

VOLUME XXVII

THE VIEW

NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDGEVIEW ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION STEERING COMMITTEE

ACCEPTANCE IS THE KEY

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THE
RIDGEVIEW
ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION
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30080

The best way to **escape** from the
past is not to avoid or forget it,
*but to **accept and forgive** it!*

Moonlight-path

UPCOMING EVENTS

| | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------------|---|
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | May 3, 2013 | Day Hospital |
| Sam Anders Serenity Scramble Golf Tournament | 10:00am | May 13, 2013 | Dogwood Golf Club – Austell, GA 9am Registration |
| Spring Fling Weekend | 6:30pm | May 17, 2013 | Ala-Non Speaker Meeting, Day Hospital |
| | 8:00pm | | AA Speaker Meeting, Day Hospital |
| Picnic, Cookout & Fun | 12:00noon | May 19, 2013 | Tennis Courts, Swimming Pool Area |
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | June 7, 2013 | Day Hospital |
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | July 5, 2013 | Day Hospital (tentative date due to holiday) |
| Alumni Steering Committee Summer Retreat | 4:00pm | July 12-14, 2013 | Camp Donnie Brown |
| Atlanta Round-up | | August 1-4, 2013 | Westin – Atlanta Perimeter North |
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | August 1, 2013 | Day Hospital |
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | September 6, 2013 | Day Hospital |
| 1 st Friday | 7:45pm | October 4, 2013 | Day Hospital |

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

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 or Sean C., bostonsean99@gmail.com using "Newsletter" in the subject line.

Warren Taylor: *Communications Chair*

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Sean Cleary: *Co-chair, Minutes*

Delores DeFreitas and Dorothy Seiden: *Bulletin Boards*

ACCEPTANCE PRAYER

"THE 12 STEP PRAYER BOOK"

BILL PITTMAN, AUTHOR

God grant me the serenity to accept my addiction gracefully and humbly. Grant me also the ability to absorb the teachings of the Program which by its past experience is trying to help me. Teach me to be grateful for the help I receive.

Guide me, Higher Power, in the path of tolerance and under-

standing of my fellow members and fellow humans; guide me away from the path of criticism, intolerance, jealousy and envy of my friends. Let me not prejudge, let me not become a moralist, keep my tongue and thoughts from malicious and idle gossip.

Help me to grow in stat-

ure spiritually, mentally and morally. Grant me that greatest reward of all rewards, that of being able to help my fellow sufferers in their search out of the addiction that has encompassed me and them.

Above all, help me to be less critical and impatient with myself.

ACCEPTANCE IS THE KEY

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.

It tells me in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous that "acceptance is the answer to all my problems today." (Big Book, 3rd edition, page 449) This is true although I would not have believed it had I not experienced it for myself. I could accept things intellectually but I had difficulty accepting them emotionally. For instance, I always knew I was an alcoholic. Every time I picked up a drink, I didn't know what was going to happen because I couldn't stop. However, until the idea that I was an alcoholic went from my head, down into my gut, I had no hope of recovery. It was impossible for me to have sobriety until I accepted the fact that alcohol is a deadly poison to me and that I can't have so much as a drop.

What followed acceptance was faith; at least in my case. I knew I had to change but how was I going to do that?

Who could I trust and most importantly, would it work? At first the little bit of faith I had told me that Ridgeview Institute could help me. After that, I found hope in Alcoholics Anonymous. Eventually I

came to believe that maybe a Higher Power could become part of my life and would be on my side as I struggled to stay sober. I had to accept the fact that "God either is or He isn't." (Big Book, page 53) To be honest, the acceptance of a Higher Pow-

er comes and goes, even to this day. It's usually there but there are some times when the assurance of a Higher Power leaves me and I start questioning the existence of God again. (Damn good Catholic I am, huh?) This is when my faith falters and I am left to self-reliance and thinking on my own. I've been trained through good people in AA and at Ridgeview to never stop praying. When acceptance leaves me, prayer and talking with another alcoholic will jump start my "spiritual stall out" and will inject me with faith once again.

After I completed my 4th and 5th steps, I had to accept the fact that I had some character defects that weren't exactly charming.

In order for me to work on these, I had to accept a certain amount of humility and realize that I am human and that God made me this way. Much to my astonishment, I realized that I don't have power over everything. The solution today is not just to

work the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous but to live by their principles as best as I can. I will never be completely free from emotions such as anger, fear, pride, ego etc. Again, I have to accept the fact that I am human and I will have some days that

are better than others. It's all in my perception.

One of the biggest obstacles I have found regarding acceptance is personalities. Until I came into AA, I could only find fault with others. This of course made me a victim and I was always clashing with someone or something. My instinct was to run. By accepting people, places, things and situations as they are and not trying to manipulate the outcome, I can live a much happier life.

As I have travelled along my road of recovery, I have concluded that the learning continues. Acceptance has been a common thread in my sobriety. The lessons never stop and I won't ever be cured of alcoholism. Some of my greatest pain and experiences have turned out to be my most valuable spiritual lessons. The Serenity Prayer states that there are some things I can't change. The awesome gift of acceptance reveals itself when I can walk through controversy and am assured that my Higher Power is always with me.

Finally, I have learned that "my serenity is directly proportional to my level of acceptance." (Big Book, 3rd Edition, Page 452) It's funny but I call GA-400 my "spiritual barometer". When I

I had to accept a certain amount of humility and realize that I am human and that God made me this way.

"acceptance is the answer to all my problems today." (Big Book, 3rd Edition, page 449)

THE LITTLE BOY

SUBMITTED BY: DANNY P.

An old man of the mountains traveled into town one day to find a little boy he knew but lost along the way.

The lines of rugged living lay like furrows on his face, and tears plowed through those dusty rows to clear the way for grace.

Some say it was poor choices, some say disease or fate that drove him up that stony road and shut away the gate.

I say, for sanctuary the elder sought repose beneath a verdant canopy where mountain laurel grows.

And in the spirit of an ancient spring-fed, sparkling stream his thirsty soul drew sustenance, and Heaven was his dream.

Though weary from the wayward ways embarked upon in youth a wisdom gained in wandering had etched his stone with truth.

But broken years still left for him a longing so profound to muster all remaining will and walk familiar ground.

So with his only trapping an old heart that longed for home and bygone days of innocence burned by the urge to roam, he limped along towards the gate he'd fastened long ago to wall away his brokenness the world could never know.

That day he walked on Holy ground: a churchyard near a grave; a grassy spot beneath an oak that "progress" chose to save; the playground where, in fantasy, he'd wiled away his time; the schoolyard where a snow-capped dame had taught his lines to rhyme; the lot upon which stood the timbers of his childhood home; (a mansion in his memory, with ivy overgrown) his double-secret hideaway: a fort for all the boys who'd bravely fought marauding bands and shared in manly joys.

And as the sun was sinking down behind his mountain wall, he passed the spot where love's first kiss had bade its beckon call.

IN MEMORIAM

Rick Welch

Laura Andrews

Dawn Haim

ACCEPTANCE IS KEY

SUBMITTED BY: BYRD III.

Traffic on the freeways in Atlanta sucks every rush hour morning or evening. If it rains, traffic is even worse. If it snows an inch or two and the temperature drops below 32 degrees, the city is going to shut down. I'm not going to agree with every decision my boss on the job makes. Kids will be kids and they frequently make decisions that their parents don't agree with. Every person who enters into the program of recovery won't recover.

Some things you just have to learn to accept.

When I walked into the doors of recovery my first battle was with denial. It's the same battle that all of us faced when given the opportunity to admit that we had an addiction problem. For me with my tremendous girth of pride and an ego that was astronomical, to admit I had an addiction problem was to be a monumental defeat. Surrender to alcohol and drugs, not me! To say that alcohol and drugs were in control and that I was not, was an unconscionable thought. It was painful for me to sit in those first group sessions and say, **"My name is— and I'm an alcoholic and addict."** I looked at the group leader who requested that statement from me and thought,

"That woman don't know me, I can't admit to that."

Finally, feeling the pressure of the group and the eyes of what seemed like the world around me, I

...we had an addiction problem. For me with my tremendous girth of pride and an ego that was astronomical, to admit I had an addiction problem was to be a monumental defeat.

softly whispered the words they all wanted to hear, but more importantly the words I needed to say.

"I'm— and I'm an alcoholic and addict."

If honesty is the principle behind the first step, then acceptance is the spark that lights the fire of honesty and begins dousing the flame of denial. In Chapter 3 of the Big Book, ***"More About Alcoholism"*** it

states, ***"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery."*** Acceptance of my addiction problem was my first lesson learned in recovery and it has provided me the fuel I needed to string together quite a few days of sobriety, one day at a time.

It has not always been easy though to learn to accept my sobriety, my situation in life, the consequences of good and bad decisions, people, places and things or just dealing with life on life terms. Just like my recovery and the 12 steps

that guide my life's pathway now, I have had to learn to practice acceptance on a daily basis. I've had to learn to control my urge to control, my compulsion to manage, organize, arrange and label the lives of other people. I've had to learn to accept situations and people as they are instead of how I would like them to be. I've had to learn that painful situations in life lead to growth and further development into the kind of person my Higher Power intended me to be. I've had to learn that I should constantly strive for ***"progress not perfection"***.

In ***"As Bill Sees It"*** on pg.44, Bill writes, " Our very first problem is to accept our present circumstances as they are, ourselves as we are, and

the people around us as they are. Again and again, we shall need to return to that unflattering point of departure. This is an exercise in acceptance that we can profitably practice every day of our lives."

I've had to learn to accept situations and people as they are instead of how I would like them to be.

This passage I frequently reread when I am stuck in my own head and having trouble accepting people, places or situations in life that go against my grain. Through it all I've learned and got better at practicing acceptance and recognizing what the difference between my will and what is God's will for me. Practicing acceptance in all of my life situations and circumstances has

Continued on Page 8

ACCEPTED AA & MYSELF BEFORE I LOST EVERYTHING

SUBMITTED BY: DOROTHY S.

It started with fruity drinks. When I was younger and single I'd gravitate towards them for their sweetness. I did not even really like what they did to my head. It was not until I was married and had all the demands of entertaining friends, my husband's colleagues and clients that the pressure became unrelenting and only a glass of Jack Daniels would help. I was soon in love with the Tennessee whiskey. It gave me the ability to be energetic, high, and entertaining. It was the easy answer to any and all my problems—or so I thought.

The first few years were manageable. I was able to raise our three children in a stable home, entertain guests, and stay very involved with my church and community. My husband even bragged that I handled my liquor well and that I was a "two-fisted drinker." We traveled all over the world, from Norway to Polynesia, Prague, to Paris, to Porte au Prince, Berlin, Bermuda, and Belize. It was then that I discovered "uppers" and "downers." No more sluggish mornings for me. Alcohol helped me entertain in the evenings and drugs allowed me to get moving in the morning. I had never had passed out from my drinking before, but I started to now. First with friends, but soon my behavior even with my husband's colleagues became unacceptable. I'd drink so much he would have to carry me to the car where he would drop me in the backseat, disgusted, and leave

me there when we arrived home. I would crawl out of the car and sleep it off in the grass or in our toolshed. Thank goodness we lived in Miami where the nights were rarely cold.

I knew I was an alcoholic when I sometimes found myself drunk in the morning. This along with the use of uppers could have very well killed me. At this point my children had all become grown and left home. Without the focus on domestic life that had lent

structure to my days before, my life quickly went down the toilet. It was not long before my husband said it was A.A. or divorce.

I went to A.A. to stop drinking, but I continued my drug use. When my husband became critically ill I turned to drugs, including marijuana, to deal with the overwhelming feelings of fear and loss.

My husband even bragged that I handled my liquor well and that I was a "two-fisted drinker."

Somehow in this time I was able to stay by his side throughout his illness. Before he died he forgave me for all the trouble I had caused.

After his death I dropped even further. There were days I could not get out of bed. I was a selfish, self-centered, self-pitying, resentful lump under the blankets. I would spend entire weekends in my closet drinking and smoking weed, isolated from

the world. My own children were embarrassed and began to avoid me.

Finally my daughter invited me to visit her in Atlanta and she offered to take me to Emory for detoxing. At that point I was sick and tired of being sick and tired and was willing to

do anything in order to change. I was willing to truly accept what A.A. had to offer and surrender to the program. At the same time I read the book: "I ain't much baby, but I'm all I got" by, Jess Lair. I

offered what I had left of myself (and it wasn't much) and A.A. accepted me.

I LISTENED CLOSELY to everything Ridgeview had to offer. With Sam's help and my sponsor Delores, I started to grow a little each day instead of dying a little each day. As the community at Ridgeview accepted me, I accepted A.A. as my new "way of life." I sold my house in Miami and moved to Atlanta so I could be part of the alumni community. It's been six years since I had any desire to drug or drink and I'm convinced it's because I made the program my way of life.

I've now earned back the respect of my adult children. My advice to anyone new to the program is to "stick with the winners," get involved with the alumni or if you live too far away, get INVOLVED with your home group whether it's A.A., N.A., E.A. I love my family in the alumni group and I'm extremely grateful for all that has been taught to me.

ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

SUBMITTED BY: DOUG F.

Recovery is for life?

Are you kidding me?

Those were some of the thoughts that I had in the early days and months of my Recovery. How could this possibly be for life? No more cocktails for the rest of my life? No more prescriptions of Klonopin? Why did I have to accept this? I spent many hours thinking of all the good things in life I would miss. I focused on each and every negative I could make up and how all this was so unfair to me. After all I was a good man, right?

After all, the booze and pills had made my life more... More what?

More pain, aching needs, sweaty anticipation, violent shakes, losing the ability to form words, lost money, lost memories, lost friends, and lost loves; ruined trips, horrid holidays, bad tem-

pers, sadness, regret, and a complete loss of self.

No more future.

When my past became forefront in my mind, and when I came to realize the toll my addictions had taken on my life, a sudden thought came to mind.

In order to heal I had to accept the price this life of addiction had and would cost me in the future. I had to accept that I was just not like other folks. One drink or one pill will never be enough. I really knew that this was the case and I became scared of how I could deal with this future.

During this time of doubt, I did what I was told. I accepted that "my way" certainly was not working. I went to ninety meetings in ninety days, I got a sponsor, and I worked

the Steps. I saw folks who were happy, joyous, and free. I wanted what

they had. Little by little the path forward began to be illuminated. Day by day a future materialized from the void I had been living in.

I simply had to accept that there must be a better way than "my way."

When at last I did that, more important things entered my life.

More joy, new friends who care, a network of answers, memories, new loves, a program that is teaching me how to live, holidays I remember, and a new sense of who I am supposed to be and why I am on this planet.

I just had to accept it. After all, if I did not like what I was getting, my addiction would gladly refund my misery.

**Recovery is for
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ACCEPTANCE... (CON'T FROM PG 3)

SUBMITTED BY: SEAN C.

can accept that I can't control people, places, things or situations, then I am granted a level of peace that would otherwise be lost to me. Happiness is a by-product of spiritual living.

Funny story before I go. When I was trying to get sober before I moved to Georgia, my sponsor back in Boston would tell me every night to

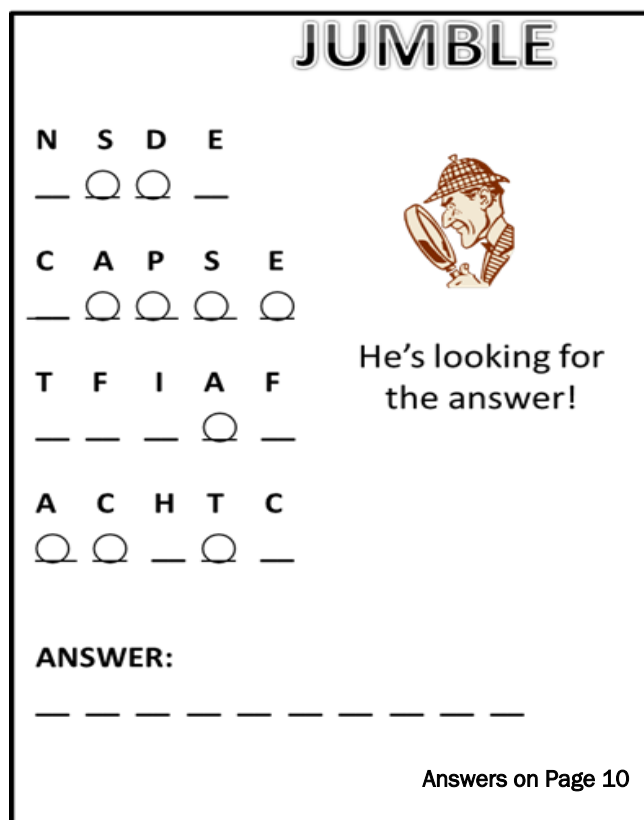
read page 449 in the Big Book regarding acceptance. By the time the fourth edition came out in November 2001, I had moved and I called my Boston sponsor to tell him that the page on acceptance was now on page 417. He told me to "Read It" and hung up! Lesson learned. Ac-

ceptance is important. It is vital to my serenity and peace of mind.

The changes continue in my life. The lessons and blessings are constant and I have come to accept this. Thank you God!

JUMBLE PUZZLE

CREATED BY: BARBARA W.



ACCEPTANCE ... (CON'T. FROM PAGE 5)

SUBMITTED BY: BYRD III

granted me freedom and peace of mind and taken away that constant daily battle of fighting myself and everyone else. More importantly, practicing acceptance has increased my faith and belief that whatever the situation or whoever the person, place or thing, my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God, would

help me through my difficulties and much, much more.

Traffic on the freeways hasn't changed and if I'm in it, I'm in it. If it rains and I'm on the road, pay attention and deal with it, the boss made a decision, so deal with it or get a new job, I'm not God, so I can't

make anyone recover from addiction and kids along with every other person will sometimes make a bad decision, including me!

Today I'm an alcoholic and addict. Tomorrow will be no different. I must never forget who and what I am and **Acceptance is the Key!**



ACCEPTANCE VS. DENIAL

SUBMITTED BY: ANONYMOUS

"I'm not supposed to be here! It wasn't supposed to happen this way! I don't understand, I haven't hurt anyone except myself!"

These are only a few of the excuses that we use when we make our initial entry to recovery. The sad fact is that we refuse to accept alarming and sad truths about ourselves in early recovery. We use the denial skills that we so easily honed over the period of our drinking/using.

We're told very quickly that resentments and denial are the two biggest threats to recovery, and they walk hand-in-hand. Until we admit compete defeat and accept help that is given through the fellowship and

the 12 Steps, recovery is highly unlikely.

With an honest and thorough Step One, I'm allowed to "deny the denial". I make certain admissions that allow me to move forward, come to believe and make a firm decision to "let go completely". Only then can I work on the resentments piece, and in identifying those resentments I'm allowed to move forward toward totally accepting the program. Working Steps Six and Seven thoroughly, the denial is gone.

It seems that I can plan and plan, but I must be cautious that I do not plan outcomes. The old joke in

the rooms is, "Every time I make plans I can hear God laugh". When I plan outcomes and those outcomes do not meet my expectations, I'm setting myself up for a step backwards. I must accept that the outcome of any situation is not in my control. I also have to be careful that I don't try to manipulate situations to meet an expected outcome. I have to recognize that others may be affected by my manipulative tactics.

Only when I am fully able to accept the program, follow the suggestions and remember that I am not in charge am I allowed to lead a peaceful and serene life.

ACCEPTANCE IS THE KEY...ACCEPTANCE IS THE BEGINNING...

SUBMITTED BY: RENE H.

During my first thirty days, I was confused and had little HOPE, but that little bit of hope allowed me to see Acceptance for what I needed it to be. It was the beginning of my Recovery.

Acceptance allowed me to enjoy the daily meetings in a way that I had not seen up to that point. The Big Book started to make everyday life understandable. "Life on Life's terms" helped make Acceptance a cornerstone of my Recovery. My Sponsor is

the one person who helped me with my thoughts about all the things I was going to have to accept in order to truly work the Steps the way I needed to work them.

**Acceptance
finally allowed
my mind to be
at peace with
itself.**

Acceptance finally allowed my mind to be at peace with itself. I could now work the first Three Steps every day. That is what helped me with my Fourth Step, and allowed me to be honest with myself, and complete a good Fourth Step. Now, my Fifth Step was completed right

after my Fourth Step while the ink from my Fourth Step was still wet.

Acceptance is something I have to work on everyday. Some days are easy and some days are not, but I have to stay focused on my Recovery because "No one promised me a Rose garden."

Acceptance is what allows me to understand what God's will is for me, so I can ask for "the Power to carry it out." God doesn't give me more than I can handle, no matter what my mind tells me at any given moment.

THE SLEEPWALKER

SUBMITTED BY: R. KENT S.

This train heaves side to side; its steel wheels levitate over iron tracks, then slams down again and again, tossing me left to right in the passenger aisle, making me sick as it winds down this mountain. At the far end of the train car I clench the seat-backs on each side, struggling amid shifting shadows to make out the object up ahead. And under my feet I feel the rumble of ta-tunk-dunk, ta-tunk-dunk as the train crosses over rail after rail. Moonlight slips through the windows, then cuts off into darkness. Light then dark, then light, over and over like a reel-to-reel film. In snapshots the moonlight flickers. In snapshots shadows come, and in snapshot shadows go. And in flashes the object gets closer, and all I want to do is run, but there's nowhere I can go. I heave side to side with this train, watching as the object barrels toward me, and stop abruptly at my feet. My stomach knots, then drops and jumps up into my throat. Breath, dammit.

It's just a service cart full of dinner trays. There's entrées of Veal Parmesan, and entrées of Mongolian Beef, each with sides of vegetables, and each with a choice of dessert - either moist Red Velvet cake or creamy Crème Brûlée. It's quite a delicious site. But then there's that smell, a smell so familiar, yet so grossly out of place, as if I'd somehow turned inside out. The smell, the heaving side to side, the rumble under my feet; it makes my whole body, my whole spirit sick. But that smell, that smell is sickening most of all. It's a different mountain heading toward the same end. Again my stomach knots, then drops and jumps up into my throat. And moonlight flickers, and my gut locks up, and the bile in my mouth is the bile pouring over trays of Veal Parmesan, and plates of Mongolian Beef. It's flooding dishes of Red Velvet cake, and spilling over bowls of Crème Brûlée. I've been here before. I know how this ends. But God, please tell me, why do I do this again? There is no answer, only heaving, violent heaving, as this train winds down this mountain, slamming down, first right, then left, barely staying on the tracks, while ta-tunk-dunk, ta-tunk-dunk rumbles repeatedly under my feet. But at last all is calm and I soon forget this truth I cannot come to accept. And I find myself once again at the far end of the train, struggling to make out a strange but familiar object up ahead. And once again, in snapshots of shadows and light, the object gets closer, and with excitement, I wonder what I will see. And as this train winds down this familiar mountain, heading toward the same ole end, I hear the voice of the conductor say, "Like a dog returns to its vomit, so does the fool who trusts in his own ways."

THE ANSWERS ARE:



SEND

SPACE

FAITH

CATCH

ACCEPTANCE

FAITH & WORKS OF PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE

SUBMITTED BY: GEORGE M.

What might happen in my life if I apply certain principles over personalities? St. Francis asked for the grace to bring love, goodness, honesty, truth, hope, mercy and faith, instead of ...(the opposites... fear, hatred, lying, despair) ...“it is better to comfort than be comforted, understand than be understood, love than to be loved.” Having a spiritual awakening...”sought through prayer and meditation...”continue to take personal inventory...” Have I been resentful, dishonest, selfish, or afraid? This is how I “accept” living sober today. During my recent cardiac “event,” instead of “I have to learn to live with this “a. fib thing,” which leads to a deadly heart rhythm, what might happen if I accept my Gift of Gratitude for breathing and being sober today? I accept I have to go through what I did to get to where I am. I have to experience extreme danger to learn “boring is good.” Just like when I drank every 45 minutes, until 12 years, 4 months ago.

We are inevitably born into a life with both pain and joy, no matter what our status in life. I learn that when today seems filled with difficulty or I am challenged, there are possibilities for coping with it. The doctors took steps to move me towards overcoming my health instability,

again and again (getting sober, liver failure, heart failure). What’s the Point, George? There are unseen forces at work, bringing about the changes, for life always changes. As I face difficulty and rise to the challenges, I have an attitude of acceptance.

For many of us, life has become far more serene since we discovered the Serenity Prayer.

There are countless situations (literally, every heartbeat, for me), in just one twenty-four hour period, that we can’t control. And no matter how forcefully we try, we can’t manage to change the many people in our lives we’d like to change. We may feel assured that THEY need to change, forgetting that this is for them and their Higher Power to determine, not us.

Learning to accept what we can’t control becomes habitual with continued practice. The profound relief of knowing that we’re not responsible for every decision, every situation, and every person in our life feels like the best blessing we’ve ever received. Today, I accept my life as it unfolds and enjoy the freedom and serenity of letting go.

Acceptance is a kind of faith. This is my situation at this moment. God makes no mistakes, not in what came before or what will happen, and this is the goodness with-

in us. We know we have to accept ourselves the way we are, with all our imperfections, but also with our potential. We can make a difference in our lives and others, doing small things with great love (like prison meetings). God won’t give me anything I can’t handle.

During my active addiction, I pursued pleasures and escapes creating a bubble of unreality around me. Stepping into the bubble was exciting, compared to my “boring” world which carried me into romantic pursuits, drugs/alcohol, and the codependent thrill of saving other people out of their troubles. I felt grandiose about my power to fix others (my children), and the power to walk on the edge of danger and not get hurt (my cirrhosis and liver transplant). I could handle things most people couldn’t (I was “Super-George at work). I felt bad and shameful (having an affair while married). I

had yet to accept everyone as they are and let them be. I practiced a process of lying to others and self-deceit to keep the bubble until it “blew up.” I couldn’t force my unreal world to exist in reality one day more, so here I am.

No longer trying to mold or shape reality to fit my desires, I see more clearly by accepting living hon-

Learning to accept what we can’t control becomes habitual with continued practice.

Acceptance is a kind of faith. This is my situation at this moment. God makes no mistakes, ...

ACCEPTANCE IS THE KEY

SUBMITTED BY: TED N.

For this Ridgeview alum, the acceptance from others in recovery helped him learn to accept himself and eventually a higher power.

On September 25, 2012 I picked up a knife to kill myself. I was 34 years old and a failure (in my eyes). I had spent my twenties trying to save the world, working in Africa in orphanages and AIDS hospices. I had used that experience to get into a Masters of Public Health program at Emory and eventually land a job at a development agency based here in Atlanta. But in 2011 I was laid off. I had a "soft" landing, accepting a full scholarship to Georgia State to receive my MBA, but depression had already taken hold of me. I did not see the scholarship and the MBA as a great opportunity, but rather as a second chance to make up for naïve, grandiose, and overly idealistic choices made in my 20s.

I was self-focused and self-reliant and bent on earning as much money as my peers who spent their 20s building their careers and not nursing sick children. All I had was myself, there was no higher power in my life because I had stopped believing after witnessing the things I did in my work abroad. If there truly was a god why would he allow such poverty, such suffering, even among chil-

dren? I could not understand it, so I had rejected the whole concept.

Overtime, my self-loathing only grew. Friends my own age were buying houses and starting families. I was back in school and at 34 was "old," among students ten years younger. I was on unemployment. My self-pity and resentments were endless. It all got the best of me that morning when the steak knife found its way into my hand. I threw the knife across the room and dropped to my knees, praying desperately to a god that I no longer believed for help.

For this Ridgeview alum, the acceptance from others in recovery helped him learn to accept himself and eventually a higher power.

Help came. First in the form of cottage C. Secondly it came in the form addicts and alcoholics—a group of people I had always been judgmental towards, since they comprised a large percentage of my extended family and I had grown up hearing stories of how they had "ruined" their lives. But my second night in cottage C, I could not sleep for my roommate's manic screaming. I

moved to the common area but when the staff had to take another patient to the floor and put him in restraints I was too scared to sleep. Then a kind drunk, who was detoxing and could not sleep, offered to sit next to me. He did, all night. And when I woke in the morning he was still there looking out for me.

While at the Ridgeview halfway house I made close friends who were in A.A., C.A., N.A. I started attending their meetings instead of E.A. There was so much hope, love, and camaraderie in those rooms full of recovering addicts and alcoholics. It gave me hope. It also gave me my faith back. I saw how people were controlling their disease with a reliance on a higher power. There were small miracles and big miracles happening each day. Once I

graduated from Ridgeview I bought a Big Book, sought out a sponsor, began the 12 Steps, and started attending open meetings. The love and acceptance I felt from my friends in the program was powerful and only opened my heart further.

I know I am still "young" in my psychological recovery but so far, recovering drunks and addicts have been my salvation. So has the Big Book. I'm trying hard not to be so caught up in economic success. I also have stopped judging myself for wanting to help others. I realize that even in A.A. it is an important calling that helps the helper as much as the helped. Without the acceptance of my friends in A.A. none of this would have happened.

My self-pity and resentments were endless. It all got the best of me that morning when the steak knife found its way into my hand.

ACCEPTANCE IS KEY

SUBMITTED BY: TOMMY S.

Alcohol literally killed me and still I was not ready to accept that I needed help.

I was a middle child, lost in the mix between two older siblings and a younger brother who was the family baby. It was one of my older brothers who gave me my first taste of Sir Robert Burns gin at 13. After that I kept drinking whenever the opportunity came up. At 15 I discovered whiskey. In my teens I drifted, just like a middle child who doesn't feel like he has a place, from one group of friends to another, one life plan to the next. I don't know when I crossed the line from social drinker to being addicted to alcohol, but it was while I was in college that it must have happened. I was working as a waiter and once I was 21 I became a bar tender. Between working at a bar and living and hanging out with college students, I was always around alcohol. In such an atmosphere my drinking seemed run of the mill, except that I did not realize that when people drank that was what they did that day, whereas for me it was what I did every day. Any problem, worry, anxiety I had was smaller when I had a buzz. Still, people said, "Oh Tommy, he's in college, he will grow out of it."

I drank myself right out of college and soon my health began to deteriorate. I was drinking as much as a half-gallon per day. I would sometimes finish a fifth of vod-

ka for breakfast. I was racking up DUI charges, and my internal organs were failing. My cholesterol was 3348. My liver was twice the size it should have been. My pancreas was necrotizing, and my kidneys were failing. When I went to see the doctor he told me that the chest pains I had been having were not palpitations but heart attacks. Afraid that I would go into life threatening withdrawal the doctor even offered me a drink, but said I needed to start to taper off immediately.

I did stop for two months, changing my diet completely and white knuckling it on the alcohol. My cholesterol level returned to normal, my internal organs were no longer in failure. I was able to convince myself that I did not have a drinking problem, just a cholesterol problem. So I started drinking again. Soon I knew it was more than cholesterol. I was depressed that I could not stop drinking, but my only way to deal with that depression was to drink it away.

Rock bottom was when I died. It was a Saturday. I had been out drinking the night before, woke up in the afternoon and went out to drink again. I don't remember much more than arriving at the bar, but people there said I fell out of my chair, hit the floor hard and was not breathing. Someone on the scene administered CPR and another per-

son called 911. I woke up in the E.R. with cords and tubes all over me. My skin was yellow from my liver shutting down.

My parents dropped me off at Ridgeview where I spent three days in detox. At first I did not even want to stay. I had died and still could not accept that I had a problem. However the process of talking to other drunks in cottage C helped me get over my "terminal uniqueness." I had thought I was the only one who had to drink in the morning, but I met others with the same problem. I realized that not only were there other people like me, but other people like me who were able to get better through A.A. Something clicked while I was at Ridgeview, in the half-way house, whether it was the book study, the bonds I made with my brothers, therapy, or all those things, I came to accept that I could get better.

Now I'm still early in my recovery, but I already appreciate things more. I don't miss those days drinking, since I realize now I was never really even having that much fun. I'm rediscovering my hobbies, photography, biking, wood-whittling. Now that I'm not spending so much money on alcohol I can buy things, like a new bike and a tripod for my camera. I will be re-starting school soon and I will look to start a career when I graduate. My higher power gave me a second chance and it's never too late to start again.

I don't know when I crossed the line from social drinker to being addicted to alcohol,...

Rock bottom was when I died. It was a Saturday.

AM I RELAPSING?

- 1) Do I feel apprehensive about my well being, do I feel secure?
- 2) Am I denying that something is wrong, is there a problem?
- 3) Am I being adamant about my sobriety?
- 4) Do I have compulsive attempts to preach about sobriety?
- 5) Am I being defensive, there's something wrong with you, not me?
- 6) Am I having compulsive behavior; going to lots of meetings; workaholic?
- 7) Am I having impulsive behavior?
- 8) Do I tend to be lonely?
- 9) Am I having tunnel vision; focusing on specific self problems?
- 10) Am I having minor depression?
- 11) Have I lost my constructive planning, things becoming unmanageable?
- 12) Are my plans beginning to fail?
- 13) Am I daydreaming, having wishful thinking?
- 14) Do I feel as though nothing can be solved?
- 15) Do I have immature wishes to be happy, am I failing to be grateful?
- 16) Am I having periods of confusion, can't seem to get it together?
- 17) Am I irritable with friends?
- 18) Am I easily angered?
- 19) Are my eating habits irregular?
- 20) Do I feel a sense of listlessness, am I easily fatigued?
- 21) Have my sleeping habits become irregular?
- 22) Is my daily structure becoming progressively undone?
- 23) Do I find myself in deep depression occasionally?
- 24) Have I quit going to meetings?
- 25) Do I have an "I don't care" attitude?
- 26) Am I openly rejecting help?
- 27) Am I dissatisfied with life?
- 28) Do I feel powerless and helpless?
- 29) Do I feel self pity?
- 30) Am I having thoughts of social drinking?
- 31) Am I consciously lying?
- 32) Do I feel no self confidence?
- 33) Do I have unreasonable resentments for other people?
- 34) Have I discontinued all my treatment?
- 35) Do I feel overwhelmingly lonely?
- 36) Have I tried controlled drinking; either binge or a little every day?
- 37) Have I lost complete control?

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

Date: _____

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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FAITH AND... (CON'T. FROM PAGE 11)

SUBMITTED BY: GEORGE M.

estly. Life is simpler and I have peace of mind. Some mornings I wake, warm in my spirit-light, and other days I experience the darkness of the soul, surrounded by a heavy shroud of worry. I breathe in "The Prayers of the 3rd, 7th and 11th Steps; I breathe out George." To be present in life in this moment, I need to carry the big picture of life's cycles in my mind. Like a child, I didn't have this because my using/drinking stalled my growth, spiritual-

ly, emotionally, and mentally. Children haven't yet experienced the ups and downs of daily life. We learn how to experience these in our adolescence. Our adult lives teach us the bad times pass and the bright light returns.

No longer denying the darkness, we breathe the fear into ourselves, sit with the feelings, and breathe out the light of faith. We choose to improve our conscious contact and constant companionship

with our Higher Power. We are grateful that we pay attention to our relationships that sustain us through our darkest times. This is what works for me.

