



# A VIEW FROM SERENITY HILL

A Newsletter from La Hacienda

March 2004

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Reunion is Coming



### Tentative Schedule



#### Friday, April 30th

Registration	4-7 PM
Hamburgers	5-7:30 PM
La Ha campfire	8-9 PM

#### Saturday May 1st

Registration	7:00 AM
Power Pole	9-12:00 PM
Speaker	10:00 AM
Lunch (BBQ)	11:30 AM
Collegiate Mtg. (Bodega)	12:00 PM

(You can bring a lunch!)

#### Saturday May 1st (continued)

Announcements/raffle	1:00 PM
Speaker:	1:30 PM
Birthday Meeting	2:30 - 4:30 PM
Yap Speaker & Food	5:00 - 7:00 PM

#### Sunday May 2nd

Meditation on Serenity Hill	9-10:00 AM
A.A. Meeting on the lawn	11:00 AM

(Weather permitting)

### Call Us for Details!!!

### 1-800-749-6160

Extensions 510, 511, 512, and 513



**CHRIS SAYS...****Buddies –**

Hope all of you are warm! I'm not. I've been cold all winter. That's the one big draw back with the cigars....ya gotta smoke OUTSIDE! Warm weather and Reunion 32 are right around the corner! I can't wait!

Excited about this Reunion. (We have some good speakers lined up) Nervous too. Always anxious about this deal. Not sure why. It always turns out great. (Even the year it rained all weekend!) Guess I'm always worried nobody will show up. Always relieved to see all of you swarm us on Friday night! What an experience. Looking forward to seeing a bunch of you I haven't seen in a while. (You know who you are! Call and make those reservations at one of our nice Hill Country Hotels...You can get a list of 'em in this newsletter. If you wait too long they will all be full!) It's the same weekend every year. First weekend of May. (April 30, May 1, 2)

Heard something at a retreat I was just at. I wanted to share a quick piece of it with you. One of my old sponsors has been after me for years to attend this "Spiritual Men's Retreat". I gotta tell you I wasn't real excited about using one of my free weekends to spend with a bunch of hairy-legged guys talking about religion. (Come to think about it, I don't really want to talk to ANYBODY about religion!) This deal was different. It was held up by Lake Dallas at a Jesuit Retreat Center. The retreat "leader" was a little old Jesuit Priest. (Recovered in AA a long time)

His talks were short. 10-15 minutes each. Basically "bullets" to reflect on. One of the things he asked us to look at was our "inordinate attachments". Great phrase. All of us have them. Things, or people, that we hold a little TOO close. These "things" are so important to us that we spend an "inordinate" amount of time thinking about them. These are the things that most of us,

unconsciously, place before our spiritual growth. Look at the things that we think about mostly in our waking hours. (ouch!) Woman? Money? Job? Kids? None of this is bad unless it's ALL we think about! There wasn't a guy there that didn't get a bit uncomfortable!

I realized that I had, without really being aware of it, gotten my priorities all out of whack. My attention to my personal life had, once again, taken center stage. The things that moved me closer to God had taken the back seat! Very subtle. My humble sense of gratitude for my cool life was being replaced by a lot of worry and fear. No conscious decision was made to pull back. Looking back, I see that I had simply stopped taking the time to meditate and pray like I had in the past. Working with others had also slacked off! Not good. I've made some changes to get back on track and I already feel 100% better! Some of ya'll may want to look at this a bit!

Hospital is full. Looks like another busy year. We are blessed. We have been blessed by every one of you! Stay Close!

(Now...stop reading for a second and go call that hotel! April 30, May 1, 2)

xoxo – Chris R.

[craymer@lahacienda.com](mailto:craymer@lahacienda.com)

**Give us a call or send  
us an e-mail  
800-749-6160  
ext 510, 511, 512, 513**



***We'd love to hear from  
you!***

Chris – [craymer@lahacienda.com](mailto:craymer@lahacienda.com)

Alicia- [anew@lahacienda.com](mailto:anew@lahacienda.com)

DJ- [dshay@lahacienda.com](mailto:dshay@lahacienda.com)

Deborah –

[ddoherty@lahacienda.com](mailto:ddoherty@lahacienda.com)

**ALICIA SAYS...****Hey Alumni –**

Now that we have made it through all of the holidays, it is time to focus on the next big event – Reunion 2004!!! It is hard to believe that it is already here, but preparations are underway to make it the best one yet. It will be hard to top last year, but we are ready for the challenge. Last Reunion, I was blown away at some of the people who showed up – the ones we didn't think would make it were first to arrive and the last to leave...it was an amazing thing to witness. I really hope that those of you who haven't been able to attend in the past will make a special effort to come and join us for that blessed weekend – April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 2 – can't wait to see all of you.

So much has happened out here since I last wrote that I don't know where to begin. In January, I celebrated 5 years and was overwhelmed with some questions - "How did this happen to me...how did I go from the demoralized lost soul that I used to be to the woman I am today?" I was very humbled to realize how I have taken for granted the priceless gift of being totally RECOVERED. Technically, I know that as a result of working the steps, I had a spiritual awakening and the obsession to drink and do dope has been totally gone for five years, but those are just words...you know what I mean? I am amazed at the supernatural Power that caused the unexplainable miracle that has taken place in my life. I guess what I am getting at is that I hope each of you are shouting about this miracle and letting people everywhere know what God has done in your life!!! We see so many miracles every day in our fellowship - the chronic relapser who picks up monthly or yearly chips or the obstinate atheist who begins to talk about feeling the Power of God and no longer doubts His existence –

these are only a few and yet we take them for granted. We are so used to seeing these transformations take place that we don't even get very excited anymore and just calmly clap and smile, like it is no big deal! I am so guilty of this and recently, my eyes were opened and I am looking around now in awe of the Power I see in so many of you. That is one of the awesome things about working here – I have the God-given opportunity to watch you all transform over a month's time right before my eyes. Then after discharge, I get the honor of talking to you or seeing you out there in Recovery land and your life has continued to evolve in an exceptional way. I am not able to put into words how God did these things, I just know that it is happening and we need to be showing our brothers and sisters who can't seem to stay on this path with us, EXACTLY how we have recovered, so that they may experience the same unexplainable miracle that we have. This Power that we seek does not have favorites...He doesn't only help every 10<sup>th</sup> person who cries out...in fact, the Big Book says it like this: pg. 46 "We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us the Realm of the Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive: never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men." And pg. 57 says "But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us." That tells me that every alcoholic and addict has the same chance at this freedom I have found. Therefore, it is my responsibility to let those still suffering know the absolute unexplainable miracle (yes, I know that I have used those two words a lot...can't help it!) that has taken place in my life as a result of these steps.

Did any of that make sense...probably not! I tend to get a bit passionate about this God stuff and my mind works faster than I can type!!! Sorry – I hope you got my point. As Reunion approaches, I

encourage you to reach out to those you were in treatment with, especially those who might be struggling right now. Let them see, through you, what this Power is all about. I can't wait to see each of you and look so forward to hearing about your new life. May God bless you all until then...

**Peace – Alicia**  
[anew@lahacienda.com](mailto:anew@lahacienda.com)

P.S. God is helping me work on His timeline in a lot of areas, especially with my song, SCARS!! Still working on it, only at a much slower pace than I would like~ totally out of my control, but I will continue to keep all of you informed on the progress. Oh yeah, everything is still awesome at home. Thanks for all of your thoughts and prayers.

## DJ SAYS...

### Hello Alumni Friends:

It seems like only a few weeks ago that the last newsletter went out. It has been pretty busy at the hospital. I hope that everyone had a great holiday and Santa found everyone being good boys and girls! Enjoying our first Christmas in the new house was a real blessing. It was very nice getting out and visiting a few of the Alumni groups and meeting some new people and seeing some old friends. I'm glad that the holidays are behind us now so we can get down to business with the New Year. It won't be long until reunion is here! That is a pretty exciting thought. I hope that everyone has made arrangements for lodgings. I am really looking forward to seeing you guys and enjoying some of the campfire meetings at some of the lodges where the alumni groups will be staying. I've made each reunion since I've been sober but this one will be pretty special getting to work and visit at the same time! I'm sure that

by now most of you have seen or heard about La Hacienda being on the Dr. Phil show. It has been really interesting being at the hospital with so many people from all over the country. I look forward to hearing from all these new alumni from different regions and hearing about them carrying the message in places where perhaps the fellowship needs some shoring up. It will be pretty cool to watch what God has in store that's for sure.

While riding to work this morning, I was thinking about what it is I would really like to take the opportunity to say in this letter. One thing for sure is that I have watched a lot of people leaving La Ha on fire with this deal and really going out there and doing the work!

The sad thing is I've watched quite a few die recently. It is really heartbreaking to receive phone calls of that nature after the fact. The thing that is really frustrating is that it didn't have to be that way. Recovery is possible for each and every one of us that is willing to take the action required. I only wish some of these people would have reached out. I came to work here because of the love God has given me for alcoholics and drug addicts. If any of you guys are out there hurting, PLEASE PICK UP THE PHONE AND CALL! Until next time take care and God bless!

**Your friend – DJ**  
[dshay@lahacienda.com](mailto:dshay@lahacienda.com)

## DEBORAH SAYS...

Howdy All!

I can't believe I've been here in the Hill Country for almost 7 months now. Wow, what an experience the last few months have been! Once again, I'm humbled and awed by the opportunity to work with and learn from Chris, Alicia, and DJ. I'm also blessed to have the opportunity to teach Big Book to the young adults. It is an absolute honor to work with

these kids. I'll show you a true miracle when a "bulletproof" angry 16 year-old walks in on day one and then leaves 30 days later - humble, honest and willing. Unbelievable to see God work in these kids!

It's been a little bittersweet finding and getting used to a new home group here in Kerrville. I loved my home group in Austin (Go Stepsisters!) and I am proud of the women who became my sisters in this fellowship. One of the reasons I have so much respect for the women in that group is because they have never forgotten the primary purpose for attending meetings – to be there for the newcomer. When I got out of treatment, I was given info on this group and while I had never had much trust in women, I was willing to give it a try. Before I even got through the door, these women had introduced themselves, hugged me and corralled me into the club. This fellowship of women laughed, cried and celebrated together. I had found my home.

Religiously, I went to that Friday night women's meeting. I was proud to be around a strong group of women who had recovered from this disease. I also dedicated myself to the Austin alumni meeting. I loved these two meetings mainly because I could walk in the rooms and immediately see 5 or 6 friends and we could catch up with each other on what was going on in our lives. I had lost so many friends before I got sober that I was thrilled to have so many friends in the fellowship. Committing to these meetings also contributed to the illusion that I was active in the steps.

Nine months into sobriety, I was involved in a disastrous relationship, sitting on my 4<sup>th</sup> step, avoiding my sponsor and PRETENDING that I was happy, joyous & free while I was DYING inside. Every Friday night leading up to those 9 months, one particular woman in my home group would get real honest with me and try to help me find my truth. Every Friday night, I would curse her name and tell myself, she doesn't know me

(I'm different!). Same deal with the Wednesday night Austin alumni meetings. I'd show up and piss & moan about what God wasn't doing for me and how the steps weren't working for me. Oh, but I loved the fellowship and the friends it gave me! It took alumni who had dedicated themselves to that alumni group way before I got there, to help get me back on track. Thank goodness they stayed in that alumni meeting way past their discharge date. If it hadn't been for the experience, strength & hope of those who came before me, my sister in my home group and the two guys at alumni, I don't know if I would have seen through my selfishness to get out of myself and finish the work. That woman I used to curse eventually became my sponsor and I am honored to have been able to go through the work with her.

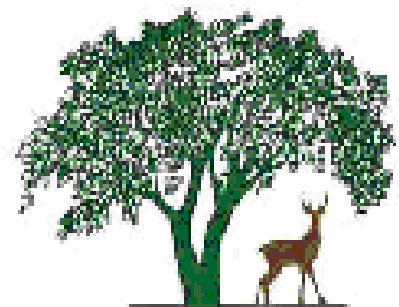
Last night I went to a meeting and the topic was fellowship. Almost everyone who shared commented on how much they loved their home group because of the familiar faces they saw and because of the friends they have in that group. Let's get real clear – we don't go to meetings to see our friends and catch up on the latest gossip – we go for the newcomer – the scared guy/girl who couldn't afford treatment and is in the rooms for the very first time. I had an alumni tell me once that he doesn't go to the alumni meeting in his area anymore because he "outgrew" that meeting. So he outgrew working with newcomers??? There is a crop full of newcomers coming into those meetings every week. Service work??? Go to your alumni meeting. The newcomers need you old-timers there to share your experience, strength & hope like those guys who helped me. On page 97 of the Big Book, it tells us, "Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery." So many of you excel at this and your foundation stone is firmly in place. We are so grateful to you for your hard work. We need MORE of you out there in the trenches with us.

The biggest opportunity to share with others is just around the corner. Reunion will be here before you know it. It's an awesome deal to see this campus crawling with miracles of recovery. It's guaranteed to be a HOOT! I hope you all will be able to come see us in May and share the blessings you have received as a result of doing this work. I look forward to meeting those of you I don't know yet. Please stay safe and keep those who are still suffering from this disease in your prayers!

**God Bless – Deborah**  
[ddoherty@lahacienda.com](mailto:ddoherty@lahacienda.com)

## WEBSITES OF INTEREST:

<http://houston.lahacienda.com>  
<http://dallas.lahacienda.com>  
<http://corpuschristi.lahacienda.com>  
<http://lubbock.lahacienda.com>  
<http://midland.lahacienda.com>  
<http://sanantonio.lahacienda.com>  
<http://www.lahasolutions.com>



## Messages from the Hill:

### Chronic Relapse

Brethren,

Last night at the Alumni meeting, we were talking about chronic relapsers and, now that we know the solution, there are no more excuses for our failure to continue on the Road of Happy Destiny. Once having been armed with sufficient knowledge and a psychic change, relapse seems out of the realm of possibility. Now that "Issue Man" is recognized for what he is - an excuse - what could come our way to interrupt the happy, joyous and free life we enjoy today?

I shared that I, too, was a chronic relapser. Seven times in treatment; more "desire" chips than countable; varying periods of miserable sobriety over the past sixteen years. I had internalized this defeatist label and was perfectly happy using this term as an excuse for not accepting the concepts of the 1st Step, as well as turning my back on God and not accepting his omnipotence found in the 2nd and 3rd Steps.

While sharing, I had another one of those epiphanies or, as I prefer to call them, a "No shit, Richard!" These things come to me - generally when I'm talking out loud - and they just knock me flat on my back. It's like this big light turns on in my brain and those dark, long-abandoned, deepest recesses of my brain begin to fire.

Anyway, I'm sharing and, out of the clear blue of my now-sober mind, I emphatically state that I wasn't a chronic relapser at all. In reality, I was a **chronic alcoholic suffering from acute periods of miserable sobriety**. As long as I

was drunk, I didn't have to feel or think about my miserable existence. When sober, and without surrender to or a connection with God, was when my life really sucked. I felt all the fears; remembered all my failures; shook like a neurotic poodle; told more lies to cover my previous lies; felt all the resentments I harbored towards myself and others.

It wasn't until my psychic change that I was able to fully understand, internalize and accept there is a wonderful life waiting for a **chronic alcoholic suffering from acute periods of miserable sobriety**. I finally figured - once and for all - the idea that recovery is possible if I was willing **to do certain simple things and meet a few simple requirements** (beginning on the last paragraph of page 50 and continuing on page 51 of the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*). This is the nuts of the deal in two-hundred words or less. It is all right there in black and white.

1. Thousands of men and women experienced a *revolutionary change*;
2. The change came about by doing the Steps; and,
3. The "what we were like; what happened; and what we are like today" is still practiced today to give hope to the hopeless.

Basically, our forefathers:

1. Got God;
2. Cleaned house; and,
3. Carried their message to the newcomer.

How friggin' simple is this! What the heck was keeping me away from this not so closely-guarded secret? My answer is found on page 568 of the Big Book (4th edition):

*"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation.*

If I signed your Big Book while we were at La Ha, it's a good bet this is the page I used. These are powerful words to me; perhaps the greatest words ever written that directly apply to me. Once I sobered up enough to get out of SCU and into Reverend Chris' rantings, I saw all my contempt and ignorance. And it wasn't near as pretty as I was upon admittance to La Ha, sitting in my wheelchair and barking orders in SCU.

Following Chris' revelations, I was on to the lovely Alicia's "2nd/3rd Step" class. My reinforced stone wall constructed of massive amounts of quarried contempt and ignorance began to crumble as I recited the 3rd Step Prayer up on Serenity Hill. By the time I got through with the "4th Step" group, my wall was just a pile of bad memories; failed efforts; and unfulfilled self-expectations. I **had**, in fact, experienced a psychic change and a spiritual awakening was just around the corner.

Now, I know some of you are asking, "Sick Dick, how come you know so much? Where does all this knowledge come from? What am I missing that you have?" Relax. Someone told me to open my Big Book to page 112 and read the first three words on that page. I did and haven't stopped yet!

Later,  
"Rockin' Rickie - No Longer the Sickie"

CALL US, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

## KEEP IN TOUCH!

800-749-6160

Ext. 510, 511, 512, 513



## Kerrville Area Motels, etc...

Here is a list of area motels, hotels, bed & breakfasts, and other facilities to contact if you plan to be in the area:

### Best Western Sunday House Inn

2124 Sidney Baker  
830-896-1313 or 800-677-9477

### Days Inn of Kerrville

2000 Sidney Baker  
830-896-1000 or 800-329-7466

### Budget Inn

1804 Sidney Baker  
830-896-8200

### Days Inn

2000 Sidney Baker  
830-896-1000

### Flagstaff Inn

906 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27  
830-792-4449

### Y.O. Ranch Hotel

2033 Sidney Baker / Hwy 16  
830-257-4440 or 800-531-2800

### Inn of the Hills River Resort

1001 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27  
830-895-5000 or 800-292-5690

### River Inn Resort

Rt. 2, Box 120, Hunt, TX  
830-238-4226 or 800-841-0501

### Save Inn Motel

1804 Sidney Baker / Hwy 16  
830-896-8200 or 800-219-8158

### River Bend Bed & Breakfast

FM 1340, 2.8 miles west of Hunt  
830-238-4681

### River Road Bed & Breakfast

P.O. Box 498, Hunt, TX  
830-238-4244

### Casa Bonita Lodges

Hwy 39, 1 mile west of Hunt  
Store  
830-238-4422

### Waltonia Lodges on the River

3 ½ miles Hwy 39, Ingram, TX  
830-367-5613

### Lazy Hills Guest Ranch

Henderson Ranch Road  
Box G, Ingram, TX  
830-367-5600 or 800-219-8158

### Armadillo Junction RV Park

dillorv@hctc.net  
HCR 7, Box 31, Ingram, TX  
830-367-3200 or 800-238-2848

### Guadalupe River Resort

2605 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27  
830-367-5676 or 800-582-1916

### Hunter House Motel

Ingram, TX  
800-655-2377

### Motel 6

1810 Sidney Baker  
800-466-8356

### Comfort Inn

2001 Sidney Baker  
800-221-2222

### Hampton Inn

2038 Sidney Baker  
830-257-0600

### Econo Lodge

2145 Sidney Baker  
830-896-1711

### Roddy Tree Ranch

Hwy. 39, Hunt, TX  
830-367-2871

### Super 8 Motel

2127 Sidney Baker  
830-896-1511

### Comfort Inn

2001 Sidney Baker  
830-792-7700

**Make Your Plans Today for the 32<sup>nd</sup> La  
Hacienda Alumni Reunion**  
**April 30, May 1, 2, 2004**



**Check us out on the web!**  
Surf over to [www.lahacienda.com](http://www.lahacienda.com)



Has your address changed? Fill out the form below and mail it back to us to continue receiving a copy of "A View from Serenity Hill" quarterly newsletter.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Work # \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Approximate date you left La Ha \_\_\_\_\_ Sobriety Date \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: La Hacienda  
P.O. Box 1  
Hunt, TX 78024

Please print legibly so we can enter this info into our database.

## Upcoming Events

March 6	16 <sup>th</sup> Primary Purpose – Group Anniversary Eat at 6:30 pm/Chris speaks 8	Dallas, TX
March 9	Lafayette – Alumni Meeting Chris speaks 6 PM	Lafayette, LA
March 20	Alternative MC Sobriety Run Chris speaks 8 PM	New Braunsfels, TX
March 26, 27, 28	CA in the UK Chris speaks Friday night	Bournemouth, England
April 30, May 1, 2	La Hacienda's Alumni Reunion 32 <sup>nd</sup> !	Hunt, TX
May 14, 15, 16	21 <sup>st</sup> Man to Man Conference Chris and DJ will attend	Lake Brownwood, TX
May 28, 29, 30	District 5 AA Campout Chris speaks Saturday Night/ Contact Mike M. 254-770-1323	Harker Heights, TX (Up by Temple)
June 18, 19, 20	Texas State AA Conference A bunch of us will attend.	San Antonio, TX
June 26	Founder's Day Conference (AA) Chris speaks Saturday night/ Contact 850-385-2112	Tallahassee, FL
July 17	AA Workshop Chris speaks/ Contact # 317-431-5727	Indianapolis, Indiana
August 6, 7, 8	Fellowship of the Spirit Conference NY Chris will attend	Queens, NY
August 27, 28	Big Book Study Group Chris speaks/ Contact Glen S. 717-512-1574	Harrisburg, PA

Call for Details: 1-800-749-6160  
Ext. 510, 511, 512 & 513