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Unbending Sponsorship

A wise old-timer gets a newcomer's feet firmly planted on the ground

I was holding Ruby Ann's hand when she took her last breath. She was in a nursing facility in Mississippi, her home state. She'd moved to Mississippi a year earlier, even though she had no family or friends left there, to settle her estate. Four months into her stay, she was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

I flew out from California to be with her for a few weeks, to try to be helpful. I was to take five flights more to be with her, one or two weeks at a time. I cried the day I finally had to put her in a nursing home. She lasted there only sixteen days.

She was my first sponsor – tough as nails, but also exquisitely gentle. At two-and-a-half years sober, I took a thorough Fifth Step with her. When I finished, she looked at me, smiled, and said, "Baby, you weren't all that good at being all that bad." This from a white-haired woman not quite five feet tall, who at one point had tested me on what length I would go to stay sober.

In my early sobriety in 1975, my car broke down one day, so I called Ruby Ann to see if she could take me to our usual Tuesday afternoon meeting. She said, "Baby, God gave you two feet, and that oughtta tell you something," and hung up. I walked the six miles to the meeting with my kids (they were thirteen, eleven, ten, three, and one then), dropping them off at the halfway house across the street from the meeting, where the sober drunks took care of them.

Ruby Ann didn't let me get away with a thing. Once, when I had been sober two years, I chaired a meeting and spoke about service in A.A., elaborating on how we should each do our part. After the meeting, I walked up to her to get my hug. She took one cold look at me, turned around, walked out the door, and went home. I didn't know what I'd done to offend her. Three days later, after gathering courage,

obsessed and worried she wouldn't be my sponsor anymore, I called her on the phone and asked what I'd done. She asked, "You mean you don't *know*?" I said weakly, "No." She replied, "How dare you tell us alkie what service we should do, and how? Who do you think you are?" I was dumbfounded. She was right.

Ruby Ann knew exactly when I need soothing and exactly when I needed blasting. She knew my terrors but also my fierce desire to live. She identified with me. She never failed to teach me the preciousness of life.

She told me about prayer, that prayer is living energy and can't be wasted.

At seven months sober, I left my violent, practicing alcoholic husband. Through the next couple years of getting the divorce, Ruby Ann admonished me, "Baby, plant your feet firmly on the earth, lift your face to God, and see it through." And, "If someone or something keeps you in turmoil on a continuing basis, put two things between you and it: distance and silence." If it weren't for her, I would not have known to do these things.

She also said, "All things have purpose (believe it, even when you get the royal brush-off). I love to dwell on the imponderables." But also, "Don't you know life is *supposed* to be a mystery?"

I met with Ruby Ann between meetings as often as possible and did Twelfth Step word with her. I was raising the kids, working, going to college, hitting a meeting every day. But Ruby Ann made sure I would take some weekends to rest at home, or play baseball with fellow drunks at picnics held by A.A. groups. She said we need our fun times because the rest of the time, "experience is dearly bought."

When I'd been sober for three years, she moved to

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Become a “Faithful Fiver”

What are Faithful Fivers?

They are A.A. members who pledge at least \$5.00 each month toward the support of their Central Office to “carry the message.” Many of us have spent more than \$5.00 daily/hourly on alcohol during our drinking days!

I agree to pledge \$ _____ and enclosed is my contribution.

Name*: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/ZIP: _____

** You may remain anonymous if you wish.*

Sponsor

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Mississippi – it nearly broke my heart. But guess what? We wrote to each other – every single day for the next year, even on Sundays. For both of us, getting that daily fix on the mail meant the world was balanced. We talked of everything, much of it filled with A.A.: “Baby, somewhere in that Big Book can be found the strength and courage we *need* under any circumstances – not tra-la-ain’t-it-grand when the going is rough – but truly the strength needed to tide us through.”

Our letters to one another are gems. I have them still. I have a whole book of important “sayings” from Ruby Ann’s letters to me, and I read it periodically for inspiration. Even in the end, the pain from her cancer made her say, “Pain makes you bitter or better, and which depends upon your closeness to God.”

The day when she took her last breath, I lit a jasmine candle next to her bed and was holding her hand, singing “Nearer My God to Thee” over and over, tears running. Built into all those emotions was the heightening love she brought to me, for individuals and for mankind.

Finally, she said, “We just flat don’t realize how *extremely* fortunate we are! We got to A.A. before we had completely destroyed our adaptability – whew—close call for many of us. My God, my God, how blessed we are!”

Helen M., Napa, CA, via, A.A. Grapevine

A Note of Thanks

The Board of Directors for Victor Valley Intergroup wishes to extend its thanks to Andrew A., who stepped up to take on our Newsletter for a number of months, as well as for his service in the office. It was much appreciated, and we wish him well, whatever his future endeavors.

Kara O., Chairman

Minutes of Victor Valley Intergroup Meeting, 18 April 2009

Minutes of the Victor Valley Intergroup Meeting - April 18, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Kara O. who led the Serenity Prayer. Becky read the 12 traditions. Kara thanked Sam D. and Matt N. for filling in at the December meeting.

Betty B. read the minutes from the February 21, 2009 meeting as submitted by Matt N. Matt accepted them as read, Glen seconded the motion and it was approved. Betty also thanked Carol for filling in for her in December and Matt N. for his filling in in February.

Sheldon S. gave the financial report for both February and March 2009. So far for the year, we are at approximately (\$404.00). Please see newsletter for the exact numbers. Sam D motioned to accept the report, Becky seconded the motion. It was approved.

Craig B. gave the Office Manager’s Report. The statistics are in the March/April newsletter. He also stated the Summer 2009 Directory will be going to press about Wednesday, 22 April, so please make sure all meeting corrections are into the office by then.

Old Business: Wayne U. announced that Donna S. will be the new Co-Chairman for the Founder’s Day Picnic/Ways and Means Committee. This year the picnic will be on Saturday, 13 June 09. He also reported that due to the economic downturn, T.X.I. park will not be available. Therefore, he has reserved Schmidt (sp) Park at the old George A.F.B. Matt has just about confirmed the speaker for the day. There will be flyers with more information coming out soon. Craig B. said he would work with the committee as far as getting insurance, etc. Craig B. also announced that G.S.O. is raising book prices from \$1.00 -- \$2.00 effective 1 July 2009. Needless to say, our prices will also go up not only because of New York, but because of our 1% rise in sales tax. He will stock up as much as possible while the price is less to delay increasing the

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Singleness of Purpose

The newcomer says, "Drugs are a part of my story, so I'm going to share about them."

The elder statesman says, "Having a bowel movement everyday is a part of my story too. You want me to share about that?"

Submitted by: Susan B., Apple Valley

The Twelve Rewards of the Twelve Step Program

Ann C. wrote this a number of years before the International Convention in Montreal, Canada where she set it to tape at the Old-timer's Meeting. She wrote it to show the contrast that can take place in any of our lives if we will try to follow the A.A. principles.

"We can all have hope, instead of desperation; Faith instead of despair; Peace of mind instead of confusion; Self-respect instead of self-contempt; Self-confidence instead of helplessness; The respect of others instead of their pity and contempt; A clean conscience instead of a sense of guilt; Real friendships instead of loneliness; A clean pattern of life instead of a purposeless existence; The love and understanding of our families instead of their doubts and fears; The freedom of a happy life instead of the bondage of an alcoholic obsession.

All this and more through A.A. Are we grateful enough? Gratitude will continue the miracle of your sobriety. I found that out."

as written by Ann C. of Niles, Ohio — sober April 1, 1948.

via, www.a.a.history.com

Why We Come Back

Like Bill W. listening to Ebby or Dr. Bob hearing Bill for the first time, at any given meeting, if we're listening and paying attention, suddenly we may hear our story. Every one in a while, some word in even the most unpromising talk from an A.A. member will touch us and set our hearts on fire. We'll be moved by some bit of conversation or some moment of silence, by seeing somebody we love sitting near us, or out of the blue catching sight of a stranger whose face somehow touches our hearts. A newcomer catches fire, or a long-timer speaks with conviction and strength. A member, tears flowing down her cheeks, shares the strange truth that, even in devastating pain, there is joy and peace in sobriety. These are the moments that, despite our gloominess, desolation and isolation inspire us to hope and move us to faith. And for as long as these moments keep happening, we'll keep coming back.

Submitted by: Bonnie C., Victorville

REMEMBER:

Central Office now has chips and medallions — bronze and "fancy." We also carry aluminum chips from 1 month to 11 months, PLUS, we now have 18 month chips. So, order chips early for that "special birthday" for that "special drunk" in your life!

Minutes

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price for as long as possible. Also, the Thursday morning shift is open as well as the Friday afternoon one.

New Business: Craig B. announced that Intergroup has been invited to host a marathon meeting at the Antelope Valley Round-up on 27 June 09. The topic will be "Self-centeredness. Our Public Information Chairman, James J., reported to Craig B. that he has a presentation to do at Serrano High School in May 09. Craig B. reported that due to a series of unfortunate events, Andrew was unable to publish the newsletter in March. Betty B. put together a duel month one to at least get out the February and March financial statements. Andrew told Craig he would let him know by the end of April if he will be able to continue as Editor. If not, Betty B. will do it for a while as long as there are not complaints. Betty B. reminded the Chairman that her term as Secretary is over. Kara O. appointed Matt N. to serve as Secretary and he gladly accepted the position. She opened the floor for nominations also, but there were none. Craig B. gave a big "Thank You" to both the Convention Committee and the Ride to Recovery Committee. The Convention presented the office with a donation of \$2,352.00 and the Ride to Recovery donated \$1,500.00. Both will go a long way in helping us financially.

Announcements: On 15 May 09, Kara O. celebrated 9 years of sobriety and on 14 April 09, Sarah celebrated 1 year. Sarah also announced that Lucerne Valley will have its Speaker Meeting Potluck on the last Wednesday of the month starting at 6:30 p.m. They also have a new meeting on Thursdays at 12:00 p.m. On the second Thursday there will be a potluck starting at 11:00 a.m. Both meetings could use some support for the newcomers that go to them.

At 10:13 a.m., Becky motioned to adjourn the meeting, Wayne U. seconded the motion, and it was approved.

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE SATURDAY, 20 JUNE 09 AT 9:30 a.m. AT CENTRAL OFFICE.

Submitted by,
Betty B., Secretary

Upcoming Events

June 13, 2009

14th Annual Founder's Day Picnic, Schmidt Park, George A.F.B. If you would like to be of service, call Wayne U. at 760-885-9195. The next planning meeting will be May 9, 2009 at the V.V. Alano Club.

June 20, 2009

Victor Valley Intergroup Meeting at Central Office at 9:30 a.m.

June 26-28, 2008

19th Annual June Lake Kampvention, June Lake, CA. For more information contact Heather F. at 760-868-2530 or Mike B. at 760-934-6652.

June 26-28, 2009

36th Annual Antelope Valley Round Up, Antelope Valley, CA. For information call Marian G. at 760-209-4642.

July 3-7, 2009

33rd Annual Sequoia Campout, Sequoia National Forest. Registration is on a first-come-first-serve basis. Contact Tim at 562-961-3600 or Jane at 559-658-6395 for more information.

August 1-2, 2009

6th Annual Mountain A.A. Conference, Big Bear Lake, CA. For much more information visit their website at mountainconference.com

Meeting Decretory Changes

HESPERIA

(H2) is now meeting at 8518 Maple Ave., Church of the Nazarene

Name Change:

Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
Sisters in Sobriety 12061 Jacaranda, Suite 3. [cl]

Delete:

Friday, 7:00 p.m., Women's Meeting (H1)

New Meetings:

Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., Big Book Study (H2)
Thursday, 10:00 a.m., Podium Promises (H2)

PINION HILLS

Delete:

Monday, 6:30 p.m. and Thursday 7:00 p.m.

VICTORVILLE

Time Change:

Sunday, 7:30 p.m., Women's Meeting at 13333 Palmdale Rd. now meets at 7:00 p.m.

"How true! How very true!"

- It's not old behavior if I'm still doing it.
- All we ask is that you completely change your attitude, as soon as possible.
- An alcoholic is a person who wants to be held while he's isolating.
- Sobriety is the leading cause of relapse.
- A treatment center is where you go and pay \$15,000 to find out that A.A. meetings are free.
- Once I become proud of my humility, I've lost it.
- The good news is you get your emotions back; the bad news is you get your emotions back.
- If drinking is interfering with your work, you're probably a heavy drinker. If work is interfering with your drinking, you're probably an alcoholic.
- I often obsessively pursue feeling good, no matter how bad it makes me feel.
- In order to change the way we feel, we need to change the way we act.
- There is only one way to coast, and that is down hill.
- How come if alcohol kills millions of brain cells, it never killed the ones that made me want to drink?
- From a newcomer reading the Promises for the first time: "We will comprehend the word *cemetery* and we will know peace."
- If God were small enough to be understood, He wouldn't be big enough to be God.
- If you want to quit drinking, you are going to have to quit drinking.
- Newcomer: "How do I know how many meetings I should attend each week?" Old-timer: "Gradually cut back until you get drunk. Then you'll know."
- I would rather go through life sober, believing I am an alcoholic, than go through life drunk, trying to convince myself that I am not an alcoholic.
- Resentments are like stray cats. If you don't feed them, they'll go away.
- The difference between a problem drinker and an alcoholic is that: (A) When alcohol is taken away from the problem drinker, the problem goes away. (B) When alcohol is taken away from the alcoholic, the problem begins.
- Before I came into A.A., I was dead, but I did not know enough to lie down.
- This is a "one day at a time" program. If you are sober today, you are tied for first place in A.A.

Submitted by Bonnie C., Front & Center Meeting via, A Declaration of Unity, Dayton, Ohio