

Religion

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FOCUS

Depression victim 'on the way back' after near-fatal episode

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Community News Editor

As a radio announcer, Johnny Gardner receives all sorts of phone calls from all types of people. He receives a lot of prank calls. On Oct. 11, he received a call from an extremely depressed woman.

"Something in her voice let me know that this wasn't just a prank call or just someone who liked to talk to a deejay," said Gardner, a WSMX gospel announcer.

The call was not a prank. On the other end of the line, "Linda" was describing how she planned to kill herself and her two teen-age children. ("Linda's" true identity has been withheld to protect the privacy of her family.) She needed someone to talk to, she told Gardner, so the announcer put all of the other calls to the hold and spent an hour talking with Linda. During that time, Gardner played several gospel selections which he felt would help Linda and listened as she explained her situation. On Monday, Linda sponta-

neously being distracted by a radio station.

"The radio station in our house is always set to one station because everyone in our family always listens to the same music," Linda said, her voice quivering slightly. "I turned on the radio because I was a little nervous even though I had made up my mind what I was going to do. For some reason, somebody had changed the radio to WSMX and Johnny Gardner was on the radio. He was playing Christian music and asking what people wanted to hear. And he kept telling people to call in if they wanted to hear something. It was like he knew I was seeking help so I called him. He told people that he had a disturbed lady on the air, and he was going to spend a little time talking with me. It was like God sent him to hold my hand until help came."

Gardner was able to keep Linda on the telephone until she calmed down and convinced her to call a doctor and discuss her problems before continuing on her mission. Heeding his advice, Linda first called Alcoholics Anonymous, but said she became frustrated when she was put on hold and told that the person she needed was not available. Next, Linda phoned her psychiatrist but, once she was in touch with his office, decided instead to call only to cancel her afternoon appointment. But her doctor told her that he would come to her home. Linda said she was confused by his insistence and rode around in a taxi to clear her head. When she returned to her home, a police unit was there and escorted her to the hospital, where she was met by her doctor.

Linda, who obtained a day-pass from the hospital to attend the program, said she is better now, but not well. She cries every few minutes as she discusses what almost happened to her, but she is convinced that by talking about her experience she may be able to help save someone else.

Linda said she suffers from severe depression. The pressures of single motherhood had become too much for her, she said, and her depression reached a dangerous level. Her frustration was intensified by a string of unfortunate incidents: Her house caught on fire last December, and, shortly after, she suffered a stroke which kept her in the hospital until February. Her hospitalization cost her her job and left her with little income to support her children. Linda said she felt she was cheating her children by making them have to help support her and not having a chance to enjoy their youth. In her depression, she said, she saw no way out other than killing herself and taking her children with her.

"If it hadn't been for Johnny Gardner, I would have died. He was the person God sent to hold my hand... I want someone to walk a mile, not a block, in my shoes and tell me that they have been through the same thing or that they wouldn't have done what I did."

-- "Linda"

and an appreciation event for Gardner, whom she said saved her life and the lives of her two children.

"If it hadn't been for Johnny Gardner I would have died," Linda said during Monday's program, which was attended by several of her family members, Gardner's family, the station's staff and members of Macedonia TVPH Church. "He was the person God sent to hold my hand."

Linda, who freely admits that she had been "very suicidal," said that she planned to kill her children when they returned from school that afternoon and to her own life as well. She had planned carefully, sending the children off to school, she went to the store and purchased a large quantity of alcohol, which she drank. She knew that her children would be suspicious if she told them to drink alcohol, so she bought their favorite flavors of milk shakes and added bottles of sleeping pills into the milk shakes. Everything was set. But Linda said she hadn't planned



photo by Mike Cunningham

Family, friends and well-wishers joined "Linda" in thanking WSMX announcer Johnny Gardner during a program held at Macedonia TVPH Church Monday. Station operations manager Sarah Bailey, representing "Linda," presented a plaque to Gardner, who was joined at the occasion by Bishop S.D. Johnson, the church's pastor, and his parents, Lillie Mae and Oble Gardner.

Materials available at Forsyth Hospital estimate that 30,000 people in the United States commit suicide each year. Persons suffering from major depression account for 40 to 50 percent of those suicides. The materials further indicate that the overall prevalence of major depressive episodes in the United States is between 3 and 5 percent. The hospital defines a major depressive episode as one in which the patient's "mood disturbance is prominent and prolonged and usually associated with accessory symptoms."

Symptoms of severe depression include appetite and sleep disturbances, feelings of hopelessness, drive inhibition and anxiety. Persons with major depression also may experience loss of memory, chronic pain, fatigue, hopelessness, irritability and feelings of inadequacy.

"I want someone to walk a mile, not a block, in my shoes, and then tell me that they have been through the same thing or that they wouldn't have done what I did," said the 36-year-old Linda. "But the important story is that there is help for people who need it. Depression and alcohol can kill you. I learned something in the hospital. My hurt is on the inside, and that's something I have to work on. Getting it out is what will help me because we all wear masks, but you can't keep everything on the inside. So many people are ignorant of depression that when you say

you're depressed they think it's all in your mind. You have to be aware of the symptoms and get some help. Depression is a mental illness, but when you say mental illness most people think about you being retarded, and that's not what it's like. Anybody can get depression."

Gardner said he wasn't sure what to do at the time he began talking to Linda, but he felt confident that she just needed someone to talk to.

"I got the distinct impression that she was for real. I didn't know what to say because I'm not a psychologist or anything," he said. "All I wanted was for her not to hurt herself. She knew she needed to talk to someone so we just talked for an hour or more. I think that was a big part of it. It's one of those situations you can't take for granted. I knew I had to say something, and, fortunately, what I had to say took effect and I'm just glad she's here."

Linda, too, is glad that she survived that bout with her depression and is working hard on recovering.

"I'm not going to get well overnight. Depression doesn't come overnight and you can't get rid of it overnight. I'm just so glad I didn't do what I was going to do. Depression and alcoholism can wipe out a family, and that's what it almost did to me. I'm going to fight it every day. I'm going to make it this time."

CHURCH CALENDAR

FRIDAY, NOV. 11

Ambassador Cathedral will celebrate Appreciation '88 through Nov. 13 in honor of their minister of music, David L. Allen. The guest evangelist for the weekend will be Nathan Simmons of Brooklyn, N.Y. Area and local churches will also participate. Services will begin at 7:30 nightly. Sunday's service will present the "Black and Gold Fashion Affair," sponsored by the Ambassadors for Christ Choir. Bishop F.D. Patterson is host pastor.

SATURDAY, NOV. 12

Bethany Baptist Church will hold an all-you-can-eat barbecue hickory smoked meal from noon until. The Bethany Baptist Church Youth Council is sponsoring the event. Adult plates are \$5, plates for children ages 6 to 12 are \$3; plates for children under 6 are free. The proceeds will benefit youth activities, including a winter retreat.

Mother Mary Abbott will conduct an Inner Healing Service at noon. The guest speaker will be Jeanne Reynolds, a graduate of Rhema Bible Training Center in Tulsa, Okla. She is a member of Agape Faith Church. Elder J.C. Ash is host pastor. For more information call St. Peter's Church of God Apostolic at 722-2285.

Shop McGuinness High School will hold its annual bazaar from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the school, 1730 Link Road. There will be quality upholstery fabrics, handmade crafts, baked goods, raffles, clothes, a silent auction, a Yule sale, games, a book fair, a flea market and lunch will be served. All proceeds will benefit the school.

Bethlehem AME Zion Church's Trustee Board will sponsor a barbecue and fish dinner sale from noon to 7 p.m. at the church, 6475 Old Yadville Road in Pfafftown.

Bishop Willie Davis Jr. and Christ Rescue Temple Apostolic Church will hold a dedication service for the church's annex at 2 p.m. Bishop O.D. Grant, state overseer of the North Carolina United Churches of Jesus Apostolic and pastor of Progressive Apostolic Church, will be the guest speaker. Bishop R.L. Kellam, Martinsville, Va., and Bishop S.E. Saunders, Goldsboro, will also appear on the program. Churches from Virginia, North and South Carolina will participate. The CRT Young Adult Choir will furnish music for the occasion.

"God's Answer to Fat" Club will be organized at 2 p.m. at Revelations of Faith Church, 1236 E. 26th St. Everyone with something to lose is invited.

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CHURCH NOTES

37th Race Progress Day scheduled at New Bethel Baptist

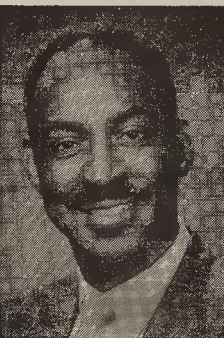
Special to the Chronicle

The Rev. Dr. Ralph McKinley Ross, assistant professor of philosophy and religion and assistant dean of student development at N.C. A&T State University, will address the 37th annual Race Progress Day audience Nov. 13 at 3 p.m. at New Bethel Baptist Church.

The program will mark the 64th anniversary of the Effort Club.

A native of Miami, Ross received his bachelor of at Knoxville College and his master of divinity degree from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta.

He also completed advanced studies at the University of Tennessee and at Drew University.



Ross

He is the interim minister of First United Baptist Church in High Point, has worked for Eastern Airlines and as a minister in Columbus Georgia, as an associate minister in Miami, dean of chapel and students in Tennessee, as a chaplain with the U.S. Naval Reserves and as a lecturer at the University of Tennessee.

Ross is the recipient of several awards including a Rockefeller Fellowship Award, the Marathon Award, and the Phi Alpha Theta International Honor Society in History.

He is affiliated with the NAACP, MBHE, NAPW and ACURA. Ross has travelled extensively in most of the continental United States, Canada, France, Germany and Korea.

He and his wife, Gertrude, have six children. Others appearing on the Race Progress Day program will be Corinne Phillips, presiding; Ophelia Robinson, scripture; Harold Easter, invocation; Paula Limes, the occasion; Charles Robinson, offertory prayer; Flora Golden, introduction of speaker; Hattie Carson, presentation to the church and the NAACP; and Dorothy Shipp, introduction of Effort Club officers.

Music will be furnished by the Young Adult Choir of New Bethel.

Dr. Jerry Drayton, the church's pastor, will give expressions of thanks and the benediction.

Ann Hanes is president of the Effort Club; Corinne Phillips is program chairwoman.

New Faith to celebrate journey of faith

New Faith Chapel Holiness Church will hold its first annual Founders Day services beginning Nov. 14. The services will run through Nov. 18 and a service also will be held Nov. 20.

The week of festivities will kickoff with a candlelight procession led by the founder and pastor, Dr. Lawrence S. Tate and his wife, Brenda Tate. The couple will be followed by church members, guest officials, guest ministers and guest churches. The theme for the occasion is "We've Come This Far By Faith."

The church was organized in May 1980 under the leadership of Tate, when approximately 90 members joined. The charter members were: Mr. and Mrs. James Floyd Sr., Joseph Garis, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Carson, Jean Armstrong, Willie Cross, Bell Cato Sr., Bell Cato Jr., James Bassett, Willie Williams, Fannie Cato, Alton Gamble and Mary Davis.

The church officers are: Mrs. Tate, church secretary; Louvenia Pittman, financial secretary; Sandra Carson, treasurer; James Belton, chairman of deacon board; Genell Stewart, chairman trustee; Sandra Young, church reporter; and James Belton, Sunday school superintendent.

The guest speaker for the week will be Jeff Reed, pastor of Power House of Deliverance #7, in Mississippi. Reed, a native of Mississippi, has been the church's pastor for five years. He is a graduate of West Virginia State University. He and his wife, Tina Reed, have two daughters.

Following the morning service, dinner will be served in the church's fellowship hall.

Service time is 7:30 nightly. Reed also will be the Sunday morning speaker.



Special Messages

Bishop Lawrence S. Tate, left, and Minister Jeff Reed, pastor of Power House of Deliverance #7 in Mississippi, will deliver messages at the Founders Day observance at New Faith Chapel. Tate is the church's pastor.

