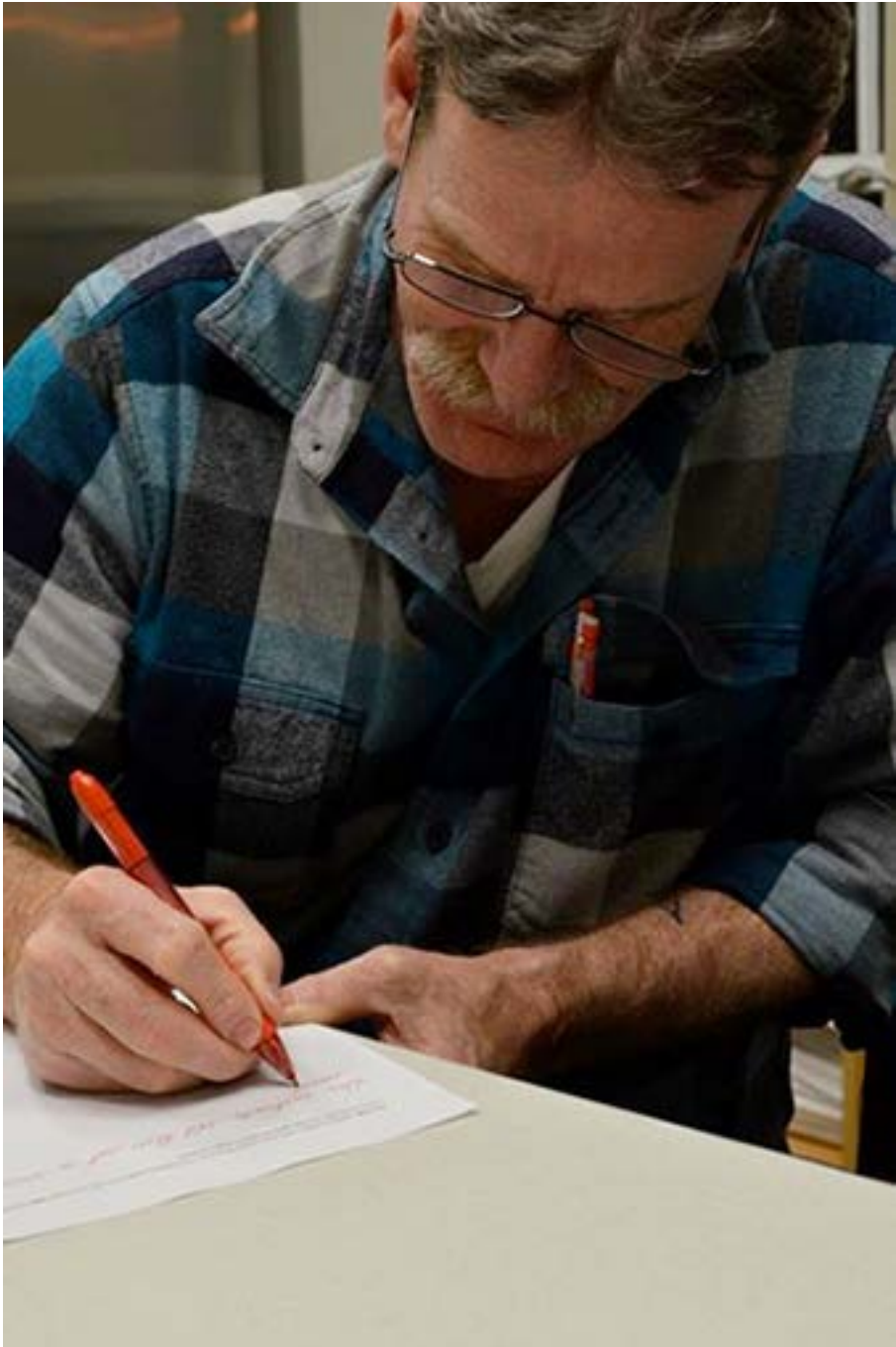


TALKING SIDEWALKS



voices. faces. stories. souls.

Spring 2014

TALKING SIDEWALKS

Talking Sidewalks is a literary magazine featuring the writing of authors and artists who have experienced poverty and homelessness. The magazine is distributed freely throughout the community in Chapel Hill, NC and online. The Spring 2014 Edition of *Talking Sidewalks* is dedicated to the memory of long time contributor Gary Harwell, AKA "Mark Davidson".

1956-2013



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Photography by Maggie Latta and *Talking Sidewalks* volunteer Maitreyee Singh

In Memory: Gary

Whenever I think of Gary, there are several things that always come to mind: his mischievous grin, his easy laugh, his smiling eyes, and his amazingly thick, beautifully bristling mustache. I doubt I'll ever forget that mustache and I know I'll spend years missing that smile, but even more, I know that what I will always remember about Gary is his relentless optimism, his commitment to hope, and his firmly-anchored belief in the possibility of real, meaningful, lasting life-change.

Everyone who knew Gary over these last three years knew that he was a changed man. After 40 years of drinking – 40 years of living in a haze of what he liked to call “fermented thought” – he found himself “homeless but not hopeless” in Chapel Hill (again, his words). After arriving here, Gary made a serious commitment to sobriety and he stuck with it. He got involved with HOPE, CEF, and AA programs right after moving into the IFC shelter. At our weekly Talking Sidewalks meetings it was so encouraging to hear his updates and see him show off each of his new AA chips with pride: 30 days, 90 days, 1 year, 2 years... There was nothing he was more proud of than those mile-markers, nothing he was more serious about than the daily task of moving forward and never turning back.

But what was most remarkable about Gary was not just the fact that he overcame his addiction, but the way that, in the wake of that victory, his newfound hope and faith and joy spilled over to others. For me and many more, those Wednesday night meetings at the shelter were a weekly high point, a much-needed refresher, a refill on hope – and so much of that came from Gary. The happiness and positivity he found with this new lease on life was infectious – it was something you don't encounter that often, something simply inspiring to be around.

- David Kayler, former *Talking Sidewalks* volunteer

9 Heads

Danny Hicks

9 heads gather today so I came here to hear what they had to say

9 opinions truly came forth with 9 loves in their voice

Yeah 9 heads made my day as their voices of love took my 9 problems away

9 souls that are now my friends

1 hour of gratitude, of love

From the 9 heads that I let in.

At First

Ryan Barris

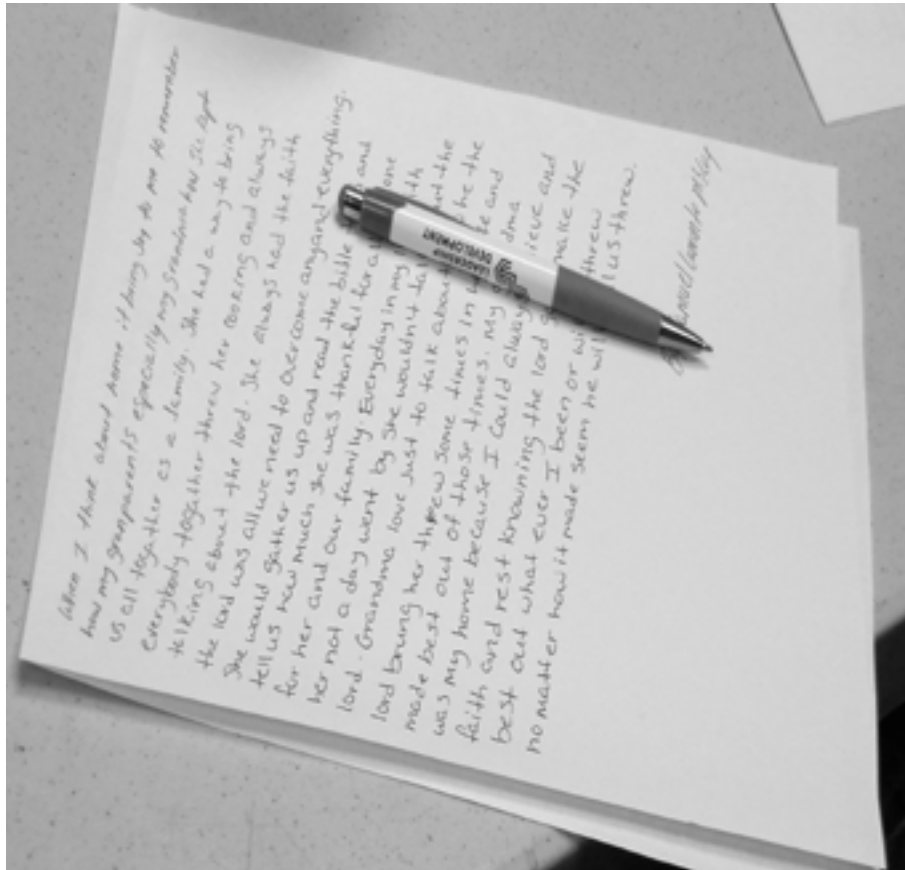
My wife can be the most beautiful thing,
At first, it starts out simple,
Basic, “normal,”
Then like waves crashing against
Sandstone
The Joy,
The Happiness,
The Shock,
The Fear,
The Terror,
The Rejection
Then things truly start to
Fall apart, where all you
Can do is TRY and hold
Water in a container that has
Holes
The Avoidance,
The Disappointment,
The Guilt,
The Questioning,
The Acceptance of Pain
And finally
The Emptiness...

Greek Mythology

Daniel Hamilton

The diseases of addiction
When picking up a substance
Release the thought of going
Overboard like in a case
Of a siren singing that
Song, that beautiful song
That leads you down
The path of destruction
And you can't do nothing
About it, so don't
Listen to that song
Close your ears to it
When you hear it.





Deep In My Soul

Danny Hicks

Deep in my soul I cry,
Deep in my soul I fly,
Fill the sky with loud love,
Take a change seek God above
To be with one self, is not being alone
When you find comfort in your own
Home, (Which is your Spirit)

Untitled

Darren Coley

What is life, something you have learned or something
you have done
or is it something that you're going to do. I'm seriously
trying to cope
and learn these things. Have I lived yet, I don't know.
When will I live,
one thing's for sure, as long as I have breath I have life.

What Are Dreams?

Jeffrey Scott Sifuentes

What are dreams? I think dreams are based on our most
wonderful thoughts, goals, our deepest fears, loss, and/or
adventure. I once had a dream I was a
man/fish/creature diving full throttle Underneath the
deep blue depths of the Ocean. Different marine life
swam past me like neighbors. The weird part about it,
was I could breathe without air. It felt liberating to be
swimming everywhere like a hippie, enjoying life because
I could. Then when I soared like a rocket out to the sky, I
realized I could fly through the air, going past cities and
bridges. I could see Orca killer whales, flying underneath
the big bridges, which I thought was far-out amazing. It
makes me realize how precious life is. Life is a gift and
not a waste.

The Shelter

Earl Richardson

My life is turning around for the better, somewhat now that I've come to the shelter in a way, but there's always something lurking around the corner.

My Obituary

Ronald Jones

First, I would say that I loved my life.

My accomplishments were:

- 1) Finishing high school (1970-1974)
- 2) Doing my full enlistment in the U.S. Navy (1978-1982)
- 3) Joining a masonic lodge, where I am presently discovering more about being a man than any other time in my life. (2004-Present)
- 4) Being able to express and present myself when needed or called upon.

Life

James Dunn

In life we as humans think too much about would have could have and should have, when we need to see what we can and should do. There are people who are in worse condition than you may think you're in. Take for instance me being in this shelter; there is someone who has to find a place in the woods or doorway to stay but I am blessed to not have to. But if I could I would try to help who I could, maybe not with a place but with words to help them get through the rougtime, that man has it worse than me so I am grateful to have this place. I would give the shirt off my back because I have more and if he doesn't than giving him one would be the right thing to do. Helping each other is what I think we should do.

September 18

Ryan Barris

Holding your hands out, gripping absolutely nothing...
not as a child, begging for
something, but barely touching the air, feeling the breeze
through your fingertips,
realizing how empty and devoid they are as you run them
back together with only
memories and scars left in your fists...

The Winds of Home

Anonymous

I catch your scent on the wind
and it reminds me of home
None of which I currently have
None.
No walls to hang paintings
No floors on which to dance.
No tub to cleanse away the
Dirt.
The pain, it lingers
with your scent on
the wind.
The wind that blows me
from sidewalk to shelter,
from the temporary solution
to temporary setback
From hope to despair and
back again.
The wind changes. I lose
your scent
just as I've been
fading – fading
threatening to be no more.
The winds kick up
blowing your scent
past me
And I follow it
hoping to find myself
Home again

Tomorrow Is My Birthday

Anonymous

I feel good, tomorrow is my birthday.

Untitled

Ryan Barris

Dear Reader:

Stand up... Are you standing? Can you stand? Was it painful? If it was painful, was it painful emotionally, physically, or both even? Did you even listen to my instructions? Have my words brought back any memories even if you're still sitting?

For My Mother

Almalfi

The only thing I can say is joy for my mother's life, and I wonder if she is alive. God bless her, I will fall to see her up. Because I love her.

Time Man of the Year

Martin Maola

I would like to thank the Times Magazine Person of the Year selection committee for my designation for the year 2006. That having been said, I am still somewhat bewildered by my selection as I am not prominent, have little if any money at this point, am far between jobs, and have recently been put in the position of having my home foreclosed. Then again, perhaps that is the whole reason I was selected. For in all these respects, I am the poster child for the modern middle class here in the United States.





Black History Month

D.L. Porter

Poetic words, they devastate the sounds of negativity, creating peace and the sounds of harmony. They're without competition in the eyes of reality, they captivate the people like gamma rays from the sun, people seemed hypnotized from the words I've spun. What I'm relating to sounds refugee but it's yours. My psychological discordances are well explored. My sophisticated skill reaches the highest degree. The elevation of my words reach capacity with mandatory skills organized in my mind, I'm qualified to equalize the poetic words from the beginning because they are what you are receiving, by the time I'm finished you will be believing my poetic words. It was the year of 1929, a great man was born, he was one of a kind, he live by the name of Martin Luther King. He fought for civil rights, yeah! For many years he did his thing. Many opposition tried to call his bluff, and many others thought him a practical joke, until they heard him and the powerful words he spoke, the words he spoke they reigned supreme, and his most heartfelt speech was "I Have a Dream!"



Fuck My Parents

Karim Dovar Broscoe

Fuck my parents!!

They were never there and they never will be there. I chase their love because I never had it. The fact of the matter is they don't want to give it. So what the fuck am I supposed to do. I'll tell you what. Be the man and woman they were never or could ever be.

Fuck my parents.

They buy my love with cheap presents and gifts but have no idea how to love a child at all. So who are they? I still don't know. My parents though. So how many kids is my father going to have to send down the path of destruction.

What a bitch!!

He has no idea of survival. He couldn't and would walk in my shoes because he is a coward.

How about that!!

A coward who doesn't have a clue what life is about.

Dumbass!!

My mother, she is not even worth my ink, that nigga stinks. I'll tell you what to think about the woman who couldn't even get her head up and out of the hole that she herself crawled in.

Dumbass!!

So she points the finger at her so called baby daddy.

My father, why bother!!

It doesn't matter, because they don't love me and the sad thing is they don't even know me. As I sign out, Fuck my parents who have no clue who Karim Dovar Broscoe is. Dummies!!

Untitled

Martin Maola

My wife and I moved to North Carolina in March of 2000. The first few years were good. We built a house in Hardscrabble in the North side of Durham, I had a job at Duke and things were looking up. Even when the Duke job ended in 2002, contract assignments kept me employed and moving around to really amazing jobs. But then, in 2006 everything came crushing down. We lost the home in the housing meltdown, Nancy wound up in and out of the hospital due to orthopedic issues and in 2010 - due to the economic collapse - my last contract ended. By September 6, 2012 I was homeless and living in Durham Urban Ministries. In Nancy's case, she was and is spared homelessness by virtue of her living at Poplar

Health nursing home in Elizabethtown. The bright spot in all this has been family. Both in my adopted and birth families. Relatives with whom I never had contact got in touch with us at roughly the same time we were losing everything. Since 2006, I have been in almost daily contact with my birth mom, at least twice a month I am talking with a cousin in the Maola family up in the Detroit area. Thanks to Facebook, I am in daily contact with other family members and friends.

In addition, I am very grateful for both urban ministries and the IFC - because at both shelters I met really good people and made new friendships I would not have had I not wound up in both places.

Untitled 2

Cedric Butler

I was thinking about being with my girlfriend all day, chilling and making it do what it do. Anyway, I just love the way she kisses me and hold my hand. She even watched me play basketball and carried my dirty shirt for me after I was tired. That was yesterday!

Now today, we chilled and went to the park and talked for a while, until her cell phone started going crazy but it was okay with me. Today was a good day!

I Am Me

William Dalton

I am me
No matter what
I am not an artist
I am not a zookeeper

I am me
No matter what anyone says
I am a loving person
Who loves helping others

I don't care what others
Want me to be

BECAUSE

I am me
And that is good enough for me

What Is Love

William Dalton

What is love
Is it the sound of the river
Is it the music of the birds
Is it the dreams

What is love
It's the joy and beauty
It's the sound I hear everyday
It's the look in the eyes of eternity

Untitled 3

Clifford A. Perry

Talking with God, expecting nothing is when I experience the most profound blessings. I ask only for his will to be done, then I pray for others. Today is not about me. It is about humanity. Changes I expect to see in others are the areas of my life I need to pay attention to. Today, I choose God to change my character defects, and positive seeds planted reap good fruit.

Untitled 4

Clifford A. Perry

It was December 4th, 1999, my girlfriends birthday. My aim was to surprise her with dinner because she was in town. I did my prep with the vegetables. Minced garlic for the shrimp scampi, with a white wine spinach base. Pan seared salmon with onions, garlic parmesan crust with a pat of parsley. Fresh lemon juice as a substitute salt. Asparagus and garlic. Half smashed red potatoes with whole milk, butter, garlic with Vermont cheddar pepper and salt. Did I cook for her, or myself? Anyway, we were satisfied, and to this day, it is one of our fondest memories that cannot be duplicated. Cheers with a sparkling local Moscado, here is to you babe!

Her mere presence became my dessert. How savory, the taste of my love's compassion. Slow bites of sweet nothings

F.E.A.R.

Mark Davidson

False Evidence Appearing Real. When things are going so good in the day, that's when the thought appears. Such a beautiful day, sunny, warm, and I feel alive. Surely one, tall ice-cold, frothy beer wouldn't hurt. Who's going to know? Or on the other hand, what a miserable day. What's going to go wrong next? No one understands me, the hurt, pain and suffering. What's the use, this sobriety stuff anyway? Good news people, I don't have to react that way any longer, I have a pair of AA's in my pocket thank God, and for Chapel Hill also.

The King of Beers

Mark Davidson

Growing up in the city where the King of beers was crowned, I found it easy to indulge. I can't remember when I crossed the line, but change became a necessity. Diluted truths and fermented thoughts became the norm. Battling this disease for nearly forty years drained me to where insanity kept me chained to the bottle. But there was hope and that hope came when I moved to Chapel Hill. I couldn't make it another day but still yet I battled. Then one month later I was back in a twelve-step program and turned my will over to God. I got baptized and from that date I was relieved from the compulsion to drink. Seven months later I quit smoking and it has been a little over two years for not smoking. 952 days sober. So yeah, it's great to wake up with the King of Kings and not the King of beers. I have a born-again-date not like the born-on-date on the bottle. You can say I traded Kings.

Saying Goodbye to my Best Friend

Mark Davidson

Dear Beer,

Around the surprisingly young age of fourteen, we were introduced and became inseparable for nearly forty years. Throughout puberty we trusted in each other, all the good and the bad times yet to come. When serious relationships came into the picture, you were right there for me. I trusted you'd get me through anything. When I got married and had children, I held on to our friendship, in spite of the distance you brought between me and my family. I promised my wife that things would change, but you were becoming the only family I had left. How in the hell could I desert you now? I needed you, so I held on to our relationship even more. Why, you were there for me when my father passed, throughout my divorce, and all the bad times I needed your support or comfort, you were there. People thought I was insane, and I was, with this obsession that you became upon me.

At times I thought I could moderate the times we spent together, only to find your existence became more apparent. You put me through legal difficulties and I became imprisoned for the times and crimes you bestowed upon me. You've cost me my very existence of rational thought or comprehension of dealing with life on life's terms. I can't go anywhere, there you are, squeezing my life out and fermenting my every thought. You used me up and spit me out like there's no tomorrow, but I got news for you, we're through. I've got a new friend now, one that's true. One that I thank each morning when I wake, and one that I praise for blessing me with the courage to rid myself from your sorry ass.

(Continues on the next page)

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So in closing, if our path never crosses it'll be too soon
and lord help you if you even try to pull me back into
your grasp. With my new found friend, and the meetings
I attend, you'll surely not hold onto me in your clutches
ever again. One day at a time, and the lord's help, I'm free
and sober to live once again.

Never Yours,
Mark

PS. Oh yeah, tell brother Whiskey the same!
Good-Bye, Need not Reply.

Reprint of Gary's First Contribution to Talking Sidewalks

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And many others!

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