

BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



An astonishing thing happened in New York the other night. Students of the Big Town's behavioral patterns first regarded it as a miracle that might have profound significance in our crime-crossed community. Diminutive friend of ours named Ruth left an apartment house at 57th St. and 7th Avenue, opposite Carnegie Hall, to pick up a cab for home. She had had a late card game. The intersection seemed relatively empty.

As Ruth approached the hack, a husky black woman wrenched the purse off her arm and started high-tailing down 7th Avenue. Spunky Ruth took off after her, hollering.

It would have ended there, normally (abnormally?) but all of a sudden an amazing thing happened. A black man and two whites appeared out of nowhere and gave chase to thief. Thief made a fast turn and started up 7th Avenue again, belted Ruth, threw the purse back at her and headed for the subway entrance. Integrated trio closed in and bagged a thief.

A police patrol car stopped. So did half a dozen cabs. Police seized thief and put her in patrol car. Asked disheveled Ruth if she wanted to prefer charges against thief. Their mood was that it would save a lot of time and trouble for everybody concerned if she just forgot the whole thing and went home. After all, she had her purse back.

Ruth wavered, torn by all the standard doubts that have contributed to this type of crime in our time. Did the poor woman need the money (and all those credit cards?) Why become involved in what might be a tedious day or two in court? Would there be possible reprisals against her if she pursued the case?

So Ruth said to the cops, "Oh, skip it."

"No!" came a thundering cry from what was now a crowd of perhaps two dozen. It had spilled from taxi-cabs that had seen the action and from an all-night lunchroom on the corner.

"You must prefer charges," a man in the crowd said. "How can we live in this town if somebody doesn't prefer charges?"

Ruth swallowed and said she'd prefer charges.

"Okay," one of the cops said. "Hop in and we'll all go to the station together."

Ruth said no; she didn't want to go to the station in the same back seat with the woman who had molested her. A couple from a nearby cab volunteered to take her to the station, and they and perhaps a dozen others served as witnesses when Ruth preferred charges.

That happened last Sunday, early A.M. "Be here tomorrow morning for the hearing," Ruth was told by the desk sergeant.

Ruth figured that meant Monday. She had never heard of a Sunday court. Anyway, she appeared Monday — ready and finally willing to go through the act of being a good citizen. Waited for hours, then was told she should have been there Sunday morning. The personnel she had met in the wake of her traumatic experience were "not in." Nobody seemed to know when they'd be back. So, after a long time, Ruth went home. And there the whole matter — and the whole philosophy and the whole morality — appears to rest.

Father Henry Atwell's column will appear in this spot next week.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



People who have lived two or three generations find that what once was considered unmentionable is now blazoned through all communications.

This past year we all have noted the increase in articles, posters, radio and TV programs on venereal diseases: how to detect them; how to treat them. Doctors say the disease is epidemic, and report 2,500,000 in one year.

Until I joined the Army in 1942, I hardly knew VD existed. Parishes were composed pretty much of people who held purity and fidelity in high esteem; and non-Catholics held about the same moral views about sex as Catholics. The Bible was accepted as a teacher. "What God wants is for you all to be holy. He wants you to keep away from fornication and each of you to use the body that belongs to him in a way that is holy and honorable; not giving away to selfish lust..." (1 Thes. 4) If obedience was not perfect, disobedience certainly was not of epidemic proportions.

On October 15, I watched FOCUS on TV Channel 13. It was a program on VD with statistics, descriptions of the symptoms, the effects of non-treatment. A Dr. Haughie was one of the few panelists I have ever heard even refer to the fact that in this problem there are moral issues. However, since the program had to do with detection and treatment he said: "We do recognize morality; but we are concerned about the treatment. Find where the fire is and put it out." This is good; but he and most of us are anxious that the fire should never be started!

A Mr. Dexter showed a film made for high schools, colleges, clubs, etc. The film repeated the signs and consequences of non-treatment of VD. A weakness of the film is the assumption that all youngsters are promiscuous. For example, the film advises men to use a protective; "and women should encourage male sex partners to use one. The pill does not protect against VD." The assumption that all youngsters are promiscuous is very bad. The pressure on youngsters today from what they read, from TV and films, from mixed college dormitor-

ies, etc. finally builds up the idea: "If everyone is doing it, then I better too."

About a year ago I watched another TV program on VD. It was a Rochester-made film, movingly done. The actors were a Nazareth College girl and a Brighton High School senior. The purpose of the film was to persuade youngsters who have, or may have contracted VD to go to the clinic for treatment. The film opened with the beautiful girl tripping over a grassy field, expecting her boy friend. Soon he came forward to meet her, with legs of lead. His joylessness was quickly understood as he worked up courage to say to the girl: "I've got it, and if I have it so do you." "It" of course, is VD.

The rest of the picture was modestly done: the agony of the couple; the terror of the girl as she tossed in her bed speculating what the disease would do to her; worry about her parents; the dilemma of what to do next. The finale was her quietly finding the Public Health Clinic, which is now at 111 Westfall Road, and going in for treatment.

Now lest any reader think I am opposed to the VD clinics, I affirm with Dr. Haughie: "When there's a fire, we must put it out." However, isn't it even better that the fire never be started?

Will preaching and teaching that fornication and other impurities are not just social diseases but that they are sinful, and "the Lord punishes sins of that sort." (Thess. 4) reduce VD? I think so.

Our poor youngsters are so bombarded with twisted ideas that many have lost their sense of sin. Even the inspiration of Our Lady and the saints has been hidden from them for lesser examples. Is there a better method of preventing the VD fire than purity? Not all will obey God and His Church. But propaganda for purity will have good effects on many.

The catechism reads: "By the 6th commandment we are commanded to be pure in our behavior; by the 9th, in thought and desire." When men are persuaded these commandments are for keeps, many fires will never begin.

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