

Caterpillar



April
1993

4884 Constitution, Suite 1-C, Baton Rouge, LA. 70808
1924-0029 (24 Hours)

FROM THE



by Patt J.

The theme of this publication is "New Beginnings". Usually, we think of New Beginnings as being as being something happy or joyful. However, this is not always true. This past December was when I named the theme for this issue. Little did I know how much this theme would haunt me! For on January 23rd, my husband left me. Not quite the new beginning I had in mind. Through the heartaches and the tears of this time span, I decided I would share this traumatic event with my fellow Al-Anon members. The purpose of this sharing, is just maybe, it will help one of you. I, too, will benefit by this sharing. Sharing is what we do in Al-Anon to make us feel better as well as gain insight into ourselves.

A PAINFUL CRY FOR HELP

My story begins in October, '91. I believed my husband was nearing an alcoholic overdose. I was very frightened. I didn't know what to do. I was afraid he would be angry with me for admitting him to a Substance Abuse hospital for alcoholism - but I was more afraid he was going to die. I felt, somehow, our love for each other would overcome this terrible time. I thought - once he knew how close he was to dying - he would understand. He didn't! His deep resentment built steadily towards me until he moved out January 23, '93.

I couldn't believe this was happening to me. The thought kept racing through my head - "This is all just a dream. I know I'll wake up soon!!". It wasn't a dream. It was cold, hard reality! I managed to get through the first two weeks in a fog-like state. Then I hit bottom!! My pride was scraping the dregs of despair. I sank deeper into my miry pit of desperation. The pain was so intense I thought I couldn't breathe. I wanted to scream - I wanted to cry - I wanted to go back in time. Anything to get away from the pain that was exploding in my heart and knotting my stomach as it took over my whole being.

My doctor had prescribed medication for me to get through this time in my life. As the pain took over my senses - I began to take more of the medicine. By this time I was so far gone that I do not remember much. Apparently I decided I did not want to live anymore. I can't remember. I did not consciously make the decision to end my life. But my crazed state of mind made that choice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jeanette L. resigned as Office Volunteer Chairman. Thanks to Jeanette for her many hours of service.

NEW MEETINGS

Back to Basics Al-Anon Meeting, Monday at 8:00 at Southside Baptist Church, 1700 Lee Drive, Baton Rouge

Monday Noon Meeting at St. Theresa Convent Meeting Room, 1022 N. Burnside Ave. in Gonzales

MEETING CHANGES

Tuesday's Child meeting moved to Unity Church of Christianity, 1555 Old Jefferson Hwy., Baton Rouge

Friday and Tuesday Zachary meetings moved to New Life Ministries Church - Corner of Church St. and East Ctr. Ave.

Live & Let Live AFG meeting now at AIS Office - 6:00 pm Thursday

OFFICE HOURS

Open Monday - Friday 9 am to 3 pm.

Closed on Saturday.

Open Thursday 5 pm - 8 pm to sell literature beginning mid-April.

Call AIS Office 924-0029 for any Information

NEXT PUBLICATION!!

The theme for the next quarterly publication will be on Freedom/Liberty. The issue will serve the months of July, August, September. Just remember when you felt a load lifted - felt free or at liberty to be or to do. Tell us your experiences. If your experience happens to be comical - great!! We need some humor tool

The Caterpillar is published quarterly to be distributed at the Al-Anon Information Service (AIS) Office quarterly meetings

The Alternate GR or someone from each group obtains the number of copies needed for their group at the quarterly meeting or later from the AIS office.

Copies will be mailed only to those groups beyond a 25 to 30 mile radius from the AIS Office, who make a request to the Caterpillar editor.

AIS CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

by Clara E.

A time for fellowship, food and fun,
 A time to renew oil friendships...
 A time to be good to ourselves...
 A time to learn about Al-Anon's history...
 A time to share experience, strength and hope...
 A time to play "Al-Anon Bingo" --- that's what Heritage Day is all about.

You are, hereby, personally invited to our ninth annual Heritage Day on April 23, at the Sheraton Baton Rouge Hotel.

Reservations are necessary for the luncheons; reservations for the "speaker only" are preferred.

A big "thank you" to all of you who attended our January workshop. Our ten speakers, (Ruth, Sylvia, Tammeryn, Pebble, Joyce, Boogie, Mike, Joe, Pattie, Diana) who shared their experience on sponsorship and spirituality did a wonderful job. A special thank you to our "kitchen help", to those who helped to set up, clean up and who assisted with registration.

Each of you made it a great success.

Love in the program,
 Clara E.

NIGHT PHONE LIST

by Sandy G. (Chairman)

This is the list of the groups responsible for the night phone during the months of May thru July. A letter requesting volunteers will be mailed out to the group's GR a couple of weeks prior to that group's turn. If a group changes GR, please notify the A.I.S. office as soon as possible @ 924-0029.

GROUP	MEETING TIME	PHONE DUTY
Goodwood AFG	8:00 PM Thu	May 3 - May 9
Al-Anon Adult Children (St. Pat's)	7:30 PM Fri	May 10 - May 16
Triangle AFG	7:30 PM Mon	May 17 - May 23
Serenity Group	7:30 PM Wed	May 24 - May 30
Doing Our Thing	7:30 PM Thu	May 31 - Jun 6
New Beginnings Step	6:30 PM Sun	Jun 7 - Jun 13
University	8:00 PM Mon	Jun 14 - Jun 20
Good Shepherd	7:30 PM Thu	Jun 21 - Jun 27
Recovering Parents	8:00 PM Sun	Jun 28 - Jul 4
Steps to Serenity	Noon on Mon	Jul 5 - Jul 11
Faith & Hope Adult Children	Noon on Thu	Jul 12 - Jul 18
Denham Springs	8:00 PM Fri	Jul 19 - Jul 25
Comite	7:30 PM Mon	Jul 26 - Aug 1

ALATEEN

by Joyce G. (Sponsor)

A New Beginning

Want a new beginning, growth in your Al-Anon program?

A great opportunity to do both is to become involved sponsoring an Al-Ateen group.

I find being a sponsor has been the most rewarding service work I've done since becoming a member of Al-Anon.

Alcohol is a family disease and we need to break the cycle with the young ones. Unconditional love is yours for the asking.

Needed NOW

=====

Thursday 7:30 p.m.
Church of Christ
8725 Jefferson Hwy

Sponsor and
Co-Sponsor

Thursday 8:00 p.m.
Broadmoor Scout Hut

Co-Sponsor
Pre-teens group

Wednesday 7:30 p.m.
St Francis Episcopal Church
Denham Springs

Co-Sponsor

Saturday 6:30 p.m.
St John's Catholic Church
Prairieville

Co-Sponsor

Al-Ateen Meeting Schedule

Monday 7:30 p.m.
Blackwater Methodist Church
1000 Blackwater Rd

Thursday 7:30 p.m.
Church of Christ
8725 Jefferson Hwy

Wednesday 8:00 p.m.
Broadmoor Methodist Church
10230 Mollylea @ Sharp Rd

Thursday 8:00 p.m.
Broadmoor Baptist (Scout Hut)
7125 Goodwood Blvd

Wednesday 7:30 p.m.
St Francis Episcopal Church
Denham Springs

Thursday 8:00 p.m.
Broadmoor Baptist Church
7125 Goodwood Blvd
(Pre-teens)

Saturday 6:30 p.m.
St Johns Catholic Church
Prairieville

THE GREATER BATON ROUGE AIS OFFICE
Districts 4, 9, 13, 14, and 16

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NINTH ANNUAL
** HERITAGE DAY LUNCHEON **

SHERATON BATON ROUGE HOTEL
in Camelia I

4728 CONSTITUTION
(EXIT I-10 @ COLLEGE DRIVE)

Saturday,
April 24, 1993

Speaker
FRAN D. -
Bessemer, AL

Cost: LUNCHEON & SPEAKER - \$13.00 SPEAKER ONLY - \$3.00
LUNCHEON ADMISSION BY ADVANCE REGISTRATION ONLY

"New Beginnings in Al Anon"

Theresa B., Baton Rouge

The prase in the Just For Today bookmark which says "Just for Today I
will be happy. This assumes to be true what Abraham Lincoln said, that "Most
folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be."

DO · DID · GET · GOT · DO · DID · GET · GOT ·
If you always do
What you always did,
You will always get
What you always got.
GET · GOT · DO · DID · GET · GOT ·
DID · DID · GET · GOT · DO · DID · GET · GOT ·

Sue C.

A New Beginning came about in my life one morning when I saw an ad in the newspaper that read, "Are you living with an Alcoholic or Drug Abuser?" This question had popped in my mind during the past several years, but I just tossed it aside in denial and accepted the pain that I was living in, accepted the things that I could not change, nor did I know how to change them. God knows I had tried everything in my power, from prayer to submission, from submission to being controlled, from being controlled to door-mat, from door-mat to loss of self-esteem, from loss of self-esteem to anger and self-pity. My spouse and I had lost respect for one another through the years and the four children that God had given us had suffered in many ways from hearing us argue.

Our children are all grown and married now and on their own. I am very happy for them and feel blessed for who they are. They have given me so much love and respect through the years.

"Are you living with an Alcoholic or Drug Abuser?" "Call this number". I read the ad several times before I had the courage to pick up that phone, but in the depths of my despair I dialed the number and made an appointment. I went in search of the answer to that question. I had finally come to believe that my life could not possibly be normal.

A "NEW BEGINNING" for me, was when I did answer that ad and went to find the answer to my question. Not only had I been living with an alcoholic, my beloved husband, for the past forty years, but I realized that my father, who committed suicide when I was young, had also been an alcoholic. Above all else I learned how sick I was and how the illness had affected my life as a child and now as an adult.

WOW! What an eye-opener from following up on one phone call, that I wish I had made years ago. Did I know? Had I been living in acceptance and denial? Yes, I found out that was part of my sickness.

Al-Annon? What is Al-Annon? I can honestly say I had never heard about it. Or had I been listening? What was this program about? What did 12 steps mean? I decided to go to a meeting and find out. After all, what did I have to lose?

One of my assignments was to attend at least three or more Al-anon meetings in one week. My first Al-Annon meeting was more than I could handle. I didn't like some of the things I heard. After all I was not the one with the problem. I did not drink. Be restored to sanity? Who did they mean? Me? I was not the one insane. It is my spouse and his drinking that has caused every problem in our home. At least that is how I felt at first meeting.

INGS

I sat looking at the group of supporters saying things like, "I am not insane. There is nothing wrong with me. I am a Christian and I have been a Sunday School teacher for 25 years. I have been the one who has kept my family together all these years. I have never stopped serving, nor trying to change everyone around me. Everyone has come before me. I have not mattered. I believe in putting others first. I can tell you I am not the one that is sick, he is. I'm just worn out.

Well, the group was very polite and they let me get a lot of things off my chest. Then I heard one lady say lovingly, "you need to take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth." O.K., I can handle that, so I started listening and kept coming back and continued reading the twelve steps.

I didn't have any problem believing in a "Higher Power". He was my God. The God of the Holy Scripture and I loved Him with all my heart. I knew Him in a very personal way through His Son, Jesus Christ. He was my strength and had been for years. He was the God whom I had served for years and had walked in His way and His will. Or so I thought.

What I hadn't realized however, was that I had been playing God by trying to control my spouse and his drinking. I had poured out and watered down many bottles. I thought I was helping to save his life. I became obsessed with trying to change him. I had even been in God's way so much that He could not work in the life of my loved one. I was able to see and to admit to God that I had been so busy taking care of everyone and trying to manage their life that my life had indeed become unmanageable and I was falling apart spiritually, mentally and physically.

During all this time I thought it was God's will that I try and fix everybody. I thought it was His will that I let others abuse me and walk all over me. I learned this can be a sickness called "Being a Martyr" and I had lived in this roll for a long time. I enjoyed all my friends saying "Bless your heart. How do you do all that?" I just accepted this as my lot in life and that God had called me to it. The Bible tells us that the Apostle Paul suffered greatly. Well I knew that God does allow His children to suffer in many areas of our lives in order to grow in strength and character and to become more like Him. However, I was able to see that I had brought about a lot of this suffering upon myself by my own actions.

I was in shock when I took an inventory of myself. I never realized how much anger, unforgiveness, resentment and pain that was buried deep inside of me. Things that I thought God had

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delivered me from. If I had allowed God to do so, would I still feel this turmoil inside me? Would I be wallowing in all this self-pity? Would I be blaming everyone else for my unhappiness? Would I be nagging my spouse, putting him down for his habits, driving him further into despair by making him feel more pain. This in turn gave him an excuse to drink more.

With God's help, I was able to look deep inside myself. I was responsible for my own actions - not my spouse. I was responsible for my own life - not the life of others. I was responsible for my own salvation - not others. That was and still is their choice. I was also powerless to change others. Nothing I had ever done or said changed the person that I loved so much. As a matter of fact, my love had caused him more harm than good, because I "Enabled", "Allowed" and "Provoked" him, while I became a "Puppet".

Out of the forty years of our marriage I had spent the last twenty years, trying in many ways to change him, instead of allowing God to do that for me. By me trying to "Fix" those around me, I had driven them further from me. My spouses drinking got worse and he got meaner. We both stayed in denial.

It wasn't hard for me to admit all this to God. After all, He already knew about me. I was His child. But, I did experience tons of guilt and pain that only He could remove. So I had to remind myself that His Word teaches, "As far as the east is from the west, He has removed our transgressions from us. (Psalms 103:12) This tells me that God knew all about my fruitless efforts, my wasted hours, the sinning and the regrets. I can leave them all with Him and He will blot out every wrong that I have done. I can trust His word, that He not only forgives me, but He then forgets those sins. I can not allow myself to live in this guilt. I did all I knew to do and did the best I could at that time in my life. I cannot go back and change a thing. I don't even have to look ahead, God sees and holds my future. I just have to keep looking up and let Him remove all my defects of character. This will be a daily job for the rest of my life and I am allowing Him to do that by turning my life and will over to Him to let Him change me - one day at a time.

I can look back and thank God for all those years. I can think upon those good years when my life was manageable, before the disease progressed.

At first I had a problem with Alcoholism being a disease. Doesn't God give us a choice, to drink or not to drink? When I truly accepted it as an illness, just like cancer or any other terminal illness. That all family members suffer greatly from it, then it was easy to give up all my resentments. It was easy to

forgive those who had harmed me. It was easy for me to also ask for forgiveness and to try and make amends to those I had hurt by trying to change or fix them. It was easy to take responsibility for my own actions and know that it wasn't just my spouse that caused all our problems and pain. I too had many defects of character. It wasn't quite so easy to learn that I can only save myself. As painful as it was, that is what I chose to do four years ago; to save myself for I had much recovering to do. I knew too, that I still had the faith that God could take better care of my spouse than I had done. Who knows? One day, God may send him to AA, just as He sent me to Al-Annon.

I am sixty years old now. I have lived alone for the past four years and that's O.K. This was my choice but not what I really wanted. It was not all the dreams that I had longed for or prayed for or waited for, but as hard as it may seem for some to believe, it was God's will for me and still is at this time because I can only save myself. I have let go and I'm letting God work in the lives of all I love.

I did not cause the disease of Alcoholism and I cannot cure it. But with God's help and acceptance of His will I am making it. My days are filled with sunshine and my heart and soul, with joy and peace.

Acceptance of God's will doesn't mean that it is easy or you will be free from grief or pain. But I know that acceptance of God's will in my life is the very best that God can give to me. It may not be what I want, but it is best for my life because He alone knows the future. He is the God of all hope and through Him I can do all things because He and He alone is the strength that I need daily. I can face tomorrow knowing He is with me. I can now say as the Apostle Paul said, "I have learned to be content in whatsoever state that I am in", although there are times I still experience some grief.

I could not submit a story without saying how blessed I've been through the years with so many good faithful friends, family and ministers of God that have supported me with love, prayer and encouragement in my church and still do. But, I would say that, AL-ANNON WAS THE "NEW BEGINNING" for me when I learned how to work the twelve steps. It didn't conflict with the teaching of His Word. I had a better understanding of what I was teaching and what I was learning about His will and way. I have learned a lot about "Letting Go and Letting God" work, instead of me.

Many times I think my life is running so smooth and perfect that I don't think I need the Al-Annon program. Then I find myself running back, because I had relapsed. Once more I was trying to fix somebody. So I have learned, that the Al-Annon program is for life.

Letter From Patti

I found a good-bye note I had written to my husband saying I couldn't go on anymore. When I found this - when I realized what I had almost done, it shook me up pretty badly. I knew I had to get help - this was not the Patti I knew.

For the last two months, I have worked steadfastly and diligently on ME! My identity, my self-worth, my being, is slowly beginning to re-emerge. I have immersed myself in Al-Anon meetings, Al-Anon people, a wonderful, understanding sponsor, a good friend, and professional help. I had also lost my faith somewhere along the way. That too is full force back in my life.

I had taken enough pills to end my life. There is no reason I should be alive today - except one. My Higher Power took matters out of my hands, because He has something else for me to do with my life. I am now trying to leave those doors open to allow God to get through to me. I want to seek His will for me and I want to live in that will. Spirituality has meaning for me now.

It is a unique feeling to just take care of me - to put the focus on me. This is not easy for a woman who thought she could "love" her husband into being happy, into being peaceful, into being well. This does not come easy to a gal who willingly took her husband's shoes off at the end of the day, and served him supper in bed. This does not come easy to a wife who totally worshiped the ground her husband walked on. But that is the key phrase. "I worshipped my husband!"

This, of course, was my main problem. I had made my husband my God instead of my Heavenly Father being my God. I sought to please only my husband, rather than my Lord God in Heaven. Once I realized the root of my problem - then I could set about restoring my sanity and rededicating myself to God's will. I never want to live that old way again!

I still don't know what will happen between my husband and me. There are many days that I still shed the tears and feel the pain. But those painful days are getting further apart. I still love him... I still want him back... it still hurts... But, I'm going to be OK!

See you next quarter. Keep me in your prayers. (To Be Continued)

In Al-Anon Spirit,
Patti J.

(To talk to me, call (504) 622-2921 anytime or write to Patti J., 41182 Dean St., Gonzales, LA 70737)

Letter From Patti

In Al-Anon I have learned the differences in sharing God's love and helping others, instead of trying to fix them. I have learned the difference in giving love and compassion and allowing others to mistreat me out of their own misery and illness. I have learned to take responsibility for my actions and not others. I am learning, I can not play God by trying to control someone else or their habits.

Many times I have to work on getting rid of thoughts like, "what if", "if only", or "I wish I had known before what I know now". I cannot have peace if I let these thoughts linger. That was then and this is now, so what do I do? I can not go back and change one thing. I can go to the Scriptures and read all of God's promise. I can read my "One Day At The Time" book and work the twelve steps. I can go to an Al-Anon meeting and share my mistakes and failures as well as my serenity and victories. I can let others know how much Al-Anon has helped me to find out more about myself and how I was affected by the illness. I can find people there who are still going, who have been where I have been.

Till then, keep on keeping on and keep on coming back to AL-ANON.

FROM CATERPILLAR TO BUTTERFLY

By Patt S. J



From caterpillar to butterfly -
That is now my goal.
With lots of pain and questions 'why'-
Completely baring my soul.

This change will not be easy -
The change I so longingly seek.
It means falling on bended knee -
Going to God week after week.

'Too much we love'; some people say.
Others expound; 'it's control we want'.
Caring a lot is our way.
And how that line comes back to haunt!

To relationships we give our all -
Whether it be mate, family or friend.
Till finally we build that wall -
That wall that makes us pretend.

We live in shame and pain -
Our hearts breaking in two.
We often go totally insane -
A vast blackness is our view.



It's 'Get Better or Die!'
That's the choice we get!
We cry - we scream - we defy -
Until a sponsor we met.

'Work the program', we're told.
That's the Al-Anon theme.
Not until pain takes its toll
Do we get on with the team.

Sponsorship is a major key
In getting better - gaining life.
Slowly we open our eyes and see
We want happiness - not strife.

'Let go and let God' -
Give up our will for 'His'
Dropping our old facade -
That's the only way - that it is!

No longer the crawling caterpillar!
The soaring butterfly we want to be!
We leave the painful way we were -
Joining the world to live happily.

"New Beginning" (Cont From P. 5)

This phrase was a new beginning for me as it entailed taking responsibility for myself. I hated the idea at first as I thought my spouse/others should make me happy. By listening at meetings and reading between meetings I began the adventure of looking inward rather than outward for my happiness. I did not know how to begin to be happy or where to begin. By looking inward with the help of my Higher Power, God, I learned through working the steps, talking with others, and the Al Anon program that I can indeed be happy whether others in my life are happy or not. What a "new beginning" for me.

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AIS FINANCIAL REPORT

by Pebble B. (Treasurer)

B.R. GROUPS CONTRIBUTIONS

	JAN	FEB	MARCH
Al-Anon Literature Study (disbanded)	\$ 23.25		
Bayou Al-Anon	\$ 10.00		
Comite	\$ 51.00		
Comite Alateen	\$ 5.00		
Courage to Change	\$ 15.00		
Doing Our Thing	\$ 10.00		
Easy Does It			
Faith & Hope		\$ 20.00	
Good Shepherd	\$ 35.19	\$ 39.87	
Individuals		\$ 10.00	
Just for Today	\$ 5.00	\$ 10.00	
Keep It Simple (DS)		\$515.37	
Memorial Denation	\$ 25.00		
Molly/Sharp		\$ 25.00	
Mon Noon Steps to Serenity		\$135.00	
Mon Discussion		\$ 35.00	
New Beginnings	\$ 20.32		
New Life	\$ 31.00		
Powerless Step	\$ 42.00		
Recovering Parents	\$ 25.00		
St. Patrick Adult Child	\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00	
Saturday Newcomers		\$ 75.00	
Starting Over	\$ 10.00	\$ 10.00	
Stepping Stones	\$ 15.00		
Strength & Courage	\$ 20.00		
TGIF	\$ 25.00		
TGIM		\$ 30.00	
Triangle	\$ 50.00		
Tuesday Tau		\$ 50.00	
Wednesday Noon Serenity	\$156.46		
on Jan. 26, 1993	\$17.00	\$ 10.00	

\$17.00 was contributed with no name or group ID #

SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTIONS TO

Baton Rouge AIS Office
4884 Constitution, Suite 1-C
Baton Rouge, LA 70808

LA Area Assembly
% Gail Ward
Rt. 1, Box 254
Plaucheville, LA 71362

AFG, Inc.
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Midtown Station
New York, NY 10018-0862

LA State Conference
P.O. Box 2074
Lafayette, LA 70502

LaTresure Chest
% Sarah Young
1301 Covey Lane
Lake Charles, LA 70605