

# The Northeast Ohio Recorder

Oct / Nov / Dec 2018

<http://www.area54.org>

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**"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."**

A.A. Co-Founder, Bill W., February 1961, From: "The Shape of Things to Come", *I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A.*, © A. A. Grapevine, Reprinted with permission

## A Word From Our Delegate

Hello to all in Area 54:

I would like to share some thoughts on Tradition 11:

Let us see what the long form of the 11th Tradition can give us in understanding Attraction rather than Promotion and the Principles we should live by.



*Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think A. A. ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as A.A. members ought not be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.*

"By changing my appearance, how I communicate, dress, and conduct myself in and out of the rooms of AA. It depends entirely on how well I work my program of recovery, on how true I can be to AA's mission. So, I know that by staying rigorously honest (with myself first), and focusing on the essentials of Alcoholics Anonymous, that I am (to the best of my ability) exercising "attraction" rather than "promotion." This is also part of carrying the message.

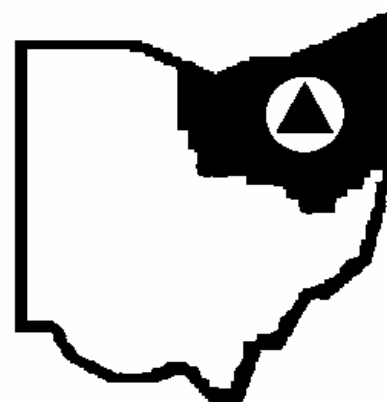
The concept of attraction versus promotion has the benefit of personal responsibility. My behavior being of maximum service to others and showing them what happy, joyous and free can be.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a powerful dynamic program that saves lives, and the accompanying "word of mouth" that naturally occurs among those grateful that it does is a remarkable example of faith in action.

Being of service and carrying the message to my fellow members is my primary goal.

I love Alcoholics Anonymous!

**Jamie B., Panel 67 Delegate, Area 54 – Northeast Ohio**



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### ROTATION PROTECTS OUR BELOVED FELLOWSHIP

It was a pleasure to serve as your editor for the past eight years (2011-2018) through four Panels and 32 issues. This issue will be my last one as newsletter editor of the Northeast Ohio Recorder.

Rotation is good for the fellowship and good for the trusted servant, too. The incoming Panel 69 delegate and area officers will select a fine replacement for me in this position. I'm not worried about the future of the publication or the quality of the material therein. No one is indispensable. I am reminded that Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929), French journalist, physician and statesman, once quipped, "*Les cimetières sont pleins de gens irremplaçables, qui ont tous été remplacés.*" That is to say, "The cemeteries are full of once irreplaceable people, who have since all been replaced."

I need not fall into maudlin reverie at the state of the world (or AA), as my main hope in life has become to leave AA no worse off for having been a member. If some small improvement was wrought on the anvil of MY experience, that is not for me to determine...

At the 1955 Convention in St Louis, Bill W. passed on to the AA fellowship the responsibility for the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. Just imagine how difficult that must have been for Bill. He set up our service structure and helped make AA available worldwide. He was the driving force behind the movement, and now he was letting go of the reins and allowing the Conference to act in his stead.

In Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, Bill describes the emotion and challenges of stepping down as a leader of Alcoholic Anonymous and speaks about AA being safe in the hands of the fellowship, even from him. Bill knew the pitfalls of having a person in a position of power in AA and of the problems it could cause within a group, district, or area. He knew how easy it could be for any one of us to be deluded into thinking we are an expert, that we have some measure of importance, and that we don't have to abide by the group

conscience because we know better. He understood that rotating leadership is best.

The spirit of rotation means more than just giving up the title of a service position. Rotation means truly letting go of the control and the actions. It means allowing new GSRs, DCMs, Committee Leaders, and Officers to make mistakes without criticism and do their jobs without undue influence from those who have rotated out of those positions. It means allowing the entire service structure to operate with God leading the way ... through our group conscience.

The benefits of rotation are very real and practical. The benefits to the individual are beyond our imagination because we know that anything God has in store for us will be better than anything we could have planned for ourselves, and when we make ourselves available for service, we have new opportunities for growth. We can't move forward if we are still clinging to our present conditions. We don't know what God has planned for us, but we'll never find out if we are not willing to let Him guide us further down the path.

By rotating out of a service position and truly letting go of the job, we open ourselves to an ongoing spiritual awakening. In effect we are saying to our Higher Power that we finished the job laid out for us and are ready for what HP wants us to do next. Bill set the example for all of us, and the challenge for us is to follow his example.

*(Non-personal comments above were condensed from a talk given at the 52<sup>nd</sup> General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous by Loren B., Panel 51 delegate from Montana.)*

*~Your editor (emeritus),  
Jeff*

***We welcome your service  
-related contributions,  
comments and questions.  
Send topic ideas or complaints to:  
[newsletter@area54.org](mailto:newsletter@area54.org)***



## AREA OFFICER REPORTS

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### **ALTERNATE DELEGATE'S REPORT**

#### **The Steps/Living the Design**

Within the fellowship of AA and other 12 step programs, the STEPS are considered the “recovery leg” or side of the triangle in the circle. The other two sides of the “triangle” relates to the sustainment of the fellowship (unity and service: traditions and concepts), but the “recovery” relates to the 12 steps and how they worked and then applied to one’s daily life, meaning our personal recovery. The following is article that shares the “principles behind the steps.”

Twelve Spiritual Principles (Virtues) taken from [www.aacleve.org](http://www.aacleve.org).

Bill W. considered each step to be a spiritual principle in and of itself. However, particularly in the 12 & 12, he outlined the spiritual principles behind each step. Some of them seem like common sense but understand going into the exercise that reading these principles and actually practicing them in your day-to-day lives are two entirely different things (and that the latter requires vigilance and willingness).

1. HONESTY – Fairness and straight forwardness of conduct: adherence to the facts.
2. HOPE – To expect with desire; something on which hopes are centered.
3. FAITH – Complete confidence; belief and trust.
4. COURAGE - firmness of mind and will in the face of extreme difficulty; mental or moral strength to withstand fear.
5. INTEGRITY – The quality or state of being complete or undivided; soundness.

6. WILLINGNESS – Prompt to act or respond; accepted and done of choice or without reluctance.
7. HUMILITY – Not proud or haughty; not arrogant or assertive; a clear and concise understanding of what we are, followed by a sincere desire to become what we can be.
8. LOVE – Unselfish concern that freely accepts another in loyalty and seeks his good to hold dear.
9. DISCIPLINE – Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; to bring under control; to train or develop by instruction.
10. PATIENCE/PERSEVERANCE – Steadfast despite opposition or adversity; able or willing to b thr ear; to persist in an understanding in spite of counter influences.
11. AWARENESS – Alive and alert; vigilance in observing.
12. SERVICE —  
A helpful act; contribution to the welfare of others; useful labor that does not produce a tangible commodity.

Source – Unknown Author

While researching this topic I came across an article from a person who has a practice that helps alcoholics and others deals with spiritually and recovery( JoAnn Campbell-Rice). I would like share her thoughts because they echo what I’m feeling about “Living the Steps” :

“We recently moved, and I'm now shopping for a step ladder so I can reach my cupboards. Because it will be a permanent fixture in the kitchen, this ladder must be durable, sturdy, tall and elegant (the house I’m trying to buy I have the same issue) . It’s not a big leap to see that the Twelve Steps also function this way in my life—they lift

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## AREA OFFICER REPORTS

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me to a better place and allow me to reach what I want, if I just use them.

I can only live the Twelve Steps if, at some point, I've taken the actions they require under the guidance of a sponsor. It's not enough to go to meetings and talk about them or hear how others have worked the Steps. I have to follow the principles myself, with help and support, to become spiritually fit. Spiritual fitness, which is the buffer zone between what happens in the world and how I respond to it, is much like physical fitness. I don't get lean by drinking coffee and talking about treadmills. I actually have to walk.

Taking the actions for each Step as outlined in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) allows two things to occur, simultaneously. The first thing is that my ego is deflated and my personality is changed; my inner alcoholic goes into the back seat by taking actions that level my pride, confess my shortcomings, and require self-searching (AA p. 25). The second thing that working the Steps does is nourish my "innermost self" (AA p. 30), my spirit—the healthy me always connected to a Higher Power—by ensuring that I make an honest, authentic connection with myself, others or a Higher Power in each Step. I receive benefits, results, and promises when I take these actions.

Once I've worked the Steps I have new skills to cope with life when things get hard, skills I have to practice daily to live happily in recovery. Perhaps the one line that best sums up the perspective I gain by working the Twelve Steps is the following: "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us" (AA p. 90). This line in the Step Ten essay in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions shows me when I need to double up on my spiritual activities—anytime I'm

disturbed. Living in the solution of these steps, I can no longer point fingers or blame others for my emotional imbalance. Whenever I'm disturbed, I must search myself for the cause. That's the essence of conducting a daily inventory. I can't afford to let irritability and restlessness become my norm" [www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/campbell-rice/living-the-twelve-steps](http://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/articles/campbell-rice/living-the-twelve-steps).

When I was in active alcoholism living happily depended on the actions of others and their place in my life. I had to "right" partner, jobs, friends etc. Today in recovery I know that my happiness (peace and serenity) depends on me practicing and living spiritual principles, or as Bill W. calls them virtues on daily basis to live a life that will be of "maximum service to God and the people about us" (AA, p.77)

In Love and Service ,

***Shyrl B., Alternate Delegate Panel 67/Area54***

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### AREA CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

#### **The Three Legacies of AA, Recovery Unity and Service**

As I write this article. I realized this is my last article as the Area 54 Chairperson. Thank you very much for allowing me to be your trusted servant for Panel 67. It has been a huge honor to be the Area 54 Chairperson. Again, I thank you.

When I came into AA I didn't know what to expect let alone think I would ever be trusted to help. Early on in my recovery, I was doing service work without realizing simply trying to do what I could to assist was service work. It so happened another member of the fellowship advised me what I was doing was the beginning of a life long journey in sobriety. I can remember this one time my husband was appointed to be a group's GSR. He went to the district meeting and had no clue

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## AREA OFFICER REPORTS

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what was going on. The longer I stayed in the fellowship, the more I realized I wanted to be a part of this journey of service. During later years, I was appointed to be our group's GSR. I was given the opportunity to share what I had learned through my journey within the service structure. He was taken aback at the responsibility a GSR truly has to it's group and to represent its district doing what's right for AA. We are truly the link between our group and our fellowship. Those in service I've come to know throughout this journey discuss how it begins and continues throughout our recovery. The 12 steps allow us work toward becoming productive members of our fellowship and society in general. Our traditions provide common ground that even though we may be from different walks of life, we unite under a common purpose, to help the alcoholic whom still suffers. Our 12 Concepts allow us to serve others within the fellowship in roles that our higher power utilizes our talents. These spiritual principles not only provide us guideposts and direction in our sobriety, but they give us ideals to strive for in our lives within society.

Even though through the spirit of rotation I may leave as your Area Chair. I know there are more opportunities within our fellowship to be of brotherhood, love and service to my fellow alcoholic. For all whom have offered their experience, strength and hope throughout this journey. Thank you does not begin to say what it meant. And for those I've met and will be able to serve with in the future. I am grateful to know all of you.

In Unity, Recovery and Service,

**Tina C., Panel 67, Area 54 Chairperson**

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### AREA RECORDING SECRETARY'S REPORT

Once again on the road for Area 54. We arrived in Perrysburg Ohio. The ambiance was fantastic and the people....inviting.

Area 53, 54, 55, and 56 were in attendance. Once the evening began, each Delegate introduced their panel members and anyone from their particular areas.

Dave. C. shared his experience and hope. After that the Ice Cream Social was enjoyable.

What's the Basket For?.....The panel spoke on many different areas of the importance of contributions to the entities and importance of the 7th Tradition of Self-Support. Then Ada T. shared her gratitude for AA. She was mesmerizing and heartwarming.

Sponsorship/Service Sponsor?.....The panel spoke on many different areas and how important sponsorship is.

Bob W. Trustee At Large showed slides of his world travels....and spoke on carrying the message internationally. Networking between countries is an integral part of making sure interested areas receive printed materials. We then took a break...and Bob W. lead.

Thank you Area 54...for the opportunity to serve.

Very Sincerely,

**Beverly F. - Recording Secretary  
Area 54 -  
Panel 67**





## TWELVESTEPS BACKWARDS

Some friends and I were talking recently about someone in the program that went out and drank after several years of sobriety. We were talking about the "doing the steps backward is what takes me out the door" concept. I've been thinking about that a lot since then, and thought I'd share with you what this looks like to me ...don't know if any of you can identify.

12. God isn't listening to me anyway. I don't really need to talk with a sponsor, heck I've been sober long enough that I don't need a sponsor. He's/ She's only going to tell me to work the steps or work with another alcoholic, "call the newcomer"/he'll/ she'll say. I don't have time for the newcomer, I have important things to do ...oh, and look the clerk thought I gave her a \$20 instead of a \$5 — my lucky day!

11. You wouldn't believe my commute! If I am not on the road early, I won't make it to work until after 9:00 am! I don't have time to "pray" and "be quiet" in the morning ... of course, by the time I get home at night and have dinner and watch a TV show or two I just want to fall into bed and go to sleep... and besides God never talks to me anyway.

10. I can't believe that guy/gal at work said those things about me and then didn't even think he/she needed to apologize. I got in trouble for that and it's not like it's really my fault that I did what I did anyway.

9. Why should I make amends to her/him? Did you see what she/he did to *ME*? He/She has some nerve and now he/she thinks I should apologize. I don't think so!

8. I guess I stretched the truth a little bit about what I saw, but I'm not going to go to her/him and make amends for that ... what would he/she think ... and that clerk doesn't even remember me, how would he/she know that he/ she gave me too much change. That doesn't belong on my "list" that's for big stuff.

7. I'm under a lot of pressure lately. I have commitments out the ying-yang and I get a little irritable. When this project is over and I have some time to be good to myself I'll change, but right now I just don't have time and I think they're being rather unreasonable about it, too.

6. Why is everyone picking on me. I'm only human, so of course I'm going to make mistakes. It's not like *THEY'RE* perfect either!

5. Don't let anyone know how you feel. They'll see where you're vulnerable and they'll use it to their advantage ... and besides what if they share that stuff with someone else, then everyone will know my business. No way am I doing that.

4. Why should I have to sit down and look and my past. I'm living in the now. I don't need to look at my past ... look at your own damn past!

3. There is no God. If there were a God why did He allow me to be hurt (sick, get fired, lose my relationship, go into bankruptcy, we could increase the list ad infinitum). He would want better for me. Happy, joyous, and free, boy that's a load!

2. I am not insane. There is nothing wrong with me.

1. Life sucks. It just darn sucks. Those folks from the softball team asked if I wanted to go out with them after the game this evening ... I don't need to get home anyway, maybe I'll just stop with them, maybe shoot a few games of pool or darts -- it's not like I'm gonna' drink or anything ... but I *COULD* try one of those non-alcoholic beers.

### Let's Go Green!

Area 54 General Service is inviting you to Go Green! Get your Area flyers, information, and an EXPANDED web-only version of the Northeast Ohio Recorder. All the information that comes to your USPS mailbox now can come to your inbox.

The NEOH Recorder you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of this issue of NEOHR is 31 pages packed with experience, strength, and hope.

Let Dustin S., your Area 54 Mailing Secretary, know that you would like to save a tree or three (and save the area some \$Green\$) with a message at [mailingsecretary@area54.org](mailto:mailingsecretary@area54.org)

Please note: if you do nothing, you will still get your Area mail by USPS and by email (if we have your email address) as you always have.

**A Color-Enhanced and expanded page (11) version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>**

## UPCOMING DATES FOR THE AREA AND BEYOND

# NOTE THE DATE

October 21  
Area Assembly (area elections)      GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm

November 12  
Gratitude Sunday      GV Lit sales  
TBA

2019—Panel 69

January 20  
Area Assembly      GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm

February 17  
GSR/DCM Workshop      2:00 pm

March 17  
Area Assembly      2:00 pm

## OUTSIDE OUR AREA

November 3 – Columbus, OH      11:00 am  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting



Unless otherwise noted, Area Assemblies & Workshops are held at The 12 Step Recovery Club, 1480 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH (on OH-303 about 1/4 mile south of US-42) Phone: (330) 273-7216

## NOTE THE PASSING OF A PAST AREA DELEGATE

Robert Sebastian, past panel 49 delegate for Area 54, passed away on June 29, 2018. “Rob” Sebastian came to us from the Northwest. Rob had been a devil-may-care 18-wheeler driver for cross-continent trips until this was derailed by a DUIA—insurance carriers would no longer cover him. He landed in Akron, taking a job that kept him close to home. He married a gal named Judy, whom he dearly loved. He referred to her as his “bride.” He became an active member of the Flame Group of AA. I got to know Rob better when he was elected Mailing Secretary for the area. Mailing Secretary and Area Registrar were combined into one job at that time. He was a neophyte with computers and I a professional. We became friends. Around this time Rob reconciled with the two daughters he’d left in the Northwest in his escapades.

He followed me down through the officer’s assignments so we traveled together a lot. I would rather ride than drive and Rob really, really would rather drive than ride, so the other passengers and I had a regular chauffeur by this “professional tourist” as he referred to his previous profession. Rob was elected Alternate Delegate when I became Delegate and for two years it was like I had four hands—we worked together as one. Rob followed me as the Panel 49 delegate for the area. He also served the area as newsletter editor from 2001 to 2007.

Years later Rob applied for and became a member of the Akron Intergroup staff. He brought the AAWS/ Intergroup Seminar to Akron one of those years. While he’d ceased smoking several years before, he suffered lung damage. Breathing difficulties affected his mobility. He was put on oxygen and had to drag tanks along.

He moved to Ft. Myers FL, “paradise” as he called it, for many years to help Judy’s father there before returning to Akron several years ago. He lost his wife Judy in early 2016 and lost his own life on June 29<sup>th</sup>. He is missed!

*Contributed by Bob M.*

## RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our A.A. experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, expressed through our group conscience, is our sole authority. World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy. Our meetings are informative and educational. They are held so that the Committee Members, GSRs and all interested members may be better equipped to carry the message of World Service back to their home groups and individual members, thus giving a better understanding to our purpose, our hopes, and our work.

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## TWELVE STEPS—LIVING THE DESIGN

Several weeks ago I was asked to speak on the topic: Steps-Living the Design. It sounded pretty cut and dried. I gathered notes with my thoughts and some quotes and some passages from AA literature. After several attempts at organizing these notes into something coherent, and having failed, I reached out to a friend with a text. It read: "I'm trying to write about ego deflation (the steps) for the convention and my ego is trying to do the writing! This is more challenging than I thought!" My friend texted back to me about some difficulties she was going through. I was able to share with her some of my experience which helped her. As a result I was able to go back to my keyboard with a little better understanding of where this design for living fits into my life. In a nutshell my ego was messing with me, making it difficult to write...gotta be perfect...gotta be clever. So I reached out to another human being who just so happened to be struggling too. I shared my experience with her, which helped her, which helped me. The June 16 *Daily Reflections* states, "The sharing of self joins me to the human race and brings me closer to God, as I understand him." So this morning I'll share a bit of myself with you in the hope that we can share in this design for living.

About ten years before I ever made it to the rooms of AA I noticed alcohol was causing me problems and I had done some crazy, stupid things I was ashamed of. I decided on a Friday night that I wasn't going to drink. It was the longest night of my life. All I could think about was drinking and I couldn't wait to go to bed. The next

morning I reasoned that I probably didn't really have a problem; that it was probably a "blood sugar thing," that I needed to be sure to eat before drinking and I wouldn't have so many crazy things happen. Having used that logic I drank for ten more years because that's what I thought sobriety was...wanting a drink every minute of every day for the rest of my life. I knew I could not live like that. I was not spared that last 10 or 15 years of drunkenness.

So the years moved on and thirteen years ago I was sitting in my living room, drinking my eighteenth beer of the day, miserable, hopeless, alone, suicidal, the reflection of myself unrecognizable in the mirror. A curtain seemed to draw open and I was able, for the first time, to see the reality of where my life had gone. I had always viewed myself as a tragic character...victim of a cruel, cruel world yet beloved by the thousands who would eventually attend my funeral. It was a hopeless situation and realizing I had only two choices; die or surrender... I couldn't choose so God chose for me and sent help. I haven't had a drink since that night...the night where I stood at the turning point.

In "How it Works" we are told, "the principles we have set down are *guides* to progress." In other words the steps guide us. They're directions to a new life. The Doctor's Opinion states, "unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery." It goes on to say, "one feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change." Well, what do they

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## TWELVE STEPS—LIVING THE DESIGN

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say will happen if this psychic change occurs? It says, “he suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules.” I believe I had a psychic change which was my bottom and surrender, then I worked the steps, then I found my life progressing for the better. For someone like me, who has a brain like mine, the steps are a set of life saving instructions. They’re like post-op instructions before going home from the hospital or a set of blueprints layed out for a builder. I didn’t write them and I didn’t create my sobriety. There is nothing special about my story. I’m a garden variety drunk who hurt badly enough to want to follow some directions and I believe I worked step one before I walked into my first AA meeting. I really wanted sobriety and the obsession to drink was gone.

Within my first week of sobriety I found a sponsor and we began working the steps. I remember feeling so **insulted** by step two **insinuating** I was **insane** (you know, the four I’s). My sponsor even said she was convinced that people in their first year of sobriety are completely effing nuts. But to me I was the sanest person I had ever known. I just wanted help with my drinking. I plugged away after the evidence was clear that I was pretty crazy and eventually came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. I then went forward with the rest of the steps. In my drinking days I always thought of myself as one of the good guys but in reality I lived on self will, selfishness and self-centeredness. What is amazing is that if

someone had pointed that out to me it would have produced nothing but a huge resentment from me. I had to drink my way into a surrender which led me to AA which led me to the steps. This ego and self-centeredness could only be revealed through my bottom and my sobriety can only be maintained through ego deflation. I had to take inventory. I had to see the truth about myself and this took work. Before he died a famous song writer/musician described what it takes to write music: “Elbow grease, time, thought, persistence.” This also applies to my inventory. I have to continually work at it, think about it, and continue.

From the same band another member, the crazy guitar player who during an interview said this: “a philosopher said, as you live your life it appears to be anarchy and chaos and random events...non-related events smashing into each other and causing this situation and this happens and its overwhelming and it just looks like what in the world is going on? And later when you look back at it, it looks like a finely crafted novel, but at the time...it don’t.” This said by a guy who once destroyed a hotel room at the cost of \$28,000.00! There was something in his words and in his voice that sounded like a person who found a different way to live. I did a little bit of research and discovered, not to my surprise, that he had been sober for several years. He didn’t identify as an AA member but the “language of the heart” seemed clear.

Several years ago a woman gave her lead and described the night she got the phone call that her son had been in a terrible car accident. She came to the hospital where he

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was in intensive care...his prognosis was poor...they didn't think he would make it.

She told us that she stepped away and prayed to God to help her accept his will and she said that she was surprised that she really meant it. He actually survived and made it to AA with her. I've never forgotten her story because that is my measure of where I would like to be spiritually. I got to test that and didn't fare as well. A couple years ago my husband had a medical emergency and had to be taken to the hospital by ambulance. I followed in my car and was put in a private waiting area. I remembered that woman and how she handed her son to God and I wanted so badly to be like her but I couldn't. I didn't have it in me to hand over my husband so rather than pleading with God for my will, I just went blank. I think I found a half-way place at that point. He turned out to be okay...I failed the test I suppose but that woman's experience is still my guide to progress and I like her design for living.

There are many reminders in this world of how close I came to losing my life to this disease. I work for the county coroner as his secretary. He told me that one year there were three suicides. The second and third scenes looked like the first...empty cheap beer cans strewn over the floor and the same generic cigarette packs and overflowing ash trays. There is nothing poetic nor poignant about an alcoholic death and I'm grateful that was not my ending...as a coroner's case.

I do know that I'm still kind of nuts. This past winter I tore out deck boards with a crowbar, convinced my cat was

stuck under there and was going to freeze to death. I even got my husband to get out the chainsaw...thank God it was locked up frozen! I just lost my mind. Just a few weeks ago I was going through some trauma...a situation I couldn't control. I was distraught. I was out of my mind sad and panicky for days.

My husband did two things that helped me. Number one: he told me he understood. Then he turned around and asked if I'd like to go eat Mexican. Whewww! That was the answer for that moment. Later though as I was crying and feeling so sad he said, "Andrea you're not right. Neither of us are. We're both damaged goods." You know what? That made me feel good. Isn't that weird? I wasn't even insulted. It took the pressure off me that somehow I'm supposed to know how to handle every situation at any given moment in my life. It was a relief to be reminded that I'm still messed up but when I'm done wallowing in my misery I have the steps. This design for living tells me there is something wrong with me but I can take an inventory and ask for help. I don't have to do this all alone. I have a program...I have people. I have all of you. I also like to tell people that today I love my life...I have a white picket fence...no lie...a great husband, and lots of grandchildren, the newest one born on Monday. I have a grandson who named me Good Guy! I know I don't deserve this life but I accept it gratefully as a gift from God.

***Andrea H., Area 56 Registrar Panel 68***