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School, which I taught in.

And there was the abortion counseling service, which has the nickname Jane. And all the women who are in it are called Janes. And what the service did to begin with, in the very very beginning was to find people who were competent abortionists and refer women to them because women were always looking. It was against the law.

Of course there were many people who were doing abortions. There always have been, there always will be, because abortion is one of the things people need. Some of them are vicious and greedy. And that is one of things that happens when abortion is illegal. But many of them, certainly in those days, are neither vicious nor greedy. They are kind, generous, decent, and thoughtful. They use the skills they learn in a variety of places to help women and girls.

Early Jane work was about finding the good guys and identifying the bad guys: "Go here, don't go there." Over time, though, we began to say, "Hey, there is stuff here we can do." We figured out, we learned, we discovered, that our main guy, the one we worked with most of the time because he was really good and generous and kind. We found out that he wasn't an M.D. There were many responses, not just two. Big arguments: "What are we going to do?" and "if he can do it, then we can do it. We want to learn."

Ultimately, he taught us. He had been in the army in the Korea War in the 50s. He was a medic and he trained that way, and learned to do abortions. He taught us. And then he was gone and we did everything.

We counseled the women. We did the abortions. We did whatever aftercare we could. We had a little secret team of back-up docs just in case something went wrong. Because even with regular medical procedures, occasionally something goes wrong. So there was this group of anonymous types who certainly did not want to be known but were "good guys" who were willing to help us. So that's what we did. That's what I did.

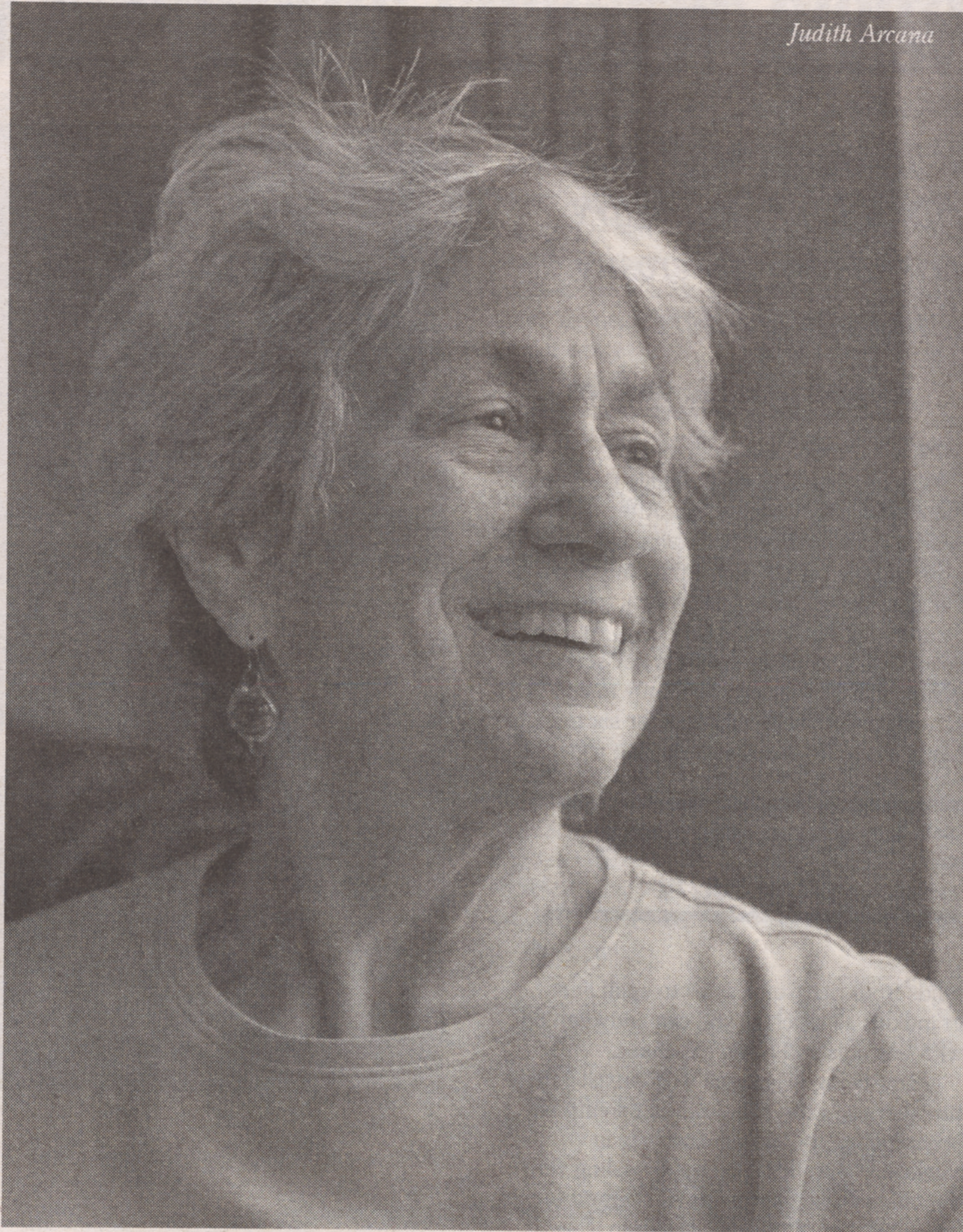
E.F.: *There are obvious issues facing abortions in the political atmosphere. It's pretty ugly right now for reproductive rights. What is your take on these big issues, including access, which is really important and still limited.*

J.A.: Many people believe that because Roe has not been overturned by the Supreme Court, although it seems likely, that everything is OK. But actually, everything is very seriously not OK in most of the United States. Forty-nine out of 50 states have created laws that limit access to abortion. Forty-nine out of 50. Not a good record. (Oregon is the exception.)

Even in those places where it is relatively more accessible than not, there are barriers for very young women, for poor women, or even for women who don't happen to have an extra several hundreds of dollars available to them suddenly and unexpectedly. Also, this atmosphere we have been talking about – social, political, cultural atmosphere – affects the medical tech people as well. Nurses, doctors, midwives, dulas, many of whom are thinking and struggling in this same arena that workers who want to do the same kinds of things that Janes did.

But the fact that Roe is still on the books has in no way kept anti-abortion activity from being limited severely – not only the actual practice of doing abortions, but knowledge about what it is, how it works, when it needs to be done.

My personal analysis is that the really smart people in the anti-abortion movement would rather not overturn Roe because it's a cover for them. They can say "Look, this is the law of the land." And at the same time they move, very effectively, state-by-state, region-by-region, county-by-county, township-by-township, to essentially eviscerate that law. They have been wildly successful.



Judith Arcana

PHOTO BY BARBARA GUNDEL

E.F.: *Bills have progressed in many state legislatures this year to limit abortion access, including Texas and Ohio.*

J.A.: Right, nothing after 20 weeks. And in some places, an even smaller number or require ultrasound, or parental consent, or spousal consent. Or all of the above. All of that is not only emblematic of, but the guts of, the success of the anti-abortion movement.

Oregon is the 50th state – the only state which has no restrictions at the moment. But we have to deal with the same issues that everybody else does. If you do not live in Portland, Eugene, Bend, or Ashland, you have to travel a long way. If you have a job, you might have to miss work, which would put your job in jeopardy. If you have kids, you have to have child care for those children while you travel. Plus, you have to pay, minimally, up to several hundred dollars, and if all of that makes your time lag even greater, then you are looking at a procedure that is more complicated, more costly, much more difficult to find a practitioner for. And that's even in Oregon, where we don't have, yet, at the moment, any of those tremendously restrictive laws in place.

But at the same time that Oregon is looking good comparatively, we are now a very clear target. A lot of money supporting anti-abortion proposals in legislation is going to be coming at us – is coming at us.

E.F.: *What do you think about Democrats dubbing the Republican policies as a War On Women?*

J.A.: I understand why the two major political parties play that way. It's opportunistic, on the part of the Dems. On the other hand, it could be useful.

It's not only about abortion and

contraception, reproductive health, and reproductive justice, it is true that some of these guys actually ... we're talking ignorance, it's astounding – their stuff about rape, about child abuse, about sexual slavery and trafficking. Their ignorance is deep. Their ignorance is broad and wide.

So all of this constitutes the quote-unquote "War On Women." It isn't only about the particular theme and subject. It's a generic thing. I don't like the phrase, it's tacky. It's just a slogan, it's like something you shout at a pep rally.

E.F.: *What conversations do you wish would happen about reproductive rights?*

J.A.: One conversation or series of conversations I always want is to talk

about what abortion actually is and what it means in the life of a woman or girl that is pregnant. And also talking about how they feel and think about that. And how they think and fell about the history of abortion, globally and in the United States. I want the information about that history bandied about. I want it discussed by great numbers of people.

In the United States, I've actually heard people say, "Well, abortion: Feminists created that in the '60s." I'm thinking, well, not exactly. People have known how to abort a fetus for literally thousands of years in various ways. In the Philippines, there is a massage version. In various countries all over the globe, there are herbs that women have used. These things are not 100 percent (effective) but what I am saying is that it has been done for a long time, and that people should know that it's been done for a long time, that people should understand that this is not something recent that came out of the women's liberation movement. It would be cool if we could take credit. The fact is, we can't.

I want people talking. Talking in small groups where they feel comfortable. Not debating, not dealing with the "other side." Talking.

E.F.: *What do think will be the final catalyst for these conversations.*

J.A.: I don't know that there is one catalyst. In every community there are often little catalysts here and there. For instance, there will be a particular thing that happens, like some young woman will die because of a butchered abortion in her desperation having told no one of her situation.

The really terrible stuff is always catalytic because people are outraged, disgusted, and frightened. Another kind of catalyst is the recognition and realization that comes from the kind of learning.

As the characters in the Jane Bill are arguing about: it's pretty dangerous to be known when you are against the law or against the tide. That's more our condition now. We were against the law, now we are against the tide. But you know about the tide: the tide turns. For example, the online stuff is so useful and it's so dangerous.

E.F.: *Dangerous? Do you mean to the individuals like Edward Snowden?*

J.A.: Yes. And to the people they are talking about. If you are organizing, then you have other peoples' lives in your keyboard. So you are endangering yourself, Snowden being the current, Julian Assange, and all of these folks. And, in this case, we did a tremendous amount of stuff by telephone and in person. It's just too risky, I think.

E.F.: *You've mentioned that even the Catholic Church has changed its stance. Could you talk about that?*

J.A.: They've gone back and forth. This is the most interesting thing for me: that it is literally true that different popes change the rules over hundreds of years. So that at different times there have been abortions have been fine until what is called "quickenning," and it was still called quickening, by the way, even in the 20th century. It's a word you don't hear very often in the 21st because now we have machines that tell us whatever it is, the people in charge of the machines want us to be told about fetal development.

Also, when it was the Church – and of course it was all men – dealing with this, they talked about the Spirit. They said that the fetus was not 'enspirited' until a certain time. Of course they argued about the date. They didn't know, but they talked about it anyway. Just as men talk about women's bodies now, they talked about women's bodies then: in ignorance.

E.F.: *What would you like to see happen beyond the zine?*

J.A.: The Jane Bill, that story and other stories that I've written, the movies I hope to get made, and the plays I hope to have adapted, and the conversations we hope to spark. All of those things is like an underground, really, since the mass media is already infused with a particular position. It's almost like working in the abortion underground in the late '60s and early '70s, in that we are so different in our perspectives, beliefs, and desires, from the prevailing and accepted generic position.

Let's face it: the mass media is huge. Street Roots is remarkable for its independence in a country where most of the news media is generic and owned by right wing position holders. So that's what I want. And I don't see why it won't happen. I don't see why young women with the power and the energy and the desire and the passion, that I have seen in them will not make common cause with their elder women and people they know, people they've read, people they've studied, people they've worked with, to make these changes and do this learning.