

BY SUSAN HOLMES

It was not quite noon on a February day, and the small airport was deserted except for a few businessmen waiting for their flights and two women seated on opposite sides of the lobby.

Two Women On a Quick Trip To NY Abortion

The younger of the two, a small, pretty girl with soft brown hair gently framing her face, absent-mindedly leafed through a Cosmopolitan magazine. The other, a tall, large-boned brunet, sat unmoving lost in her thoughts.

Both women were pregnant.

Within minutes, both would board a tiny private plane headed for an abortion office just outside Niagara Falls, N.Y. They would fly there, get the abortions and fly back to Detroit, all in the space of eight hours.

The entire trip, including the round-trip flight, the legal abortion by a licensed doctor in New York State, and even a free meal after the operation, cost each woman \$400.

Both of the women awaiting that day's flight agreed to discuss their pregnancies and their reasons for getting abortions if their names were not divulged.

The flight was arranged by the Mitchell Referral Service of Niagara Falls. The service is run by Oak Park businessman Martin Mitchell, but it has no office in Michigan.

EACH WEEK, several flights take off from a Detroit-area airport carrying women from Michigan, where abortions are illegal, to New York, where they are legal.

"Just call me Jane, and please don't let on what I am or where I'm from," pleaded the 30-year-old widow, whose husband was killed in Vietnam three years ago, leaving her with four young sons. Now she was nine weeks pregnant by a boyfriend whom she said she would never marry.

"He's got children of his own, and anyway, he doesn't get along that well with my boys," she said.

Nervous about the flight and the abortion, she admitted feeling a little guilty about the whole thing. "But everybody in the neighborhood knows me, and I could never have a baby without being married," she said. "I don't feel good about this, but well, I'm not a baby anymore. I know the score," she added, shrugging her shoulders.

Her companion for the flight was Carole, a 22-year-old secretary with a good job in a hospital. Carole lives with her parents, who not only knew of her abortion but even lent her the money to pay for it.

"I'm going to pay it back to them. I've even got money saved up in the bank," said Carole brushing her hair back from her face. "After all, this is my responsibility." Ten weeks pregnant, Carole said she wasn't ready to get married. The alternatives for her were simple: Have the baby and put it up for adoption, or have an abortion, legally, in New York. "I'd never go through an illegal abortion. I'd be too scared."

Carole and Jane had come to the airport after calling the referral service long distance in Niagara Falls. The receptionist told them that one-day abortions were available if they were less than three months pregnant. All they had to do was send in their \$400 to get an appointment.

"WE FIRST required the girls to get a letter from their doctors saying how far along they were," explained Mitchell. "But we found out that some doctors lied about the duration of the pregnancy, and when the girls got to the place, our doctors wouldn't perform the abortion."

"This way works out better. The responsibility is on the girl. If she's lying about it, we tell her she won't get the abortion," Mitchell said. New York State law allows abortions in a doctor's office up to three months. After that, the operations must be performed in a hospital and patients must remain there several days.

Less than a week passed between the girls' initial calls and

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