‘Jane Roe’ Made Abortion Legal. Then a Minister Changed her Heart.

Just last month, two major marches in Washington DC drew hundreds of thousands of Americans to public demonstrations on both sides of the four decade long battle over the ‘right to abortion’ on demand legalized by the infamous Supreme Court *Roe* decision. It’s probably safe to say that the vast majority of activists on both sides don’t know who or what Roe was.

Norma McCorvey was the woman named Jane Roe in a 1969 Texas court case challenging that state’s abortion law, a case that went to the Supreme Court as the vehicle to overturn all US state laws in 1973 and ensconce abortion as a right. But McCorvey wasn’t all that involved in the case as even this New York Times article admits.

McCorvey, five months pregnant with her third child, signed an affidavit she claimed she did not read. She just wanted a quick abortion and had no inkling that the case would become a cause célèbre.

Four months later, she gave birth to a daughter and surrendered her for adoption. (Her second child had also been given up for adoption, and her first was being raised by her mother.) She had little contact with her lawyers, never went to court or was asked to testify, and was uninvolved in proceedings that took three years to reach the Supreme Court.

Something most people who even know who she was probably don’t know is that Norma McCorvey never had an abortion. This Times article reports that her mother raised her first child, Norma ‘gave her second child up’ for adoption, and “surrendered” her third child for adoption while her court case was still being

heard. But she gave them life. As tough as her life circumstances had been, she gave life to three children and families have grown as a result. She admitted to a local radio station "I think I have always been pro-life. I just didn't know it."

Another point coming out of accounts of Norma McCorvey's life and death is that her conversion from abortion backer to pro-life advocate, from seeker to Christian to baptized Catholic, came as a result of the friendship first encountered with minister Flip Benham, whose "humility disarmed her", according to this Washington Post piece. She worked in an abortion clinic, he worked next door in a pro-life office.

As McCorvey stood outside smoking…Benham sat down beside her. He apologized for calling her names: "I saw my words drop into your heart, and I know they hurt you deeply."

McCorvey was taken aback. She excused herself, went inside and cried, she wrote (in her book *Won By Love*)…

"The war in front of our clinic became a war of love and hatred," McCorvey wrote in her book.

Love won. Her longtime friends at Priests for Life know her fuller story personally, from working with her in the pro-life movement for over two decades, and receiving her into the Catholic Church. Here's an account by Fr. Frank Pavone, who knew her best.

She was used for a time as an icon by those in the "pro-choice" movement, but they were plagued by her straightforwardness. On one occasion, when she was being shown a new abortion device, she shocked the clinic administrator by bluntly asking, "Is that what you guys use to suck the children out of their mothers' wombs?"

Then she began flirting with the truth, a little here and a little there. As St. Peter was brought to repentance at the

moment he heard the cock crow, Norma heard several cocks crow. In many instances, it was a normal human event that became a deep interior summons to life. Rev. Flip Benham, the founder of Operation Rescue, apologized to her one day for some unpleasant things he had said on a previous occasion. His admission to her that he, too, was a sinner, opened her eyes to the fact that pro-lifers were not self-righteous.

On another occasion, she was moved by the hug of Emily, the little girl whose invitations to Norma to come to Church finally prevailed upon her. This is significant. Many in the abortion industry fail to recognize the value of the unborn child's life because they fail to recognize the value of their own lives. The hug and invitations of this little girl gave Norma a message that many others in her life had denied: You are lovable; you are good: your life is valuable.

Conversion is not an easy road. Norma began realizing many things she didn't like, such as how cold and callous the abortion industry really is, being more concerned for itself than the good of the woman. She even began persuading women not to have the abortions for which they were calling to make an appointment. Little by little, truth drew her in and proved itself more attractive than the abortion industry. Her rediscovery of the value of her own life helped her rediscover the value of the unborn.

That is what the pro-life movement has been about, since Roe v. Wade, it will continue to be the mission of the pro-life movement to be a whole life message of love and care for mothers and their children, and Norma McCorvey dedicated the last decades of her life to ending what Roe wrought, and spreading what she knew from firsthand experience. Which wasn't abortion.

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