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Fire Guts Louisiana Abortion Facility

Investigation rules out arson, blames electrical problems

Dateline: 7/17/01
Updated: 7/19/01, 7/21/01
(Updates at bottom of article)

An early morning fire on Sunday gutted Delta Women's Clinic abortion facility in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There were no injuries. Federal, state, and local authorities are investigating the fire. Spokespersons for the Baton Rouge Fire Department and the BATF would not comment on the cause of the fire, stating that they have not yet ruled out any causes.

Delta was the only remaining abortion facility in Baton Rouge.

Baton Rouge once had three abortion facilities. However, four men had firebombed Delta, then in another location, and burned River City Clinic abortion facility to the ground. The third facility closed due to financial problems.

News coverage of the fire has focused on the previous fires, and on confrontations outside Delta in its different locations:

- October 1994: The 22-year-old husband of an abortion patient shot at protestor Richard Mahoney, but missed.
- July 1992 Operation-Rescue type protests outside Delta.
- Small-scale ongoing protests continuing outside Delta.

One news source also noted that in 1999, Governor Mike Foster ordered an inspection of Delta after a TV station had reported unsanitary conditions there. The inspection found no deficiencies.

News coverage has been silent on what women have suffered at Delta -- including the case of [Ingar Weber](#), who died following a 1990 abortion at Delta, and [Sheila Hebert](#), who died after a 1984 abortion at Delta.

News coverage also has been ignoring the fact that Planned Parenthood stopped referring women to Baton Rouge Delta after a teen-ager said the doctor walked out of the room during her abortion, and that the clinic had run out of sterilized gloves and pain medication. The health department also recommended revoking Delta's laboratory license due to the possibility of inadequate testing. (*Dallas Morning News* 9-5-93; AP 10-4-97 in *The Advocate*, Baton Rouge)

News coverage also ignored the fact that the owner of the building Delta previously inhabited in Baton Rouge filed suit alleging that the performance of abortions on the premises had resulted in the loss of fire and hazard insurance, threatening the owner's mortgage. Delta, and then-owner Richardson Glidden were informed of such, but failed to cease performing abortions, in violation of their lease. (Baton Rouge Parish Case No. 299277)

News coverage also failed to notice these malpractice cases:

"Megan" alleged that she went to Delta for the abortion of her 20 week pregnancy. The abortion was performed by Richardson Glidden at Delta March 28, 1984. Glidden failed to determine the position of the fetus, was unable to retrieve fetal leg, and sent Megan patient home with assurance that she would expel the leg. Megan was bedridden with pain for six days, then returned to Delta. Glidden then informed Megan of a laceration of her uterine wall in addition to the retained leg. Glidden's attempt to

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"Ain't no media bias. Nope. Nope. Just imagining it."
[Christina](#)

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remove the fetal leg was unsuccessful. Megan was transported to a hospital, where the fetal leg was removed through a surgical incision. (Baton Rouge Parish District Court Case No. 281159)

"Kayla" alleged that she underwent an abortion of her 6-8 week pregnancy performed by Calvin Jackson at Delta July 16, 1974. Upon arriving home, Kayla was weak and bleeding. Her neighbor called Delta; Jackson was spoken to and informed of the heavy bleeding, which was a serious situation. Jackson prescribed Methergine. Kayla's husband filled the prescription, and Kayla's bleeding abated for 5 days. However, Kayla had to be hospitalized one week following the abortion. There, she underwent a transfusion. Surgeons found a large hematoma and a perforated uterus. Kayla had to have a hysterectomy to treat her injury. Her lawsuit also alleged that staff at Delta had failed to inform her of the risks of the abortion. (4th Circuit Louisiana Court of Appeals No. 9083)

So, background information that paints Delta as a hapless pawn or victim is apparently kosher; information that paints Delta in a less savory light -- and which might indicate that patients and their loved ones might well have a motive for torching the place -- is verboten.

Update: 7/19/01

Investigators have ruled out arson as the cause of the fire at Delta, citing electrical problems which they say sparked the blaze.

WAFB-TV in Baton Rouge broke ranks in the coverage, delving into some of Delta's unsavory past.

A patient, Roxy Daniels, had come forward saying that "a 1998 operation at Delta forced her to wear a colostomy bag for eight months." WAFB-TV investigated the clinic, and clinic workers spoke to WAFB, confirming Roxy's story. This is the story that, according to WAFB, prompted a spring 1999 vote of the Louisiana Legislature to include abortion facilities in outpatient surgical centers' regulations. Abortionists claimed that this was an attack on their practice and that following the regulations would drive up the cost of abortions. The abortionists sued, blocking enforcement of the law. In response, Louisiana legislators drafted a law requiring regulations just for abortion clinics.

WAFB's coverage also noted that state prosecutors have received detailed affidavits from former Delta workers about the conditions and practices at the clinic. WAFB's coverage of the fire concluded with noting that Delta heating up even before the fire -- the Roxy Daniels' suit was about to enter into preliminary hearings, the former employees were stepping forward with allegations about conditions within the clinic, workers indicated that Delta's debts were mounting... and then the place burned to the ground.

Update 7/21/01: The BATF has concluded that it was a faulty air conditioner that caused the blaze: "There is no clue or indication, in any shape or manner, that it was arson and anything other than an accidental fire," said Jerry Dennis, who heads the Baton Rouge field office of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Delta's operators indicate that they hope to be back in business shortly. In the mean time, local abortion advocates are referring women to New Orleans.

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