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June 1, 1999

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Washington, D.C., 20463

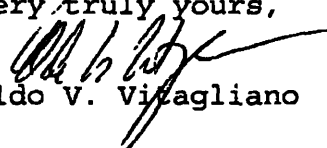
Re: MUR 4883

Dear Mr. Turley:

In connection with the referenced matter, enclosed please find additional information regarding the extent of the illegal campaign activities of the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion. According to the new report, 86,000 calls were made last year. Not one call was reported as an expense item on the Federal Political Action Committee run by this organization, despite the fact that calls were made on behalf of Charles Schumer and against Al D'Amato. 70,000 brochures were mailed. Not one item of production or mailing costs for this brochure was listed as an expense.

Apparently, as the news article details, this has occurred for many years.

Very truly yours,


Aldo V. Vitagliano

'I am doing the right thing,' Polly Rothstein declares

GARY STERN
The Journal News

On Election Day '98, Polly Rothstein was deep in the jungle, surrounded by watching eyes and sharp fangs.

Her Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion was making the last of its 86,000 phone calls to get out the vote for candidates who support abortion rights in three tooth-and-claw races. But as her volunteers banged out their final calls, Rothstein — the single-minded leader of the abortion rights movement in the northern suburbs — was on a very different mission in Guyana.

Led by machete-swinging guides, Rothstein and a small group of friends were trekking 30 miles through heavy brush, surrounded by anacondas, tarantulas, pumas and countless stinging insects. Their destination was a river filled with stingrays and alligators.

The opportunity to see a saf-

Tracing their roots of activism

IN FAVOR OF ABORTION RIGHTS

Iron-crested tyrant-manakin or another South American bird was too great for Rothstein to pass up. So she missed celebrating the victories of U.S. Senate candidate Charles Schumer, state Attorney General candidate Eliot Spitzer and state Assemblywoman Naomi Matusow — all vigilant defenders of a woman's right to have an abortion.

"I couldn't not go on such a vigorous, exciting trip," Rothstein said. "I love birding more than anything."

It may come as a surprise to her opponents that Polly Rothstein spends any time away from her tireless campaign in behalf of legal abortion. Over nearly three decades, she has built the Westchester Coal-

Please see **ROTHSTEIN, 4A**

HOME DELIVERY 1-800-942-1010

God had other plans, Faranda family believes

SEAN WHEBY
The Journal News

COTON-ON-HUDSON —

There are few clues in this ranch house that Thomas and Bridget Faranda are leaders in any sort of a struggle, other than struggles that come with being parents of young children: a traffic jam of Tonka trucks on the lawn, toys lost in the sofa, score crumbs on the floor.

There are no signs of protest here, no fire-and-brimstone placards, no bullhorns, no posters of bloody fetuses. Yet the Farandas are, in fact, determined rebels. They are stalwarts in a shrinking core of anti-abortion activists.

Their movement, forged from the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973, has suffered a series of grave setbacks in recent years. Now, it hangs on mainly in the churches and quiet homes such as the Farandas' — olive green, ob-

OPPOSED TO ABORTION RIGHTS

durately plain, guarded by some shrubbery and a few pansies.

The hard-driving investment counselor, 47, and the quiet homemaker, 50, have spent the last decade of their lives passionately, battling against what they see as the state-sanctioned murder of unborn babies.

Together as a team, they help run the Hudson Valley Coalition for Life, with about 300 members in the tri-state area. The coalition is one of a small, generally cooperative galaxy of grass-roots anti-abortion groups in Westchester, among them the Right-to-Life of Lower Westchester, the Catholic Coalition and the Northern Westchester Put-

Please see **FARANDAS, 5A**

6p1

'I won't let them tell me what I should be doing'

ROTHSTEIN, from 1A

on for Legal Abortion into a political force that many believe has tilted the balance of several major election battles in the favor of politicians who support abortion rights.

In a debate characterized by extremes, Rothstein is alternately viewed as a force of great evil, and as a fearless defender of women and principle. And in truth, she rarely gives people a glimpse past her public persona — of the person who hines when talking about her two grown children's first giggles, adores classical music and ballet, and pursues birding with the same determination she does her work in the political arena.

Rothstein says she accepts the black-and-white way people perceive her — though she admits "it can be difficult."

"People feel very strongly," she said. "Many people, not all, are very rude. But I don't let it pull me off my job. A lot of what people want to do is take me off my job, intimidate me. I won't let them tell me what I should be doing."

As a measure of how strongly some people oppose what she's doing, the Catholic Coalition of Westchester has held two prayer services in which hundreds of people asked God's help in changing Polly Rothstein's mind. The coalition says it will hold more such services in the future.

"She's more than symbolic," said Stanley Tomkiel III, an Eastchester lawyer and leader of the Catholic coalition. "She is the foremost proponent of abortion in our region and certainly has a great influence on elected officials. We pray she can turn her very considerable talents to the protection of human life."

Rothstein, a secular Jew, said she finds the prayer services offensive — and frightening. The anti-abortion movement, she said, encourages violence when it frames the abortion debate as a holy war.

But Rothstein insists she will not back down. Not for one moment in the last 30 years, she says, has she entertained a moment's doubt that she is right

changed by the lengths her desperate friend had to go for an abortion.

A decade later, Rothstein volunteered at a women's health clinic in Pelham. There, she watched abortions performed and came to know the women who came for them. Rothstein says many told her of abuse, both physical and sexual, at the hands of their husbands.

"If I ever needed convincing, I didn't after that," she said. "Everyone had a story that was a heartbreaker. Everyone was doing a difficult thing they felt they had to do. I held their hands, stroked their shoulders and comforted them. They were very glad someone was there."

GETTING THE VOTES

Rothstein realized early on — some say before anyone else — that the best way to protect a woman's right to choose was to make it a purely political issue.

Rather than debate the morality of abortion, Rothstein devised a new strategy: Convince a politician to vote for abortion rights, or gather the votes to replace him with someone who will.

"Polly was the first to realize that we could use choice as a political issue, which changed everything," said Carol Reichert of Roughkeepers, a longtime leader of Family Planning Advocates of New York State. "She realized that choice was important. If we can change their minds, we can change their faces. The woman is an icon."

What pushed Rothstein to see abortion rights as a long-term political battle was the response of anti-abortion activists to two key events.

First, after the New York State Legislature legalized abortion in 1970, anti-abortion lobbying led to its repeal two years later — although Gov. Nelson Rockefeller vetoed the change. Second, the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, which legalized abortion, galvanized anti-abortion forces.

"I called the Christian Coalition, posing as a member, and said, 'What do we do now?'" Rothstein said. "The answer was to go for a constitutional amendment. I knew then

She received hundreds of unsupportive e-mails recently when it was widely reported that she called Cardinal John O'Connor responsible for the murder of abortion doctor Dr. Barnett Slepian.

Rothstein says she blamed religious leaders as a group, and not specifically O'Connor, for creating a climate that can incite people to violence.

"I don't believe there would be an anti-choice movement without religious leadership," she said.

"That would be part of Polly's theme of trying to portray religious people as fanatics," the Catholic Coalition's Tomkiel said. "It's one of her talents, her ability to spin."

At times, Rothstein's voice betrays her frustration and her fatigue over a fight that is never won. She is not so single-minded that she doesn't grow weary of the endless cycle of elections to be influenced, the endless trips to Albany to lobby politicians, and the endless stream of "unsupportive correspondence."

Rothstein faces other struggles, too: Her husband of nearly 40 years, Jesse, a patent lawyer, was diagnosed two years ago with Alzheimer's disease.

When her energy lags, Rothstein says, she gains strength from the deeply personal letters she receives from abortion rights advocates, many with checks attached. The women who write praise her in glowing



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Mark Vergan/The Journal News

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Polly Rothstein, director of the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion, stands in her White Plains office. Behind her are newspaper, editorial cartoons that have been posted on a bulletin board.

terms, tell her deeply personal stories, make it clear that to them, Rothstein is a hero. Pray that your courage does not wane. One woman recently wrote to Rothstein. Rothstein has no plans to give up

the fight. In the jungle of abortion politics, she's learned, only those who persist prevail. Only those who maintain a certain emotional detachment can survive the tooth-and-claw struggle. During her trip to Guyana, Roth-

stein watched for two hours as an eight-inch centipede methodically killed and consumed a frog. "I couldn't stop looking at it," she said. "That's the way it goes. You learn not to take sides with what goes on. Many things get eaten."

To Rothstein, a 62-year-old Harrison resident, the abortion debate comes down to one, direct line of reasoning: "Abortions will never stop, so must not be illegal. Outlawing it doesn't make it stop."

She has no interest in debating when life begins. That is the other side's turf, where Roman Catholics and evangelical Christians lead the opposition to abortion on religious grounds.

She says that she focuses on the needs of the woman, not the fetus. Period. Case closed. End of argument.

"I only care that the outcome is decided by the pregnant woman," Rothstein said. "If no one ever wanted an abortion again, I wouldn't care."

"If someone on the other side sees a fertilized egg, a zygote, as a full person, the same as you and me, they are following their conscience by opposing abortion," she said. "They can't say, 'I will never have an abortion' and I will speak against the rightness of that. 'But you can't use the law to take away the choice of others.'"

Abortion opponents cannot budge Rothstein from her refusal to discuss when a fetus becomes a person. Her willingness to address that issue, they say, is the mark of intellectual and moral dishonesty.

"Any pro-abortionist doesn't want to face the truth, that life begins at conception," said Robert McKeon, chairman of Westchester's Right to Life Party, who has debated Rothstein many times. "There is no hot debate on that because she doesn't want to hear it."

Many who take a personal stake in the abortion wars can point to a defining experience that transformed them into activists. Rothstein is among them.

It was 1958. Rothstein was fresh out of college and living in Boston. An unmarried friend from her hometown of Fairfield, Conn., was pregnant. The friend was distraught, and did not want to have a child. But abortion was illegal.

So the two young women learned to find a doctor in Ashland, Pa., who would terminate the pregnancy secretly. Rothstein and her friend made the trip to the small town, which had become a mecca of illegal abortion.

"It was a strange place," Rothstein said. "People didn't make eye contact. We just whispered to each other. It was totally terrifying. This was time when sex before marriage was not permissible and when women had no sexual freedom. We were breaking the law, out in the middle of nowhere."

The doctor was Dr. Robert Pender, who became famous for performing abortions — with his wife's quiet consent — for decades before his death in 1969. But Rothstein says she was permanently

The group's power began to coalesce during the 1980s, when volunteers called every registered, female voter in the county to build a voting block of supporters. WCLA's newsletter is now mailed to 70,000 Westchester households.

"What Polly has done in Westchester has had tremendous ramifications statewide," said state Sen. Eric Schneiderman, D-Manhattan. "Polly made it clear that you can talk about abortion, focus on choice, and win with it."

Rothstein is a proud liberal, unable to name a single issue on which her position might be considered conservative. But when it comes to supporting politicians or seeking to displace them, she looks only at a candidate's record on abortion.

And on her terms. Rothstein will accept no legal limitations on abortion. She believes the decision is the woman's alone. The late-term abortion issue, she says, is not a valid concern because third-trimester abortions are rarely, if ever, performed.

Rothstein has had it out with several politicians who describe themselves as abortion rights backers but support parental notification for minors to get abortions or a ban on late-term abortions. She has repeatedly criticized Gov. George Pataki for misrepresenting his position. She lit into Ted Dunn, the unsuccessful Republican candidate for Westchester County Executive in 1997, for describing himself as favoring abortion rights while supporting some limitations.

When asked for their views on Rothstein for this article, neither Dunn nor Pataki would comment.

Most of the WCLA's endorsements go to Democrats, who are far more likely to support abortion rights. But Rothstein will go to the mat for Republicans who also vote to support abortion rights, said Lynne Grefe, national director of the New York City-based Republican Pro-Choice Coalition.

"As far as I'm concerned, Polly has done a wonderful job supporting Republican pro-choice politicians, and I'll keep an eye out and make sure she stays bipartisan," Grefe said.

Considering that in 1996, the WCLA endorsed state Sen. Nicholas Spano, a Republican who backed abortion rights, over Democratic challenger Thomas Abinanti, who had served as WCLA's unpaid counsel for 18 years.

'RELIGIOUS' WAR

The walls of Rothstein's office are like an open scrapbook documenting her two passions. On one side are pictures of birds from around the world. On the other are newspaper headlines halting major abortion decisions, cartoons making fun of the religious right and various mailings from the anti-abortion crusade. What she doesn't refer to is her positive correspondence.

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