

# *The View*

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association

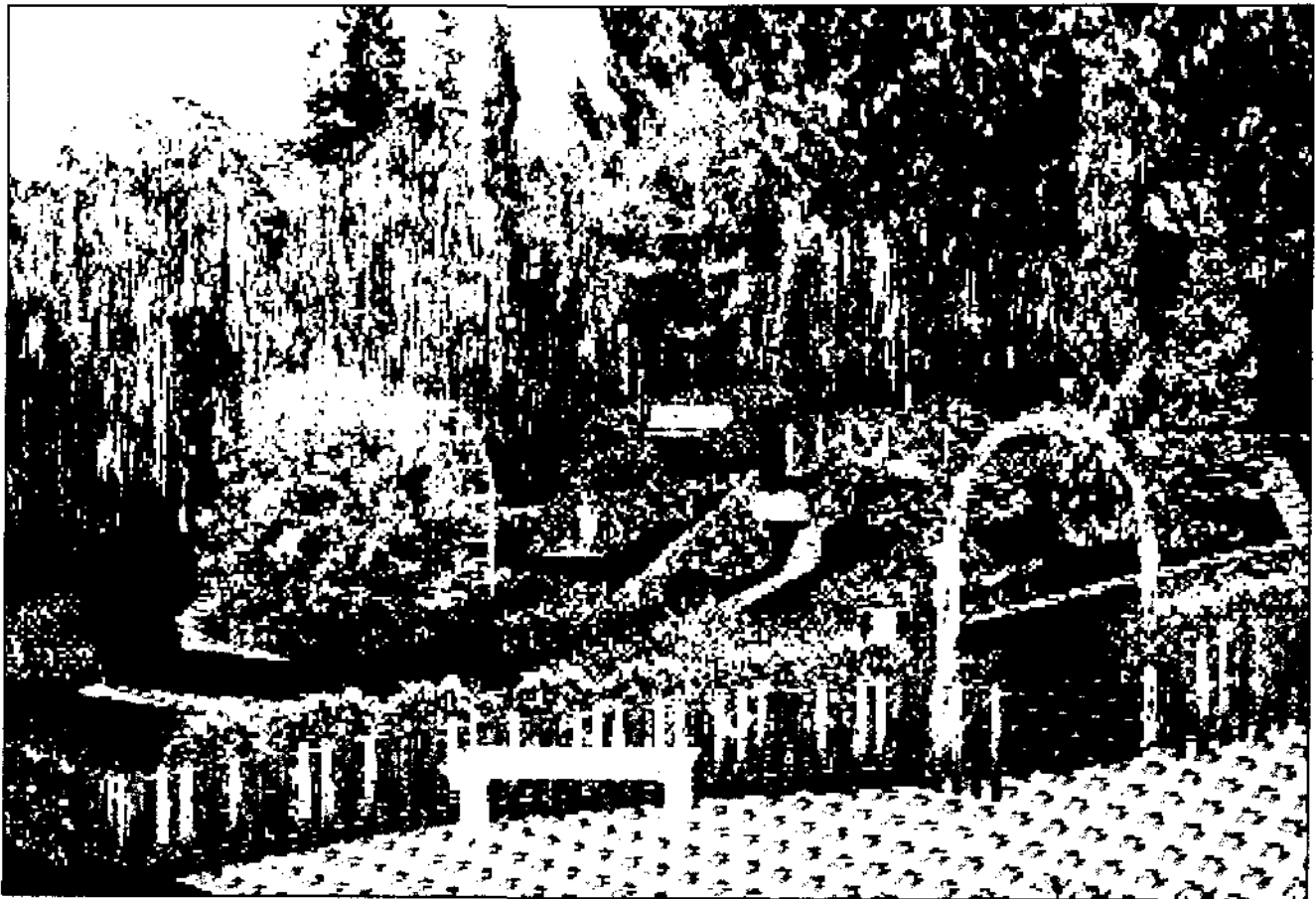
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Fall 1999

Smyrna, GA

The Ridgeview Alumni Association  
Proudly Presents

## “The Serenity Garden”



# The Ridgeview Alumni Association Presents The Serenity Garden

This edition of **The View** focuses on Spirituality and Serenity. On the cover is a rendering of the planned Serenity Garden.

As a gift to Ridgeview Institute, the Ridgeview Alumni Association is creating a **Serenity Garden** on the grounds of the campus. The garden will be located just to the left of the steps leading from the Administration Building parking lot to the Conference Center.

The garden is intended to be the Alumni's gift of love, appreciation and gratitude toward Ridgeview Institute for its vital role in the continued support of our members' sobriety and mental health.

One purpose for the Serenity Garden is to provide a long-lasting gift in acknowledgment of the institution that turned our lives around and makes all that we do possible. The garden will also memorialize our fellows that have died in order that some of us may live.

Included in the **Serenity Garden** will be an area dedicated to a brick walk--a path to serenity. The red bricks will provide space for engraving with personalized endearments and messages. Proceeds from the engraved bricks will go toward funding for development and maintenance of the garden.

We hope all alumni and their families will support the Serenity Garden and use it as a place to remember where we have been and where we are now; a place to come back to in order to be near the environment that led us into recovery.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association.

## **Memorial Brick Information**

**Help support the Serenity Garden and leave a lasting memory and sign of gratitude by purchasing a personalized brick.**

\* The bricks may be engraved with two lines of information, 14 characters per line.

\* The cost is \$25 each

\* Bricks may be purchased through any Alumni Association member.

\* Brick sales will continue until construction is complete.

\* All proceeds go to the Alumni Association, not the institution.

\* Order forms are on the inside back page of the newsletter.

## **Interview with Jack Gronewald COO - Ridgeview Institute**

**By  
Christina S.**

*What is your vision for Ridgeview moving into the next decade?*

That we continue to be a premier full service acute psychiatric and chemical dependency hospital and that we remain non profit. That we survive all of the managed care issues and issues that face this industry right now and continue to be able to positively impact people's lives to where they can gain recovery from various illnesses that present themselves. We would like to see services continue to expand. We have started to treat some gambling addictions and area already treating sexually compulsive people. We remain the one place in the state of Georgia that provides eating disorders treatment. I guess some pie in the sky dreams will be that we will be able to, at some point in time, build a new halfway house and re-open cottage B as probably a seniors program.

*What is the first change we are likely to see in the year 2000?*

Additional marketing and care to seniors. The growth in our trying to market on a wider basis both the women's and adolescent programs, and growing the gambling and sexual addiction tracks.

*What impact is managed care having on the treatment programs at Ridgeview?*

It's had a lot of impact. We've had to adjust our length of stays tremendously. We've had to adjust the delivery of services. No longer can we bring people in and stabilize them the way we would like to stabilize them. We are having to do more ambulatory continuation of detox. It's just harder to get people admitted to an inpatient setting all the time. What we are seeing is that managed care is making it harder to treat people on an IOP or intensive outpatient basis. But, what they are more inclined to do is have them go to a doctor twice a week or to a social workerrather than a; program. So it does create hardship for people who have some of the insurance policies that really don't treat alcoholism as a disease as much as a drunken state where a person only needs acute detox and that's it. That attitude creates the old revolving door of 20 years ago all over again.

*What role do you see the Alumni playing in the future of Ridgeview?*

Good question. You know the Alumni are probably one of the things I am proudest about since I've been here. When I got here almost 8 years ago, the Alumni was really an Aftercare group and that was about it. Now, they do anywhere from 50 to 60 hours a month leading meetings on the various cottages. They've implemented buddy systems and sponsor programs for people coming out of treatment. They are very involved in and are really key to some people's continued growth in recovery. I think in many cases it's that contact with the Alumni members that really gives

people that impetus to continue on in recovery. They find out they are not alone, there are other people who have been there before them. They are people who are willing to give, to share, to give back. The Alumni does it with such a grace and dedication and compassion that can't help but touch those patients. And I think that has been a role that they have played and continue to play. And, I would hope that would continue to expand over time with more and more activity that directly impacts the current patients and future patients in such a way that they become active in the Alumni. I think what I've seen since I've been here is winners stick with winners, and the Alumni is definitely a group of people winning with the program of recovery. It's great. It's one of the fun groups I get to deal with or work with here.

*How do you as C.O.O. (Chief Operating Officer) view your relationship with the Alumni?*

I don't know. That's a hard question. I really enjoy the activities with the Alumni. I am very supportive of their attempts to expand their role here on this campus. I think they have got great leadership in Sam Anders and the Steering Committee and I just feel good that they've welcomed me and let me play with them and basically made me an honorary Alumni member. I am proud of that. My role sometimes puts the brakes on things so that they don't get too far out in front of themselves. But, they have always approached everything with the best of intentions and it is real easy as the C.O.O. to work with a group of people that are starting from that standpoint. We seem to always work something out that is to everybody's benefit.

*The Alumni is probably one of the things I am proudest about...*

*We spoke earlier about the different groups that are all coming into Ridgeview outside of addiction. With all the different programs and treatment available at Ridgeview how do you see fitting them into the Alumni and Continuing Care Program?*

I think the biggest thing is that the Alumni has made itself open to accepting any person who has gone through a program here at Ridgeview. Unlike some of the Alumni groups at other facilities that I have seen through the years, they have always been open to dual diagnosis. They have been open to the patients who have had eating disorders, they have been open to welcoming people who have been on the psych program for depression or bipolar disorder or those things. And, I think the key is that as the Alumni puts on meetings and groups on the cottages, they can build and attract more of those people with other diagnosis, helping them get involved in attending some of the Emotions Anonymous meetings, some of the eating disorders meetings, some of the dual diagnosis, some of the prescription medication groups and so forth. I think those are very powerful events that can lead to the continued growth of the alumni group.

*As the Alumni continues to grow, how do you think Ridgeview will be able to accommodate that growth?*

It gets to, at some point in time, when does aftercare remain aftercare and when does it become a meeting for some people. It may get down to some of the people who have been in aftercare for a long period of time we may have to really develop some groups where some of those people are

leading, for lack of a better term, advanced aftercare groups or something. Staffing aftercare has become a major hurdle that we face. And it may be that as people grow in their own recoveries, a different type of aftercare group actually starts to emerge. I have seen that happen in a couple of other places in the country very successfully and I don't see any reason why, with the people who are involved in our aftercare here, that can't happen here.

*How do you envision the purpose and distribution of the Alumni Endowment Fund?*

I really haven't given that any thought. I know the Endowment Fund is going to help finance some of the Serenity Garden and its continued upkeep. Beyond that I really don't know. I don't know what the group as a whole intends to do and I haven't met with anybody about that. So I am wide open to their suggestions as to how they see that working and what could be done with that money. I would hope that it could be used for something that would advance treatment for some people.

*The Alumni is very excited about the Serenity Garden and appreciates your support in getting it through. What are your thoughts?*

I think that it will be a great addition to the campus. I think the spot they have selected is an excellent spot. And, I'm willing to work with them as much as possible to help them achieve their goals of doing what they plan to do. I think it is the type of thing that represents a gift back to Ridgeview I just think it is a great idea.

***I think that (the Serenity Garden) will be held in perpetuity as one of the great give-backs I have seen happen.***

*So rumors of the life size statue of yourself?*

Those are just rumors. I would not allow that. Just as I out voted everybody on naming the Halfway house Jack's Shack! If they want to put a stone, a commemorative stone, that would be a really neat thing to do around the fountain. They don't have to name anybody on the staff. I think the Alumni need to dedicate the garden to Ridgeview Institute from its Alumni and I think that will be held in perpetuity as one of the great give backs that I have seen happen.

*Jack, thank you for taking the time to share your vision for Ridgeview Institute and your thoughts about the Alumni Association.*

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## *Fall Focus:* Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### Spirituality and Recovery

by Christina S.

*I'm in recovery now. I was in recovery yesterday and the day before. This day isn't over, so I will check back tomorrow about today.*

To me, addiction is a vast ocean. I am steering a boat that represents my life of addiction. On the boat there are several important people. My husband, my children, my parents and some of my friends.

Because I am an addict and an alcoholic, I steer the boat, carrying everybody through the swells, the white caps, the storms and the endless open sea. There is no port in sight, I'm not looking for land because I love the ride. Every once in a while, a passenger tries to take control and steer. I let them take over only if they don't try to alter my course. As long as they steer the way I want or need them to, the boat stays afloat and nobody falls out and drowns.

I don't care if anyone in the boat can swim; it is their choice to sail with me. I am not responsible for their sadness and fear. One day the water is much choppy, everyone is restless. My friends and family have had enough sailing on my troubled waters and they are rescued by the advice of others who tell them to save themselves and leave my boat, my life of addiction.

I remain alone, fighting to keep the boat from capsizing. I'm sick and exhausted and frightened. The only thing left is to give in to the turbulence and drown. Then one last hope arises.

I can pray. I ask God to save me, I can no longer steer my boat; it is steering me. Land appears miraculously on the horizon and my boat washes up on the shore. It's a place called Recovery. My family and friends are all there, waiting for me. They are sad to have watched me toss around in the ocean, but grateful not to be tossed around with me anymore. They chose to be safe from my risky ride and to allow me to choose the land called Recovery all by myself.

We are together now, and my boat sits in dry-dock, ever ready for me to set sail again.

Some of my loved ones might join me again, but probably not. I try to remember feeling sick and alone out there so that I won't go back.

Every time I look over at my boat, it looks shiny and new and inviting. Sometimes I sit in it and pretend I'm sailing. But I remember what God did when I asked for help. I washed up on the land called Recovery.

I think I'll ask Him to help me stay here.

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### Spirituality

by Vincent P.

Before I came into the rooms of the twelve step program, I was truly spiritually bankrupt. There was emptiness, loneliness and pain.

Now my life is so full - I have happiness; I have joy; I have honest friends. That ugly feeling of hopelessness is gone and has been replaced with faith. Faith in a Higher Power and now faith in myself. I know now what is right and what is wrong.

Recovery has brought me spirituality and an inner transformation. There is now love within me that allows me to touch another person with honesty, which before I never had.

The founders of A.A. refer to alcoholism as a "spiritual malady". I heard a story that talked about a hole within us that we try to fill with all kinds of things, drugs, alcohol, sex, power, spending, shopping, gambling, eating or not.....none of these ever work for us in the end and the story explains that it's because that hole within us is a God shaped hole, and none of those addictive things are God shaped.

Before recovery I ran from life, now I embrace it. For myself, daily work is required to maintain a spiritual contact with my Higher Power. What's made a difference for me in sobriety is humility.

I now live my life with grace, honor and dignity.

## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### The Spirituality of Imperfection

by Vicki S.

I spent most of my life trying to be perfect. To do, be, look, sound and think perfectly--the perfect child, perfect student, perfect employee, perfect wife, perfect co-dependent, and, initially, perfect Al-Anon.

If I couldn't do it perfectly, I didn't do it. Almost a year into recovery, I don't want to be perfect now. But it's hard to let go of something that seemed to work for such a long time. What I have learned by listening in many meetings, doing a lot of reading, and talking to my sponsor is that perfection belongs to my Higher Power, not to me. My goal is progress, not perfection. But since I am not perfect, I won't ever do anything perfectly, not even give up striving for perfection. But I can get better by working the program.

On the Family Workshop Week book table a couple of months back, I found a book called *The Spirituality of Imperfection* by Ernest Kurtz (he also wrote *Not-God*, the history of A.A.) I just love the title. Words in a combination I needed. Imperfection, something I once feared, is now something I am learning to embrace. Imperfection now means to me that I am no longer my higher power or anybody else's. I am a human being, therefore imperfect. I can admit my powerlessness and ask for help--that's progress for a perfectionist and absolutely required for my recovery. And in that realization is the key to my serenity, acceptance, and joy (recently defined to me as spontaneous gratitude). What a huge relief, not only for me but for everyone in my life :-))!

Benchmarks of progress for me include: calling my sponsor willingly, not because I think I should, saying no when I feel no (but think I should be saying yes), seeing my Higher Power working my life and saying thank you, H.P., more often; asking my Higher Power for help more often before I start something (rather than after I'm in it); being grateful more often for where I am in my life (rather than wishing things

were different); more often, honesty brings me to joyful tears and dishonesty to forgiveness (for

myself and others); and, sometimes, I operate with less judgment and more compassion.

A piece of my perfectionism is needing to be right. I have been asked "would you rather be right or have serenity?" Whoa..... some days that's still a tough call. I am not perfect. But today there are more days I choose serenity. Progress means I can see what I am doing, like needing to be right, even if I can't always choose to let go of it. Recovery is a miracle in my life and the surprise gift is spirituality. It's always there for me. I just need to let go and let my Higher Power. For the miracle and the gift, I thank Ridgeview and all of you, with love.

### Spirited Questions

by Jacqueline M.

What is it?

How do I know it?

When do I meet it?

Where do I find it?

Why do I need it?

Can I see it?

Can I hear it?

Can I feel it?

Will it give me new hope?

Will it help me find peace?

Will it bring my life joy?

Will it put me at ease?

Can I accept it?

Can I believe it?

Can I let go?

Can I not?

## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### Spirituality - A Feeling

by Jack A.

When approaching the subject of spirituality, I find myself at a loss to come up with one sweeping, accurate definition. Before Ridgeview, I had seldom, if ever, even contemplated the term. Like many, the only "spirits" I was interested in were those of the bottled variety.

So what is Spirituality? Certainly it cannot be the exclusive property of organized religion. Spirituality to me is a feeling. You can't see it with your eyes or hold it in your hands. It is a sensation that blows through you like a wind of serenity.

At Ridgeview, I eventually felt the "feeling" of Spirituality and decided that it could be defined as the coming together or bonding of souls against a common foe. Yet I realized I had experienced this moving sensation before and knew it wasn't confined to those of us battling addiction.

At Ridgeview, I eventually felt the "feeling" of Spirituality and decided that it could be defined as the coming together or bonding of souls...

Spirituality must manifest itself in countless faces and forms when working together or connecting with others. I've learned that one may encounter this spiritual feeling in many diverse scenarios.

You can feel it working on a charity project with a group of biker buddies; standing to pray with old friends and complete strangers before a college football game; as part of a small cohesive elite military unit; as a prisoner working with other inmates in the "Scared Straight" program in an attempt to keep younger people from sharing our fate. Dare I say even in the camaraderie of a good bar - and now in the company of other recovering alcoholics and addicts.

Spirituality tells us we are not alone (especially when facing adversity); that we are a part of something larger, that we belong.

Perhaps this earth is a school and we are all cells in something bigger. A Force? A Higher Power? A God? We absorb strength from each other and the resulting feeling of elation and euphoria is "Spiritual." Spirituality may be the key component in the quest for inner peace or peace of mind.

Peace of mind is where you find love from those around you and love for those around you. The more you experience, the more you come to know that peace of mind cannot be found in wandering, in alcohol, in drugs.

Take it from me. I know. I've been there.

### Falling Down

by Cecil W.

We live in a room that  
has no sides.  
The limits we set  
grow from our fears.  
When we fall down  
down go others.  
Because our fears  
have crossed their worlds.  
If we set our limits  
from our dreams.  
If we leave the room  
that has no sides.  
Then when we fall  
others will rise.  
The help they give  
will grow us all.

*"We should take care not to make the intellect our god: it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality."*

*Albert Einstein*



## *Fall Focus:* Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### **Guaranteed Spirituality**

By John W.

I had never felt so all alone in my life. It seemed like just moments ago I was surrounded by a team of doctors and nurses. My wife was by my bedside and my oldest and most trusted friend was on the telephone with me from a thousand miles away.

I was flat on my back in a hospital bed in Crawford Long Hospital with a heart catheter stuck in my body, unremovable because of the danger that taking it out would kill me. The only choice I had been given by the doctors was to agree to open heart surgery and multiple bypass, or to die.

I told them I would take my chances on death. They all left the room. My friend hung up reluctantly with as much support as he could give me. My wife left in tears and sobs to go home to take care of our dog and I think to get ready for my death.

**I told them I would take my chances on death.**

It was so quiet I could hear my diseased heart beating weakly. I began to cry. Three months before this day I had also been crying as I packed a bag to take to Ridgeview Institute where I had finally agreed to go in order to save my life from alcohol poisoning and 30 years of alcoholism.

I was very close to death that day. The doctors were not certain they could save me.

They did, and with their help I made a remarkable and rapid recovery. And after just three months I was beginning to feel better than I had ever remembered feeling. I had heard much talk about spirituality and

what it meant and how it was so very important to the success of recovery and finding joy in life. I still wasn't sure what spirituality was, but I was ready to give it credit for my recovery and how wonderful I was feeling.

I was still unsure about what spirituality meant when this heart thing happened. While still living in the half-way house my doctor sent me for a routine heart examination. They found serious problems and wanted me to go for treatment immediately.

I was very angry. I was terrified. I was in full blown denial. I was terrified. I was depressed. I was terrified. I certainly was not feeling very spiritual.

I tried to carry on with my alcoholism treatment for three more weeks. But I had lost all of the good feelings I had just so recently been given.

I decided that I was not going to feel any better or make a successful recovery until I agreed to undergo the testing procedures the doctors were recommending.

I failed the test badly and now I was stuck with a long wire running up through my body and into my heart and no way to just get it out without killing me. They had to crack my chest open and repair my heart in order to remove it.

Now I was all alone and the most terrified I had ever been in my life. I didn't have the courage to die and I didn't have the courage to go through with the heart operation.

I wanted to pray, but I felt I did not have the right to pray. I had been an agnostic for many years. I had often heard that there were no atheists or agnostics on death beds or in fox holes. I was not going to be so hypocritical as to put in an emergency call to a God that I had denied existed up until now.

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## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

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And, as far as a higher power was concerned, that was working fine for me to keep from drinking, but I couldn't see that working in this situation.

But, wait a minute! Why couldn't it work now? A higher power is a higher power, right?

I started to feel quite a bit better. I wasn't sure why, but I did. About that time my wife walked back in. I started to feel even better. She looked a lot better, a lot more in control, and even somewhat optimistic. I couldn't understand it, but that too seemed to give me more hope.

Hope? Where the heck was that coming from. Nothing had changed. I was still in the same mess. Why was I feeling more calm? Why was my wife feeling more calm?

About that time the cardiologist came back into the room. She had left somewhat angry and frustrated with me about two hours ago. I didn't think I was going to see her again.

She was all by herself this time. She looked very tired and very concerned. I thought I could even see water welling up in her eyes as she pulled a chair up very close to my bed and looked squarely into my eyes.

She almost whispered, "John, can you try to tell me why you won't let us do the operation?"

I told her that I was terrified. She asked what was frightening me most. I said I was afraid of all of the pain there would be for such a long time. As soon as I said that, admitted I was afraid of the pain, a coward, I clearly remember feeling a wave of relief and calmness. I felt the gift of surrender.

She smiled a child-like grin and said, "Would you do it if I could guarantee you would not feel any pain?"

That was incredible. I had never had a doctor guarantee me anything. I had been told many times by doctors that if one of them ever guarantees anything, run away as fast as you can.

Well, I certainly was in no condition to run anywhere. Besides, for some reason, it was in her eyes, I believed her.

But most important, that new feeling of calmness was now growing into one of absolute peace and serenity. How could this be? Just moments ago I had felt so forsaken, hopeless and confused.

In what felt like a tremendous sigh of relief, I told her I could go through with the operation.

I had totally, unequivocally surrendered. I was feeling the exhilaration of turning it over to my higher power.

And for the first time I had experienced knowing the true joy of spirituality.

P.S. It was a triple by-pass and I never felt any pain!

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Spirituality is the missing peace (sic); truly the only thing that allows me to be loved, enlightened, inspired, joyous, calm, grateful and hopeful.

Diana W.

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We are all spiritual *beings* having a *human* experience.

Rachelle M.

## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### A Spiritual Experience

Sean C.

By the time you read this article, it will be mid-October. The air will be a little cooler, Philips Arena will be open, the leaves may be just starting to turn and Susan's Bulldogs should be 4 or 5 and 0. (Sorry, Sam). However, as I write this, it is Friday, September 3, 1999. Last night, I shared at the Alumni meeting in Cottage B about my recent spiritual experience. For me it was pretty weird but let me share it with you. ( Oh, I forgot, I'm still in Georgia). Let me share it with y'all.

I first came through Ridgeview Institute in February 1999. I left treatment in March and began my road to recovery. Things were fantastic. Life was good once again. I had gotten a home group, a Georgia sponsor, was attending at least one meeting a day, and was going to church every Sunday. Exercise and getting out of the house had become important to me. The "promises" were starting to come true.

During the July 4th weekend, I flew back home to Boston to see my parents, sister, her husband and to wrestle with the family dog. The night before I was to come back to Atlanta, I got into an argument with my father. I left the house, went to a meeting of my former home group, met up with my Boston sponsor and spent the night at his house. Paul had to work the next day but told me I could stay until it was time to go to the airport.

### The 'promises' were starting to come true.

Instead of calling someone in the program like I knew I should do, I started to obsess over a rum and coke. Although I was always a vodka and orange juice fan, rum and cokes were my favorite drink whenever I flew. By the time I got to Logan Airport, I had already begun. I dropped off the rental car and had a stash in my carry-on bag, three 16 ounce coke

bottles filled halfway with rum. As I entered the terminal, Air Trans' finest announced that our flight would be delayed several hours. I knew I had to save my drinks for the two hour flight so I stepped into the bar and had some Sam Adams beer.

By the time I reached Hartsfield, I was falling down. Somehow I managed to get on MARTA to Doraville and took a cab to Norcross. I continued to drink for the rest of that week, since I was still on vacation.

I returned to work on July 12 and managed to hide my secret for the rest of that week, occasionally knocking down a few at lunch and definitely when I got home after 5 o'clock. Meetings were no longer on my agenda. Ron, my Georgia sponsor, thought I was still back in Boston.

The following weekend, I got hammered and had to call in sick for the week of July 19. By the time the following weekend rolled around, I knew where this deal was headed. There was no stopping my disease. I just had to sit there helplessly on a runaway train if I was going to continue to do this by myself.

Instead, I asked my EAP person for help once again. I arrived at Ridgeview at 10 a.m. on Monday, July 26, my new sobriety date.

As I sat in the lobby waiting to be processed, I spoke with a few people I knew from Ridgeview who happened to pass through. It was very humbling to me and I felt so ashamed. I've always suffered from low self-esteem and this really made me feel worthless. I didn't even know why I wanted to bother to try again.

It says on page 83 of the Big Book "If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." Paul had always told me not to quit five minutes before the miracle happened. (He also told me to read page 449--just to be a pain in my side).

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## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

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They enrolled me into Cottage C under the "23 hour" plan. I agreed since there has never been a strip search that I didn't like.

Dr. Gordon suggested I go to Cottage B for two weeks plus I was extended for a third.

On August 13 I left Ridgeview and began once again.

During my stay, however, I started to develop a cough that didn't seem to want to go away.

On August 29th, I had to go to Northlake Medical Center in Tucker. I was coughing so badly that I didn't know what it was. I even figured they would have to take out my tonsils. So, I packed for a four day stay (always heed the warnings of self-diagnosis).

The nurse asked me what was the matter. "Oh, nothing really," I responded. "it's just that my tonsils are sitting on my tongue!"

The doctor gave me a prescription for antibiotics and said I was OK to go home. To my surprise I was only at the medical center 35 minutes. Anyway, Sunday night I went to lay down and I couldn't because I kept choking.

So, I slept on the couch sitting up. The previous Saturday I bought a meditation tape that I heard about in treatment. I decided to play it to help me to get some rest.

(This is the "get this" part). Get this. On Monday morning I woke up and had a terrific coughing fit. I was hacking enough to make Bob Vila proud. I was coughing so badly that I was dancing just to keep my balance.

When I was finished I was standing bent over with my hands on my knees, catching my breath, holding my chest and my eyes watering.

I noticed the light was on in the laundry room and I didn't remember leaving it on. I never do.

I walked in and all of a sudden I started coughing again. This time it was enough to knock me down onto my knees. I felt a cold rush go through me like a Vermont snow. When I finally stood up, I felt really light on my feet. My chest

had cleared and it was as if I could breath again only this time I didn't have the asthma. I felt like a big weight had been lifted off my shoulders. It was as if I had just taken off my goalie's equipment.

**I felt a cold rush go through me like a Vermont snow.**

My legs felt light and I was able to make a throwing motion like a pitcher does. I could really whip that invisible ball in there with a snap. I then jumped up and down and there was no effort to it. Then I asked out loud "God, what's happening to me?" I'm not making this up--this really happened to me! In fact, I looked at the coffee maker and the time was 7:01 a.m.

I got really panicky and scared. Then I asked out loud, "God, I just died, didn't I? My body is somewhere else and it's just a matter of time before I realize that I'm dead. God please help me." At this point, I really thought I had just died.

I walked out into the kitchen. I could see into the living room that the TV was still on. Still delusional, I said to God, "You mean they have SportsCenter in Heaven?" (I don't know why I automatically assumed I was going to Heaven). "

I was feeling lighter than ever. I could lift my knees up to my chest (I haven't been able to do that in 20 years). I ran into my study on the opposite end of the apartment in about two seconds; quicker that I had ever been able to do before. I was really frightened now.

I got down and did 10 push ups in about four seconds or so with no effort. I yelled out "Holy ----." I might point out that the "f" word was used quite frequently as an adjective during this whole episode! Then I got down and did 10 sit ups, again with no effort. I got up and did leg sprints feeling like I was 21 years old again.

(Continued on page 13)

## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

(Continued from Page 12)

I really thought I was dead now. Maybe it was the medication or the fact that I had been up all night but something had changed. They say in the program, if nothing changes then your sobriety date will.

For some strange reason, I walked over to the bookcase and opened the Big Book to page 83. I don't know why I wanted to read the Promises. But there they were. "If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through." I stopped right there. I realized that yes, I had relapsed time and time again but each time I never gave up and I would crawl back into AA eventually (sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly...ha, ha!).

I read on. "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." I stopped again. I realized at that very moment that I don't ever have to drink again. EVER!

Then I asked God out loud, "God, I don't have to drink again? Ever? Do you really mean it?" I shouted again.

I sat down on the floor and stated crying. I hadn't cried tears since I was 12 years old. And then I asked God again out loud, "I really don't have to drink again, do I?" I said thank you to God with the most sincerity that ever poured from my heart.

As I stood up and caught my breath and wiped the tears away, I realized that God had done for me what I could not do for myself.

I haven't been able to wipe this smile off my face since then. I'm happier than I've ever been before.

To think all I have to do from now on is go to meetings, get involved in the steps, and share my experience, strength and hope; then I can grow spiritually and be even happier than I am now. Such a deal. God deposited a "Big Lotto" into my spiritual bank account and if I keep doing what the program tells me to do, it can gain interest. It's been said in this

program "God will provide the canoe, all I have to do is be willing to paddle.

Anyway, that really happened. I now know what it truly means to be happy, joyous and free. I've been feeling "pissa, piss" ever since.

I'm so grateful to everyone at Ridgeview. If you don't mind, I'd like to single out a special few that have made a difference in my life, starting in order of appearance: Richard Morgan, Dr. Gordon, Jamal, Chip, Stefan, Dr. Annie, Sam and Susan. To the entire staff at Ridgeview, not forgetting the crew in the cafeteria, may I quote from the immortal words of Archie Bunker when I say "Yuz done good, dare!"

With my sincerest love and gratitude, a warm and heartfelt Thank You.

---

### Entertainment Committee

We are entering our busy time of the year. A lot of varied activities surround the holiday season. These range from our Fall Retreat at Lake Allatoona to Christmas Caroling at Ridgeview. Come join us for fun and fellowship.

The highlight of the holiday season will be the New Year's Eve dance as we move into a new decade. Last year we went caroling to the different cottages on the Ridgeview and Woodland Ridge campus. This along with the Gratitude Dinner allows us to say thank you and give back for all we have received.

Fall Lake Retreat	October 9 and 10
Halloween Dance	October 30
Gratitude Dinner	November 21
Christmas Caroling	December 21
New Year's Eve Dance	December 31
Super Bowl	January 22
Winter Lake Retreat	February 12 and 13

## *Fall Focus:* Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### **Spirituality** By Steve B.

Spirituality is a form of being in the inner self when we believe and accept that there is a High Power, or God as I choose to call my High Power.

With me it is my spiritual program of life as I choose to look at it that gives me peace of mind when I'm working the program the way it is designed.

To me spirituality was the hardest thing to accept and surrender to. Yet it has given me the tools to live life on life's terms.

It has helped me to understand what unconditional love is. It gives me hope and strength to keep traveling the road in which God would have me travel instead of turning back to the life that I had before coming to Ridgeview.

Spirituality helps me overcome the fears of the unknown. It also allows me to get rid of all the garbage from the past. It helps me by not allowing me to forget the past where I came from which is good because if I forget the past, then I'm destined to repeat it.

With love and best wishes for all people who have gone this way, and for all that will go down the road to recovery.

\*\*\*\*

Spirituality means to me  
self acceptance,  
self love and  
a healthy relationship to  
God/Higher Power.

Walter B.  
\*\*\*\*

### **Lost Spirit** By Jacqueline M.

Bright, translucent white,  
Formless and vaguely winged,  
It fluttered more than flew as  
My spirit left.

In a moment of decision  
I stood;  
Observed without watching.  
The void inside grew until  
All that was left was emptiness.

No pain exists when feelings are  
hollow.

No regret exists when the heart is  
stone.

No disbelief exists when the mind is  
blank.

No self exists when the soul has  
flown.

Emptiness prevailed.

There was no me.

Time had stopped.

The world had dropped away.

Only nothingness remained.

\*\*\*\*

If you want to get at the  
unadulterated truth of egolessness,  
you must once and for all let go  
your hold and fall over the  
precipice.

Hakuin.

\*\*\*\*

The more I learn, the more I realize  
I don't know.

Albert Einstein  
\*\*\*\*

## Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### Ridgeview Support Groups

(All meetings in Conference Center unless otherwise noted - see monitor in foyer for meeting rooms.)

- Adult Children of Alcoholics \* Monday, 6:30 p.m.  
 AlAnon \* Monday, 8:00 p.m.  
 Ala Teen \* Monday, 8:00 p.m.
- Alcoholics Anonymous  
 Sunday, 11:15 a.m.  
 Monday, 8:00 p.m.  
 Mon. & Thurs. 6:00 p.m. / Men's AA  
 First Friday of Month Speaker Meeting 8 p.m.  
 Saturday: Conference Center  
 11:00 a.m. / Women's AA and Men's AA  
 7:30 p.m. / Relationships in Recovery
- Cocaine Anonymous  
 Monday, 8:00 p.m.  
 Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.  
 Wednesday, 8 p.m. / Big Book/Pro North Bldg.  
 Friday, 8:00 p.m.  
 Sunday, 8:00 p.m.
- Codependent Anonymous \* Thursday, 6:30 p.m.  
 Nar-Anon Thursday, 8:00 p.m.
- Narcotics Anonymous  
 Friday, 8:00 p.m. - Friday Night Freedom  
 Sunday, 8:00 p.m. - 12 Steps Closer
- Depression/Manic-Depression Assn. (DMDA)  
 Bi-Monthly (2nd & 4th Wed.), 8:00 p.m.
- A.N.A.D. (Anorexia/Eating Disorders)  
 Wednesday, 6:00 p.m.  
 Saturday, 10:00 a.m.
- Emotions Anonymous  
 Tuesdays, 7:15 p.m. / Pro North Bldg.  
 Thursday, 7:00 p.m. / Pro North Bldg.
- Rx Anonymous (Narcotic Pain Pill Addiction)  
 Friday, 6:30 p.m.
- Nicotine Anonymous \* Thursday, 8:00 p.m.
- Overeaters Anonymous for Anorexics and Bulimics  
 Thursday, 7:30 p.m. / Pro North Bldg.
- F.E.D. (Friends & family of people with eating disorders) - Mondays, 6:00 p.m.
- Gamblers Anonymous \* Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.  
 Gam-Anon (for families and friends)  
 Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.
- Step-by-Step (Christ Centered 12-Step Group)  
 Friday, 8:00 p.m.
- Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.

### ENDOWMENT FUND CAMPAIGN 1999-2000

**It's time again to show our gratitude and give something back to our fellows in need.**

Following up our successful initial campaign of last year that raised close to \$4,400, the Ridgeview Alumni Association proudly announces the startup of its second annual Endowment Fund Campaign Drive.

Beginning October 1<sup>st</sup> of every year the Alumni Association seeks contributions from fellow alumni, family, friends, businesses and the corporate community, which are used in a variety of ways to aid patients in treatment at the Ridgeview Institute.

All Ridgeview Alumni are asked to contribute a minimum of \$5.00 for every year they have been in recovery. Contributions of any amount are sought and welcomed from family, friends, business or the corporate community. All contributions are tax deductible.

Endowment fund contributions are deposited into a special investment growth account earmarked for use in helping patients in treatment.

We urge you to help us help our fellows in need.

A donation coupon for the Endowment Fund can be found on the inside back page of this newsletter.

**Remember, "You can't keep it unless you give it away," so show your gratitude for your time in sobriety by giving something back."**

## *Fall Focus:* Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

### Special Projects Committee

**Robert B.**

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a group of actively recovering alcoholics, addicts and those with behavioral disorders who strive to support the recovery of patients in treatment at Ridgeview, as well as strengthening their own recoveries through service and fellowship.

The Alumni Steering Committee meets Thursdays at 5:45 PM in the Conference Center. It consists of four subcommittees that coordinate all of our various projects.

The Special Projects Committee's formation was authorized by the Alumni Steering Committee in the Summer of 1998. Although the committee has only been in existence for a year, it has been very busy.

Already the Special Projects Committee has coordinated two successful arts and crafts fairs, helped Alumni member Linda C. with successful clothing and household goods drives for M.U.S.T. Ministries, collected funds at our first Friday Speakers meeting to donate to over 3,500 diapers to M.U.S.T. Ministries "Dollars for Diapers" campaign, cooked and served a Christmas Eve dinner at a downtown Atlanta homeless shelter, and a crew of ours has performed as "Santa's' Little Elves" carrying gifts and holiday cheer to Scottish Rite Children Hospital for the last five years.

Another project of which we are very proud is the establishment of the **Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund**.

For a 90-day period that started in September of last year, Alumni members donated \$1 for every year of their sobriety, in an effort to help future Ridgeview patients in need of financial assistance to help cover the cost of treatment. Additional donations were sought from family members, staff and

the business community. To date we have secured close to \$4,500 for this effort. We are very excited about this campaign and the real opportunity it provides for us "to give something back."

We also look forward to providing another long lasting gift to Ridgeview--the institution that turned our lives around and makes all we do possible. That gift is **The Serenity Garden**, a memorial to our fellows who have died in order that some of us might live.

*For more information on the Endowment Fund and the Serenity Garden see pages 2, 15 and the inside back page.*

\*\*\*\*

When we come to the end of our lives on earth, we will take no material thing with us. We will not take one cent in our cold, dead hands. The only things that we may take are the things we have given away. If we have helped others, we may take that with us; if we have given of our time and money for the good of A.A., we may take that with us. Looking back over our lives, what are we proud of? Not what we have gained for ourselves, but what few good deeds we have done. Those are the things that really matter in the long run.

"Twenty Four Hours a Day"--July 26.

\*\*\*\*

...The proper way to look at service is to see it as something we perform for our own benefit. While we hope that it will benefit others, that does not have to happen in order for us to benefit. Our good comes from the giving of service, not the measurement of its results for others. No one is obligated to us; nor does anyone have the right to complain if our services did not help. We serve entirely for our own benefit.

"Walk in Dry Places"--November 29.



# Fall Focus: Spirituality - A Path to Serenity

## 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/sponser. 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 chacters per line)

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

**\$25.00 per brick.**

\* 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, Bricks

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



3995 South Cobb Drive  
Smyrna, Georgia 30080

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