



A VIEW FROM SERENITY HILL

A Newsletter from La Hacienda

December 2003



Happy Holidays



CHRIS SAYS...

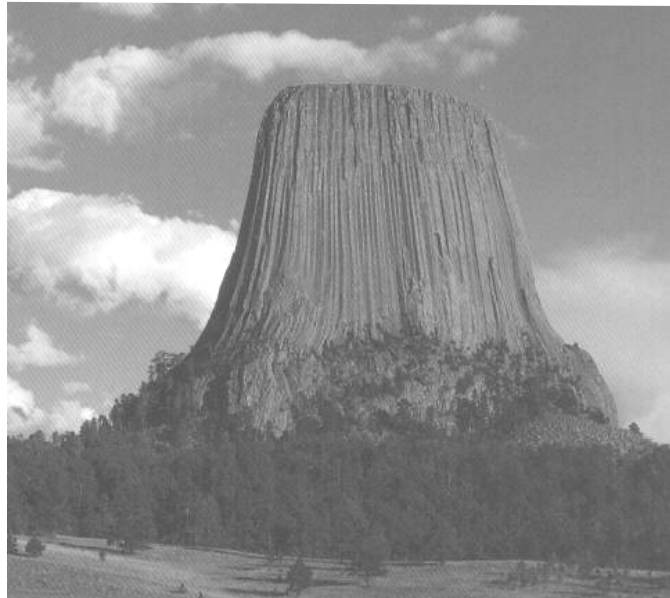
Buck-a roos!

Once more, this month, I am struck with the realization of just how fragile this gift of sobriety is. I have had a bunch of buddies get re-tangled in this disease!

I've told some of you this story but I want to retell it to try and make a point. In October, I was in Gillette, Wyoming speaking at their Fall Convention. Terrific bunch of folks! My hosts, Barbara and Pete, knowing that I loved Geology, took me on a side trip to see "Devils Tower". (You know the one... "Close Encounters of the Third Kind") I had seen a thousand pictures of this mountain, long before the aliens landed on it. I wasn't really prepared for all the unexpected emotions I experienced as I walked around its base! Amazing. I understood, suddenly, why so many Indian Tribes considered this Holy Ground! It was an extremely humbling experience. I really don't have the words to describe how I felt. Words fail me. THAT'S THE POINT! All my

knowledge about that mountain didn't prepare me to experience that mountain!

I am, as most of you know, a relapsing fool. Years I was in and out of the fellowship of AA! Fi-



nally, doing some things different, I got sober in '87. (Just celebrated 16 years on the 13th of November!) I had a lot of knowledge about the disease and its solution, but NO experience of doing it!

Maybe this is why I am so drawn to the "relapsers". I remember the frustration of thinking I had it figured out, only to fall on my butt one more time. I am the FIRST to yell

"relapse isn't necessary!" And it's not. But if it occurs, we need to all face it squarely and start over. We establish a new sober date. We don't quit. We don't give up. We let others help us get back on track and keep heading for the light!

I know the Holidays are tough on some of us. For the 10 years I have written these articles, I have said the same thing! "Don't try to do this by yourself. We will get through whatever is going on, together!" This ain't the time to be slacking up on the meetings. Get to that Home Group tonight and find someone to work with. They will be blessed and so will you!

Ya'll have a great Holiday Season. Check in and let us know your still kicking!

PS. Don't forget, if you want some recovery stuff from the store, we will send it to ya! (have some GREAT elves!)

xoxo – Chris R.
craymer@lahacienda.com



ALICIA SAYS...

Hello Alumni!

It seems like forever since I have written...so much has been happening and the holidays are on their way! We recently received an early Christmas gift...a fourth member for our Alumni team. God filled the final spot with Deb Doherty from Austin and we are so honored to have her. She carries a great message of hope to the patients and is a computer wiz, as well. (Much Needed) Things are finally settling down and the work load is spread evenly so that we have more time to spend with you guys...thank you, God!

Over the last few months, I have felt God gently nudging me out of my safe little box. Ya'll know what I mean...growing, doing things that aren't always comfortable, getting me out of my complacency...those things. One of His nudges recently allowed me to have the honor of speaking with Chris in Mississippi. That was amazing. The women that came up to me afterwards felt as though I knew exactly what they were going through – it almost freaked them out. These women, miles away from me in Texas, were battling the exact same spiritual condition as I had. That always fascinates me – how did two guys from the 1930's know exactly how I was going to feel internally when I came into recovery in 1999? The alcohol and drugs have changed over the years, but the spiritual malady and selfishness remain the same. It was wonderful to share the common solution with these new friends. I had a message to carry and they heard it. Now, Chris is talking about speaking with him in Denmark in November 2004...can you say

COLD!!! I don't know if I can carry the message when I am cold, just kidding. We'll see what God does.

What message are you carrying? I have to ask myself that question often. Do my actions match my mouth? Do I talk well in meetings or from the podium about being there for the newcomer and then when one comes up to me after the meeting asking for help, tell them I am too busy? If this stirs something in your spirit, then I hope you ask God for some direction. I have had to do that same thing. I was reading through the Forewords the other day and it hit me all over again – “strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.” Look at the words vital and permanent – an absolute must. If you are struggling with vital and permanent sobriety, I hope you will get into action and help someone else. I can't imagine where I would be today if someone had not helped me find the Solution. Now it is my turn to pass it on – then it's your turn... and so on and so on. We have to keep this chain of carrying the message going. I don't want to be the selfish one in the links who decides I don't have time to help and the chain breaks. Besides, I promise - it never fails – if you try to help someone else with their life, God will take care of yours.

Great web site for you **Big Book Thumpers!** Check it out soon!
<http://aaprimarypurpose.org/notationbook.htm>



Personal and “Scars” update: Things at home are almost too good. My husband, Shane, and son, Ethan, are both doing wonderful. Ethan got on his knees and did the 3rd step prayer with a newcomer and I the other day –precious!! (The next day, he did NOT bite anyone at day-care...go figure!) I am living in “The Family Afterwards” and God is reuniting our home!! I hate to say this, but there haven't been any new developments on my song “Scars”. I hope to meet with the bass player this week to get things rolling...I will let you know.

With the holidays approaching, I hope that each of you will give someone what has been so freely given to you – the priceless gift of sobriety. I can't wait to see all of you during the holiday festivities. Until then, I hope that each of you stays in the sunlight!! If there is anything I can do for you, PLEASE call me at ext. 512.

Your friend - Alicia
anew@lahacienda.com

DJ SAYS...

Hello Alumni Friends!

Life has really picked up the pace since I've gotten settled down here in the Hill Country. It has been such an amazing thing to witness God's power working in your lives. Chris and I rode into Austin a few nights ago, so he could speak at Stepping Stone's and the turn out was incredible. It was quite an experience for me because when I was in high school I lived about two blocks away from that church and I really felt the impact of how much God has changed my life. It is incredible the things that happen in our lives when we become



willing to help carry this message to our fellow brothers and sisters? If someone had told me six months ago that I would be buying a new house, I would have thought they were living in a dream world. The truth is that with God's power I get to live in a world (dimension) that I had not even dreamed existed! To top that off I get to be part of a fellowship where I constantly get to witness the cool things God is doing in your lives. Working here at La Hacienda has made me acutely aware of the connection to doing The Work and living a life being happy, joyous and free. We all know what happens to those that do not do the work, but the truth is I see a lot of you stepping up to the plate and doing this deal! What an honor it is to get the chance to know you and be a part of your lives.

It is a beautiful Sunday morning and as I sit here at my desk (the fact that I sit at a desk is pretty amazing in itself) the thought that keeps going through my mind is "The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that!" To get to watch my fellow Alumni bear witness to God's Power, coming in from all across Texas to share the cool things in their lives that God has made possible, is a pretty incredible thing to watch. All the more so because tomorrow I will celebrate three years sober. That journey began in that same room. After hearing the vision of hope and

actually seeing the happiness in you and your families, I picked up my desire chip and my life has not been the same since. My thanks go out to every single one of you who have made the commitment to do this work! Don't ever underestimate the impact that your recovery can have on another person.

This year has without a doubt been the best year of my life and to think that the Big Book promises that "The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the Fellowship, and so will you." p 152. I am looking forward to getting down to Houston to talk to the Alumni down there this month. I will also get the opportunity to get into Austin a few times this month. To those of you that I will not get the privilege to see, I want to wish you and your families the very best for the holidays and may you enjoy all of God's blessings to the fullest. If there is anything I can do or if you would just like to say hi and let us know how you are doing, my extension is 511 or e-mail me.

Happy Holidays – DJ
dshay@lahacienda.com

Deborah Says...

Greetings from the Hill Country!

What a whirlwind the last few months have been! I am honored to be a part of the alumni staff at La Hacienda! Chris,

Alicia and DJ are THE BEST and what a cool deal it is to have the opportunity to work with these guys! I learn from each of them every day. I'm fortunate to come back to the place where it all began for me a little over 2 years ago and share the blessings God has given me with the patients who come through here now.

I've spent most of my time here on the phones, catching up with alumni and hearing stories of the Power they have back in their life as a result of working the steps. Likewise, I've talked with alumni who have walked off campus and rolled the dice again, trying to prove they're normal drinkers & drug users. They're failing miserably. Worst yet, I've spoken with numerous alumni who are biding their time, staying sober, knowing they need to work the steps, but not DOING IT. Unbelievable! You left here knowing you are suffering from a fatal disease and the only options are death or spiritual help. The "heat" is off, you're busy at work, the children need you, you got a new job/car/house or you found Mr./Mrs. "Right" – a million excuses (none of them good) for why you have abandoned the program AND God who got you to treatment in the first place. The absolute arrogance and selfishness of it all shouldn't surprise me, but it continues to do so. The disease gathers strength every day that we don't work the steps to feed the Power that

Seasons Greetings
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Ext. 510, 511, 512, 513



keeps us sober. Your lives were so chaotic and miserable that you have up 30 days of your life and A LOT of money to hang out with a sick group of people in order to find another solution other than drugs & alcohol. The EGO has rebuilt itself and the chaos is gone and now the thought crosses your mind that maybe you can do this on your own. Insanity!

Now...the truth. The person I just described was me! This is exactly what I did when I got out of treatment. Nine months later, I was sober, but just as miserable as I had been before I went into treatment. The reason? I used the same excuses you have for not finishing the steps and getting connected to God. A little humility check, when I thought about judging those of you who haven't done the work. The point is, you don't have to allow the spiritual malady to control your life. You no longer have to live in the darkness. At nine months sober, when I finally took the action necessary to get connected to God, I recovered – I was FREE for the first time in my life! I never fully appreciated the word freedom until I worked these steps. The definition of freedom is RELEASE! I want freedom from the spiritual malady that is my normal state when I'm not connected to God – I want to be *released* from a state of restlessness, irritability and discontent. I've experienced an entire psychic change that

allows me to handle chaos and tragedy with grace, mercy and courage. I want that for each of you and, I think that's why I get so frustrated when I see so many of you making the same mistake I made! Please, learn from my mistake and take the spiritual tools God has given you and take a leap of faith that what has happened for those of us who have recovered CAN & WILL happen for you, provided you take the necessary action. On page 46 of the Big Book it says "God does not make too hard terms for those who seek Him." His hand is extended to you – it's up to you to grab hold.

Again, I'm honored to be a part of the alumni staff and I look forward to getting to know you all. A special hello to the alumni in Austin – I love you and I miss you – keep up the awesome work you're doing!

God bless – Deborah
ddoherty@lahacienda.com

The Lone Ember

Author Unknown

A member of AA, who previously had been attending meetings regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, her sponsor decided to visit her. It was a chilly evening and the sponsor found the sponsee at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire.

Guessing the reason for her sponsor's visit, the sponsee wel-

comed her, led her to a big chair near the fireplace and waited. Her sponsor made herself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, she contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs.

After some minutes, the sponsor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then she sat back in her chair, still silent. The sponsee watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and "dead as a door-nail."

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the sponsor was ready to leave, she picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the sponsor reached the door to leave, the sponsee said, "thank you so much for your visit and especially the fiery sermon. I'll meet you at the meeting in the morning."

32nd Annual Alumni Reunion!

April 30, May 1-2, 2004

Give us a call or send us an e-mail

800-749-6160

Ext. 510, 511, 512, 513

We'd love to hear from you!



Kerrville Area Motels, etc...

Here is a list of area motels, hotels, bed & breakfasts, and other facilities to contact if you plan to be in the area:

Best Western Sunday House Inn
2124 Sidney Baker
830-896-1313 or 800-677-9477

Days Inn of Kerrville
2000 Sidney Baker
830-896-1000 or 800-329-7466

Budget Inn
1804 Sidney Baker
830-896-8200

Days Inn
2000 Sidney Baker
830-896-1000

Flagstaff Inn
906 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27
830-792-4449

Y.O. Ranch Hotel
2033 Sidney Baker / Hwy 16
830-257-4440 or 800-531-2800

Inn of the Hills River Resort
1001 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27
830-895-5000 or 800-292-5690

River Inn Resort
Rt. 2, Box 120, Hunt, TX
830-238-4226 or 800-841-0501

Save Inn Motel
1804 Sidney Baker / Hwy 16
830-896-8200 or 800-219-8158

River Bend Bed & Breakfast
FM 1340, 2.8 miles west of Hunt
830-238-4681

River Road Bed & Breakfast
P.O. Box 498, Hunt, TX
830-238-4244

Casa Bonita Lodges
Hwy 39, 1 mile west of Hunt Store
830-238-4422

Waltonia Lodges on the River
3 ½ miles Hwy 39, Ingram, TX
830-367-5613

Lazy Hills Guest Ranch
Henderson Ranch Road
Box G, Ingram, TX
830-367-5600 or 800-219-8158

Armadillo Junction RV Park
dillorv@hctc.net
HCR 7, Box 31, Ingram, TX
830-367-3200 or 800-238-2848

Guadalupe River Resort
2605 Junction Hwy / Hwy 27
830-367-5676 or 800-582-1916

Hunter House Motel
Ingram, TX
800-655-2377

Motel 6
1810 Sidney Baker
800-466-8356

Comfort Inn
2001 Sidney Baker
800-221-2222

Hampton Inn
2038 Sidney Baker
830-257-0600

Econo Lodge
2145 Sidney Baker
830-896-1711

Roddy Tree Ranch
Hwy. 39, Hunt, TX
830-367-2871

Super 8 Motel
2127 Sidney Baker
830-896-1511

Comfort Inn
2001 Sidney Baker
830-792-7700



Websites of Interest:



<http://houston.lahacienda.com>
<http://dallas.lahacienda.com>
<http://corpuschristi.lahacienda.com>
<http://lubbock.lahacienda.com>
<http://midland.lahacienda.com>
<http://sanantonio.lahacienda.com>
<http://www.lahasolutions.com>



Check us out on the web!
Surf over to www.lahacienda.com



Upcoming Events

Dec 5	Permian Basin Christmas Party 7:00 PM—Potluck La Hacienda Community Outreach - Chris speaks	Midland, TX
Dec 6	Austin Christmas Party 6:00 PM—Potluck La Hacienda's Solutions	Austin, TX
Dec 8	Dallas Christmas Party 7:00 PM—Potluck La Hacienda Community Outreach	Irving, TX
Dec 9	Houston Christmas Party 6:00 PM—Potluck La Hacienda Community Outreach—Chris speaks	Houston, TX
Dec 16	CA Group at Stepping Stones—DJ Speaks	Austin, TX
Dec 16	The Woodlands/N. Houston Christmas Party 6:30-8:30 The Parent's Coach	The Woodlands, TX
Dec 17	Rio Grande Valley Christmas Party La Hacienda Community Outreach	McAllen, TX
Dec 18	Bryan/College Station Christmas Party 6:00 PM Scott & White—Chris attending	College Station, TX
Dec 19	CA Meeting—Chris Speaks	College Station, TX
Dec 20	San Antonio Christmas Party La Hacienda Community Outreach	San Antonio, TX
Dec 27	CA Group 720 Club—Chris Speaks	Kerrville, TX
Jan 16, 17, 18	Mid Winter Conference—Hospitality Room	Midland, TX
Jan 31	Sponsorship Workshop—Chris speaks twice	Ponca City, OK
Feb 24	Volunteer training 5:30—9:30	Kerrville, TX
March 28	CA in the UK—Christ speaks Sunday AM	Bournemouth, England

Call for Details: 1-800-749-6160
Ext. 510, 511, 512 & 513



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Please print legibly so we can enter this info into our database.

Name _____ Home # _____

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E-mail address _____

Approximate date you left La Ha _____ Sobriety Date _____

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Hunt, TX 78024

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