

# 'Tough love,' not gags, can help alcoholics

**A**LCOHOLISM IS A chronic, progressive and potentially fatal disease, according to the National Council on Alcoholism.

To a few renegades, alcoholism is not a disease. But despite the current controversy of its nature, there's no question that alcoholism and alcohol abuse is a seriously neglected problem in our society. It crosses all sexual, economic, age and racial lines.

'Alcoholism ranks with cancer and heart disease as a major threat to the nation's health. About half of the fatal accidents occurring on the road involve alcohol abuse. Violent behavior attributed to alcohol use accounts for 65 percent of murders, 40 percent of assaults, 35 percent of rapes, 30 percent of other sex crimes, 30 percent of suicides, 55 percent of fights or assaults in the home and 60 percent of cases of child abuse.

Yet despite our knowledge of its outcome and our

day-to-day association with alcohol abuse, we ignore it.

We even laugh about it — in cartoons, on the screen and at parties.

We're embarrassed by it; we're ignorant of how to deal with our friends, relatives and co-workers who are alcoholics; and we're bored with the problems associated with and caused by alcoholism.

**WE CONDONE** drinking among our teen-agers, because we're frightened that they might turn to drugs; and we feel "safer" when they're high on booze.

We cover up for those who are closest to us when they're obnoxious or destructive.

And we encourage the tradition that drinking can't hurt you. Our celebrities extol the virtues of booze and beer in advertisements geared to potential drinkers of all ages.

We decided that when prohibition failed, alcohol

wasn't dangerous; and because alcohol is big business, both for the distributors and those selling advertising, no one treads on the sacred ground carved out by the booze sellers.

And why should they? Alcohol doesn't kill people; drinking too much of it does. We learned our mistake about trying to legislate the use of booze.

But it isn't necessary to go on a Carry Nation crusade to realize that alcohol is a substance that can be and is seriously abused.

That calls for education — for our children and ourselves. It also calls for a change in attitudes, to recognize the problems of alcohol abuse and to recognize alcoholism in its many forms. We have to quit laughing or ignoring alcoholics and take individual stands to help them.

We as family members and friends should know what we do to help a person remain an alcoholic — those who do their holiday shopping at the liquor

store, the wife who buys beer for a husband who has a drinking problem.

We start picking up the alcoholic's role and by covering up we take away their responsibilities.

**WE MUST** refuse to play the game.

It's called "tough love." We have to take a stand.

If an alcoholic goes on a bender and ends up parking the car on the lawn, we shouldn't be the ones to move the car.

The alcoholic needs to be made aware that he/she was responsible for parking the car on the lawn.

If family members can't get the alcoholic to seek help, they should tell them they intend to seek help from Al-Anon, even if the alcoholic does not go.

We have to educate our children to the potential dangers of alcohol, and we don't have to be prudish about it.

Drinking isn't taboo; but it is dangerous.

— Lynn Orr



Nick Sharkey

## A problem hard to share

Even now as an adult, it's not easy to say. My father is an alcoholic.

This week several Observer & Eccentric newspapers are running articles about alcoholism in the suburbs. As part of that series I agreed to write this column. But it's still difficult to share this part of my life.

I can only write this column because my father lives in a different state and will never read what I have to say.

With my family, like most, living with an alcoholic is a lifetime of cover-up. Since most people still consider alcoholism a sign of character "weakness," many families suffer silently with their sorrows.

It doesn't have to be that way. An outstanding organization which is part of Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, offers needed help for families. Its local offices are at 1591 N. Woodward in Bloomfield Hills and 810 E. Seven Mile in Detroit.

As much as I regret it now, I never used the services of Al-Anon.

**IT WAS NOT** until I was about 11 years old that I knew my father had a drinking problem. Looking back, I can see there were signs. But I didn't realize what those signs meant then.

Whenever the family took long trips when I was young, we had a cooler in the front seat of the car. My brothers and I would try to talk my dad into letting us have one soft drink for every two beers he drank. We knew we'd have plenty of pop then (but we were not successful in this play).

I remember the many cocktail parties we had in my home. By the time I was 10 I knew how to mix a martini and a Manhattan. But my other friends' parents were going to the same parties. So I figured that was how all adults had fun.

I remember many times when my father would disappear from our home for a few minutes late at night. I recall the baseball games when he left in the first inning and didn't return until the ninth inning. Now I realize he was looking for liquor.

Until I was about 11 years old I never saw my father drunk. My mother later told me that he was well-known among his friends for his ability to drink great amounts of liquor and never show the effects.

But it caught up with him. My teen-age years were filled with the turmoil of living with an alcoholic. But it was something that was always kept within the family. No matter how close I was to a friend, I could never confess what was really happening in my home. I'd always have to make sure my friends were in my home at the "right" time. Fortunately, my father always kept his privacy when he was drinking heavily.

I was one of five energetic and active children. The five of us and my mother drew close together and had a happy home life. We had many friends, parties and sports activities. To outsiders we were a spirited family with an eccentric father.

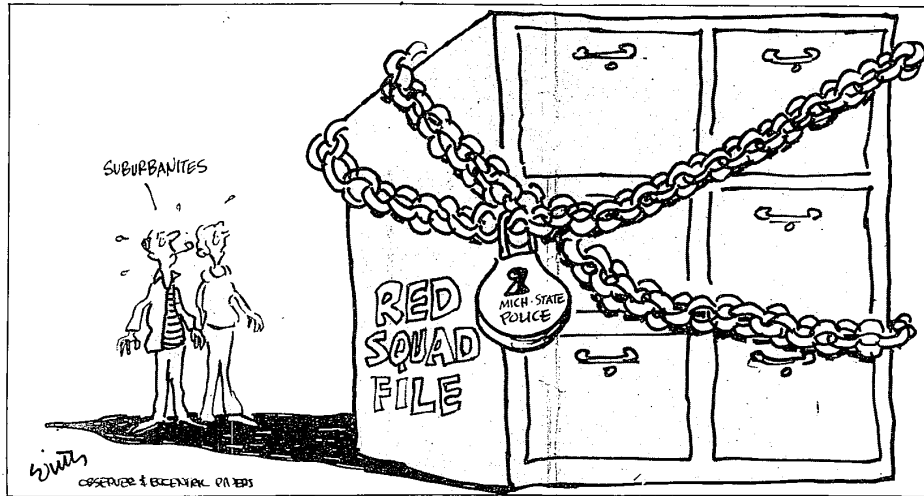
We learned to live our lives without expecting the participation of a father. He may have missed birthdays, ball games and graduations but mom would never let us become bitter. We all loved my dad for his kindness and gentleness.

But we were always searching for a new cure for his problem. Prayers, shock treatments, Alcoholics Anonymous, psychiatrists, special pills — they all worked for a while. But in time there would be the inevitable fall off the wagon.

**TODAY I HAVE** a balanced attitude toward alcohol. I can see that in limited quantities it can help people to relax. I drink moderate amounts myself. But I was never able to get into the "drunk is fun" mentality. Alcohol holds too many unpleasant memories for me to believe it's all fun.

I urge any family suffering through the pain of living with an alcoholic to contact the local Al-Anon chapter. Alcoholism is a problem for the entire family, not just for the alcoholic. Help is available through Al-Anon.

Last week I visited my dad. He recently went through a program for alcoholics, and he's been sober for six months. He is relatively healthy and happy with his life. I firmly hope that he'll finally stay sober. But I can't be sure.



## A look into a pair of Red Squad files

You may have read classified government material in this paper.

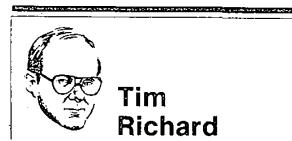
No, there was nothing about atomic or military secrets. But the government — particularly the Michigan State Police subversive activities unit, alias the Red Squad — wasn't too particular about what it put into confidential files.

I have just finished reading the Red Squad files of two suburban friends, husband and wife. Frankly, I'm appalled at the kinds of things the State Police Red Squad collected on my friends over the past dozen years.

You'll recall that Zolton Ferency, once Democratic state chairman, later a candidate of the Human Rights Party and now back in the Democratic fold, won a lawsuit which forced the release of these files. That's how the couple happened to get theirs.

**THE CLASSIFIED** material on her included eight clippings from the old Observer Newspapers (two of which I wrote and the rest I edited), two copies of a New Democratic Coalition newsletter, single clips from three other establishment papers, a campaign flyer in which she endorsed a Democratic congressional candidate, a couple of reports from an informant whose initials were crossed out and letter by her to the Detroit Free Press.

The letter to the Free praised Republican Con-



Tim Richard

gressman Jack McDonald's vote against the draft. Some classified material!

An Observer photo shows her winsome daughters, then ages 5 and 4, with peace signs. It's captioned "Mommy's Little Helpers."

**THE WOMAN** WAS a member of NDC, HRP and an innocuous peace group and did publicity for them, which was how I got to know her.

Her politics are not my politics, but she spelled names correctly, made deadlines, got good quotes and delivered usable material. In our friendly arguments, she used facts and logic, never name-calling or ridicule. I admire people like that.

Not only did she never utter a subversive word, but the others in her Red Squad file were just as tame. They weren't sociologists or harridans from Berkeley; they are engineers and CPAs from

Waterford, West Bloomfield, Novi, Farmington Hills, Livonia.

**HER HUSBAND'S** file contained four entries: He was in a peace group, he hosted a neighborhood gathering for a Democratic congressional candidate and his car was twice observed at meetings, once at a Livonia church, the other time at an Oakland County campus. Both times his wife was using his car.

I asked her whether his activities or possible circulation of his Red Squad file hurt his career at the auto company. She replied, "At work a secretary slipped and said, 'You're never going to go anywhere because of your wife.' He asked her what she meant by that. She said, 'Oh, nothing.'"

Nothing is right. The husband is advancing steadily up the management ladder.

We got a laugh from one informant's report which described her at a meeting with Zolton Ferency and said, "I'm sure you have a file on him." As it turned out, there was no Red Squad file on Ferency.

Maybe Bob Tisch is part-way right. Maybe the bureaucrats in Lansing do have too much money to spend.

If Proposal A passes on May 19, Bill Milliken and the Gang of 148 will have to cut \$250 million from the state budget. As far as I'm concerned, they can cut most of it from the State Police.

## Pulitzer flap demonstrates contest mania

The melodramatic baloney has been sliced pretty thin when it comes to discussing the recent Pulitzer Prize snafu.

The noble knights of the news business have galloped about the country warning that for years to come readers will look askance at the media because some reporter won a journalism award for something more akin to fiction.

And some piece of fiction Janet Cooke must have written for the Washington Post. The great and mighty Ben Bradlee believed it. Watergate star reporter Bob Woodward did too. Even the Pulitzer judging committee bought it.

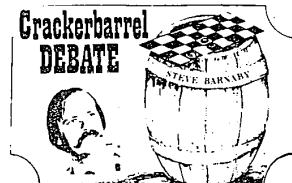
Recently two legends of the electronic media, Daniel Schorr and Richard Salant, addressed the issue of Janet Cooke while appearing in our very own suburbs. Their messages were similar and they missed the point of the Janet Cooke incident.

"This is an enormous loss to journalistic credibility — a tragedy for all of us," Salant, the NBC news executive told a gathering of journalists in Southfield recently.

"All credibility of all newspapers are called into question," said Schorr, former CBS news correspondent.

Bunk, pure bunk.

The real problem, one which many journalists are loath to admit, is the contest.



**EVERY CRAFT** and profession has its quota of phonies. The Cooke incident brought out a war story from a friend who used to work at a suburban hospital.

Seems this medic decided he wanted to be a surgeon. So he walked into the hospital, threw around some fancy medical phrases and passed out a dynamite resume.

Now this clown actually made it into the operating room and did some work with the knife. The patients survived but colleagues noticed a gap in his technique. Further investigation showed this guy had about as much business being in the operating room as a high school graduate.

Quietly, very quietly, the hospital officials showed the fellow to the door.

We've all heard of incidents about phony physicians but it certainly has stopped very few of us from going to the doctor when we're sick.

And readers aren't going to stop believing what they read in the newspapers because of the misappropriated Pulitzer Prize.

But, you see, the difference is that too many journalists have a contest mania uncontrolled by reason. It seems like just about every month a pamphlet comes across my desk outlining rules on how a reporter can win a certificate of appreciation from some group or another.

**I'VE SEEN** reporters whose prime motivation was to do a piece to win a contest. Damned be the reader, the contest is the thing. And the Pulitzer Prize is just another contest, tailored for journalists more interested in salving their egos than serving the public.

Janet Cooke was just another reporter who looked around the big city newsroom and saw a lot of contest winners. She wanted to be one, too. Bradlee thought another Pulitzer certificate would look nice on the wall.

The Pulitzer committee accommodated them.