

Out of Darkness, Into the Light

We watch them walk into their first meeting defeated, their spirits broken. Their suffering is obvious, and their desire for help even more apparent. They collect a newcomer chip and go back to the seats, shaken by the effort.

We see them again, and they seem a little more comfortable. They've found a sponsor and are attending meetings every night. They still won't meet our glance, but they nod their heads in recognition as we share. We notice a spark of hope in their eyes, and they smile uncertainly when we encourage them to keep coming back.

A few months later, they are standing straight. They've learned how to make eye contact. They're working the steps with their sponsor and are healing as a result. We listen to them sharing at meetings. We stack chairs with them afterward.

A few years later, they are speaking at a convention workshop. They've got a wonderful, humorous personality. They smile when they see us. They hug us and tell us they could have never done it without us. They understand when we reply, "nor could we, without you" and, as a result, they came out of the darkness into the light.

—Gil

A Prayer

Dear God,
I have no idea where I am going,
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself...and the fact
that I think that I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe this: I believe that the desire
to please you does in fact please you. I hope
I have that desire in everything I do. I hope
I never persist in anything apart from that
desire. And I know that if I do this you will
lead me by the right road, though I may know
nothing about it at the time. Therefore I will
trust you always, for though I may seem to be
lost – and in the shadow of death – I will not
be afraid, because I know you will never leave
me to face my troubles all alone.

—Anonymous

What a Difference

It was 2 years ago today that I came back from a very demoralizing, devastating relapse that had threatened to end my life. I did not come back because I decided it was time to stop. I was completely incapable of making that decision.

Instead, I came back because, after 36 hours of wanting to die, something deep inside spoke to me. Something deep inside of me let me know that I had a very tight window of opportunity to leave, even with the knowledge that, for the first time in my life, I would be leaving "more" on the table.

Today I look back on the moment in complete wonder. The absolute truth is clear to me today. I was given a chance to get my life back from a Power that, without, I would not be here today.

The light that appeared through the total darkness of my life that morning, seemingly out of nowhere, has proven to be the Power greater than myself that has stayed with me every day, no matter what.

Continued on p. 2

Difference, from p.1

I will not say that from that moment on, my life has been a wonderfully easy life. For months, I obsessed over using. But the difference was clear to me. This time, I had not returned full of remorse and promises to never do it again. This time, I came back fully aware that no amount of promises and resolutions would work, that the desire to stop for good was not enough. I knew that for me, the only hope was to put my trust and faith in God.

Through working the Steps, I have had a Spiritual Awakening that has removed from me the obsession to use. This is true because I completely acknowledged that I was hopelessly addicted. And, with that acknowledgement I was freed from the thought that someday, somehow I could use for fun. Sounds simple, but this was a drastic change for me.

My truth today is that, if I continue to work, continue to focus on the effort, not the results, continue to try and do Gods' will, I will be ok. I know that the only true way to help myself is to reach out to others who need help. It is by doing this that I remain close to God, without whom I could not stay clean. I no longer try to control my future. All I can do is seek Gods' will for me at this moment, and try to live by the principles of the Twelve Steps.

—Brian K.

Untitled

I was a little depressed earlier today, then I realized I wasn't having to pop into the bathroom every 45 minutes to pack my face. It's not 6:30am on a work day where I need to be at work in 90 minutes and I have just spent the last four hours walking the halls of the hospital 'cause I did too much coke but I didn't have the nerve to actually go to the Emergency Room. I haven't spent all last night chain-smoking, watching porn, and pissing in beer-bottles—then trying to figure out which bottle had beer in it and which one was full of piss and cigarette butts (I have picked the wrong one before—yummy). I'm not lying on my bed with my son watching TV and wondering if I'm going to be alive in a minute.

As exciting as all that was, I'm glad I'm not there today. Life is good.

—Nick L.

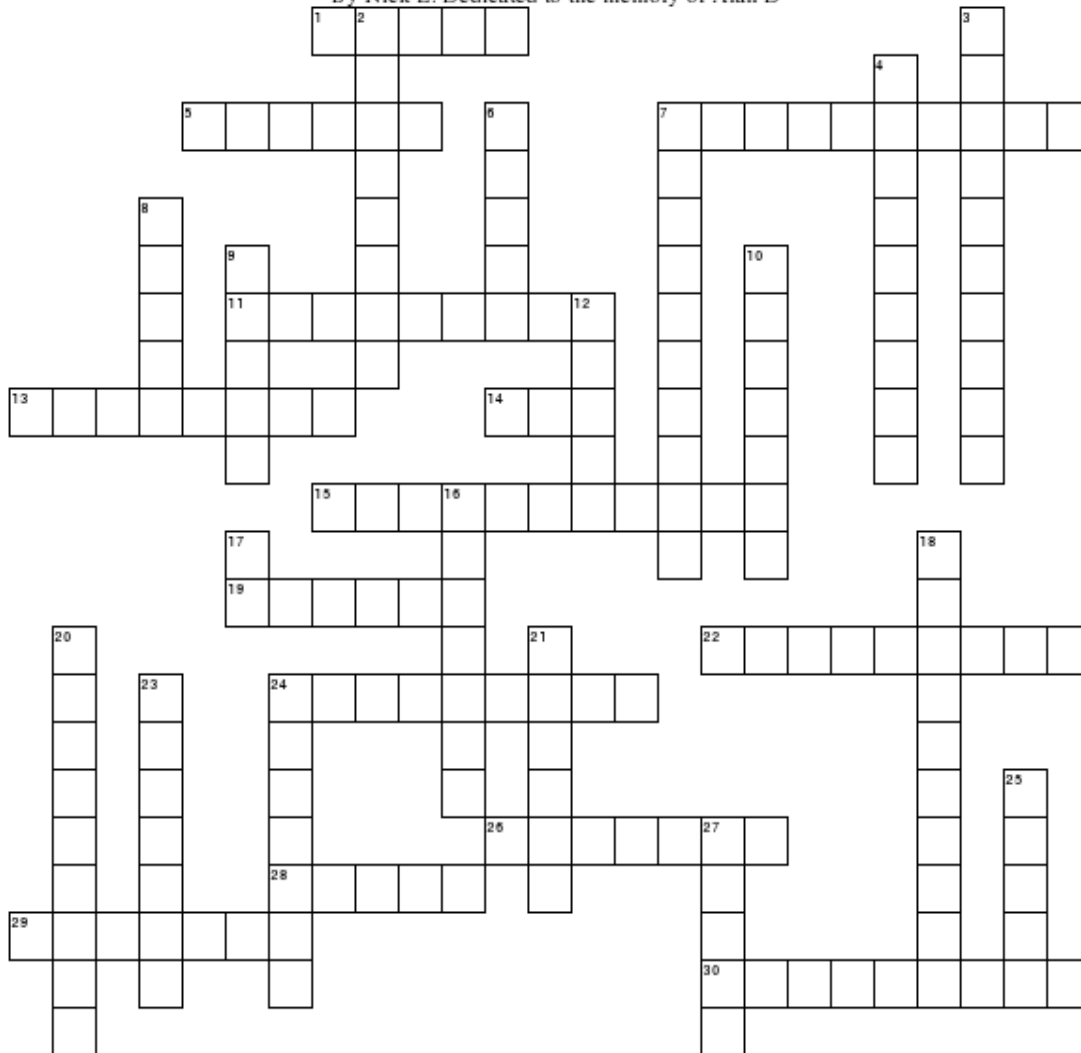
I Almost Never Saw the Ocean Again

First there was a roaring and insane circling madness that gradually slipped into a deep dark silence. I thought I was ready to leave. Surely there was no way out of this one, this last stand with the dark that fought to take my soul for good. All my dreams, they faded before my tired eyes like a festival of sunsets: oranges, candy blues, and shimmering pinks. I could taste the ocean as the intense saltiness played over my tongue and the delicate foam caressed my body. The intense laughter of children echoed in the background and I was laughing—I dreamed of my laughter, the youthful feminine cacophony of sound giggling with joy. I wondered if this great earth would ever hear it again. I thought it was time to say goodbye. *No I did not want to*, yet at the time I saw no other way out. No way out of losing me and all the world had promised me. Visions of my loved ones passed through my mind, begging me not to go. I wondered if I'd ever function normally again. I dreamed of the lost dreams. Would I ever again see the ocean? Would I ever again hold a man against my body? Was twenty-six years enough time for me on this great planet? What about conquering the world as the famous author I was destined to become? What about college? Was it all lost? Then the dreams called again... The sounds of Summer—coconut-scented tanning oil, lemonade, fresh water gurgling from a garden-hose splashing onto hot pavement. How I longed to get better... Again, the laughter at the carnival, then the roar of the crowd when I receive my diploma. Would I ever live again? Would I live to see me be *me* again? I begged for a miracle. Never had I wanted or needed more from God. First, simply to function. To shower, to put on clothes, to eat a complete meal. All I could do was stay in bed, the only place now without pain being sleep. How I dreamed to *dance* again, to move about freely, run, jump, and grasp my dreams and let them *dazzle* me! How I dreamed I would awake and find Nichol whole again, so she could see her ocean. I could not die knowing I never got to see the Caribbean or Mediterranean, get married in a white dress, see Paris or Greece, or gallivant about the streets of Manhattan. I began to see that I would spend the rest of my days institutionalized. Yet I also began to see that it was not my time. I

Continued on p. 4

We Agnostics

By Nick L. Dedicated to the memory of Alan D



www.CrosswordWcaver.com

ACROSS

- 1 Everybody nowadays, believes in scores of assumptions for which there is good evidence, but no perfect visual _____.
- 5 Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than _____?
- 7 And who could _____ a Supreme Being anyhow?
- 11 If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably _____.
- 13 Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from _____ asking yourself what they mean to you.
- 14 We found that _____ does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him.
- 15 It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple _____ a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.
- 19 When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the _____ of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God.
- 22 To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a _____ basis are not always easy alternatives to face.
- 24 We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting spiritual beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many spiritually-

_____ minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, _____ and usefulness which we should have sought ourselves.

- 26 Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to spiritual things made us _____ with antagonism.
- 28 We read wordy books and indulge in _____ arguments, thinking we believe this universe needs no God to explain it.
- 29 Lack of power, that was our _____.
- 30 When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most _____ fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.

DOWN

- 2 We, who have traveled this dubious path, beg you to lay aside prejudice, even against organized _____.
- 3 We looked upon this world of warring individuals, warring theological systems, and inexplicable calamity, with deep _____.
- 4 In this respect alcohol was a great _____. It finally beat us into a state of reasonableness.
- 6 That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as _____.
- 7 Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's _____ of

God.

- 8 He had stepped from bridge to _____.
- 9 Arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of _____.
- 10 So it was comforting to learn that we could commence at a _____ level.
- 12 But we found that such _____ and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried.
- 16 Could we still say the whole thing was nothing but a mass of electrons, created out of nothing, meaning _____, whirling on to a destiny of nothingness?
- 17 God either _____, or He isn't.
- 18 We talked of intolerance, while we were _____ ourselves.
- 20 We have shared his honest doubt and _____ . Some of us have been violently anti-religious.
- 21 As a celebrated American statesman put it, "Let's look at the _____."
- 23 So we used our own conception, however _____ it was.
- 24 If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad _____.
- 25 Our _____ resources, as marshalled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.
- 27 _____ is great stuff. We liked it. We still like it.

Untitled

It was not a physical death we died
In those dark hours of despair and
bitter hopelessness.
The soul no longer able to endure
sought refuge where there was none.

Until a higher voice inside
whispers and asks us to abandon
past regrets.

“Confess your innermost truths.”
The voice calls out.
“And you will understand.”

And in the quiet hours,
When all is still,
God’s voice whispers
A gentle sound-
Compassion.

“Survive and witness the perfection
of the clouds.
The changing colors and patterns.
The peace of a blowing breeze.”

And the sun rises like a glowing God,
shining above us in our restlessness.
Shining still in our sorrow and joy.
And with it comes the wisdom-

This sun changes everything.

—Tricia Byrne

Go Forward With Courage

When you are in doubt, be still, and wait;
when doubt no longer exists for you,
then go forward with courage.

So long as mists envelop you, be still;
be still until the sunlight pours through
and dispels the mists
– as it surely will.

Then act with courage.

—White Eagle

The Dark Hours

The phrase “darkest before the dawn” sounds like a B-movie zombie version of my recovery attempts. There I am in the last house on the block. Whew! It’s good to feel safe. It’s been a tiring and frightful ordeal, and it’s a brain feast out there. Yet, how many times have I been that wing-nut that thinks, “If I can just make it to my car,” but when I get there... Munch! The clever zombie hiding in the backseat gets his first meal of the day.

In the hours before my careless choice, my fear is escalating and my mind is racing. I can’t seem to muster any trust for my companions. Sensible words aren’t getting through to me. I’m caught up in my own head. I think I’ve got a plan and so I make a break for it, but my “ah ha” moment soon turns into an “oh s**t” finale.

For me, that is my relapse story, as simple as I can make it. However, I guess it’s cutesy more than anything. I just needed to get some zombie action in here somewhere. So, hey, mission accomplished.

Actually, I guess I didn’t want to relate much with the topic for this newsletter. I still feel kinda dazed from recently moonlighting as the undead. I’ve had a lot of dark hours, most of which are still fresh in my memory. The worst ones had been those shivering moments in the middle of the night when I realized I was much more afraid of the creature that I’d become inside my own house. I’d usually try to shake that feeling off pretty quickly, either by continuing to use or by burying my head under a pillow. It used to be that I didn’t believe there was a passageway to hope, but it becomes hard to deny after being in the program and then

Continued on p. 5

Ocean, from p.2

begged for life. I begged for life the way one would to a man holding a loaded gun to their head. *Please let me live! Please let me go!* I am not ready to give up yet.

Then the oceans roared in approval as they never had before, while the sun, moon and stars lit up and agreed in unison. I was going to be okay. There was hope. I was back. Again, I began to hear my laughter.

—Nichol W

Dark Hours, from p.4

going back out. I knew it didn't have to be what it was. I had an out, but I just wasn't sure I could come back

That was one kind of dark hour.

Another type of darkness was the kind that came before I made the decision to go back out and use. Sometimes it would be days or weeks of this heavy, pervasive feeling that seemed to indicate I was inevitably screwed. My brain would scream, "This just isn't going to work, and I don't think I can hold out much longer!" That sucked in a sort of vampiric *hey I'll bite myself in the neck and drain all the blood out my own recovery way.* (Note to self: Don't isolate yourself if you're still the monster you dread.)

Whatever was happening in those moments, it felt inescapable. Sometimes I could reach for my phone and find encouragement, but in the darkest hours... I felt irreparably separated. By then, my mind usually had a stranglehold on me. As many times as I had heard the suggestions, and having not made a practice of it, I would not think to go and help someone else. If only I'd found someone else who needed assistance prying off the claws of their own fear and doubt, maybe I'd have been too busy to continue working myself over as bad as I did.

That was another sort of personal darkness.

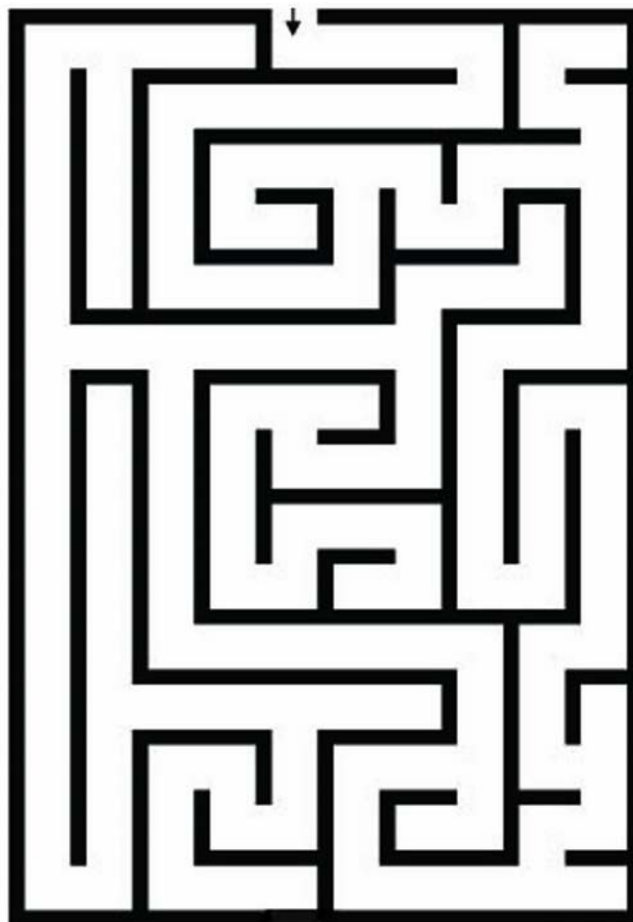
In the greater scheme of things, I couldn't even have an awareness of those experiences if it hadn't been for the expiration of a broader dark spell some 70+ years ago. At a time when medical, psychiatric, and religious experts seemed to agree that alcoholism was a virtually hopeless condition, something began breaking through. Being an alcoholic was a despairing position with no cure in sight. Confused, harshly judged by self and others, the alcoholic simply became resigned to an undignified decline, an ugly downward spiral with no ascent back up. There had been no clear or systematically effective way to solve the problem, but hindsight shows us that a solution did emerge.

In the beginning, it may have appeared no more than a sliver of hope on the horizon, the hint of a possible new life for the alcoholic/addict. Today, we know that sliver contained the fullness of the Sunlight. The 12-step program was the dawn after the endured long night.

If an age of darkness was dispelled for a particular portion of humankind, for a population having my same problem... why not for me on an individual level? It's certainly hard to see it that way when I'm disemboweling myself over my failures, fears, or frustrations. However, when I hang in there just a little longer, I am again presented with overwhelming evidence that this thing works, that the sum-total is pretty damn positive, and that there is a powerful collective of light in the rooms. For those reasons, I'm glad to be back.

—Anonymous

First Step Maze

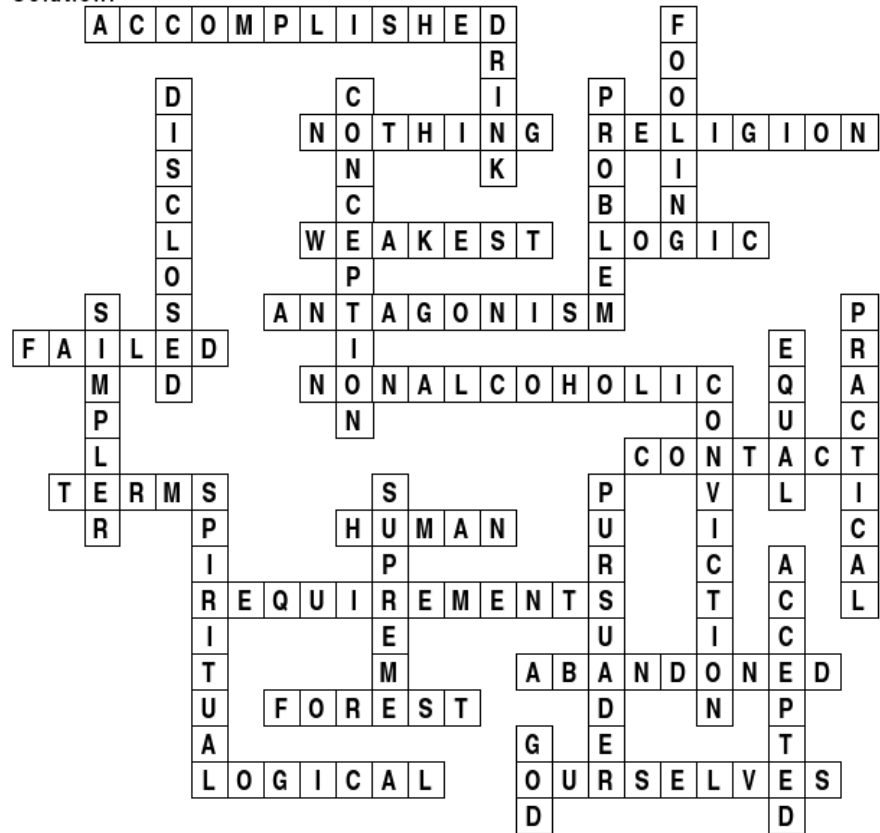


Birthdays

Ben P.	5/12/2008
Craig W.	5/12/2005
Chad M.	5/13/2005
Venus N.	5/30/2007
Patrick B.	6/1/2007
Russ C.	6/7/1989
Nick S.	6/12/2005
Steve B.	6/26/1986
Bryan G.	7/13/2001
Ali H.	7/14/2000
Beth S.	7/18/2005
Tina N.	7/25/2005
Kathleen L.	7/30/2006
Jennifer B.	8/19/2007
Kipton S.	9/14/2005
Justin W.	9/15/2007
Rick D.	9/22/2002
Briggs R.	10/2/2007
Robert T.	10/6/2006
Emily M	10/13/2006
Eddie P.	10/29/2007

Solution to last month's puzzle

Solution:



Submission Info

Submit your articles, quotes, artwork, etc.
newsletter@cacolorado.org

Feedback Request

We welcome your feedback.
 Let us know how we can improve the newsletter.

Next Quarter's Theme

KEEPING IT SIMPLE

CA Events

- CA Campout, Aug. 21st-24th
- Labor Day Picnic, Aug 31st 11am-3pm
- Bike Day, Sep. 6th 1 – 5pm
- Being of Service Workshop, Sep. 13th 2 -4pm
- Movie Event, Sept. 20th
- CAWS Fundraiser Picnic, Sep. 27th 11:30am-3pm

Committee Mtg Dates

- Unity Committee:
 2nd Tue. 6 – 7pm
- H&I Committee: 3rd Sat. 9am
- Area: 3rd Thu. 7pm
- PIP Committee:
 2nd Sat. 12:30pm
- IT Committee: 2nd Wed 5:30pm
- Chips & Lit.: 2nd Sun. 11:00

Newsletter Credits

Scott B.
 Chair

Justin W.
 Co-Publisher

Erik S.
 Co-Publisher