

# Three forms of epilepsy made her a prisoner

By LARRY JOHNSTON  
Thornhill Editor

Barbara, "please don't use my real name" sits impatiently in the church meeting room, dragging a cigarette from the corner of her mouth and occasionally taking an all-knowing look at the ceiling.

She listens to the questions from 30-odd friends and parishioners of Holy Trinity Church, Thornhill. They still have not grasped life on the inside, and finally she reaches out.

When she finishes her story, there is hardly a dry eye in the room. The meeting, called to discuss how people in Thornhill can assist the church's work with prisoners, is over.

This slim young woman embraces people as if she will never have the chance to touch anyone again.

All her life, Barbara had to be careful. If she got too excited, she had a seizure; if she got too down on herself, she had a seizure too. She was one in a million, born with three different kinds of epilepsy in one small head.

The state's solution was to lock her up. Detention homes, correctional centres, hardly a hospital. "They told me once I was going to a hospital. It was a jail."

Barbara spent 14 years in institutions. When she hit the Vanier centre for women in Brampton, she figured she was an old hand. Vanier was split into cottages and Barbara was a cottage leader.

She used to stage-manage the cottage meetings, where problems were supposed to be sorted out with staff. She had directed everyone in advance what to say.

## 11 children are baptised

Richmond Hill United Church was the scene last week for the baptising of 11 children.

Rev. Robert K. Shorten officiated.

Baptised were Krista Leanne, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon J. Baird, Centre St. W.; John Anthony, son of Mr. and Mrs. John M. Beek, Baker Avenue; Lydia Claire, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Barry Carson, Springhead Gardens; Andrea Lynn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Douglas J. Denton, Kitsilano Crescent; Lisa Christine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. David John Hughes, Zeldia Crescent; Richard Keith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Darryl Jarvis, Bayview Avenue; Scott David, son of Mr. and Mrs. David M. McNelly, Colbourne Avenue; Fiona Katherine, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ian Springate, Demaine Crescent; Karrie Marie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Ward, Markham Road; David Evan, son of Mr. and Mrs. William R. Woodger, Merrylynn Drive; and Tracy Lynn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William H.M. Woods, Oxford Street.

Also baptised was Mrs. Lynda Stone.

## Driver nabbed

Past the Richmond Hill police station isn't a lucky place to drive when you're not all that sober.

At least that's what Paul Shields, 30, of Willowdale found Friday at 1:20 a.m.

Stopped by YRP on Major Mackenzie Drive, his next stop is at Richmond Hill provincial court Nov. 28 to face charges of impaired driving and refusing to take a breathalyzer test.

When she was finally let out of Vanier, she was told she wouldn't make it. She would be back inside within 24 hours because she had been "institutionalized".

But she fooled them. She has never been back.

She had a reputation among the COs (correctional officers) as a tough kid. She got a phone call once telling her that her dog had died. She cried and a CO saw her.

"We didn't think you had any feelings," the woman said. Barbara walked away, her cover blown.

But someone reached

her in Vanier. First it was a "black guy" who caught her sleeping in the laundry. It would have been a reprimand, real status around the cottages, but he said it was exactly what she wanted.

Then a prison chaplain befriended her.

Finally, there was The Bridge.

The Bridge is a new ecumenical, largely volunteer group that attempts to lessen the gap between the inside and the outside, to help prisoners who want to make a fresh start.

It makes something of the analogy between the Christian philosophy of

being born again and the prisoner's desire to start a new life. The Bridge has been built around the energy and dedication of Daisy Dunlop, who went into the Brampton Adult Training Centre four years ago to assist the overworked chaplains and when her program had expired and her salary run out, was too stubborn to tell anybody.

"I was appalled at how little we on the outside know about prisoners. Only spectacular things are picked up," she said. "The public gets an attitude of fear and prejudice that just does not add up."

Ms. Dunlop's approach is just to go up to prisoners and talk to them.

"All human beings are struggling to see where they are going. We don't have any answers."

"Prisoners want someone to talk to inside and when they get out. It is pretty hard when you get out at 17 or 18 and the only people you know are the gang you ran with, to go out and make a life for yourself."

Prisoners won't open up with COs or social workers because they are on the prison system payroll. Ms. Dunlop has seen five chaplains come

and go in Brampton, rather than become institutionalized themselves.

Support staff like psychiatrists hardly have time to check prisoners, just their file cards. Prisoners may tear each other apart in group therapy, Ms. Dunlop said. Everybody gets a label inside.

"They don't allow for the mystery of each human personality."

Her own position has been saved by successive ministers of correctional services, after going over the head of the prison bureaucracy.

The Bridge has a

distinguished board of directors headed by Rev. David Jones of Brampton. The primate of the Anglican Church headed on delegation to the office of Richard Potter, the former minister. The group came away with Mr. Potter's blessing and the commitment to pay half of Ms. Dunlop's salary.

Later, John Smith came to Brampton and reviewed the whole program and said it had to continue.

Now Ms Dunlop is coordinating the pastoral visitor program, backed up by an office staff of five employed under a

Canada Works grant.

Volunteers go through an extensive training program and there is plenty to be done, if it is only raising money by those who do not want to go inside.

Barbara might have found herself inside again if it were not for pastoral help. In trouble with the law, she found herself in court, with a lawyer she knew and friends to support her for the first time in her life. The charges were dismissed. She had had a temporary absence pass while on remand.

"We did a first in Canada for you that

time," said Ms. Dunlop. Barbara is now going to school.

She got up nerve to call her parents.

Her mother said she could not remember what she looked like.

Then her parents phoned and said they were coming to visit her. She took them on a sight seeing tour of Toronto.

Now they want to come back for Christmas and Barbara is looking forward to it.

For further information on The Bridge, contact Rev. David E. Jones, 4 Elizabeth Street N., Brampton, L6X 1S2 or telephone 451-6649.

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