

THE STORY OF JANE: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Service

All that most of us knew about abortion was that it was rare, and that every once in a while, a woman had an illegal abortion and she died from it. When women started talking to each other, they realized that lots and lots of women wanted abortions. Lots of them got them. In many cases, they weren't very pleasant experiences.

There were women who reported that they'd been demanded sexual favors in exchange for the abortion. There was no quality control. But there were some good practitioners. Groups all over the country—including Jane, when we started—sussed out the underground abortion network in their area and figured out who were the competent and non-abusive practitioners, and then helped the women raise money because they were expensive. An illegal abortion cost \$500, and you could rent a decent one-bedroom apartment in Chicago for maybe \$125 a month.

The original members of Jane realized very early on that just sending somebody off and saying, “Well, we've sent other women and they all come back alive” was not really the best situation for women. And so that earliest group said, “In order to give women power over this experience, we need to take control of this.” So they looked for a practitioner who was willing to work fairly closely with them. And they found somebody.

[Originally, the members of Jane thought that this practitioner was a physician. But some women eventually discovered that, in fact, the man wasn't a doctor at all—he had just learned to do abortions from one.]

He became very close with one of the central people in the group, and she pushed him to allow other women to come and sit during the abortions. She told me that it was his idea that she actually pick up the instruments. At first, she just said, “No, I'm not doing this.” The idea of actually using instruments inside a woman's body was outrageous.

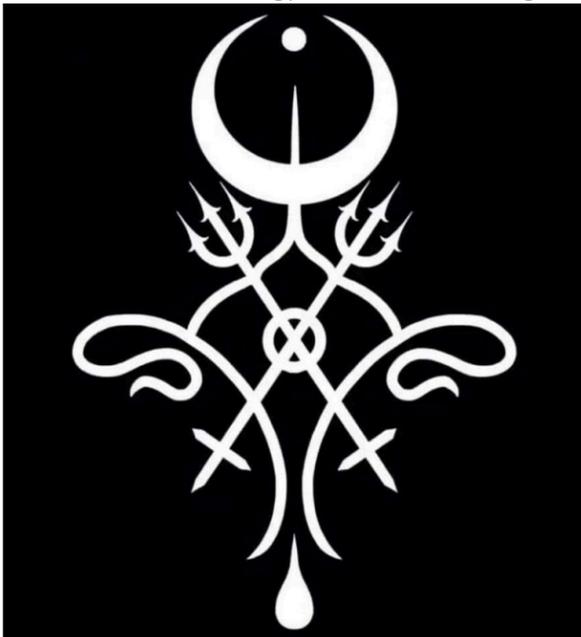
But in this instance, according to her, he talked her into it. When you break through the wall, it's like going through the looking glass. It's like landing in Oz. Suddenly it's in color and not black and white. It takes a lot of guts to do that. But it's exhilarating once you do it, once you break through that barrier that says, *You cannot do this.*

I came when the practitioner was leaving and the women were taking over. I first found Jane when one of my dear friends from the university discovered she was pregnant from a failed IUD and found her way to Jane. After her abortion, she came to my apartment and she was so excited by the experience. I mean, she just had an illegal abortion, she'd been blindfolded—and she was almost literally bouncing off the walls of my apartment in excitement from this incredible experience she had just been through.

So I signed myself up.

We had a number: 643-3844. That number really had gotten around the city of Chicago pretty good. If some-

...It won't be long, it won't be long...



one needed an abortion, she would call that number and she would get an answering machine. Answering machines were really rare. This one, our first answering machine, was the size of a suitcase.

A woman would call and she'd get a message that said, “This is Jane from women's liberation. If you need assistance, if you need help, leave your name and phone number and someone will call you back.” And then one of the members of our group, who was known as Call-Back Jane—very creative with the names here—would call that person back and say, “This is Jane, you called. What are you looking for?” We always waited for the woman to say what she wanted.

Her information was taken by the call-back person. It would be her name, her age, her address, her phone number, her last period, how many previous pregnancies, how many kids, how many miscarriages, any medical problems.

We would say, “We charge \$100. If you can't afford that, what can you afford?” So those cards went to our main administrative person who we called Big Jane—again, creative names—and Big Jane did the scheduling, figuring out who was going to be scheduled on what work-day.

Those names were then given to counselors. If I was a counselor, I would call the woman and say, “Hi, my name is Laura. Jane gave me your phone number and I'm going to be your counselor. Let's pick a time when you can come to my apartment and I can explain everything to you then.” We would encourage women to bring someone with them—a sister or mother or their husband or boyfriend, whoever they wanted for moral support.

Women would come to our apartments and we'd make a pot of tea and we would explain all the steps—not just what happened in the abortion itself, but what that day would look like and feel like and what they would see and what they would hear. We knew, for ourselves, the *not knowing* was the thing that made you most nervous. We wanted women to be as comfortable as they could be.

We never asked women what the reasons for wanting or needing an abortion. That was their business and not ours, and we certainly weren't into judging.

We would say, “So when you're scheduled, I'm going to call you and tell you what day it is, and I'm going to give you an address and this is a place we call the Front, where people just gather. And then in groups of four or five, you're going to be taken to another apartment where the abortions will be done. This is who you'll see there. This is what you will experience and what will happen afterwards. You'll be taken back to the Front. You'll be given post-abortion medications. We encourage you to bring someone with you. You'll go home and we'll keep in touch with you for the next 10 days to two weeks to make sure everything's OK. Here's the kind of problems you could have. Here's what we do about these kinds of problems.”

I don't remember balancing my checkbook before that, but here I was doing this life-and-death thing.

The Fronts were mostly apartments around Chicago that belonged to us or our friends. So my apartment got used. You'd have a lot of people shoved together, total strangers. The guys would maybe be watching sports on TV, or there'd be a card game. There'd be food.

In the Place, we worked out of two rooms, so there were two abortions going on at the same time. We did them on regular beds, on plastic sheets that we wiped down with alcohol, with surgical equipment, forceps and curettes. We only used local anesthetic.

There were usually two people in each of those rooms. One was a fully trained abortionist and the other one who was called an assistant and usually in training. [People who support abortion rights today don't usually use the term “abortionist,” because abortion opponents sometimes deploy it like a slur.]

I would say to women, “You could do anything but scream, because we're in an apartment.”

The fully trained person would be sitting with the woman and holding her hand and talking with her about whatever she wanted to talk about. At some point, the two women would switch positions—the assistant would then sit with the woman and hold her hand, and the other person would then do the abortion.

That switch was really quite critical. It was a way of saying, “We are all in this on the same level.” It's not like the doctor comes in and is in a special position. The switching of the roles was, I think, really key to give women the sense that this was a fluid thing and that we were there to support her. And that she, too, could get off that bed and join us and begin the process herself.

We would say to people, “This is not going to be comfortable. People have different levels of what's tolerable for them, so we can't tell you this is going to feel outrageous. It's nothing you can't handle.” We would say that to every woman: “**You can handle this.**”

You've got to remember that in those days, there were no shelves of books in bookstores on women's health. There was nothing. And women knew very little about how their bodies worked.

Story of Jane Continued on next Page

Healthcare Hack Strikes

At the end of March, The Hive ransomware group, known for attacking healthcare organizations, posted on its dark web site that it has stolen 850,000 personally identifiable information records from the Partnership HealthPlan of California, a public/private organization that is certified by the State of California to provide health care services for Medi-Cal managed care beneficiaries in 14 California counties, including Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Trinity, and Yolo.

The organization's website landing page said that they had been “experiencing technical difficulties,” including a “disruption to certain computer systems.” The organization's phone systems had a similar message, with a recorded message saying that “all of our systems are down, with no expected time of repair.”

The stolen data also includes 400 GB of files from the organization's server, Hive claimed.

The Hive ransomware group has been active since at least June 2021, which is the first time the group posted on its “HiveLeaks” dark web site. Past reported ransomware attacks by Hive have included an August 2021 attack against Memorial Health System, which has hospitals in Ohio and West Virginia, and an October 2021 attack against Johnson Memorial Health in Indiana.

Being the victim of a data breach puts your sensitive data in the hands of an unauthorized person. As a result, you are at an increased risk of identity theft and other frauds, and criminal use of your information, a possibility that should not be ignored.

Organizations like PHC are responsible for protecting the consumer data when they collect and hold personal data about California customers or visitors to their websites, under California law, they take on the obligation to protect that information and keep it safe from hackers, thieves, and other criminals.

On May 18, 2022, PHC finally began sending Data Breach Notices to affected current and former enrollees by mail. Partnership HealthPlan also posted a copy of the Notice on its website.

The Notice, mailed a full 60 days after the initial Hive ransomware attack and data theft, still fails to inform enrollees that their data was compromised in a ransomware attack by a well-known criminal enterprise. Nor does the Notice inform enrollees and their families that the Hive group published details of the data theft on the dark web. The Data Breach Notice provided by PHC confirms that the compromised confidential and personal data may include the following:

Your name, Social Security number, date of birth, Driver's License number, Tribal ID number, medical record number, treatment, diagnosis, prescription and other medical information, health insurance information, member portal username and password, email address, and street address.

In 2018 approximately 23 million people in the United States reported that they had been victims of identity theft within the previous year. By 2021, there were over 50 million personal records compromised nationwide, with the T-Mobile data breach alone affecting 6 million consumers.