

VOLUME XXIII

# THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

## THE PRINCIPLE PATH

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### THE ORIGIN OF THE 12 STEP FOUNTAIN

SUBMITTED BY: TOM S.

THE  
RIDGEVIEW  
ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION  
3995 SOUTH  
COBB DRIVE  
SMYRNA GA  
30080

Sometime in May 2011, Drew [H.] told me that a lady had donated a large fountain to the Alumni because she wanted to “give back” in appreciation for the help that both her daughter and she had received from Ridgeview. We had been looking at a barren spot across from the Day Hospital next to the Serenity Garden for some time trying to decide what to do with it. Drew

and I decided that would be the perfect spot to put the fountain. I made copies of a rough scale drawing of the chosen area, the sidewalk, trees, etc., and passed the drawings out to anyone who was interested in providing suggestions for the layout of the surrounding benches, plants, fountain orientation, or other input. Then, we gathered at the

location, and voted on which of the three plans would work best.

Once we made the final choice, I called a stone mason that I had worked with in the past. He quoted me a price for leveling out the area, building a stone retainer wall, and building four benches. Also, we ran an electrical line from the Garder  
(continued on pg 14)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### The Spiritual Hour

Come join fellow Alumnus Warren Taylor as he hosts the weekly **Spiritual Hour** each Sunday between 10–11 am in the Day Hospital Auditorium. During this time, Warren shares a topic which relates and strengthens the spiritual aspect of Recovery. The Hour begins with singing and music, where the music is often times provided by patients currently being treated on the RVI campus, and those patients who have been successfully discharged. Warren has been an active Alumnus since completing treatment in 2002. In addition, he holds the Recovery certification, *Certified Addiction Counselor 1 (CAC1)*, is a licensed Minister, and a member of the *Academy of Parish Clergy (APC)*.

### Appreciation and Gratitude to the following who donated gifts to the Alumni Association's Spring Fling 2011 Raffle

#### Alumni (& Spouse; along w/ friends)

2 Anonymous; Perry Banks, Paul Berke, Linda Black, Anna Bornacelly, Chip Bunn, Kelly Busbin, Carolin Bush; Mike Carpenter, Eddie & Suzie Chinal, Mark Clinard, Richard Colby; Delores Defreitas, Eliza Dillingham; Steven Finley, Doug Fleming; John Galatas, Gail Gordon, Janet Guffey; Curt Hassinger, Drew Hendrick, Flo Henry; Mary Beth Ingle; Greg Johnson, Allison Jolly; Bonnie Lantz, Dawn & Paul Liistro, Sharon Linder; Hudson Marts, Leona & Van McLean, Luanne McClelland, Ted McMahan, Mary Jean Millikan, Perry Millikan; Lynda Nauright, Don Newsome; Kelly Orenstein; Donna Reich; Jane Sabel, Danny Scott, Tom Scott, Patsy Stripling; Warren Taylor, Steve Tiedemann, Steve Thomas (along w/ Allan and Tom), Chuck Tucker; Angela Walsh, Jay Watson, and Barbara Wheeler

Special thanks to Hudson Marts for spending the majority of the event walking amongst the crowd while soliciting Raffle tickets

#### Businesses (directly and indirectly involved)

Diagnostic Equipment Services, Inc., Roswell, GA; CBS Television; Publix Super Markets, Inc.; A Beach House in Saint Augustine, FL; Eliza Dillingham Designs; Dollar General Corp.; The Kroger Co.; QuikTrip (QT); Apple Inc.; Suzigooch Jewelry, Smyrna, GA; Woodstock Antiques & Consignments, Acworth, GA; King Pen, (404) 803-5777; Go Fish Clothing & Jewelry Co., Marietta, GA; Home Depot; Royal Dutch Shell, plc (Private Limited Company); Macy's, Inc.; Alon's Bakery and Market, Atlanta, GA; Target Corp.; Great Clips; Savage Pizza, Avondale Estates and Little Five Points, GA; Ray's on the River Restaurants, Sandy Springs, GA; Earl Smith Strand Theatre, Marietta, GA; Chico's (either the Mexican Restaurant or the Women's Clothing Store); AA Auto Doc, Marietta, GA; Mellow Mushroom, Yoly's Salon of Vinings, Smyrna, GA; Wal-mart Stores, Inc.; Just Baggin' It; Jim 'N Nick's Bar-B-Q, Smyrna, GA; Cool Beans Coffee, Marietta, GA; Lowe's Companies, Inc.

This issue, as well as archival copies, is available on our website at [www.ridgeviewalumni.com](http://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](mailto: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 Warren T., [warrenbtaylor@bellsouth.net](mailto:warrenbtaylor@bellsouth.net), or Marcus W., [invinoveritas34@yahoo.com](mailto:invinoveritas34@yahoo.com) using "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Warren Taylor, *Communications Chair*  
 Marcus C. Wright, *Co-chair, Minutes*  
 Nancy Gormally, *Newsletter Formator and Web site Facilitator*  
 Paul S. Liistro, Jr., *Photographer*  
 Dorothy DeFreitas and Dorothy Seiden, *Bulletin Boards*  
 Barbara Wheeler, *Greeting Cards*  
 Dawn B. Liistro, *Chair Emeritus*  
 Editors: Barbara Wheeler, Marcus C. Wright

## LIFE IS ABOUT CHOICES

SUBMITTED BY: JOHNNY L.

How does this happen? I remember back in college with papers being assigned, and always thinking, *"You know, this one I am going to get started on right away!"* Of course it never failed that I would end up cramming to research, and compose the project at the last minute. I would brew up a pot of coffee, and all writers block would leave out because of desperation to get it done, while creativity and work would set in. As I sit here drinking my cup of coffee now, I realize some things never change. I by no means am promising a masterpiece, but I did promise to get it [this article] done.

I came to Georgia four years ago with the motto "Living the Dream," and through the turmoil of my disease, today I believe that motto to be true along with feeling happiness. It doesn't come from the material prosperity of my financial success, which, to be honest, I thought was the key to happiness. But,

as I learned, it comes from the choices I make every day in life. Sobriety has given me the ability to make those choices that keep my dream alive.

A friend at work asked me the other night if I ever get in a good mood and don't know why? *"Yes; actually, I do know what that feels like,"* was my response, but then I realized, in fact, that it's a regular occurrence. I know why, too. In my life, it's the spiritual Principles this program has given me. And when I'm not in a good mood, I know it's something to do with me.... Huh? Did I just say that? It makes me staying mad, jealous, envious, miserable, sad etc...? It's my choice? Huh? There I go again, did I just say that? Well, if that's the case then that would mean I am choosing to stay mad, miserable, or be on my "pity pot." Thank God this is an anonymous program; I wouldn't want people to know I admit that. Oh, wait: it's an *honest* program.... Ok, I admit it!

You know, it's that happiness inside that keeps me coming back. My previous stints with sobriety always missed the Principles. I would be sober, but miserable; then, what was the point?!! All I ever wanted to do was to feel better. I wanted the pain to just go away. I turned to drugs and alcohol for that relief. It's like fixing an old truck: really I was just painting over rust... which always bled through. The Steps which are Principle based showed me how to get rid of the rust, and if it came back, how to treat it. It is right, inside and out: God, Meetings, Literature, Steps, and the AA program show us the way.

The Promises are a result of these Principles that I practice in my life on a daily basis. It doesn't have to be perfect 'cause there are times that I've hoped the Promises included the Red Ferrari from "Magnum P.I.!" Oh come on, that was funny?!! Choose to laugh a little, will ya'?!!

## THE 12 STEP FOUNTAIN

A new structure has been added to the Alumni Serenity Garden: a 12 Step Fountain. The two-tiered Fountain with trickling water stands center, surrounded by a circular path of 12 stones, each displaying an engraved one word Principle which corresponds to a respective Step from the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Encircling the path are four separate, arc shaped benches; while standing and facing the Fountain at Due North, two benches stand at the Northeast and Southeast points, while two stand at the Northwest and Southwest points. Directly behind the Fountain

stands a knee-high stone wall. Last, the Fountain is surrounded by plants and shrubs.

The Fountain was graciously donated by Jody Mayo as a "Thank You" gift paying homage to the compassionate role Ridgeview Institute plays and delivers via Recovery. The planning, schematics, and erection of the Fountain were the collaborative efforts of the Alumni's Special Projects Committee: Drew H., *Chair*; Tom S., *Chair Emeritus*; and Jeff W., then member, and now current *Chair*, from the advent of spring thru mid-summer.

On Friday, 5 August 2011 at

6:45 pm, a Dedication for the Fountain was held. The Program consisted of the following: Warren T., *Master of Ceremonies*, offering the Opening and Closing Prayer along with a brief Introduction of each Honorary Guest; Jody Mayo, *Donator of the Fountain*, offering her words; Robert Fink, *Chairman of the Board and Founder of Ridgeview*, offering his words; and, Sam A., *Continuing Care and Alumni Coordinator*, offering his words. Various Alumni were in attendance. For further reading, please refer to the article entitled, *The Origin of the 12 Step Fountain* by Tom S. beginning on the cover.

## THE PRINCIPAL PATH

SUBMITTED BY: BYRD III

Like so many others before and after me who walked through the doors of recovery from addiction, I couldn't spell the word principle. The only principle path I followed was directed towards my next high, who to get it from and how I would finance it. Unprincipled, undisciplined, spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally broken, something or somebody far more powerful than me, made a decision that my life was worth rescuing. Despite the wreckage I created through 25-plus years of addictive behavior, there was something deep inside this Lil' Byrd that was good and worth sharing. But first, I had to walk through this path of Steps and Principles that began with **HONESTY**.

I recall one night after about 10 days in the Halfway House, something came over me with a simple, straightforward message. **"Fool, look I am giving you a chance that I don't give everybody. Stop fighting! In your subconscious mind, as you were out there trying to kill yourself, you asked and prayed for this. Now that I'm answering your call, you still want to act a FOOL! All those other drunks and junkies out there I could help, I didn't have to choose YOU! But I did. I've placed you exactly where you need to be. Listen to the folks I've surrounded you with and follow or go your own way again, and I assure you, YOU WILL DIE!"**

I didn't know where that came from at the time or who it was. I now know it was the God of my understanding. Quite frankly that scared the crap out of me. It was the first time in a long time I was forced to get **Honest** with myself, because everything I heard from that

powerful presence was true. I'm sure we've all felt that presence in our recovery. I had asked for help after trying to kill myself. Help had been delivered, but I was still fighting. The new people I was surrounded by were all great people, following the path that was laid out before them. There was no reason not to follow. Death was as certain as sunrise, if I continued travelling the path I was on.

For me, like so many others, it all started with that first wee bit of Honesty. That's the overriding principle behind the first step taken in the program. I was taught to work that step perfectly every day no matter what. **"I AM AN ADDICT AND AN ALCOHOLIC! IF I DRINK OR USE DRUGS, I'LL DIE!"** That's the honest truth and that statement daily generates so much power, energy and emotion in me. If I can't say that to myself then the rest of the steps and the principles behind them don't matter. Honesty is the principle that drives and turns the wheel for all other steps and this principle for me was **BIGGER THAN HUGE**.

You see, I was not honest in any way, form or fashion when I walked into recovery. There was no truth in me. My dishonesty had wrecked everything and everybody I had come in contact. Wife, kids, employers, co-workers, so-called friends, even the dealers who supplied me, I was dishonest with everyone and everything I did had a dishonest slant to it. **I was elected 15 years in a row, President of the DA (Dishonesty Anonymous) of the Milky Way Galaxy.** Honesty was the principle I knew I would have to work the on the hardest, if I was to have any future success on the path or with the principles of recovery.

And, so, I have diligently worked at this principle, one day at a time, starting with me first. That was the key, **ME FIRST**. I learned early on that if I could just tell myself the truth first it would generate a good enough feeling in me that I could possibly then share with others. But I had to do it one day, one situation, and one person at a time.

What kind of hope was there for me if I couldn't be honest? Where's my faith, with no honesty to back it up? Courage, integrity and no honesty? How the heck can I surrender, be committed, vigilant and of maximum service to my fellow traveler in this program if I can't be honest with me first and then the other person? How can you have humility and make amends without honesty.

It has been a real challenge, but I can say that I am a far more honest person today than I was when I walked into recovery years ago. Have I got it down to perfection? No way. I'll never be perfect. But I make a little progress each day by working on being honest with every opportunity that arises.

My Daily Reflections Book states, "The honesty expressed by my fellow AA members in meetings has had the power to open my mind. Nothing blocks the flow of energy that honesty carries with it and each of us exposed to the gift of sobriety is challenged on a daily basis to accept this program of honesty." That's. **HOW IT WORKS**. It's the H (honesty), O (open-mindedness) and W (willingness) of the program. There is a lot of growth value and peace in honesty and it has fueled my recovery. Our 12 Step Fountain and the Principle Path begins with honesty.

Peace

## SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK N ROLL.....

## THE UNPRINCIPLED PATH

SUBMITTED BY: LUANNE M. AND NANCY N.

*"Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British, Politician, sex, J.F.K. blown away, what else do I have to say."*

Chorus: *"We didn't start the fire.  
It was always burning  
Since the world's been turning.  
We didn't start the fire.  
No we didn't light it  
But we tried to fight it."*

*"Birth control, Ho Chi Minh, Richard Nixon back again  
Moonshot, Woodstock, Watergate, punk rock Begin Reagan, Palestine, Terror on the airline, Ayatollah's in Iran, Russians in Afghanistan.*

*Wheel of Fortune, Sally Ride, heavy metal, suicide, Foreign debts, homeless Vets, AIDS, Crack, Bernie Goetz  
Hypodermics on the shores, China's under martial law Rock and Roller cola wars, I can't take it anymore..."*

Chorus: *"We didn't start the fire.  
It was always burning  
Since the world's been turning.  
We didn't start the fire  
No we didn't light it  
But we tried to fight it."*

Anyone reading these words, and recognizing at least half the references of this Billy Joel song is surely in the Baby Boomer generation.

There are currently 75 million of us boomers in the US today ranging from 46 to 64 years of age. And each of us, in our unique way, has experienced our generational issues. We are now called the "Sandwich Generation." We grew up in the drug culture and experienced what they did to our minds and values; we saw the first man walk on the moon; we remember the "God is Dead" movement;

we are part of the telecommunications boom (some still kicking and screaming); and, we believed that the sky was the limit. We are the generation of "we want it and we want it now..... and bigger and better if possible."

But now as we age, we are experiencing losses in most facets of our lives. We are losing parents, spouses and friends; our children are gone (but some keep coming back); we lose jobs, careers, identities, financial security, and our vitality. According to a study at the Hanley Center in Florida, boomers coming into a Recovery program are taking an average of 4.5 medications daily for anxiety, sleep, depression, pain, and/or physical ailments. Many of us have turned to alcohol and other addictions, such as prescription drugs, gambling, sex, and shopping to numb our losses. We are the drug generation, and addictions are expected to double among us over the next ten years.

And all of this at a time that each of us is living longer, and facing more challenges while we age; but, we are denying that we are getting old.

Some wise staff at Ridgeview recognized this phenomenon and last May, started a Baby Boomers Group once a week for Cottage B and C residents to discuss the issues that have contributed to their addictions, and got them a ticket to Ridgeview. A few months of that Group's success lead to the creation of a Ridgeview Alumni Baby Boomers 12 Step Meeting which gathers every Thursday at 4:40pm in Room 6 of the ProNorth Building, just before our Alumni Steering Committee Meeting at 5:45pm.

What started as a small intimate group of about five has now grown into a robust

and dedicated meeting of 12-15 people, and we're still growing. We read from *A Boomer's Guide to the 12 Steps* and use that for our discussion. Through our sharing, we are helping each other to accept life on life's terms, and learn to trust our Higher Power as we enter this new uncharted territory of our lives.

I know for me, I have found a level of trust and intimacy with some of my fellow boomer Alumni that is yet another tool in keeping me sober. Being in Recovery with people that have experienced some of the highs and lows of my generation like me makes for an openness that I can't explain.

So, where does the "Principled Path" come into this? As I look at the 12 Principles of AA today, many of them were applicable to me back in my youth, as I set out along my path of life. Many of those Principles were important to my generation as well; those being honesty, service, willingness, courage, awareness of God, and perseverance. But life, fear, unsolved issues, unattended sorrows, and my drug and drink of choice sent me crashing off that path. I can honestly say that humility and discipline have been the hardest for me. But there is always hope... hope in the program, hope for me and my fellow AA's, and hope for the world. And, for that, I am ever grateful for the 12 Steps and Principles of AA and Ridgeview for helping me rediscover that path again.

So, to quote the great musical philosopher Ringo Starr: *"Will you still need me, will you still feed me, when I'm 64?"* I hope so because I will do the same for you.

## WHEN DO YOU FEEL LIKE WHAT WAS MISSING FROM YOUR PROGRAM SPIRITUALLY IS NOW IN YOU, WITH YOU ... (An Assignment during Treatment)

SUBMITTED BY: JO ANN H.

I guess it began back when I first started coming to the Evening Program. After the first week, I began to realize that much of what I learned from my first try at Rehab kind of slowly went away. As I had previously stated, I had let life take me back over. All the control issues I had crept back in. I was not keeping a balance in my life with work/family time. I wasn't "letting go" of things I couldn't do anything about or have control over. I wasn't trusting that my higher power would take care of me, and that I don't have control over things, situations, people, etc. Selfishness and self-centeredness had crept back in.

At this point, after weeks of familiarizing myself with the spirituality that I gained back in the Fall [2010], and the fact that I'm constantly striving for more and more – I feel that I'm in a good place. I will never confess that I know all the ins and outs of spiritually, but I like the fact that I'm willing and wanting to always learn more and more. I feel that I'm very "teachable" at this point, and I intend to keep my eyes open and learn.

I think there are two types of spirituality: I find that there are times when I try to be more spiritual, and there are other times when it kind of just happens all on its own. *Trying to be spiritual can begin with the saying, Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you, mentality.* For example:

- Holding a door for an old lady
- Giving a homeless guy food or money
- Giving to charities
- Letting a car out that has been waiting

- Giving the last piece of chocolate away to someone else
- Giving your umbrella away in a rain storm
- Service work of any kind
- Etc.

Next, is spiritually that kind of just happens – these are small things that are often taken for granted:

- The smile that you get from your child first thing in the morning
- The reaction you get when you come home, and your son says, "Yeahhh, Mommie's home!" while running up to you for a hug
- The relaxation you get when you watch your son's eyes slowly close while falling asleep in your arms
- The smell of babies ... what I call "puppy breath" in the morning time
- The sound when they say, "I love you, Mommie."
- The crisp smell of an Autumn morning
- Hearing the leaves crackle when the wind blows
- The smell of a turkey roasting on a Thanksgiving morning
- The smell of coffee brewing first thing in the morning
- The sound of your favorite love song in a quiet moment
- The silent sound of a snowfall at dawn
- The sound of a thunder storm during the night
- Looking into the eyes of a friend and each of you knowing what the other is thinking
- The sound of a newborn cooing

"I think there are two types of spirituality: I find that there are times when I try to be more spiritual, and there are other times when it kind of just happens all on its own."

- The feeling you get when you have just won the lottery
- The rush of excitement when you discover you are "in love"
- When you realize that you have the ability to "let things go" that you can't control
- Waking up in the morning on a day off knowing you have no important obligations, and can do anything you want
- Waking up from an awesome dream
- Looking forward to a favorite program on TV
- Finding that "perfect outfit" at a store
- Biting into your favorite food
- The feeling you get when you are cold, and stepping into a warm bath
- Someone softly scratching your back

I think you get the idea.

I plan to keep these spiritual things rolling in my head by constantly reminding myself that I'm not in control. Like I said earlier, I wake up every morning with an untreated disease. So, I will strive every day to work towards serenity and spirituality in my life. I plan to always keep a willing and open mind, and to always open my heart to absorb and learn new things in life. For after all, we only have one.

## THE PRINCIPLE PATH

SUBMITTED BY: DONALD R.

Sam Anders appropriately shares a joke about two Alanon's commenting, *"Isn't he progressing nicely?!!"* in regards to a newcomer's concern about her alcoholic son getting a DUI and going to jail. When Sam Anders refers to me, *"he was living in the weeds,"* after I share my experience, strength and hope in After Care meetings, causes me to reflect where I started *"progressing nicely."* The application of the first principle of honesty begins in a homeless shelter. A renovated detention center is where, Will, a 60 year old addiction counselor with 6 years of sobriety from 40 years of heroin use, shares his honest story of recovery. I listen in awe. A powerful story repeated often with so many newcomers, I never tire of listening. This is deep gut honesty. I want to acquire this honesty through surrendering work on my 1<sup>st</sup> Step. I want what he has and learn to keep the First Principle of complete honesty through reading and application.

Really reading the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* for the first time was an excellent beginning. Besides, what else was I to do after an 8 p.m. curfew without distraction? The reading fueled a new hope, the Second Principle of Step 2, for this despairing drunk and compulsive gambler, and igniting the quest towards a beginning faith. Faith, the Third Principle, comes slowly to a beaten man such as I. Why should I acquire faith to a Higher Power that let me obliterate my previous world? He has all power, doesn't he? He actually gave me exactly what I wanted. I wanted freedom from an enabling wife, a dead end ca-

reer, and a recovering community. He gave it to me and then some extra fringe benefits for the ride down the elevator shaft without a parachute. Progressing nicely, hell yea, towards all that would fix me. And fix me it did. In good old fashioned ass whipping style like my mother did back in the days of my youth.



In the weeds of loss, faith starts looking more and more attractive. I believe I'll have some. My faith today focuses on the essential needs of my existence, everything else is icing on the cake. I am grateful today for my attitude adjustment towards prayer, the fruit of silence, and faith, the fruit of prayer. *"Today, more than ever, I need to pray for the light shining toward the will of God, the love to accept the will of God, and for the way to do the will of God."* I borrow this prayer from Mother Teresa and attach it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step Prayer in the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous* on a daily practicing basis. I need this pathway to courage, the Fourth Principle, to write down in my Fourth Step the carnage of self will run rebellious with total disregard to any principles. Sharing the written Fourth Step in 2008 with Danny S., my temporary sponsor, and my most current mini-Fourth Step with my permanent sponsor, Michael W., allows me to experience integrity, the Fifth Principle, and a required 6<sup>th</sup> Principle willingness and a 7<sup>th</sup> Principle, humility, viewing all my character defects and shortcomings. The work progresses me nicely toward unconditional love.

Brotherly love, the Eighth Principle, sounds similar to the theme of the '60's hippy generation. Duh, I remember now, I grew up in the midst of the "John

Lennon/Beatles Love" ambiance. Is this what happens to a 56 year old college student who thinks he is still 20? Probably, or the old shortcoming of denial is edging back in, you can pick. And self discipline, the Ninth Principle implying responsible action without harm to another human being, is the colossal horse pill worth swallowing to *"trudge the happy road to destiny."* The promise of safety, protection and removal of the destructive addictive behaviors is my experience. The long and winding road never ends. The reaction of love and tolerance replaces anger and judgment with a new found spiritual condition. Keeping it is as simple as Principles 10, 11, & 12 always works, if I utilize them.

The maintenance principles of perseverance, God awareness, and service supply this previous misfit of humanity with tools of empowerment. I could give all the credit to my powerful Infinite Being, but complacency, procrastination, and *"resting on my laurels"* does not bode well in my spiritual program of action. I find my will power solace in reading line 18 on page 85 of the *Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous*, *"Every day is a day when we [I] must carry the vision of God's will into all of our [my] activities. How can I best serve Thee—Thy Will (not mine) be done. These are thoughts which must go with us [me] constantly. We [I] can exercise our [my] will power along this line all we [I] wish. It is the proper use of the will."* Hopefully my relational principle story encourages consideration or uplifting reflection of our wonderful 12 Step program. Recovery is ours to hold, cherish and deliver to any and all who want it. Progress nicely, everyone, especially mine enemies.



## UNTITLED

SUBMITTED BY: TODD P.

October 22, 2009 is a day I'll never forget—a day that has changed me and impacted my recovery. Around 9:00 a.m. that day I received a call from an apartment mate in the ¾ residence where I had been living since May. He was distraught as he told me that “Joe” (anonymous name), my roommate, was dead! I immediately left my work to run home. As I pulled up that beautiful autumn morning there were police, detectives, paramedics and the unpleasant sight of the medical examiner surrounding the apartment. I immediately ran up to my apartment, and was stopped by a police officer who confirmed that Joe was dead. He had died in the room we shared. The day had changed, still beautiful but very surreal. Everything seemed to have a glow.

It was determined that Joe had died from an overdose. Because of this, I felt guilt for a long time and still do at times. The biggest part of my Recovery is honesty. You see, I had slipped out after room checks the night before to spend the night with a woman. The guilt I felt afterward was enormous, but the reality of the whole situation wasn't clear for some time to come. I remember thinking there was no way in hell I would ever pick up and use again after this experience. My guilt was brought on from thinking that if I had only been where I was supposed to be, I might have been able to save his life. In the following days I was in a depression over what I “could have or should have” done. We saw a therapist after this, but because I wasn't being honest with myself the therapy was useless. Until I became aware that being

honest is the foundation of my recovery, I would remain sick. I have just recently learned this and work on it daily.

It took my picking up again to realize the vital importance of honesty. In July, 2010, the woman I was dating impulsively decided to move to another city. Because I had a career opportunity there, it seemed like the right thing for me to move there with her, even though I already was working in the best job I ever had right here in Atlanta! I took off without talking it over with anyone because I knew I would only hear that it was a stupid idea! We were moving for the wrong reasons. I knew this but was not being honest

with myself. In early January this year I decided that using sounded good because I was in physical pain. For this drug addict to have a prescription for pain meds is a death sentence. For the next three weeks I used enough to kill most people. Death was staring at me. I was able to get back to Atlanta to see my doctor who put me on “maintenance medications” to get me moved back. I ended up getting hooked on the maintenance meds. In spite of all this, and by the grace of God, I was able to get my old job back. For the next two months I was just surviving...miserably zombie-like with no spiritual connection. During this time I became addicted to a drug I never realized I was addicted to in the past. Boy was I wrong!

In May, I had had enough and wanted so badly to be clean. I tried to do it on my own at my family's home for three days until I knew it wasn't working

“In May, I had had enough and wanted so badly to be clean. I tried to do it on my own at my family's home for three days until I knew it wasn't working and was crying for help! “

and was crying for help! My father came and got me and took me back to my safe place (Ridgeview) where I went through a rapid detox process.

Looking back, I accept that relapse is part of my story. Because I was totally sober in Recovery, and then I fell into relapse, it has shown me how much I changed and became a miserable a\*\*hole! I never want to experience the behaviors that led to my picking up again. It never has to happen again as long as I keep on doing what I'm doing: make all efforts to be honest in everything, stay connected with my peeps, doing 12 Step work, attend meetings, and, of course, talk to my very patient and forgiving sponsor. Realizing that acceptance is huge in my Recovery, I read page 417 of *The Big Book* whenever I am bothered. I have more fun today than I ever did while I was using!

Today I am one blessed soul! I have re-built a relationship with my ex-wife so I can be a better father to my absolutely beautiful daughter! It was impossible a year ago to talk with my ex-wife with any kind of compassion. Now she calls me telling me stories about what my little girl is doing, like getting notes passed to her by boys in her class (they are five years old so I'm not too worried yet!). I have real friends, a great relationship with my family, and a spiritual connection.

Even though Joe's death has haunted me for a very long time, today I am at peace. Whenever I think I have all the answers, I am reminded of Joe and feel his presence. He has blessed my soul in so many ways and I will never forget him. I am a very happy man today.....happier than I can ever remember and that is due to my program.



## TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING

SUBMITTED BY: STEVE F.

Tradition; have you ever looked the word up in a dictionary? One definition I found reads, *"The handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc. especially by word of mouth or by practice."* A few years back, the word "Tradition" meant nothing more than the preceding definition. Today however, I see much more than that. Having been a member of AA for a few 24 hours, I see a plethora of the 12 Step Program. Thank God for that!!!

The 'handing down of statements' reminds me of the catch phrases in AA such as *"Let go and let God"* and *"Easy does it."* The 'handing down of beliefs' reminds me of my Sponsor asking me if I believe AA has a solution. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Step in AA is all about having a belief. Then comes the Legends: Bill W. and Dr. Bob; Ebby Thacher and Dr. Silkworth; Sister Ignatia and Lois Wilson. The list goes on and on. Now, the customs; WOW! I love the customs. Essentially, every Home Group has their own. My Home Group customarily reads, *How it*

*works, the 12 Traditions, and the Promises* at the beginning of every meeting. We also hand out chips to mark the milestones in our sobriety, and we never close without circling up, holding hands, and saying the Lord's Prayer.

Next up, is the information. I could write for days about all the information that's available: the *Big Book* of AA; *The Twelve and Twelve* (Steps and Traditions); *Daily Reflections*, *Twenty Four Hours a Day*; *As Bill Sees It*; *A New Pair of Glasses*; *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*; *Experience, Strength & Hope*; and, *The Language of the Heart*. Not to mention all the pamphlets; 55 total; and, don't forget the Speaker CD's, and On-line meetings. One cannot fathom just

how much information is actually out there.

Now, taking all the aforementioned from "generation to generation" is all about carrying the message. There are quite a few options in order to carry this out: Sponsorship, service work, chairing a meeting, etc. How many of your

Sponsors have Sponsors, who also have Sponsors? That's what I'm talking about, "generation to generation!!!"

It goes on to say that it is carried out *"especially by word of mouth or action."* Sounds to me like going through the 12 Steps with a Sponsor, and getting into action. Action equals practice, and vice versa.

So, as you can see, the definition of "Tradition" has certainly taken on a new meaning for me.

Before closing, I'd like to share another definition of "Tradition" which reads, *"A long established or inherited way of thinking or acting."* Sobriety holds a special place in my heart where tradition is concerned. If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times, *"I can't think my way into right acting. I have to act my way into right thinking."* This tradition has been long established in AA. I'm working on my inheritance of acting my way into right thinking. It's not an event, it's a process. Daily, I'm given the opportunity to take the actions towards maintaining my sobriety, and I'm loving it; every step of the way!!!

"If I've heard it once, I've heard it a thousand times, 'I can't think my way into right acting. I have to act my way into right thinking.'"

## LIVING WITH THE TENTH STEP PRINCIPLE - "PERSEVERANCE"

SUBMITTED BY: RENE H.

Step Ten: "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it..." This is something I have to do every night before bed. My Sponsor has been telling me to do a Tenth Step every night for fourteen and a half years so far and I try to do it to the best of my ability. I have to persevere because I do miss some nights and I have to try to stay on track as best I

can. Every night I actually do a Tenth Step, I really do sleep better. My mind is clearer and at peace with the world. It did not come easy at first. I had to "JUST DO IT" and "JUST DO IT," AGAIN the next night. Soon it seemed weird not to do it before bed.

The PERSEVERANCE is what has made it doable for all these years. Making amends the next day has made life so

much easier than if I wait a few days before I do my amends. And, since I "Continue to take personal inventory," things do not pile up on "my side of the street". This simple fact makes life so much easier...like I said "JUST DO IT" that's the best way to PERSEVERE...and again, do it every night.

## PATH TO RECOVERY

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.

If someone asked me what path I took to get sober (which is what they asked for this assignment), I wouldn't know what to tell them. So, this is the end of my article; thanks for letting me share! Seriously, before I began to write, I had to think back to what it was like a few summers ago when I arrived at Ridgeview. I then asked myself "How did I get from there to where I am today?"

My Sponsor took me through the Steps almost immediately! It's been said that, *"The pain isn't in doing the steps. The pain comes from not doing the steps."* I had to find a way in which I could live and do it without alcohol and drugs. The path had already been blazed for me in 1935. The solution our forefathers found was put into writing in 1939. All I had to do was stop fighting and follow my Sponsor's direction. Since he had already been down this path, it made sense to do what he said. Looking back, I find that I made it difficult for myself by fighting this new way of life.

Have you ever woken up on a rainy Monday morning and felt tired and groggy? That's what my *"spiritual awak-*

*ening"* was like. It wasn't sudden. Happiness, joy, and peace of mind come from *"right living."* The problem was and still is that if I don't incorporate the Steps and their Principles into my life on a daily basis, then I don't know how to live the right way. This transformation didn't come overnight. It takes practice.

That brings me to my Larry Bird story. Being from Boston, I grew up a Celtics fan. Every day at 4:30 p.m. when Boston had a game, Channel 4 Action News would show a "live shot" from the Gaaahden. In the background, you'd see Larry Bird in his gym shorts taking shot after shot. The ball boy would feed him the ball and he never stopped shooting. Bird worked up quite a sweat, and it was still three hours before the game. Bob Lobel, the sportscaster, sat down with Bird one day and asked him why he did this.

To paraphrase, this is how the conversation went. *"You're one of the greatest players to ever play in the NBA,"* Lobel reasoned. *"Why do you practice every day at 4:30?"*

Bird responded, *"I'm actually out here at 3:30 and it's because I need*

*to practice. I'm not a naturally gifted athlete and so I have to be diligent in my work ethic."*

"All I had to do was stop fighting and follow my Sponsor's direction. Since he had already been down this path, it made sense to do what he said. Looking back, I find that I made it difficult for myself by fighting this new way of life. "

Coincidentally, this is the path I have taken in *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Living a spiritual life doesn't come naturally to me. I don't know what I'm doing most of the time! I have come to believe that a Higher Power is guiding me. He has the

roadmap and all I have to do is follow. The "old-timers" in AA always said, *"Just suit up and show up."* This is the path I have taken over the years. My Higher Power has put the right people in my life; certain situations where I can learn, other situations where I can be grateful, and the timing has always been perfect. When I follow the path of AA, peace of mind and joy in my heart seem to just fall into place.



## RECOVERY SUNDAY

The month of September is recognized nationally as "Recovery Month." Robert Fink, Chairman of the Board and Founder of Ridgeview, was inspired to hold an event to pay homage

to Recovery during its recognized month. Desiring to collaborate with the Alumni, he conferred with Sam A. along with Alumnae Luanne M. and Nancy N. to create a Guest Speaker plus Luncheon

type event entitled, "A Celebration of Recovery and Gratitude to Our Higher Power" which was held on Sunday, 25 September 2011. The morning began at 10 am in the Day Hospital Auditorium

*Continued on Back Cover*

## UNTITLED

SUBMITTED BY: BEN H.

As a group we should be grateful that our sole focus revolves around belief upon the 12- steps and correlating principles. The 12 principles in AA are necessary for our success and our sustenance, with each illustrating no more importance than the others, and how each is reliant and contingent upon their daily practice. All 12 principles together create a harmonious balance of character with which we all strive to grasp and comprehend. No single principle or virtue can out shine any other in our attempts to be complete with our aim for living in recovery. The totality of the principles is an understanding of Our Higher Power. Though this in not a destination for us in recovery, it is the path we must walk each day to ensure that our existence is

one with blessings and fertile possibility.

As recovering members of the community, we must be active in the pursuit of spiritual progress, being mindful not to aim towards spiritual perfection. In many different understandings throughout worldly traditions, philosophies and religions, immense value has always been placed upon such a vast subject of "moral excellence or goodness." Our distinction from all others is the absolute necessity of these practices of virtue for us to survive. Our path must be illustrated and illuminated by these prin-

ciples, lest we forget, we fall into the abyss. Progress requires practice, and practice we must, for our very survival depends upon our ability to understand, appreciate, respect, and emulate these truly significant words.

Do not be afraid. Do not be skeptical. No hope should be lost in the belief that this is a feat too great. These principles are guidelines that ever so faintly sketch an idea of promise through simple and genuinely authentic living. Upon this "Principled Path" is great reward, peace, and countless blessings.



## JOURNEY ALONG THE PRINCIPLE PATH

SUBMITTED BY: RICKEY B."RICKEY BOBBY"

(This Ain't Hop Scotch)

I know from previous experience that it takes real effort to work the Steps in their proper order; I guess that's why they are numbered. Prior to my enrollment in RIDGEVIEW, July 2011, I was sober and fairly sane for over 16 years. As I look back, it seems as if I may have hopped over or slid by some of the Steps that seemed a little too difficult to complete at the time. Over the years I had to go back and do the steps again in order to maintain my sobriety and sanity. What I gained



from following the Steps is more than I could ever imagine. The peace of mind and serenity was so wonderful; I am beginning again and working hard to regain that feeling of "One day at a time." I know this program works. I also found out that no matter how many days, months or years I have, if I stop working the Steps, I will stumble. So here I go again up the Steps one at a time, no skipping or hopping allowed. Today, I am grateful just for this day. Being alive is a gift, a gift that I will not take for granted. I am blessed, and have been given the wisdom to count my blessings. Just the act of appreciation allows good to be present in my day.

Thank you all so much for helping me, by sharing your experience, strength, and hope, which helps me to continue my Recovery journey.

**"I SPENT A  
LIFETIME IN  
HELL AND IT ONLY  
TOOK ME  
TWELVE STEPS  
TO GET TO  
HEAVEN."**

## THE RIDGEVIEW MIRACLE

SUBMITTED BY: MARK DL.

A new dawn has broken and my heart feels lyrical  
For I have witnessed the Ridgeview miracle  
The change took place around the third week  
Once I shed off my old self, tired and meek

At first powerless over my reckless emotions  
I cried shameful tears that overflowed oceans  
An illness had come and stolen my spirit  
I needed help now but refused to hear it

I met my new brothers in the recovery residence  
Good doctors, lawyers, and company presidents  
Addiction and depression had laid them low  
There was no other place for them to go

The sisters on campus were women who cared  
They opened their hearts and painfully shared

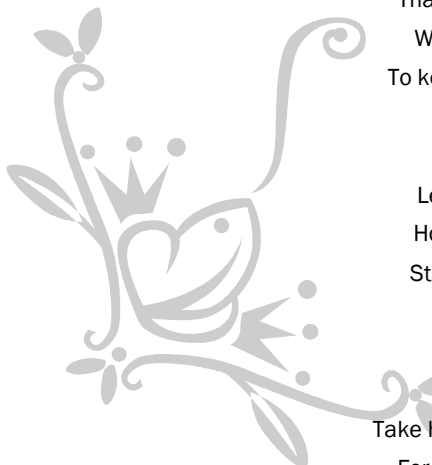
We held 12-step meetings and big book studies  
Walked with our friends and campus buddies

We kept our minds clear and stopped the insanity  
We bettered ourselves and threw out our vanity  
Together we can do this I know we can  
If He plans the work and we work the plan

The miracle came to those who believed  
That their deepest fears would all be relieved  
We learned how to love the people we are  
To keep on our bright light and shine like a star

Leave here grateful, helpful, and wise  
Let your heart grow to three times its size  
Hold your head high and stand up straight  
Stay on the clean path and follow your fate

If you happen upon a person in pain  
Show them the sun instead of the rain  
Take hold of their hand and walk them to freedom  
For miracles appear to people who need 'em.



## FULL MINDS AND EMPTY PROMISES

SUBMITTED BY: STEPHANIE S.

full minds and empty promises  
here you are again residing in my head,  
wishing you would go,  
but wanting you to stay

confusion residing in my head;  
he's your roommate  
or maybe he just came along with the  
refrigerator

I know the refrigerator is there  
because I am cold and empty  
like the ice box that hasn't been filled  
or the cabinets that are bare

you fill my heart with promises  
that you never keep.  
You tell me that you care  
but the payment isn't there

Why do I let myself get here?  
why do I bring myself  
to open my mind and my heart to people  
who won't pay the rent?

## THE ORIGIN OF THE 12 STEP FOUNTAIN (CONTINUED)

breaker box under one of the seats to hide a plug connecting to the water pump motor for the fountain.

Due to the high cost, we – the *Special Projects Committee* – decided to raise funds by selling the four benches individually, and the entire surrounding stone wall via the Alumni. The Donors received a plaque bearing Dedication wording to be attached to their respective purchased bench. I took each Dedication wording to a local trophy shop to have the plaques engraved, and after, mounted each on a bench. In addition, Drew and I went to a local stone supply company and selected 12 large stepping stones. Then, we delivered them to an engraver to have the corresponding Principle for each of the 12 Steps carved into each stone.

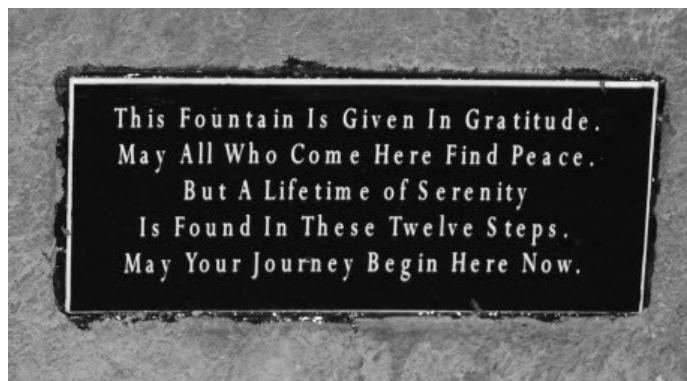
Jeff White, whose excellent landscaping knowledge came in handy, and I went to a local nursery supply and bought various plants to put around the fountain area. Drew announced a Work Party on two separate Saturdays asking any and all Alumni to assist with the planting. Everything eventually got planted; during the planting, I hit a main water line with a pick! So, during the repair, we were able to install a water faucet to water the plants, and keep the fountain filled.

Two weeks later, the stepping stones were completed by the engraver. I picked them up along with about another 20 stones to fill in around the 12 engraved stones, and to make an entry path into the fountain. Another successful Work Party was organized while the

stones and gravel were embedded.

Since the Fountain's completion, various Alumni have been watering the plants, and keeping the cigarette butts picked up to help ensure a nice and clean appearance.

The Dedication of the Fountain occurred on Friday, August 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:45 pm, with a brief ceremony. Warren Taylor, *Master of Ceremonies*, delivered the opening and closing prayer. Brief speeches were delivered by Ms. Jody Mayo, *Fountain Donator*, Robert Fink, *Chairman of the Board and Founder of Ridgeview*, and Sam Anders, *Alumni and Continuing Care Coordinator*.



*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 \$60,000. 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.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

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

### Serenity Garden—Memorial Brick Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 Lines/14 characters per line) Cost \$30.00

(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.

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



# THE VIEW

THE PRINCIPLE PATH

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

3995 SOUTH COBB DRIVE  
SMYRNA, GA 30080



## RECOVERY SUNDAY (CONTINUED)

with Warren T. offering the Opening Prayer and Welcome. After, Eddie C. offered a brief explanation of the Event, and then introduced Robert Fink. Following, Mr. Fink introduced Reverend Dick D., Guest Speaker. Rev. Dick hailed from the Sacred Heart Jesuit Retreat House, a place to visit and renew your spirituality, in Sedalia, CO. He spoke on "Recovery is a Spiritual Journey: My Story." Upon completion of his speaking just before 11 am, Warren closed offering "The Lord's Prayer."

At 11 am, most gathered at the 12 Step Fountain for social time, and were accompanied by guitar music from Chip A. and a friend. Next, at 11:30 am all journeyed to the "Luncheon under the Tent" located within the east parking lot of the Day Hospital. The meal consisted of a choice of hamburger or hot dogs, and sides of corn on the cob, baked beans, and potato chips. Salads in a cup were provided at each table, while peach cobbler was the desert. All compliments of the Ridgeview Cooking Staff who did the serving.

Around 12:30 pm, as the eating calmed, Reverend Dick D. spoke on the topic "Relieve Me of the Bondage of Self." Approaching 1 pm, after Rev. Dick D.'s sharing ended, Eddie C., speaking on behalf of the Alumni, expressed appreciation to Reverend Dick D. for visiting and speaking from the heart regarding Recovery; to Bob Fink for his inspiration, fortitude, and character in making this event a reality; to Sam A. for being the glue that binds the Alumni; and, to all Alumni for their enthusiastic participation. Last, Eddie invited all to form the traditional hand-holding circle, and close with an in unison reciting of the Serenity Prayer.

The following Thursday afternoon during the weekly Alumni Steering Committee Meeting, Sam shared that Mr. Fink had already expressed his enthusiasm for a similar event, same time next year.