

Editorials and Commentary

Just what is an alcoholic?

There are as many definitions of alcoholics as there are alcoholics. Perhaps that's why so many people are alcoholics: no-one seems to really know what one is.

For example: the New York State Department of Health says you are an alcoholic if your drinking "seriously interferes with" family relationships, ability to earn a living, or your health.

The problem with that definition is, however, what is a "serious interference?"

Does it mean that you have to beat your wife, kick your kid, and refuse to feed the dog?

Can it be more subtle than that, say for example refusing to let the rest of the family watch a favorite television program?

Just what is a "serious interference" in family life?

The same distinctions apply to your ability to earn a living. There are those who would argue that the loss of one percent efficiency on the job constitutes a "serious interference." Others, however, would say that efficiency decreases as tenure increases and thus the loss of efficiency has to be substantial: say in the 20 percent range.

Health, that could be somewhat easier but not much. After all, you lose brain cells daily and what damage is done to your body by drinking might be no worse than what damage is done by existing in a world that has dirty air, filthy streets, rancid water and a host of other environmental problems. With all that working against you just what does constitute a "serious interference" with respect to your health?

We favor a more literary description of what an alcoholic is, though. It's one which you might use as a guideline if you ever have the presence of mind to wonder if you are now or feel you are about to become an alcoholic.

A paraphrase of e.e. cummings, the definition which we think best fits the bill is: "Alcoholic- someone who pawns his intelligence to buy a drink."

Sound like anyone you know?
If it sounds like you all we can suggest is that you don't forget where you put your pawn ticket.

Bricklayers on strike

Normally we do not comment on those things which occur outside of our local readership area however the recent announcement of a strike by Bricklayers Local 58 in Jefferson and Lewis Counties is, we feel, an extraordinary incident.

Unemployment is at an all time high locally- as near as we can determine from what information the government hands out- and yet men earning \$10.66 an hour have elected to go out on strike at the height of the construction season.

Somehow we do not believe that makes any sense. Local 58 has had trouble negotiating with the Construction Employers Labor Relations Association and their contract expired on May 21. We concede that point and we believe that there are occasions when a strike is necessary, but when there are people on the bread line who wish to work and cannot a strike seems immoral at this point in time.

It was not long ago that the carpenters and joiners of Local 278 blustered about seeking to bring the Upstate People for Safe Energy Technology to court over a supposed violation of union members right to work. Union spokesmen alleged that because of USPET's opposition to nuclear power and the proposed 765 kv power line there was no work for their members in the North Country.

The carpenters, however, have also gone "on strike this year." A working person should get a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. He or she should be afforded equal opportunity for advancement and those who want to work should be able to. These are premises with which we agree wholeheartedly.

We cannot agree, however, that men earning \$10.66 an hour have a legitimate enough complaint to go on strike especially when those men pay union dues to finance negotiations. They have a right to work and the North Country needs to have them working to bolster its ever dwindling financial resources.

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The big question (one of several) finally unanswered

By Victoria Levitt

The big question these days is whether or not there is life on Mars, and for that matter, I suppose, whether or not there is weather on Mars.

I was mulling the matter over the other day as I was on my way to my pedicure appointment and I decided to drop in at my friendly neighborhood fortune teller's and pose the question for her crystal ball.

Maybe you know her place -Madame Zuchinni's Organic Garden and Fortune Telling Emporium. She's been doing a pretty brisk business these days and now there's a new sign in her window. It says "Two ouijas-no ouating."

I caught her on a bad day-she was in a rotten mood. For one thing, she says, with the rotten weather we've been having why shouldn't she be in a rotten mood? And who could argue? Because look what's been happening to her organic garden, she says. For one thing more, her egg plants are coming up scrambled already because who can tell if it's spring or fall and who can believe it's summer when even the sun flowers are overcast?

So if there's life on Mars, who cares? Do they rescue us from drowning? And, anyway, if there is they probably have to eat store-bought because who can grow anything in all this rain?

Unless maybe they grow rice, so they noddy up their home-made hand decorated chop sticks-she brightened up for a minute there.

But anyway, she says, she can't even tell how the harvest will turn out, if at all, because the windshield wipers on her crystal ball are out of order, and who can blame them? They could use a vacation.

And so, says Madame Zuchinni, could she.

If things weren't had enough, when she got out to her garden, she discovered the scarlet runner beans had rebelled and run off to the South for a little sun and fun. Then when she tried to get a little human commiseration from her buddy the butler next door, he was so depressed and soggy from trying to bail the water out of a dozen or so left-over dry martinis that all he could manage was, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

Well, that was the end of a beautiful friendship, she says and she left him contemplating a hair of the dog that bit him, which reminded her it might be a good time to paddle down Pierrepont Avenue and replenish her supply of eye drops and toes of frog. But then after all that toil she says she got herself into double trouble for speed-boating in a pedestrian zone and newttering without a license.

So anyway, with all her problems, how does she know if there's life on Mars? Sometimes she's not even sure there's life on Earth, especially in all this rain.

But just before she threw me out, she came up close, backed me into her purple velvet draperies and whispered dramatically, "this much I can tell you- I cannot say if there is life on Mars, but the last time the sun was out I went on a picnic and just before dessert I received a sign. I could see through the glass of the iced tea jug that without a doubt there were ants on the Milky Way!"

She could be right you know. After all, many's the time I've found gnats on my Nestles Crunch.

The soap box

By Lillian LePage

Looks like the little guy is going to pay through the nose again while the biggies continue to enjoy the tax loopholes.

From Washington we hear that producers who use business can no longer claim a tax deduction.

This means that the little man will find it harder than ever to get a start, and may well get discouraged and give up.

The laws set down regulating so many things are squeezing out the possibility of going into business for many.

If you want to open a restaurant there are so many rulings it takes a lot of money just to open up. You have to borrow, and the lender has to make sure you are going to be able to operate before he will let you have it. Then, a little later on, if you decide it would be more convenient to have your sink in another place in your kitchen you must get a permit to move it. But that's not too bad. The permit only costs \$100.

I see there is a swishy effort to discredit Jimmy Carter, by telling the world his nephew is a convict. Will that have any effect on Carter's chances for the White House? Maybe not. It seems that the naughtier one is the better he is liked, but if that is the best they can do for him, he'll only look like a dud.

I wish intelligent people would stop playing silly little games for attention getters. Who cares what each other's relatives do with their lives. If it doesn't mean a national disaster why waste time digging up skeletons?

Now if you want something to really talk about how about the issue of Privies-on-the-Prairies?

Privies-on-the-Prairies proposals are about as ridiculous as rest stations in outer space, yet the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has proposed running water and flush toilets every so many feet out on those vast acreages where large numbers of workers are employed.

Years ago farmers with hundreds of acres used portable toilets on sledges and moved them around the fields as the workers needed. And there was a water boy who came to the workers, no time

wasted running around the fields all day.

The cost of drilling wells, installing pipes and sewage systems, and heating and maintaining them might throw some big producers out of business. Does that take over? The government or some foreign business like the Arabs in our banks?

Imagine miles and miles of toilets! I believe in good working conditions for people, but I also believe that a worker has an obligation to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.

The situation for workers in the field is not that bad. The proposal says that a toilet must be within a five minute-walk from each worker. Now if 40 workers walked to and from these places two or three times a day, or even more just figure how much time is lost by that group. Ten minutes times 40 and you have 400 minutes, or over six hours lost there alone. Then everybody decides he needs a drink of water, and of course, he'll have to make another trip to the rest station.

And if the company dares to try and put on a few restrictions they can go on strike.

Privies-on-the prairies is a lot of nonsense, and I think I know a little bit about that. During World War II when everybody and his uncle was working his head off to help the war effort, I worked in a large spinach and cauliflower field near Malone where portable toilets and water boys were used. Even women who wouldn't do their own housework were out there working. Nobody complained, nobody got hurt, nobody got sick.

I suggest that drag-around-toilets be used and kept clean and emptied each day. They can be kept close to the workers.

Migrant workers should have decent places to stay at the end of their day's work, but privies on-the-prairies, used twice a year and left standing as a monument to somebody's stupidity?

Imagine the tourists going through our highways- "There's one, There's one, There's one!"
Keep America beautiful!

Me! We have a Constitutional right to work and those ecology nuts against nuclear power are denying us that right! Nuclear power will mean jobs for everyone!
In the meantime go out there and get on the picket lines!

Sure, we have picket lines? Sure, we have picket lines? Sure, we have picket lines? Sure, we have picket lines? Sure, we have picket lines?



WHAT IS IT? Columnist-reporter Viki Levitt didn't know either but Madame Zuchinni seemed to. Something about rain in her crystal ball.



MORE THAN 40 dead and dying trees in the Village of Potsdam are having their tops removed. Falling limbs have been a nuisance in recent years. (Mike Kane Photo).

Editor's note...



MIKE BILLINGTON

BICYCLE PATHS NEEDED

This fitful season which has so inappropriately been labeled summer has, despite the rain and the relative cold weather, brought to light a continuing problem in the village of Potsdam.

The problem is bicycles and those who persist in riding them on the sidewalks of the village. For those who did not know, it is against the law to ride a bike on the sidewalk, and those who do and get caught can be fined in village court for that offense.

On the other hand, riding a bike on Market Street is not always to be preferred either since few cars observe the 30 mile per hour speed limit and many motorists fail to ever consider a bicycle as a bona-fide method of transport worthy of at least some respect.

The question, then, is how to resolve the problem of the bikes on the battlefield-like sidewalks without endangering the lives of the pedalers by forcing them into Market Street and other busy thoroughfares.

The answer: bicycle paths restricted to the two wheel sans engine set. Sounds simple but it isn't.

Unfortunately bike paths cost money not only to build but also to plan. "We'd need professional help," according to village administrator Charles Sandwith.

Sandwith noted that the problem has been discussed at various meetings of the planning board on an informal basis. The big question has always been the routing of the paths.

He cited as an example the fact that the path could lead from the college campuses to the shopping centers. This would serve the college community but could tend to exclude others who do not wish to go either to the college or the shopping centers.

A further problem concerns where to construct the bikeways. The routes cannot be built between the sidewalk and the street because the tree line is currently located there. Designating a certain area on the street for bikes only is not really safe, no safer than the present system in fact.

Nevertheless the problem does exist and a solution of some sort is clearly called for.

Any ideas would be appreciated.

HOLE IN THE GROUND

Right now it's just a hole in the ground, but work has started on the Norwood Community Bandshell project. The project will provide Norwood with a community bandshell to house concerts and will be an attractive addition to the village.

CROSSWALKS

Crosswalks in the village are also a source of continuing complaints. Residents of the village have called to complain again and again that they have been unable to cross the streets of Potsdam without being harassed by drivers who fail to believe that the law gives a pedestrian in a crosswalk the right of way.

Enforcement of this law is clearly called for yet it has not been forthcoming.

OIL PRICES RAISE

Sun Company, Inc. has raised the price 1.1 cents per gallon for retail and wholesale heating oil.

The pre-raise price averaged about 38 cents per gallon.

According to a company spokesman, the increase was a "competitive adjustment" which now allows Sun to bring its price up to a level comparable to its competitors.

The consumer, on the other hand, is stuck holding the bag. Seems he or she cannot induce any "competitive adjustments" in the price of this basic home and business cost.

Oil companies wonder why people seem hung up on solar energy and wind power as an alternative to current energy sources but the answer seems obvious...

REFLECTED GLORY?

Norma Bartle, Congressional candidate for Bob McEwen's seat, stumped the area last week in the company of Dan Moynihan, Senatorial candidate. Moynihan, a former UN ambassador and a flamboyant political figure, may have hurt Bartle's campaign since she was generally ignored while travelling with him. It was, in my estimation, a mistake to hook up with a national figure this early in her campaign when she needs exposure here. Having Moynihan on the tour would help her in Oswego-where she is? I'dy know-but in this area she needs to be able to talk with people on a one to one basis. A little reflected glory is okay if you can get it but I don't think she did.

Mad to sa
 Anyone in looking to s well to stop Friday after p.m. For a bership and members of wide varie prices.
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