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Fostering respect for life

EDITOR'S NOTE: Some names in this story have been changed to protect sources' identities.

In the late 1980s, Alice was a 19-year-old college student who had just begun dating Joe, a 20-year-old who attended the same school. The relationship became serious very quickly, and the couple had not been dating long when Alice realized she had missed her monthly menstrual cycle.

"It was six weeks after we actually started dating that I learned I was pregnant," Alice recalled.

Feeling frightened and vulnerable, Alice decided she could not turn to her family for help. Instead, she contacted Planned Parenthood, an organization she knew of due to its strong presence on her college campus. As a student short on funds, Alice figured Planned Parenthood was a good place to receive a free pregnancy test as well as some counseling.

Planned Parenthood, indeed, gave Alice a free pregnancy test, confirming that she was pregnant. As the shock of her situation slowly sank in, her counselor at Planned Parenthood then asked Alice when she wanted to schedule an abortion.

"There was absolutely no discussion," she recalled.

Alice shared the news of her pregnancy with Joe. Both were in shock, and felt frightened and vulnerable. Alice told Joe that Planned Parenthood had expected her to have an abortion.

"I just didn't know what my options were," Alice said. "I just assumed it was the right thing to do. I went through with it. The whole thing was a blur."



U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

The abortion was scheduled for the following week. As the procedure began, Alice became distressed about what she was doing, so much so that the two Valium pills she was given provided no relief. After the procedure, she insisted on seeing what had been extracted from her body. Her request was honored in an attempt to calm her, and she was told that what she saw was not a baby, but simply a mass of tissue.

"I felt a sense of void when it happened, but I kind of pushed that away," Alice said.

Now a wife and mother, Alice, who lives in the Rochester area, looks back on her abortion and wishes that she had been counseled about her options before the procedure. She also wishes she had been informed about the emotional side effects of having an abortion.

"It's going to haunt you for the rest of your life," Alice said.

ABORTION ANNIVERSARY

Alice is one of millions of women who have had abortions since the procedure was

legalized by the 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*. According to Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for diocesan Catholic Charities, more than 40 million unborn lives have been lost during the last 30 years. During that period society has become numb to using death as a solution to problems, she noted, and abortion has led to a disregard for life.

Armantrout said that legalized abortion is just one of many life issues that have helped make America a cul-

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Story by Jennifer Ficcaglia