

Roe

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Within days she found out that he was a convicted child molester, and he was arrested for having violating parole when he took her to Oklahoma. Over the next six years, he was in and out of jail. But she remained with him, and they eventually produced four children.

"I always assumed that when you married you stayed married," Cano explained. "I didn't have the knowledge in my head that you don't have to live with someone who's bad."

A combination of difficulties with her own family and her own mental problems led to Cano's two children being placed in foster care.

When she became pregnant a third time, she realized because of her situation that she could not take care of yet another child, so she put it up for adoption.

By 1970, pregnant with her fourth child, Cano had had enough with her marriage.

She went to Atlanta Legal Aid to seek help getting a divorce, and to get back the two children in foster care.

The cases

McCorvey, naively hoping that she would win her challenge to Texas' abortion laws in time to obtain an abortion, readily signed all the necessary papers.

She won her case, but the state appealed the decision. She realized then that she would not be able to obtain an abortion. She also realized, as she wrote in *I am Roe*, that to the lawyers representing her, she was "nothing more than just a name on a piece of paper."

The baby was born and put up for adoption. McCorvey has never knowingly met her *Roe* daughter — who some 37 women have claimed to be, she said.

Sandra Cano's case began with her signing papers, too. But she was unaware of their contents.

At Atlanta Legal Aid, a lawyer referred her to an attorney not affiliated with the legal aid service. The second lawyer helped her receive a divorce and custody.

Then her attorney — who is now deceased — allegedly began using Cano's situation, including her pregnancy, to pursue other ends.

One time, Cano recalled, the attorney asked her, "Do you believe in abortion?" I said no.

Nevertheless, the attorney allegedly scheduled an abortion for Cano. When Cano found out, she fled Atlanta. The lawyer contacted her and told her that she didn't have to have an abortion, but that she was needed for the case.

"Her case, she said, was about women's liberation," Cano claimed. "It was about women making the same amount (as men)."

Cano returned and apparently signed the affidavit that became the basis for *Doe*

'If the judge had asked me if I wanted an abortion, I would have said no.'

— Sandra Cano (Mary Doe)

us. *Bolton*, though without reading it.

"I didn't know what they was," Cano said of the papers. "I trusted (my lawyer). She helped me get my babies back."

The affidavit claimed that she had applied for an abortion at a private hospital. This was the hospital at which the lawyer, not Cano, had allegedly scheduled the abortion that led to Cano's flight.

It also claimed that she had also applied to a public hospital (now known as the Grady Health System) for an abortion, but that a panel there had denied her application.

In a letter dated Feb. 10, 1997, however, Grady Health System's director of medical records reported that although Cano had been a patient at the hospital several times, the hospital had no records of her being treated at the hospital during the time in question.

Cano was never called upon to testify once the case began.

"If the judge had asked me if I wanted an abortion, I would have said no," Cano declared.

Cano gave birth, and gave the child up for adoption. The two have been in contact in the years since.

Aftermath

On Jan. 22, 1973, the Supreme Court ruled on both cases.

Roe vs. Wade permitted abortion on demand during the first trimester of pregnancy. *Doe vs. Bolton* allowed abortions throughout the full nine months of pregnancy for a variety of reasons, including for the sake of the mother's health — an exemption that courts have defined so broadly as to allow abortion under almost any circumstance.

"The night I found out that *Roe v. Wade* had been decided, I cried," McCorvey wrote in *I am Roe*. "I eventually drank myself to sleep." She only told a few people that she was Jane Roe, and didn't actually go public until 1984.

Cano recalled her own reaction upon learning of the decisions: "I felt like a heavy weight came down on me. To this day it has not lifted."

In 1974, she went to the Atlanta Right to Life office to see if it would be possible to overturn the decision, but she didn't know enough details about the case — claiming she was Jane Doe rather than "Mary Doe," for example — to convince them she was indeed Doe. They turned her away.

For a time, she stopped speaking out. "I was embarrassed for so long to let

somebody know," she said.

In 1988, however, she saw Operation Rescue protests on television.

"It's like something hit me," she said. "You're sitting here with them on TV and you're partly responsible and not doing anything."

At that point, she decided to try to reopen the files. The lawyers who represented her in 1970 fought to keep them sealed. But she won, and for the first time, actually read the affidavit.

"I was horrified at what I saw," she recalled.

She also found out, however, that despite the inaccuracies involved in the 1970 case, it could not be reopened because the law it had originally targeted had been stricken from the Georgia books.

But the public battle had made her known.

She and her second husband were sitting on their porch one night, when a vehicle drove up and shots were fired at them. One morning, she went out and found writing all over her car. "On the hood was written 'You will die b____,'" she said.

Out of fear, she retreated into silence. And in 1991, she began raising her grandson, Joseph, and wanted to be even more careful on his account.

McCorvey too found her life threatened after she went public. In 1989 shots were fired into her home.

But rather than keep quiet, she became even more active, working for abortion clinics and trying to speak out. But she found herself rejected by pro-choice leaders.

In her 1997 book, *Won by Love*, she pointed out that she was criticized for her manners and her lack of education, and pro-choice leaders tried to keep her out of the public eye at events.

Pro-life activists

The two ultimately became pro-life activists thanks to children who touched their lives.

In Cano's case, it was due to the premature birth of a baby to her daughter who had been the center of the *Doe* case.

"The Supreme Court baby that I had, Melissa, gave birth April 16, 1992," she said. She later realized that the date was the anniversary of the day the *Doe* case had been filed.

The baby was only about four-and-a-half months along, and doctors would not give it life support, saying it was too young to survive. According to Cano, they only referred to it as a "fetus," not a baby. She and her daughter stayed with the child for two hours until it died.

She firmly believes that the doctors' refusal to call the child a "baby" is the result of legalized abortion. She recognized that in the face of such hardening attitudes, she could no longer remain silent.

McCorvey's turnaround came as the re-

sult of getting to know 7-year-old Emily Mackey.

In 1995, by an odd twist of circumstances, Operation Rescue's national headquarters moved next-door to the Dallas abortion clinic where McCorvey was working. One of the pro-life group's volunteers, Ronda Mackey, regularly brought her two daughters, Emily and Chelsey, to work. One day while the two girls were playing in front of the clinic, one of the clinic escorts tried to trip them.

Enraged, McCorvey told the escort to go home, then went over to apologize to the girls, explaining that not all grownups were like that and that she herself liked children.

According to McCorvey, Emily responded, "Then why are you letting the little ones die inside?"

Unable to respond, McCorvey said she fled back into the clinic, thinking the child thought of her as some sort of monster. Yet the next time Emily saw her, the little girl ran up to her and gave her a hug.

Soon McCorvey was playing with the girls and getting to know their mother. She even got to know the head of Operation Rescue, Rev. Flip Benham, a man she had always called "Flip Venom." He constantly treated her with respect, and even apologized for some things he had said to her in the past.

In fact, she reported, everyone at Operation Rescue treated her better than she had been treated by pro-choice leaders.

McCorvey began to realize that the pro-lifers were caring individuals, and not just hate-filled, judgmental fanatics. She found among them deep concern and ongoing support for the women in troubled pregnancies — unlike the "rough and uncaring" attitudes she saw in the pro-choice movement.

On Tuesday, Aug. 8, 1995, Rev. Benham baptized McCorvey. She soon resigned from the clinic, rejected lesbian acts as sinful, declared herself pro-life and began to work for Operation Rescue. Despite earlier comments that she supported first-trimester abortions, she is now completely opposed to abortion.

In June 1997, she left Operation Rescue to branch out on her own and form *Roe No More* Ministry, through which she speaks against abortion. And although she is not specifically lobbying for the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe*, she would be happy if it did.

"I think everyone who's pro-life would like to see *Roe vs. Wade* overturned," she said in a Jan. 15 teleconference.

Cano, meanwhile, became energized two years ago after hearing about partial-birth abortions, recognizing that *Doe* was being used as the basis for justifying these late-term abortions.

"I decided then and there I would get out and no matter what I have to do, if I can move it one step closer to ending abortion, I'm going to be there," she declared.

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