



WHERE DO WE BURY THE SURVIVORS?

by Richard Farnsworth

An old childhood riddle can still fool some who hear it for the first time: A plane crashes right on the border of the USA and Canada. Where should they bury the survivors? Perhaps you will start arguing that it doesn't matter where the plane crashes, but it's where the survivors live and come from etc. You fail to notice the key word is "survivors." The survivors are alive! You don't bury them!

Or do we?

In the 1990's Balkan wars, Serbian soldiers raped Moslem women of Bosnia, a little country breaking free from Serbia. Besides the obvious depravity of the men, there was their cruel knowledge -- which proved correct -- that every woman raped would be shunned by her community. "Damaged goods." How could the woman's friends and even family turn their backs on her for something done to her against her will? Yet this happened. Many of the women later attempted suicide, some succeeding. They would bury themselves because of a trauma perpetrated upon them.

Women and men who abort have different degrees of involvement in the decision. Surprisingly, a fair number of abortions are forced upon the mother and father by others, often the parents of a young pregnant girl. And though many women and men participate willingly in the decision to abort their child, they often feel later as though they really did not decide, but just went along. They do not claim this absolves them, but when the decision was made, they often did not feel fully rational or able to reflect on the full nature of abortion. If they were also pressured, they let themselves comply rather than take an unpopular and difficult stand.

We learn even those who were forced into the act faced a future of enormous guilt and emotional troubles. Post-abortive stress syndrome is analogous to post-traumatic stress syndrome. The mother often witnesses (even hazily) the death of the fetus. She certainly knows

that a death has occurred even if she is not conscious enough to see it. This alone makes her like a foot soldier in combat, witnessing brutality and death. Even an absent father can feel strong emotions from a life being snuffed out and taken away.

Physically, the women and men survive. But very soon, no one wants to discuss the matter with them. "Put it behind you. Move on. You can't look back. You have your whole life to live now." The American Psychiatric Association does not recognize Post Abortive Stress Syndrome. As a result, therapists (who look to the APA to inform and instruct them) are not given direction as to how to recognize or treat the individual suffering, and the syndrome goes untreated.

Perhaps the APA is responding to a logical belief that if a woman has a problem with her pregnancy, and then terminates it, the problem is solved and so she should improve and be happier. It would be logical if the woman merely had a big splinter in her stomach. Remove it, the pain goes away, the stomach heals. But our human offspring are not mere splinters in the bodies of their mothers. In ways that elude the logic of splinter removal, mothers especially have physical, emotional and intellectual senses about the unborn child.

Connections between them occur and grow from first awareness of pregnancy. After abortion, often each parent of the baby dwells on the absent baby, the lost child, the creature they will never see, never hold, never converse with. Sometimes these symptoms become prevalent only years after the abortion, another reason some professionals don't even know about this syndrome.

The emptiness can be emotionally crushing. One woman who persuaded her daughter to abort told us that in the waiting room, each of them was waiting for the other to stand up and say "Let's get out of here." But neither did. The daughter went through with the abortion. In not too long a time, the mother and daughter became estranged, rarely speaking to each other for many years. The shadow of death was over them.

Continued on page 4



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From Our Director

Mary Ann McNeil



Last week a woman called the PATH office after seeing an ad for our program in her church bulletin. She had been a member of a bible study group at her church for over 20 years, but was not aware that there were bible studies just for people who have suffered following an abortion. She presumed that a few of the women she knew had had an abortion, although she did not know for certain. I told her that recent statistics indicate that one third of American women will have an abortion in their lifetime and that 27% of those who obtain abortions are Catholic (source: <http://www.grtl.org/statsandpolls.asp>). I assured her that, sadly, she is probably right about knowing women who have had this experience. There was an audible pause at the end of the phone. Then she said, "I need to think about this. Maybe we'll have you talk to our group."

As mentioned in the front page article of this newsletter, those who survive abortion are the walking dead. The public continues to be stunned at the sheer numbers of abortions because of the secrecy surrounding it. In what other circumstance do we expect an individual to undergo an emotional, physical, and spiritual trauma, then go right back to school, work, and family as if nothing has happened? Yet women and men have been doing just that.

The good news is that this silence is coming to an end. Courageous women, such as Jody Duffy, are participating in the Silent No More Campaign and speaking out about the truth of abortion. My prayer is that the United States is reaching a 'tipping point'. Hopefully the combination of recent gruesome revelations regarding infamous Philadelphia abortion provider Kermit Gosnell, and video of Planned Parenthood employees assisting individuals posing as child traffickers, will push us to the tipping point (source: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/house-of-horrors-victims-allege-gosnell-forced-them-into-abortion>). And hopefully the women from the Silent No More campaign will shove us right off the proverbial fence. We will finally have to answer the question: Who does abortion benefit? The abortionist, lining his pockets with the ashes of our children.

Welcome and Goodbye... Changes in PATH's Board of Directors

Let's welcome new board members Fr. Brian Lorei, parochial vicar at St. Thomas More parish in Decatur, Deacon Mike Mobley, who serves at St. Stephen the Martyr parish in Lilburn, and Caryn Stofko, communication and marketing coordinator at St. Vincent de Paul. Thank you to Kelly Markillie, Dottie O'Connor, and June Webb, who have generously served on PATH's Board of directors for the last few years, and who rotated off in 2010. June was one of our founding board members, and has served since PATH was incorporated in 1996! Although they will no longer attend meetings and vote on PATH issues, all have offered to continue serving PATH as advisors and ambassadors.



Fundraiser: “a fine effort”

by Richard Farnsworth

For a long moment, there was a bittersweet silence. Then we all applauded, and rose into a standing ovation. Tears glistened on cheeks of presenters and listeners alike. Every heart felt sorrow and joy for Meredith, Carolyn and Sharon, who had just courageously and dramatically shared three intertwined experiences of fear, pain, sorrow, shame, anger, forgiveness and healing.

Pictured to right is Meredith Blackburn, one of the three speakers. Pictured below Carolyn Harrison, Sharon Harrison, and Scott Harrison smile for the camera at the fundraiser dinner.



The three women’s presentation seemed to flow effortlessly, as if they were having a conversation with a friend. Motivated by their desire to offer to other women the grace and healing they have experienced, they had invested the necessary preparation time to create a presentation so smooth that it seemed unrehearsed. Many thanks to them for their gift.

Each woman was linked to the other two by overlapping experiences and feelings, derived from family relationships and chance encounters that had to be more than coincidences. Each story was enriched by the other two; yet, each stood on its own, offering its own points, lessons and feelings.

Founder and Executive Director Mary Ann McNeil reported that the November 4, 2010 PATH Dinner raised a new record for donation pledges. She added that the entire PATH community -- board members, facilitators, and participants in retreats and Bible study groups -- all felt infused with great energy and enthusiasm from the experience of that night. Mary Ann also presented a 10-Year Volunteer Award in the form of an Angel of the Heart statue to Jody Duffy.

Jamie Thietten, who had performed at our 2009 dinner, thrilled us with several selections besides “My Chance,” including “Love’s Work Is Never Done,” a new anthem encouraging those who give so much serving others.

Our stalwart, Msgr. Lopez, used a story of a young man who was forced to use treasure looted by the Nazis from Jewish victims to help two Jews get to safety. Father stressed the need to find both grace and resources in even the most dire or sinful circumstances, and to help the fallen to find redemption that is theirs for the asking.

Father Joseph Peek led the blessing before dinner, and new PATH board member Father Brian Lorei closed the night with a moving prayer.

The Jeff Simpson Trio provided wonderful musical entertainment during the gathering, dinner and dessert times. Petite Auberge Restaurant catered the delightful meal. Bev Osterbur ably coordinated volunteer efforts from board members, facilitators and friends, who prepared Kenny Hall at Christ the King Cathedral, supervised the seating, served the wine, and saw to every detail. The happy result was a very smoothly run evening, that actually ended on time. Our arms may be sore from patting ourselves on the back, but we can be forgiven some measure of pride in a fine effort with such nice results.





Help The Survivors Dig Out

continued from page one

Survivors of abortion often bury themselves. They cover themselves over with work, tasks, activity, all to keep their minds busy. Friends who urged them to abort drift away. The bond between them is death, as it was for the mother and daughter above. Who wants to spend time with someone who will bring death to mind every time she sees her? The friends join the burial party. Spouses can do the same, even spouses who do not know about a past abortion. They sense the post- abortive one being distant, having difficulties that are hard to understand, but which strain the marriage. They learn what things not to bring up, what ways to see another bout of depression coming on. They find -- and leave -- a hole in their marriage, where whatever hurt occurred however long ago is sucking the life out of things.

Eventually, the survivors feel that the entire world has buried them. As they participate in the burial, they detach one part from a part of themselves from the rest.

Imagine the trouble that causes! Covered with simplistic assurances that do not touch the truth, and an unwillingness to revisit an unpleasant time and event, the survivors find themselves truly alone, unable to connect with themselves or with those they know who don't want to talk about the abortion or discuss the bad feelings that overwhelm them at times. Still less hopeful is the notion of trying to talk about any of this with new people in their lives. The isolation can be total.

Where should we bury the survivors? Or can we help them find a way to dig out from under? If you are looking for a way, or you know someone who is, first, know that there is a warm, reassuring, thorough healing available for all who can make the first step of reaching for it. To reach, or to help someone reach, contact PATH at 404-717-5557.



On September 1st PATH said goodbye to one of our most loyal and dedicated workers...Sr. Pat Thompson, RSM. Over the last 14 years, Sr. Pat has served PATH as retreat director, bible study facilitator, volunteer trainer, intake worker, and author of our aftercare program called Ongoing Healing.

Sr. Pat has embarked on a new journey in Columbus, Georgia, where she will continue to serve those in need of post abortion healing in the diocese of Savannah. Fort Benning, located in Columbus, is expecting an increase in their population since the BRAC program (Base Realignment and Closure) is moving the Armor school from Fort Knox in Kentucky to Fr. Benning. Those of us who work in post abortion ministry are aware of a great unmet need in the military. Sr. Pat hopes to meet this need by offering Rachel's Vineyard retreats to the people of Columbus, including military personnel.

Sr. Pat felt called to serve in Columbus, not only because of the unmet military need, but because she hopes to continue the presence of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas in Columbus, where they have been since before the Civil War. Two Sisters of Mercy of the Americas have retired, and one of the retired sisters is moving back to Baltimore.

Although we will miss Sr. Pat's direct involvement in PATH, we recognize that her move is a blessing to many....the launching of a new satellite for post abortion ministry. Her first Rachel's Vineyard retreat is scheduled for September 9-11, 2011.



March for Life Heals the Secrecy and Silence by Jody Duffy

Silent No More Awareness is a campaign made up of women who regret their abortions and men who regret their lost fatherhoods. Silent No More seeks to expose and heal the secrecy and silence surrounding the emotional and physical pain of abortion through the public testimonies of these men and women. This is Jody's eye-witness report on the January 2011 March on Washington event.

I joined Silent No More awareness Campaign in 2009 after attending the seminar presented by co-founder, Janet Morana, at the Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference. It was a dream come true to join them in Washington DC for the March for Life. During the rally, I ran into Cardinal Wohl, Archbishop of Washington DC. Cardinal Wohl is an occasional visitor at my parish, Transfiguration, where his niece is a parishioner.



I had the opportunity to hang out with Kelly Clinger and husband, Matt. Kelly, a recording artist, is a spokeswoman for Silent No More.



After attending a Rachel's Vineyard retreat, 13 members of Phoenix Silent No More decided to attend the "March for Life;" they were supported by the Bishop of Phoenix, friends, and the Knights of Columbus. Next year, I would like a big group of us to come from Atlanta.



Theresa Burke and her family were there to cheer us on throughout the march. Theresa, of course, is the founder of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries and Rachel's Vineyard Retreats. She is always on the go, yet manages to keep it all together. She is wise, warm, and always welcoming.

These four young ladies represent a movement called "Back to Life" focused on abortion targeting minority women. In the spring of 2012, thirty-nine young women, for the thirty-nine years since Roe vs. Wade, will set out on foot across 300 miles for a 21 day trek, starting from the nation's largest Planned Parenthood in Houston and ending at the Dallas courthouse, the birthplace of Roe v Wade.



One by one, forty-five of us shared our testimonies in front of the Supreme Court building so that marchers could hear the truth about the impacts of abortion on men and women. I met and reconnected with so many wonderful people. What an experience!

