

## Awareness Week

continued from page 5

Jonathan is a North Carolina native and founder of the Jargon Society. His works include poetry and amusing expressions, signs, and incidents from his life. He started with a string of humorous, short, but complex limerick-like poems called Clarahews. This was followed by a wonderful Crown Poem (by Tom) and some stories from the north of England and Highlands, North Carolina.

### Key Note Address

The key note speaker for the eleventh annual Lesbian and Gay Awareness Week was Tom Duane. Tom is a candidate for the New York City Council. He spoke to one of the largest groups of the week about his life, his political career, and issues he thinks should be given priority.

Tom spoke on how he started a gay student group at his very small and conservative alma mater, Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. He described several of his major accomplishments as a Democratic District Leader in New York, and issues he will work on if he is elected to the City Council. Tom feels that the time has come for life-partner legislation. Such legislation would ensure lesbian and gay couples the same rights that married straight couples take for granted. This legislation would make a lesbian or gay spouse the next-of-kin for inheritance purposes and would make her or him eligible for inclusion in employment benefits such as health care and pensions.

Tom is a very likable guy and we wish him luck in November.

### Rap Session on Substance Abuse in the Gay Community

The gist of this session was that "more lesbians and gay men die from substance abuse than will ever die from AIDS." Our discussion was led by Jim, who is the leader of Chapel Hill's only gay AA group. The group meets every Thursday night at 8:00 PM in the Carolina Newman Center.

Jim said that there are few social outlets for lesbians and gay men that do not involve alcohol. To be gay and live as a gay person has become associated with drinking. This is borne out in statistics that indicate that 40% of the lesbian and gay community but only 10% of the general population is alcoholic. Jim called alcoholism a disease of denial. Alcoholics often refuse to admit that they have a drinking problem, and Jim saw a correlation between this denial and the refusal to admit one's homosexuality. "Drinking took care of all the secrets in my life," Jim said. "For gay people to become sober they must first accept themselves as gay."

### Rap Session With a Gay Couple

Jeff and Stanley have been living in bliss for the past nine years and they came to speak as a long-term couple. In fact, some remarked that they were so happy together they didn't really qualify as role models!

Stanley did not realize he was gay until he fell in love with a man. He uses Christ as a model for loving, since he describes Christ as affectionate, forgiving, and able to make sacrifices. The day Stanley and Jeff met, Stanley knew he loved Jeff, and they have been together ever since.

Jeff said that he seeks security and a sense of continuity from relationships. His previous relationships involved reaching out and giving, but did not include the reciprocity he needed. "The person I loved most while growing up was my grandmother, and Stanley loves me like my grandmother does. It is a demanding love."

Factors which have contributed to their success include the proper level of "togetherness." They know the limits of topics of discussion, and each has time to himself, without the other partner, every week. Finally, they accept the fact that at times they will be annoyed with each other. Jeff suggests, "As long as you strive for balance in the relationship, you will succeed." *continued on page 7*

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