

# Martin's Volunteers' Newsletter

May/June 2004

## Preventing Conflicts at Martin's

In April, Martin's held an informative session to review our methods and philosophy for keeping Martin's a safe and loving place by preventing volatile situations and diffusing conflicts.

The best way to avoid a conflict is to create an atmosphere in which it is unlikely that problems will arise. Second best is to diffuse the conflict as it begins. Nurturing within ourselves attitudes of acceptance, non-judgement, friendliness and hospitality helps to create the necessary conditions for non-violence.

**1) The more workers in the yard and dining room, the safer the place is.** It's easier to get help if you need it. People act out less when they see an apron nearby. This includes the time before meals are served.

**2) Talking with guests** helps people relax and feel at home. This goes for volunteers and guests alike.

**3) Be alert and attentive** to murmurs and rumblings. Bravado, boasts, and insults are common streetfare, but may lead to trouble. Be watchful.

**4) Don't touch people without their consent.** This includes guiding someone by the arm while standing in the line. Awaken sleeping people verbally if possible or tap them gently on the shoulder or foot.

**5) Be aware of people who are psychotic and people's responses to them.** Being crazy doesn't justify verbal abuse, but appeal to other people's sanity when asking for tolerance.

**6) If you become aware of rising volume or tension somewhere on the floor, move towards that area.** You want to assess the level of tension so you can decide whether or not to intervene. Often, just the non-violent, uninvolved presence of another person is enough to diffuse the situation.

**7) Acknowledge that you are being watchful.** If you are not sure about the tension level, you can ask people involved a question like, "Is everything o.k.?"

**8) Remind them that they are at Martin's and that this is a safe place for people.** Violence, threats, and verbal abuse will not be tolerated.

### Guidelines for Asking a Guest to Leave

*(Continued on other side)*

## Martin's Prayer

Many of you have asked what the prayer or grace is we say at holiday meals and at other meetings. I wrote this prayer many years ago trying to express all we feel and do each day in our lives and at Martin's. I share it with all of you. This is the first time I have written it down.

*All Blessings, Barbara*

*We thank you, dear God,  
for bringing us  
together in this circle of love.*

*We thank you, dear God,  
for the many blessings in our lives and  
especially for the blessing of this very day.*

*We thank you, dear Lord,  
for all those who have crossed over  
and for all those who will come after us.*

*We ask, Great Spirit,  
that you always remind us,  
we are one family, brothers and sisters,  
under the light and love of God,  
now and forever.*

## SUMMER CLOSING

Martin's annual summer closing will be from July 31 through August 10. We will reopen for lunch on Wednesday, August 11. Be there, Wednesday crew! And enjoy your break.

## Help Wanted!

Summer means vacations for many people and that can mean fewer volunteers at Martin's. This is a good time to bring a friend to your shift, encourage others to volunteer or work an extra shift yourself. Check in the office to see when help is most needed.

## Community Thrift Update

Thanks to all of you who have donated goods to Community Thrift store, Martin's received the first check in over a year reflecting a portion of the sale of those donations. Just tell the workers on the loading dock your donation is to be credited to Martin's and when our share reaches over \$150, we get the money. And you get rid of your stuff - with a tax deduction if you need it. A good deal for everyone!

# Guidelines for Asking a Guest to Leave

At Martin's we do not kick people out - "86" them- as punishment for doing wrong, but to maintain an atmosphere of safety and sanctuary for our guests and ourselves. If someone gets kicked out, they need a break from Martin's, and we need a break from them.

When someone is told to leave, the person dealing with the situation (often the crew chief) needs to decide for how long. Usually it is either for the rest of the day or for a month. Over the years there have been a handful of guests 86'ed for more than a month. Those people generally have been kicked out repeatedly for 30 days and have not had a change of heart sufficient to be here without posing a threat to others. Acts that result in someone being 86'ed mostly fall into four categories:

**I. Participating in Physical Violence:** This means someone has to leave for a month.

## **II. Threats of Violence or Challenges to Fight:**

This really depends on the situation.

**III. Verbal Abuse:** This usually gets resolved with someone leaving for the day.

## **IV. Using or Selling Intoxicants on the Premises:**

Can garner a warning or reminder that such things aren't allowed here or being asked to leave for the day.

These time periods are not really categorical; sometimes a III or a IV will lead to being 86'ed for a month, and on rare occasions a I might not get the 30 days. How long to 86 someone depends on several factors, including:

**1. Did actual physical violence occur?** This pretty much necessitates someone being 86'ed for 30 days. It doesn't matter who started it.

**2. Was a weapon used, looked for, threatened to be gotten, or pretended to be held?** This severely increases the tension and danger, warranting 30 days.

**3. Did the person wait outside the gate, or in some way challenge someone else to "take it outside", threatening to get them later?** Fighting on Potrero is not an acceptable resolution to conflicts at Martin's. Waiting in front with violent intent is still a II. Legal jurisdiction is not the issue here.

**4. Once volunteers tried to calm the situation down, did the guest(s) respond positively?** Did they ignore you or even increase in hostility? Did they apologize to, or for give someone else who was involved? If a blow was struck, apologizing is good, but the person should still be asked to leave.

**5. Did the problem persist or seem scary enough that the police had to be called?** If you need to call the cops, it's undoubtedly a 30 day affair. See note below about calling the police.

**6. Guests who verbally assault, belittle or swear at volunteers or other guests should be told to stop or to leave for the day.** Also, guests who mutter to themselves or shout at no one in particular mustn't make derogatory or offensive statements that rile people up. In general, other guests are tolerant of people who talk to themselves, and it's not a problem. It is absolutely not okay for someone to physically assault another guest for verbal abuse.

**7. If someone refuses to leave, dragging the problem out, the length of the 86 can be increased.**

**8. Some factors that are less relevant than you might think:**

\*Did the attacker have a legitimate gripe or not?

\*Who started the fight?

\*Was the person intoxicated, in grief or simply not in their right mind?

\*Did other guests take one person's side?

If someone is 86'ed for a month, you need to put a notice up on the "In-House Communications" bulletin board in the office. Write as good a description of the person as you can with a name if possible and date it. Include a brief description of why they are out, and be sure to put your name so if any questions arise, they can be clarified.

## **Regarding the Police at Martin's:**

If you don't think you can handle a situation, have a volunteer call 911. Sometimes they arrive quickly, sometimes not. Pretending to call 911 often is sufficient to calm a situation down. If it gets resolved before the police arrive, the person who called should call them back to cancel it. Often they still show up. Try to talk with police on the sidewalk, not in the courtyard. That some people only see authority in a badge or a gun is a crying shame and perpetuates the cycle of violence from which we strive to be free. Peace at Martin's is maintained through love, not intimidation. Nonetheless, if you think you need to call the police, do it.

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