



DRY TIMES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF ARID GROUP HOMES NIAGARA – SUMMER 2004

FACTS & NEWS

BED NIGHTS:

April: 358–85 percent full
May: 374–86 percent full
Budget: 86 percent occupancy

TURNOVER

April 3 admits, 4 discharged
May 8 admits, 7 discharged

WALKATHON:

Arid's annual walkathon / rollathon, held on May 1 in cooperation with WARM, raised \$2,522 for Arid.

TRILLIUM:

Arid recently submitted a grant application to Ontario Trillium Foundation for \$95,000 over three years. Purposes are to bridge operating costs, make capital repairs and fund strategic planning. Thanks to staff for their hard work on this.

AA MEETINGS at ARID:

Thorold: Wednesday 10:30 a.m.
Ft. Erie: Thursday 10:30 a.m.
Thursday 8:00 p.m.

DRY HUMOUR DEPT.



While befuddled with booze, Lord Astor
Made a pass at a cast of plaster.
When informed of his error,
He shrank back in terror
And said, "Thank God I'm not faster."

THEY COME FROM ALL OVER

For Ken B., Arid was the last house on the block – but he had to fly from London to get here.

BY TOM CONNELL

ARID ALUMNI Ken B. was always something of a globe-trotter. Little wonder then, that he arrived at our Fort Erie house from London's Heathrow airport, rather than the local detox like most residents.

The final leg of Ken's journey may sound glamorous, but the years before it were all too familiar to any recovering alkie. By January 2002, 89 Queen Street was "the last house on the block" for Ken.

Just a day earlier, his wife had phoned Arid founder Keith H., whom the couple knew from an earlier stay in Canada. Then, almost out of hope and completely out of options, she drove Ken to the airport. Too sick, frail, and drunk to make it on his own power, he boarded the Toronto-bound flight in a wheelchair.

Ken had reached that place of lonely desperation that only an alcoholic or addict can un-

derstand. He knew that drinking meant an imminent death. In fact, he'd spent time in a ward for the dying few years earlier.

Here was the catch: he was equally certain that he'd die if he didn't drink.



"I was in terrible shape, hallucinating, the whole works. I was sure I'd start having seizures, if I didn't keep drinking," he said.

As a child growing up in Lincolnshire, there was nothing that marked Ken as a future alcoholic. His life was marked by hopes and dreams, great plans and aspirations, and the unshakable belief that anything was possible. Long before his disease became full-blown, Ken realized many of those early dreams.

Entrepreneurial flair, coupled with some chance encounters, brought material success, some fame, and the

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Welcome, Partners!

IT'S A DISTINCT PLEASURE to welcome 18 new partners to the Arid team. As just about everyone connected with Arid knows, we are working hard to replace declining funding from traditional sources, especially from charity bingo in Fort Erie. Our partners program is an important part of this effort.

TO OUR ARID PARTNERS

Thank you for stepping up to this important challenge. For a dollar a day (less than the cost of a small coffee) you are helping Arid's clients become productive, healthy members of society.

Please take a moment to read the rest of this newsletter. See what's new and learn how Ken B. came all the way from England to find a new life through Arid.

If you have more time, consider paying us a visit. Our staff or residents will show you around. Or call me at 905-892-0803 (home) or 905-893-0611 (office) and I'll do the honours.

NOT A PARTNER YET?

The partnership program costs \$365 a year, payable at once or by monthly debits to your VISA card. Arid is an acronym for Alcoholic Recovery in Dignity, and that's what we're all about. Every penny of your contribution will go directly to the cost of helping our clients. Call me or one of the numbers on page 2 to learn more.

Sincerely, Carl Johnson
Arid Board Chair

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chance to travel and live in exotic locales. A stint in the R.A.F. at eighteen opened his eyes to the wider world. He was stationed in the Far East, where he began—although he couldn't see it at the time—his “alcoholic training.”

After launching and selling a business while still in his twenties, he became managing director of a Portugal-based exporter. “I really thought I'd landed,” he said. “I was wealthy and successful.”

Years later, then an English pub owner—fulfilling every alcoholic's fantasy—he found a unique application for the famous British penny that was being pulled from circulation. He completely covered an Austin Mini with the old coppers. This “bit of a lark” caught the media's attention, and Ken was off on a new and profitable career.

For years, he and his wife toured car shows around the world, raising money for charities with a gold-plated version of the original Mini. Alcohol was a constant companion, but it hadn't yet become a worry.

Unfortunately for Ken, and millions like him, alcoholism is progressive. It creeps up on its victims, while convincing them they don't have it. Few heed the warning signs—if they notice them at all.

Somewhere every alkie crosses a line, where terms such as “heavy drinker” no longer capture the powerful, all-encompassing hold that booze takes on their lives. No amount of rationalization can explain away the insane thinking that puts drink before everyone and everything else in life.

Ken crossed that line shortly after arriving Canada, where his latest tour had wound down. He had rented a house with his pregnant wife, his resources were dwindling quickly, and the pressure to earn more became intense. “I was under a

tremendous amount of pressure and I was drinking like a fish. I thought Alcoholics Anonymous might help. I didn't know much about it—but I thought it might teach me to drink responsibly.”

Ken found a friend and sponsor in Keith H. For four years he enjoyed the fruits of sobriety. He started importing gourmet foods to Canada, and business was good. His family life was back on track.

But, like many, Ken began to drink again. “Things had gone so well when I was sober,” he recalls. “They really had. But I drifted into complacency. Then I got to the stage where I thought I could handle a few drinks. Soon, I was as bad as ever.”

By 1996 Ken was back in England, seriously sick. An alcoholic death was no longer an abstract idea—it had become likelihood. His liver was about to explode and his skin was turning yellow. Hospitalization sobered him up but—proving that you can't scare an alcoholic—he was back on the bottle in less than a year.

At that point Ken was just another drunken sot with one foot in the grave. But his wife had other ideas. She remembered Keith and placed the transatlantic call.

Ken spent eight months at Arid House and today is two years sober. “Arid House literally saved my life,” he says. “It gave me time to think with no pressures, in a sober environment. I had time to get into the AA way of life again. The atmosphere at Arid was absolutely vital to my recovery. My quality of life has turned 180 degrees.”

The house at 89 Queen St. in Fort Erie is not the most exotic or glamorous place this intrepid Englishman has called home—but it is without doubt the most important. •



Setting a New Direction for Life

WHEN AN ALCOHOLIC decides to clean up, there's much more to change than his drinking habits. Nearly all are broke—financially, physically and spiritually.

Work, family life and self-respect are all in disrepair. To an alcoholic, just hours or even days from his last drink, the road to recovery seems long and mysterious. No wonder many soon find themselves back on the bottle.

Arid's Resident Care Plan (RCP) is an important tool in helping our clients make the transition to a healthier life. Developed by staff counsellor Ken MacKenzie, and based on research with other organizations, it replaces vague notions of “doing better” with a concrete plan of action.

As a first step, each new resident is asked to evaluate five areas of his life:

- 12-step program
- Relations with family and friends
- Employment and finances
- Mental and physical health
- Quality of recreational and social life

They then work with Ken or one of our volunteer counsellors to map out a path to improvement in each area.

Arid has also introduced a follow-up system, to see how well clients do after discharge. Volunteer counsellor Jim Muir developed the survey and conducts phone interviews each month. We'll report in more detail on our follow up in a future newsletter.

ARID GROUP HOMES NIAGARA is a Canadian Registered Charity 0612085-57-16 • www.aridhomes.org

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