

# Cocaine



By M.Katherine Burke

**T**he dark side of the mirror is a very ugly place." Thus, in a phrase, a one-time junkie paints a vivid picture of the pitfalls of cocaine use.

American society has always had a tendency to denounce the unknown and due to this course of action, each successive generation has taken under its wing the causes its parents fought against. Cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana each in its own turn faced such strenuous infighting.

### Generation gap

"The "killer weed," for example, was labelled as addictive, hallucinogenic and evil by one generation. As science put these claims to the test, it was found that although there was some basis to these claims, they were highly magnified. The result? The younger ones paid very little attention to the truths.

The same seems to be holding true with cocaine. As with most street available illicit drugs, cocaine has become a major target for reformers. They speak at great length about the dangers of "Coke," "Heaven Dust," or "Junk."

### John Belushi

At times the issue goes into remission but, like hepatitis, it is always there. Then when an incident such as comedian John Belushi's death occurs, it rears its ugly head.

The key it seems, is to make the issue



a personal one. Although the "me" generation is said to be on the way out, the conditions that spurred it into existence linger on.

Okay, then, what does this all mean to the recreational user? Better yet, to the soldier? "What's in it for me?"

For starters, the Army takes a dim view of drug users infiltrating its ranks. Proof positive is a tightening of policies governing soldiers who abuse drugs and alcohol or are suspected of doing so.

Late last year, in December, the Department of Defense gave commanders of all services looser reins regarding the use of urinalysis tests. At the beginning of the new year, the Army issued a 90-day, shape-up or ship out mandate. Shortly afterward the Army reinforced DoD's broadening of the use of urinalysis tests on soldiers.

Consequence Number One: tainted or shattered careers are, "what's in it for me."

### Punishment

Next on the agenda are the obvious legal implications. Under federal law, simple possession of cocaine is punishable by a prison sentence of up to one year and a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

Manufacture, distribution, or possession with intent to distribute is punishable by imprisonment of not more than five years and/or a fine of \$15,000, with the maximums doubled for second offenders.

Consequence Number Two: a jail sentence or stiff fine is "what's in it for me."

Cocaine, the primary active ingredient of the South American Coca plant, is considered the most powerful stimulant