

Guest House

Alumni/Alumnae NEWS AND NOTES

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Edited by
Bob Martin
Staff
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" DUCT TAPE "
BY BOB MARTIN

A friend of mine was telling me a story about old cars. He is a collector of antique cars. One of his cars is a 1916 Ford Model-T. It is unique in that it has most of its original equipment – even though some of the upholstery is being held together by duct tape. During a recent car show he won an award for the “most creative use of duct tape.”



That got me thinking about my life before sobriety and how it felt like I was piecing things together with duct tape all the time. Duct tape, staples, and superglue seemed to be my survival kit. The image that comes to mind is wearing a new suit with 18 pieces of duct tape and staples holding it together. Denial told me that the suit looked fine that way. No insanity there, huh? I was unable to see reality. I remember how many clients I worked with at Guest House that told me “things were fine” at

the parish or in their personal life and they had no idea why the bishop was sending them for treatment.

When the drinking got too painful, I got help and was able to stop the drinking. But I still had very little idea of how messed up my life was. After a while, I began to recognize just how unmanageable life had become. In spite of my exterior façade, I was frightened, lonely and angry. I was also filled with shame that I needed to be sent to treatment with a bunch of people who couldn’t control their drinking as well as I (thought I) was. Alcoholism and addiction are a lot about feelings and mine were really messed up. I’ve been taught that feelings are neither good nor bad. But that’s not what they felt like. I mean, how “good” can loneliness, fear and anger be especially when those feelings were dominating my life? I was blessed with a sponsor that told me that my feelings would change after I began to change my behavior. So his emphasis with me was going to meetings and working the 12 Steps. I began to realize that this wasn’t more duct tape. This was a real change. I was beginning to, as Dr. Phil would say, “get real.” Sobriety will do that.

Reality isn’t always a nice place. Reality didn’t match my drinking fantasies of always having fun and being happy and entertained and admired and respected and cared for. It didn’t do much to relieve the dissonance with childhood teachings of being there for others and helping them. Drinking gave me relief – at least for a while.

My relationship with God had changed dramatically from my years of Catholic grammar school, high school, and college. Duct tape would be a charitable description of my spiritual life. Prayer had all but disappeared except when I was exceptionally guilty or needy. I prayed for what I selfishly thought I needed. And I was angry when I didn’t get what I wanted. Prayers were the foxhole variety. Of course, I’ve come to a different

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"DUCT TAPE"

understanding of how God cares for us. It's like owning a pet. When we eat something like chicken or ribs, it smells wonderful to our pets. They want some. They sit at our feet and beg for us to share some with them. But we are supposed to be the ones who love and care for our pets. We know what's good for them. We know that chicken bones can splinter and kill a dog. So out of love, we say no when they look at us with big eyes and whine and beg. It is our responsibility to say no. They don't know what we know. So it is with God. God sees what we cannot see and understands what we cannot understand. Even though we don't understand why we can't get what we want. God knows better. Now that I'm a little saner, I realize that God always acts with love in mind. He always wants what's best for me.

My relationship with God wasn't the only relationship that I misjudged. Most active alcoholics don't have healthy relationships during the active part of their addiction. I wasn't the person I wanted to be. What I brought to relationships was denial, dishonesty and addiction. I also brought unmanageability. So naturally my relationships weren't too healthy. But I would learn what is needed to precede good relationships. And it wasn't duct tape. I needed to live differently.

Duct tape kind of living didn't give me any consistency. It was all shooting from the hip and figuring my way out of one mess after another. Sobriety brought stability from instability. It brought order out of chaos. It brought

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a new and healthy relationship with a God that I would never be able to understand. It brought a sense of stability and consistency instead of just putting another band aid on an untreated wound.

There's an old story about God riding in the front of a tandem bike looking back at us saying, "Just keep peddling, kid!" My sponsor told me it would be like that for me. I needed to keep doing what I'm supposed to and not try to figure out what's right and wrong with the world. Heck, I couldn't even figure out what was right and wrong with me.

At the wedding feast, Mary said to the people, "Do whatever He tells you." That's what sobriety has become – praying for knowledge of God's will and the power to carry it out. Trying to do God's will as I understand it.

I don't regret my duct tape days anymore. Those days brought me to Alcoholics Anonymous and to recovery and to a completely new relationship with my Creator. How could anyone ask for more?



WOULD YOU LIKE
TO VISIT
THE ROCHESTER
TREATMENT
CENTER?

Please contact
the center at
800-634-4155

Make Plans to join us for the Inaugural 5k Run **Harvest Dash—Race for Recovery** Sunday, September 27, 2009

Proceeds will benefit Guest House Institute
www.guesthouseinstitute.org

Race will begin and end at the Scripps Mansion
1840 W. Scripps Road, Lake Orion, MI 48360

Cost: \$20.00 Pre-registration, ends Thursday,
September 24th. Entries received after this date and
including race day \$25.00.

If unable to attend, donors of \$25 or more for the event
will receive a Race for Recovery t-shirt. Please indicate
your t-shirt size, when sending your check payable to:
Guest House Institute.

For your convenience we have enclosed a return
envelope with this mailing.

**For More Info: Contact: Colleen Richards or
Louise Westcott at 248-391-4445**

Guest House **33rd Annual AA Retreat**

*For Alumni and Other Recovering
Clergy & Religious*

April 20-23, 2009

Scripps Mansion, Lake Orion, Michigan

Retreat Master, Fr. Richard Lewandowski

*To Register Contact: Belinda Booker
Phone: 800-626-6910 or*

Email: bbooker@guesthouse.org

Brochure included with this mailing

A MESSAGE FROM THE MARKETING DIRECTOR, RON KELLER

Express your gratitude for Guest House

Guest House is building a **new website** and we need your help. We would like a section of the new site to have statements or "testimonials" from our alums. A great number of you have deep abiding gratitude for Guest House and gratitude for your recovery experience.

We want to hear from you!

Gathering this information has two purposes:

It's always nice for the people who work at Guest House to hear from our alums.

Testimonials speak volumes to those who may be considering using our services or to those who support our work with their financial gifts or volunteer efforts.

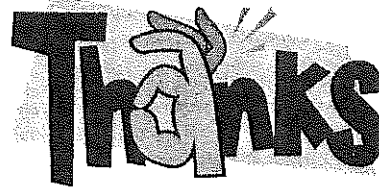
If you feel moved to share a statement of gratitude, we would certainly love to hear from you. Simply send me an email at rkeller@guesthouse.org

NOTE: We will not use your name in any marketing materials unless you specifically say that it's ok to do so. Even then, we would respect your anonymity by the typical name designation such as: "Bill W - Guest House Alum." If no permission was given it would simply be labeled as - "Guest House Alum."

Remember, you can't keep it unless you give it away.

Thanks for your help,

Ron Keller
Director of Marketing
Guest House



4th Annual National Catholic Council on Alcoholism and Related Drug Problems, Inc./Guest House Institute Awards Banquet held at the Conference in Houston, TX on January 20, 2009

Fr. Ralph Pfau Award

Awarded to:

Rev. Msgr. William J. Clausen

This award is being presented annually by NCCA and Guest House Institute to a priest or deacon who has, through life-long efforts in the diagnosis, treatment, and care of persons suffering from alcoholism and other dependencies, helped to advance recovery from addictions, both in religious life and the general community. Fr. Ralph Pfau was the founder of NCCA in 1949.

Rev. Msgr. Clausen received this award in recognition of all that he has contributed to the mission and work of the NCCA and to helping so many people from all walks of life to return to sobriety and remain in sobriety. He has also served as a vital member of the NCCA Board of Directors.

Sr. Ignatia Gavin Award

Awarded to:

Lee Anne Farrell, SSND

This award is presented annually to a religious sister, in recognition of her outstanding dedication and commitment to the field of addiction treatment and recovery. Among many other contributions to the field of recovery from addiction, Sr. Ignatia Gavin was instrumental in implementing the first Al-Anon program for families of alcoholics.

Lee Anne Farrell, SSND received this award in recognition of not only her present years of leadership/direction of Guest House's Treatment Center for Women Religious, but also for her 28 years of dedication to the cause of recovery from addictions and the work she has done nationwide to promote the cause of recovery.



Thought for the Day

Bob Martin publishes a "Thought for the Day." They are posted on the following weblog or "Blog": <http://recoverythought.livejournal.com/>

Just type in the address and hit enter. Some people bookmark the site. Suggestions are welcome at bobmich@mac.com.

The daily thoughts are a collection of quotes, stories and reflections of a spiritual nature for use in prayer, reflection or discussion.

Moving? Change of Address?

Name: _____

New Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

Email: _____

Send to: Guest House - Communications Dept.
1601 Joslyn Road
Lake Orion, MI 48360

Phone: 800-626-6910

Fax: 248-391-0210

Email: bbooker@guesthouse.org

PLANNING AHEAD? FUTURE EVENTS—2009

47th Annual Alumni Conference & Reunion *The Scripps Mansion Lake Orion, MI*

*First 16 to sign up will stay
in the Mansion*

August 4-6, 2009

For Information
Contact Belinda Booker at:
Phone: 800-626-6910 or
Email: bbooker@guesthouse.org

GUEST HOUSE REGIONAL SEMINARS

There is still time to sign up!

"Spirituality of Our Story"

The Presenters:

Fr. Gavin Griffith & Bob Martin

SCHEDULE for 2009

Techny, IL

Techny Towers Conference Center
June 8-11, 2009

Niagara Falls, ON Canada
Carmelite Centre
Sept 28-Oct 1, 2009

For Information
Contact Belinda Booker at:
Phone: 800-626-6910 or
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