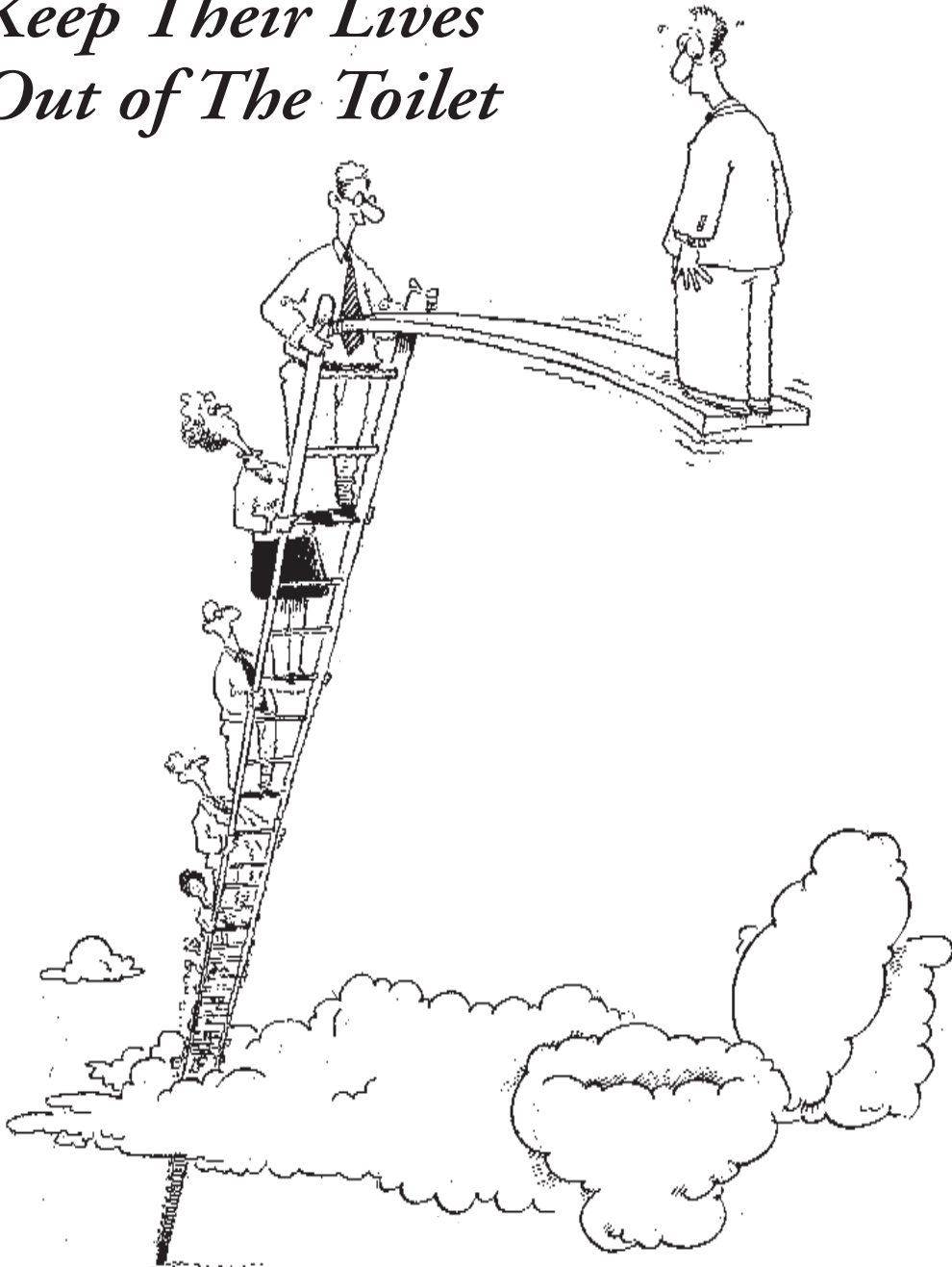


How Successful People...
*Keep Their Lives
Out of The Toilet*



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Foreword

Life in the Toilet. What a revolting concept. How was it ever conceived to write a book that combined life in the toilet with the elusive concept of success? Elusive we ask?

A bunch of soon-to-be graduates were asked why they were breaking their necks (and spending someone's good money) to go to graduate school. Their response, "That's easy. To help us be successful some day."

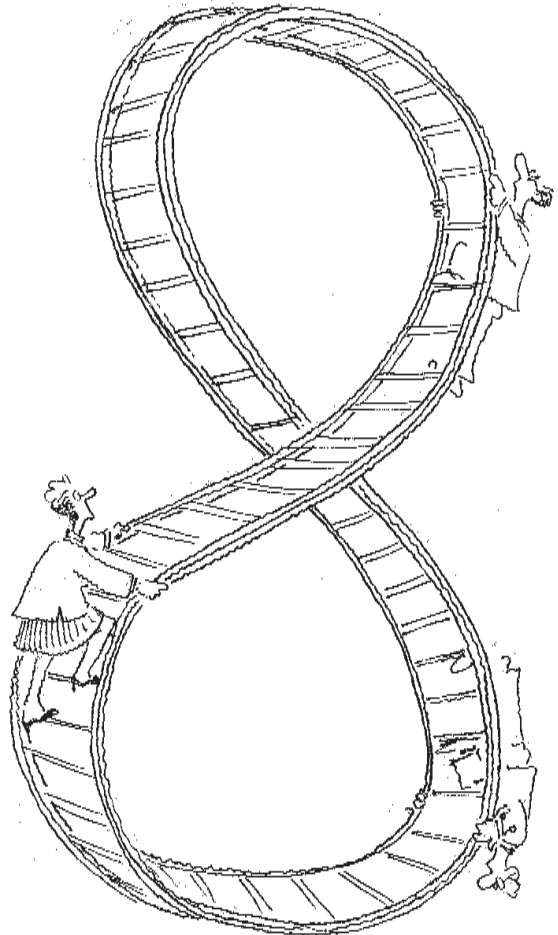
"What's success?"

The answers came fast, but were all refuted as being too vague. The harder the young people tried to come up with a basic definition of success, the more befuddled they became. Some began to ask, "Why *are* we here?"

A clean-shaven farm boy finally cried out, "It's reaching the top!" His friends, primed for such an answer blurted their own retort, "Where's the top?"

The ravenous pack toppled his definition and every other explanation of what it means to "make it" in life. For each proffered definition of reaching success came an equally convincing example of someone who had achieved "the top" and yet was unhappy, unloved, unmotivated, dissatisfied, and basically unfulfilled in life. No matter the definition, examples can be found of people who seem to fit the success categories but don't "feel" like they are truly successful.

Take the authors for an example. Sandra, an accomplished mother of



eight children, has spent her post-collegiate years (Family and Consumer Studies & Communication), changing diapers (spent enough on diapers to have bought herself a new Mercedes), cleaning toilets (seven men in the house), completing scouting projects (six boys, six Eagle Scouts), supporting school activities (at one point she had children in nursery school, elementary, middle, high school and college), and running a

one-person taxi service. In the midst of her motherly duties she built two homes (the second, a 5,000 sq. ft. maintenance-free home), served in various leadership positions in her church and the community, traveled and lectured internationally (to six continents), and appeared in a half dozen television segments, all the while fulfilling her role as the wife of a college president—no small task. Having been happily married for more than thirty years, she is also the proud grandmother of six glorious grandchildren.

By most measures, she is “successful” as a mother and is proud that her family bears the brand of her efforts. But she’s neither wealthy nor famous—at least not yet. So by other measures, she falls short of being “successful.” She may even admit to days when she feels like her life is, “...in the toilet.” For example, if you think building a home (or two) can produce a strain on relationships, try writing a book. But the very fact that you are reading this right now proves that she has succeeded as a writer and has been successful in keeping her life (and her book) out of the toilet.

Our second author, Don, is known by several titles, such as, “Latrine King,” “Urinal Colonel,” and “Don Juan of the John.” When Don went to college, he was on his own financially and decided to start a cleaning business to support his noble effort. Inexperienced but bold, he accepted any offer that paid. Was he successful? Not at first. I laugh every time he tells the story of cleaning wool

carpets with hot water and watching the furniture rearrange as the rugs shrunk; or using straight ammonia to clean and realizing only too late that the parakeet in a nearby cage fell out of his perch, dead.

Don didn’t despair. After graduating from college (English & Physical Education), Don launched a family run cleaning business. With the help of his faithful wife and their six children, this “mom & pop” operation sustained growth and offered a promising future. Don and his partner, Arlo Luke, now own Varsity Contractors, one of the largest professional facility service management companies in North America.

Don’s talented enthusiasm is infectious. While managing Varsity Contractors, he has spun off an affiliated business selling cleaning products to the public. He is highly sought after as a presenter on national television and has made appearances on all the current talk shows. He has lectured to innumerable audiences around the globe. Don is a three million-miler member of a major airline. He has been active in community service, served in responsible positions in his church and is a Silver Beaver in the Boy Scouts of America. He takes care of his own ranch in Southern Idaho and spends his winters in the 5,000 square foot, maintenance free home he personally built in Hawaii.

What does he do during the winter in Hawaii? He writes books. I estimate that this book is near his fortieth to be completed. And Don has created his

own publishing company—Marsh Creek Press—to assist in moving his works forward. His books have sold more than 3 million copies.

Is Don successful? Like Sandra, in many aspects a resounding, Yes! He is well-known, highly respected, doesn't fret about making it to the next pay check and has been married for more than forty years. But Don also has his days in the toilet. With all else that he has achieved and accumulated, he bristles at the smugness of those who fail to appreciate the nobility of the cleaning industry, and the value of keeping our homes and our world clean.

So, you take a janitor who has made his claim to fame cleaning toilets and a mother who spent her postgraduate apprenticeship in the bathroom cleaning up after the men in her life and what emerges is the genesis of a book on *how to get your life out of the toilet*. It is a natural outcome of a blending of the two authors.

As far as identifying what success is—Don and Sandra feel it is individually defined; that is to say, each of us must seek out and achieve what success means to us. What our authors have done is provide direction and inspiration for all of us on how we can more simply keep our lives out of the toilet, which then allows for success.

You will now enjoy an original journey through a delightful array of ideas and applications. I can promise that implementing their ideas and examples

will lift anyone's life to a higher level—some of you will even be blown right out of the water. So as you read, pause from time to time for what may be a badly needed flush.

Reed B. Phillips, D.C., Ph.D.
Husband of Sandra



*“The Idaho State University Press is pleased to participate in the publication of *How Successful People Keep Their Lives Out of the Toilet* by Don Aslett and Sandra Phillips. Mr. Aslett was the recipient of ISU’s 2000 Distinguished Alumnus Award, the highest honor given by the University. In 1993, the College of Business recognized Mr. Aslett as its Idaho Business Leader of the Year. Since his graduation in 1963, he has been a friend to the University and a role model of ISU students. He regularly speaks to classes, serves on the College of Business Advisory Council, and developed and taught a course for female prison inmates for the College of Technology. His impact at the University is positive and productive.”*

*Richard L. Bowen
President, Idaho State University*

anymore.”

“She made me do it.”

“This relationship is sucking the life out of me.”

“I can’t help it—I had an abusive mother.”

“This is just the way I am. You’ll have to get used to me.”

“The boss always did have it in for me.”

“I couldn’t help falling in love.”

“She never listens to a thing I say.”

In our day-to-day world com-

Successful People Recognize and Preserve Quality Relationships

“I just don’t feel comfortable with him



posed largely of interactions with others, relationships can be the big numero uno in the whole scheme of things. We might at first think of relationships as being limited to friends, family, and lovers, but in reality we have to include customers, employers, classmates, teammates, our banker, barber, doctor, plumber—even our dog or cat! And perhaps most important of all, our relationship with our Creator.

WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD.

[SANDRA] *A friend and neighbor of mine, Gary Wallburger, has been in ecclesiastical positions for more than a quarter century now. From his experience in counseling with stable as well as*

troubled folks, Gary tells me that no one is exempt from eventual problems in one or more of the following areas:

- 1. Employment*
- 2. Finances*
- 3. Health, and*
- 4. Relationships*

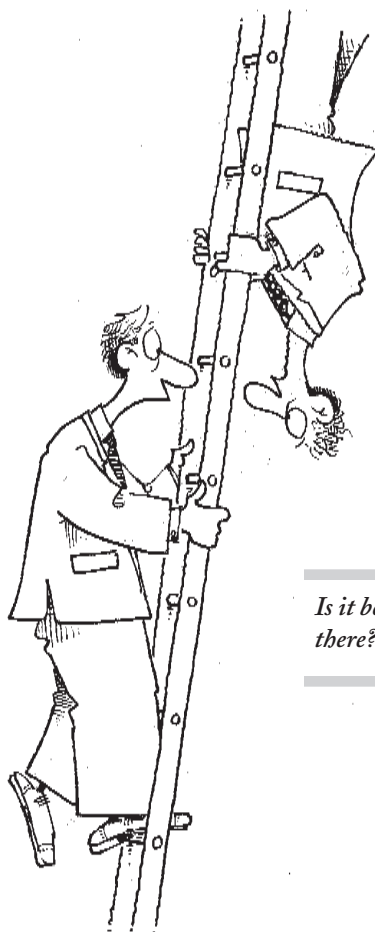
Relationships seem to build up, then fade away as quickly as our bank accounts do. We all know we must ultimately face the death of a loved one, but many of us will also deal with alienation, abandonment, rebuff, unemployment, or divorce at some point. The divorce rate alone outstrips the rates of birth, mortality, inflation, the prime and unemployment combined.

Successful relationships, those full of love and trust—good friendships and joyful companionships—can help insulate us against the pain of other reverses. If we are truly loved and know how to return love, anything out there that needs settling is just a day's work—not a lifetime fight.

Let's consider a few areas of toilet caution in relationships before we explore the can-do builders that successful people rely on to avoid the flush.

DON'T BE CAUGHT UP IN COMPARISONS.

[DON] *My high school basketball team had a four-year losing record—we never even came close to being #1. But all ten of us came out of school winners.*



Is it better up there?

We were educated and ended up in great jobs, married and established families. Second place, or even last place, is irrelevant in some things—life isn't just to keep scores or check ratings or comparisons, or to obtain stuff or status.

Most of us would be happy with our lives and ourselves if we weren't trying to be happier or more satisfied than someone else. Every second, from the inside and the outside, there is an ongo-

ing review of us. We are weighted, rated, ranked, and graded. Our movements are marked and calibrated to assess health, wealth, faith, loyalty, and intelligence. The outcome supposedly determines how *successful* we are. Comparisons!

We live and deal in comparative measurements—like the final fours, top twenties, ideal weight, fluctuating interest rate, size of our family, acceptable salary level and so on. We use our mental energy to statistically analyze every standing conceived by mankind, and do it daily. We literally and figuratively *weigh ourselves* to locate where we are in the overall general standing of societies' acceptables. We make New Year resolutions, and generate charts, sermons, articles and equipment to estimate and validate our standing in every subject from appetites to zodiacs.

Why do we share and display awards, trophies, report cards, trip mementos, diet victories, family pictures, gas mileage results, paycheck stubs, golf scores, promotion letters, the latest fashions, nice stereos, and posh furnishings? *Because they all personify what we believe to be success.* Yet, as we cast one eye to heaven in thanks for these blessings, the other is looking for what we don't yet have.

So we climb up our rungs and constantly check and measure to see where we are and how we are doing. If we are not pleased with our progress, we aren't happy, and if we aren't happy we don't feel successful.

We're so caught up in comparison when it comes to setting our standards

and levels of satisfaction that we even envy things we are smart enough to know full well might injure or destroy us. We'll see a magazine with someone famous on the cover who is going through a divorce or rehabilitation, yet we still wish we could be more like him or her. We'll read an article about some billionaire's empire, an entertainer's dream home, a politician's love life, or see a heavily retouched photo of the latest Hollywood babe or hunk, and allow it to set our personal standard of beauty and attainment. Or we'll listen to a relative's glowing account of a high-paying, glamorous job, forgetting that some people exaggerate (even lie), and share only the best angles and greatest stuff for our appraisal. No wonder we slump into insecurity because we "don't measure up." Ironically, many of the folks we eulogize are deep in the toilet trying to pretend otherwise. Media hype trap-pings don't entice successful people.

Looking the other direction on our personal ladder of success, we see those who don't measure up to our own attainments. We get a certain level of contentment just knowing we aren't nearly as bad as **they** (the low-'rungers'), but still feel twinges of dissatisfaction that we are below the benchmark of other climbers. For most of us, where we rank ourselves on this ladder determines how we feel about our success.

Accepting less than what we perceive to be success is an unhappy personal disaster. We listen daily to people who

complain about where they want to be compared to the perceived void of where they are. Falling short of our dreams, expectations, or goals hurts. Period. Are we a worthy father, mother, employee, teacher? Life seems to demand of us some Olympian effort to be “as good as.”

With these deep urges to want to do better and feel better, the successful shed some of the treading they’ve been doing. They run *some* place instead of just *in* place—with the hope to beat haunts and habits that bind them. What we *are becoming* is what counts in life, not where we are in some media line up. If we watch our own feet on the ladder of success, we won’t feel a need to analyze other’s, above or below us.

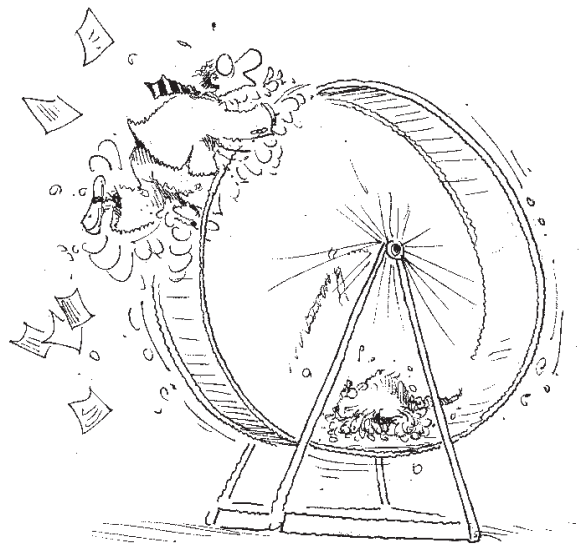
THE POWER OF ASSOCIATION.

As kids, we’d often be out of the house, gone for a few hours or even for a day of play, and our parents had no idea which of all of our friends we’d decided to pal around with. Yet that evening back at home, it wouldn’t be long until Mother or Dad would say, “You’ve been paling around with that little Sanders kid today haven’t you?” Bingo! Right on. How on earth did they know? We didn’t realize this as children, but it

was revealed by how we talked, looked, smelled, and by our attitude, the mannerisms and things we brought home from our little rendezvous. The power of our peers to pace and place us is astonishing.

The mother threatening her child was wiser than she knew when she said, “Heather, you hang around that little Philbin girl and you’ll become just like her.” We all copy our companions in some way, by absorbing and adopting some of their characteristics. *Association is a strong factor in success—or failure.* Some of the most unlikely people on the earth have risen to the best lives imaginable through friendship and association. And some of the most privileged folks have ended up in the toilet through the reverse process.

The “everyone else is doing it” mentality is introduced as far back as the pre-teen years, cultured in high school, and continued with pathetic proficiency



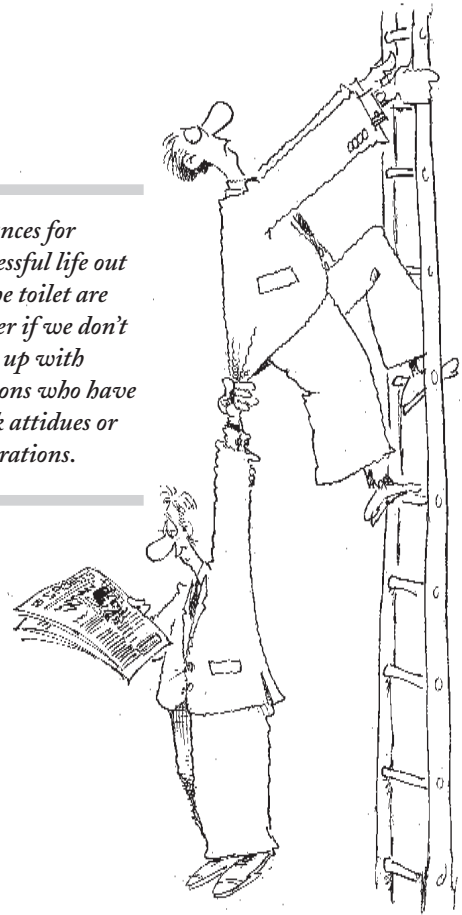
Where is our treading taking us?

into adulthood. When life isn't where successful people want it to be, one of the first things they do is take a good look at whom they're spending their time with. They know if friends are headed toward the sewer, the undertow may well take them along. As a result, we find that people more often end up in the toilet collectively than individually. Positive or negative vibes transfer from one to another without an ounce of planning. People we spend time with we become like, slowly but surely.

[DON] I worked on a company project in Kentucky for just three days, and spent the next two days fighting an inclination to mimic the locals' drawl in every sentence I formed. "Ah tell ya what..." these things stick. And I'm only in Hawaii a few weeks a year but I find myself using the pigeon slang of the islanders at corporate presentations for weeks after I return. When I'm around gentle, considerate people, their traits too must rub off because others occasionally comment, "Boy, you've been especially kind lately."

Jesus taught us to love all fellow humans—but He didn't add that we should emulate all of them. Successful people choose and demand wholesome associates who keep them on the path of self-production. Successful people have compassion, treat people well, but are cautious about who they run with in close quarters. Too often we hang

Chances for successful life out of the toilet are better if we don't link up with persons who have junk attitudes or aspirations.



around and onto toilet people because of family ties, job, church, or social obligations. In *Clutter's Last Stand*, there is a chapter called, "Junk on the Hoof." The case is made that all junk and clutter in life isn't in drawers or attics, or piled in the garage...people can actually fit this description. They might even be rich, famous, charismatic, and outwardly wonderful, but some can cause problems. They may not mean to cause them but they do. Nursery school to nursing home, there are people lurking around

who can clutter our whole existence.

Being with good people at good times and in good places doesn't mean we are some kind of a goody-goody. It means our chances for successful life out of the toilet are a lot better than if we link up with persons who have sewer attitudes or aspirations.

We usually choose who become our friends and associates. Will they be those people dancing on the rim of the toilet or those who are completely out of the bathroom? Chances of getting pushed or pulled in by the rim-sitters are more probable if standing next to them. Successful people don't jeopardize their futures by hanging out with would-be toilet dwellers. That would influence their personal direction—like letting somebody else plan their destiny.

Sometimes we desperately want to start anew. So we change our clothes, schedules, education, location, even vocation, but it doesn't affect our behavior one bit if we don't change our friends (*or the types of friends*) we're drawn to.

We love being around those who inspire us to feel and do better. Those with a pulse and a passion to improve.

SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DON'T DECK THE HALLS WITH PAST FOLLIES.

It is common to moan to others about our mistakes in life. We share phrases like,

“Let me tell you about the time I went to jail.”

“I used to be addicted, but look at me now.”

“I was the wildest girl in high school.”

Reviving and constantly reconfessing what happened way back when, is really dumb for several reasons. First, few care about the long-past experiences, especially the negative ones—and when we spill our wicked past, it makes others feel uncomfortable. Even if they are interested, what business is it of theirs? And finally, what does it accomplish, really?

It is true that rags to riches, loser to winner, and sickness to health stories are intriguing to hear and tell—everyone loves a success story. And aside from overly detailed surgical or graphic descriptions, these stories are usually welcome and safe to share. But the sensationalistic type of “Sinner to Saved” success story is not always appropriate to spill out for the entire world to hear. *Evolving, repenting, and working toward an increased level of devotion to higher personal values is the ultimate human accomplishment.* And we should be respected for such progress. The problem is too often we dwell on the gory instead of the glory.

If someone rises from the bottom of the toilet bowl, they must be very careful with whom they share the details of

their story.

[DON] *A man I worked with told his story to our church congregation. "While I was a Marine, I did what all Marines do, then repented." He visibly shocked the listeners and noticeably reduced his "good example" leadership power. Marines do as many things as our imagination can invent. Turns out the man was not immoral, a carouser, mean or a killer. He later told me he merely picked up a bad language habit then dropped it. But his public "confession" unquestionably weakened his respect in the imaginations of others, especially the youth.*

We see lots of youth leaders, unwisely dredging up their "wild oats days" for the benefit of their teams, scouts or students, who may end up reasoning, "If our great Coach Chris can survive the wild side, and is tough enough to emerge out of the toilet, so can I."

If someone is an entertainer, business mogul, sports figure or politician, a few busy bodies or hungry reporters might be interested in digging up their old actions. But by and large, most people want to leave another's bygone struggles alone.

Odd as it may seem, most often *we* are the ones who keep opening our old wounds. Other people are quite forgiving and forgetting, but first we must forgive ourselves and let it go.

Our past won't usually come back to haunt us if we follow the steps of saying,

"I'm sorry," repaying our debts, returning what was taken and repairing what we have broken, or restoring what was injured. If we keep on reliving our trouble, pretty soon it will be back living with us. This tendency to rehash life's trash will get old with others, too. Letting everyone know where we are and where we're going instead of decking the halls with our past follies is the most powerful message to share.

A TRUE FRIEND.

Friends might disagree with us, but they will stand by us, and look for ways to help us stay on track or get back on track. They are always free and flattered to help us as a counselor or source of information and comfort. True friends are not to be confused with "fair-weather" or "stray cat" friends who might patronize us for some expedient purpose. True friends are friends before, during and after any reverses we might have. Around these friends we don't have to explain or justify. Finding and accepting this type of friend is one of the surest prescriptions for personal success. These friends won't ask us to do anything wrong (or help us do it).