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The San Jose Alano Club News

Home of the Fair Avenue Fellowship

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August 1999 --- A Community Asset For The Last Forty Eight Years -- Volume 48.8

August 7th, August 14th, (Our ongoing dance August 21), August 28th and September 4th.

The new deal: You can buy 4 dance tickets and the price is \$20, the great deal is that you get 4 guest passes for a friend for the same dances. August 7th, 14th, 21st or September 4th. We will be providing professional DJs, tickets are now on sale, Dance times are 9:30p.m. –12:30 p.m., every Saturday Night. Help make this work!

Dance Committee is still forming: First meeting August 8th at 4:00 p.m. in the Serenity Garden.

These Great and Wonderful Club Members will be celebrating a Milestone Soon!

Edwin S. 8/1/80	Sharon P. 8/1/72	Byron W. 8/3/82	Richardo H. 8/8/82
Paul M. 8/8/96	Antonio R. 8/9/88	Richard G. 8/11/94	Michele A. 8/13/80
Kizzy P. 8/15/98	Ray D. 8/16/87	Klaus S. 8/18/86	Claudio M. 8/20/98
Leopoldo N. 8/23/93	Peter O. 8/21/96	Norm D. 8/23/87	Sharon T. 8/24/98
Wes K. 8/24/98	Katryna W. 8/27/72	Erin O. 8/30/83	Laura M. 8/30/97

Dear Tony

Happy 26th, if I'd kept my "last" date sober I'd have remained in "the class of '73". But since I "graduated" I'm now taking a "refresher course" with the class of '97. I'll tell you more about what it was like, what happened and what it's like now later (if I haven't already). Regarding quoting me, I'm so excited. In the past I've always been an example of what "not" to say or do. Thanks for your reminder to "protect the miracle", today that's my life's work.

This has been, another great week in London. Plus, tomorrow I get to go to Bournemouth to church again. The car is working fine and we're on our way. I haven't been so pleased to do anything in twenty years. We'll also stop off and see friends on the way back and have "a spot of tea". What fun (and I mean it). My amends are going slowly but surely and seem to continue to have this great effect on me. I hope this letter finds you in good spirits also.

I can well remember that my biggest thing in life, since I was a small boy (physically, I'm still a small boy emotionally) was being upset at people who claimed to know what's "best for me". I'd rebel against anyone or anything that made such demands or claims. Today, it is very interesting to me that the things that seem to have the most profound effect on me are those things I don't think are "right" for me. When reading the "Just for Today" card I would almost always get upset when I read the one that says:

"I will do at least two things I don't want to do - just for exercise."

Maybe I needed to look at that? The truth is that in my entire life I seldom (if ever) did anything I didn't want to do. If I didn't think it was "right" for me I didn't do it. "Just for Today" I can see the good of doing "two things I don't want to do". It precludes that I might not be "right" about those "two things". So it, therefore, a small act of surrender. Furthermore, to do them "just for exercise" means I can't do them to "get something out of it". This is new concept, one that I have certainly never understood. Everything I ever did had motive behind it.

I normally don't like to send "articles and things" via e-mail. Since I get so many of them it tends to feel like junk mail. However, this particular article did make me say to myself "What a way to go".

From The Washington Post, Sunday, June 20, 1999 The Truth From a Man With a Message Lives On
Some years ago, I was hunched over my computer keyboard with a furrowed brow, straining to overcome writer's block by funneling some outrage into my work, when a light on the monitor indicated that I had a message. It was from a copy editor who sat not far away named Robert H. W-- ---. He was an old-school hot shot type newsman with a reputation for downing four ounces of wine every four hours, projectile vomiting and spewing invectives that were just as foul. Here's what the message said: "Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of belonging that comes to us. We no longer live in a completely hostile world. We are no longer lost and frightened and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of God's will, the moment we begin to see truth, justice, and love as the real and eternal things in life, we are no longer deeply disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary that surrounds us in purely human affairs."

The effect of that bit of Alcoholics Anonymous wisdom on me was immediate. My shoulders relaxed, my brow unfurrowed and my writing began to flow. It was the outrage, which Bob saw as a manifestation of fear that had been blocking me all along. My electronic thank-you prompted another message from him: "There's more where that came from. "During the course of our ensuing friendship, I'd discover that to be an understatement.

Bob stopped drinking alcohol and throwing up on people on June 18, 1980. Sadly, he died of a heart attack on June 10, 1999. Amazingly, that was the anniversary of the founding of AA. Bob, 66, was in an AA meeting at the time, leading a group of recovering alcoholics in a discussion of the 12th step.

The 12th step is regarded as the "helping others" step, the one where you have to "give it away to keep it". The 12th step in AA's "Big Book" reads: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Around the Post newsroom, there are several stairwells designated as fire zones, or escape routes. If you were ever on fire emotionally - say, an editor was threatening to kill your column - all you had to do was send a message to Bob, who would direct you to the nearest zone. Fire zone 9, at the front of the newsroom, was Dr. Bob's main office.

Bob would joke that he had turned a promising career into a job that he could barely hold on to. "I've clawed my way to the bottom of the barrel," he once said after being assigned to proofread the comics' pages. It was a long way from his jobs as a columnist and editor of a newspaper in New York. He also had been a copy editor on the National Desk of The Post. Alcohol took him from doing that to making sure Ann Landers' name was spelled right.

But he persevered, found gratitude in having a job at all and threw himself into being a "worker among workers."

To get along with people, he'd say, treat them with courtesy, kindness, justice and love. Other principles to live by included honesty, tolerance and patience -along with an understanding that all people are to some extent emotionally ill and frequently wrong.

He believed it pointless to get angry with or be hurt by people who were simply suffering from the pains of trying to grow up. Which is not to say that he did not get angry or hurt. He did. On Father's Day, 1993, he wrote in The Post: "My dad was something special. Once when I was about 8, he took my older sister and me to a double feature at the Majestic Theatre in East St. Louis, and between the movies, he went out to smoke a cigarette. That was the last time we saw him for over a year. Luckily, my sister knew the way home and had car fare."

Bob had an abandonment issue, and if you missed an appointment with him, he might hang up in your face and not talk to you for days. But, after June 18, 1980, he wouldn't get drunk.

Something miraculous and irreversible had happened to him on that day caused him to spit a mouthful of wine back into the bottle and never take another drink. That something was grace. And through faith, he believed; his fears also would be lifted. But he had to take some action, too, including admission of his alcoholism, restitution for wrongs done and service to others.

At his last AA meeting, Bob reportedly heard a newcomer express some bewilderment at how cunning and baffling alcohol can be. His response was a citation from AA literature, in which a group of eminent psychologists had concluded that the alcoholic is "childish, emotionally sensitive and grandiose." Bob began to laugh, perhaps at himself, then fell out of his seat and died.

I had received my last computer message from him just a few days earlier. He called it "A Prayer for L Street" to say when the going got rough around here:

God guide me through the forest of self
The thicket of pride and vanity
And the brambles of self-indulgence
Lead me to a quiet glade
Where I might rest with thee
And so be restored, and freed
To resume my quest to be of maximum use
To thee and others.

[Note: There were a few breaks of Anonymity by the author and a photo of Bob W. published with the article. Despite these breaches of the Anonymity Tradition, (removed here) I felt the tribute was worth sharing.]

Well, that's enough for this week I send my love to you from the "London lout" (where did that come from? Now I have to look up lout). Yep, that's-