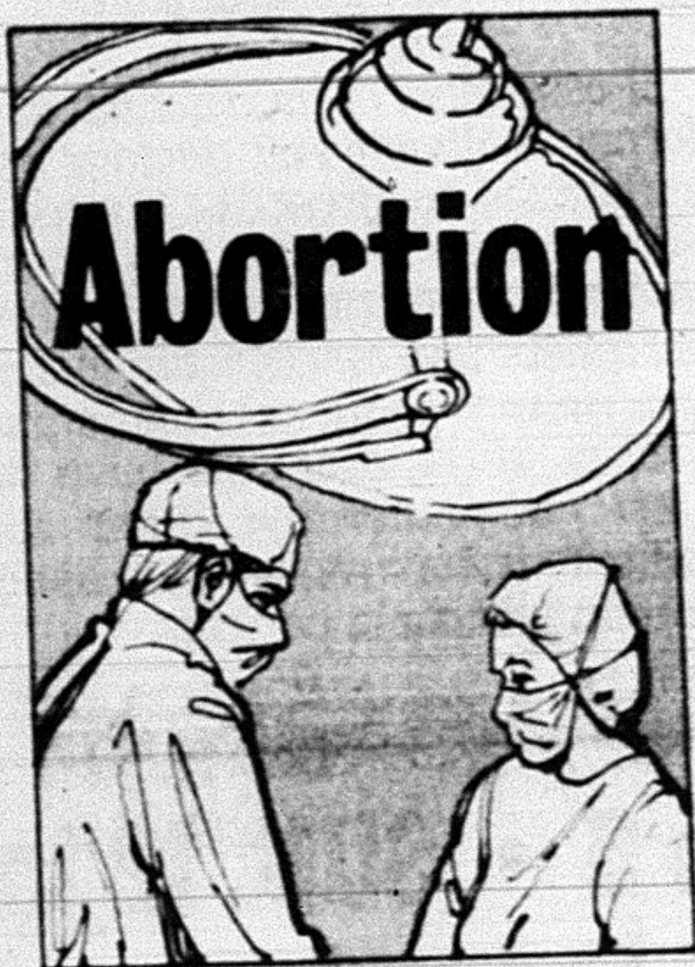


Abortion Pioneer



The path to abortion for many San Joaquin Valley women leads to Dr. Edward Allred, the state's leading abortionist and a pioneer in the field since the late 1960s. A profile of Allred and the controversy over abortion will be explored in a series of articles in Sunday's Bee.

Abortion — A Lucrative Operation

But Leading Practitioner Also Believes He's Right

By DOUG HOAGLAND
Bee Staff Writer

California's premier abortionist is a fiscal conservative and a human rights liberal who didn't want to study medicine and now yearns for the day when he can shovel manure on his ranches.

Leading a life filled with such paradoxes, Dr. Edward Allred admits he is sometimes surprised when he surveys the medical empire he has built in the last 10 years.

"I didn't even want to be a doctor," he said. "Frankly, I wanted to be a lawyer. I'm business oriented . . . I'm a doctor because every young Seventh-day Adventist boy who's got any brains is supposed to be a doctor. I'm kind of here in spite of myself."

Whatever his initial reservations, Allred has not allowed them to stand in his way. Today, he owns and operates eight out-patient abortion clinics and a 22-bed hospital which services the state from Fresno to San Diego. He employs 300 people through Family Planning Associates Medical Group, the corporation name under which he operates.

Since 1969, Allred estimates he has

done at least 250,000 abortions in his clinics. In Fresno, where he has operated since 1973, he guesses about 20,000 abortions have been performed on women from throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Since Valley Medical Center stopped offering abortions last May because of a nursing shortage, Allred's clinic has been the only facility where valley women can go for early abortions. Few doctors are interested in doing any abortions, let alone the volume that Allred and his associates handle.

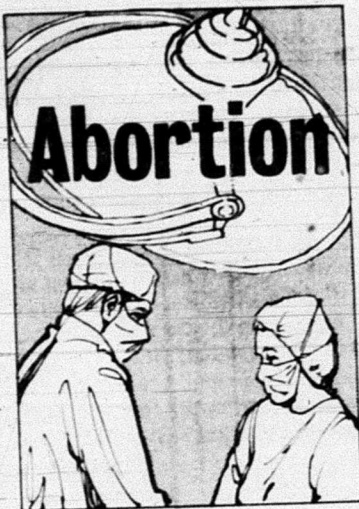
On the two days each week that Allred performs abortions in Fresno his patient load averages 100 women and sometimes ranges between 120 and 130.

An ordinary looking man of medium stature, Allred, 42, is aware of his controversial position and, surprisingly, is not afraid to talk about it.

" . . . I don't mean to toot my own horn, but it's safe to say that I have far more experience than anyone else in the United States in doing this particular thing," he said.

"I've devoted my entire time over

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More In Tempo

Pre-abortion counseling is outlined by the family planning agencies and doctors who provide it.

One of Fresno's leading abortion opponents explains what she believes counseling should involve.

A 26-year-old woman who has had three abortions tells her story.

Abortion critics explain their objections and California's leading abortionist answers allegations made against him.



Bee Photo

Dr. Edward Allred . . . 250,000 abortions in 10 years

Abortinist: He'd Rather Be Running His Ranch

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the last 10 years to doing this. I'm really a workhorse. I work day and night..."

Allred's devotion to hard work is an extension of his belief in the free enterprise system. That belief has paid off handsomely for him.

Allred has become a millionaire by daring to enter a field of medicine which most of his colleagues have shunned and by offering his service at a reasonable rate.

Abortions performed in the first 13 weeks of a pregnancy cost between \$130 and \$190, depending on the type of anesthesia and if any pre-surgery

Not a frivolous thing... young people, in particular, should take responsibility for their sexuality.

work is done by a referring agency. In a hospital, the abortion would cost upwards of \$500.

Allred's Fresno clinic handles women only through their 13th week. More advanced pregnancies are referred to his Los Angeles hospital where the required cesarean section is accommodated. Vasectomies and tubal ligations also are performed at the Fresno clinic.

While Allred's speciality has brought him considerable wealth, it also has subjected him to hate mail, picketers and vandalism. Allred's ability to tolerate such pressures is an indication of the complex forces which drive him. Those forces seem to have created more than one paradox in his views.

He resents, for example, people who view abortion as a "frivolous act." Young people, in particular, should take responsibility for their sexuality, he said. However, Allred has done seven and eight abortions on the same women.

Politically, Allred claims to be a conservative Republican. But, he also admits to recently meeting a sizable Democratic congressional candidate who had only one redeeming quality by Allred's political yardstick. The Democrat appeared to have a chance of beating a conservative Republican incumbent who is vehemently opposed to abortion.

Allred also parts company with some of his politically conservative brethren on the issues of personal freedom. He does not believe, for example, that consenting homosexuals or marijuana users should be penalized with jail sentences.

There is even a paradoxical side to Allred's prudent business sense. If he is convinced that a woman doesn't have the money to pay for an abortion, he will perform the surgery free of charge or for a reduced rate.

Underlying Allred's devotion to the abortion cause is his belief that overpopulation is the world's most serious problem.

"Overpopulation is the one thing which lends itself to demagoguery and people voluntarily giving up their freedom," he said. "You can see it in the difference between people who live in the state of Montana and the people who live in New York City..."

"They accept totally different kinds of lifestyles. They (New York City residents) are easy to mold into one thing.

Allred said he believes the failure

to solve the overpopulation problem will doom the future of democracy.

"I'm very skeptical that we're going to lick it," he said. "I think we might be reading Chairman Mao's books and living that kind of life some day. Frankly, I'm very skeptical about the outlook of Western civilization, but I'm not going to give up trying."

Memories of Army regimentation are a constant reminder to Allred that he does not want to live in a society where sheer numbers make personal freedom impossible.

"Everybody was uni-think. Everyone wore the same clothes and the same glasses. They went to the PX and did everything together. It was kind of frightening."

"I believe strongly in individuality and I think population control is part and parcel of that."

Allred has remained true to his views on overpopulation in his personal life. He and his wife have purposely had no children during 18 years of marriage.

Also a factor in his decision not to have a family, Allred said, is a schedule which finds him seldom at home. "To have children would be criminal for what I'm doing," he said.

Maintaining a commitment to his practice also has required an understanding wife. "We have a good relationship because she understands what I am and always has understood the way I am. It (the practice) takes this kind of attention or it just won't work."

Allred's wife is a former school teacher — she quit rather than join a union — who now helps design and furnish his new clinics.

Even before Allred became involved with abortions, he demonstrated a similar devotion to work. After a two-year stint in the Army, which included a tour of duty in Vietnam, Allred entered private practice in 1967 as a general practitioner in Los Angeles.

By 1969, he was managing the 22-bed Avalon Memorial Hospital which he later purchased. During his first six months at the hospital, Allred lived at the facility so he could devote 24 hours each day to developing a clientele in the poverty-stricken neighborhood where the hospital is located.

"I built that thing up by an enormous success, and I did it by constant personal attention. That's the type of thing I do.

"Anyone who knows me and my people... will tell you that I'm a very hard-driving person, and I won't

"I believe strongly in individuality and I think population control is part and parcel of that."

tolerate anything but the best from the people who work for me.

"I work them all very hard, and I think they have a lot of respect for that. The only way I can demand that of people is to be that way myself."

"I enjoy work and I enjoy the fruits of work, and I'm really happiest when I am working."

While Allred's association with the Avalon Memorial Hospital introduced him to abortions, the liberalization of state law coupled with technological advances paved his path to the top of the field.

In 1968, the state Legislature de-

cidated to permit abortions if a doctor could stipulate that the woman would suffer mentally if the pregnancy continued. Shortly thereafter, a suction machine was introduced on the medical market which allowed doctors to perform first trimester (first 13 weeks) abortions more quickly and easily.

The suction machine led to the development of the vacuum aspiration procedure in which a plastic catheter is inserted into the pregnant woman's uterus and tissue extracted through the power of the suction machine. Before the technique was developed, first trimester abortions were performed by a doctor scraping the uterus with a surgical instrument.

The vacuum aspiration procedure is regarded by most medical authorities as the safest abortion technique. The complication rate from post-operative infection and hemorrhage is very low.

In 1969, Allred was approached by several physicians from Beverly Hills who wanted to do abortions at Avalon Memorial. Allred said he was shocked when the doctors suggested doing five abortions a week at the hospital.

"I couldn't conceive of such a thing, but I looked into the law at their behest, and I let them start working there. I kind of observed them, and it all kind of grew out of that..."

At the same time, Allred said, he was approached by the Los Angeles Free Clinic about the possibility of establishing an abortion program.

Allred agreed to do so, but admits today he did not have the background to perform abortions. "Really, I wasn't trained, but neither was anyone else at the time so I became a pioneer if you can call it that..."

(Officials of the Los Angeles Free Clinic deny that the organization ever encouraged any physicians to establish an abortion program. "No employee or supervisor at the Los Angeles Free Clinic told anyone to go into the abortion business," explained Lee Magnus, a spokesman for the clinic. "We're not for or against abortion and we can't take credit or responsibility for this man's success."

(Elizabeth Canfield, the clinic's pregnancy counselor in the late 1960s, said the clinic did not have to encourage doctors to take abortion cases. They were approached by physicians who wanted referrals, Mrs. Canfield said. Some doctors openly solicited abortion cases while others were more subtle in letting it be known they would handle women with unwanted pregnancies.

(Mrs. Canfield said she cannot remember which approach was taken by Allred.)

The decision to specialize in abortions, and be known thereafter as an abortinist, did not come easily to Allred. "I can't say they (officials of the Los Angeles Free Clinic) forced me into it, but they kind of drug me into it because I was kind of reluctant," Allred said.

The reaction of his fellow physicians was of particular concern to Allred until he realized that performing many abortions was no different than doing the one or two which most obstetrician-gynecologists are willing to do.

"Certainly it doesn't bother me now," Allred said. "I've learned how important it is, and it is important, that people who do it are very skilled



Bee Photo

Most San Joaquin Valley abortions are performed in this Fresno clinic.

and very organized."

Even Allred's critics agree he has become skilled and organized as he expanded beyond the hospital and established out-patient clinics in Fresno, Bakersfield, Ventura, Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Cypress, Riverside and San Diego.

The Supreme Court's 1973 decision which prohibited states from regulating early abortions enabled Allred to establish his chain of out-patient clinics. The clinics specialize in first trimester abortions and most are performed in five to 10 minutes.

Before the Supreme Court's landmark decision, Allred's abortion practice was limited to Avalon Memorial Hospital, and many of his patients came from states which did not have liberalized abortion laws. To better channel his many patients from the Southwest, Allred worked with an organization in Texas which provided air transportation and hotel accommodations for them.

Following the court's decision, Allred lost many of his out-of-state patients and expected his abortion practice would be drastically curtailed. "We were prepared to go about our business and do other things," he said. "However, our interpretation of the demand for abortions in California was wrong. We wound up busier than ever."

In Fresno, Allred's practice began on a small scale. He would drive to Fresno and visit friends and spend a few hours one day doing abortions.

"The first six months, it was so quiet that it was a little hobby, if you want to call it that," he said. "It was an experiment which started to succeed overwhelmingly."

Since that modest beginning, Allred has changed facilities twice as his patient load increased. In 1978, he moved into a new facility just north of Fresno Community Hospital which he describes as "the dream" of what an out-patient clinic should be. aesthetically, the office is a triumph of design. Modern and comfortable furniture fills the spacious waiting room and a steady stream of mellow music plays in the background.

Allred said visitors from throughout the United States have toured the Fresno facility for a view of an ideal out-patient abortion clinic.

Allred usually spends Sundays and

Mondays each week at the Fresno clinic and divides the rest of the week at some of his other facilities. He also devotes two days of most weeks to performing more complicated second trimester abortions at the Avalon Memorial Hospital.

At least once a month, Allred visits clinics where he does not have a regular schedule so he can maintain personal contact with all his employees.

He purposely maintains a regular schedule in the Fresno clinic because of ties to the community. He said his best friend lives here and he has many business friends in the city.

Allred also owns a home in Fresno and belongs to a local country club. When the weather is nice, he tries to take a few days off to play golf at the club.

Besides golf, Allred's only outside interest is quarter horse racing. He is

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not only an avid fan, but also a breeder. He owns a 270-acre ranch near Atascadero where the horses are kept.

Allred also has a cattle ranch in Nevada, but spends little time there or at his Atascadero ranch. He hopes one day to have the time.

"I like that type of life and someday I'd like to take part in it..." he said. "I'd like to shovel manure or whatever I'd have to do. I like that sort of thing, but I don't get much chance to do it now."

Allred also maintains a home in the Los Angeles suburb of La Brea-centa and an apartment in Long Beach. Allred moves between his clinics in his private plane, a 10-place King Air 200 turboprop.

Allred's rise to the top of the abortion field has produced more than material comforts. It also has made him the target for vocal and sometimes militant abortion opponents.

Allred has received his share of hate mail, and his personal phone numbers are closely guarded in an attempt to protect him from harassment. Allred said he understands that abortion opponents focus on his

practice because "we are very large and very successful."

Ironically, he added, the picketing and protests of abortion opponents are the only reason his clinics have succeeded in several cities. Without the protests and resulting publicity, he said, it would have taken much longer to develop the community identity necessary to attract large numbers of patients.

While he said he believes most abortion opponents are law-abiding citizens, Allred also recognizes that "there are some real lookouts on the street." In Ventura, one individual made a habit of breaking the windows at his clinic and leaving a rosary.

Emphasizing that he does not fear for his personal safety, Allred nevertheless takes whatever steps are necessary to protect himself, his family and his staff from mentally deranged individuals "who might feel the Lord's voice is telling them to do something."

Despite their efforts to derail his lucrative practice, Allred said he has "a fair amount of sympathy" for abortion opponents. "If someone really believes that abortion is taking a human life," he said, "I certainly can see the depth of their protest and that view, but I can certainly see how it could come to be a very dramatic thing..."

Despite sympathy for his opponents, Allred does not underestimate their increasing political strength. He noted, for example, they have been successful in getting the legislature to restrict Medi-Cal funding of abortions for poor women. Only a court order now prevents the restriction from being imposed.

Statewide, Allred estimates that 25 percent of his patients pay for their surgery with Medi-Cal, and that the figure is higher in Fresno.

If the court order is lifted, Allred said clinics like his should be prepared to perform abortions free of charge for low-income women. "We're not Robin Hood, but it's probably the practical thing for us to do," he said.

"We would do it also because we believe in it and because we have control of all the facilities required to do it... It's part of our role and responsibility."