships with women and men, and ongoing substance abuse. McCorvey had a second baby, gave that one up for adoption, then, in 1970, found herself pregnant for a third time.

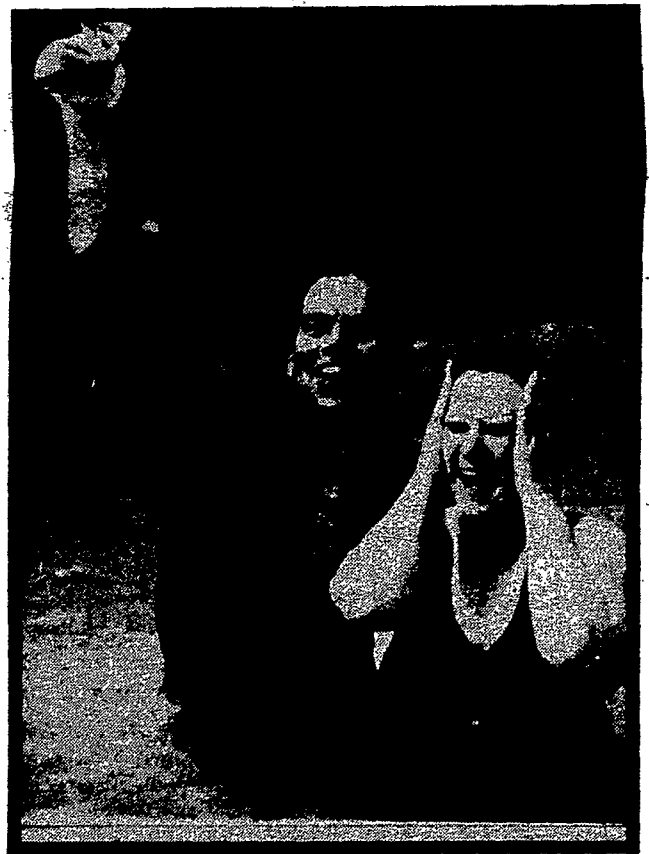
It was at that point that she sought an abortion, then illegal in Texas. Trying to improve her chances, she falsely claimed she was pregnant as a result of rape. Still unable to obtain an abortion, she agreed to become part of a suit to overturn Texas' abortion laws.

Sandra Cano also found herself married at 16, though she had little choice in the matter.

Cano had dropped out of school early and when she was 16 dated a young man twice—her first-ever dates. On their third date, they traveled to Oklahoma. Although nothing happened between them in Oklahoma, her family brought them back to Atlanta and forced them to marry.

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STORY BY LEE STRONG



Operation Rescue leader, Rev. Filip Benham, baptized Norma McCorvey ("Jane Roe") Aug. 8, 1995.