



FAMILY
COUNCIL

inside:

**The Baby in the
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**The Brief Life and
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Mary Rose Doe**



**APRIL 2020
UPDATE LETTER**

Dear Friends,

Every person who is active in the pro-life movement has a story—a reason why they fight against abortion.

Some narrowly survived being aborted as unborn children.

Others had abortions during their younger years, and have since repented and received God's healing grace.

For others it was hearing from abortion doctors and clinic workers who had conversion experiences.

Many Baby Boomers became pro-life after witnessing an actual abortion performed on a sonogram in the film "The Silent Scream."

More recently, many Millennials have become pro-life after watching undercover videos that exposed how Planned Parenthood and other companies bought and sold organs and tissue harvested from the bodies of aborted babies.

Stories like these change the way we look at unborn children.

They expose the grisly reality of what happens inside abortion facilities all over the country every day.

When people hear these stories, they stop thinking of the abortion debate as something abstract.

Being brought face to face with the horror of abortion changes us forever.

I want to share one story with you that affected many members of the pro-life community in Arkansas 37 years ago.

It's the story of a tiny baby who was legally aborted and then literally thrown away like trash.

Her death galvanized pro-lifers and helped fuel efforts that paved the way for our work at Family Council.

I hope you will read this special update letter from us as we share with you the story of Mary Rose Doe.

Sincerely,

Jerry Cox
Family Council President

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THE BABY IN THE DRAINAGE DITCH

The Brief Life and Tragic Death of Baby Mary Rose Doe

By David Cox, Assistant Director of Family Council

On April 28, 1983, an eight-year-old boy playing by his yard near Little Rock's Cantrell Road discovered something wedged between two large rocks in a drainage ditch. Lying there amid the garbage and runoff from one of the city's busiest streets was the lifeless body of a tiny baby girl.

The perfectly formed child with white skin, brown eyes, and auburn locks of hair rested limply between the rocks while the umbilical cord still attached to her body wound its way through the dirty water.

Authorities eventually determined that the baby had been legally aborted before she was tossed in the drainage ditch. She was approximately 28 weeks—seven months—gestation when she had been killed. The grisly story ultimately would send shockwaves throughout Central Arkansas and affect individuals for years to come.

This is the story of the baby girl known today as Mary Rose Doe—and the impact her brief life and tragic death had on Arkansas.

The Legalization of Abortion in Arkansas

To understand what happened to Mary Rose Doe, we need to go back a little over ten years—to January 22, 1973. That was the day that the U.S. Supreme Court issued its *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision.

Like the vast majority of states at the time, Arkansas law generally prohibited abortion. In 1969 the legislature passed Act 61 permitting abortion in cases of rape or incest, fetal abnormality, or in cases of grave risk to the mother's life or health. Beyond that, however, Arkansas did not permit abortion.

In 1972 there were 793 legal abortions performed in the state, according to the Center for Disease Control. Another 762 abortions were performed on women from Arkansas who travelled to other states for the procedure.

When the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973, it overturned state abortion laws like Arkansas'. With the stroke of a pen, the nation's highest court nullified virtually every abortion statute in America.

In December of 1973 the *New York Times* wrote that Arkansas initially resisted efforts to enforce *Roe v. Wade*. Abortionists were told Act 61 of 1969 was still in effect. In other states, lawmakers called on the courts to reconsider the abortion issue. By the end of the year, however, Arkansas Attorney General Jim Guy Tucker's office reportedly had declared Arkansas' abortion ban unconstitutional in light of *Roe*—a position later reinforced by a federal court.

Many citizens resigned themselves to abortion on demand simply being the law of the land in Arkansas.

Abortion in Arkansas During the 1980s

By the early 1980s, the number of abortions performed in Arkansas had skyrocketed to more than 6,000 per year.

In spite of that, doctors rarely reported performing abortions on women past the twentieth week of pregnancy—although one pro-lifer recalls an abortionist from south Arkansas who





said he was willing to perform an abortion at any point prior to the beginning of labor. Once labor had started, he said, abortion became too complicated.

Abortionists in Arkansas performed virtually all abortions surgically. Most involved the use of vacuum machines, forceps, or sharp blades to kill and dismember the unborn child.

In 1983 abortion largely was unregulated in Arkansas. In the spring of that year, the state legislature passed Act 509 instituting some of Arkansas' first meaningful restrictions on abortion facilities. However, those regulations did not take effect for many months. None of them was on the books when Baby Mary Rose Doe was aborted—and then abandoned—in Little Rock.

Legally Aborted and Abandoned in a Drainage Ditch

After Mary Rose Doe's body was found lying in the drainage ditch in Little Rock, authorities were dispatched to investigate. Little Rock police officer Jim McDaniel was the first on the scene near Cantrell Road. The call was a difficult one.

"It really tore me up," McDaniel told journalist Mike Masterson in 1983.

Authorities sent the tiny, unidentified body—dubbed Infant Doe—to the State Crime Lab. Following the autopsy, the medical examiner determined she was the victim of a legal abortion. She probably had been dead only a few hours by the time her body was discovered, he said.

There was no obvious reason for aborting the child. The State Medical Examiner told the *Arkansas Democrat* that this perfectly formed baby girl was developed enough that she could have survived outside the womb and been placed up for adoption, had she been delivered by Caesarean section.

What happened to Mary Rose?

Was Mary Rose Doe the Victim of a Botched Abortion?

A lot of questions surround Mary Rose Doe's case. One is whether or not she was actually the victim of a botched abortion.

In second and third trimester surgical abortions, doctors typically kill the unborn baby in utero before dismembering the child and extracting its body for disposal. The fact that the procedure is carried out with surgical precision by licensed physicians does not make it any less barbaric. However, Mary Rose Doe's body was found intact—not dismembered. So how was she aborted?

According to news reports at the time, the State Medical Examiner determined Mary Rose Doe asphyxiated in the womb as a result of a legal abortion. I reached out to Dr. Donna J. Harrison, M.D., the Executive Director of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, about abortion procedures that cause asphyxiation.

Dr. Harrison said, "One of the methods for inducing fetal demise before an abortion involves cutting the umbilical cord and letting the baby bleed to death in the womb. This would result in 'asphyxia.'" However, Dr. Harrison noted that the autopsy report from 1983 might offer more answers on how Mary Rose was aborted.

Family Council requested a copy of Mary Rose Doe's autopsy report from the State Crime Lab, but as of early March the lab had been unable to locate and release a copy of the report.

Journalist Mike Masterson noted in 1983 that Mary was found with 20 inches of her umbilical cord still attached to her body. This could indicate that Mary Rose Doe's umbilical cord was severed as part of the abortion procedure. Without oxygen supplied by the umbilical cord, she would have slowly asphyxiated in utero. Her body then would have been delivered with much of the umbilical cord still attached.

**What happened
to Mary Rose?**





The logical conclusion is that the abortionist gave Mary's body to her mother instead of disposing of it like other aborted babies.

But why would an abortionist do this? Another abortion story from 1983 may be able to shed a little light on that question.

"Take It Home, and Wait for It to Stop Moving"

On May 3, 1983—just five days after Mary Rose Doe's body was found—three women arrived with a newborn baby girl at Jefferson County Regional Medical Center's emergency room in Pine Bluff. The baby's mother had gone to an abortionist earlier that day. However, the child narrowly survived the botched abortion procedure and was born alive in the abortionist's office.

Jacki Ragan led North Pulaski Pro-Life—a chapter of Arkansas Right to Life—in 1983. Sometime after word about the botched abortion in Pine Bluff got out, her organization was contacted by a friend of the baby's mother. The friend had gone to the abortion appointment with the mother, and she was there when the baby was born alive.

After delivering the living, breathing baby, the abortionist placed her in a bag. "The friend remarked that the bag was moving," Jacki said. The abortionist told the mother and her friend to take the baby home and wait for it to stop moving. "So they did," Jacki said. "And the bag did not stop moving."

The women eventually took the tiny baby girl to the emergency room. An ambulance transferred her to Children's Hospital in downtown Little Rock. Ultimately, the baby survived, but only after several months of hospital treatment.

It is difficult to read about this baby's remarkable story without wondering if Mary Rose Doe went through something similar—especially considering that the abortions happened just days apart.

Just like the baby from Pine Bluff, was Mary Rose Doe still moving when the abortionist delivered her five pound body? Did the abortionist simply tell her mother to take Mary home and wait for her to stop moving? If so, it might explain why the abortionist did not dispose of Mary's body the same way as other aborted babies.

Thirty-seven years later, however, it seems unlikely these questions ever will be answered with certainty.

"To my knowledge, there was never any speculation or discussion about who the mother [of Mary Rose Doe] might have been or where the girl was aborted," Jacki said. "I am not even sure that there was any effort to find the mother at all."

How Mary Rose Doe Got Her Name

Jacki Ragan founded North Pulaski Pro-Life in 1975, and was heavily involved in the pro-life movement as the group's leader in 1983.

"I learned about Mary Rose Doe on Mother's Day, May 8 of 1983 from a newspaper article that Mike [Masterson] wrote in the *Arkansas Democrat*," Jacki recalls. "I called a meeting of NPPL [North Pulaski Pro-Life] and we decided to get started on trying to give her a proper Christian burial."

Jacki said there was tremendous support for the idea. North Pulaski Pro-Life assumed guardianship of Mary's remains a few days later, and the group managed to get everything donated for her burial.

North Pulaski Pro-Life's Treasurer and his wife provided Mary with a dress that had belonged to their daughters.



Mary Rose Doe's headstone at Calvary Cemetery in Little Rock.





North Little Rock Funeral Home gave her a small coffin. The Catholic Diocese of Little Rock provided her with a grave plot in Little Rock's Calvary Cemetery. And North Pulaski Pro-Life gave her a name: Mary Rose. The name was particularly fitting, given that the State Medical Examiner who performed the autopsy on Mary described her as "a perfect little bud that was clipped before she could blossom."



The corner of Calvary Cemetery where Mary's body was laid to rest.

On May 16, 1983—less than three weeks after her body was found—some 100 people attended a graveside service for Mary at Calvary Cemetery in Little Rock. According to a news report at the time, the group sang "Amazing Grace" and heard from two ministers—one a Church of Christ preacher and the other a Catholic priest—who both called for an end to abortion. White linen, rosebuds, and daisies covered Mary's casket. A small marker was placed on her grave—a memorial to Mary Rose Doe and the thousands of other unborn children aborted in Arkansas. However, Mary's graveside burial service was not the end of the story.

"The Unfolding Horrors of Abortion" in Arkansas

With the death of Mary Rose Doe, many felt that abortion in Arkansas now had a face and a name. "This was a very real, tiny little baby that was found tossed away in a ditch," Jacki Ragan said. "Mary Rose made abortion a very personal, a very real issue. She represents all of the babies that the right to life movement works so hard to protect."

Attorney Rob Shafer of Little Rock remembers the publicity Mary Rose received in 1983. "I was not yet involved in pro-life work (although I was burdened by the issue)," he said. The following year, he and others formed the Unborn Child Amendment Committee. The group successfully amended the Arkansas Constitution in 1988 to prohibit public funding of abortion; out of that effort, Jerry Cox formed Family Council in 1989.

Rob sees a connection between Mary Rose Doe's story and the pro-life efforts that followed. "It would be accurate to say that the story was part of the background that led to the Unborn Child Amendment, because it publicly showed the unfolding horrors of abortion."

The Creation of the Mary Rose Doe Award

To honor her memory, Arkansas Right to Life created the Mary Rose Doe Award. Since 1985 the group has bestowed the award on individuals and organizations that go the extra mile in fighting for unborn children. The first recipient was journalist Mike Masterson, who brought Mary's story to the pages of the *Arkansas Democrat*.

"He wrote about her death and burial, and through his recognition of her as a person, helped grant her the 'personhood' the United States Supreme Court denied her," Jacki Ragan said.

Other past recipients include Governor Mike Huckabee; Governor Asa Hutchinson; Arkansas Attorney General Leslie Rutledge, whose office has tirelessly defended the state against lawsuits from the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, and other pro-abortion groups; and the late Dr. Fay Boozman.

During U.S. District Judge Leon Holmes' confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate in 2003, the Mary Rose Doe Award given to him in 1999 was mentioned alongside his many accolades from Duke University and the Arkansas Bar Association.

That's why Family Council was tremendously honored to receive the Mary Rose Doe Award on Monday, January 27, 2020, at Arkansas Right to Life's banquet.





Pro-life leaders, volunteers, and elected officials came from all over Arkansas to attend the banquet. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee gave an excellent keynote address discussing the history of the pro-life movement in Arkansas—and how difficult it used to be to pass pro-life laws.

During the event, Arkansas Right to Life President Andy Mayberry surprised Jerry and the staff by presenting Family Council with the Mary Rose Doe Award in recognition of 30 years of pro-life work in the state.

Thirty-seven years later, Mary's legacy lives on, continuing to touch lives in Arkansas.



From Left: Family Council staff members Charisse Dean, Luke McCoy, Jerry Cox, Doris Cox, Ken Yang, and Erin Hogan pose with the 2020 Mary Rose Doe Award.

Remembering Mary Nearly Forty Years Later

Had Mary Rose Doe not been aborted, she probably would have been born in July of 1983. She would have graduated from high school in 2001 or 2002. She would turn 37 this summer—old enough to have children of her own.

Today, Mary's body rests in a quiet corner of Calvary Cemetery near the intersection of South Woodrow and Asher Avenue in Little Rock. Her grave lies just a short drive across town from the place her body was discovered 37 years ago.

In May of 2019, Mike Masterson, who originally chronicled Mary's story in the *Arkansas Democrat*, penned a column titled "RIP, Mary Rose." In it he reflected, "The child's death was the kind of horror story that couldn't help but touch every parent and grandparent."

Jacki Ragan, who helped make sure Mary received a Christian burial, has worked for National Right to Life in Virginia since 1985. However, she still keeps newspaper clippings about Mary handy.

"She was a beautiful, fully formed little angel," Jacki reflects. "I pray for her mom a lot."



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