

*This is a copy of the article by Michael Foust, Baptist Press Writer, published in the November 27, 2003 issue of Baptist Messenger.*

*The following-described procedure is still practiced in the United States despite President Bush's recent signing of a law banning it.*

WASHINGTON (BP)-Brenda Pratt Shafer witnessed a partial-birth abortion. It was an experience she would rather forget, but cannot.

A registered nurse, Shafer in 1993 worked for three days in an abortion clinic in Dayton, Ohio, under abortion doctor Martin Haskell, who popularized the procedure. Shafer's testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee in 1996 helped strengthen the push to ban partial-birth abortion and has been recounted often by senators and representatives in congressional floor debates. President Bush signed the ban into law Nov. 5.

"Because of the strong pro-choice views that I held at that time, I thought this assignment in Haskell's clinic would be no problem for me," she told the subcommittee in her 1996 testimony to a transcript. "But I was wrong." On her third day in the clinic, Shafer said she witnessed three partial-birth abortions-the first on a Down Syndrome baby, the latter two on healthy mothers with healthy babies.

She described in detail the procedure on the Down syndrome baby, which she said was six months (26 and a half weeks) along. The procedure startled both her and the mother. "Dr. Haskell brought the ultrasound in and hooked it up so that he could see the baby," Shafer testified. "On the ultrasound screen, I could see the heart beating. As Dr. Haskell watched the baby on the ultrasound screen, the baby's heartbeat was clearly visible on the ultrasound screen. "Dr. Haskell went in with forceps and grabbed the baby's legs and pulled them down the birth canal. Then he delivered the baby's body and the arms-everything but the head. The doctor kept the baby's head just inside the uterus. "The baby's little fingers were clasping and unclasping, and his feet were kicking. Then the doctor stuck the scissors through the back of his head, and the baby's arms jerked out in a flinch, a startle reaction, like he might fall." The abortion was nearly complete. "The doctor opened up the scissors, stuck a high-powered suction tube into the opening and sucked the brains out," Shafer said. "Now the baby was completely limp. I was really completely unprepared for what I was seeing. I almost threw up as I watched the doctor do these things. ". . . Dr. Haskell delivered the baby's head. He cut the umbilical cord and delivered the placenta. He threw that baby in a pan, along with the placenta and the instruments he'd used. I saw the baby move in the pan. I asked another nurse and she said it was just 'reflexes.'"

Shafer said she had been a nurse more than 10 years and had witnessed many graphic procedures, but this was the most shocking. "I have been a nurse for a long time and I have seen a lot of death-people maimed in auto accidents, gunshot wounds, you name it. I have seen surgical procedures of every sort. But in all my professional years, I had never witnessed anything like this. "The woman wanted to see her baby, so they cleaned up the baby and put it in a blanket and handed the baby to her. She cried the whole time, and she kept saying, ' I'm so sorry, please forgive me!' I was crying too. I couldn't take it. That baby boy had the most perfect angelic face I had ever seen."

Shafer concluded her testimony by noting the baby was "only inches, seconds away from being born, when he was killed." "What I saw done to that little boy, and to those other babies, should not be allowed in this country."

*If done to a puppy, you go to jail; done to a human being, it is legal. "Have the guts to call it what it is: MURDER!"*

Submitted by Ron Wilson, pastor of The Bible Study Center, Blanchard.