

VOLUME XVII

THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
STEERING COMMITTEE

I CAN'T, WE CAN

STORIES BY

JEFF A.	3
JASON R.	4
DONALD R.	4
MS. CHARLIE	5
TOM S.	5
ANONYMOUS	6
PERRY B.	7
DICK W.	7
CROSSWORD	8
JENNIFER B.	9
MICHELLE C.	10
SEAN C.	11
EDDIE C.	12
RENE H.	12
DAVID	13
STEVEN F.	14



SUPPORTING THOSE IN NEED

THE RIDGEVIEW

ALUMNI

ASSOCIATION

3995 South Cobb Drive

Smyrna GA 30080

It's hard to believe that the winter months are just around the corner and once again we will be doing our part supporting our community. Together with the Central and Shrine Shelters in Atlanta we will seek volunteers to give of their time and resources to help feed

Atlanta's homeless. We are looking for volunteers to assist in preparing and serving meals and more importantly we are seeking donations. For the cost of a cup of coffee from that special coffee shop you can help us in our quest to feed the homeless. Please consider pledging \$5.00 a

month to help us give to those in need.



UP COMING EVENTS**1st Friday Speaker's Meeting**

October 3, 2008

November 7, 2008

December 5, 2008

January 2, 2009

February 6, 2009

Alumni Fall Retreat October 17-19, 2008

Gratitude Dinner November 23, 2008

Lighting of Serenity Garden December 2008

New Years Eve Party December 31, 2008

This issue, as well as archival copies, is available on our website at www.ridgeviewalumni.com. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format, our website will link to download the FREE Adobe Reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to be notified by e-mail when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at steering@bellsouth.net or contact us thru the Website. Please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you to those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter, if we have learned anything in recovery it is that

We cannot keep what we have if we do not give it away!

If you would like to submit an article for the next Newsletter, please email it to Dawn L at steering@bellsouth.net or dbliistro@bellsouth.net.

Editor: Dawn L.
Design & Layout: Nancy G.
Proof-Readers: Nancy S.
Barbara W.

***We cannot keep
what we have if
we don't give it
away!***

THE BLESSING

By: Jeff A.

Today is August 28, 2008. This morning I began by "hitting my knees" and praying the Third Step prayer along with the Eleventh Step prayer. That's the one where I ask God to direct my thinking by:

1. Divorcing it from dishonest, selfish or self-seeking motives.
2. Granting inspiration or intuitive insight into decisions I make.
3. Showing me during the day what my next step is to be.
4. Reminding me to pause when irritated or doubtful and ask for the right thought or action.

Also, I'm to remind myself many times during the day that I'm no longer in charge and to say "Thy will be done" about all kinds of stuff.

I do this pretty much every morning. However, during the day I'll forget to employ these things that I've prayed for. So, I add something like, "Oh by the way, God, you need to somehow remind me that I prayed all this stuff this morning so I can, in fact, use it!"

So when do I use this stuff? Well, if left to my own devices, I wouldn't. Especially if things are going really well; I will

give myself credit that things are going really well. If things are going south, then it will be because some external form is causing it. An external form is a person, place, situation, event or anything that can be blamed for causing my perceived misfortune.

It's difficult to change from

relying on my own resources to relying on power that's outside me. Even when it's clearly not working I've tried harder, worked longer, yelled louder; but bad external forms don't seem to improve. Or, if they do, the victory is shallow and short lived. And when that happens, I'll repeat the cycle over and over again expecting different results. So, why keep doing it? Because, left to my own thinking such as it is, nothing changes. Not only that, but if I should escape the cycle, I will always return because that is how it's always been. That's familiar territory; I've been doing it for decades. In other words, the mind that is this way is not capable of creating the solution to change the way it is. A mental catch 22 in a way.

This has been my dilemma many times while abstinent from drugs. One would think that once off the drugs and alcohol, a magical transformation will take place and "POOF", life becomes wonderful. That's simply stating an idea that I wouldn't admit to but harbored nonetheless. The problem is that my thinking did not change and I still relied on self.

The last time I returned to the Program, it took months for me to thaw out. I was afraid I was one of the ones who were constitutionally incapable. Every avenue of life had been a failure. I stayed close to the program. I went to many meetings, got a sponsor, did my aftercare, followed suggestions the whole nine yards. I began working the twelve steps, but had not completed them. I became part of the fellowship and some of the loneliness left me.

Early on, I remember asking God to sort of shove me down the right path, because left to my own free will, I would fail. I figured that stuff would happen that would be evidence of my being on the right path. Stuff meant external events. At about 15 months

sober, some stuff did happen. None of it was good and the combined weight of everything was just too much. The death of my father, the loss of my job, my then wife wanting a divorce, and a broken leg all in a 3-4 week span; It seemed overwhelming.

I clung to the fellowship for support and relief. Meetings became like an oasis in a storm.

Now, I believe that these happenings were, in fact, God answering my prayer. I now call them blessings in disguise. And at the time they occurred, they were well disguised, trust me.

I clung to the fellowship for support and relief. Meetings became like an oasis in a storm.

I worked the steps, and am still working them. I continued to do what was suggested in recovery with a greater desire. The blessings in disguise help me see and feel the power of this program. I received the love and benefit that's embodied in the phrase, "We can do what I can't..." I know what that means now.

And, I must continue to take the action that will effect a change in my thinking. It's a daily process that sometimes feels like "two steps forward one step back." It's difficult to directly gauge one's progress on this journey. But, consider this: In the midst of all the storm of external ordeals, I have experienced wonderful peace. My circumstances today, August 28, 2008, are nowhere close to what I want them to be, but I feel fortunate and blessed anyway. There is so much power in this program, real spiritual power. And I have been blessed in ways I never saw coming.

Today, August 28, 2008, I hit my knees and prayed the 3 and 11 Step prayers. Tomorrow, August 29, 2008, I intend to do the same.



I CAN'T, WE CAN

By: Jason R.

It was a dark lonely place while I was in the grip of my addiction. Drinking and using pills started off as something I did with friends to pass time, but by the time I reached my bottom, I just wanted to be alone in my misery. All I looked forward to while using was scoring some pills and locking myself in my apartment so I could escape life. Despite life at the bottom, I could always hear God telling me that this is no way to live.

It didn't take many years of living in the chains of addiction before I decided I had to quit taking pills. Ya, pills, that was my problem, so I set out on a path of trying to kick the habit of pain pill addiction. I first tried to quit by seeing a doctor in another town, but explained that I was going to keep drinking and smoking the weed. Needless to say, that didn't work out very well. I stopped taking pills for a few months and then decided that maybe I can control it this time.

After that, I tried many ways to elude the strong hand of addiction. I

can't remember how many times I decided to be my own doctor and wean myself off pills. It seemed no matter what I tried to do to kick the habit, nothing worked. I vividly recall trying to quit cold turkey by calling in sick to work for a week. This was a terrible idea and the loneliest time in my life. I remember thinking, "Once I get over being sick from the withdrawals, I am going to force myself into never using again".

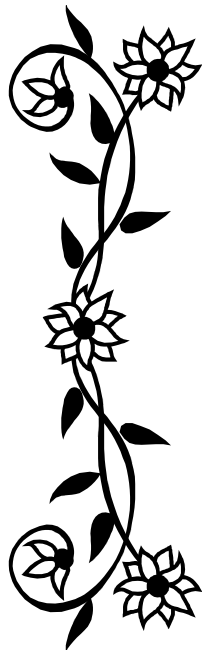
day six, I was starting to feel better and really determined to kick the habit this time. I was thinking this until my dealer called and told me to come on over. It didn't take but a few minutes and I was out the door and headed 50 miles to get my fix. This was the point in my addicted life where I realized that I was ultimately doomed. I had failed to quit on my own about ten different times and I knew I needed to go to rehab. It took months before I could muster up the courage to go into treatment and get help.

"Thank God that I am not alone in the disease!"

Once I arrived to detox, I remember sitting there like a scared puppy dog, not knowing how I was going to live the rest of my life without drinking or using. For the first few days I didn't feel like I really fit in with those crazy folks. This was until I met Paul P. and asked him why he was there. He started to tell me of the many years he had been taking pain medication and was addicted. My ears perked up and for the first time I felt like someone else understood my pain.

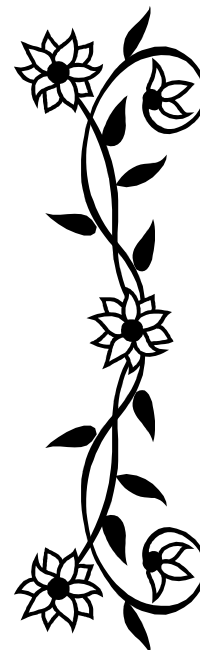
It was a huge deal to hear this guy share his story with me. I realized that I was not alone in the battle for my life. This was the moment I became convinced that I needed help getting sober and could not do it alone. It is in hearing my story told over and over in the rooms of AA that continues to keep me on the path of happy destiny. Thank God that I am not alone in the disease!

IT'S A GIFT



***Glancing around the candlelit room,
reminded of one's touch,
The spoken word, the laughter
familiar,
Family we are, with attention
as much,
A tear, a nod with a knowing blink,
a stare.
Winners the course they stay
to live,
Obliged with gift often to
become,
Prayer is all we are often
able to give,
To accept I can't - We can
happens just to some.***

By: Donald R



IT'S ABOUT FAMILY

By: Ms. Charlie W

A couple of months ago, I traveled from Atlanta to Statesboro, Georgia mainly to be with my mama for an appointment she had with the chief of surgical oncology regarding the results of a Cat scan of her colon. Normally, my sister would have taken her, but she had a doctor's appointment in another city.

What an excellent opportunity for me to be of service to someone, and how grand to be of service to the woman who gave me life, at this time of her life? How great it is to be in recovery, I thought to myself as I merged off of 75 South onto Interstate 16. The top was down on my VW Beetle and Lee Ann Womack was singing "I Hope You Dance."

As I listened to the lyrics I thought how I wished my mother had said things to me like,

I hope you never lose your sense of wonder, You get your fill to eat but always keep that hunger May you never take one single breath for granted, God forbid love ever leave you empty handed I hope you still feel small when you stand beside the ocean, Whenever one door closes I hope one more opens Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance, And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance...I hope you DANCE.

Now Mama and I haven't always seen eye to eye, especially when she was spanking my butt about beating up one of my little brothers, or getting that hand-me-down Sunday go to meeting dress covered with mud pies. I still remember how she always told me not to smile so hard, cause I'm

so black and all you see is them big ole white teeth.

Her first comment to me was "Now don't you come down here telling them doctors what to do and how to do it, you hear me?" Yes Ma, I hear Ya. The day of the appointment came early the next morning, and we were the first to arrive at the doctor's office. Unfortunately, the doctor was driving from Augusta about an hour or so away. He arrived nearly two hours later because there had been a fatal car accident on highway 80. Oh yeah, did I mention my mother has a character and is as mean as a rattlesnake caught off guard.

The results of the test were really no surprise to me. Mama has cancer. Just so happens, almost a year ago I went into treatment. Just so happens, I'm working my Step 8 *Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.* Just so happens my mother is number 4 on my list. Just so happens.... I Can't, We Can!

I have a sponsor, I go to meetings, I open my mouth, because someone once said to me, if you share it, it gives it less power. Step 4 was hard, I felt like going back out. When I told my home group, they rallied around me. They shared with me their Strength, Hope and Experience...I can't, we can! Gave me another day of sobriety.

I thought I was strong, I thought I could handle the news, but I became so angry, and these crazy urges came up inside me and started to grow stronger and stronger. I could almost taste and smell the drugs, my tongue seemed to feel the bitterness of red wine. I thought I was losing my

mind. I started praying, oh how I prayed! It seemed as if prayer wasn't doing me any good. Help me God! Help Me! Please, I can't do this by myself. So off to a meeting, called up my sponsor, she wasn't available. Called up a young lady in my network. Why now, why like this? For so many years I have hated my mother for having so many children, all nine of us. For the way she spoke, saying screet instead of street, scrait instead of straight. I blamed my failures on her, all of them. I could have been a lawyer if she would have just hugged me...said to me some of the lyrics in that song..."I Hope You Dance." But you know, it just didn't happen that way and it almost brought me down.

I have a great family in recovery, a great network of brothers and sisters who love me and I love them. They are forever showing me that if I Can't, then We Can! This is a We program, not an I program. I am grateful!

"I have a great family in recovery, a great network of brothers and sisters who love me"

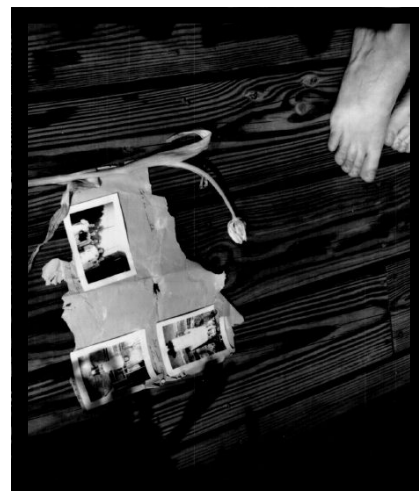
ME, MYSELF AND I

By: Tom S.

The WE I lived with for most of my life was "me, myself and I". That troika continued to lead me to drink and the destruction of all I held dear.

After alcohol had beaten me and I had admitted total defeat, I began relying on the program of AA, a sponsor

and a Power greater than myself (in that order) to awaken me to my lost human potential. Now, WE would not trade that new way of life for anything in the world.



FRIENDSHIPS

*By 1st Impressions I judge a man
My past experiences or sudden whim,
May be a mirror in which I can
Tell all of me I know from Him.*

*Bravely I bear the challenge
Meet the fear, go thru the pain,
Not as a cross or misfortune
Which my God gives me to gain.*

*Defining ourselves how we learn and grow
Spiritual Beings discovering we can restore,
To be Divinely Human we worship so
Developing depth of Character, Understanding more.*

*Will You give me a Sign?
By changing my mind,
It's risky for me
Being real to be.*

*To get out of the box,
Unfolds the Beauty inside,
"I can't, She can, I'll let Her,"
Places Intention outside.*

*The memory of the Past may die
Inside our Human Hearts are Treasures
And its not quickly the days fly by
Nor dreams, or hopes, or love, or pleasures.*

*Where am I? – I'm right here,
What Time is it? – It's right now.
The Solution that's Spiritual may be near
Embracing Evolving Experience is How.*

*The Mystic Power is with us still
Where Centering Prayer Has Wondrous Might
Breathe in, "God," is a Divine Thrill
Breathe out, "me" shows The Triune Light.*

*How Cool is it? Attraction in Life has its Way
Powerfully bringing together our stance
And resist as much as we may, say
Appreciate and Learn Friendship is not by Chance.*

Anonymous, for Lynn

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?

By: Perry B.

When did I come to believe that I was not the truth for myself? Did I not grow up independent; in fact, was I not raised to be in charge of my own situation; It did work for a long time. I could be alone and happy in my thoughts. I could be in charge of my life, dream the dreams, and make them reality. There was nothing greater than me but GOD, the power of thought given to me by that heavenly power. How could that power to think be wrong? How could I think wrong? Wasn't I following the tenets of my GOD to the best of my abilities, living a moral life?

Friends were a high calling on my scale. I had a few. Most people were so out of touch with reality, (my reality). Why didn't they see their errors? (The imperfect man looking for a perfect world). My judgments were just, fair, equitable, and doled out with the best of intentions. With few exceptions never did I have anyone try to counteract my judgments. This is because my judgments stayed inside of me. I didn't need the feedback, only the compliance. All of this was wrapped in a neat, nice package that others could look at, but not open.

This problem of me, the **I AM**, continued when alcohol could no longer be denied. Years of casual and weekend heavy drinking finally led to that craving that could not be quenched by me. I quit smoking when I wanted, why did I have this problem? Maybe it wasn't a problem, so I continued. After all, I couldn't be very wrong. When in time I could no longer wake, work, or sleep without drinking; when I had three immobilizing collapses, I started seeking help. Thanks to a friend and co-worker, I entered Ridgeview. Now I could work to get back to drinking normally as I did in my youth.

I believe Ridgeview could be called a "land of surprises". It was for me! "What do you mean I am an Alcoholic and I can never drink again? I've been through de-tox and I haven't had a drink in days, I believe I can get by without having a drink for a while... I know I can. The shakes are almost

Enter the Practical Program of Action and the Fellowship of Alcoholic Anonymous.

gone, too."

Thanks to many, today is different. Promises have come true! I have had a spiritual experience. What a weight off my shoulders, I am no longer in charge! Best yet, I get to tell others of how I got sober and certain steps that anyone can take to recover.

For me, the **I** still exists. I am a member of the We. The We of AA. All around me are friends, people who are just like me, people who **are** me. I am not lost forever in this AA crowd, but rather found in that crowd. To be a part of a whole has transfixed the need for the **I AM**.



THREE STAGES

By: Dick W.

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a team to succeed in recovery. Recovery is not an individual effort but a group action.

I have accomplished many things, and everything that I have done well, at least started out as "we" action, such as sports, education, military, corporate jobs. I can't think of anything I have done well that I did all on my own. Everything starts with learning methods, rules, standards, and techniques. Coaches, teachers, parents and mentors provide these through training, practice, and in doing.

I think there are three stages of development in any new activity, to

include most importantly recovery. The stages are (1)dependence, (2) independence, and ultimately (3) interdependence.

During the dependent stage you must listen, learn, and practice with the assistance of others, such as doctors, therapists, counselors, sponsors, and others in recovery. You must allow others to tell you how to recover, and let them guide you.

In the independent stage, you try to do the things others have convinced you to try in order to succeed in recovery. This is a dangerous stage because you may think you know it all and can handle things on your own, which increases your chance of relapse.

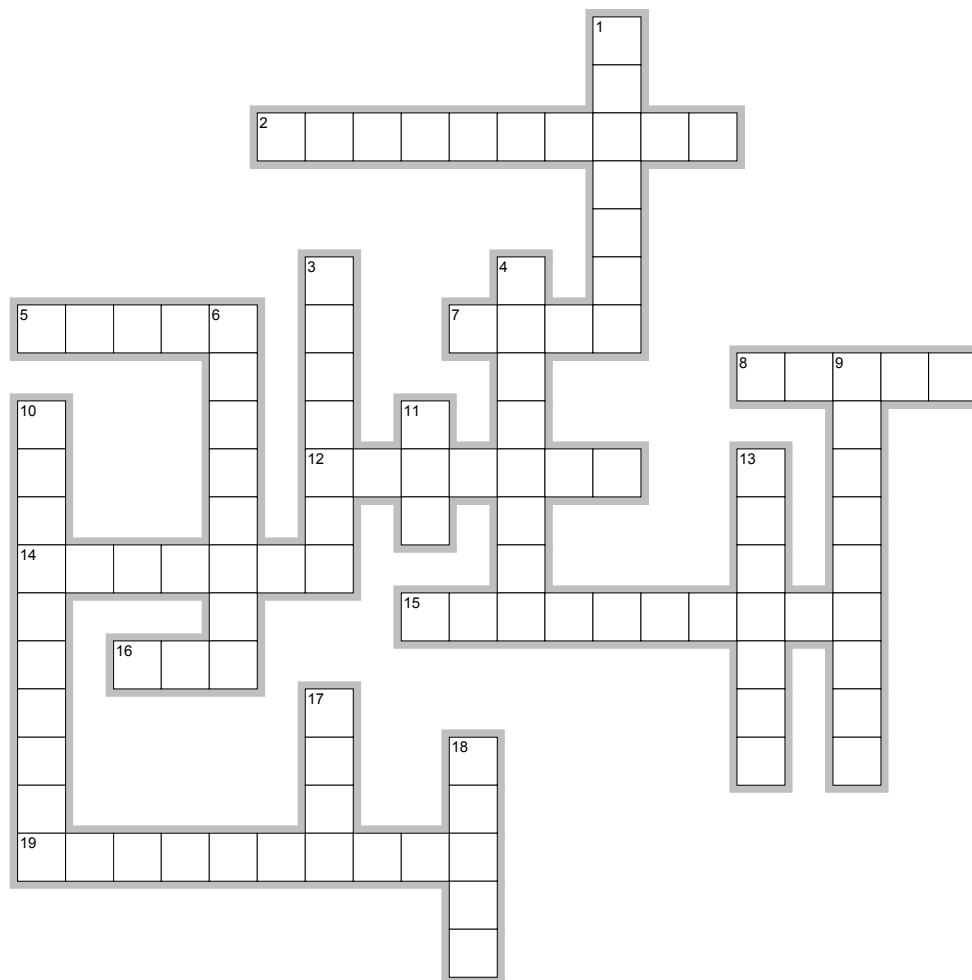
If you are careful, you recognize the need for interdependence, the third stage. You maintain your recovery by working with and for others. This reciprocity or mutual effort with others will keep you (us) on the recovery road.

Just as in sports, military efforts, relationships, work, family, and all of society, we achieve success through teamwork, not individuality. To achieve and maintain success in recovery you must commit to the outcomes, methods, and resources required on a 24/7 basis.

I can't; you can't; we can and will!

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By Barbara W.



EclipseCrossword.com

Across

2. ... is the solution to all my problems.
5. Chapter 5, How it _____.
7. Happy, joyous and _____.
8. This is dead without works.
12. The Doctor's _____.
14. ... you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy _____.
15. Number one offender
16. Theme of this newsletter, I Can't, We _____.
19. What the Big Book is meant only to be.

Down

1. Relieve me of the _____ of self, that I may better do they will.
3. We would go to any lengths for _____ over alcohol.
4. Are these extravagant _____.
6. There is one.
9. What we take in Step 4.
10. The 12 Steps and 12 ...
11. We are people who normally would not _____.
13. We will know a new _____ and a new happiness.
17. Acronym for hungry, angry, lonely, tired.
18. Trust in God and _____ house.

I CAN'T

I can't be sober.

I can't think.

I can't make decisions.

I can't know what's right and what's wrong.

I can't be honest.

I can't decide which path to take.

I can't recover.

I can't take the first step.

I can't do it on my own.

What I have learned in my short time of being sober

is that I can't do any

of these things BY MYSELF.

But I do know, that with the help of another addict

and my Higher Power...

I took the first step.

I am sober.

I can think clearly.

I am able to make rational decisions.

I am honest.

The path that I am supposed to travel will be revealed.

I will recover

By: Jennifer B.

I CAN'T BUT WE CAN

*I can't, we can, it's the answer to recovery
Twelve steps and Fellowship is a journey to discovery
I can't, we can means that nobody's alone,
So go meet with someone or go pick up the phone.*

*I can't, we can, will keep us all together,
We will do anything for each other no matter what the weather
I know for a fact I can't do it myself,
I know that I need other peoples help.*

*I can't, we can is my favorite slogan to use,
I can only win, and never lose.
There are so many people in the fellowships,
Every day I express my gratitude through my lips.*

*I can't, we can I know I won't fail
Or else it will be "Institutions, death or jail,"
If it weren't for this I know I'd be dead
So I'm glad that I got it through my thick head
Before I'm lying in a coffin dead.
Using again is my biggest dread*

*I can't, we can is the solution
It is my forever resolution.
I am so eternally grateful
Instead of being resentful and hateful.*

*I can also thank my higher power
My life is now like an open flower.
Before treatment my life was a mess
Now all of my defeats I can confess.*

*Even though some people don't understand
I still need to try to take a stand.
People loved me until I loved myself
No matter if I was poor or had bad health.*

*Today I have a new way of life
To help me get through my stress and strife
Thanks to all you loving people,
I'm here alive to tell my story*

By: Michelle C.

A NEW BEGINNING

By: Sean C.

Imagine walking into your first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and no one was there to greet you. The coffee is made but no one is there to chat with you while you pour in your 7 packets of sugar. Let's take this a step further and pretend that everyone is assigned a cubicle. All the AA members are at their desks either reading AA literature or listening to AA tapes. However, no one is talking to each other. Do you think you could get sober that way?

This of course is an exaggeration. The fact is, I tried to get sober on my own. I wasn't going to bother you and I certainly wasn't going to let you bother me! My grand plan was to attend a few meetings, figure this out on my own and go from there. Since I was so unique, it was imperative that I did things my way. I realized ahead of time that you wouldn't understand me and how special I was.

When I was first introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous in November 1989, I had a wall between you and me. I didn't realize that recovery was on your side of the wall, not mine. It took me ten years to reach that level of incomprehensible demoralization that the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous describes. I crawled through the doors desperate to listen to any suggestion.

I didn't know it at the time but I was at Step Two. I believed that you had a solution in Alcoholics Anonymous to my problem and if I followed your program of recovery, then I wouldn't have to drink any more. And that is exactly what happened. I stopped fighting and I let you take care of me. I came to meetings and got into action!

"I believe laughter is a part of love."

The fellowship started in 1935 with one alcoholic talking to another. For me, I met my sponsor Wes. He had and still has a sponsor named Darryl. Wes' father is also in the program and so is his sponsor Gibson. So I walked through the doors of AA and suddenly I'm in a network of recovering alcoholics. And I haven't even eaten a cookie yet. Wes has a ton of friends and he introduced me to every one of them. While he was introducing them to me, he would comment on what he deemed to be their "chief character defect". They in turn told me about all of Wes' shortcomings. None of us could stop laughing!

Laughter. Now there's a great gift from God; I believe laughter is a part of love. Haven't quite figured it out but I know love and laughter *have* to be related. Have you ever been to an AA meeting where there was no laughter?

Through the people in Alcoholics Anonymous, I found a way out of my misery. I couldn't do this on my own but with your help I found that WE stay sober one day at a time. Thank you God!



S
P
I
R
I
T



F
O
R
G
I
V
E
N
E
S
S



C
O
U
R
A
G
E

THERE IS NO "I" IN RECOVERY

By: Eddie C.

There is no more important concept behind the success of Twelve Step programs than the idea of "support groups." I spent many miserable years trying to get a handle on my alcoholism and drug addiction. Unfortunately, I surrounded myself with "PARTY" people. We all had the same goal: avoid responsibility, escape reality, and seek instant gratification.

So, in a sick kind of way, my first support group was of the enabling kind!

When I realized I had gone from a mere functional alcoholic to an out of control drunk, the last thing I wanted to do was admit to another

person I needed help. Fortunately, one of those party people in my crowd had left the dark side a year earlier and by some miracle (or a flat out lie), he managed to still be clean and sober. On my own I had tried to stop, slow down, and moderate my drinking. On my own I failed miserably. How could Ric have accomplished what I had secretly been trying to do for a long, long time? I had to know.

Finally, at my point of utter desperation, I reached out for help and called him. Ridgeview and AA were the answers he found and they too became my answers. Answers to a prayer of desperation, "God please help me!"

I was introduced to other peo-

ple just like me. The old party was over and they convinced me that not only would life go on, it would be better than I could ever have imagined. I was not alone!

A real "SUPPORT" group, what a concept! I will be forever in debt to Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob. They realized that in order to keep this deadly disease in remission, they needed to stay close to each other and share their experience, strength, and hope with all who wanted it. It's a "WE" program, and I strive never to forget that the gift I've been given is a GROUP effort. I TRULY THANK GOD FOR THAT!

There may be an "I" in alcoholism, but there is definitely not an "I" in RECOVERY.

A TWELVE YEAR SAGA (SO FAR)

By: Rene H.

The first 30 days I was very confused and I know I had heard these Words somewhere, but where escapes me at this point.

These Words have been one of the cornerstones of my Recovery effort. For me it is very important to remember that The Steps do not have "I" in them but they even start off

(Step 1) with "We were" and My Recovery started with those Words.

My Meetings represent "We do together What I can't do alone. I always hear what I need to hear at a meeting and God talks to me at each Meeting through one of the people there. It may not be what I want to hear but it is what I need to hear. On days when I think the World is against me, I always hear someone share on something they may be struggling with and I always think "Hey, my problems

are not as bad as theirs are."

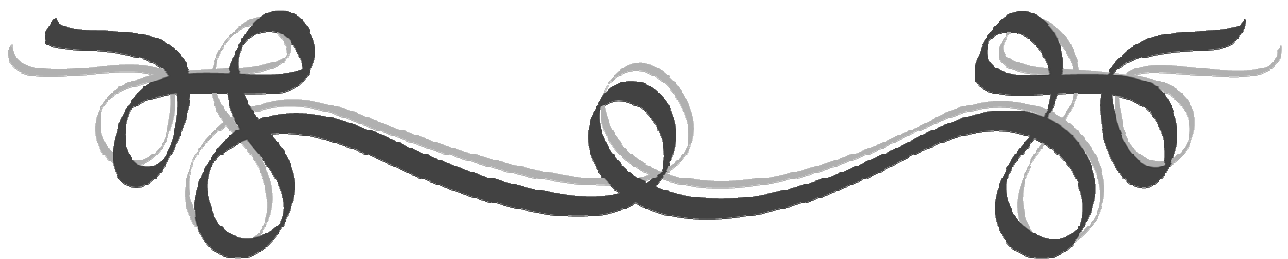
For me the "We can" has always meant talking to another Alcoholic. That person usually is my Sponsor but if he was busy or away from his phone, I have twenty or thirty other Alcoholics I can call. I actually have many more phone numbers in my cell phone so I will never run out of numbers to call. I just have to make the decision that "I can" dial my phone and it will actually call people if I let it.

I have described my "AA" experience as a bunch of decisions. I have to make a decision to go to a meeting, to call my Sponsor, to work with another Alcoholic, not to drink today, to read my "Big Book", to chair a meeting, to make coffee, to clean the meeting room, to actually work the "Steps" to the best of my ability and the list goes on and on....

The "Rigorous Honesty" of this program is what helps me stay balanced. I very seldom know the next right thing to do....BUT I always know the Next WRONG thing to do....If I just don't do the next WRONG thing I have a chance not to screw up the situation I'm dealing with at that moment.....It's all about BALANCE each day....

"I can't...But We can"... and that's a fact.

For me the "We can" has always meant talking to another Alcoholic.



NOT ON MY OWN

By: David.

I can't count the number of times I tried to quit cocaine using the "sheer force of will." Twenty three years ago I managed to do it for about a year & a half. Then one night I thought it'd be OK to do just a couple of lines & I was, as we say so often, off to the races again. The next 20 years witnessed a succession of attempts on my part to slay the demon, but the demon became the dragon which I kept chasing. Knowing deep down that I needed to stop, I kept on trying. I would "preach" to those about me (my using friends) that we were rolling headlong down the road to perdition! I would swear to myself that I was not going to get high today! I would talk to myself in the mirror telling myself, "You're better than this." As it turns out, I was right. I am better than that, but I am not stronger than that. So I started thinking that I was weak; that I had no will power; that I was the scum of the earth, and that I was doomed.

I walked into my first AA meeting in March of 2003. I was asked to

read something called "How It Works." The first thing I said was that I had a real problem with the surrender idea, and that I was reluctant to turn things over to anyone or anything. This became sort of a self fulfilling prophecy for me. I spent the next five years in & out of the rooms (mostly out). I even spent 90 days in a halfway house at the insistence of my wife. At that time I managed to string together 134 days clean. I can't really say "in sobriety" because all I was doing was waiting to get a paycheck so I could go buy some dope. I mean, really, the only reason I stayed clean even that long was because I had no money. And sure enough, when I did get some, I went straight to the crack house & bought \$20.00 worth. Of course when it was gone I went back for twice as much, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

Two & a half years would go by before, at the insistence of my wife again, and that of my family, I entered Ridgeview. It was there that, through some miracle, I acquired a sincere desire to stop using cocaine. It was this desire that gave me the willingness to

let go of those parts of me that needed to go. And it was this desire that helped me realize that I could not do this thing by myself. If I was going to make this thing work I had to learn to rely on my fellow addicts. I had to learn to ask for help.

I started by asking God for His help! Then I came to understand (after I didn't hear any booming voice from the clouds) that God works through others. I learned to listen to those who had been where I was, who had gone through what I was going through, and had come out the other side fundamentally changed. Instead of trying to be funny with my sharing, I shared what was happening with me, and in my life. Instead of coming late to meetings and leaving early, I started coming early and hanging around with the winners afterward. In this way I began to feel the healing power of God, and to learn to "let go & let God." The transformation in my life, of my life has, since then, been nothing short of miraculous. And, as I have learned, one of the thousands of miracles taking place in this program everyday.

So it is that I can state unequivocally that "I CAN'T, WE CAN."

If I was going to make this thing work I had to learn to rely on my fellow addicts. I had to learn to ask for help.

SUMMER RETREAT



The Lake



Sunset on the Lake



The Yacht



The Band



Just hangin' at the lake

WHAT I CAN DO

By Steven F.

I'll admit that there are a few things I can't do. I certainly can't perform brain surgery. I can't pilot a Boeing 747 or beat Tiger Woods in a round of golf. Prior to getting sober, a few of these notions weren't beyond "reachable" in my mind.

In order to figure out what I can't do, I first had to look at the things I could do. I used to wander around in life thinking I could do anything. I "can" fix your problem. I "can" give you the answers. I "can" whup your butt. I "can" do almost anything you say I "can't" do. I used to jump through hoops to get your answers. I would never allow you to know that I didn't know.

I "can" make you feel as bad as or worse than me. I probably feel as though you deserve it. Often, I do it just to make me feel better about myself. Sometimes I do it just so I don't have to feel alone in my misery.

I "can" go to the hole in the wall bars to be among those "alcoholics" who certainly have worse

problems than me. I have a better job than them. I have a nicer truck than they do. And judging, (since I'm the expert) by the clothes they wear, my wardrobe is by far superior to theirs. My sponsor calls this being the smart kid in the dumb class.

I "can" do lots of things. I "can" make high-risk choices. I "can" get arrested. I "can" sport a pair of shiny hand cuffs. I "can" go to jails and prisons. I "can" do all these things as long as I hang onto the notion,,,,, "I can".

What I couldn't do was ask for help. I couldn't let anyone else know how empty I felt inside. I couldn't tell you about my fears, my shortcomings, my pain, my anything. I couldn't be myself for fear of not being accepted. I felt I couldn't live with myself if I fell short of your expectations.

Through desperation, I sought help. I just needed to quit drinking. If I could just get rid of the booze I'd be okay. After I was introduced to the concept of sobriety, well, that painted a different picture altogether. I met peo-

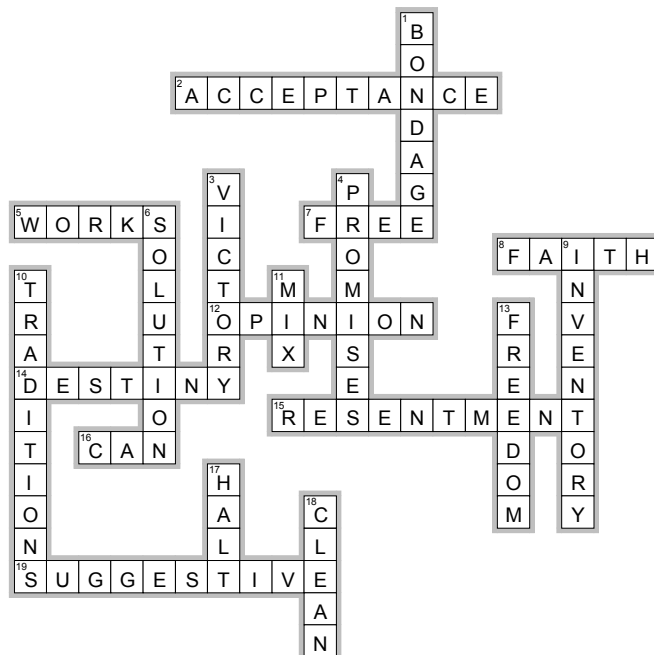
ple just like me. Same drinking problems. Same thinking problems. Same sinking problems. One thing I heard over and over was that I was no longer alone. I heard "we" a hundred times a week. In all the meetings I've attended, not once did I hear, we picked up a drink.

Wow!!! What a concept, what a fellowship. I can't stop, we can. I can't find an answer, we can. I can't handle this pain, we can. I can't figure this out, we can.

I didn't learn about "we" in juvenile hall, boy scouts, the U.S. navy, prison or church. I found it in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Today when I find myself without the answers, without a friend, without some comfort or God, all I need to do to find it is to remember these simple words,....

I can't ...we can.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS



EclipseCrossword.com

***"God grant me
the serenity to
accept the
things I cannot
change, the
courage to
change the
things I can, and
the wisdom to
know the
difference."***

Remember hitting your bottom? Do you remember that moment when you first began to feel some hope? Looking back, can you remember those angels who appeared at that precise moment when you needed help the most? I can.

I can also remember the abject fear of, "How am I going to pay for this?" No insurance, no real savings, no trust fund, no golden benefactor. Scared, having hit my bottom, finally able to ask for help. I was in a safe place. The rest would just have to take care of itself.

Treatment costs money, real money. Programs, therapies, prescriptions, food, housing and all the while life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund raising goal is an endowment fund that will one day be able to help financially that person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, another couple of days in a halfway house, medications, daycare so the patient can make it to the program that week, the needs can be overwhelming at times. We all know how powerful a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.

Our goal for the Endowment Fund has to be set high if we are to be able to generate any kind of meaningful income. To date we have raised \$46,000, towards our first \$500,000. Every single dollar raised goes into an asset management account over which the Alumni Steering Committee has sole control.

When the day comes, and it will, that we are in a financial position to begin offering grants to patients, a review committee will be established. This group will be comprised of active Steering Committee members who have demonstrated a record of service, and a representative from the hospital. The committee will review the requests and make grants based on need, the patient's participation in their own recovery, and the patient's treatment team's input.

Obviously we are a ways down the road from making any grants. The next several years are about increasing awareness of our project, raising and investing the donations that come our way. Today, you can make a difference in the life of that person who is still out there.

Won't you make a commitment to be someone's angel, just for today? We have.

Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

YES, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery _____ years and would like to give back \$_____.

YES, I am not an Alumni; however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$_____.

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Serenity Garden—Memorial Brick Order Form

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 Lines/14 characters per line)

(Line 1) _____

(Line 2) _____

* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

Make checks payable to: Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

Mail to: Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, GA 30080-6397

THE VIEW

I C A N ' T , W E C A N

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SMYRNA, GA
PERMIT NO. 118

3995 SOUTH COBB DRIVE
GA 30080



THERE IS NO "I" IN RECOVERY

By Chuck T.

We've all heard the cliché "there's no 'I' in 'team'". That also rings true for those of us involved in a recovery program.

A newcomer needs only a glance at the 12 Steps to realize that our ability to recover depends upon a "we" theory:

"We" admitted we were powerless...

Came to believe that a power greater than "ourselves"...

Made a decision to turn "our" will and our lives...

And so it goes.

Tradition One tells us that our unity is our most cherished quality, and is probably the sole reason that 12-

Step communities exist and flourish and that most individuals can not recover unless there is a group.

As newcomers, some of us initially used the group as a "Higher Power" until we could identify our own concept of what a power greater than ourselves really meant. We saw the strength and hope that could only be provided by a "we"-oriented program. When assigned to a small group in the recovery program at Ridgeview, we came to realize that only by drawing from the experiences of that group could we create a road to wellness. Seldom were our shared experiences original, there always seemed to be another member of our group with an experience very similar to our own.

Author and spiritual advisor Eckhart Tolle identifies "collective ego" in his book "A New Earth". He points

out the danger that many individuals face when they believe that they have risen above their own ego to work for a greater good of the collective without demanding personal rewards or recognition. This creates a strange paradox concerning recovery groups. In recovery, our personal egos must become secondary to the collective, and so it should be. Yet, we also realize that our personal recovery must come first if we ever again wish to become responsible and productive members of society.

So, our shared experiences and the hope that is drawn from our recovery community is basic to our program. The group concept is the very cornerstone on which a strong recovery program is built. Only by working with others can we develop and maintain a program that allows us to once again function as "whole" human beings.