



24th Annual
Herrington/McBride Alumni Reunion
Saturday, June 27th, 2009
At Rogers Memorial Hospital-Oconomowoc

- 9:30 Continental Coffee & Rolls
10:00 Opening Welcome – John Aschenbrenner
10:15 Keynote Address: Martin Stanton – “The Importance of Staying Connected.”
11:30 Annual Meeting – Bob Olson - HMAA President
Election of Board of Directors
11:45 Marion Heinz – “The New Herrington Recovery Center!”
12:00 Reunion Picnic
(Mickey Gabbert-head chef Rogers Hospital generously provides the gourmet picnic)
1:00 AA & Al-Anon Speakers – Tom & Peg W.
“Staying Connected to AA and Al-Anon”
Afternoon Games & Activities for Kids on Grounds with our Rec. Therapist.
2:00 Annual Scavenger Hunt
(for present residents of Herrington House and any interested others)
As in years past, the scavenger hunt list is kept under lock & key, until just before the scavengers are sent out in their groups.
(Prizes are donated by Bob Olson and T-Lon Products of Hartland)
- Dinner will be “On Your Own” in the surrounding Oconomowoc Area.
If you’d like suggestions, please see one of the locals among us.
- 6:30 Scavengers are due back with their “LOOT” for judging and the awarding of prizes.
7:30 - ? Gabbert’s Fire. “Celebrating our Gratitude.”
(Our “Open” AA Meeting Campfire Meeting welcomes not only our recovering members, but also family and friends of Herrington/McBride.)

PLEASE CALL 1-800-767-4411 EXT. 1140 FOR RESERVATIONS.
WE WANT TO BE SURE TO HAVE SUFFICIENT FOOD.
AS OF MAY 1, 2009, ROGERS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
GROUNDS ARE SMOKE FREE

The Moving Finger

The Herrington McBride Alumni Association

Spring 2009

Spirituality in Sobriety

Prayer, Meditation and Relationship with Others
by Bill Dennler
Seminar at Nashotah House

When we first begin the journey of recovery, it is doubtful that we begin with the intention of reviving our spiritual life. For many of us, I am not really sure that we even know what is meant by “the spiritual life.” However, when we begin to embark on working the Twelve-Steps we learn very quickly, in a large part, that a sober life is a spiritual life. In the book, Alcoholics Anonymous, we read, “What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition” (page 85). What does living a spiritual life consist of? What are the obstacles to that life? Finally, what can we do to cultivate and maintain our spiritual condition as we live into our sobriety?

Spirituality is a relationship: it is a relationship with God, with people and with the world around us. In recovery, the recognition that we are powerless over our addiction is the first step. To continue in our recovery, we learn there needs to be a Power greater than ourselves and that Power is God. We also learn very early on that we are not alone. We discover there are many others just like us. We begin to develop friendships with those others especially those who seem to understand where we are. We begin to see that as addicts and alcoholics, we are not alone. We need the power of God working in our lives to help us on the journey to recovery.

As we begin to orientate ourselves away from the selfishness and self-centeredness that has consumed us all the years leading up to our recovery, we come to rely on God and on our friends to help us along the way. This is why it is so crucial to interact with others at meetings. Many people decide at some point that meetings

are no longer important. This is one of the classic mistakes addicts make and often with very detrimental consequences. If we are not in meetings, we miss the opportunity for possible direction from God through the words of others. We also miss the opportunity to reach out to others. To live a spiritual life is to have a relationship with God and to engage others who are struggling as we are. It is to engage the world around us by helping others.

There are two ways in which we cultivate and develop our relationship with God and with others. Our relationship with God develops through prayer and meditation. Praying to God is getting to know Him and getting to be more comfortable with Him. Think of it in this way—you have met someone you are drawn to. Initially, the two of you introduce yourselves; there may be some superficial questions and generally, that is all. As you continue to meet, you become more comfortable and the questions become more important and require deeper thought in answering them. You begin at some point to get to know this person and with time and more conversations, you really become close and the time together seems much more comfortable and natural. A Relationship with God in prayer is much like this. We may start off in the simplest of ways but as we continue meeting with Him, we develop a relationship that is much more comfortable and one in which we are willing to offer ourselves far more often. We begin to have a sense that He is there for guidance and direction in our lives. In the quiet of meditation or reflection, we begin to recognize when doing some particular things make sense.

In meditation, we take time to reflect on something. We may read something in the Big Book or in a devotion book or any of a number of books that are conducive to hearing God in our reflection time. The very thought of meditation can seem intimidating for those that are not familiar with it. This is why I also use the word reflection. Meditation is a way in which we spend time listening to God and like prayer, it offers us time to continue to cultivate our relationship with God.

“The Moving Finger writes, and having writ, moves on.” - The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

The outward aspect of the spiritual life, relationship with others, is also a time in which we can become keenly aware of God working within our lives. Often times in meetings, someone will bring up an issue they are struggling with. The answers that come through the sharing of others often develop into the help that person needs. God speaks through others and in that process we are helped or healed. When we reach out to others, both in recovery and those who are not, we are doing so in a way that allows us to take the focus off of ourselves and places the focus on the needs of others. In helping others, we help ourselves.

There are obstacles to the spiritual life. The very nature of addiction: the incessant selfishness and self-centeredness that we struggle with, will often convince us prayer and meditation are not necessary. I have heard many stories about those who have relapsed. It becomes easy to skip our prayer time or to be less apt to reach out to others and become consumed with what we think is best. I have heard many stories from people who have relapsed. In most of those cases, they had stopped going to meetings. When I have asked if that was where it began, they said their prayer life ceased, their attitude changed and ultimately they stopped going to meetings.

When we first come into a Twelve Step program we are told we do not drink or use—one day at a time. This is true but in living a sober life, we live it one day at a time. This means that we set aside time for prayer and meditation each day. I would guess if we committed even 20 minutes to prayer and meditation in the morning and evening, we would only be committing a tiny percentage of time we once spent consumed with thinking about drugs and alcohol before we got into recovery. It is far too easy for us to believe we do not have the time. This is a danger. I am convinced when we take the time to pray and meditate, we discover our day will be more organized and with the organization comes availability of time. The attitude to have is—I am so busy today and I cannot possibly get everything done **without** 20 minutes of prayer and meditation. Do not let the lie of being too busy take you away from the very Power that helps you maintain your sobriety.

When it comes to mediation or reflection, one of the obstacles can be that we try and do too much. I have met people in early recovery who will read three or four daily reflection books each morning. This is typical of alcoholic thinking—if one is good, then four is better! The key is to keep it simple. If we read four books, we are asking for far more than we can comprehend. Choose a book and read it. If you want to do that for one month and then choose another, that

is fine. We must keep it simple and we can do so by limiting what we read.

As with thinking we are too busy to pray, we can also come to think we are too busy to go to meetings or to help others. The question you must ask is; what was our time consumed with before we entered recovery. I venture to guess most waking moments were spent thinking about using or thinking about not using. Countless hours were spent focused on ourselves. In recovery, in the spiritual life, time must be devoted to our relationship with God and others. Again, it orders our life.

In Step 11, we are told to “Seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understand him, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out” (page 59). Prayer and meditation are crucial to recovery. Developing a relationship with God and others offers us the life God intends for us. As you begin each new day, do so with an urgency to listen to what God has in store for you. Be intentional about reaching out to others. At days’ end, reflect on your day and try and recall where you saw God working in your life. You will often be surprised at just how rich your relationship with God and others has really become. Our sobriety is contingent on maintaining our spiritual condition.

Electronic Delivery of the Moving Finger

Over the next few months we will begin to deliver the *Moving Finger* to you electronically via e-mail. There will be a period of transition, but in order to make sure that we can reach you via the web, please ensure that we have your current e-mail address. Please send any updates or changes to Bill Martens at wemart@aol.com.

In partnership with Roger’s Hospital, we will also be launching a new HMAA web site. This site will contain HMAA news, schedules of upcoming events, as well as down loads of the *Moving Finger*. More to follow in the upcoming issues of the [Moving Finger](#).

Feel free to contact Bob Remme at dynawide05@gmail.com with any questions or concerns.

The Moving Finger is published by and for the Herrington McBride Alumni Association. Please send story ideas and feedback to: HMAA Box 13581, Wauwatosa, WI 53213
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Recovery and the Economy

by Mickey Gabbert

It never ceases to amaze me as to the “reasons” an alcoholic or an addict “creates” in order to maintain their addiction(s). For the construction worker who is working outside, it’s “beer clouds coming our way- better pack up my toolbox and head for the tavern”. For the salesman, “it’s been a bad month, sales wise; I think I need to discuss this over a drink.” For the nurse, doctor, or dentist, “I had to deal with a bunch of tough patients today- I need something to take the edge off.” For some of us, “you’d drink too if you had a boss like mine” or “you’d use too if you were married to whom I’m married to.”

For today, we have the economy- including the stock market that is ravaging our 401Ks, etc. to blame things on. Every day, I hear individuals discussing how much they lost due to “the market taking another hit.” I also hear, “Those in office really don’t care about the rest of us” or “the economy is in chaos, I think I need a drink!”

Although it seems like just yesterday, when in reality it was over thirty years ago, I was a “flaming practicing alcoholic and addict” and I, too, used every excuse in the book as a reason for drinking or using. I was unemployed (after being fired), had an ex-wife, no money (other than what I could get from pawning some item that I still had in my possession); but I continued to blame my ex-bosses, my ex-wife, my landlord (who had evicted me for non-payment of rent), I had no vehicle as it had been repossessed, etc., etc.

But, I didn’t have the economy to blame as jobs were plentiful. Today, the practicing alcoholic now has another person, place, or thing to blame- the economy. It adds one more recipient to place the blame on rather than “coming to believe” that our addiction is our problem and that we are powerless over it. Yes, there are unmanageabilities that continue to occur (the stock market); but we’re not creating these unmanageabilities as we do when we’re active in our addictions.

Today, I can hang onto all of these things, and develop resentments (which are a sure fire direct route toward relapse), or I can utilize the serenity prayer and develop “the wisdom to know the difference.” Some things I can change; and some I can’t change. It’s knowing how to develop “the wisdom to know the difference” that keeps me clean and sober today.

When I was drinking and using, I had nothing. Today, I have everything I need- not necessarily everything I want. But that’s okay. I have made it

through the “hell” associated with addiction; and as long as I stay clean and sober, I have the opportunity to “change the things I can, and accept the things I can’t.”

The stock market can go to hell, but I don’t have to go there with it. (I’ve been broke before-I don’t think I’d be able to return to recovery if I relapsed.) So, just for today, my sobriety is the most important thing in my life.

2009 Retreat Report

by Mary Krall

Another spiritually uplifting retreat (the 22nd annual) was held at the Redemptorist Retreat Center with 50 registered attendees. Residents of the Herrington House were guests on Saturday morning.

The Friday evening keynote speaker, Br. Gerry Patin, got the retreat off to a great start, sharing his story and how the Promises have come true in his life.

Make plans now to attend the 23rd annual winter retreat January 8-10, 2010.

Look for further information on scholarships and the registration form in the winter issue of this newsletter.

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