

Gosnell's right-hand man is sentenced to 6-12 years

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By Dave Andrusko

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Among the most nightmarish testimony from last year's trial of abortionist Kermit Gosnell came from the lips of Steven Massof, an unlicensed physician who for five years worked "under-the-table for \$300 a week, performing illegal late-term abortions and killing infants born alive," as the Philadelphia Inquirer's Joseph A. Slobodzian wrote today.

Massof was smart enough to plead guilty to two counts of third-degree murder and testify against Gosnell, who eventually was convicted of three counts of first-degree murder and one count of involuntary manslaughter. Prosecutors originally charged Massof with first-degree murder for killing infants born live and viable during abortions by slitting their spinal cords. He would have faced a possible death sentence if the jury had found him guilty.

Today Philadelphia Common Pleas Court Judge Benjamin Lerner sentenced Massof to 6-12 years in prison.

Massof's intelligence was one of the reason Assistant District Attorney Edward Cameron argued for a 10- to 20-year prison term. "Despite Massof's cooperation, Cameron said, he had the education, intelligence and training to know what he was doing was wrong – and stop it," Slobodzian reported earlier today.

Judge Lerner described what went on at Gosnell's West Philadelphia abortion clinic as "unspeakably horrible."

"As evil as Dr. Gosnell was, as charismatic as he may have been, he didn't do this alone," Lerner said. "He couldn't do this without the assistance of someone like you."

Slobodzian writes

"I don't know how it started," the 51-year-old Massof, voice cracking as he forced down a sob, told the judge.

"I realize that this is something that's wrong and will never be right and will never go away," said Massof, who called his work with Gosnell "a horrific part of my life."

In 2011 Massof was one of nine Gosnell workers at the Women's Medical Society who were charged, including Gosnell's wife, Pearl. Three have yet to be sentenced.

The following is from a story posted in April 2013, when Massof testified.

As grim as testimony in the murder trial of Kermit Gosnell had been prior to Thursday, it took a decidedly worse turn when Steve Massof testified about his five years working at Gosnell's Women's Medical Society abortion clinic.

In 2011 Massof, an unlicensed doctor, was one of nine Gosnell employees charged in connection with second- and third-trimester abortions. All but one pled guilty.

Massof had already admitted to delivering viable unborn babies alive and then slitting their spinal cords, prior to his testimony. Like Gosnell, he faced first degree murder charges but pled guilty to two counts of third degree murder in exchange for his testimony.

If you read the account of the Philadelphia Inquirer's Joseph A. Slobodzian—assuming you can get through it—you will have a far deeper and more disturbing understanding of what took place at Gosnell's West Philadelphia abortion clinic.

Slobodzian writes that Massof

"at times exhibited an almost ghoulish glee, smiling and giggling, as he described the abortions he did and infants whose spines he snipped with surgical scissors.

"No babies would be born alive at 3801,' Massof said Gosnell told him.

"At one point Massof asked jurors to feel the backs of their necks and he guided them to the spot where he would use scissors. Several jurors did.

"It's like a beheading,' Massof said."

Massof has already pleaded guilty in a separate case "to 30 counts of using Gosnell's prescription pads for controlled narcotics that were sold on the streets," Slobodzian writes. "Gosnell is to be tried there after the murder case is over." [Gosnell pled guilty last December to running a "pill mill."]

When joint federal and state authorities raided Gosnell's abortion clinic in 2010 it had nothing to do with abortion. He was suspected of illegally selling drugs, particularly OxyContin.

Only then did they discover (according to the Grand Jury report) a "filthy, foul-smelling 'house of horrors' " where hundreds of viable unborn babies were aborted alive and then allegedly murdered when (primarily Gosnell and Massof) slit their spinal cords.

On cross-examination, Gosnell's attorney, Jack McMahon, returned to one of his primary arguments: that Gosnell practiced "urban medicine" with the good of his poor clients his uppermost interest.

"I believe that Dr. Gosnell was honestly trying to help women and protect them from abuse and neglect," Massof said.

However, the Associated Press reporter observed that

"The statement came in questioning about why Gosnell kept fetal samples, including severed feet, in jars at the clinic."

Massof also testified, "He always led me to believe he was a poor, struggling urban physician and surgeon," he added. "I thought he was hurting financially."

Prosecutors assert Gosnell made a million dollars a year off of illegal abortions and kept \$250,000 in cash under his mattress

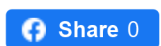
Finally, in response to questioning by the prosecution (according to the AP)

"Masoff estimated that he saw about 100 babies born alive and then 'snipped' with surgical scissors in the back of the neck, to ensure their 'demise.'

"Gosnell, who had another clinic in Delaware, typically came in only at night for the final part of the procedure, leaving Masoff to monitor the pain-racked or highly sedated women.

"I felt like a fireman in hell. I couldn't put out all the fires," he testified."

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