

WAYS & MEANS®

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SPOTLIGHT:

A Harvest of Miracles

It's About Letting Go and Letting God

I came to Debtors Anonymous while living in a maternity home. I had spent the previous six months making the difficult decision to give up the child I was expecting for adoption. I had been living on welfare, in shelters, with no support from my family. I felt that an adoptive family could raise my child better than I could.

The first time I attended a D.A. meeting I realized that I was in the company of people who could relate to my low sense of self-worth and my lack of care for myself and my child. Immediately, I got emotional support and practical help in the program.

The first time I shared my file of bills with another member, I cried because the shame and pain was so deep. This person helped me to separate my sense of self from my debt, and he showed me how to create a system for handling my bills. Through D.A. and Business Debtors Anonymous, I began to learn the tools of recovery.

Nothing I was doing my own way was working. I couldn't do it on my own and realized I needed God's help. Attending meetings and hearing D.A. recovery stories helped me expand my sense of

God. He wasn't like my earthly father who could be cold and uncaring because of the pain of his past. I came to see that God was a loving Father who wanted the best for me.

One of the best things to happen to me since joining D.A. is my heightened awareness of my tendency to debt. I used to think nothing of skipping out without putting enough money in the

parking meter. At one time during my pregnancy, I had over \$1000 worth of parking tickets, and my car was impounded because I couldn't pay the bill. Now I'm really conscious of my responsibility to pay the proper amount for parking. Occasionally, I still get a parking ticket, but I pay it on time and try to stay conscious.

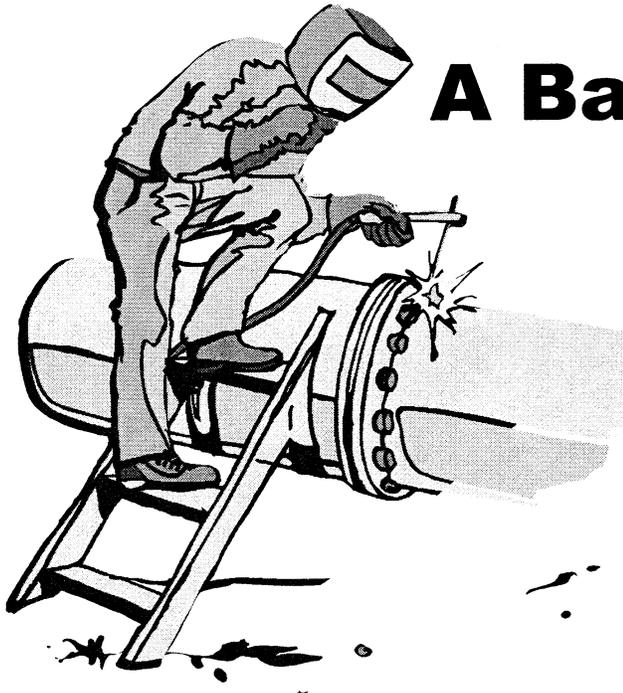
I really value the anonymity practiced in 12-step programs. I can go to any meeting and share about the most personal things that happen, but I have never had them come back to me. I have gained strength from sharing my story about placing my son in adoption without experiencing condemnation. Instead, I've experienced acceptance and love from those who've heard me share. It has really helped me to heal, and I'm very grateful to everyone. ☺

Joy K.
(Los Angeles)

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A Bag on the Wall

Upon returning home from a short vacation, I was unhappily greeted by a terrible smell in my basement—the unmistakable, horrid smell of a sewer. Having grown up in the country where we had our own well and sewer system, I was familiar with the problems that could occur with both. And, as it is often said, the memory of a smell is vivid. I know now that this does not just apply to freshly cut Christmas trees and oven-baked bread.

Over the next four days the odor became much worse. I had to do work in the basement, and even though the aroma was nauseating, I didn't want to deal with it. I was trying to ignore it. However, since I had to regularly run upstairs or outside for a breath of fresh air, the ignoring technique clearly wasn't working too well. I began to bemoan my situation with thoughts of self-pity and gloom: "Why, oh why, does something ALWAYS have to go wrong in my life? No one else has problems like this. Why does it always happen to ME??"

I finally admitted the situation wasn't going to improve and called a repairman. I braced myself for a serious diagnosis, but it turned out I hadn't braced myself enough. The sewer technician said there was no damage in my system, which led to a problem far greater than I could have imagined. He believed there was a major crack in the city's sewer pipes, which was causing sewage to collect underground near my house. The only way to correct it was to dig up the

Kieran K.
(Los Angeles)

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Editor's Corner

We rely on meetings for our fellowship to thrive. *Ways & Means* is the whole DA fellowship's meeting-in-print. As such, it needs your support as readers and writers in recovery. If you already subscribe, please share the value that the publication has for you with your meeting. Encourage fellow DA members to submit an article about a topic such as working a particular step. We especially would like to hear from members in parts of the country that have not been represented in *Ways and Means* recently. Consider giving a sponsee a gift subscription!

Enjoy this issue which contains a rich crop of articles focusing on the life-transforming support of the fellowship and miracles experienced in recovery; our regular interview section considers Step Nine. ☺

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All articles, jokes, and cartoons in the spirit of D.A. recovery are welcome. Submissions are subject to editing and cannot be returned.

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Releasing The Grip Of Fear

Q: How did Step Nine bring about change and blessings in your life?

A: Step Nine released the grip of the fear and anxiety around all that I thought I did that was bad, including being in debt.

Q: What did you do to work this step?

A: I worked it with my sponsor. I worked out of the AA 12 and 12, wrote paragraph by paragraph and kept it simple. My Step Eight list was much shorter than I thought it would be. I had a ton of resentments but didn't actually owe all that many amends.

All my debt was repaid in the strict DA sense but I had some things to work out with my Dad. I had borrowed money from him during my college years with no formalized agreement. I didn't know that he

was keeping track of the money I had borrowed. When I graduated

he sent me a file with the total amount.

My sponsor suggested that since we had had no formal agreement around this money that we have a discussion. In the conversation, my dad said to forget about repayment. This was such a gift, not just the money, but the clarity and

honesty it brought to our relationship.

"I am now fully self-supporting through my own voluntary contributions and trust I can continue . . ."

Q: What was the blessing or miracle that resulted?

A: I can live on my own. I am now fully self-supporting through my own voluntary contributions and trust that I can continue on in this way.

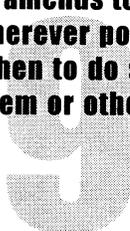
Q: How do you recommend that someone get started if they are stalled or blocked?

A: I recommend that they go back and review the first eight steps, use the phone, get to a meeting, and talk about the block. When we are back in action, the block will eventually release. ☺

Interviewee: Pam
Interviewer: Nancy P.
(San Francisco Bay Area)

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

Step





A Bag on the Wall... (← page 2)

street to the tune of up to \$2 million. Because of the cost, it was something done by the city only every 8 to 10 years. My Bearer of Bad News went on to tell me of people he had known (with the same misfortune as me) who had to sell their homes because the smell had permeated every room, making life unbearable. Naturally, no one else wanted to live in homes like this, which meant selling at a greatly reduced price before the house was condemned.

He collected \$50 for the service call and left. I collapsed in a heap on the couch seeing a grim future stretching before me. What was I going to do? There was no solution. It wasn't just my own fatalistic thinking telling me there was no solution; I had the word of a professional on it.

I sat up on the couch and tried to pray. It was just a sentence or two, asking to be shown a path. Then I got in my car to run an errand, hoping to clear my head and subdue the panic I could feel.

I returned 45 minutes later and decided to take one more look downstairs, hoping there was something I had missed in my

other numerous investigations. My eyes landed on a plastic bag I had hanging on a hook on the wall. Something brown had seeped out of the bag and was collecting on the concrete brick wall. I couldn't remember what was in the bag as I reached to pull it down. When I opened it, the smell just about knocked me over.

The previous summer, when all my garden onions had matured at the same time, I had put them in this bag planning to deal with them later. I found 25 wet, rotting, slimy, disgusting onions with a smell remarkably similar to that of a sewer. To be sure, nothing had ever smelled so good!

I raced outside, put them on my

compost pile, threw the bag away, and came back inside to find the smell I had been fighting for days instantly gone. My entire

“How easy it is for me to spend time and energy... attempting to force solutions.”

problem was solved in less than a minute.

How easy it is for me to spend time and energy wres-

tling with problems, attempting to force solutions. I spin my wheels, creating more anguish. I tell myself I'm being industrious by churning things over, looking for the answer. It has become a habit I easily forget doesn't work.

I have come to believe in a God that has simple, peaceful solutions to my problems, the God who directed me to a bag of onions hanging on the wall. My only job, it seems, is to humbly ask and then wait for an answer. If I can wait and not grab for the controls again, my answers are uncomplicated, joyful, and nearly effortless. ♡

Anonymous
(Minneapolis, MN)

Just A Couple of Miracles

When I began attending D.A. meetings in the Spring of 2002, I found the 12 Steps full of good, practical advice. It all made sense to me at a basic level, but the notion of miracles remained a foreign concept. It sounded like a fairy tale. Therefore, I was more than pleasantly surprised when my higher power treated me to several miracles.

One miracle occurred when I went to a club to support a friend who had decided to become a singer. My girlfriend, an actress, and I were standing in line outside the club, waiting for it to open, when we were joined by her agent, one of the most powerful commercial agents in Los Angeles.

After we chatted for 15 minutes she suddenly turned to me and said, "You know, you're a great type.

Have you ever considered doing commercials?"

"Yes," I said. "But nobody's asked me."

"I'm asking," she said. "Can you come down to my office and meet the other agents?" I did, and was offered a contract. That day I read for a commercial.

This was a Hollywood fantasy come true. After six or seven auditions, I was hired to shoot a commercial for a bank and then invited to join the professional organization associated with acting.

Another miracle that I found flabbergasting had nothing to do with work, except that it lifted my spirits and made

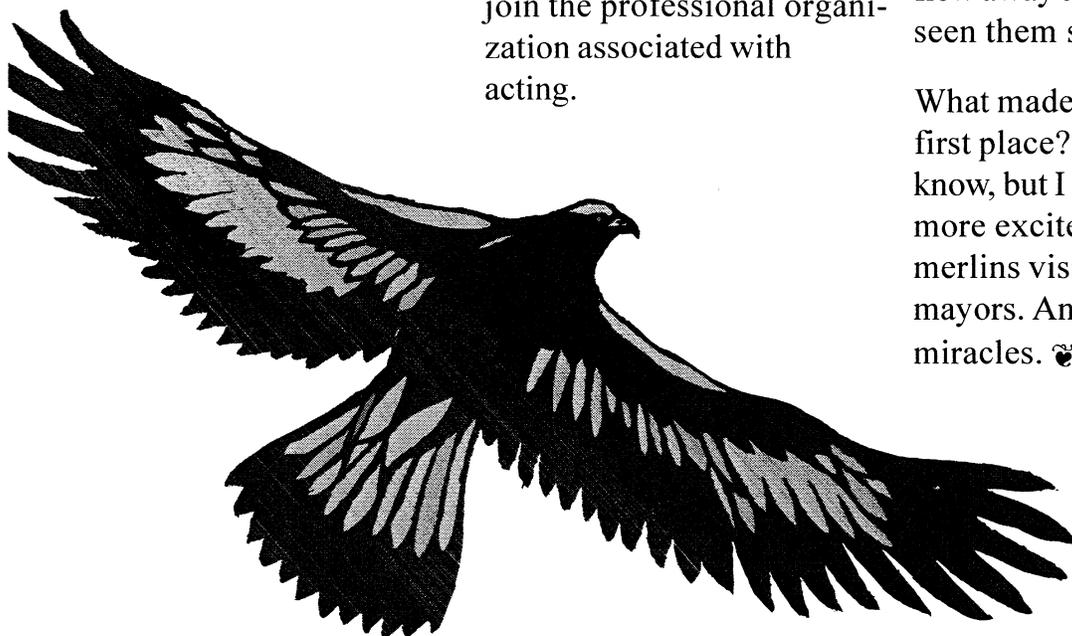
me feel much better about life.

Without explanation, three merlins began nesting in a

Chinese elm in our backyard. No one in the neighborhood had ever seen falcons before. All three were females and stood a foot tall. I must have taken fifty photographs of them, and they let me come within five feet. Of course they scared away every other bird, and while they were living with me the backyard was eerily quiet. Then they flew away and I have not seen them since.

What made them visit in the first place? I will never know, but I know that I'm more excited to have three merlins visit than three mayors. And I now believe in miracles. ☺

George F.
(Los Angeles)



Looking Ahead to WSC 2004



When: August 25 – 29, 2004

Where: Doubletree Hotel,
Sacramento, CA

Estimated Cost to Attend:
\$700 (registration fee, room
and board, and gala)

Work for the 2004 World Service Conference (WSC) is in full swing. The privilege of hosting the 2004 WSC was awarded to the Sacramento DA Fellowship at the 2001 WSC in Baltimore.

Our host committee was formed and started meeting early in 2002. With a core group of four to five members, we set about the task of preparing for the conference. We conducted a visioning process at one of our first meetings which consisted of a meditation on what we wanted the conference to be like followed by sharing our vision.

We generated a list of 11 possible local sites, then narrowed that list down to five.

After visiting all five sites, we narrowed our list to three primary sites and sought detailed proposals from the three “finalists.”

Proposals in hand, we developed a spending plan comparing the cost of holding the conference at the three sites. We also evaluated non-financial items such as proximity to other commercial establishments, perceived quality, “feel,” and parking. Committee members were asked to rank the three finalists. All ranked the three locations exactly the same way.

The Host Committee has now organized into 12 subcommittees. A proposed theme and logo has also been submitted to the General Service Board for approval. The committee is now refining the spending plan and schedule.

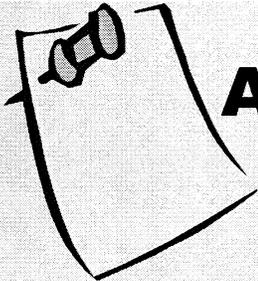
The “lessons learned” from this process are numerous. A few of them:

God is in charge. When selecting the local site, it’s almost as if the decision was made *for* us. We got out of the way, listened to one another, listened to our hearts, and spoke our truths. Having done so, it became abundantly clear that God was speaking to us. While we had done our homework and were equipped to make a rational decision, at some deeper level, there was a sense that this was the right place for us. Reaching this awareness was a powerful experience.

Time abundance. With three full years to plan for the conference, we have had the gift of “total time abundance.” Nowhere have we been pressed for time. So far, everything has unfolded with a sense of grace. We do the work, stay on task, and are not hassled by time. It’s been a great blessing.

Service. The list of 12 DA Tools tells us that, regarding Business Meetings, “some of us have felt that business was not a part of our lives, but for others more qualified.” Well, we’ve cast aside that stinkin’ thinkin’ and continued to show up. As we do this work, God is touching us. It’s an awesome experience. ☺

Allen T.
(Sacramento, CA)



Announcements

Upcoming DA Events

August 25 – 29, 2004 World Service Conference, Sacramento, CA

Visit the official D.A. website at www.debtorsanonymous.org and click on the Events button for links to details.

Seeking Nominations for General Service Board

Do you know someone who might be a suitable candidate to serve on the D.A.'s General Service Board (GSB)? Or would you yourself like to serve? The GSB nominations committee is currently seeking nominees. Contact Phoenix (committee chair) at 505-243-1937 for further information about board service, qualifications, and the nomination process.

Your Help Wanted!

Ways & Means needs your contributions!

- Send in your
- D.A. jokes
- D.A. cartoons
- D.A. shares

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