

VOLUME XVIII

THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
STEERING COMMITTEE

DISCOVERY IN RECOVERY

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Photo by Paul L.

GIVING IS BETTER THAN RECEIVING

THE RIDGEVIEW

ALUMNI

ASSOCIATION

3995 South Cobb Drive

Smyrna GA 30080

Feeding the homeless this past holiday season was a very rewarding experience. Along with preparing a meal we also put together some small gift bags for those we fed. The Shrine of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church was also on hand giving those present a new



sweatshirt. Unfortunately they were one sweatshirt short.

Awkward, yes, problem, no, not when a member of the Ridgeview Alumni is present. We know what we have been given, so for one of our own to give the shirt off our backs was not a problem. Andrew N. graciously gave the

shirt off his back to someone who was less fortunate this holiday season. Thank you Andrew for giving of yourself so graciously.

Also thank you to all of you who graciously contributed to the fund. We are continuing our efforts this spring so keep the dollars coming during these trying economic times!

UPCOMING EVENTS**1st Friday Speaker's Meeting**

April 3, 2009

May 1, 2009

June 5, 2009

July 3, 2009

August 7, 2009

Spring Fling May, 15, 16 & 17.

Summer Retreat July 17, 18 & 19

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information or join us every Thursday at 5:45 in Pro North on the Ridgeview Campus

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.

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A NEW SET OF WHEELS

I awoke one morning and stepped out my front door, I started to get on my bike and something caught my eye. There in the driveway stood a very attractive, slightly used 2006 Bentley. After a little investigation I found a letter, it said:

"Andy, after you totaled your last car I figured you could use this one. The only catch is you have to view it as a loaner. By the time I come back for it I want it to look better than before. I want you to know every in and out of it and if so much as one scratch gets on it or one oil change is missed, the car may be repossessed immediately. (Signed a friend) P.S. I want you to use this vehicle to make amends to all of those you have harmed!

"Why a Bentley!" I exclaimed "I don't know a damn thing about Bentleys! Why couldn't it be a Mustang like my last one, I already knew everything there was to know about keeping that up." Of course it was coughing black smoke and rolling with a doughnut by the time I wrecked it. After a few days of being stubborn and



ungrateful, I admitted that I needed this car, accepted that it was not my own to keep, and became entirely willing to face the challenges ahead. First things first. In order to maintain it, I realized I had to know every "in and out," so I proceeded to do a full engine overhaul (with my maintenance manual at my side). I flushed and replaced every fluid, tightened every nut and bolt to spec, and a few days later I was ready to roll.

At this point I knew all there was to know to maintain this vehicle while traveling great distances to make amends. After that mission was complete, I continued to keep up the Bentley's fine tune and maintenance, never knowing when its rightful owner would return. While taking that into account, I used my new found peace of mind and free time to begin making improvements. I started with the obvious things such as new paint, custom exhaust, and even one of those high-end air filters. By the time I was done with that I could hardly go anywhere without someone stopping me to say, basically, "I want what you have." So out of

gratitude for this mystical giver of new things, I opened my own fuel stop and "maximum service" station. I was more than willing to help anyone with their car needs

***"Why a Bentley!"
I exclaimed "I
don't know a
damn thing about
Bentleys!"***

as long as they were willing to do most of the work themselves.

This is the story of my recovery. That old Mustang

was my life, which I knew for certain how to live. I learned how to take shortcuts (rig), how to impress and how to avoid consequences. This wasn't enough. I destroyed the life that had been freely given to me. By the grace of God through this program I received a second chance at life, a new life that I knew nothing about, or that would require a flawless and thorough effort to live. A life that was not my own but God's and the people closest to me. Although there were many challenges to this new life, I was willing to return to infancy and learn how to live from scratch.

Here are the steps I took.....

By Andy W.

DISCOVERING I CAN

The first discovery I made in recovery was that I could go one whole day without having to take a drink. I still thought about drinking but I did not have to act on that. The other people on the cottage and in the AA meetings I was taken to had accomplished

that feat for a number of days in a row and were alive to talk about it! Another early discovery was that by showing up and sharing at meetings on a regular basis I began to lose the corroding thread of fear that the Big Book talks about (pg 67). Each discovery

leads to another which leads to another and that has kept recovery interesting and rewarding.

By: Tom S.

DISCOVERING THE “GOOD STUFF”

Overwhelmed! Sure, you would be too, I thought, if you had my problems. They don't even understand me. They talk but how come nobody listens to me? If they heard me I could probably help them understand what my problems are.

On second thought I couldn't even understand myself. I had to learn it was more important to understand than to be understood. I lived in confusion for so long it was all I knew. My conversations usually ended with me saying, but... but... Hmmm. What do they mean I have the yeah buts? Yes, I actually thought I needed to help them. That's how sick I had become.

I was hurting physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I had indeed teetered on the edge of insanity and death. I was living in a fog. My ability to understand was inhibited by the mental chaos in my mind. It was as if there was an itty bitty committee meeting in my mind all the time. And all I could feel was constant pain and confusion.

Opening up helped me feel a little better when I first came in. But the more honest, open and willing I was the clearer things became. Where I had started out in an utter state of confusion I now began to develop an understanding of me and what I needed to do to stay sober. However, after 30 days I was scared to leave treatment, so I clung to the Alumni and all the benefits it offered.

My sponsor was very active

in the Alumni Steering Committee and got me interested in it. He helped me through the steps. He also became my friend and guide. He advised me to stay in the after care and stick with the winners. The winners don't just talk the talk, they walk the walk and stay sober. Walking the walk is doing the steps and staying in actions. The alumni aftercare is great and to this day I still attend. I always look forward to aftercare and the steering committee meetings. Actually that is the highlight of my week every week. Every time I go to one of these meeting I get that feeling, the feeling like I am coming home. And what a great feeling it is, too. For the first time I feel whole. I am now a part of something more powerful than myself. I am also finding examples of how to live one day at a time there. Sure these people have problems too, but they are living in the solution to their problems. The slogans I hear in these

“I believe laughter is a part of love.”

rooms have taken on new meaning in my life. Where I once saw them as petty platitudes, they have become some of my most valuable tools. Before I got sober I made things confusing and complicated. I guess they adopted simple slogans so complicated people like me could learn how to live.

I used to carry all kinds of problems around with me trapped in my head. They just kept piling up because I never really resolved any of them. It was as if all I did was collect them like a rock collector collects rocks. You would have thought it was fun or some-

thing. Off I would collection these rocks (problems) because that's all I ever talked about. Eventually I collected so many rocks (problems) that my back pack got so heavy I couldn't even move. So I finally had to figure out how to get all those rocks out and what to do about them. Thank God for Ridgeview and the great staff or I never would've gotten rid of all those rocks (problems)! Now this might not make a lot of sense to some people but it sure makes sense to me. And believe me, I am very grateful.

Day by day I have learned to accept the fact I'm not perfect and its okay not to be. I have learned to deal with life on life's terms. Some days are harder than others and I have to turn things over to “The big guy in the sky” constantly. And if I am not sure of the right thing to do, I do the next right thing and no matter what just don't do the wrong thing. I also know that whenever I am in doubt I should call my sponsor. And of course I always take it to a meeting. I leave my mind open when I get in the meeting. I can hear the “God of my Understanding” speak through the people.

I have discovered a relationship with the God of my understanding. Where my relationship with my higher power had stated out as a tool of survival for me, I now have found he is my best friend. He seems to be wherever I go and it is great to know he is always there and he cannot not love me. I enjoy having someone with me wherever I go. And it brings me great comfort to know that everything that is happening

DISCOVERING THE "GOOD STUFF" CONTINUED

is unfolding just as it should. Yes, and one big bonus for me has been that ever since I got this relationship with the God of my understanding, the committee meetings in my head have been adjourned.

Now I stay away from doing stuff to look cool or be accepted into places I don't belong or just to prove how tough I am. I've put an end to people-pleasing. One of the greatest things my (deceased) sponsor "Big John" taught me was, what other people think of me is absolutely none of my business. When I make it my business I put my happiness in their hands, not mine. I don't know about you but I am thrilled to be a light-hearted happy guy. Happiness is an inside job and the solution to my problems I find in AA rooms

Don't get me wrong I don't enjoy church but I was kind of shoved into it as a child. I felt that I was going to please my parents. And I discovered that I had spent a lot of time going to church to talk to God. But now I hear Him speak to me through other people, people in this spiritual program, people struggling with life but continuing to live in the solution. How exactly does all this work? NO one seems to be able to explain it. I have come to know that miracles do happen!

My once restless heart and soul have found a home. I found

Now I stay away from doing stuff to look cool or be accepted into places I don't belong or just to prove how tough I am. I've put an end to people pleasing.

where spirituality resides. There is something very special about Ridgeview and the people that work there. There people and the alumni embody the miraculous spirit of the God of my understanding. I see it in their faces and hear it in their words. I say, if you want to see miracles take a short walk to the alumni meetings.

Of course you have to believe in miracles to be able to see them! Keep your mind open, stick around, and be prepared. Because I see them everyday and you will too if you learn how to look for "the good stuff."

By: Anonymous

WHAT I HAVE DISCOVERED ABOUT MY SOBRIETY

What have I discovered about my Sobriety? I am reminded that I don't need to drink today to handle my life challenges on a daily basis. Everything used to bug me I was the drunk who drank at you "I'll show you I will get drunk." It was easier than facing whatever problem I couldn't handle. My husband, the dogs, my job, it didn't matter what it was I wasn't a happy person.

Today I live for the day. "One Day at a Time" is my motto. I refuse to let my problems get a hold of me, to think that the drink will cure all. A hangover and a whole pack of problems are associated with that first drink.

I am constantly challenged by "whatevers." This year's biggie was armed robbery. I had a gun stuck in my face and gave up my work's night deposit without hesitation. What an excuse to drink, but instead I went back to work to stay busy and called fellow

What an excuse to drink, but instead I went back to work to stay busy and called fellow drunks to tell my story.

drunks to tell my story. It was news for a week, as on the 6:00 news my tragedy was played out for all to see. I can honestly say I'm glad I didn't drink because it was hard to keep cool with all that was happening to me. I know my higher power was there to protect me or else I wouldn't be writing

this. Life has moved on and I'm still not drinking or drugging.

My latest challenge is kicking my other habit of smoking. I have discovered I am a stronger person than I thought. I am amazed at my strength in fighting this habit. Drinking was a major life change but I could still smoke. Now I have given up my cigs with nothing to replace them but "peppermint puffs." So everyday is a new discovery in my recovery journey!

By Mary Beth I.

RECOVERY

I quit using drugs
I think that is the whole deal
To my surprise, NO

I begin the hike
on the road of improvement;
fog is clearing now

Lots of work to do
mending, healing, learning: me
this is difficult

No more running and
no more hiding and I must
face what is real now.

Was that really me?
You mean other people live
on this planet too?

Now I take The Steps.
More is revealed about me.
I return to love.

"Stuff" – it still happens
but my toolbox is prepared –
don't use drugs today

Now I help others.
I become conscious of them.
Serenity now.

By March F.



DISCOVERIES

It's late Saturday night. It's my weekend to have my girls. My two daughters, Katie and Lindsey, are sleeping. I'm watching them sleep. I know it's a corny parent thing to do, but it means the world to me. I say a prayer silently: "God, thank you for these two beautiful girls. Please continue to keep them safe and healthy. Thank you for the gift that allows my heart to be so touched as I look at them." This is a feeling that cannot be measured. It's a joy that is common to parents as they watch their children grow. It's a corny parent moment. I have a lot of them these days.

My 19 year old son Dane is another blessing. He's become a healthy and balanced young man. We communicate as father and son. We do things together. Late Monday he came to visit. It truly made my week that he wanted to come and spend time with his old man. He's a full-time student with a scholarship and works part-time to earn extra money. I'm so proud of him and I tell him so. I tell my daughters the same. Sounds like I'm bragging a bit, doesn't it?

There was a time when none of these precious realizations would have even registered with me. This beauty was right in front of me but I couldn't see it. Addiction does that. It robbed me of the simple joy of truly seeing all the gifts God has given.

I used to spend a lot of time and energy thinking about how difficult and unfair life was. I easily let anger, fear, and toxic thinking drive my life. Many external circumstances are not the way I

want them to be. Looking at the unfairness of my circumstances feeds the toxic thinking. When fed it becomes stronger. This is a form of spiritual poison, I think. Yet I still do it even now. How can the beauty of God's world be perceived when the mind is preoccupied with negativity and victim mentality? Just because I've stopped using doesn't mean my wounded mind and spirit is healed. My thinking has to change. It has to be guided in a new direction. It feels like two steps forward, one step back much of the time. I have to have help and support from people and from God.

I am interested these days in what I'll call spiritual growth. I view spirituality as elusive; hard to pin down; not so cut and dried. My newly found interest has led me to read new books and practice new things. It's like seeking something that is, many times, very difficult to find. I also practice some tried and true activities that have been suggested by people who seem to have a handle on the importance of spiritual growth. They're seeking as well. Many have been at it longer than I. I see the result and want what they have. I see their struggles and am inspired to carry on.

For a very long time I was pretty much a self-absorbed, self-centered prick. I was not even aware that was the case. One could say I was a self-absorbed,

self-centered, prick-ish moron. Active addiction enhances the self-centered prick part. The moron may have come naturally. Truth is I'm still like that to a large extent. One important difference is that I can recognize it. That's a good thing. Another important difference is I ask God to help me change and heal. That's an even better thing.

The Big Book of AA mentions that we will have a host of real friends grow around us. It's a benefit and a blessing of being in recovery. I'm very fortunate. I've experienced this wonderful blessing without a doubt. I must also be a real friend to those around

me. It's a two-way street.

This little essay has been a bit disjointed perhaps; an attempt to put a few random thoughts down about some things that are true in my life. They are just some of the things I've noticed. To be able to

experience this is a direct result of being in Recovery and continuing to work the Steps of the AA program. I believe that God's loving hand touches the Program. And to discover that is good news.

By: Jeff A

This beauty was right in front of me but I couldn't see it. Addiction does that. It robs me of the simple joy of truly seeing all the gifts God has given.

GET A LIFE, GEORGE - DISCOVERING BALANCE IN RECOVERY

Just as a balanced nutritional diet takes into account nutritional needs, a balanced life takes into account the need for friends, family, work, love, and play. And time for these is private, recovery, and spiritual, especially time with God. An inner voice (or maybe a friend) tells me when I get out-of-balance. If I listen, I hear and I adjust my life.

Today, I trust that people I want and need will come into my life. I am open to the lessons I need to learn. As I open or "unfold" myself to the recovery process, I move towards balance away from the extremes of healthy vs. unhealthy tolerance of others, giving/receiving, and understanding/accepting vs. setting boundaries.

What do I balance?

(1) Emotions with Reason, (2) Detachment with Involvement, (3) Work (business) with Social (play) activities, (4) Spiritual with "Chores"-Responsibilities-Accountabilities, (5) Caring for others with Caring for my Self, and (6) Meeting the wants of others with meeting my wants. There's a distinction between everything I need, which is supplied, and everything I want, like the Rolling Stones' song says "You can't always get what you want, but if you try, sometime-you might find, you get what you need."

There is quiet time of introspection, of healing, of forgiveness, that I found at The Monastery. And time to initiate relationships taking a risk, initially, followed with patience, and trust, it's a process. It is an "inside job" to learn what I need to learn by work-

ing through my family of origin issues (anger, caretaking, control, respect, love). Instead of using people in relationships to make up for what I think I need or want, I do my part, step up to the plate, do a little more, walk in the woods, to embrace and enjoy my experiences, to "go with the flow."

When I discover the issue is about me and not the other person, this is the heart, the hope, and the power of recovery. Instead of trying to change to be like other people, what's right for me is to look for what's good in me, to love George, and to outwardly "unfold" these characteristics, to be George.

How do I let go of what I want and trust God to bring me the desires of my heart, in God's time, in God's way? ***Praying, Let Go and Let God, my Higher Power help me to understand:***

To let go does not mean to stop caring, it means I can't do it for someone else.

To let go is not to enable, it's to allow learning from natural consequences.

To let go is not to blame or try to change another, it's to correct my shortcomings.

To let go is not to fix, it's to be supportive. To let go is not to deny, it's to accept.

To let go is not to judge, it's to permit another to face reality.

To let go is to admit powerless-

ness which means the outcome is not in my hands.

How I balance my life by using the "mental diet" for happiness and peace of mind means:

I choose my life. I choose all the conditions of my life, when I choose the thoughts upon which I allow my mind to dwell. Thought is the real causative force in life. The food I furnish my mind determines the environment of my life. I cannot have one kind of mind and another kind of environment. If I change my mind, my conditions must change too—my body must change, my daily work

or other activities must change. My whole life must change. If I am transformed by the renewing of my mind, there is no need to change, no need to morph into someone who is more loving. Just simply to unfold, to become who I already am in es-

sence: gentle, compassionate, and living in the present. Balance is recognizing the beauty in my life by receiving and giving back the warmth and encouragement I have received.

By: George M.

When I discover the issue is about me and not the other person, this is the heart, the hope, and the power of recovery.

WORD SEARCH

BY Dawn L.

P A Q F L T H O N E D A Y A T A T I M E S R V Z W I O
 R A D A X C J U Q A T W E L V E S T E P S S P I R I T
 A N T M H V W B I P N Q D K E E C N L G Z Y U Q X K J
 Y S P I R I T U A L A W A K E N I N G Z Y S R M M I Z
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 Y R E V O C S I D U I V W G X P Y Z O A B E P H K A R
 A B C D E M N O I P O Q R A S A B C D T Z B X A W Y M
 B Y S P E A K E R Z N F G R H A I J K R L R M I N O Q
 C P Q A B C D N O P Q R S D S L N T U E V O D R B O B
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 A C O M M U N I C A T I O N S M S L R N U N M E D O K
 G O M I A L L A N I A N I A R N R E O E S C Q R R A E
 Z T A B Y R E V O C E R C D E I G F H I L J K S L M K
 H T E L L U F W Q K L N M O P Q R S T U V A W O X Y Q
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 H I J K L P M O Q O R I S T T L F W S R E D N A M A S

ALUMNI

BILL W

CAMP

CASE MANAGER

CHAIRPERSON

COMMUNICATIONS

COTTAGE C

DISCOVERY

DONNIE BROWN

DR BOB

ELLIE

ENTERTAINMENT

FAMILY WEEK

FIRST FRIDAY

MAY

MEDITATION

ONE DAY AT A TIME

PATIENT MEETINGS AND RE-
LATIONS

PRAYER

RECOVERY

RIDGEVIEW

SAM ANDERS

SERENITY GARDEN

SPEAKER

SPECIAL PROJECTS

SPIRIT

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

SPRING FLING

TWELVE AND TWELVE

TWELVE STEPS

A LETTER FROM BILL

October 20, 1970

My dear friends,

Recently an A.A. member sent me an unusual greeting which I would like to extend to you. He told me it was an ancient Arabian salutation. Perhaps we have no Arabian groups, but it still seems a fitting expression of how I feel for each of you. It says, "I salute you and thank you for your life."

My thoughts are much occupied these days with gratitude to our Fellowship and for the myriad blessings bestowed upon us by God's Grace.

If I were asked which of these blessing I felt was most responsible for our growth as a fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, the "Concept of Anonymity."

Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical.

On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes.

- 2 -

A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard. As long as we accept our sobriety in our traditional spirit of anonymity we will continue to receive God's Grace.

And so -- once more I salute you in that spirit and again I thank you for your lives.
May God bless us all now, and forever.

Bill

Bill's message on his 36th Anniversary -- October 10, 1970

RECOVERY IS ALL ABOUT GROWING AND SEEKING GOD'S WILL

When we were still active in our addiction or codependency, we were constantly catching ourselves in the web we had woven through our lack of discipline. How did we ever think that we could do our own thing and not suffer the consequences?

The twelve steps take us into the deeper levels of recovery, the adult stages. Through working the steps we realize that God knows

how to disentangle us.

The STEPS teach us the needed discipline to help us stay free from our greatest folly.

We learn that GOD knows us completely and that he only wants what is best for us. Therefore we learn to trust his direction for our recovery.

Life is a maturing process, as is recovery.

The twelve steps take us into the deeper levels of recovery, the adult stages.

We begin on a certain level of understanding as we continue the journey. We no longer feel compelled to try to run our lives or the

lives of others.

By: Donald R.

DISCOVERING WE CAN

I cannot play a game of softball, or a game of volleyball, or build a garden all by myself. However, as a group, we can have some fun, and share our support to produce something everyone can enjoy.

I cannot FIGHT an addiction that I have without support from many different individuals. WE as a GROUP can and have offered

advice, support, comfort to each other from a short period to a continuous long-term support.

We can show love and compassion as a support group to another addict. Sometimes, I cannot do this alone. I look for support for the right words to use and the support another human being needs.

God Created His Universe He created man and woman to live in His World and we, as individuals, should try to and make His home one of love and peace.

By: Ted M

DISCOVERY IN RECOVERY

What have I discovered in recovery? First of all, I have discovered recovery. Sadly or maybe not so sadly I know the difference between only being a non-drinker compared to real spiritual and emotional sobriety. I didn't have a drink of alcohol for 11 years but the

day came when I did. But you must understand I had everything under control. I went to AA meetings for about 4 years but my time became too valuable. I owned a Big Book. Read it got it. Didn't need a sponsor since I had

I discovered God. I for the first time ever discovered a love that would not let go.

full control. I had my marriage going my way. I was making a substantial income. Rightly so, I took up golf, as any sober gentleman should. So what could be a problem? I had it!

Obviously since I'm writing this, I ended up being poured into RV I had sunk from being a gentleman into a state of incomprehensible demoralization. Everyone at Ridgeview were very rude. I was excited to leave there and

assume the status I was used to. But things didn't go so well back to my old ways. Life was terrible. UNTIL.

On an evening when I could not go on, because of all the nasty people pushing me to get into real sobriety, work steps, call a sponsor and all kinds of useless crap, I fell apart. I had a breakdown. In a moment of hopelessness, I discovered God. For the first time ever, I discovered a love that would not let go.

Now a few years later the journey continues. That love has never let go!

By Anonymous

“AND WHAT ABOUT THE DEPRESSION?”

What is the commonality between peanut butter and jelly? They go together in an understanding way, right? Well, hold onto that thought, as it figures in prominently later.

I am an Alcoholic and Depressive. My drug of choice is alcohol. My mood of choice is depression. Well, it's not really my mood of choice, rather my mood of pervasiveness. Long ago, I was diagnosed with depression first. The alcohol abuse came in a sometimes distant second while fueling the first. Two hospitalizations (1989 and 1991, respectively) and the alcohol was touched upon. “You're a binge drinker,” my psychotherapist told me. How depressing!

Fast forward to July 2008, and I am admitted to Ridgeview for alcohol abuse and severe depression. Ten days were spent in Cottage C2 detoxing and having to deal with the fact that I am an Alcoholic, for the first time in my life, and that I will never be able to drink again. And, as an added bonus, it will be necessary for me to attend AA meetings for the duration...of my life! Simultaneously, I am treated for my severe depression; however, the main focus was placed on my alcoholism. Still not trusting myself, on day eleven I decided to live in the Halfway House while attending the Day Hospital program. Two weeks of intense, diligent recovery, and I receive the “insurance cure.” Consequently, this was not too depressing; just anxiety ridden!

So, I continue the Day Program out-of-pocket. This continues for another month and I finally graduate to half days. Two weeks of this and I am successfully discharged toward the end of August 2008. I was tickled, a bit proud of myself, and humble. I felt better about myself, and my future appeared more positive. The acceptance of my Alcoholism was slow and of the “educational variety.” Also, the acceptance of recovery, period, was gradual. I was a skeptical one. Yet, reflecting now, I see that my stay at Ridgeview was divinely inspired.

The end of December 2008: not quite six months of sobriety and in combination with recovery, I discovered that my obsession to drink had been lifted. I felt relieved. Now, as I sit on the cusp of eight months of sobriety, I can joyfully and honestly say that I have not relapsed with alcohol. And what about the depression? Well, I've emotionally relapsed three times since my discharge! Three times: the first, just before Thanksgiving; the second, during the third week in January; and, the last, at the beginning of February. Although my depression was being treated all along, it took a backseat to my alcoholism. Since I still try and seek the familiar in this trying time of recovery (the first year), I know I can always fall back on my depression for comfort. In so doing, I perceive any depressive episode as nor-

mal par for the course (because I had suffered from it for years). Moreover, I have not attached the significant consequences to my depression as I had my Alcoholism.

My thinking was thus: I have not had a drink in so-and-so months and I have been depressed so-and-so times in those months. I'm doing fine! Not so. I received a dose of reality during the third episode. I was doing volunteer work for a friend and I decided not to show up one morning. I did contact that friend...via a text message. Since this was my second to third time of repeating this behavior, my friend responded with a text message honestly and respectfully advising me that my volunteer days were ended. Yea, that hurt! But, it was what I needed. It was only

after a Therapy session that I realized what my behavior had done: unconscious self-sabotage, as I had been prone to perform in earlier years. In addition, my Sponsor told me that my depression would kill me just as much as my Alcoholism would. Not only is my thinking twisted with my Alcoholism, but also with my depression! And my depression carries the same seriousness, consequences, and morbidity as my alcoholism.

As a result, now both my alcoholism and my depression are receiving equal recovery attention. My psychiatrist, my therapist, and my sponsor,
(continued on page 14)

I was tickled, a bit proud of myself, and humble. I felt better about myself, and my future appeared more positive.

DISCOVERING A NEW WAY OF LIFE

When I take a realistic look at my previous life, I discover a number of things. Twelve of them, actually. I had absolutely no spiritual awakening as the result of anything. Hell, the only time I prayed was when there were blue lights in my rearview mirror. God never showed up, never saved my butt and I always went to jail. The only message I carried was to the judge, proving once again that I had absolutely no principles in my daily affairs. I never meditated over anything. I prayed that I'd find a way to get drunk on a daily basis. I was pretty successful at that. (If you call that success.)

Inventory was something I did when I went to the refrigerator. If I was out of beer, then I certainly needed to replenish my stock. That, I will admit to. Amends? Are you kidding? On a rare occasion, I'd say I was sorry, but then again, most people knew that before I opened my mouth. If I ever made a list of people I had harmed, it was only because I wanted to justify in my mind why they deserved the pitiful way I treated them and why you deserved it. I never asked God or anyone else to remove my shortcomings.

These were tools I used to enable my alcoholism to grow and to further complicate my life. I never wanted anyone or anything to remove what "they" deemed as defects of character. That would be admitting that my behavior was unacceptable to others. Screw them!!! If you don't like the way I am then move on folks. I don't need you or even want you

in my life.

Taking an inventory of my life would be absolutely senseless. I might discover some common denominator related to all the discomfort in my life. If that means taking away my booze, forget it!!! I can say that I turned my life over to the care of everything I felt good about. Illegal, immoral, doesn't matter. If I think it's right, then so be it. I had come

I've discovered a new way of life that allows God to love me and for me to love my God.

to believe that a power greater than me could ease my pain and allow me to live without having to address emotions that make me uncomfortable. Liquor is so much quicker. I needed results and didn't want to waste time getting them. I never felt powerless over alcohol. I could get it; I could

drink it and convince myself that my life wasn't nearly as unmanageable as those I surrounded myself with. If I can set the bar low enough, I can stay high enough.

As you can see, my life was about not working the 12 Steps and in reverse order when I did. You see, I taught myself all these things because I "felt" they were "just and right." When my moral barometer has a basis of self will, I become my own god. I run the show. When you, or anyone else, cross me, you should be punished and I deserve a good drunk as my own reward. Pretty twisted thinking, huh?? Unfortunately, that's how I rolled.

What I've discovered in recovery, is how to work the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as it's laid out in the Big Book. When I became honest, open-minded

and willing, I learned how to "un-learn" all the garbage I taught myself. I discovered a way to stay sober. I discovered how to address uncomfortable feelings and how to work through them. I've discovered that working with other alcoholics is one of the best ways I know to maintain my own sobriety.

I've discovered a new way of life that allows God to love me and for me to love my God. I wish, hope and pray that anyone else who starts a program of recovery will have the same fire that I carry in my heart. I've discovered that it's not all about the destination and where I'm going, but where I end up and how I get there.

The AA paradoxes:

- *From weakness (adversity) comes strength*
- *We forgive to be forgiven*
- *We give it away to keep it*
- *We suffer to get well*
- *We surrender to win*
- *We die to live*
- *From darkness comes light*
- *From dependence we found independence*

IN MEMORIAM REV. JOSEPH C. MARTIN

USED FIGHT WITH ALCOHOL TO AID OTHERS

BY DOUGLAS MARTIN

Published: March 15, 2009

The Rev. Joseph C. Martin, whose battle with [alcoholism](#) inspired him to become a national leader in the fight against the disease by speaking, writing books, making videos and starting a treatment center, died March 9 at his home in Havre de Grace, MD. He was 84.

The Rev. Joseph C. Martin used his struggle to aid others.

The probable cause of death was [heart failure](#), said Rosemary Ostmann, a spokeswoman for Ashley, the highly rated treatment center Father Martin started near Havre de Grace. The center, sometimes called "the Betty Ford Clinic of the East," says it has helped more than 40,000 people, including several celebrities.

Father Martin first became widely known through a talk he gave on the 12 steps of recovery propounded by Alcoholics Anonymous. He sometimes began with a preface similar to the one every alcoholic uses to address meetings of the organization, changing it to give his full name: "My name is Joe Martin, and I'm an alcoholic."

With no preaching or moralizing, he spoke plainly of alcoholism as a sickness, not an evil. He used a blackboard and chalk, and in 1972, the Navy filmed the speech to use for mandatory addiction training, titling the movie "The Blackboard Talk." The speech came to be known as "the chalk talk," and subsequent videos of it and more than 40 more talks that Father Martin made were used in other branches of the military and throughout the federal government as well as in [hospitals](#), corporations and treatment centers around the world. He wrote three books.

"We alcoholics drink because we can't *not* drink," Father Martin declared in his many talks. His motto: "Have chalk, will travel."

Betty Ford wrote to thank him for the video, which she saw while she was in treatment.

One person who said her life had been changed by Father Martin was Lora Mae Abraham, a housewife from Havre de Grace, whose drinking had spun out of control in 1964. She went to Baltimore to hear Gov. Harold Hughes of Iowa, an alcoholic who often spoke to other alcoholics about his own recovery.

When Mr. Hughes did not arrive, Mrs. Abraham saw that a Catholic priest — Father Martin, as she learned later — was about to speak instead. She stayed to hear his message.

"He removed the shame from me," she said in an interview with The Baltimore Sun in 2008. "It changed my life forever on."

Father Martin became such close friends with Mrs. Abraham and her family that he eventually moved in with them, staying for more than 38 years. He became inactive as a priest and took a job with Maryland's alcoholism agency as an educator. He came to regard Mrs. Abraham and her husband, Tommy, and son, Alex, as family.

In addition to them, he is survived by his brother, Edward, of Lilburn, Ga.; and two sisters, Frances Osborne and Dorothy Christopher, both of Baltimore.

In 1978, Mrs. Abraham told Father Martin she feared that his accomplishments would die with him. She suggested that they open a treatment center. It took seven years to raise enough money to open Ashley, which is named for Mrs. Abraham's father, the Rev. Arthur Ashley, and is on the former estate of Millard Tydings, a United States senator from Maryland. It now has 85 beds.

Joseph Charles Martin was born on Oct. 12, 1924, in Baltimore. His father habitually got drunk on Friday, payday. Three of the four sons developed drinking problems, The Sun reported.

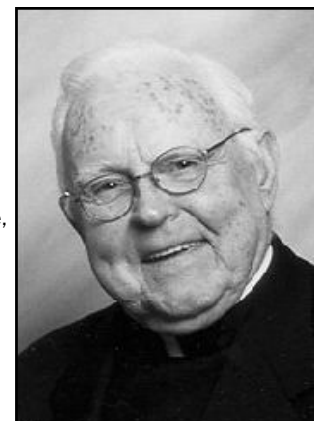
At Loyola High School in Baltimore, Father Martin was valedictorian and was voted best debater, best actor and class member with the best smile. He attended Loyola College in Maryland, then studied for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore. He was ordained as a priest in 1948 and became a priest of the Society of Saint-Sulpice, whose chief mission is to educate seminarians.

He then taught in the order's seminaries in California and Maryland and discovered he had a taste for gin. In 1958, his drinking prompted his superiors to send him to Guest House, a Michigan treatment center for the clergy, where his recovery began.

Father Martin often used humor in discussing alcoholism. He told of a police officer who saw a drunk with a penguin and told the drunk to take the penguin to the zoo, where it belonged. The next day, the officer saw the same drunk with the same penguin and demanded to know why the drunk had not taken the bird to the zoo.

"I did," the drunk replied. "He loved it. Today, we're going to the library."

But Father Martin's best-remembered words were probably his customary welcome to each troubled patient at his treatment center: "The nightmare is over."



"AND WHAT ABOUT THE DEPRESSION?" CONTINUED

whom I affectionately refer to as "The Three Wise Men," are working collaboratively to assist me with both my disease and my illness. I am a renewed person currently, having realized and faced the truth: that for me, my alcoholism and my depression go to-

gether (just like peanut butter and jelly). Both must be equally treated (and spread) if I am to live (and eat the sandwich that is) recovery.

By: Anonymous

ANSWERS

P	A	Q	F	L	H	O	N	E	D	A	Y	A	T	A	T	I	M	E	S	R	V	Z	W	I	O		
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D	W	X	Y	Z	A	K	F	G	H	I	J	K	E	L	U	M	D	O	T	P	W	Q	P	Z	Y	D	
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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

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