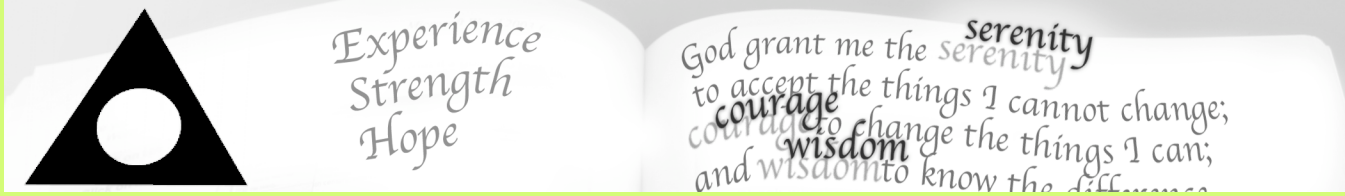


Hello, Higher Power Speaking.



District 14 Al-Anon Newsletter #4

November, 2007

Here are your stories. Here is our experience, strength and hope.

JINGLE BELLS

I had been roped into playing Christmas carols for my brother's Cub Scout troop for their evening at the Rochester Friendly Home for the Aging. Dad was to conduct the boys in several rounds of "Jingle Bells", "Joy to the World", "Away in the Manger" and other seasonal classics. The week of the performance, I spent several hours practicing the carols printed on various dog-eared copies of sheet music.

On the night of the performance, my mother got dressed up in her stylish mohair sheath with matching heels and red lipstick that was ever so slightly misapplied. I noticed that she seemed to have a problem pronouncing words, which was odd considering her pride in having been an accomplished English major in college and being a strict grammarian to boot.

The elderly people at the home were so anxious to hear the Cub Scouts sing that they filled the linoleum-tiled dining hall to the brim. We went through all the Yule favorites, with the boys and the audience singing with delight. We started our final piece, "Jingle Bells", in unison, voices chiming with the piano. Suddenly, I panicked. There was a sheet missing. I tried to remember, but my fingers would not play the right tune. My father's face was starting to flush and the boys began to lose the melody. "Jingle Bells" was finished a cappella.

I wanted to die...to fade into the woodwork, never to emerge again. Yet the people clapped and clapped, and my Dad and the scouts took bows. As I left the dining hall, I encountered my mother in the reception area from which she had audited the performance. I scanned her face for sympathy. "Well," she said in a glacial tone, "this is what happens when you don't practice enough. I hope you learned a lesson".

When we returned home, my Dad stopped me in the bedroom hallway. "Did you find the page?" he asked. "Yes, Daddy...and I am so, so sorry to ruin everything!!" He took me in his arms and softly said, "You didn't ruin anything, Pickles. Things like this happen in life. The folks loved the chance to sing, and the cub scouts had a great time, especially eating the cookies afterward". "But, Daddy, Mom is really mad and she thinks I didn't practice enough. I'm so sorry". "Don't think about that right now, Honey. You just go to bed and have a good sleep."

The next morning, the house was uncharacteristically quiet. My mother was not in the kitchen having coffee, as she usually was. As I picked up my books to walk to the school bus stop, my mother, still in her pajamas, came out to the family room. "I'm really sorry for last night", I said. "Oh? What are you talking about?" she asked as she swallowed three aspirin.

Today at age 54, I am still struggling with the consequences of an event that occurred 40 years ago. It is only now, in Al Anon, I see how a childhood experience still reaches into my life. When I react to situations that are not under my control, take personally the hurtful comments of others, and take on the guilt and shame of just being human, I know that my life started to become unmanageable even in early adolescence. Al Anon has given me the tools to name these memories so that I can begin to accept them as symptoms of the disease we know as alcoholism. For me, naming and remembering help to bring light into the darkest areas, allowing me to honor my past, enjoy my present, and look forward to the future.

~ Elise B.

STUFFED FROG

I remember almost nothing of my first week in the hospital, but one incident stands out clearly because of a present from one of my Al-Anon friends. It was a stuffed frog. I hate stuffed animals. They are childish, ridiculous. Nobody past age three should own one. And the meaning of the frog—the acronym: “Fully Reliant on God.” I was way too cool to accept that kind of simplistic nonsense. I intended to throw the frog out the window (even though the window was locked and barred) as soon as my visitors left, but I suddenly had one of those moments of clarity that happen once in a while.

First, it was exactly that kind of superior cynicism that had landed me in a locked ward of a psychiatric hospital. Second, my friend had cared enough about me during her busy day to buy me a present and go through an annoying hospital sign-in process before she was allowed to see me. Where did I get off having that attitude? I knew I had to

stop thinking that way or I’d never get well. So, I decided to keep the frog, no matter what, until I had learned to understand what it was all about.

I would not only keep it, but I slept with it to make sure I wouldn’t forget to think about its meaning. I’m home now and my dog keeps trying to steal the frog, but the lesson of the gift has remained with me and has become one of those “changed attitudes that can aid recovery” in Al-Anon.

~ **Anonymous**

Progress, not perfection.

~ **The Sloganeer**

Ongoing Calendar Events for 2007

District 14 Speaker Meeting. 4th Saturday, 6:30–9PM., Refreshments, Birthday Chips & Literature Sales. Walnut Creek Kaiser, Medical Office Building, 1515 Newell, 3rd Floor Oak Conference Room. Contact: Maureen 925/212-4621.

District 6 Birthday-Speaker Meeting. Last Friday, 7:00 – 8:15 PM Kaiser Hospital (3rd floor Rooms C & D) Vaca-Valley Parkway, Vacaville. Contact: Carl S. 707-864-1193 or carlsil@msn.net

District 12 Speaker Meeting. 2nd Sunday, 7:00 PM. Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church. Diamond Heights @ Addison, San Francisco. Contact: Tom K. 415-759-7404.

District 15 Fellowship Event. Last Saturday, 6:30 to 9:30 PM. Pot Luck and Speaker Meeting. AA, Alateen and Al-Anon Speakers. Broadmoor Community Church, 301 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro.

District 16 Speaker Meeting. 2nd Saturday, 8:00 PM St. Clare’s Episcopal Church, 3350 Hopyard Rd, Pleasanton. Contact Suzanne: suelovinglife@yahoo.com

District 17 Birthday Speaker Meeting. 3rd Friday, 5:30 PM Cedar Blvd Neighborhood Church 38325 Cedar Blvd, Fellowship Hall downstairs, Newark. Contact: Jenn H. jennhutchin@comcast.net

District 26 Open Speaker Meeting. First Saturday, 6:30 to 8:00 PM. Northbrae

Community Church, 941 The Alameda (near Solano Ave), Berkeley. Gallery Room, upstairs from rear parking lot.

One-Time Calendar Events for 2007-08

Check web site for a complete listing:
http://www.ncwsa.org/cal-2007_Events.html

Northern California Alateen Conference (NOCAC) November 9–11
Holiday Inn, 1740 N. First Street, San Jose
Hotel: 408/993-1234. Alateens 12 and over

Yosemite Summit Conference
November 16, 17 & 18, 2007
Curry Village, Yosemite National Park, CA
Contact 209/966-8300 or ysc@sti.net

NCWSA Convention Alateen Fundraiser
February 2nd, 2008, 1–4 PM
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
580 Trinity Drive, Vacaville
Contact: Darlene 707/494-9682

District 14 Day in Al-Anon
February 9, 2008, 8–5 PM
San Ramon Valley Methodist Church
902 Danville Boulevard, Alamo
Contact: Al D. 925/250-3478

NCWSA Annual Convention
“On the Wings of Recovery”
Al-Anon & Alateen with AA Participation
April 4–6, 2008. Beach Resort Monterey
2600 Sand Dunes Drive, Monterey
Contact: Kim H., 831/277-3994
rdrb@mbay.net

37th Annual Hospital and Institution Conference with Al-Anon Participation

April 25–27, 2008. Sheraton Gateway Hotel
600 Airport Blvd., Burlingame, CA
Contact: Louise M. lkmori@earthlink.net
or call 408/266-4200

District 16 Day in Al-Anon

April 26, 9–4 PM. Workshops, meetings, potluck. Childcare is available. Guest Speaker: Leslie N., Olympia, WA. Trinity Lutheran Church, 1225 Hopyard Road, Pleasanton. Contact: Heidi 925/413-3126 heidramor@yahoo.com; Karin 925/519-6362

Al-Anon International Convention

“Connecting People Around The World”
July 4–6, 2008, Pittsburg, PA. Special series of service workshops. Thu July 3; Space is limited. Registration: \$105 by 12/31/07. \$125 by 5/31/2008. \$150 at the door. See www.al-anon.org/members for online registration.

Please tell us your stories. When we get enough, we’ll put out another newsletter. So get crackin’.

Direct any comments, questions, requests for the submission guidelines or excess serenity to your editors: Scott L. and David L. at: **district14newsletter@yahoo.com**

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