

"We missed the reality and the beauty of the forest because we were diverted by the ugliness of some of its trees."



EXPERIENCES OF BEAUTY IN SOBRIETY



**THE GREATER
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**GREAT
FACT**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The quote announcing this month's theme comes from We Agnostics in the Big Book. The message there is open-mindedness, and I have always felt it has applications far beyond being open to ideas about HP. To me, it's the key to being able to "stop and smell the roses," something I had no use for in the blur of my acting out days, unless that smell had the power to get me high in some way.

Slowing down and appreciating the real world around me is more than a delicious luxury of sobriety. It's an important recovery tool that keeps me grounded and out of fantasy. I remember a friend sharing in a meeting once about feeling upset that on his beautiful bike ride down to the meeting he still had the irritating and difficult task of averting his gaze from attractive people and potential acting out spots. After the meeting I mentioned to him my feeling of gratitude: even though we carry this horrid and deadly disease, we're armed in such a way that all we have to do is put blinders on to 10% of our view, and we get to fully experience the other 90% without fear or shame. He responded by saying "Stop taking my inventory!" and stormed off (just kidding).

Thanks to Pam D. for formatting the Minutes and Announcements, and to Intergroup for their attention to this issue's content.

Trudgingly (but never grudgingly),
Gene B.

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ABOUT THE COVER ART: "UNDER CONSTRUCTION, STEP 4"

By Anonymous

The piece, for me, relates to the Fourth Step because of the "under construction" metaphor. The crane is digging up and excavating what was

beneath the surface. It is the process of unearthing and then rearranging the land for a new development that will take place in the remaining steps. Having written several fourth steps over the years, and having faced and revisited feelings of shame, desire and guilt, to name a few, I find each time I undergo "construction", I dig deeper. I sometimes take out old hurts and put them on when traumas and dramas of the present rekindle traumas and dramas of the past. Through the excavation process of "construction" I hope to one day eliminate many of those outmoded feelings.

During a recent retreat, I found myself delving into a 19-year old story. That took me to a 38-year old story, which led me to two simple sentences: "I am sorry. I was wrong." This was the groundwork for what will eventually be a ninth step amends, to a person I believed I should confront for having told a lie about me. Thanks to much digging, and the loyal support of loving sponsorship and fellowship, I unearthed a new truth. Yes, it is true, the person did say a lie about me; that is a fact. But I am not so disturbed by that anymore. I feel new courage because my side of the street has been taken care of. In a sense I dug up an old rock, and found a safe place to relocate it to.

REMEMBRANCE OF ANNA

By Kelsa

On May 19, we lost our dear friend, Anna, one of our sisters in recovery. Her cause of death was suicide. However, as her roommate and sister in the program who attended weekly meetings with her for about 2 years, I believe that it was ultimately her disease/her addiction that took her. I watched Anna go from a woman in recovery who I looked up to for her years of recovery and service—not to mention her infectious



personality, warmth, intelligence and humor—to a person who showed very little care for herself. One slip on a work trip out of town was like the opening of Pandora's box, and I had a front row seat to the spiral that ensued. She slowly stopped going to meetings, began reaching out to qualifiers, became increasingly secretive and created barriers between her and anyone who truly cared about her welfare. Getting her next high was all she seemed to be focused on during the last few months of her life. The unmanageability of her disease included an array of qualifiers, risky behavior, prescription drugs and alcohol, all of which collided into one lethal combination on May 19, 2017 while she was on vacation in Australia. The worst part about all of this is that Anna knew that this disease had the power to kill, and she could have stopped it. She had a solution that works through the power of the 12 Steps in SLAA.

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WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD!

Paul D.

I absolutely love Louis Armstrong's version of this song. It just makes me smile, slow down, and take notice of the little miracles and connections that take place every second, all around me, both in nature and between people. One of the themes that my group therapist constantly stresses to me and the group of men of which I am a part is noticing beauty in the world.

In my addiction, my world was very small, insular, and all about what I could do to manipulate any "bad" feelings out of my field of view. I'm not sure if my sex addiction is a cause or effect of this but naval-gazing the issue is a bit like questioning which came first, the chicken or the egg. As a result of my ever smaller and smaller world, I walked around mostly blind to the beauty of creation. I had glimpses of beauty from time to time in my addiction but they were so fleeting that any inspiration toward God's will for my life never lasted more than a few minutes and then I was right back into resentment, numbness, and compulsion of all kinds. But since this article is about noticing beauty in and because of my recovery, I won't spend any more time talking about my addiction but focusing on "what it's like now."

A few of the things that I find beautiful and I notice more now than I ever did before recovery include:

1. Nature.

I love the forest. I love mountains. Even seeing pictures of them stirs something in me. I feel more connected with my true self, my real self

when I think about (and then eventually do) spend time sitting quietly and taking deep breaths of clean air. I had a chance last year to go hunting in northern Michigan with some friends. For two days I sat in a deer blind and didn't see a single deer. But that time spent quietly, listening to the wind and marveling at untouched nature was soul-cleansing.

2. Babies

I love babies. I even love TV shows that show babies squirming and cooing. I love babies to the point that I can't help but cry, not tears of sadness but of pure joy and delight. I don't have children of my own but if the day ever comes that I am blessed to become a father, that will be one of the greatest days of my life.

3. Unexpected kindness of strangers

Chicago is so busy and everyone is in such a hurry that when I see people stepping out of their own rush hour to help another person, my faith in people is renewed and it makes me want to pay it forward.

4. Music

I know, I know. Everyone loves music. But I have these moments (facilitated by Verizon unlimited data and streaming services) where I get absolutely lost in whatever music fits or helps me get into the mood. Sometimes it's screaming metal that surges adrenaline through my veins. Other times it's quiet piano that slows me down so that I can reconnect with my softer, gentler side.

My hope for you as you read this is that you'll put in the work and embrace the surrender necessary in your own recovery to start noticing beauty in your own life. Just like we couldn't change anything outside of us to "fix" our addiction, recognizing beauty is something that happens inside of us so that we see our world, right where we are and who we are, differently. We live in a wonderful, beautiful world!

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TODAY I HAVE A CHOICE

By Rob

Why do I continue the fight to not give up on life? Because, through recovery, I choose to be. Like any addict, living a "normal life" is a struggle, but it can be done and its rewards can be reaped.

I've been sober from my bottom line behaviors for almost a year. However, I still battle with isolation from others and the obsession with sexual and romantic intrigue. Before coming to SLAA, my whole reason for living

was the pursuit of romantic and sexual attention. Regardless of what I got or didn't get, the loneliness and anxiety about what to do with myself haunted me on a daily basis. I haven't felt able to connect with anyone for a long time, I feel like I'm living on a completely different page as the rest of society. I want to create this character for everyone to see and even convince myself that this is who I am. But, who am I?

So I stand in the distance from my fellows, wanting only to feel a connection. My feeble attempts at connection have amounted to not much more than romantic intrigue. I see a woman I find attractive, suddenly I feel paralyzed and without choice or a conscious decision. I wish I could just connect to another human being, but am I enough just as I am? So I obsess and gawk, and then guilt, fear and shame flood me till I'm uncomfortable and hopeless.

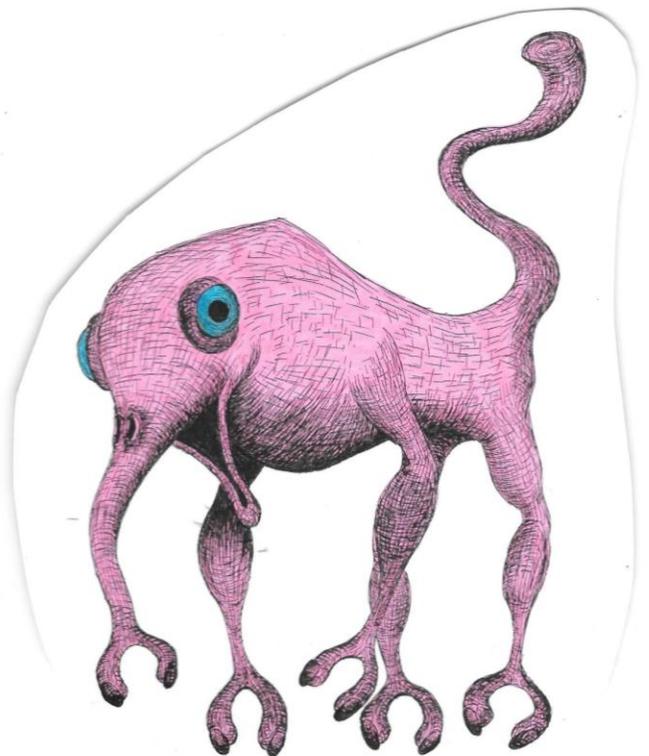
Just the other night I remember being in a place where there was a woman that normally stirs my obsession. I was standing there thinking, "Here we go again." This time however was different. I realized that I have a choice. I chose to not fall into that obsession. Sure enough I felt a strong feeling of relief as my mind drifted from obsession and I was just present within myself.

It felt like a loss as well, like I was falling away. I felt my consciousness starting to drift into obsession. So I relied on what worked for me before and again my mind cleared.

At the same time I was able to face the loneliness of not having my usual, vicious emotional

Experiences of beauty in sobriety? Count me in!

cycle of obsession. Soon afterwards, we were outside. It was raining really hard. She was still there. I was scared. then I remembered something I saw on a t.v. show about addiction. It was about an unorthodox addiction counselor who took his patients out under a waterfall and taught them to simply feel life.



I watched as the rain poured intensely over the edge of the roof, just like that waterfall. The lights from the building bounced off the water making a flickering pattern. I was so mesmerized that I just gazed and

drifted off, more like drifted into a state of consciousness of wonder and hope.

I felt good about being alive and about all the wonderful things in life, the things that pass me by when I'm trapped in obsession. I felt so refreshed and renewed. I realized just what this program can do for me. For that moment I stopped obsessing and started to live.

I contemplated going to a morning meeting the next day, I usually don't do that. The next morning I woke up with just enough time to get to the meeting. Normally I wouldn't have that kind of motivation, but I knew I had experienced something special and needed to share it.

Today I make the choice to experience life.

Missive From Mumbai

Paul D.

NOTE: This column documents the experience of a program member who was sent overseas for job training. As part of his recovery plan, he emailed a group of about fifteen program members on a daily, sometimes twice-daily basis. It's a fly-on-the-wall look at how program principles can be woven into the mundane elements of a life.



Good morning! Today is my first day of training here in India. I'm not entirely sure what to expect so I'm going in with a blank slate of expectations and ready for whatever comes up. I woke around 5:30 this morning after a pretty good night's sleep. I did my usual prayer and reading time and it was very good. The last time I was in India, 13 years ago, it was a great time of connecting with God and being of service to others. I'm here for an entirely different reason this time but the mental connection I think helps me to be more connected to God. I was thinking about a quote my wife sent me the other day from John Maxwell. "You'll never change your life until you change something you do daily. The secret of success is found in your daily routine." I started to think about things I can do differently to be a success. I have started doing push-ups each morning. I am sending out these daily check-ins as a way of staying accountable to my recovery plan. I have for years had a pretty consistent prayer and meditation time in the morning. And I make sure to stay connected with my wife since I've been gone through daily phone calls. Those are some of the things that I think are helping to make for a successful life. There's a ton more that probably should be done but it's about progress, not perfection...right?

I am really grateful that jet lag doesn't seem to be affecting me too bad. Generally, as long as I stay busy, it's not a problem for me to stay awake so I don't anticipate any issues with being alert today. My back feels pretty good, which is another blessing because when I'm in pain, it's difficult to focus on much else. I plan on going to work out tonight after work. The same rules apply for me here as did in Atlanta. I will only use the gym if I'm by myself or, should a woman come in, only if another guy is present. The pool is right out in the middle of a courtyard so that's a good bit of accountability but I will be cautious of being around women in bathing suits. I am taking my computer with me to work along with my camera so that I can send out pictures of my room without my TV, per my recovery plan. I won't be taking my tablet with me. Because of the Sprint phone card that my company hooked me up with, I won't need to use Skype at all while I'm here. Anyway, I'm headed down to breakfast. I am looking forward to a great day and really appreciate all your support. I will set aside some time in the next day or two to respond to those of you who have emailed me. God bless you! Thanks for listening.

**Greater Chicago/Milwaukee SLAA Intergroup
Saturday July 17, 2017 Meeting Minutes**

Attendance: Scott (Chair), Vince (In-reach), Paul (Treasurer), Anthony (Outreach), John (rep - Park Ridge), Elizabeth (rep - Ravenswood Fellowship)



Officer Reports

Treasurer

- Report on scholarships for SLAA retreat from individuals and groups
- July rent paid
- Balance: \$3007.04
- Accounting for retreat (suggested by Anthony)
 - Paul itemized contributions using existing account spreadsheet
 - Anthony will make his own spreadsheet to track retreat funds and expenditures
- Anthony updated Paul on expenses for ABM

Chair

- Cathy will address website issues
- Scott considering website audit - will consult with Cathy
- Application submitted to host 2018-2019 ABM
 - Host site will be determined at 2017 ABM
 - Trustees concerned about costs of hotels in Chicago
 - Orrington in Evanston proposed based on cost and location
- Anthony suggested we address problems with IG website specifically meetings list (which is incomplete)

Outreach

- Outreach chair still open

- IG discussed idea of reaching out to other 12-step fellowships like AA to help grow awareness of SLAA

In-reach

- Vince informed that August newsletter awaits feedback from IG
 - IG requested that newsletter be sent to Google group with a feedback turnaround time of week
 - Request from Anthony to include retreat info in newsletter
 - Scott will suggest some wording to be added to all newsletters regarding IG's role/responsibility in newsletter
- Vince sent email to Chicago West IG regarding GC/M's declining of their offer to provide money in exchange for representation at ABM, as well as removing Chesterton meeting from CW's website

Old Business

- Feedback on ABM agenda regarding proposed publications
 - John will provide feedback from Park Ridge group
 - Elizabeth will request feedback from St. Hedwig, Ravenswood Fellowship
- Chicago West IG
 - Anthony asked GC/M group to reconsider how we communicate with CW

Next Meeting: Saturday, August 19, 2017



ANNOUNCEMENTS... FOR THE GOOD OF SLAA

"Get Back to Basics" Workshop for Sex & Love Addicts: Work all 12 Steps in this 5-hour workshop

Lunch provided. \$10 suggested donation. Saturday, Sept. 9
10:30 am - 4:30 pm. Grace Episcopal Church. 924 Lake St., Oak Park

FWS News

The Anorexia Committee is still looking for shares for the Anorexia 4,5,6,7 Booklet. You can share at <https://slaafws.org/submit4567anorexia>.

Newsletter News

Next month's theme is "The first word of the First Step" and Pam D. has already committed to writing something! So if you want to appear in print next to that fabulous writer, let me know!

cinesobriete

I ran outta gas. I had a flat tire. I didn't have enough money for cab fare. My tux didn't come back from the cleaners. An old friend came in from outta town. Someone stole my car. There was an earthquake, a terrible flood, locusts. It wasn't my fault!! I swear to God!!

-- The Blues Brothers

Some of my lies in addiction were precious. Statements that were so ludicrous that the people I spoke them to probably couldn't believe that I would offer them such fantasy. I once told someone that I spent \$800 on taxis in one week (I had really used it to pay for sex). My friend once told his parents that his bag of pot and pipe were just for tobacco for a prop in a movie (that one has some nice parental denial in it).

The people I lie to in addiction know I am lying just as I do; or they choose to believe the lie to delay some other pain or reality of their own, just as I



do. In addiction I use a lack of confrontation as 'getting away with it.' In recovery I have found that I don't get away with anything. All my actions have consequences, some immediate, some delayed for weeks, months or even years, and others ongoing indefinitely. And the program helps me identify the consequences and unmanageability, and ask God to change me, and make amends for those consequences. It all happens step by step, with my higher power in the lead.

After I give up on excuses, I can rely on the truth as God shows it to me.

More at <http://recoveryonfilm.blogspot.com/2015/>