

Rock doctor condemns 'bad trip' treatments

(CPS)—Dr. William Abruzzi, medical director at both the Woodstock and illfated Powder Ridge rock festivals, has charged that current hospital emergency room treatment of persons under drug-induced bad trips is often more damaging to drug users than either the drug or the trip itself. And in some instances, he says, such treatment has contributed to tripper's deaths.

Dr. Abruzzi, 44, a physician at the State University College of New York at New Paltz, has treated or observed nearly 4,000 bad trips over the past 17 years. He says virtually all mind-expanding drugs today are laced with varying amounts of respiratory depressants such as thiazine and barbituates, which help get users off to a quicker high. The danger comes when someone suffering a bad trip is

brought to a hospital and is given another dose of barbituates to calm him. "This is all too standard a practice in emergency rooms today," Abruzzi said. "The result is an overdose of the depressant. The tripper's anxiety becomes intensified, and we often end up with a severe paranoid on our hands."

He estimates that about 10 drug users in New York have died this year because of such treatment, and countless others may be permanently scarred psychologically. "In none of the cases with which I am familiar, have fatal drugs, such as heroin been involved," he said.

Furthermore, the usual drug tripper does not require hospitalization unless he is homicidal or suicidal, Abruzzi said. "What he does need, is quiet, a gentle place where people are kind to him."

"Too many emergency rooms treat kids like junkies or otherwise put them down. This alone is very destructive psychodynamically. These youngsters are in highly agitated states and in no condition to cope with harassment," said Abruzzi. He maintains that each bad trip is different, and when treatment is necessary, it ought to be handled by physicians on an individual basis. "The examining doctor should treat the syndromes he finds—comas, agitation, whatever—and not try to play detective. The best treatment in the world is to talk the kid down."

This is what Dr. Abruzzi attempts with trippers with considerable success, both at rock festivals and at the college in New Paltz where he established a drug clinic.

Dorm residents . . .

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"It may be that there are other alternatives, and we've tried some, including the tribunal system, Resident Assistant sanctions and the card-key system."

"Students should be the ones to establish hours and hire watchladies," demanded one student. "It shouldn't be parents or alumni."

Romm answered by stating, "The University is left holding the bag."

Thornton Hall resident Jane McNutt added, "There's something you can do after two

o'clock that you can't do any other time?"

Jane then quoted from section I-A-5 of the Student Conduct Code which reads, "Students shall have the opportunity to participate fully in the formulation of all policies and rules pertaining to student conduct and in the enforcement of all such rules."

"If you feel we are misinterpreting the Student Conduct Code I'll be glad to go to the Student Conduct Committee with you," declared Romm.

When asked as to the origin of the night watchlady's salary, Romm stated, "Her salary comes out of the student room

and board fee. When you pay your \$900, you're trusting us to spend the money in the best way possible," he added.

Incidents of theft and strangers in the dorms have decreased since the night watchlady and Office of Campus Security night watchmen have been making their rounds.

One of the alternatives for increased security was voted in by Walton complex residents during Fall term. A 24-hour lock-up was instituted after several incidents occurred, but, according to resident Jean Niland, the policy was voted down Monday night, "because it just felt like a prison."

Students finally decided that Romm did not possess the power to change the policy and "get rid of the night watchlady," so Henderson Hall resident Carol Kagy presented him with 37 petitions containing nearly 100 signatures, which were circulated in a one-day drive Monday.

The petitions call for a meeting with President Clark and housing department officials to suggest alternate security measure to the night watchlady.

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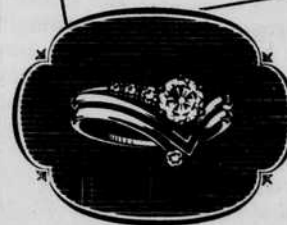
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