

**Partial Birth
ABORTION**

LIFE ADVOCATE

September/October, 1998 Volume XIII Number 2

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Biskind incompetent

Cleveland, OH -- It only takes a few miles for the stately homes and towering trees of Dr. John Biskind's neighborhood to fade into a rundown stretch of plain commercial buildings that house abortion clinics.

For years, Biskind, a Cleveland gynecologist, has lived in one type of world and worked in the

other - both in Cleveland and in the Arizona Valley - performing as many as 700 abortions a year. Now both of Biskind's worlds are swirling with controversy.

In Cleveland, the 72-year-old doctor stands accused in two lawsuits of practicing with a man who reportedly passed himself off as an abortion doctor for years and reportedly sexually assaulted numerous patients - after having his medical license yanked in six states.

In the Arizona, where Biskind and his wife own a home in a gated Scottsdale community, he remains the target of a police investigation after attempting to abort a baby that was 37 weeks along. He ended up delivering the infant instead.

Physicians around the country have responded in disbelief to Biskind's claim to have miscalculated the baby's age.

"Ultrasound is precise, that's why we use it," said Dr. Robert Tamis, who also commits abortions in Phoenix..

"It is impossible not to be able to distinguish a 23-week [baby] from a 37-week [baby]," according to Dr., Edward Sattenspiel, an OB/GYN who serves on the Arizona Medical Board. "We have medical students who know how to do this," he responded after being told that the baby's age had simply been mistaken.

"What really amazes people is how the delivery happened," said Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Council of Abortion Providers. "That is really stunning."

Fitzsimmons may be referring to the fact that assuring fetal death is the more common practice. Such efforts have resulted in abortionists leaving babies to die unattended after live delivery rather than arrange for medical care, crushing the skull, as Alabama abortionist, Thomas Tucker allegedly did, and suffocating the baby either manually after birth or through strangulation of the cord during delivery.

Biskind also is being investigated in connection with the case of a woman who bled to death after an abortion he performed.

On April 17, Biskind killed the baby of Louann Herron. Sometime during the procedure he punctured the woman's uterus as well. Then he refused to come back to check on her while she bled. Herron eventually suffered a cardiac arrest as the result of massive hemorrhaging. Nearly all of the blood had drained from her body in just under three hours. During most of that time she was without proper medical attention. Only after her heart began to fail did staff respond to the emergency by calling for an ambulance.

When an ambulance was finally requested, abortion facility staff delayed the arrival further by asking that the ambulance not arrive with lights flashing. They were told the lights would need to be on. The caller then insisted that the ambulance not be brought to the more accessible front door of the facility. The Arizona Republic newspaper has retained a copy of the 911 call which is accessed routinely at their website.

Emergency room physician Dr. Patrick Connell concluded, based on 33 independent medical reports, that Herron had been in acute distress for some time before she was finally taken to the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center.

"The patient was abandoned and essentially left to die over the three hours," he told the medical board.

In July, as a result of the June 30 "miscalculation," as well as the April death of Herron, the Arizona Board of Medical Examiners voted to suspend Biskind's medical license, pending a hearing before an administrative law judge.

It's not the first time Biskind has received such official attention. Despite solid educational credentials and a decades-long practice, Biskind's medical career has been marked by repeated allegations of negligence -- whether in private practice or while performing abortions at clinics. A self-described "independent contractor" in Arizona and a doctor who once had a substantial gynecological practice in Cleveland, Biskind has shuttled between the two states for at least 10 years, according to court records and medical board testimony from Biskind. Aborting full-term babies appears to be his specialty. The medical review board first saw him in 1990, when Biskind had some trouble with an abortion. As with the June 30, 1998 case, he tried to abort a baby he thought was 10 weeks old, when instead the child was 27 weeks. For that he got a letter from the Arizona Medical Board stating their "concern" over such an error.

Biskind got his second letter from the medical board a year later in 1991. This time the "concern" was that Biskind was "signing blank and undated prescription forms." This allowed unlicensed persons to evaluate clients and fill in prescriptions following abortions. In 1996 Biskind had a hearing before the medical board, this time because of the 1995 death of a 26 year old woman who had undergone an abortion to kill her 20 week old baby. It was noted at the hearing that "pregnancy termination at 20+ weeks carries with it a significant morbidity and mortality," according to board member Dr. Pent.

Trash from Biskind's abortion mill after his facility was closed in the wake of the delivery of "Baby Phoenix."

Other facilities had an established post-abortion observation period of 90 minutes in order to determine that the woman was stable. The woman who died in 1995



had been in the abortion clinic for less than an hour, time which included waiting, being prepped, the abortion, recovery, and then discharge.

The woman and her boyfriend left to travel home, however, she experienced breathing difficulties and shock. She was rushed to a hospital where she died that afternoon, only six hours after being discharged by Biskind.

An autopsy report demonstrated that the woman had suffered an 8 cm laceration of the uterine wall. Her abdomen was swelled with over 2000 cc's of blood, 100 times more blood loss than the abortion might have been expected to result in.

Richard Zonis, chairman of the medical review board questioned the discharge charting and a summary given by Biskind saying, "You have a patient who's had 150 milligrams of Demerol, 10 milligrams of Valium, and 5 milligrams of Compazine in IV, and within an hour this statement [of Biskind's] says she walked out with a steady gait. I think if that were I, I wouldn't be able to pick my head up off the bed, never mind walk with a steady gait."

A worker at a Cleveland-area abortion mill said the facility was forced to stop using Biskind's services.

"He was brusque," the employee said. "I do remember some staff feeling that they would not work with him any longer. We stopped scheduling him."

Like most others, the worker agreed to talk about Biskind only on the promise of anonymity.

Victoria Kimball, a registered nurse who worked with Biskind at A-Z Women's Center in Phoenix, said he has little interaction with patients outside the operating room. "He didn't really have much tolerance for people who got into this kind of condition and come in for an abortion as a method of birth control," Kimball said.

In addition to problems in Arizona, John Biskind has had recent legal troubles in Cleveland, Ohio. These stem from his association with the now-defunct Academy Medical Center and a co-criminal by the name of Nabil Ghali.

In lawsuits, filed in 1997, Biskind is alleged to have conspired with Ghali to defraud and mislead women coming to the clinic for abortions and other procedures.

Ghali, who owned the clinic, allegedly practiced there illegally for three years (*Life Advocate*, November 1996). More than 50 women claim that Ghali performed illegal medical procedures on them, and sometimes sexually assaulted them - all while Biskind and another doctor did nothing to stop such action.

From most accounts, Biskind kept a low profile providing abortions, and did not publicly join the abortion debate.

But Pastor Ernie Sanders, founder of Cleveland's Missionaries to the Unborn, recalls Biskind's reaction after protests were held outside Hillcrest Hospital to stop doctors from performing abortions. In 1993, the hospital board voted to prohibit the practice.

"Biskind was very outspoken about that," Sanders said.

"He was very angry about that."

Biskind and his wife, June, made a home in the wealthy Cleveland suburb of Beachwood, set in a lush wooded neighborhood that offers privacy, peaceful views and, neighbors said, the perfect place for the couple to walk their dogs.

Although neighbors said the couple have lived in the home for a decade or more, they knew little about them and rarely spoke.

For the past decade, the couple have also kept a winter home in the Arizona Valley. Most recently, they've lived in a home valued at \$220,000 in the gated Mountainview Lake Estates in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Biskind came to the A-Z Women's Center after responding to an ad in a medical magazine, and said he worked part time for the clinic and Planned Parenthood.

One patient, Michelle, who didn't want her last name used, said Biskind performed an abortion on her earlier this year.

Before the procedure began, Michelle said she asked the doctor what he would be doing, and he wouldn't answer. "The only words he said to me was, 'You are going to have to scoot down more,' " she said. "I tried to introduce myself to him, and he couldn't have cared less. He didn't even want to talk to me."

During his career, Biskind has been the target of 11 malpractice, negligence or wrongful-death lawsuits. A 12th is expected to be filed by a Phoenix lawyer representing the family of the woman who died in April of this year.

Four of the lawsuits have been settled, five have been dismissed by the plaintiffs and two are pending.

Earlier actions the Arizona medical board has taken also include disciplinary action against Biskind for a near-abortion in 1989.

In addition to investigating Biskind, one medical review board member, Carole Dooley, has encouraged an investigation into the A-Z Women's Center. "I'm worried that we are doing nothing to stop this clinic and everything is going on this doctor's head. His people waited to ask him before they called 911," she noted.

Maricopa County Attorney, Rick Romley has promised that his office will follow up on the Biskind case. Medical records have been subpoenaed by his office and a Grand Jury is expected to convene. To prosecute the abortionist criminally will require that investigators prove Biskind knowingly violated the law by aborting older babies. Such a finding could result in homicide charges.

In the meantime, the Arizona Medical Board has suspended Biskind's license and ordered that he comply with all investigations into his practice.

On August 13 the abortionist voluntarily turned in his Arizona license without the possibility that it will be re-issued. Ohio has said they too may revoke Biskind's license following the medical and criminal investigations.

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