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Dear Partners and Friends,

In May, CBR took its Reproductive “Choice” Campaign (RCC) to New York City (NYC). There is so much to tell you and show you, we have expand this issue of our newsletter to 4 pages. Next month, we will return to our reporting on the Spring 2002 GAP tour. We are grateful for your faithful prayers and gifts. God blesses us and provides for us through your partnership.

Fletcher and Jane

This Month

RCC Trucks in New York

Future Editions

GAP at the U of Kentucky

GAP at the U of Louisville

GAP at Seton Hall U

Airborne RCC

RCC Trucks Take a Bite Out of the Big Apple

During the first week of May, I (Fletcher) was privileged to help debut the RCC trucks in New York City (NYC). This was my first time in the “Big Apple,” so I was just as much a tourist as I was a pro-life activist. The Long Island Coalition for Life (LICL) funded the trip, so we spent most of our time on Long Island (LI). But for two days, we drove the trucks right into the heart of Manhattan. We went past, through, and over many of the most famous NYC landmarks—Broadway, Times Square, Wall Street, Radio City Music Hall, Harlem, the picante sauce factory, and more. Here is our report.

Reader discretion advised. The “potty” is not a polite topic for mixed company, but believe me, my story wouldn’t be complete if I left it out. We were in these trucks as much as 8 hours at a time, without the benefit of any stops. (You don’t just park trucks like ours on the streets of Manhattan and stroll into a diner for a leisurely lunch and bathroom break.) To make matters worse, my bladder is only rated for an hour, and that’s under optimum conditions. So the next potty break became my sole obsession for several hours a day.

The Trucks. We have replaced the old International trucks in our fleet. The new trucks are about the same size, but they now have a tarp system that allows us to cover/uncover the signs in a matter of minutes. Last September, in Florida, we had to mount the signs on the trucks every single morning (in the rain) and take them off at the end of each day. In the rain. It took about an hour to mount the signs on 2 trucks (in the rain) and another hour to take them off. In the rain. Every day. And did I mention the rain? With the new system, we just hop in the truck box, turn a crank, and a tarp unrolls to cover the sign or rolls up to uncover it. We spend less time on the signs and more time on the road.

Getting there was half the fun. On Sunday, May 3, our convoy headed down Interstate 70 toward NYC. Two trucks and two cars. The main radios didn’t work, so we used our hand-held backups to communicate. The Pennsylvania Turnpike goes through some beautiful country. As we went further east, the overpasses got older—and shorter. I saw a sign that said “CLEARANCE 12’11” ON SHOULDER.” The 18-wheelers were making it OK, because the arching shape of the overpass left just enough clearance in the traffic lanes. However, just to be safe, I radioed ahead, “Hey Mark and Bill, better get in the center lane.” As I drove under, I looked up and saw the scratches and scrapes from other trucks that didn’t quite make it. This was a foreshadowing of things to come, although we couldn’t have known at the time how much the word “clearance” would dominate the coming week.

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Entering Times Square on Broadway.

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As soon as we crossed over the New Jersey state line, Bill Calvin (LifeNet of NJ) called my attention to the fact that grass and trees actually grow in New Jersey. I was stunned.

We took a southern route into NYC, across the Goethals Bridge to Staten Island and then the Verrazano Narrows Bridge to LI. But then we saw the yellow sign: "ALL TRUCKS OVER 12'7" EXIT HERE." Our hosts had planned our routes based on the height of the old trucks, so we were unprepared. Some of you may have some experience with exceeding a speed limit, and perhaps you can do that to some extent and still be OK. But low-clearance limits are much less forgiving. They are rather like the Borg—resistance is futile. So we got off the freeway. But where to go?

Here we were, in Brooklyn, on Sunday night, looking for a route back to the Long Island Expressway (LIE). But everywhere we went, we ran into the LI Railway. It is an elevated railway, but not elevated enough. Turning big trucks around in the city is not easy. Fortunately, it was Sunday night and not rush hour. After running into the LI Railway several times, we finally parked the trucks at a gas station, and I took a car out probing for a suitable escape route. The woman at the gas station thought it was great fun. Mostly, she just gets mugged. So this was a welcome change of pace. We finally found a route over to the LIE and continued on our way. We finally got to our destination at about 1:00 am.

Scouting Long Island. We slept in on Monday morning, if you can call 7:00 am "sleeping in." We met at 8:00 am and got on the road by 9:00 am. We knew there were no clearance issues on the LIE, so we started there. But we realized that we had better scout out **every** other proposed route. We didn't want to repeat Sunday night's scenario in rush-hour traffic. I get the eewy-jeebies just thinking about it.

So Jerry Higgins—LICL gave me a spotter each day—and I set out in a car looking for RCC routes on LI. The "parkways" wouldn't work because they were designed with low overpasses so that buses couldn't use them. It seems the designers didn't want the "wrong" kind of people living out there—the kind of people who ride buses. We tried the Van Wyck Expressway. No low-clearance signs, but some of the overpasses looked awfully tight. Sunrise Highway looked OK. Until we ran into the LI Railway. Scratch that. Suffolk County Community College: tree branches too low. For the time being, the LIE would have to do. No matter. One gridlock is just as good as another!

Scouting Manhattan (Part 1). Having scouted the main routes on LI, we drove toward Manhattan. LIE to the Clearview Expressway and across the Throggs Neck Bridge. Cross Bronx Expressway to the northern end of Manhattan. Down Amsterdam Street to 155th Street and over to Broadway. Down

Broadway. Jerry had to be at a meeting that night, so we only got as far as 59th Street before we headed back.

Driving in Manhattan. Driving in Manhattan is unbelievable. The right-hand (RH) lane of traffic is fair game for double parking, so trucks routinely park there to unload goods into the stores. If you drive in that lane of traffic, you had better be ready to stop and/or merge over to the left. What we might call "cutting someone off" is an acceptable form of changing lanes. Do it in Knoxville and you get creamed, but in NYC, they're ready for you. You see an opening, you take it.

Manhattan is probably the only place in the world where, on consecutive days, you can get "cut off" in traffic by (1) a kid on roller blades, (2) an 18-wheeler, and (3) a rolling clothes rack! I kid you not. They were unloading the clothes off the truck (parked in the RH lane, of course), but the rolling rack wouldn't fit between the parked cars on the right. The only way to get the rack into the store was to roll it around the left-hand (LH) side of the truck. The "driver" saw a space in front of me, so here he came, rack and all. I slammed on brakes, just as he expected. Wow.

I even passed several tire-changing businesses that actually use the RH lane of traffic as a place to jack up cars and change tires. People just drive around them and go on. Amazing.

Fortunately, I'm a fast learner when I have to be. I quickly learned to employ the "Dorothy Method" of driving through Manhattan. Ever heard of the Dorothy Method? It's really quite simple:

1. Grasp the steering wheel with both hands.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Repeat over and over again, "I'm glad this ain't my car. I'm glad this ain't my car. I'm glad this ain't my car."
4. Then just step on it.

My Yankee friends would have been proud.

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Many, many pedestrians saw the signs.

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Scouting Manhattan (Part 2). The next day, Bob Buchta (my spotter) and I drove into Manhattan to finish scouting. We drove the complete route, circling back and repeating every missed turn. Correcting mistakes would be much easier without the trucks. We plotted a course that would maximize our exposure to pedestrians, yet avoid the many places where the trucks wouldn't fit or weren't allowed to go. By the end of the day, I knew Manhattan in a way that few visitors ever will.

A Wild Place. As we drove down Broadway, we encountered a sight that would be seen only in NYC: a man standing in the street (on the concrete median) wearing a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and a pair of Hanes underwear. He carried a guitar. On his underwear was written, "The Naked Cowboy." He posed for pictures with one tourist. Nobody seemed shocked. I guess people in NYC get used to seeing way-out things. Perhaps that's why nobody in Manhattan flipped the bird at us, not one time.

Manhattan, Day 1. Wednesday was the opening day of RCC-Manhattan. We took only one truck that first day. I drove the security car behind the truck and radioed instructions to the truck: turn left at the next light, move over one lane to the right, etc. If I got caught in traffic, I radioed instructions from several blocks behind. It was the ultimate backseat driving experience. Celeste Broyles was my LICL spotter.

We went right down Broadway, through Times Square, thru the Financial District, past Battery Park (lots of tourists), thru ChinaTown, past the picante sauce factory, and back out thru Harlem. The scouting trips really paid off. We avoided the low clearances, maneuvered thru some very complex intersections, and still managed to hit the most populated streets.

When we got back to home base that evening, we had been in the trucks for more than 7 hours. Nothing to eat, nothing to drink, and no potty break. The joints and muscles in my neck—I've got disk degeneration—were in full rebellion. I was in pain. But it was well worth it. There were high fives all around. RCC-Manhattan was officially under way. As we recounted our day to the rest of the team, Bill Calvin (LifeNet of NJ) quipped, "Only CBR would go on a tour of Manhattan with a tour guide from Tennessee."

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Planning our excursions into Lower Manhattan was a non-trivial exercise. In addition to avoiding low clearances, we also had to avoid certain streets that were closed to commercial traffic. Additionally, there are some intersections at which right turns and/or left turns are prohibited.

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NYC: a tough nut to crack. To have a long-term impact in NYC, we want 10 trucks in there every day. There is so much sensory input—big neon signs, flashing lights, car horns, sirens, etc.—people don't pay much attention to trucks driving down the street. However, we got a lot of attention when we drove thru intersections, because the people waiting to cross the street saw our trucks. We also reached tourists in a big way, because tourists were already there for the purpose of looking around and seeing the sights.

Manhattan, Day 2. Thursday we took both trucks into Manhattan, one behind the other. I drove behind the second truck and radioed instructions ahead to both of them. This became especially challenging if we got spread out over 3 or 4 blocks. I took backseat driving to a whole 'nother level. But it worked out well. God is good; all the time. Erica Rogers of CBR was my spotter. She also jumped out of the car and took some of the pictures you are seeing in this newsletter.

We timed our trip so that we would be in lower Manhattan during the lunch hour and mid-Manhattan during the early afternoon shopping period. We had planned to do a loop that included 24th Street, 8th Avenue, 34th Street, and 2nd Avenue. But by the time we drove down 24th Street, we were pretty well spent and decided to forego the remainder of the loop and head back to home base via 6th Avenue (a.k.a. the Avenue of the Americas). We went past the Rockefeller Center, Radio City Music Hall, and lots and lots of pedestrians, both native and tourist. It was so good, we **had** to do it again, even though we were really, **really** spent by then. So we looped around and headed south on 7th Avenue down to 28th Street. We saw some Storm Troopers walking up 7th Avenue promoting the new Star Wars movie, Attack of the Clones. What a city! Our second trip up 6th Avenue was even more awesome than the first. By the time we finished, we were **totally** trashed and we headed back to home base—for real, this time. The whole trip took 8 hours. What the pro-life movement really needs is a few good bladders. I hurt just thinking about it.

The Last Day. On Friday, we drove the trucks on LI surface streets, wherever we could go without hitting the LI Railway. Jeannie Casalenova of LICL was my spotter for the day. We took the truth about abortion to Levittown, Hempstead, Garden City, SUNY at Stony Brook, Hofstra University, SUNY at Farmingdale, and other targets on LI. At noon, we started the long trip home. It took most of the afternoon to get over to Liberty State Park in New Jersey for a photo-op. We covered the signs after that, and headed back to Columbus. We made Columbus late Saturday, and I got back to Knoxville on Sunday.

Recovery. Of all the trips I have taken, this was the most physically challenging. It took me a week to get over the physical exhaustion.

Accomplishments. We are not going to stop abortion in a week. One major accomplishment is that we demonstrated that RCC can be done safely and effectively, even in a place like NYC. The culture won't change until it can't stand the status quo any longer. The status quo is much less comfortable for people who are forced to see abortion over and over and over again. So, we have to show these pictures over and over again until the status quo is no longer tolerable. This is a long-term proposition, and it could include the deployment of 10 trucks in every state, and 10 more in each large city like NYC. Let us pray that pro-lifers in NYC (and elsewhere) will obtain fleets of RCC trucks and drive them every day.

Lessons Learned. Another important outcome was new knowledge that will help us be more efficient/effective in the future. For example, lessons learned in Florida led to the sign covers on the new trucks. In NYC, we really pushed the envelope of physical endurance, and we know that nobody can do what we did for very long. To make this project work long-term in Manhattan, they will need to shorten the daily trips.

We don't want people doing pro-life work at 100 miles/hour (if I can use that metaphor) for just a few months or years. Burnout has sidelined more pro-lifers than we would care to count. We need people doing pro-life work at 55 miles/hour over the long haul. Your support is making this possible.

Praise the Lord. At the beginning of each day, we prayed for God to use our work to save lives and change hearts and minds. We asked for His protection over our trucks and over us. Please join us right now in thanking Him for those protections. Please pray that people who saw the pictures will continue to be convicted by what they saw. Pray that they will repent of complicity and/or complacency in this horrible evil. And pray that they will be healed, they and all our nation.



We took the trucks all the way down into the Financial District of Lower Manhattan. Pedestrians exiting the World Trade Center viewing platform are able to learn about the horrific violence of abortion that kills more than 3,600 babies every single day in the United States.