

## **THERAPIST SAYS EVERYONE HAS A DEGREE OF CRAZINESS**

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By MARIE LATHROP

Everyone is crazy to some degree, according to Dr. Carl Whitaker, noted family therapist, author and lecturer, but in order to survive it's necessary to be tricky enough to get away with it.

"Picasso was crazy but tricky enough to get away with it," Whitaker remarked yesterday to more than 500 professional therapists, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and family service agency workers from four states. They were attending a Wiley House Conference at the Allentown Hilton Hotel.

Dressed casually and sitting on a bar-stool type chair much in the manner of a talk show host, Whitaker spoke of his 40 years as a family therapist and how he backed into his career.

After finishing medical school, he became interested in psychiatry while on a post-graduate fellowship that gave him his first opportunity to work with schizophrenics - and he immediately fell in love with them and their willingness to reveal their insides.

He called schizophrenia the disease of abnormal integrity. He explained that youngsters can zero in on problems quickly and accurately but in the process of growing up they acquire the politics of social living, whereas a schizophrenic will fight to defend his view of the world, even if it is still that of a child.

Whitaker, who grew up in an isolated rural community, where his family comprised his entire social existence, spoke of his own "craziness" which surfaced when the family moved to Syracuse when he was 13.

"I think I was schizophrenic all through high school and spent the next 15 years learning how to adapt to the social structure after living the first 15 in fantasy only."

His introduction to the curative power of therapy, he explained, was through his relationship with two "co-therapists," classmates from high school, whom he met several times a week while they all attended Syracuse University.

"One boy was the smartest and the other the most popular from high school. Together they socialized me," said Whitaker. He recommends that everyone have a co-therapist.

In addressing the process of family therapy, Whitaker likened the first interview between the therapist and family to a blind date. His advice to the therapist was to learn how to be tough and tricky enough not to become a victim.

"Learn how to play chess," said Whitaker. "It's a great game and represents the family. Castle the king right off and don't fool around with the queen. You can't make it if you lose her." The entire

family should be seen together, he said, because decisions affecting the family have to be made by the family.

One of his favorite tricks is to quickly take the onus off the scapegoat who precipitated the consultation. It could be the son who smokes dope, the daughter who doesn't listen, the father who is never home or the mother who nags.

"Explore the family history. Find out the cliques in the family. Raise their anxiety level. Force them to live their lives - not out of your head but from their guts," stated Whitaker.

Some of his most successful consultations ended with the first session because a parent "got tough" and laid down new rules and enforced them, said Whitaker.

Yesterday's program was the sixth in an ongoing annual conference sponsored by Wiley House to bring outstanding lecturers in related fields to Allentown. Last year's speaker was Dr. Terrel Bell, former education secretary. Next year's speaker will be Dr. Virginia Satir, personal development advocate and social worker.

Wiley House, for more than 100 years, has provided educational, residential and other child-care services for children with behavioral problems through its various facilities in Lehigh and Northampton counties. It provides care and treatment for more than 1,200 children daily.