PS1 for 2/18/88#THE LIFE AND DEATH ISSUES OF ABORTION

When 50,000 Americans marched in Washington, D.C., on the 15th anniversary of (BF)Roe v. Wade(end BF), it was clear that time has not diminished the passion of those who view abortion as the unjustified killing by one individual of another, or of those who view abortion as the premier woman's right. At least 20 million abortions have been performed since the U.S. Supreme Court decision of January 22, 1973 that legalized these acts.

We are all amazed at the power and capacity of the little silicon chips that hold and store vast quantities of information, making computers possible. But the human life in the mother's womb is even more remarkable.

Each of us started from a tiny substance so minute it can fit neatly on the point of a needle, yet containing all the inborn qualities of the future adult, whether male or female, black or white, tall or short, blue eyed or brown eyed. A new individual, with all the genetic information to build a human body and brain, is formed as soon as 23 chromosomes from the father unite with 23 chromosomes from the mother.

By the time the mother knows she is pregnant, and when the size of the individual is smaller than a human thumb, the individual has his eternal identity card already filled out. Each fertilized ovum is an entirely original and unique combination that never occurred before and will never occur again.

This is not a matter of religion or faith or opinion but of scientific fact based on clear and massive experimental evidence. It cannot be changed by passing a law or handing down a court decision.

Because of sophisticated modern technology and the developing new science of fetology, we now know so much about what goes on in the womb of the mother. The more we look at pictures of the miracle of

life inside a mother's womb, the more we realize that the best word in the English language to describe it is baby.

Of course, the preborn baby in the womb is dependent on receiving vital fluids from the mother, but that doesn't make the baby part of the woman's body. The astronauts in their space suits on the moon were totally dependent on tubes that carried vital fluids from the space ship, but that didn't make the astronauts part of the body of the space ship.

So, the first issue involved in abortion is life in the womb. The second issue is death in the womb, the bloody procedure known as abortion. It is unfortunate that national television has never shown the public how an abortion is performed.

When President Reagan had his intestinal surgery, the TV networks explicitly and redundantly showed us, with animated diagrams, a great deal more about his intestinal track than most of us cared to know. Why can't we see similar explicitness about the most common surgical procedure performed today, abortion?

In the first trimester, the baby may be expunged by the procedure called dilation and curettage (D & C). This is a scraping with a spoon-shaped knife that cuts up the baby in little pieces, causing heavy bleeding and possible damage to the mother's cervix and uterus.

Or, the baby may be vacuumed out of the womb through a tube that carries 29 times the suction power of the typical vacuum cleaner. The skull is then crushed with forceps so that it can be vacuumed out, too.

The saline method is used in the second trimester; a long needle is injected carrying a salt solution that poisons the baby and burns off its skin. Hours later, after the practitioner has departed, the baby is delivered, shriveled and dead, with the help of a nurse.

Or, the baby may be killed with prostaglandin, a drug that stops

the heart from beating. Again, a nurse helps deliver the dead baby hours later.

In the third trimester -- there are about 120,000 late term abortions per year -- the process may be dilation and evacuation (D & E), in which the baby is twisted, broken and removed by forceps, and then the pieces are reassembled on the table to make sure that all are accounted for. Or, the woman may have a hysterotomy (a mini-C-section); the abdomen is cut to take out the baby, who is then smothered in the womb or tossed in a bucket to die.

The fundamental question is, where do individuals get their right to life? The Declaration of Independence proclaimed that our inalienable rights comes to each of us from our Creator.

But under (BF)Roe v. Wade(end BF), your right to life depends on somebody else wanting you, a somebody else who can kill you during your first nine months of life for reasons of convenience, comfort, career, caprice, money, or lifestyle. It's no wonder that so many Americans are determined that a civilized society must reject that notion.