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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 23, 1985

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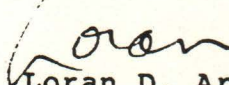
Dear Hal:

Enclosed are twelve copies of President Reagan's letter to the Fiftieth International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Montreal.

I was pleased with resounding ovation that his message received when Bob P. read it at the opening ceremony.

If I can be of any further assistance give me a call at any time.

Sincerely,



Loran D. Archer
Senior Policy Advisor
on Alcoholism and Other Health Issues
Drug Abuse Policy Office

Mr. Hal Marley
2000 S. Eads Apt 128
Arlington, Virginia 22202

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 24, 1985

Nancy and I send our warmest wishes for a successful convention as you continue to observe the 50th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Look around you, at the more than 30,000 men, women, and even children who have overcome alcoholism. You are the lucky ones; you are the winners.

Sometimes it is good to remember how you became winners. It started in 1935, in Akron, Ohio, when two men without hope united themselves against the disease that threatened to destroy them. Along the way these two men, Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., discovered that their resolve was strengthened when they reached out to help others along the way...people like themselves, whose lives had become unmanageable and hopeless.

This tremendous gathering here is a direct result of the Twelfth Step work that AA's co-founders began. Most of you could probably recite the Twelfth Step from memory:

"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."

Each of you is a winner because someone cared enough to share the pledge of his or her Twelfth Step efforts with you. This great support and sharing, I believe, is the real secret of AA's success -- one that underlies the fellowship's healing power. AA sets an example for us all, that is, love for fellow-sufferers.

I would like to share with you one of Nancy's favorite stories. It is about a starfish man.

One morning at dawn, a young boy went for a walk on the beach. Up ahead, he noticed an old man stooping down to pick up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally, catching up with the old man, the boy asked him what he was doing. The old man answered that the stranded starfish would die unless they were returned to the water.

"But the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish," protested the boy. "How can what you're doing make any difference?"

The old man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. "It makes a difference to this one," he said.

When the co-founders of AA first began to share their hope, they had no idea that AA would become more than one million members strong, or that it would encompass 114 countries around the world. But they laid the foundation for the world's largest self-help group. They reached for only one stranded starfish at a time...one day at a time.

You are making the world a better place for all of us, and on behalf of all mankind, we are grateful. God bless all of you.

Ronald Ryan

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 4, 1983

Dear Mr. Materson:

Thank you for your letter of April 28, 1983 and for forwarding me a copy of your story "There's A Long-Distance Loneliness..."

Many people have given a great deal of time and energy to helping others overcome the serious problems of alcohol and drug abuse. Thank you for all you have done and for sharing your most touching story.

Please let us know if this office can be of any assistance. Best regards.

Sincerely,



Carlton E. Turner, Ph.D.
Special Assistant to the President
for Drug Abuse Policy

Mr. Raymond E. Materson
2741 Donna, S.W.
Grandville, MI 49418

RAYMOND E. MATERSON
2714 Donna, S.W.
Grandville, MI 49418

April 28, 1983

3 MAY 1983

Mr. Carlton Turner
THE WHITE HOUSE
Washington, D.C. 20001

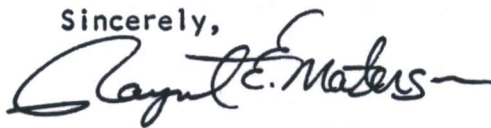
Dear Mr. Turner:

Alcoholics Anonymous, as you know, is a bi-partisan organization numbering in the millions. Members include men and women, young and old, from all walks of life. The work they do, which is almost entirely on a voluntary basis, is an inspiration and a powerful statement of what can be accomplished through simple human kindness and concern.

I am enclosing and forwarding to you a story I have written which displays the spirit of A.A. I hope you will find it interesting and inspirational. Without the splendid help these people and others in the field of substance abuse perform, this world, certainly this country, would not be as well off as it is. As an A.A. member myself, I am proud to be able to make this statement.

Thank you for your kind attention and continued support of A.A.

Sincerely,



Raymond E. Materson

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The following is a detailed account of the events preceeding and leading up to a recent admission to the Care Unit of Kent Community Hospital, Grand Rapids, Michigan. All admissions are minor miracles in and of themselves; one which display family compassion, group support and courage. This story, however, involves a remarkable, cooperative effort that reached across half a continent. The heroes are many and diverse, but their spirit is one. It is the spirit of A.A. members and substance abuse specialists nationwide. It is the spirit which we who have adopted the A.A. Philosophy refer to as our Higher-Power!

THERE'S A LONG-DISTANCE LONELINESS ...

It was my day off from work and Spring was struggling to show its promised colors. No plans or obligations needed to be met and my wife, Marlys, along with our daughter, Jessica, had just walked in the door after having had lunch with a friend. It was going to be a good day to do nothing. Then the phone rang.

Marlys picked up the receiver. From her reaction, I knew the call was long distance and desperate.

"No, Irene is not here. Is this Janet? Yes, we will accept the call."

The call was from Las Vegas and I had no idea what I could do to help. I reached for the phone in the hope of offering some guidance. It was Janet, an old and dear friend of the family's -- one I had not seen in fifteen years; one my wife had never met or even heard of up to a few days prior. From that point on, the phone rarely left my hand for the next day.

Janet was intoxicated, feeling alienated and in need of immediate help. There is no one so desperate or vulnerable as a lonely alcoholic in the throes of a binge. The mind wanders erratically and the

speech patterns are mostly incoherent. The cry, however, is readily discernable -- "Help me" -- and no one hears it louder than a fellow alcoholic. I know.

I listened to Janet's ramblings for several minutes. She talked of the past; of my deceased father, whom she had cared for dearly; of the collapse of her own life; of the horrors of loneliness. I spoke loudly into the receiver.

"Yes, I understand how you feel. Yes, I remember you. Yes, I care about you. Please believe me and try to calm yourself. Stay where you are. I'll call you right back. I care about you!"

This was the third call Janet had made to close members of my family. My mother, Irene received the first one a few days before. My sister, Barbara, had gotten the second one. We had discussed the possibilities of having Janet transported up to Michigan for treatment. She needed to be close to friends from the happy days of her past. It was time to act on the possibilities.

Although my financial means are somewhat limited, I picked up the phone and made airline reservations for Janet's trip to Michigan. Republic Airlines had a flight scheduled to depart the following afternoon. This involved a forty minute layover and change of planes in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

I next contacted my sister, a fellow recovering alcoholic and, thank goodness, the "financial means." Barbara unhesitatingly offered to pay for the airline ticket. However, we were faced with the problem of getting Janet to the Las Vegas airport. "What if she forgets?" "What if she isn't allowed on the plane?"* "How will she get to the airport?" We'd have to figure something out and our time was limited.

CareUnit, Grand Rapids, was to receive my next call. I had learned much from the staff and therapists there and I knew I could get some encouragement and input. I received just that along with some good advice on doing an intervention** and attending a family

*Federal regulations prohibit intoxicated persons to board a public air-carrier.

**An intervention involves the concerned friends and/or family members of the alcoholic. The group confronts the alcoholic with their feelings and recommend treatment.

meeting. That would have to wait. I asked for the phone number of the CareUnit, Las Vegas.

"CareUnit, may I help you?" the voice in Las Vegas said. I explained the situation: We would need some help getting Janet to the airport. My dilemma sparked an immediate concerned interest and the receptionist gathered a few staff members and placed me on a conference line. I heard my voice echoing as I reiterated the story. I was nervous as I imagined a group of trained professionals listening to and evaluating every word I spoke. I was elated when a voice spoke up approvingly.

"Contact A.A. Central here in Las Vegas. I'm sure they will help. We have one-hundred and thirty meetings a week down here. We're quite proud of that and we think what you're trying to do is wonderful. God speed you!"

"Thank-you, Patty," I said as I hung up the phone. Tears came to my eyes. The compassion and sincerity of a total stranger had overwhelmed me.

Buzz, at A.A. Central in Las Vegas answered the next call I made. I explained that I was an A.A. member and that I needed assistance with some twelfth step*** work. I mentioned Patty at the Las Vegas CareUnit and quoted her pride in those one-hundred and thirty meetings a week. Buzz chuckled, "It's closer to one-hundred and fifty a week!"

I told Buzz that we weren't sure how Janet would react to A.A. members coming to her door. He understood and assured me that they would play it "real cool" down there. Of course, all of the plans had not yet been finalized, so it would be necessary to talk to him later that evening. Buzz never questioned me as he offered his home phone number. I would call him at 8:00 p.m., Vegas time, 11:00 p.m. in Grand Rapids.

As I continued to log minutes on long distance calls, Barb was busy talking to Janet. We still weren't sure if Janet had comprehended the plans for coming up to Michigan. Barb advised her to get some rest and that we would be calling her later. All was moving along as well as could be expected.

It was roughly 8:00 p.m. Milwaukee time when the central A.A. office there received my next call. Joe, "the hot-line guy", as he called himself, listened to my story and took notes. There was little

he could do right then, he stated, but he would leave a message for the day staff. He advised me to call back the next afternoon and talk to Lou. That sounded reasonable enough -- there were nearly 24 hours until Janet's flight was scheduled to land in Milwaukee. We'll be able to cross this bridge after all, I thought. Good.

It was nearly 11:00 p.m. Grand Rapids time, when I called Buzz in Las Vegas. He had discussed the matter with some members there and they would have no problem helping out. By this time, I was starting to go a little "phone-happy." Buzz sensed this and quoted a favorite A.A. line to me ... "Take it easy, Son" he said.

"There is only so much you can do. Let God handle the rest."

He was right and I was done phoning for the day.

EARLY MORNING CRISIS ...

The bedroom telephone began ringing at 5:00 a.m. and startled my wife and I awake. I didn't have to ask who it was. Janet, although she seemed much more coherent than when I had first spoken to her, was having a change of heart. She had contacted the Detoxification Center at Nellis Air Force Base outside of Vegas. Since by marriage she was eligible for military assistance in health matters, she had decided to go that route. I was informed by her that she would be flying out via Air Force Med-Evac to an institution in Corpus Christi, Texas.

"That's good, Janet," I said groggily. "Make sure you let us know how you are."

Later on that morning after getting up from a broken night's sleep, I decided to call Janet back to verify her new plans. Yes, she would be going to Corpus Christi. At least that's what Janet told me. Yet something didn't ring quite true and, as an alcoholic myself, I knew that we are capable of spinning some very good yarns. I was going to check out Janet's story in order to put my mind at ease.

Anyone who has ever tried phoning a military installation knows it can sometimes be frustrating and time consuming. I mentally prepared myself for dealing with the military beauracracy as I dialed the main number at Nellis A.F.B. The voice on the opposite end of the phone gave me the base hospital number and transferred my call.

"Hospital. Airman Presley speaking, Sir."

"Hello, I'm calling long distance and I would like to know if you

will be 'Med-Evacing' a friend of mine to a hospital in Corpus Christi?"

"No Sir. That name is not on our list," Airman Presley replied. My concerns were verified. As I unfolded Janet's story once again, I was beginning to realize how little control I had over this long-distance situation.

My call was transferred to the Social Action Office at Nellis. Staff Sergeant Elliot introduced herself over the line and I repeated my dilemma to her. I was told to call back in fifteen minutes. Sergeant Elliot would do some checking around for me. It was 7:35 a.m. Las Vegas time.

The sergeant's "checking around" proved to be quite helpful.

"I suggest you contact our Mental Health Office, sir."

That number was forthcoming and I cleared my throat in anticipation of yet another explanation.

To my relief, Sergeant Elliot had already informed the Mental Health Office of the situation. They knew Janet and were willing to cooperate in my efforts. They had indeed seen Janet the previous day, however, while they had advised treatment they also had a four to six-week back log. It might be two months before they could transfer her to a treatment facility, Mary, at the office explained. A new sense of urgency was emerging as Janet's flight time neared. I left word for the doctor at the Mental Health Office to contact me after his rounds or as soon as possible.

It was time to contact Janet once again in order to establish the truth about her need for treatment. In addition, I had to make her realize that she would not be going to Corpus Christi. It was a tongue in cheek situation because I didn't want Janet to become defensive. I wasn't trying to call her bluff but it was imperative that we reach an honest understanding.

I let the phone ring for several minutes before I gave up and returned the receiver to its mount. Janet was not home. Now what? I envisioned everything that had been planned out collapsing. That would mean heading back to square one. If plans had to be re-established for a later time, my story might have lost its credibility and I couldn't afford that. After all, I was dealing with people I did not know, who did not know me. The more the details of my scheme were buffeted around, the greater was the risk of losing the tremendous cooperation

I had received up to that point. Janet had to be found!

Buzz answered the phone at A.A. Central, Vegas. He was disturbed that we had lost contact with Janet and offered to call around to various detoxification centers to see if she was at one of them. He was reassuring and very supportive and reminded me that I was only a tool of the Higher-Power.

"There comes a time when you have to 'let go and let God'."

I agreed with Buzz and shared my thought that perhaps the Air Force would act as a higher power for us. He acknowledged that the more help we had, the better off we would be. We cut our conversation to a few minutes. The reality of "Ma Bell's" running meter was beginning to scare me.

At Nellis, Mary informed me that the doctor, William Walters, Chief of Mental Health, had been filled in on the details. I was switched over to him and we put our heads together. Dr. Walters was compassionate but professionally objective.

"I think it's an excellent plan you have and we want to help. However, the Air Force can't just go out and pick up a civilian. We have no authority in this kind of matter."

He told me to contact a psychologist in Las Vegas to whom he had referred Janet. In the meantime, he would see what could be done on his end. He wished me the best and I told him that I would be sure to keep him informed.

It was nearing the noon hour Grand Rapids time. That meant less than five hours to flight time. I telephoned Dr. Norma Abi Karam in Las Vegas. The doctor was not in but the receptionist, after hearing my story, responded that she would have her call me when she returned to the office.

I needed a break so I met with a friend for lunch. My reprieve lasted only twenty minutes. I couldn't take an extended break. There were more calls to make, I was sure.

Marlys, who had done her share by keeping our daughter occupied during my telephoning marathon, informed me that Dr. Abi Karam had called. The doctor had spoken with Dr. Walters at Nellis and she, too, supported our plan. I was also informed that the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police were now in on the search. I started to feel like the coordinator of a profound "man-hunt".

There was still no answer at Janet's apartment. I telephoned

Dr. Walters person to person. There was no time to go through channels. He spoke to me with concern in his voice expressing that Janet might be prone to Dilerium Tremons.

Suddenly his tone changed. "She's here! She just walked in the door."

Dr. Walters then agreed to keep Janet at the Mental Health Office until her flight was scheduled to depart. We discussed the pertinent information regarding the flight. I also gave him the name of the staff physician at CareUnit, Grand Rapids. They would probably want to exchange notes. The Higher Power was patching together my well-intentioned plans.

As a matter of courtesy, I telephoned Buzz at A.A. in Las Vegas. He was relieved that Janet had been found and wished us luck.

"Listen friend," Buzz said, "If you're ever down this way be sure to look me up. You know where I can be found!"

I thanked him for his help and support as I said good bye. Now it was time to contact Lou at A.A. in Milwaukee. I hoped he would be as cooperative as his Las Vegas counterpart.

It had not crossed my mind that it was the noon hour in Milwaukee. Lou was not in. However, the note which Joe, "the hot-line guy" had written alerted A.A. of the happenstance of my situation. After a re-hashing of the story, I was advised to call back later in the afternoon.

I took a "long-distance break" but didn't leave the phone. CareUnit in Grand Rapids needed to be called. I got through easily and conveyed all the information regarding Janet that I had to offer. The rest could wait until she was officially admitted. Everything was coming together. The Higher-Power was seeing to that!

Lou answered the phone at A.A. in Milwaukee. He spoke to me as a friend of many years might. I told him that I was concerned about the layover in Milwaukee. I wanted Janet to get on her connecting flight safely and not onto a barstool in the airport lounge. That might have had dangerous consequences. Lou agreed.

"Don't you worry. We have some pretty big boys over this way. We won't let anything undo your plans. I'll have some people at the airport. God bless ya' for what you're doing."

I received one more call that afternoon. It was Nellis Air Force Base. Everything was coordinated on their end and Air Force personnel,

I was told, would be escorting Janet to the airport. We exchanged good-byes and as I returned the receiver to its hook, I was filled with a great feeling of spirituality and accomplishment.

Naturally, the saga does not end here. Yes, Janet arrived safely and was admitted to the CareUnit. But that was only the first fledgling step. It is her recovery that will serve to culminate this story. If Janet's personal Higher-Power possesses half the strength and spirit of the Power that moved her safely across half of the North American continent, then indeed, she will find serenity.

Special thanks to:

Buzz - A.A., Las Vegas
Joe and Lou - A.A., Milwaukee
Dr. Norma Abi Karam, Las Vegas
Dr. William Walters, Nellis A.F.B., Las Vegas
Staff Sgt. Elliot, Nellis A.F.B.
Kathy Thomas, Republic Airlines, Atlanta, Ga.
Barbara, my sister