

DIOCESAN NEWS

Police 'pleased with cooperation' of protesters

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Operation Save America (OSA) ended April 25, after a week of peaceful protests against, among other things, abortion and pornography in Buffalo and Rochester.

Despite weeks of anticipation in which OSA opponents expressed concerns about potential violence, no arrests of any OSA activists — or of demonstrators opposed to them — were made during the week.

"We were very pleased with both sides, and the cooperation we received from both sides," said Officer Carlos A. Garcia, public information officer for the Rochester police.

In fact, the only arrest made in Rochester was of a man who was not connected to the protests themselves. He was taken into custody by police outside of Rochester's Genesee Hospital during an April 21 noontime protest.

James Krentel, 34, of Rochester, had firearms and ammunition in his car, but was unarmed when he got out of his car and began mimicking shooting at protesters. Krentel reportedly told Rochester police he was "pro-choice" and did not like the tactics of pro-life demonstrators, although he did not say what he planned to do.

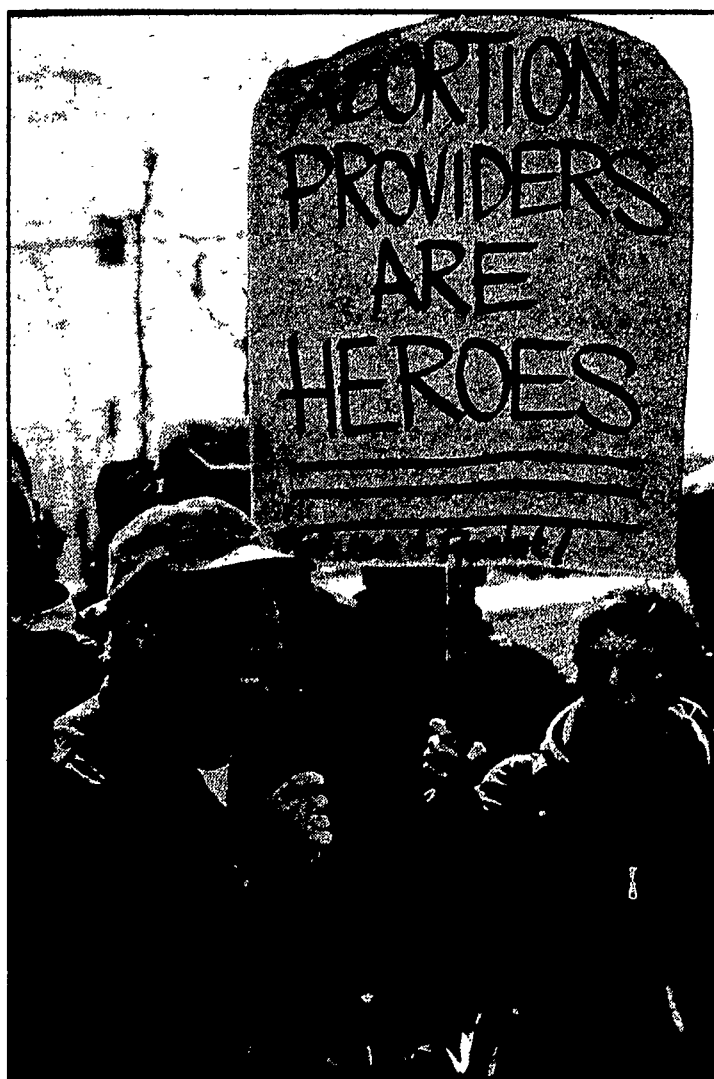
Krentel — who was not affiliated with any pro-choice group — was arraigned in Rochester City Court April 22, on three misdemeanor counts of harassment and released on \$500 bail. He was also ordered to surrender a cache of several weapons and ammunition stored at his apartment, according to Garcia.

Meanwhile, Operation Save America drew groups of activists from across the country to various sites throughout the week, protesters numbering between 30 and 150 who picketed sites where abortions were performed, and also at high schools and a bookstore in Buffalo. OSA was organized by Operation Rescue National, a national pro-life group led by Free Methodist Rev. Flip Benham of Dallas, Tx.

The protests ended at Faith Tabernacle Church in Lockport, where about 30 pro-life activists had spent the morning distributing literature to congregants, according to OSA organizer Rev. Mike Warren of Brighton Presbyterian Church in Rochester.

The minister deemed the week a success, claiming activists knew of at least four women who decided to not enter abortion clinics during the protests in Buffalo. Rev. Warren also said similar protests might take place in Virginia, Kansas and Pennsylvania in the next few months. He also dismissed those critics who claim that pro-life activists are fueling a climate of violence by holding such protests.

"We need to go out to the places where abominable deeds are being mainstreamed," he said.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

Rusty Thomas of Texas, a pro-life activist, yells into a public address system outside the offices of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley April 21. Pro-choice activist Tracy Stern of Georgia holds pro-choice sign.

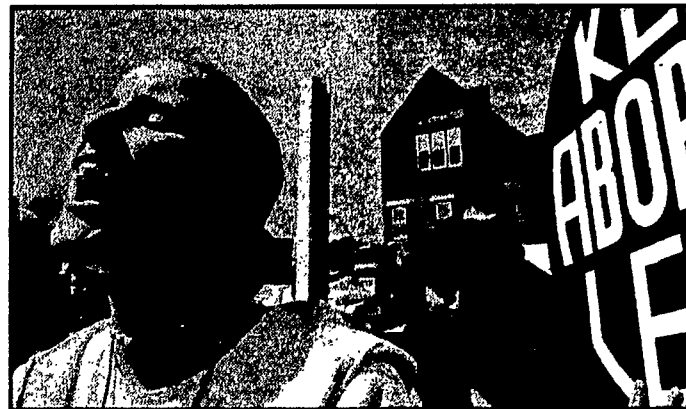
About 150 OSA protesters spent one day in Rochester — April 21 — that began at Planned Parenthood and ended with a protest on the sidewalk outside the Brighton home of Dr. Eric Schaff, a local abortion researcher and pro-choice activist.

The Rochester protests drew about 150 activists — who hailed from all over the country — to the protest sites. A small number of Catholics, including a few from the Diocese of Rochester, participated, although there was no formal presence by either diocesan or parish representatives.

A smaller number of pro-choice demonstrators, between 25 and 75, were present at the Rochester sites picketed by Operation Save America activists as well.

Before it began, OSA had been heavily opposed by many civic leaders and citizens in both Buffalo and Rochester who had signed petitions against it. One petition called "Save Our Civility" circulated in Rochester. It asked OSA leaders to cancel the protests for fear they would create an atmosphere that might lead to violence against clinics and abortion providers.

OSA organizers, and those who defended their right to protest — including Bishop



Greg Benenati/Photo Intern

Rachael McGlade sings "We Shall Overcome" in front of the Genesee Hospital as part of the pro-life demonstration on April 21. Behind her, Nancy Leonard attempts to convert pro-choice counter-protesters.

Matthew H. Clark — countered that OSA opponents were being tarred with a broad brush that covered both those who violently and nonviolently protest abortion.

The protests turned out to be peaceful, though marked by occasional verbal arguments between individual pro-life and pro-choice demonstrators.

Federal, state and local police were out in large numbers at all the protest sites in both Buffalo and Rochester, videotaping demonstrators and generally keeping a close watch on events.

On April 21, Operation Save America activists picketed at the offices of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley, 144 University Ave. Because of a federal judge's court order issued earlier this month, those activists could come no closer than 50-60 feet to the entrance of Planned Parenthood or any other site where abortions are performed.

More than 80 city, state and federal law enforcement officials were present at Planned Parenthood and stood on both sides of University Avenue. A tense moment came when Rev. Benham began speaking through a public address system.

A U.S. marshal ordered the minister to stop, noting that the federal court order prohibited the pro-life protesters from using any loudspeaking device that disturbed the general peace outside of a clinic. The minister complied with the order, and also told two young men who tried to speak through the PA system to stop as well. However, Rev. Benham told reporters the court order was unjust.

"This is one of the most draconian things I have ever witnessed to silence the Gospel of Christ," the minister said.

After picketing Planned Parenthood, the protesters marched to Genesee Hospital. It was there, under the watchful eye of more than 100 law enforcement officials, that the pro-choice and pro-life contingents mingled the most during the day, exchanging words occasionally.

Kathleen Tyree, a nondenominational Christian from New Orleans, played the fiddle during the demonstrations. Tyree said she had traveled to Rochester to stand against abortion.

"I'm very concerned about America," Tyree said. "She needs to stop the shedding of innocent blood or the wrath of God will come down."

But Terry Lindsey of Rochester, a peace activist and pro-choice supporter, criticized the pro-life activists for carrying signs with photographs of aborted fetuses. He criticized as well pro-life activists' rhetoric which he said creates a climate endangering abortion providers and intimidating young women. He also knocked the Rochester Diocese for defending the activists' right to protest. Lindsey said the church was being selective in defending only the free speech rights of those with whom it agreed.

"If the (Ku Klux) Klan rallied in Rochester, would the Catholic Church step forward to defend its right to march?" he asked rhetorically.

After Genesee Hospital, the pro-life activists drove to the offices of Dr. Morris Wortman in Brighton, where they picketed outside as police kept about 35 pro-choice demonstrators separate from them on the other side of the street.

Tom Raddell, a Catholic from Cleveland on the OSA side, said that he thought the police were doing a professional job, but that they should be concentrating their efforts on a different group of people.

"What the police should be doing is arresting abortionists because they're murderers," he said, adding that abortion clinics are "the most protected sanctuaries in our nation."

Rochester to host National Workshop on Christian Unity

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

Approximately 400 ecumenical officers, delegates and participants will gather in Rochester May 3-6 for the 36th National Workshop on Christian Unity.

Among highlights of the gathering, based at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, will be several ecumenical worship services that will be open to the public. These include the opening night service at 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 3, at Downtown United Presbyterian Church, preceded by a procession from the Crowne Plaza, and a Roman Catholic/Eastern Catholic service at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 4, at St. Josaphat's Church. At the latter, Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Basil H. Losten will preside, Bishop Matthew H. Clark will preach and Bishop Thaddeus S. Peplowski of the Polish National Catholic Church also will

participate.

The workshop will feature sessions on such topics as full communion, Christianity in the midst of religious diversity and unity in the global economy.

The national workshops began as a result the Second Vatican Council, which opened the door for more cooperation between Catholics and other Christian denominations. That cooperation has included ongoing discussions, mutual understanding and acceptance in such areas as baptism and social ministry.

"This is in a sense a celebration of what we have done in the past," acknowledged Deacon Brian McNulty, coordinator of the diocesan Office of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs.

Deacon McNulty, whose diocesan position will be cut effective May 15, was among those who first proposed in 1996 that Rochester host the convention. The

group preparing the proposal had wide support from the local religious community as well as civic leaders — factors that national workshop coordinators weigh in deciding where to hold conventions.

"Rochester is known for a good ecumenical atmosphere," he said, citing such efforts as the Greater Rochester Community of Churches and the 1988 covenant between Rochester's Episcopal and Roman Catholic dioceses.

Two workshops will specifically target Rochester initiatives: one, on such projects as the Progressive Neighborhood Federal Credit Union — Sister Beth LeValley, SSJ, who helped to start the ecumenical credit union, will be one of the speakers — and one on ongoing discussions between local black ministers and pastors of suburban churches.

The Rev. Laura Collins, co-pastor of the Laurelton United Presbyterian Church,

Irondequoit, and a member of the local planning committee for the workshop, said that this year's gathering has special significance.

"As we face the new millennium we really are facing a different world than we faced 30 years ago when these discussions began," she noted. "How do we face the millennium together as churches?"

Deacon McNulty acknowledged that while some differences continue among the Christian churches in such areas as mutual recognition of ministry and authority, there are many areas in which more cooperation is possible.

"We can find ways to walk together — certainly for service to the world," he observed.

More details about the workshops are available from Rev. Collins, 716/482-9200, or the Web site: www.nichf.com/nwcu/nwcu.htm.