



A VIEW FROM SERENITY HILL

A Newsletter from La Hacienda

June 2004

WHAT IS SOBRIETY WORTH?

I have been watching a trend throughout this fellowship that would make our fore-fathers spin. Groups are dying, attendance is dropping and why? Well we know that the message being carried is far different than the message that was carried when success rates were in the 75% brackets, or higher. But are there other reasons as well?

Let's take a look at what is going around at the group level. I see groups walking away from answering phones at inter-group offices or not getting involved at all. Was there someone there to answer your call? I would hope so. At your local inter-group, office how hard it is to get someone to do a 12 step call? You might be surprised to see it's extremely difficult. The names on the inter-group contact lists are shrinking and members just don't want to go out especially at night. It's like we've become a 9 to 5 fellowship. I know those first members were there day or night. How many of us have said or heard a member introduce themselves as grateful alcoholics, are they? Gratitude is possibly the biggest topic at a discussion meeting and don't think for one minute I'm not grateful. But my sponsor tells me it's an action word and action isn't just saying it, it's showing it.

At a recent business meeting a long time member stood and said that they would not go to certain treatment facilities, mental health institutions or jails. His reasoning was that they did not conform to the meeting formats of our area and they wanted meetings put on with some restrictions. So members should under no circumstances be

there carrying the message. So how do the people in these institutions get the message?

A few months ago a meeting I frequent was not open. I stayed and waited to see if anyone showed up so I could direct them to another meeting. One of the group members with some 30 years in the fellowship arrived and wanted to know what was happening and I told him. So I asked why then is your home group meeting not open and he blamed everyone but himself. He said he would have to change groups if this was what was going to happen. I asked if the doors were open when he got here and he said yes. I wonder if those early members ever felt like this?

It is getting virtually impossible to get members to take part in their own meetings, as chair people, greeters, set up people, etc. How is the meeting going to run, by itself? I've been at some where the coffee wasn't even on, and a member of the group said if people attending the meeting didn't like it have them see him. Go to a business meeting and come election time try to get people to run for the various positions. Good Luck.

Stand in meetings and watch that new guy or gal walk in and stand by the wall, scared to death and because we're meeting in our little cliques we don't have time for them. Then, when they don't come back, someone will say they just weren't ready for it. How do we know we never asked?

How many meetings have we attended that a Big Book wasn't available for a newcomer as no one bothered to get any. When we do have Big Books we raffle them off and hopefully

some winner will give it to a person that really needs it or we'll happily sell it to them, at cost of course. I know my money goes in the seventh to carry the message. Keep the room open and purchase the necessary supplies and to give that newcomer our basic text if they don't have one, no charge.

I hear so often in these rooms this is a selfish program. It looks as if we've become so selfish and self-centered that we need no one but ourselves. New members are being told that they just attend their home group and after a year they get active. Where does it say that? It used to be that a newcomer helped set up the room, helped make the coffee, helped clean up and greeted at the door. When was the last time you saw that happen? We sponsors need to get these new members active. How can we get new members active when we won't get active ourselves? They see their sponsors and other members showing up 5 minutes before the meeting or leaving 5 minutes after so why should they be any different?

I wonder, did the first hundred refuse to carry the message at anytime? No, or we wouldn't be here. Was the coffee on and the meeting rooms open? Yes they were. Did those members answer the phone when that person needed help? Yes they did. Did those first hundred carry the message into hospitals and institutions with no strings attached? Yes they did. Did new members get active? Yes they were doing 12 step work almost immediately. Were newcomers

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CHRIS SAYS...

Buck-a-roos,

What is it that's so magical about sitting in a room with like-minded people? Just left one of our AA meetings up at the "Outpost". (yep...the roof still leaks!) It was one of those meetings where everyone was on the "same page". Lots of laughter! Lots of interesting view points shared as we read the literature. Bill W. called it identifying with the COMMON SOLUTION. I sit here typing this with a lot of gratitude for that group, that fellowship that built up around us. It didn't happen by accident. A few of us got together about 6 years ago with the dream of having a recovery club where folks that wanted to study and work the steps could gather. A place where we could bring our books and not be laughed at! We wanted a place where we could go and share the good stuff that we were finding in sobriety, NOT a place to endure endless war stories or whiners meetings! We found a meeting place, voted on a solution based preamble, got a registration # from NY and got going!

Lots of yall have attended those meetings with us. Many of you have become members there over the years! We are blessed to have had you for a month or so. I get calls all the time from alumni who want to find a meeting like ours in there home towns. Most large cities have some good literature based meetings like ours. In the smaller towns, it may be necessary to start from scratch. Either way, try to get one! Ours started with a DREAM. Yours can too.

I've written here many times about "THE DREAM". It's what I

didn't have any of when I got to this fellowship! Jeeze. I was so intent on just not dying or getting caught, I had all but forgotten HOW to dream. I think many of you are there in that spot now. I know I talk to a lot of you on the phones that seem to be afraid of getting excited about your new lives! I get the impression some of you are just marking calendar time. (Oh boy! one more day dry.....when's it gonna get fun?!)

Folks, we got sober so we could start living. It's OK to get excited about your new life! I think its time some of you got on with this dreaming business. What is it you REALLY want to do? Don't tell me why you can't do it. Most of you don't even know what it is you can't do! Lets start thinking "outside of the box". Think BIG! Last time I looked, the POWER that allowed us to RECOVER is still guiding our lives! I believe that POWER wants us doing cool stuff, not just surviving!

I watch more of you relapse around BOREDOM than EXCITEMENT! Ask God in your morning meditation for an ADVENTURE. (Don't ask if you ain't packed!)

My first sponsor sent me this the other day..."Dreams are like the rudder of a ship setting sail. The rudder may be small and unseen, but it controls the ships

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course". (Kim Woo-choong) Ain't it the truth?

It was the BEST seeing so many of ya'll at the Reunion. Coldest one I can remember. Sold every sweat shirt we had! I kind of liked being all crowded in the tents. Seemed like I got to see more of you!

xoxo – **Chris R.**
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ALICIA SAYS...

Hello Alumni,

Well, we made it...we have all survived Reunion. ..even the crazy weather couldn't keep you guys away!! I am once again overwhelmed at all the miracles that were walking around campus. Some of you were the ones I thought I would never see again and yet, here you were carrying Big Books and looking for people to help. This is the unexplainable Power that changes us miraculously from the inside out...thank you to those of you who came out to bear witness to the Power of God. We've already started tossing around some great ideas to make next year the best Reunion yet.

I want to share with you all an experience I recently had. As always, God keeps showing up and blessing my family abundantly. We recently bought a house (that's right...me, the crack-head who had 4 trashed apartments on her credit report from the good ole' days!!) and all we had to put down was \$150...I hear that is not normal. This is another one of those situations that I am clear was made possible by something other than me. It has been so incredible to do

hours of yard work and watch Ethan play in his first sprinkler... yes, I cried and took pictures. Oh, and did I mention my sober husband doing the remodeling inside and tree trimming outside? Yes, absolutely unbelievable and you would think that I would constantly be skipping around, thanking God over and over. Unfortunately, that wasn't totally the case...I found myself irritated about little things, being grumpy, and whining a lot. How could I be feeling this way when all of these miraculous events were going on around me? Well, thank God that long ago I was given the tools for self-searching and the ability to find out exactly what was blocking me from the Sunlight I so desperately need. As I put pen to paper, I was overwhelmed at some of the defects that have secretly re-emerged and then took it a step further and shared all of this with my sponsor, who very kindly helped me see some things I had missed. Going onto six and seven was a very humbling experience because I basically admitted to God that on my own power...well, in essence...I suck!!! This I know from experience as I have rested on my laurels and the defects return, ever so cunningly, and before you know it, a bit of internal discomfort begins to stir...aaaahhhh... thank God that I can't sit in that very long. Today, I can't stand the way that it feels and remain willing to do anything to get out of

it. There is that miracle stuff again...I used to live every day filled and consumed by that spiritual sickness and today it feels so foreign...thank you, God.

The reason I am sharing this is that we have been given such an incredible gift...the gift of new life...reborn...forever free. We need to make sure that we are using this gift every day and not taking it for granted, for I know when I do, the subtle foe is there...

I must have a Defense. Please take a moment to reflect on the change God has made in your life. Sit in amazement at the spiritual experience that has taken place. If you see no change, you might look at what action you haven't taken to seek Him...the Big Book says it so eloquently on pg. 57, "But He has come to ALL who have honestly sought Him." I challenge you to seek more and see what happens.

Peace and Love- Alicia
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P.S. My dad has returned from China and we are set up to put the finishing touches on "Scars" this summer...so excited!!!!

DJ SAYS...

Hey Alumni,

It sure was great see all of you who came to reunion and those of you

who couldn't were missed. What about those speakers, AT and BN, were those guys' great or what? Chris did a great job getting those guys and putting that thing together and it sure was a privilege being part of the team. I would really like to thank all of you who helped put the bonfire meeting together. That thing went off like a charm. A special thanks to the Alumni that camped down by the river. I was down there the following Monday and that place was pristine! Truly some people who practice these principles in all their affairs because there was not a piece of litter to be found and everything looked great.

Well now that reunion is out of the way lets get to some current things. Ya'll ever notice that it seems everybody wants to talk about recovery but when it comes down to actually doing something the number of people willing to engage in action is dramatically reduced! Why is that do you suppose? I suspect that while talking about it seems relatively painless, I assure you that to be on the receiving end of the phone line with a person who is not willing to take any action or make any decisions on their own behalf is actually more than a bit frustrating. I love you guys, and I want to help but what do you do with a person who calls for help and the minute you start to give them a suggestion the first words out of their mouth is some kind of excuse why they can't or won't take the necessary action for a change to occur in their lives? Then there are the absolutely heartbreaking phone con-

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versations with these people's families. As they are being drawn down into the pit of despair they ask why we can't help their loved ones. The only real intelligent conclusion I have been able to come up with is that the battle is not so much about alcoholism as it is with Dishonesty and Selfishness! It seems that there is this misunderstanding that feeling good is doing good. The truth is that while doing good will eventually transform into feeling good. Feeling good will not always bring about doing well! I get asked this question almost every day "Why can't I get this?" The answer is very simple, because there is not something to get. There is something to DO! I know that I am mostly speaking to the choir so I'll just pose the question, that I am asking to myself and to you, am I talking about this thing called recovery or am I doing it?

God Bless all of you. It's an honor to be down here in the trenches with you. Until next time.

Peace and Love – DJ
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Deborah Says...

Hi Gang!

What an awesome experience Reunion 2004 was! It is cool to see so many of you fired up about recovery. I was thrilled to see those of you return who

were patients since I've been working here and I was especially grateful to finally meet so many of you I have been talking to on the phone. We've got big plans for next year so mark your calendars now and plan on joining us!

So many of you were able to share at the bonfire meeting (my favorite!), the birthday meeting and the alumni meeting on Sunday. Your stories had the same message - through this program we can have freedom, strength and respect for ourselves. It was awesome to see those of you who have been doing this for years share with us the miracles and hope that God continues to put in your life as a result of STAYING ACTIVE in these steps. You have clearly walked through the "certain trials and low spots" with courage and dignity. And then the honesty of the guy who picked up a year chip and admitted that he was "dry" but far from sober and free. The amazing courage it took for him to get honest in front of all of us – that's what sharing this message is about. While he was still struggling with this disease, he didn't forget the basics – honesty, open mindedness and willingness. I was delighted to see this same guy recently – he has finished the work, is a different man and can finally say he is happy, joyous and FREE! The message he carries is just as important as the one carried by the guy with 26 years.

A few months after I

started working here, I went to a doctor for a check-up. Being new to the area, this was a new doctor and she asked me several questions about who I am, where I've been and what I do now. Feeling it relevant, I explained to her that I am a recovered alcoholic who lived a fairly miserable existence, mentally & physically, until I learned about the disease of alcoholism almost 3 years ago. I described to her what we do out here and about the steps. Without missing a beat, she looked at me and said, "Wow, you have a really big calling." Hmmm. Absolutely I do – we all do! For most of my life I felt like I was supposed to have a greater purpose. In my disease, I couldn't understand how this sense of purpose was replaced by an enormous feeling of hopelessness and uselessness – how can I possibly accomplish anything while I feel so worthless? And how did I end up here when I had so many advantages? When alcohol finally beat me into a state of reasonableness and I desperately wanted to change the way I was living, I became willing to concede that I am an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. I learned that if I didn't take some action to treat this disease, I would die, one way or the other. So here I am – here we all are after sharing the same experience to one degree or another. As a result of working the 12 steps, God has granted me the ultimate sense of purpose – to share my experience, strength

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We'd love to hear from you!



& hope so that others may find their own truth and RECOVER.

From the day I was old enough to understand what my dad did for a living, I wanted to be just like him and I thought that meant following in his footsteps as a lawyer. In high school and college I studied government and the law, thinking one day, I'll be just like my dad. Almost 3 years sober, a degree in political science, an attempt at law school and a fairly successful career as a paralegal, I find I am able to be just like my dad. But it has nothing to do with being in the legal field. I have always looked up to my dad as being incredibly honorable, considerate, honest and kind – characteristics rare in a lawyer but he is all these things and a very respected lawyer because of it. I finally realized I can be just like my dad by being honorable, respectful, honest and kind in LIFE. It's not what he does that makes him all those wonderful things, it's who he is. I need to listen to God's will, which directed me off the legal path and onto a path of being of service to others. Today, I have found my "calling" as my doctor put it – to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous and to help others. My point is that we all have this same calling or sense of purpose as a result of working the 12th

step. God has given us the biggest calling of all – to be of maximum service to Him and to carry a message of hope. While I'm honored to carry this message in my vocation, I am clear that God's will is for me is to carry the message in my life as a demonstration of the power of this program. Are you demonstrating the principles of this program in your life or just in your recovery? Step 12 asks us to "carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs". I want to recover in all aspects of my life, not just around alcohol. From hearing those of you who shared at reunion, it is clear that many of you are practicing these principles in your life and you offer compelling proof to the power of this program.

I look forward to visiting with those of you who make a road trip to Hunt this summer! We have a full house and need you to give to others what was given to you.

God bless – Deborah
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(continued from page 1)

at the doors of A.A.? No, they were worked with extensively from day one.

It says that we are willing to go to any length, but nowhere do

I see it says on my terms. Take a look back at what was so freely given to us, are we not willing to give it to someone else? We talk at great length about the grace of God. Those people so gracefully welcomed us into the rooms, took us under their wings, went out of their way to carry the message, made sure we had Big Books and that the meetings were open and not once did they set rules or conditions, this is grace at its best. As recovered members of A.A. we are responsible and if we are not willing to be responsible maybe it's time we looked deep inside. I was one of those people, grateful and no action and I got drunk. In most rooms hangs a pledge and nowhere have I ever seen strings attached to it and it reads:

**I am responsible
When anyone, anywhere,
Reaches out for help,
I want the hand of
A.A. always to be there,
And for that:
I Am Responsible**

Think about it and ask yourself,
am I responsible?
What is your sobriety worth?

Mike R. - Ontario

Websites of Interest:



<http://houston.lahacienda.com>
<http://dallas.lahacienda.com>
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Upcoming Events

June 18-20	59th Annual Texas State Conference (A bunch of us will be hanging around!)	San Antonio, TX
June 22	Waco Alumni Meeting Chris speaks	Waco, TX
June 26	Founders Day Conference (850-385-2112 / Diz) Chris speaks	Tallahassee, FL
July 4	Burning Tree Ranch Reunion Chris speaks	Kaufman, TX
July 10	Brady AA Group DJ Speaks	Brady, TX
July 17	District workshop Jim B. (317-421-5727) Chris speaks	Indianapolis, IL
Aug 6-8	Fellowship of the Spirit	Queens, NY
Aug 20-22	Hill Country Round-Up (Inn of the Hills) Hospitality Room	Kerrville, TX
Aug 21	Spring Branch Club Chris speaks	Houston, TX
Aug 28	BBSG Primary Purpose Weekend Chris speaks w/others!	Harrisburg, PA
Sept 3-4	It's my Bday and I will be in Vegas. NOT talking!	
Sept 11	Rockaway Group AA Chris speaks	Rockaway, NJ
Sept 18	Richardson Group Anniversary	Richardson, TX

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