



**2011 Herrington/McBride
Annual Winter Retreat**

- Friday January 7th to Sunday January 9th
- Redemptorist Retreat Center—Oconomowoc, Wisconsin
- Theme will be, “From my head to my heart: Internalizing our Recovery”
- Speaker is Robert Salada, D.D.S
- Registration and more information in next issue of newsletter

The Moving Finger

The Herrington McBride Alumni Association

Fall 2010

Outgoing President's Message

High temperatures and torrential rain can best be said to describe our weather this summer in southeastern Wisconsin. Extreme swings in Mother Nature's mood.....

Our 25th anniversary HMAA Reunion Picnic was challenged a bit by Mother Nature as a strong summer storm passed through the RMH Oconomowoc campus the evening before our event. The storm caused partial power outages on campus including leaving the multi-purpose center and main hospital (kitchen) with little or no power.

This sent our reunion team into a scramble to make sure the attendee's still had hot coffee when they arrived and lights for the bathrooms. Fortunately, "The Team" was able to secure these necessities off campus in time for everybody to not even notice the lack of power or so we hope.

I'd like to thank all of those who helped make the 25th Anniversary reunion a resounding success. A big thanks to our keynote speaker Dr. Richard Hauser who traveled from Iowa to share his story. Rick did a good job of "connecting the dots" in his explanation of how the Herrington Recovery center got to where it is today.

I'd also like to give special thanks to our afternoon speakers, Wendy, Debbie and Charlie for sharing their experience, strength and hope with us all and to a standing room only crowd I might add! I'm sure the "open mike" portion could have gone on for hours.

It will always amaze me that so many former residents of the HRC and McBride take time from their busy lives and travel back to attend this event. It is such a huge testament to recovery and this special place that we all have shared along the way.

Keep coming back.....

In conclusion I want to address a snafu that occurred at the reunion and that was that the 25th Anniversary commemorative coins that we had minted did not find their way to all that might have wanted to receive one.

These coins are beautiful heavy weight keepsakes that our own Rob M. designed. One side has the Herrington/McBride logo and the other side contains the inscription, "Celebrating Our Gratitude 25th Anniversary 1985-2010."

Please let me know if you would like one and somebody within the HMAA will make sure one is sent your way.

With warmest regards,
Bob Olson
President - HMAA

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

Message from Newly Elected President

I've been honored in being able to follow a long line of presidents who have done a remarkable job in furthering the mission of our association. And now, I'm going to try to fill the shoes of Bob Olson who has been effective in involving ourselves more closely with Roger's Hospital and the Herrington Recovery Program.

I was blessed to have found the beginnings of my recovery nearly thirteen years ago. I haven't forgotten my time on the third floor and in the former recovery house in February of 1998. I haven't forgotten the struggle and my continuing need to cherish my recovery. I have always held onto the belief that while I'm sitting and typing this, my addictions are out in the parking lot doing pushups and that if I'm not working on my recovery I'm working on my relapse.

Please feel free to contact me with suggestions to further our mission.

The only thing I'll ever put quotations around and call mine is, "I came into recovery to save my ass and found my soul connected to it!" We all know what that means! Be well everyone!

John Ashenbrenner, President

Our Silver Anniversary Alumni Picnic/Reunion

The day began with a continental breakfast after which the welcome was given by Dan Murphy a nephew of Dr. Roland Herrington and the speaker at our 20th reunion/picnic. Dan gave some insights into his uncle's efforts to afford the opportunity of recovery to many person during his involvement in addiction medicine.

Dr. Richard Hauser, the founder of the alumni association, took us back to the fledgling days when he, off the cuff, suggested to Dr. Herrington, "We should have an alumni association." To which the good doctor responded, "Well, go start one." We followed Dr. Hauser from the inception to the present Herrington facility. Woven into his talk was his own struggles with addiction. His was a dramatic example of the power of drugs and alcohol

which does not delineate in regard to sex, race, education, financial or professional success. He was gratified to see the growth of the alumni association from the seed money of 100 dollars to the present day status of the organization. And, we are all, "Miracles."

Mickey Gabbert, the manager of AODA programs at Roger's Hospital was presented a plaque indicating honorary membership to the association.

The afternoon program was comprised of talks by Charlie, Wendy and Deb former counselors speaking of their time with many of us in the, "Old Herrington on the Hill." Members of the audience shared their best memories of their time in treatment. It was like opening a time capsule filled with stories, memories and the love that afforded us the courage to seek out our freedom from alcohol and drugs.

Tours of the new recovery center were followed by a scavenger hunt in which the current residents could see there is a great deal of enjoyment in recovery. While the scavengers were collecting their items, the bi-annual Trivial Pursuit game was waged between Johnny the Greek and John the German with the Greeks coming out as winners. This will be challenged at the winter retreat in January.

Upon their return the winning team was awarded prizes donated by T-Lon products of Hartland.

The day ended with another spiritually uplifting experience of the campfire open AA meeting. Once again the theme of the meeting was, "An Attitude of Gratitude is Our Never Ending Prayer." So———thanks to everyone who made this year's reunion/picnic a successful event and we look forward to seeing you on June 25, 2011.

The Experience of Choosing a Meeting

*by Rob McCreadie
Bob Olson*

Rob: A few of us were having a discussion about how as newcomers we identified what meetings we were going to attend based on what drug we had the most trouble with. We had heard that if alcohol was not our primary drug of choice, we weren't welcome in AA. The cocaine addicts obviously belonged in CA and NA must be for opiate addicts. Right? When I n

was in treatment, there were only 2 weekly NA meetings within 30 miles of the house. How would a addict do 90 meetings in 90 days? Where would a marijuana addict go? How about an amphetamine addict? Didn't anyone know how terribly unique every one of us were?

Bob: Unlike Rob I missed out on the conversation that discussed not being welcomed at AA meetings if alcohol was not our primary drug of choice. I guess I learned the hard way, more on that later. While I was a resident at Herrington I was surrounded by peers whom had a vast variety of issues that were being dealt with. I quickly learned a tolerance that it did not matter what your drug of choice was but rather let's deal with the fact that we even have a drug of choice.

Rob: When I got out of treatment, what kept me clean were other recovering people and meetings. Lots and lots of meetings. I went to meetings every day and was loved and welcomed by some of the most unlikely characters I've ever met. They made me feel safe and didn't look down on me. I was told to keep coming back, I got invited out for coffee or to eat after meetings and was encouraged to share openly and honestly wherever I went and in whatever fellowship I was attending at any given time.

I gravitated towards the fellowship that I now know as home. I was attracted by the people at my home group who apply the steps and spiritual principles to their everyday lives and live in the solution to the best of their abilities. It served me very well to go to as many meetings and connect with as many recovering people as possible, all while doing my level best to keep an open mind and to practice the willingness that continues to keep me clean.

Bob: I concur with Rob on the quantity of meetings that I attended after being discharged from Herrington. This was one case where quantity not quality was the rule. As time passed I quickly got a feel for which meetings felt the best for me. It was during this early time in my recovery where I ran into a few people at meetings that insisted that AA was only for alcoholics. If any other mind-altering substances where an issue you dealt with, it was best that you went to a substance specific meeting. I quickly learned to steer clear of those people and even stopped attending those meeting where that mantra was adhered to.

My thoughts on recovery and AA were sent into a very temporary tailspin. I was brought into recovery under an order of one for all and all for one. Why would anybody think otherwise? Once again my sponsor set me straight and on this issue pointed out that maybe the people ranting about substance specific meetings were not as far along in their own recovery as they liked to believe they were. Good solid counsel.

Like Rob I settled into a home group and developed a very nice comfort level with the others and have not looked back since.

Rob: One of the biggest lessons I learned in those early days of recovery was that I was the source of my problem. If my way had been working so well, what was I doing living in a treatment center? Perhaps by following the leads of others with some experience in recovery I might actually get free from the pain of active addiction. I found a glimmer of hope of what was working for others just might work for me no matter what fellowship these people identified with. It was not easy for an addict like me to shut my mouth and focus on doing the right things for the right reasons...whether I understood them or not! That, however, is what has led to the many gifts and continuous recovery that I have been so very grateful for since I began to recover at Herrington.

Bob: I agree with Rob, no matter what group I attended in early recovery I was in search of that GLIMMER OF HOPE that was working for others. I learned you could take what you needed from EVERYBODY even the coots who insisted that substance specific meeting were the only way to go. Ultimately I discovered that hanging with the "winners" was paramount but tolerance was golden.....

Rob: The reality was that anyone who was living free from alcohol, other drugs or any other self-destructive behavior knew more about recovery than we did. Recovery has very little to do with the substances used or the behaviors practiced, but rather living lives free from addictive substances and/or behaviors. Keep an open mind, listen with your hearts and keep coming back long enough for the miracle to happen.

A Story of Addiction and the Path to Recovery

by Terri Lynn D.

When I was first approached to write my story for this newsletter, I was honored and believed it would be 'no problem' to compose. I was wrong. This has proven to be far more challenging than I anticipated. Truthfully, I wish my experiences didn't make me such a qualified contributor.

Some people would describe me as a 'late starter' in my drinking career, yet age didn't determine when I crossed the line from social to problem drinker. The early warning signs had been there, but I ignored them. Afterward, there was no going back.

I was a whiskey drinker; a straight from the bottle drinker. I drank at home and alone. I hid the bottles from myself, varied the stores where I purchased them and made sure that I didn't dispose of too many bottles in the trash at the same time. I thought I was being clever.

Since I drank alone and assumed that no one knew I was drinking excessively, I convinced myself I didn't have a problem. This misconception was followed by poor choices. The first 'public' incident occurred in my own backyard. The paramedics were called because I collapsed on my patio. I will never forget my mother bending over and begging me to get up. I couldn't. Her unwanted induction into my world of alcoholism was immediately followed by the physicians at the hospital questioning whether I was trying to kill myself. I'd never seen such terror on her face.

Yet, rather than accept the fact that I couldn't control my drinking, I convinced myself that I simply needed to work harder at hiding it. I drank more and made even poorer choices. Drinking was my escape and I deserved it.

As the alcohol began influencing my thinking, I thought nothing of taking money from my co-workers. I didn't take a little out of a few purses, I took a lot. In fact, I began writing checks to myself. I have very little memory of that span of

time, but I do recall thinking I had more money than I'd ever had.

A few months after the check writing began, I showed up at my psychologist's office drunk. Immediate arrangements were made for me to get into treatment. However, I fell while walking from one building to the next and badly injured both ankles. I required surgery and then rehabilitation in a nursing home. During that time, my father died very unexpectedly. It was a rough period of my life, and needless to say, I was unable to get the help for my drinking that I desperately needed. Once released from the nursing home, I could hardly wait to get a drink.

The following summer, I participated in an intensive outpatient program at another treatment facility. Unfortunately, I still wasn't ready to face reality and the drinking progressed.

Finally, one Sunday while sitting in church, I began trembling and sweating. The depth of my drinking problem was obvious. I thanked God for giving me a warning and made a commitment to stop. I began attending AA meetings regularly.

Unfortunately, that's not the end of my story. Rather, it's the beginning of another chapter. I remained sober for nearly a year before my world came crashing down. All those illegally written checks were discovered and I was suddenly confronted with my actions. I can only say that I am grateful to God for providing me with the strength of a year of sobriety before being hit with the challenges I would soon face.

I accepted full responsibility for the checks I'd written and revealed my alcoholism. I wanted to repay what I'd taken, but knew I didn't have the finances. As a result, I made the most difficult phone call of my life. Besides disclosing my drinking problem, I had to admit that I'd stolen a large sum of money and needed to borrow money in order to repay it. Once again, God was with me. He gave me the strength to ask for help, ensured that someone was home when I made that call, and stirred that person's compassion.

The following weeks were horrific. My actions were revealed to my co-workers. I was

arrested and had court appearances. Yet, those weren't the worst parts. Because I was in a public position, my actions and arrest were highly publicized. My situation appeared on T.V., in the newspaper and was broadcast on the radio. My life was an open book and it seemed everyone in the world knew what a terrible person I had become. Not only was I an alcoholic, but an embezzler. I was deeply ashamed, scared, and depressed. But, it was even more difficult to see the humiliation I had imposed on my family.

Besides being referred to as an embarrassment to the profession, I received derisive messages from co-workers, lost many friends, and my job. Again, much of this was done publicly. The stress and anxiety were nearly unbearable. I didn't think I could take anymore and wanted 'out' of life. Yet, somehow I found the strength to keep living.

In the midst of this turmoil, God's presence was again made known to me. I was referred to a prominent attorney who agreed to take my case. In court, the Assistant District Attorney wanted to 'throw the book' at me, but was overridden by the District Attorney who decided to grant me a second chance. I was charged with a misdemeanor rather than a felony. My attorney and other members of the court were shocked by this turn of events. I'm certain it was divine intervention.

Despite the reduction of the charges, it was an extremely grueling time of my life. I had no job, no self-esteem, few friends, and almost no hope. But, I was one of the lucky ones. I had support! I continued attending AA meetings where I received much needed acceptance and understanding. I was also able to renew my relationship with my Higher Power, and accept the unconditional love of my family. Slowly, I began to heal.

Yet, there were still more consequences to be paid for my actions. After the legal portions of my crime were completed I began to feel a sense of closure. I was offered a job, but it was rescinded due to the background check. I had been completely up front during the interview, but they deemed it too serious. This happened

several times and I retreated back into myself.

Finally, I was granted an interview during which I was again completely open and honest about my background. I was given the job anyway. I was elated but not secure. I'd had the rug ripped out too many times. As it turned out, I had yet another setback. Approximately a week after being offered the job, I received a letter stating that my license was under investigation by the state. It came as a shock and a last straw. Without my license I couldn't keep my job. Without my job, I'd lose what little I had left.

I hired yet another attorney. We went through a lengthy process and I waited over a year before receiving results of that investigation. When the letter finally arrived I struggled to open it. Again, divine intervention prevailed. My license was granted. At last I could see a light at the end of the tunnel, and knew it wasn't a train coming toward me!

Today, my life is very different. I have a new job, am establishing new friendships, becoming financially secure, and am finally beginning to forgive myself. This could only have happened because the Steps and Promises of the AA way of life really do work! God willing, I will not pick up that first drink today!



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
Newsletter Editor: Natalie Zimmerman