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LouAnne Herron was scared, bleeding...dying. So why had the doctors left the building?
by Celeste McGovern



She Didn't Have To Die, She Was Only 33 Years Old

LouAnne Herron was in bad shape. Her face was pale; her legs shaking and blood-streaked. Blood smeared the tops of her feet and crusted between her toes. A crimson puddle soiled the gurney beneath her.

Six-and-a-half months pregnant when she entered the A-Z Women's Center in Phoenix, Herron allowed her unborn baby to be cut to pieces, and now she was dying, too.

"Help me," she begged. "I can't feel my legs. What's wrong with me?"
"There's nothing wrong with you," a clinic staffer replied. "The bleeding has stopped."

But it had not stopped. And it would not stop until life itself had bled out of her.

LouAnne Herron died on April 17, 1998, a day when there was no nurse in the recovery room. She died on a day when the clinic administrator insisted on waiting more than two hours before calling paramedics. She died on a day when the doctor who took her money and extinguished the tiny life inside her was too busy eating his lunch to respond to her frantic pleas for help.



LouAnne Herron before her death at the hands of an abortionist.

Just as tragic is the fact that on the day Herron died, her baby was probably developed enough to survive outside the womb.

Authorities couldn't prosecute Dr. John Biskind for killing Herron's baby, but they could put him on trial for his role in LouAnne Herron's death. So they did.

Meet Dr. Malpractice

The events surrounding Herron's needless death were pieced together in a report by Phoenix police and news coverage in The Arizona Republic. The tragedy exposed several of the abortion industry's weaknesses: untrained medical assistants; indifferent, careless doctors; and administrators more concerned with protecting their clinic's image than the health of its patients.

April 7, 1998, was the first time Herron visited the A-Z Women's Center, one of three Phoenix-area clinics owned by New York abortionist Moishe Hachamovitch. The A-Z Center was the only one of the three that specialized in second-trimester abortions, which one nurse said brought in more money.

Carol Stuart-Schadoff, 63, was the administrator of all three clinics. She has short, neatly arranged hair, a military posture and a preference for business suits. Clinic employees told police that Stuart-Schadoff had the last word on everything.

Herron, a pretty, wholesome-looking 33-year-old who sometimes tied her wavy auburn hair up into a knot, was carrying her third baby. She was separated from her husband, Jeff, who didn't know she was pregnant. An abortion might keep it that way.

Sylvia Aragon, a medical assistant at the clinic, performed an ultrasound that showed Herron was 26 weeks pregnant-beyond the state's 24-week cutoff. Aragon told police Herron was upset when she heard the test results and said she had to have an abortion.

That afternoon, Stuart-Schadoff sent Herron to the Family Planning Institute-a sister clinic in Glendale-for another ultrasound. This second sonogram indicated that Herron's baby was 24 weeks and four days old. Again, too old.

Again, Herron was upset.

Tammy Lomas, an employee at the Family Planning Institute, telephoned Stuart-Schadoff to report Herron was too far along for an abortion. Lomas later told investigators that Stuart-Schadoff said they "had to do something" and asked what the law was. Lomas said they could only give Herron brochures about clinics in Florida and California that do later abortions, since anything else would be illegal in Arizona.

Stuart-Schadoff told Lomas to send Herron back to the A-Z clinic. Lomas figured they would never see LouAnne again.

She was dead wrong.

On April 16, Stuart-Schadoff walked into the ultrasound room at the A-Z clinic with her arm hooked round LouAnne Herron. "This is my baby," the administrator announced to Michele Price, another medical assistant who performed sonograms. "We are going to take care of her."

Yet the one who would "take care of" Herron was the clinic's physician, John Biskind, 75, a tall, silver-haired World War II veteran with a history of medical missteps: In 1989, a patient emerges from a Biskind abortion bleeding heavily, with extremely low blood pressure, leg cramps and sweating. Clinic workers page the doctor repeatedly with no success. The woman is taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors save her life by performing a hysterectomy. When Biskind is finally reached, he responds that he was "not on call."

That same year, Biskind attempts to abort a 28-week-old unborn baby; Biskind says the teenage mother was only 10 weeks pregnant. He sends the girl home instead of to a hospital, and she delivers the baby a few hours later. The Arizona Board of Medical Examiners (BOMEX) in 1990 issues a formal letter of concern, questioning the misdiagnosis and lack of follow-up care.

Biskind is reprimanded by BOMEX again in 1991, this time for prescribing medication improperly.

In 1995, Biskind discharges patient Lisa Bardsley about an hour after her abortion. She becomes ill on the drive home and is eventually taken to the hospital, but it is too late. Turns out Biskind pulled part of Bardsley's intestine through a tear in her uterus and she dies of massive blood loss. This time BOMEX censures the abortionist for gross

negligence.

One month before Herron's death, another abortion patient is bleeding profusely in the A-Z clinic's recovery room. According to court documents, Biskind takes her back to the operating room, where he scrapes her uterus to determine the bleeding's cause-without anesthesia. Though the bleeding continues, Biskind allegedly tells the woman she'll be OK. He leaves the clinic and a nurse calls 911.

Two months after Herron's death-before it became public knowledge-Biskind again attempted to abort a medically viable infant. Biskind says he thought the 17-year-old mother was 23 weeks pregnant; she was actually 37 weeks along. The baby girl suffered a skull fracture and deep lacerations, and was later adopted.

No experience required

The day before LouAnne Herron's death, Victoria Kimball, a registered nurse, heard Michele Price tell Biskind that Herron's pregnancy was 26 weeks and a few days along. She heard Biskind tell Price to take the sonogram again and explain to her that by repositioning the probe, the technician could obtain different gestational ages.

When questioned by police, Price said Biskind hadn't specifically instructed her to dummy the ultrasound, but it was clear what he wanted when he said, "We need to make sure she is under 24 weeks."

Price complied.

At the A-Z clinic, women undergoing late-term abortions receive laminaria-matchstick-sized seaweed that, once inserted in the vagina, expands with force, opening the cervix so an abortionist can fit his instruments inside. Herron had laminaria inserted the day before her procedure and was told to be back at the clinic by 9 a.m. the next day to await her turn.

Herron was the first patient at the clinic the next day. Her records indicate she paid \$1,250 for her abortion.

The nurse on duty, Lois Montagno, had an appointment for a mammogram that afternoon. Several employees had heard her, in the weeks and days leading up to April 17, reminding Stuart-Schadoff she would need to schedule a replacement. Montagno clocked out for the day at 12:15 p.m. No other nurse clocked in.

Herron's abortion began about 12:30. Aragon, the medical assistant, recalled that Biskind "appeared to be having a hard time crushing the fetus' skull and pulling it out." Herron began bleeding, heavily. A medical examiner would later find a 2-inch by three-quarter-inch tear in Herron's uterus.

Teresa Jensen and Kaihya Jimenez had been hired earlier that month to answer phones and do blood work for \$7 an hour. Neither had any clinical experience. In fact, the day of Herron's abortion was the first time either of them had worked in the recovery room, but that didn't stop Stuart-Schadoff from sending them in instead of a nurse.

Both women were nervous. Jensen told police they "just kind of winged it."

Herron was wheeled into the recovery room, drowsy and yellowish, sometime before 1:30 p.m. Jensen and Jimenez took her blood pressure-80 over 50-a reading so low they thought the equipment was faulty or they were doing it wrong. They took six more readings.

At one point, Jensen told police, Herron sat up, obviously in severe pain. "You've got to do something for me," she begged.

Another medical assistant, 68-year-old Mabel Lopez, came into the recovery room sometime before 2 p.m. She saw Herron and exclaimed, "Oh my goodness, don't you see she's bleeding?" One of the assistants started to clean up the mess, but Lopez told her to leave it so Biskind could see how much blood Herron had lost.

Lopez told police she found Biskind in another room having his lunch. She told him Herron was bleeding heavily.

"Get out of here," he reportedly snapped, and told Lopez to tell Stuart-Schadoff about it. He would look at Herron after he was done eating, he said.

Lopez knocked on Stuart-Schadoff's office door and asked her to come to the recovery room. Stuart-Schadoff yelled at Lopez for interrupting an interview.

After finishing his lunch, Biskind went to the recovery room. He looked at Herron, checked an IV line that had been inserted incorrectly and muttered something to Stuart-Schadoff about inexperienced medical assistants.

Herron sat up, frightened, asking, "What's wrong? What's wrong?" Jensen told police Biskind replied, "There's nothing wrong, just lay back down."

"It looked like LouAnne was laying in a pool of Jell-O," Jensen recalled, "because at that point the blood was thick?from her belly button down to her toes." Biskind ordered the assistants to clean her up, then went to perform another abortion.

It was in the operating room that he seemed to realize there was no nurse on duty. He told an assistant to page Stuart-Schadoff. Clinic workers heard Biskind and Stuart-Schadoff arguing about the lack of a nurse in the operating room (apparently while he performed another abortion). One employee said he often complained about not having a nurse.

Meanwhile, Herron continued to deteriorate. It was obvious to the medical assistants that she was in severe pain. She was panicked, screaming, "I can't feel my legs. I can't feel my legs. Help me!"

No sirens, please

Across the street from the A-Z clinic was the Good Samaritan Hospital, but rather than call 911, at about 2 p.m. Stuart-Schadoff called Tammy Lomas of the Glendale clinic for help (she didn't say why). Lomas said she had to wait for an exterminator to finish spraying the facility.

Stuart-Schadoff next called the Family Planning Institute in Scottsdale-another sister clinic. Deryl Whitlock, a medical assistant, set out on the 20-minute drive to the A-Z clinic.

(The day's events would haunt Whitlock to her death. She began having nightmares about Herron and couldn't sleep. She cried to her sister over Herron's death. She started drinking heavily, and on May 3, 1998, Whitlock died in a car accident while intoxicated. Notes describing what she saw at the clinic on April 17 were recovered from the rear floorboards of the car she was driving.)

Barbara Blanc, Herron's friend of 15 years, arrived to pick her up and was in the clinic waiting room, worried. She heard Herron asking what was wrong. Blanc, too, wanted to know if there was reason for alarm.

According to the police report, Jensen said she "tried to tell [Blanc] with her eyes that there was something wrong with LouAnne." What Blanc was told aloud, however, was that Herron was "not coming around as quickly as they thought she would."

About 3 p.m., Stuart-Schadoff called assistant Jenil Begay into the recovery room.

Herron was propped up in a sitting position on the gurney, her legs straight out in front of her. Aragon, who assisted Biskind in the operating room, was hysterical, saying, "Oh my gosh! Something's wrong. This isn't right."

Begay snapped an ammonia inhaler in half and put it under Herron's nose. "LouAnne!" she called. "LouAnne!"

No response.

Begay grabbed Herron's hand in her own. "If you can hear me, squeeze my hand!"

No response.

Dr. Biskind was nowhere to be found. No one could pin down for police exactly when he left-he wasn't in the habit of saying goodbye. He had just finished his last abortion and left without checking Herron again likely sometime between 3 and 4 p.m.

The assistants laid Herron down on the gurney. Begay asked if anyone had taken her vital signs. No one answered. She put a stethoscope to Herron's chest but could barely hear a heartbeat. Someone said to call 911.

"No," said Stuart-Schadoff.

"Carol," Begay said, looking directly at her, "you need to call 911." Whitlock backed her.

Stuart-Schadoff gave them a look-like they were "loony," Begay told police-and replied, "No, we're going to call the doctor first."

Biskind's pager went off at 4:12 p.m. He was at a tailor shop when he returned the call. He informed them that he was not coming back.

Out in the waiting room, Barbara Blanc heard someone slam down the phone and say, "He hung up on me and told me to call 911." Blanc also recalled that a woman, someone clothed in a "dressy manner," told her Herron was having an allergic reaction and they needed to know what drugs she was on.

During the recorded 911 call at 4:17 p.m., Aragon said, "Could we have you come to the side doors, right on 10th Street, and try not to use no sirens."

The 911 dispatcher asked what the emergency was. Aragon replied: "She had a termination done."

Dispatcher: Is she breathing OK? Aragon: No, she's not. Dispatcher: OK, do you have oxygen on her?

Aragon: No, we don't.

Dispatcher: Do you have oxygen available?

Aragon: Hmm. Can we get it on? I don't know if we have any in there.

Capt. Arnie Barajas, a paramedic with the Phoenix Fire Department, said Herron was lying on a blood-soaked gurney, cold, pale and "probably had been dead awhile" when he walked in.

Capt. Brian Tobin, another paramedic, said one of the clinic employees told him Herron's blood pressure was taken at 4:24 p.m.-moments before the paramedics arrived-and it was 90 over 50. The statement was so "bogus," Tobin told investigators, that he wrote it down on the clinic recovery log and initialed it-as evidence.

Herron was taken across the street, to the emergency room of the Good Samaritan Hospital. There, Dr. David Cohen noted on Herron's record: "profoundly pale? cool?no pulse?no heart tones?pupils fixed and dilated."

Cohen pronounced Herron dead at 4:50 p.m.

Our little secret

Several clinic employees said Stuart-Schadoff got the staff together the next day and ordered them not to talk about Herron's death. She especially didn't want local pro-lifers to find out. In fact, Jensen told the ABC television program 20/20 that Stuart-Schadoff instructed the clinic staff to deny Herron's death and say it was "just a lie that the protesters made up."

According to Begay's police interview, Sylvia Aragon was very upset and told Begay that Stuart-Schadoff had called her and said there was nothing they could do, that they did their best, that "LouAnne had died because it was God's intention."

Not long after Herron's death came to light, Biskind surrendered his licenses to practice medicine in Arizona and in his home state of Ohio. At least three clinic employees resigned. Owner Moishe Hachamovitch eventually closed A-Z and two other Phoenix-area clinics.

Phoenix police asked Dr. Patricia Graham to review Herron's case, prompting her to conclude that the clinic records were faked. The care Herron received, Graham said, was "so far below acceptable levels, it was scraping rock bottom." Herron, she told investigators, "would have survived with a minimal amount of care and treatment from Dr. Biskind."

During Biskind's month-long trial at Maricopa County Superior Court, emergency room physician Dr. John Gallagher said much the same thing. When prosecutors asked him under oath if Herron should have died that day, Gallagher said no.

Biskind's lawyer argued that Herron had suffered from "incipient bleeding." He suggested that her unborn baby, not Biskind's instrument, had torn Herron's uterus. The jurors disagreed. On Feb.20, they convicted Biskind of manslaughter, and found Stuart-Schadoff guilty of negligent homicide.

Vicki Conroy of Legal Action for Women, which provides legal referral for women injured by abortion, said after Biskind's arrest that Herron's case is not an anomaly because abortion is a largely unregulated industry.

"Herron bled to death because Biskind, like so many other abortionists, is now mistaken for a respected family

practitioner when in reality he is simply a back-alley butcher," Conroy said. "Make no mistake, there are abortionists like John Biskind in every state."