

The Moving Finger

McBRIDE ALUMNI FOUNDATION

Vol. I, No. 2

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

FALL, 1985

IT WAS A GREAT PICNIC...The ants and the rain stayed away and the alums came in great numbers. Especially gratifying was the attendance by such faraway friends as Lee L., the man-behind-the-star from up north, and the always-cheerful Eileen Z. from down Illinois way. Counting the youngsters, who made it a truly fun-for-the-family event, we had close to 50 folks to make the first McBride Alumni get-together a real success.

Volleyball and tree-climbing seemed to be the day's most popular sporting events, but the opportunity to see how terrific everyone looked and felt was the real highlight of the beautiful afternoon. It was a time for gratitude. Already we're talking about an even bigger and better bash for next summer...and yes, Maureen, we'll keep the charcoal hot a little longer for that last brat-for-the-road.

IN THE MEANTIME, however, the idea of sharing the joy of sobriety with our fellow McBridites is not to be confined to once a year. Winter doldrums always need banishing, and the post-holiday blues are just as bad, so get set to break out the camaraderie once again come January or February. The committee is already at work and we'll keep you posted on the midwinter chance to keep these precious friendships alive.

Any ideas you might have, so far as activities or other features are concerned, will be appreciated (and don't be bashful). The preliminary scheme is to have food (buffet or hot hors d'oeuvres) and a "casino night" at a spot capable of surviving a spirited group such as ours. Your communicator-editor will pass along any suggestions you might have for the committee. Word will be spread as soon as a date is set, so you will be able to mark your calendars.

These social events, by the way, are meant to be times for reunion and renewal for ALL old acquaintances but there was apparently a misunderstanding when the picnic announcements went out. There was certainly no intent to omit those fine dedicated and understanding folks who are so important to the recovery process -- the ENTIRE treatment team. An open invitation was extended but some missed it. Apologies, gang, and we'll be looking for you at the winter bash.

SPEAKING OF GETTING TOGETHER...Don't forget the opportunity to keep in close touch on a weekly basis. The Sunday night AA meeting at the Recovery House offers just that. It's become a pretty healthy-sized group and provides a chance for inpatients to meet and mingle with the alums -- always a good treatment enhancement. We're now an officially-registered group (# D-50-01337, for those of you who keep track of such

things), with Sheila S. serving as secretary (the position changes a bit more frequently than normally, since the chair is traditionally held by a resident of the house). Former secretaries include Michael K., Jamie D. and Dick H., and John C. has been elected our first GSR. The meetings begin promptly at 9 p.m. in the living room.

MORE TOGETHERNESS can generally be found at CoCo's Restaurant (on Blue Mound Rd., east of Pilgrim Pkwy.) on Tuesday nights following the regular 7:30 meetings at McBride. The late evening gatherings for vittles have been growing in popularity and the waitresses have been most cheerful about our spontaneous table clustering. And they don't even moan about the separate checks anymore.

RAPPING WITH THE PATIENTS on Saturday afternoons -- our first Alumni "service function" -- has been a rewarding success. Patients and staff alike have expressed their appreciation for these visits where alums serve as moderators or facilitators at the 1:15-2:00 p.m. rap sessions on topics of their choice. Those alums who have participated so far have been unanimous in describing their own benefit in this fine 12th Step work. (And none of the current patients know what they're missing, so their appreciation has nothing to do with the fact that the raps have replaced the old "Herbie & His True Blue AA Friends" slide programs at Dewey.) Alums who have volunteered part of their Saturday afternoons thus far include Michael K. (project chairman), Natalie Z., June H., Len W., Chris Z., Ken Z., Bill W. and Dennis D.

ANOTHER HELPING HAND effort -- providing transportation for new patients -- is also now in place. Larry C. was picked up by an alum when he arrived (from Oklahoma) at the airport. To avoid possible confusion in the process, and to provide guidelines, a class on "policy and procedures" for such activities was conducted by Drs. Benzer and Hauser for a group of alums who had expressed an interest in such volunteer service. They will now be on-call for welcome and transport assignments.

THERE WILL BE MORE about what YOU can do to join the true spirit of our association in the near future. One of our main purposes, after all, is to experience that ongoing satisfaction achieved through volunteer service or otherwise supporting our alma mater and, more importantly, the patients now finding their way to recovery as we once did -- the McBride way. To get a better handle on how you would like to serve, and to mesh that offer with the needs at the unit, a membership survey is being developed. Hopefully, each of you will be contacted by phone to exchange ideas with one of the Steering Committee members. The results will be compiled and a report or "action plan" will be put together and distributed. Please feel free to use this opportunity to pass along any other thoughts you might have regarding our growing association/foundation. (Comments and suggestions may always, of course, be mailed to your friendly editor, as well.)

DON'T FORGET THE OPEN MEETING coming up Tuesday, November 19, at McBride. This event is especially meaningful since it marks not only the first anniversary of the Milwaukee Professionals In AA Group, but it will also commemorate the first birthday for the McBride Center,

itself. Appropriately, our speakers will be Roland H. (that name should ring a bell!) for AA, and "B" H. for AlAnon. Time is 7:30 p.m., in the Auditorium. Coffee and refreshments, of course, will be served. If you haven't been back to the old stomping grounds, this would be a good chance to rekindle the fervor of your "intense, open-ended treatment period." You're bound to see a lot of familiar faces.

STAFF ASSIGNMENTS HAVE CHANGED at McBride, in case you hadn't heard. Dr. Hauser has "moved on" over the hill and is now directing medical operations at Dewey Center, leaving behind all McBride duties. Dr. Benzer and Dr. Herrington are now handling the physician chores on their own. The schedule for treatment activities has also been shuffled, with group therapy now filling the 8:30 a.m. slot (what better way to start the day!). And Roger Glazer is now the Recovery House counselor. As a refresher for all, we'll have a complete update on the treatment center and its format, as now structured, in a future issue.

THAT MOVE, by the way, has prompted Dr. Hauser to step down as our treatment team liaison and advisor. At his suggestion, the Steering Committee has asked Dr. Benzer to assume that position. Our sincerest appreciation goes to Dr. Hauser for the countless ways he helped pave our road to sobriety and especially for his impetus in putting this alumni organization together. And hearty wishes for good luck in the new assignment.

SINCE ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES are picking up as we gain size and strength, the Steering Committee has decided to meet on a regular, monthly basis. We will be getting together at 8 p.m. on the last Sunday of each month. At least for the time being, all meetings are scheduled for Room E3 at McBride and all alums are welcome to attend if they wish, or to otherwise bring matters to the attention of the committee.

OFFICIAL FOUNDATION STATUS is moving toward reality under the direction of Chris Z., who is serving as a subcommittee-of-one to shepherd that administrative project. In the meantime, please keep the association/foundation in mind as you plan year-end charitable donations. Incidental expenses such as paper, printing and postage all add up; without financial support, we cannot continue to keep this umbrella of camaraderie afloat. In the longer run -- and we'd like to start shortly -- is the prospect of making our existence known to the patient community through the provision of physical amenities in the unit. A VCR for educational use has been suggested as a project but nothing definite has been decided. Lest you think these are delusions of grandeur (grandiosity?), please note that alumni of an ambitious treatment center in Tennessee recently passed the \$3-million-mark in their fund-raising drive. Now THAT'S grandeur -- and it's no delusion! At any rate, contributions (in lieu of membership dues) may be sent to: The McBride Alumni Association, C/O Ken Zimmerman at 17935 Country Lane, Brookfield, WI 53005. Make checks (if amount is in excess of \$1 million, please write two checks) payable to: The McBride Foundation. Receipts for tax purposes will be provided and the names of all donors will be published in the newsletter annually.

THE PROGRAM AT McBRIDE is growing, if patient census is any indication (and that's a pretty reliable yardstick). It has not been unusual, during the past couple of months, to see the "guest roster board" at the unit filled, or nearly so. The Cape Cod cottage continues as the overflow facility for the Recovery House and it, too, is displaying the "no vacancy" sign on occasion. Don't be surprised if expansion crops up in plans for the Dewey Avenue campus.

IN AND ABOUT THE HOUSE....The first annual recovery garden was ceremoniously planted last summer and received tender loving care throughout the growing season. A veritable cornucopia of fresh produce was seen springing from the tilled soil west of the house and rumor has it that at least one salad resulted from the harvest. Plans to place the land in the diverted acreage program next year have not materialized.....And they said it couldn't be done! A screen was installed on the kitchen door (just in time for the first frost)..... Heeding the incessant demands of an extremely vocal group headed by Len W., a serving window between the kitchen and living room was constructed. At latest report, nothing had been served through it, but it DOES provide a nice view of one room from the other.....Up on the Unit, the dense clouds of smoke that once filled the small lounge have cleared. Yielding to long-standing pleas, the powers-that-be switched the "smoking-permitted" designation to the larger community room. It was not total capitulation, however. In exchange, the television set shifted to the smaller, now-smoke-free lounge.....It may not have been a genuine "era," but something -- a kind of ambience, perhaps -- seemed to come to an end at the Recovery House with the departure of Ed F. and his sometimes unorthodox presence.

-- KZ

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* I N M E M O R I A M *

IT WAS WITH TRAGIC SADNESS that the entire McBride Community felt and mourned the death of Keith P. on September 21. For those who knew him, Keith was a source of spirit and sincere friendship. Condolences were expressed by the Alumni Association in the form of a memorial mass and a message of sympathy to his parents.

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" . . . Turn down an empty glass."
-- Omar K.