

## Serenity History...

In 1976 in St Catharines, there were 22 A.A. Groups active, when Frank W. (deceased) on the advice of Jim M., approached Fr. Charles (also deceased), a member of the Hope Group at the time to start holding meetings at 99 Garnet St (Immacule Conception). On October 16 of 1976 the first closed discussion meetings began. They struggled at the beginning with only 4-5 people at a meeting, but some key figures: Don T., Herb C. and Tommy L. (all deceased) managed to keep it going. In the Spring of 1978, Al K., new to sobriety asked Frank how he could join the group, only to be informed that it wasn't a group, but that he could make it one. So Frank W. (dec), Pat D (dec) and Al K. (still alive) both founded and found Serenity.

Margaret M. (the first "Serenity Girl) joined soon after, and Linda K. followed in July. The original members were all new in sobriety; keen, exuberant and full of enthusiasm despite the prediction from an old-timer that "a Saturday meeting? – well, that will never fly!"

From the beginning, the discussion group met in the Salle Hamel, and a Newcomer's room was soon added in the library upstairs. Eventually in the 80's the step and tradition rooms were added downstairs. In the early years, yet another discussion group would meet outside under the trees in pleasant weather, faithfully guarded by Fr. Charles' dog.

Fr. Charles himself was integral to the group. Our relationship with this church has been so close that for a time our 7<sup>th</sup> tradition was actually kept in the church safe.

Serenity was one of the first groups to be non-smoking, a rarity in those days. The "old-timers" at that time were those members with 7-8 years of sobriety, not like our current members with 60+ years, like Ralph! Back then, if you missed a meeting, you got a call, not from just one member of the group, but usually from all of them! We merely recognized anniversaries with a short presentation after the main discussion to avoid opening the meeting as that was against our group conscience at the time.

Business meetings were held at members' homes with each host member trying to outdo the last. (trust a bunch of alcoholics!) Needless to say, they were well attended, right up until Frank W. (dec) and "Dan from Sudbury" began scuffling during a heated debate. Ian R. quickly intervened and prevented any escalation. Business meetings were then relocated to the church, where so far we have managed to avoid any fisticuffs despite frequent enthusiastic debates.

Today Serenity Group has over seventy members, and active open discussion, tradition and step table rooms. We often see over 100 recovering alcoholics to our meetings each Saturday morning. We are delighted to celebrate each anniversary and our group anniversary as well, fitting tributes to the Peace of Mind we have all found within the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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