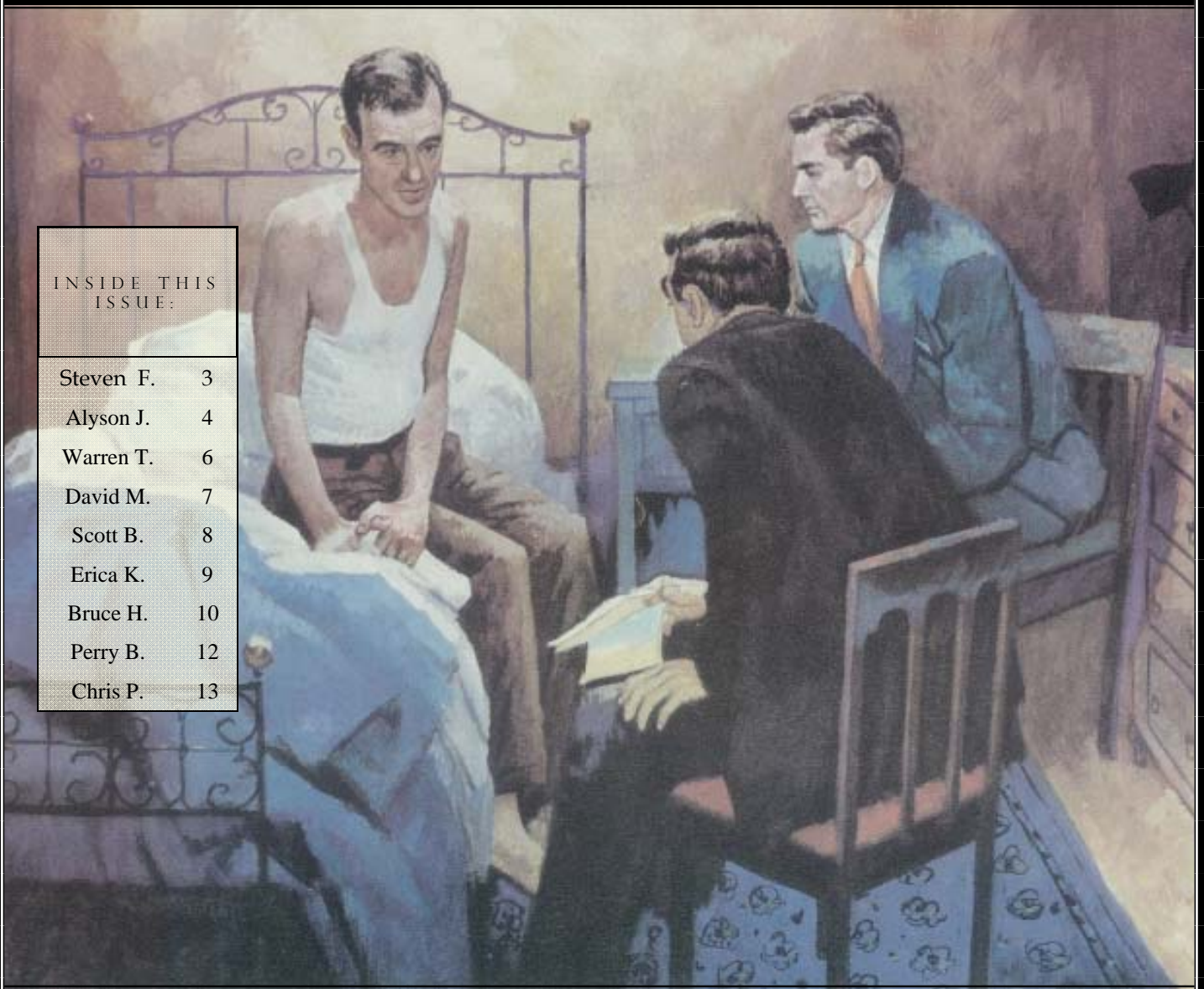


# THE ALUMNI EVENING POST

Volume XIX    Fall 2009

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God, Grant me the serenity to accept the things I can not  
change the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom  
to know the difference

## UPCOMING EVENTS

1st Friday Speaker Meetings  
8pm Day Hospital Auditorium

October 2nd  
November 6th  
December 4th  
January 8th  
February 5th  
March 5th  
April 2nd

Gratitude Dinner  
November 20th - 5pm

New Years Eve Party  
December 31st - 8pm

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information or join us every Thursday at 5:45 at the Sam Anders Alumni Hall on the Ridgeview Campus.

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, email 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 Dawn L at [steering@bellsouth.net](mailto:steering@bellsouth.net) or [dbliistro@bellsouth.net](mailto:dbliistro@bellsouth.net).

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## HEY IT'S YOUR CHOICE

BY: STEVEN F.

Have you ever wondered just how many things in life are made up of choices? Think about it. Just for a minute. Did you choose which car to buy? Did you choose what you had for lunch today? Did you choose to end up in recovery because your life became so miserable you had nowhere else to turn?

I'm sure we'd all like to think we didn't choose to end up at rock bottom, but sadly enough, we made that choice, too. I know some of you reading this right now are saying to yourself "not me. I didn't choose to end up this way." As much as I'd like to agree with you, I can't. You see, I was under the impression that my life became so intolerable because of the way people treated me and somehow always ending up in the wrong place at the wrong time. I was always "under-qualified" or "not good enough." I wasn't smart enough or pretty enough. You judged me by my appearance. I was always "less than." This list could go on and on. Some of you have already added your 2

cents in here while reading this.

Let's stop for a moment and take a little trip back in time. I'll use my lifeline as an example.

I made the choice to study hard and do well in school. This made me book smart, but not wise. I made the choice to drink at an early age and thought I'd found the answer to feel better. Actually,

all I found was a way

"I ended up where I ended up, by walking straight down the middle of the path, every step of the way, by choices I made that took me there.

to not feel, on a temporary basis. I made a choice to hang out with people who were less than and not good enough because they were having all the fun and getting away with it. I made the choice to drop out of school and have more fun with all my drop-out friends. I made the choice to get involved in illegal activities and

sometimes ended up

in the wrong place at the wrong time. I got arrested for making bad choices on more than many occasions.

You see, I taught myself what I thought what was good

and right for me. I didn't take anyone else's advice or direction for the path I chose for myself. So, looking back, I ended up where I ended up, by walking straight down the middle of the path, every step of the way, by choices I made that took me there. I learned that I was never a victim of circumstance. I was a volunteer for all the agony I could stand before I sought recovery.

I can play the denial game and think I just need to be more careful and cut back on some drinking here and there. I'll just do it at home or somewhere safe. I can't speak for you, but I tried that route and all I got was more misery.

Today, I made a choice to not drink or drug. Today, I made a choice to go to a meeting. Today, I made a choice to call my sponsor. Today, I made a choice to do some service work. Today, I made a choice, to thank my Higher Power for another day of sobriety.

Today, you will have a hundred or more opportunities to make choices. Making right choices makes for better living. If you continually make good choices in sobriety, I can assure you, your life will be better than (Continued on Pg 14)

## THE GIFTS OF BEING AN ALUMNI

BY: ALLISON J.

I wish I could say that life will be easy in recovery. After all, we hear others share how great things are going for them. Being clean and sober does not give us an “easy street,” it gives us life on life’s terms. Recovery allows us to walk through the storms of life with honor, dignity and grace. Knowing that drinking, drugging, and/or caving into depression, would cause everything to take a rapid decent into total chaos. Working The Program provides gratitude for the smallest and simplest of things. What is going on here and now is manageable, as long as I stay sober, and do what is suggested.

When it seems like huge waves have crashed down, one after another, I have had to swim even harder and hang on with all my might. I have stepped up my program, meetings, and sponsor and sponsee contacts. I have built lasting relationships with women in the program, performed service at Ridgeview and do what I can to help others. I have been able to spend quality time with family and supportive friends. I’ve spent my evenings reading re-

covery based literature and developing a relationship with God. Today, I know that hope is wondering what God is going to do, faith is knowing that God is doing something.

It is during the storms of life that test our structure and our foundation

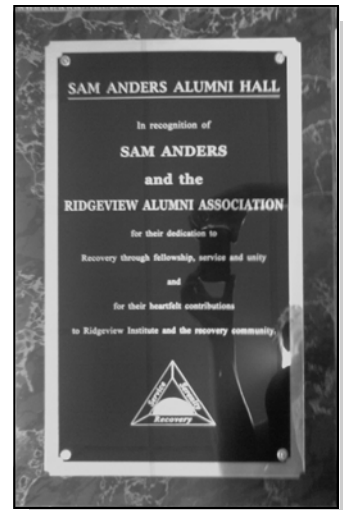
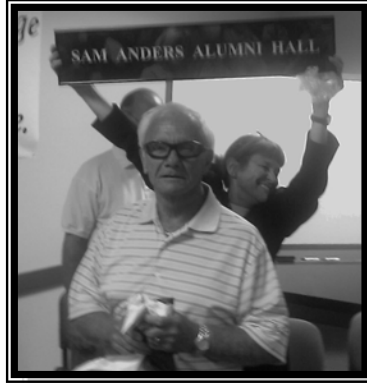
It is because of Ridgeview and being an active Alumni member, that I have received many generous gifts and expressions of love that overflows my heart with emotions. Alumni members have offered me opportunities to make money from cleaning out storage rooms at their office to painting work. Volunteers helped me load and unload a truck for a garage sale and bought items that allowed me to pay rent. Meal tickets have been placed in my hands on Thursdays. Friends have offered to buy my dinner after meetings when groups of Alumni go out-to-eat, just so I can be a part. Then there is the person, who surprised me by forcing \$40 in my hand and refused to take “no” for an answer. I have a new part time job where an Alumni referred me, has trained me, and is now my co-worker. There is my BFF, whom I have been joined at the hip with since we started this journey, who’s life has taken an upward turn when mine took a

downward turn (which is the opposite of where we were several years ago). She has been there for me and has done many gracious acts of kindness. My best friend from High School, a huge supporter of my recovery, paid for me to attend our reunion and spent \$200 on groceries for me. Several days ago, 3 bags of food appeared on my door step, no one has admitted to the kind gesture, which I have graciously shared with others, who are also struggling financially. My family has offered so much financial assistance that without them, I would be living sober under a bridge, or on the streets. It is during the storms of life that test our structure and our foundation (the program and our perseverance), not the calm times. God decided I needed to go through what I am going through, to get to where I am going. This incredible journey is not just about the person I was, or the person I am today, it’s mostly about the person I am becoming.

**SAM ANDERS HONORED**

On September 13, 2009 the Steering Committee was honored to welcome various staff members of Ridgeview at the weekly meeting at Pro North, but were totally unprepared for what was about to happen. Barb Lindenbaum, Director of Clinical Services, announced that Ridgeview is naming the auditorium at Pro North the Sam Anders Alumni Hall. This was a wonderful surprise

to not only Sam, but all of those in attendance that evening, and for the first time, left Sam speechless. Thank you Sam for all you do.



**SPRING FLING DONATIONS  
THANK YOU TO ALL THAT DONATED**

PERSON / PLACE OF BUSINESS	ITEM
AA Auto Doc (Perry Millikan)	3 - Gift Certificates for Oil Change
Allison Jolly	QT Gas card
Anna Bornachelly	Gift Card
Danny Scott	\$100 Cash and \$50 in Give-aways
Dawn & Paul Liistro	Small appliance (Slider maker)
Delores DeFreitas	Bath assortment of lotions and oils
Denise Hardman	Houston's Wildwood \$50 Gift
Don Williams	Fish Fillet Knife Set
Doug Flemings	Framed Photographs
Kirk Robbins	Recovery Books & Literature
Leon Townsend	Gas card - \$25
Mary Beth Ingle	2 Squirt Guns & Dollar General Gift Cards
Mr. Daryl Batey, Charlie Yates Golf Course	2 - Golf for 2 from Charlie Yates Golf Course
Perry Banks	DVD Movie
Publix - South Cobb & E/W Connector	Basketball Goal set
Ralph Howell	BBQ Tool Set
Robin Hall	Bath set Gift Basket
Sam Anders	Gift Certificates to Chiccos
Stan Dixon	Gift Card @ Relish
Tarkenton Financial, Inc.	Autographed Football (authenticated)
Warren Taylor	14k gold AA pendant & Christian Cross pendant
Woodstock Antiques	Gift Certificate (\$50.00 value)
Yolanda @ Fuzion Hair Studio	Man & Woman's Hair Cut Certificates



**BROKENNESS**  
 BY: WARREN T.

My one and only goal, after I found alcohol as a teenager, was to drink like a gentleman. But, it was never to be. For a short few years I might have had some fun while still in High School. Even early on at 17 years old, I acquired my first DUI; then over the next many years until I was 34, I averaged one per year. At age 30 I had to serve a year in jail because the State was really disturbed about my drinking and driving. Of course after that I went back at it, feeling that law enforcement was picking on me, since all my problems were in the Atlanta area.

At age 35, I started trying to stop drinking and going to AA Meetings, that I hated.

After 11 dry years, at 58, my drinking had been intervened on again by a horrible set of circumstances, always much worse than the last. I was dry 5 days when I was mostly carried into Ridgeview Institute. I had experienced what the Big Book calls, "indescribable, incomprehensible, demoralization," Alcohol had won but I did not need treatment again. As a condition of staying married, I had no

choice but Ridgeview. So I had to endure the nut house one more time. I hated Ridgeview and everyone in it, especially the staff. I was angry; I hated to be there. After all, I had remained dry for 11 years. I knew more about AA than the staff did. I just needed to dust off a little, go tackle the world again and regain my status in society.

At this place that I did not ever want to be, my 'Higher Power' met me. Right then and right there.

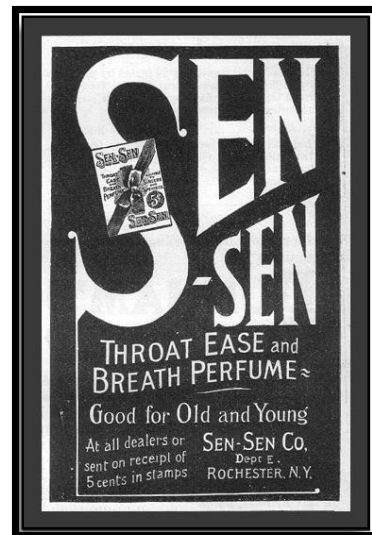
But, this time I would keep going to meetings the rest of my life. I knew what was best for me, not Ridgeview.

At the time of my discharge, my wife and Ridgeview pressured me into Anger Management Therapy. I had displayed something like rage while in treatment, so one more time Ridgeview meddled into my business.

Dry date in May 2002. By December 2002, I was a maniac. Hatred and rage, fighting everybody and everything. My therapist had given me a deadline on work that I had refused to do. My sponsor yelled at me that he was firing me for not doing work in the Big Book, that I refused to do. I needed the relief that faithful liquor would

give in seconds. If I drank, I had been assured not to come home and the marriage was over for sure. Suicide became a popular solution; a dozen bottles of whiskey should do it.

Later, at home after experiencing a break down at my Home Group, I was shaking all over; my body was aching with tension, I was crying, clutching a handful of books. I was broken, I was a failure, there was nothing left, the fight was over. At this place that I did not ever want to be, my 'Higher Power' met me. Right then and right there, my life changed and it really has changed. That was 7 years ago. I have experienced a life second to none and have been "rocketed into the 4th Dimension."





DISCOVERY IN RECOVERY

BY: DAVID M.

I thought I'd done all the discovering one could possibly do when I was using. I'd explored the world of alcohol. 'Not much there but drunk. I'd explored the world of pot. 'Not much there but stoned. I'd explored the world of cocaine, and a bunch of other mind bending drugs. 'Not much there but high, and mind bent. I'd explored the world of larceny. 'Not much there but theft. I'd explored the world of deceit. 'Not much there but, well, deceit. In all these worlds I had explored there was naught, but what I already knew I would find. No discovery there. Still, I kept exploring. I was looking for belonging, compassion, and tolerance. I'd never found them anywhere else. But they weren't *there* either. I was looking for ease and comfort. But neither were *they* there. I looked for friendship, and love, but

they too were out of reach. I was desperate. I was alone, forlorn, and could not stand myself. I was restless, and discontent. I felt despicable, and hated. I began to feel like Alice, having fallen through the rabbit hole. The hurrier I went, the behinder I got, for during my exploration, I had fallen through the hole in my soul, and the more I scraped the sides on the way down, the farther I fell. The scraping was me trying to fill up the hole, and to stop myself falling. The hole was infinite, and my feeble efforts not so. I was lost!

Into the dark pit I descended, finally giving up, turning over to someone or something else control of my destiny. By putting away my own de-

vices, I *discovered* new, and better ones. By surrendering to my disease, I *discovered* a treatment for it. By admitting that I had no power, I *discovered* a source of infinite power. I *discovered* that friendship, belong-

I was restless, and discontent. I felt despicable, and hated. I began to feel like Alice, having fallen through the rabbit hole.

ing, compassion, tolerance, and love *would* catch up to me if I would just be still long enough. By admitting my faults to my fellows I *discovered* that I am not alone in this struggle, and that if I just shut-up and listen, I will *discover* that those voices of reason and calm are actually speaking to me. All

these things I have found in recovery, but the most important thing I have *discovered* is *me!*


Made in Essential

"To achieve what the world calls success a man must attend strictly to business and keep a little in advance of the times."—E. H. Harriman.

Established 1877

**FOSTER & WALDO**

*This Christmas-*  
**Minneapolis Kneels**  
 to the **Monarch of Radio-**  
 the New AC All-Electric  
**FRESHMAN**  
**EQUAPHASE**

**I HAVEN'T HAD MY COFFEE YET DON'T MAKE ME KILL YOU**

**U M , W H E R E A M I ?**  
 B Y : S C O T T B .

I woke up in my room in cottage C confused and nervous. The reality of it had not sunk in. But the feeling in my body assured me it was very real. I was in detox. Again. The pieces of the day and night before were foggy. I remember the argument with my new wife, Wendy, the morning before. The scene was not unfamiliar, having happened several times before. It usually played out like this; I'm in the shower, waking up, the hot water feeling good, I draw open the curtain and there on the sink top is a syringe or two. Mine. Found by the one person who I hid it from the most. Caught. Tell her a lie? How many more would she believe?

This time was slightly different though. This time she noticed the long red line running up and down the underside of my right arm, the marks that I guarded from all eyes. "Teddy scratched me," was all I could come up with. I shut the curtain and hoped she would go away. She did, but the final straw had been reached.

Some 24 hours later,

after a near half bottle of pills and with a very foggy memory, here I was. The sickness not on me yet, but the check definitely in the mail.

How did this happen? How did I let it happen? Didn't I know better? See, I went through all of this before. I GOT sober. I STAYED sober. For six years. I should have known bet-

They took me back. All of them: Wendy, work, the meetings, my sponsor. How lucky and fortunate.

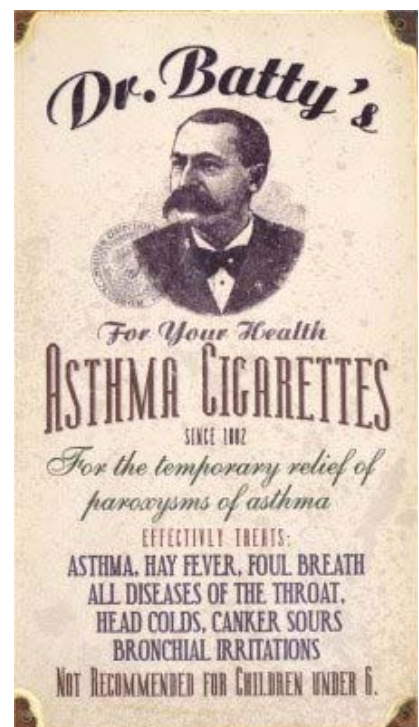
ter, right? Well, knowing and doing is not the same thing.

And here I was. Not at work. Not in my home with my wife and dogs, but here, in detox.

That was my painful reality about 7 months ago. What followed was probably similar to what you went through. I got real sick. I didn't eat or sleep for three weeks. The deadened emotions of opiate slumber awoke with shocking intensity. And the senses! My pupils burst open, unable to hide from the fluorescent lights of the day hospital, everything in bright color. Groups of people huddled together in what seemed like impossibly small rooms. Fear. Guilt. Shame. Ugh.

How this only happened 7 short months ago seems more like a dream. How quickly the mind and body are able to rebound, but not without work.

With help, I clawed my way out of that hole I was in. At first hour by hour, then the days turned into weeks and before long I was home again. Then back at work? They took me back. All of them: Wendy, work, the meetings, my sponsor. How lucky and fortunate. None of this seemed possible then. There was no way out. But there was. The door opened for me again (Continued pg 9)





## 7,776,000 SECONDS

BY: ERICA K.

...7,776,000 of the longest seconds of my life. 90 days is really not a huge span of time, if you think about it, but it felt like forever. I feel like an entirely different person compared to where I started ninety days ago--a better, more aware, more just, more honest person. I've morphed from the angry, selfish, bitter, poisonous caterpillar into the kind, angelic, beacon of all-that-is-holy butterfly! OK, too much.

Liquor truly stole my life from me for longer than I care to remember (and some of it I couldn't remember if I

wanted to). I had lost any semblance of a connection to a Higher Power; my heart had hardened and my mind grew soft. All I had once liked about myself faded. I had been kind, thoughtful, funny, and clever. No longer. I didn't even want to be around myself; how could I fault the many I drove away?

In truth, I think that cleansing my body of alcohol

has detoxified both my body and my spirit. I am ready to reach out and accept the ex-

I've morphed from the angry, selfish, bitter, poisonous caterpillar into the kind, angelic, beacon of all-that-is-holy butterfly! . . .

tended hand of life again. I will refuse it no longer. Even as I revel in a newfound freedom from alcohol, though, I remind myself that 90 days clean is still just one sip away from captivity again. With faith, friends and diligence, I hope and pray daily to never see the inside of that cell again.

UM, WHERE AM I?  
CONTINUED

and I walked, or was pushed by those that love me, right through.

The miracles that I have witnessed in my life since then are incredible. The work has been intense. I still have different types of therapy, sometimes four days a week, plus meetings and visits with Ed. Through all of this I have been relearning how to live. My self-esteem was real bad. I did negative talk all day without even realizing it. When she asked me to say posi-

tive affirmations, it was so hard to even think of one. I believed I was the stupidest, most uninteresting, unattractive person in the room. I feared people and what they thought about me. I try to replace the negative inner dialog lines with new ones. I still don't like crowds. I hate attracting attention to myself. So much so that while in-patient, my case manager made me wear my clothes inside out, and my hair in a pony tail standing straight up on the top of my

head, for three straight days. She wanted to prove to me that people looking at me, or God forbid, talking about me wouldn't kill me. It didn't, but I was certain it would.

I love my new life. Everything is better, more real. Simple things, like reading books or a pretty day mean so much to me again.

It's great to be among the living.

# LEARNING TO LIVE WITH EMOTIONS BY: BRUCE H.

*Maybe this will help someone, especially in the first few weeks of sobriety, or remind someone of where they were. By the grace of God, AA and the Alumni, I am no longer this person.*

*My sobriety date is April 20<sup>th</sup>, I wrote the following 2 weeks later. I was barely aware of what AA was and knew nothing of the wonderful friends I was soon to make as part of AA and the Alumni. I had only a glimpse of the many wonderful changes physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually that were about to occur. My thoughts wandered to one statement.*

**How I reacted to daily events in my life were a reflection of how I felt about myself.**

**This was evident to those around me, but not the almighty Bruce.**

May 3<sup>rd</sup>: I have been feeling worthless, angry, who cares, don't bother me, are you kidding an idiot could do this in half the time. But, I say nothing, smile a false smile, walk away, retreat, stay away from people because I don't want to confront the emotion or lose control.

Self-love, forgive myself and others does not come easily if at all. I don't / didn't love myself. I now see this changing daily and I am proud and happy with the changes I see. I don't worry so much about the

past and little of the future. I have faith, that given to God, I will survive. I have started to find a ray of hope that I don't have to be afraid anymore. I can feel the emotions. However, expressing them may take longer.

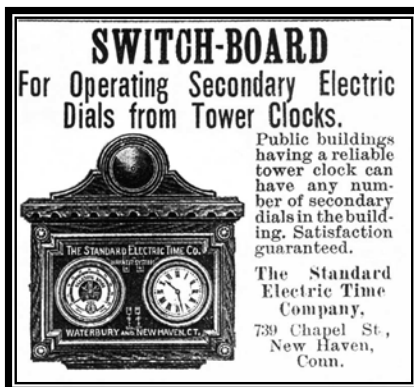
There was little real emotion in my family growing up. Praise, but no hugs, I love you, etc. This carried over into my adult life. I show little emotion. I didn't even cry when my wife passed away after a short bout with cancer. I wouldn't allow myself those feelings. All there was later, in private, was a little crying and a lot of sad songs, depression, anger and drinking more and more. My approach has always been, don't let anyone in or close, lest you get hurt (protect yourself from danger at all costs). Consequently, I have felt little real enjoyment, especially in recent

years; love, intimacy, real laughing, grief, happiness, sadness - just depression, low self esteem and anger. I convinced myself, I could handle it. I don't need you or others. As a result there was no cleansing or revitalization, just status quo. Isolated emotionally and socially. It was easier to make friends with a beer in a crowded bar.

Isolated emotionally and socially. It was easier to make friends with a beer in a crowded bar.

I have repressed my emotions so long that last week a friend told me it was hard to tell if I was happy or angry since my expression never changed. In the past I overheard someone say - "that is the most serious, sad and depressed person I have ever seen". I was just numb to it all. There were no emotions other than guilt, sadness, loneliness and depression. My life was so miserable; I hated every thing about it. I would let people take advantage of me, ignore bad behavior, even if it hurt me. Just put on the mask; anything for a little praise or acceptance.

I ended up isolating myself not only from my feel-



## LEARNING TO LIVE WITH EMOTIONS CONTINUED

ings but also physically and socially. I made excuses not to go to an event, I'd make myself believe that it would be boring, I would have to actually socialize with someone that I really didn't give a damn about. I didn't want to let anyone in or let them really know the real me when I don't even know myself. I also had to hide the drinking. I didn't want to show up for an evening event half in the bag.

My life was governed by 3 rules:

Don't talk – might offend someone or let them really see me

Don't trust – can't get hurt that way

Don't feel – again don't get hurt, don't say anything that might hurt someone and don't let them see the real me.

Hide, hide, hide – alcohol can be my friend, withdraw socially, ignore my feelings. I've always liked the saying: "The more people I meet the more I like my dog". He doesn't give me any crap, doesn't judge and just loves me for me. I became an emotional cripple hiding behind a mask. Who cares anyway, I won't have to deal with them again or very often. I don't have to really be honest. Just be

close to the truth since it is easier to remember especially if I've been drinking.

This makes for a lonely existence if you call that living. My friend became alcohol. It made me forget or suppress emotions of: happy; sad; anger; joy; intimacy; longing for friendship. It helped me rationalize my behavior – I've been a loner all my life, I don't need friends, intimacy or social contact. As the years went by my withdrawal became worse and worse. I don't say that my drinking became worse. That was always a constant – excess.

So on to the future of living with long suppressed emotions or emotions I don't even recognize or know. I am finally opening up to a few, starting to know myself, taking time for myself, changing my patterns and behaviors. I said no to a friend that I have been co-dependent on and whom I think is just using me when convenient. I've started to say no to others. If they are hurt or don't understand, I really don't care. If they don't like the change and can't accept me for who I am

and that I am for the first time putting myself first and dealing with these strange emotions – they can just move on. They probably weren't worth the time I spent trying to please them anyway. I need new behaviors, changes and new activities, new friends, positive people with a sense of self worth and caring and willing to reach out. I need to follow those examples and become the man I have always wanted to be. I tended to hang out with drunks, successful at work but now I see them as emotionally immature and acting like children.

AA has started to teach me that I am not alone. I don't feel the fear or anxiety about admitting my drinking problem and depression or struggle with self-esteem. Each person I meet in AA has a little of me in them. Opening up although slowly makes me feel a little better each day, happier with myself and taking time for myself to explore those emotions. Even being alone doesn't seem so lonely. I am becoming more content with myself; exploring the emotions. I have been reflecting on my choices and choices of friend but not dwelling on the past. (continued pg 14)

Each person I meet in AA has a little of me in them.

# FULL CIRCLE

BY: PERRY B.

When I first came into AA, I used meetings as a place of safety and to fill up my 90 and 90 card. They gave me something to do, somewhere to go to replace the empty time in which I could have gotten lost in myself, which is not a good place to be then or now. I asked and received a sponsor who suggested that I attend a particular men's meeting....and make coffee. I made coffee for a year. That sponsor of mine was sure determined to make my life miserable, having to commit to a duty in which I had to be there and be responsible, but I met many men just like me. It was necessary for them to know me, I had the coffee! That wily sponsor continued to give me good advice.

" I came to believe in the principles and how they were leading me into a better life"

around the block, just one block not many, and have another chance.

I began to go to meetings not because I needed that safe harbor or to make coffee, but because I could. I came to believe in the principles and how they were leading me into a better life. Embracing AA and finding a power greater than myself has given me the needed actions to replace my escape mechanism that was alcohol. Alcohol was not even my problem. If it were, cottage C got me clean and that would have been enough. My perception of daily life was my problem.

Completion of the 12 steps and daily living in Steps 10, 11, and 12 brings me understanding that continues to grow. There is no doubt that I will never reach complete understanding, AA nirvana if you will, and no reason to stop trying. I still only know a little. I cannot rely on my experience thus far; to rest in the knowledge that I have "got it", for tomorrow is another day and another chance for some hitherto unknown sce-

nario to be placed in front of me. Life would be impossible for me without this 12 step program.

Each day becomes a day that I must be of service. The book says to carry these principles into daily life, so I must be of service to this Family and others outside of AA, too. If I do this, and I try, I have to live my waking hours in the program. I must take what I have learned and act on it. I have to continue to be aware of the old ways as I return to the world that I had to leave, armed with a new perception and a new way of life, full circle.



**FOSTER & WALDO**

**This Christmas — Make Things Easier for Dad!**

**After a Hard Day's Work — Then What?**

Every day dad spends eight hours in the roaring turmoil of the hurrying business world. Some days business cares try his nerves beyond endurance. The family makes matters worse by telling him he's grouchy and unsociable. But, there's a remedy — RADIO! This Christmas dad's boys and girls should let the "nick nacks" go, pool their "pin money" and give dad a



**New AC All-Electric Freshman Equaphase**

The NEW EQUAPHASE offers dad an ESCAPE from the cage of every-day grind. It will enable him to let go! . . . And, for the rest of the family, it brings adventure, romance and thrills that you lack in your daily lives. It takes you to a wonderful new world . . . And there's no fun going out when there's more fun at home.

As I worked the steps....and made coffee, I began to grow. Guided by a sponsor and others, I was acting correctly when my thoughts dictated otherwise. With growing trust, when guidance said turn left, I turned left when I knew I should turn right. When I didn't follow that advice, I could go

## AL - ANON CORNER

SELF PITY  
BY CHRIS P.

What kind of stuff is self pity made of, that it can entrench itself in my mind and keep me miserable? It may be envy of those who have more of the material things – better house, a finer car. It could be any resentment of monotony, not having enough relief from the daily grind. It may be because I am critical of others: “Why can’t he do it my way; why did she say or do this or that?” Or bitterness, because we’re lonely if the spouse has merely switched from nightly sessions at a bar to a nightly AA meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The major form my complaining took was to ask, “Why me? Why was I afflicted with such a mean, drunken husband that I had to learn to protect myself from him? Why did I get a husband who couldn’t hold down a job and provide for our family. Why couldn’t my children have their friends come over without suffering embarrassment?”

Although Al-Anon didn’t seem to fit my needs at first, mainly because I wanted sympathy, I’m glad I kept coming back.

Week after week I heard the stories of others who had it much worse than I did. I’ll never forget the night I drove home after a meeting when my inner question changed. Instead of the same lament of “Why me?” this new question, “Why not

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been and actually felt grateful for my past.<sup>2</sup>

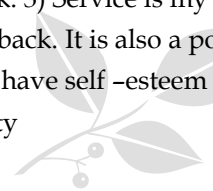
An Al-Anon meeting is a great place to observe how various people react to their circumstances. Those who have the most to be grateful for often grumble and complain. Others, living desperate and even tragic lives, somehow keep cheerful and manage to get some joy out of what little they do have.<sup>3</sup> Experience, Strength and Hope:

Self pity comes from

me?” ,popped into my head. Why did I think I was so special that I should have escaped the trials of life when no one else was exempt? I thought of how much worse my life could have

concentrating on the negative aspects of life. Sometimes I become so bogged down with dissatisfaction that I can’t see where I am or where I’m going. When I take time to “Think,” I realize that negativity keeps my life at a standstill. Al-Anon has helped me discover that, while it’s good to acknowledge whatever I feel, I have a choice about where to focus my attention. I’m challenged to find positive qualities in myself, my circumstances, and other human beings. As I attend meetings, list the things I am grateful for, and talk with other Al-Anon members, these attributes become apparent- if I’m willing to see them.<sup>4</sup>

Mine has been a defensive recovery consisting of three components: 1) Meetings are where I found the fellowship I so badly needed; 2) Steps & Slogans are the bag of tools the keep me on track; 3) Service is my way of giving back. It is also a positive way to have self-esteem replace self-pity



<sup>1</sup> One Day At A Time In Al-Anon, p. 191

<sup>2</sup> Hope For Today, p. 346

<sup>3</sup> One Day At A Time In Al-Anon, p. 191

<sup>4</sup> Courage to Change, p.279

## LEARNING TO LIVE WITH EMOTIONS CONTINUED

What's done is done. I need to move on. I can only make amends to those that I really hurt and stop being an emotional cripple, take care of myself first, but don't over think it.

I went to church last Sunday for the first time in a long time and then to an AA meeting. An uplifting morning and spent the rest of the day alone, quite content with myself and not afraid. At church I realized that I can't do it alone and I need God to guide me and walk with me (Footprints in the sand). I've always known it and heard it, but just didn't want to listen. After all if you listen and follow God's will for fellowship, you have to open up and reveal yourself to others for who you really are - someone who is hiding emotions of hope, fears, tears, joy, grief, anger and the list goes on. I had an epiphany before the AA meeting. I realized God created me for a purpose, He accepts me just as I am and patiently waits for me to

### HEY IT'S YOUR CHOICE (CONTINUED)

you could ever possibly imagine. If your sober life doesn't reap the benefits you think you deserve, then perhaps you don't deserve them. Sobriety won't make you rich or pretty. Sobriety won't mend all the wreck-

realize this. When I accept this gift, He will begin to reveal this to me and I can start the process of healing a mind and body so long neglected by my addiction. I can learn to live and I won't find it so hard to deal with the flood of emotions that grip me each day and now I have to deal with them.

Shame and guilt - I've felt those emotions long enough - did I hurt someone, why couldn't I have spontaneously supported someone I knew was in pain and needed me right then and there.

I never thought I could change, but lately I find it not so hard to speak up for myself, be honest, reflect on whether I was honest, and change my patterns and behavior. When I thought about going to church, I was sure I could come up with a good excuse not to go, but I went and even agreed to attend an after church luncheon/function in 2 weeks. I first figured, just say 'NO'. Then I told

age of your past. What it will do is make a better person out of the heart you left behind when you started making bad choices. If all else fails, you can always return to the miserable life that got you here in the first place. It's your choice.

myself "you are isolating yourself again, afraid to let someone in and show some emotions. You need to make some new friends, be more social, let them know who you are, have faith that your emotions are a positive reflection of who you really are and you are worth it." So, I said yes. I figured, what the hell; in for a penny, in for a pound.

Finally, I have begun the process of living with my emotions instead of suppressing them. Let the past go. No more self-pity, you are only hurting yourself. Emotions: I am coming to terms with them. I felt good saying no to a co-dependent, saying yes to church, yes to a social event and yes finally and truly opening up to my emotions.





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

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

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

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

**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)

(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.

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SMYRNA, GA 30080

## HELPING THOSE IN NEED

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

serving 6 different meals and provided gifts at Christmas for those less fortunate. Thank you to all that helped with your time and money. We are again looking for volunteers to assist in preparing and serving meals and more importantly, we are seeking donations. For the cost of a cup of coffee from that

special coffee shop, you can help us in our quest to feed the homeless. Please consider pledging \$5.00 a month to help us give to those in need.

