

Straight Talk

A publication of Fairview Riverside AA
U of M Medical Center

Meeting
Listings
Inside

January -
February 2016

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BLOSSOMS OF HOPE

There is this plant that sits on a little table in our bedroom. I don't know what kind of plant it is, other than it is small and green and on many days looks like it might not make it.

For the past couple of weeks, the plant has flowered. It is an odd sight. Something that looks like it is dying... to have these most beautiful flowers - pink, bright pink - that hang off drooping limbs and point toward the ground instead of the sun. Maybe the plant isn't dying; I really have no idea. I water it maybe too much.

I grew up knowing that the world was filled with good people and all I had to do was look for them. And that's exactly what I did a few years ago when I was lost, and drunk, and angry and fearful.

Sometimes I forget and it gets pretty dry. I move it into the sun. But other times, I wonder if it's getting too much light and I move it into the shade. There is no discernible pattern; it never seems to get much better despite my best efforts. It just seems to be on the precipice of not making it and yet every year around this time, it produces a beautiful display of bright pink flowers that point towards the ground.

Blossoms Of Hope, continued on page 3

God grant me the laughter
to help me see the past
with perspective
face the future with hope
and celebrate today
without taking myself
too seriously!

Who's In Charge Here?

Perhaps I should have titled this "What's In Charge Here?" After all addiction isn't exactly a living entity... is it? You could say that each time that you take a drink, snort up a line, or swallow a pill, your addiction is being nourished and fed. But there's even more to it than that. Because you have invited it (or maybe I should say him or her) to be a part of your life. Some say that even if you've been sober for years, your addiction has been doing pushups; to be stronger than ever if you invite it back into your life.

For most of us anyway, I believe the beginning was fun. We were a perfect fit. And we were in charge. Not this "new friend".

Who's In Charge Here? continued on page 4

Have you
written
something?

Would you
like to have
it published in
Straight Talk?

Leave a copy in the AA squad #1 box
in room F537 of the West building
(5th floor). Address it to Straight Talk.

"I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR MY OWN SOBRIETY"

Desiderata

*Go placidly amid the noise and the haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.*

*As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others,
even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.
Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexatious to the spirit.*

*If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter,
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career,
however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.*

*Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery.
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.
Be yourself.*

*Especially do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love,
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.*

*Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.*

*Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.
You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.*

*Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be.
And whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul.*

*With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world.
Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.*

By Max Ehrmann

Have a question
about what happens to
the dollar you contribute at
your AA meeting?

The AA trustees
have the answer.

The trustees meet
on the **second** Sunday of
each month in
the **Brennan Center**
(East Building)
at **6:30pm**.



A Soldier's Tale

My name is Brian, I'm an Alcoholic.

In 1967 at the age of 17 I joined the army. As both my parents were dead the army became my "Surrogate family". After basic training I was sent abroad to Germany. It was there that I came to realize that drinking in the army was a way of life. You are fed, clothed, given accommodation and money to spend, and most of my money was spent on drink. I was drinking almost every night, but weekends were the real drinking times.

Being drunk for much of the time was just a laugh, (or so I thought). At this time I was starting to get into trouble through drink. I would end up in the middle of a field, or occasionally be locked up for the night in the guardhouse for some drunken escapade. As time passed my drinking started to even out and I managed for the most part to stay out of trouble, but only for a while.

On 11th November 1994 I asked for help and finally took the First Step.

It was eventually promoted and given stripes, although never a week went by when I was not drunk. As my alcoholism progressed I started to get into more serious trouble. I was arrested by the German Police for drunk driving and this culminated in my entry into a detox unit. After treatment I went through a "dry" period and the army shipped me back to England for two years. During this time I decided to start a fitness regime and somehow managed some "controlled drinking".

A Soldier's Tale, continued on page 5

Experience is a good teacher,
but she sends in terrific bills.

Minna Thomas Antrim

Blossoms Of Hope, continued from page 1

So yesterday, I got on my knees and stuck my head under these flowers and looked up. The flowers smiled and I smiled back. For a few seconds, there was some mutual recognition and at the risk of being presumptuous, I think there was a moment of mutual appreciation. The plant tolerates my ignorance and ineptitude and appreciates that I do my best. I gave the little plant a kiss and thanked it for adding a little color into my life.

The moment with the flower was contrasted by a lunch with my parents who are breathing vestiges of generations of alcoholics. She is debilitated by cancer, intestinal illness, pancreatitis and pneumonia. He is deaf and mute from depression and addiction. He left early and I drove her home. She cried most of the way.

Blossoms Of Hope, continued on page 4



**Join us for a
Speaker Meeting**

**Brennan Center
East Building
Sunday @ 7:15pm**

**AA
Sunday
Night**

Blossoms Of Hope, continued from page 3

I don't know if my folks have another blossoming ahead of them, but I do know that they had one behind them. He was practical. He taught me how to work hard, how to create value and how to provide. He put me to bed with a song every night and made the world a safe place for me - he gave me roots. She was spiritual. She showed me love and truth and beauty. She read lines from Kahlil Gibran to me when I was angry and held me tight when I was sad - she gave me wings.

They both gave me the kind of childhood they had wished for themselves and today I am very grateful for that. I grew up knowing that the world was filled with good people and all I had to do was look for them. And that's exactly what I did, a few years ago when I was lost, and drunk, and angry and fearful. I looked around for the good people that I had heard about, that I knew were out there. The angels that wanted to help me and wanted nothing in return. And I found them. I've found those people that were described in the poetry my mom read to me:

"And there are those who have little and give it all.
These are the believers in life and the bounty of life, and their coffer is never empty.
They give as in yonder valley the myrtle breaths its fragrance into space.
Through the hands of such as these God speaks,
and from behind their eyes He smiles upon the earth."

Four years ago it was through your hands that God spoke and today it is through my eyes that He smiles upon the earth.

With love, from Alex - From the e-AA Group

Who's In Charge Here? continued from page 1

We did everything together. Some things, like dancing, singing, or socializing seemed to go better. And all because of our new friend. Back in those days, even if we were separated for a time, it was okay.

We weren't really that close...
not yet.

But the reunions were wonderful! They made our friendship feel even stronger. Sort of a skewed version of absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Gradually, we realized everything was better together.
Although we probably did not realize that we were not so
much in charge any more.

Sometimes, other people would help us be together. Other times, they would not. Either way, it didn't really matter. We were going to be together.

But then there were times when things went wrong. It seemed as if our best friend was turning against us. Not possible, we thought. We tried to take charge again.

Recently, a friend of mine talked of not feeling well. He said he had made it home from the bar just in time to throw up. He said that he hadn't felt quite right for the past week or so. He also said that over this past week or so, he had been smoking less cigarettes and drinking less alcohol. He thought that his lowered consumption might be the cause of his feeling ill. Even though I'm an alcoholic, I'm certainly no expert regarding addiction. Still, I believe his thought process is a sign of addiction. To be honest, it's one of the most bizarre things I have ever heard.

Of course, I've done my share of things that were pretty off base too. Some time ago, I wrote of faking to doze off at my brother's house. It was nearly 8:00 and I wanted to make it to the liquor store before closing. When they "woke me up" they suggested it was time to go. My plan worked perfectly. Another time, I was at a friend's house. We were sitting around drinking and doing lines of cocaine. There was a woman there who was not part of our regular crowd. She was talking about how addictive cocaine is. I agreed... very addictive... need to be careful.

As we were talking,
I was thinking to myself, not a problem for me...
I have it under control!

Being sober for a few years or so now, I've come to realize that when I was using, I was in control of very little. If anything. I have also figured out that the more things were spinning out of control, the more I thought I was still in charge. Or at least that I could be and should be. I just had to protect me and my friend. But my friend had become my enemy.

I had tried to be in charge of much more than I could handle. Sometimes, looking back, it amazes me that I ever thought I could do so much. It also amazes me that I tried to do it for as long as I did. Because the more I tried to be in charge, the worse things got.

These days, I'm in charge of far less. And although there are still times when I try to do too much, I've gotten better at being able to let go of it. Life for me now is a great deal calmer and easier. And I don't always have to be in charge to keep it that way.

By David O. of Fairview Riverside AA

A Soldier's Tale, continued from page 3

I arrived back in Germany and for a few years I continued to manage "controlled drinking". I saved up all my "sweeties" for the weekend. I was then promoted and given a normal posting back to England. At this time the progression of my alcoholism was affecting me more and more.

After a drunken argument I clocked an officer and was in trouble again. It was 1986, I knew I had a serious drink problem and it was then that I first made contact with Alcoholics Anonymous.

I went to a few AA meetings and managed to stay "dry" for six weeks. "Fear" was what stopped me from drinking. I was still blaming people, places and things however and inevitably lifted the "first drink".

Providence again seemed to be on my side and I was given a posting back home to Scotland before retiring from the army. I finished my last three years without any more serious trouble.

When I left the army it was with a great sense of relief. It was 1991 and my alcoholism began to accelerate. For the next three years I went through a cycle of "binge drinking" emerging from each bout demoralised and full of fear. During this time I tried to get back to AA and managed some "dry periods", but all I was doing was "getting fit to drink again". On 11th November 1994 I asked for help and finally took the First Step.

I knew I had to build up a "mental defence against the first drink" by using the 12 Step recovery programme. Being "atheist" at this time, the mention of God always put me off. The Third Step in particular seemed to be a major hurdle. It was explained to me however that I was only being asked to "make a decision" to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him. The actual turning over would take place as I "worked the next eight Steps".

I began to understand that the alcohol was only a "symptom" of deeper emotional problems. I then sat down and took a moral inventory of myself, writing down all my fears and resentments. After some serious thinking, I took my inventory to a priest in the Fellowship and unloaded all the "emotional garbage" I had been carrying around all my adult life. I told him things I thought I would take to my grave. What I had done was build myself a "platform" which would then allow me to move onto a new and sober life.

I continued on the recovery programme and made a list of all the people I had harmed. I made amends as best I could and put myself on the top of the list. By

this time I was starting to become "God conscious" and I was also reading a lot of AA books. It was after I read Chapter 16 of "Pass it on" that I was guided to a church in Glasgow where I went through a "Spiritual Experience".

After that night the whole 12 Step recovery programme fell into place.

At the beginning this "atheist" was told that if I thoroughly applied myself to the 12 Steps as they are laid down, it would be "impossible" not to come to believe in a God of my own understanding. Today the first 9 Steps have been put into the dustbin of the past (I would only have to go back to them if I got drunk) and I use the last 3 Steps as my daily maintenance Steps.

I met my wife Mary in AA and we have both settled down to a happy and sober life. All thanks to AA and the grace of God as I understand Him.

By Brian - From AA of Great Britain

Spiritual Honesty

Though I had searched my entire life, I never identified with a deity. I tried to accept what others believed, but always felt I was in a masquerade. When I sobered up, I wanted so desperately to have the peace and serenity that I saw on those sober faces that I would have believed in anything.

My solution was to share with my sponsor, then with a trusted friend, then finally, in a meeting. What I shared was this: My personal Higher Power is the collective spirit of humankind. If humans put their heads and hearts together, they can achieve anything.

Blasphemy to some, peace for me. My concern was how my beliefs would affect a young woman who had asked me to sponsor her. I realized that honesty in all things would be my path.

I feel no resentment to the few who try to persuade me that I am lost, or that some particular religious figure is the answer. I love AA and do not feel excluded by others' faiths.

AA brought me sobriety, love, joy, sorrow, and acceptance. More importantly, AA brought me to a true understanding of myself and a power greater than myself - the untiring and persevering spirit of humankind.

By Mary E. of Sherman, Texas
From AA Grapevine



GETTING HIGH ON SCORPIONS

Criminalizing drugs is futile because desperate people will always be able to find chemical relief. In Afghanistan that relief can come in the form of the ubiquitous scorpion.

Tartars in Bamiyan province crush scorpions, dry them, and then smoke the powdered tails with either tobacco or hashish.

A scorpion high reportedly can last days and causes visual hallucinations that can rival a heavy mescaline trip.



“!”

I always get drunk when I'm sad. The vomitting takes my mind off the problems

-- Tom Wallace



U of M Medical Center Fairview Meeting Listings

Day	Group	Time	Location
ACA ACOA			
Monday	10	8:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG22
Tuesday	4	9:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG22
Al-Anon			
Monday	36	7:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG23
Tuesday	33	7:00pm	Bethany Lutheran Church Franklin Avenue @ 25th Avenue
Sunday	AA General Meeting	7:15pm	East Building - Brennan Center
CA			
Wednesday		8:30pm	West Building - 5th Floor Lecture Hall
GA			
Sunday		7:00pm	East Building - MB114 (Dining Room F) (Tunnel Level)
NA			
Friday		8:00pm	East Building - Brennan Center
OA			
Monday		4:45pm	East Building - MB114 (Dining Room F) (Tunnel Level)
WA (Workaholics Anonymous)			
Wednesday		11:30am	East Building - Dining Room E

*Is your group not listed? Is your group listed incorrectly?
Please leave a note with any changes in the AA group one mailbox.

Mailboxes are located in the West Building - Room F537.

AA Meeting Listings U of M Medical Center Fairview

Day	Group/Squad	Time	Location
Monday	3	5:30pm	East Building - Dining Room E
	43	7:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG48
	63	8:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG23
Tuesday	57/36	1:00pm	West Building - Fifth Floor F571
	62	7:00pm	Bethany Lutheran Church Franklin Avenue @ 25th Avenue South
	71(signing meeting)	7:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG23 (American Sign Language Only)
	9	8:00pm	North Building - Ground Level NG42
Wednesday	32	5:30pm	East Building - MB114 (Dining Room F) (Tunnel Level)
	20	7:00pm	West Building - Fifth Floor F541
	51	8:15pm	North Building - Ground Level NG42 (Big Book Meeting)
Friday	46	7:00pm	East Building - MB114 (Dining Room F) (Tunnel Level)
	70	8:30pm	North Building - Ground Level NG42
Saturday	1	8:00pm	East Building - Brennan Center
Sunday	47	5:30pm	East Building - MB114 (Dining Room F) (Tunnel Level)
	General Meeting	7:15pm	East Building - Brennan Center
	2	8:30pm	East Building - Brennan Center
Trustees	2nd Sunday each month	6:30pm	East Building - Brennan Center

People who don't go to meetings aren't there to see what happens to people who don't go to meetings.

***Is your group not listed? Is it listed incorrectly?**
Please leave a note with any changes in the AA group #1 mailbox.

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