



talking sidewalks

voices. faces. stories. souls.

Hope is trust in the unseen but somehow knowing,
that eternal warmth that you feel and sense to be growing,
the desire for change from within and freedom of all your needs,
but hope for me is freedom from the desire for greed.

Mark Davidson



Hunter

*For questions, comments, or to get involved, email talkingsidewalks@gmail.com
Read it online at www.talkingsidewalks.com*

This issue of Talking Sidewalks is in honor and memory of Barney Ray Cobb. Ray passed away during the production of this issue, and will long be remembered by the Talking Sidewalks family as someone who cared for his neighbors and friends and always made us laugh.

Vision/Creation

Barney Ray

We see flowers—We think beauty—We feel good

We see one person help another in need

We think caring

We feel good

We see muscles—We think strength

We feel good

We see mountains—We think creation

We feel good

We see a child smile—We think love

We feel good

We help others feel good, beautiful, helpful, strong

We feel, think and see love

We help others feel, think, and see love.

We see a better and more loving universe created.

To be Perfect

From the Soul of a Virtuous Man

To be perfect is to have something to correct. Hence the word perfectionist, a person who can always find something to correct in order to be excellent. So if one says they have only met one perfect person, if any at all; then one's vision has been damaged and impaired. Be careful in living (as true) the phrase "nobody's perfect." Challenge this household phrase, if no one is perfect then no one has anything to correct. Understand the difference between perfect and flawless. We always encounter perfect people that create perfect moments that are beyond priceless. The perfect moment is beyond one particular person, or place, or time. Situation does not dictate a perfect moment, therefore a perfect moment can be in good or in bad, in chaos or in order. One's experience they live as life is a perfect moment, and although a good situation can be corrected, the work of a perfectionist is the pursuit of discipline in knowing when to stop correcting before they destroy the piece of art. Live in the perfect moment and allow the perfectionist one encounters to do their work.

If You Wake Up

Michael Jenkins

If you wake up tomorrow, and ain't got nothing, how would you feel, what would you do? I had a homeboy, blowed his brains out because he couldn't live the lifestyle, out here in the woods, in the shelter with nothing. He was used to having everything handed to him on a silver platter, and he couldn't take it and he left his wife and child. And that's a hurtin feeling when you kill yourself because you don't want to go through struggle of the pain and agony, out in the world with nothing. That's why you find a lot of bodies and a lot of people dead and in abandoned houses, and the first thing people probably look at it and say, oh, it's about drugs or something like that, but it ain't all about the drug thing. Some people just can't take the pressure and the pain. And instead of going through the agony and destruction, they'd rather take themselves out and kill themselves. And that's insanity.

Give them a chance, open up a door for them. See what he can do, see what kinda skill he got. Give him the tools to work with and you never know what he might do. There's a lot of smart people, people with master's degrees and everything, so don't look at the book by the cover until you open it up; you don't know until you ask. I thank God every-day because he pull me through. I coulda' been like my friend, I coulda' been dead. I didn't know where I was gonna wake up in the morning or where I was getting my next meal from.

If you just stop and talk to a brother, you don't do nothing but have a cup of coffee and buy him something to eat, ask him how he feel. Because they still human, they still part of this world. Find out

what's going on in your neighborhood, find out what's going on in your backdoor, see what you can do to help the next man or the next brother or the next sister with the pain and the agony that they're going through.

One day I come up to a person and ask him for something one day and he say, you homeless? And I say yeah. He say get outta here. I say yeah I'm homeless man. He say look how you dress, not like a homeless person. I say how a homeless person supposed to dress? I say because I'm homeless I'm supposed to have holes in my pants and dirty jeans and my hair all over my head. My raggedy coat and a torn sleeve. What are they supposed to look like? You ain't gotta dress the part.

It hurts me to see the way people treat the next human being as they say, a low class breed, instead of picking that brother or sister up, it don't matter what race, black, blue, green, purple, Chinese whatever. Pick that sister up! Give them that confidence in themselves to strive for excellency. Because when you believe in yourself and God, there ain't nothing you can't do.



Deanthony

What Makes a Person Powerful?

Mark Davidson

In a spiritual sense I would have to say discernment. Because I have the ability to discern right from wrong, good choice or bad. As long as it's not for personal gain and for the good of, or to help another person from the heart, now that's power. When I can look beyond the situation I'm in to help someone else in need, now that's the blessing of power. When I can feel comfortable in my own skin and not take that drink or drug, that's the power of God.

Although my Task is a Daily Task

Mark Davidson

Although my task is a daily task and truly can only be accomplished when my time is done, sobriety is my most pride-winning task. I really am grateful to be sober today, because forty years of wasted time, loss of everything dear to my heart, and really not knowing the real me. Today I have choices in life, and today I choose to be sober. My task today is to always remember that sleeping giant that hibernates in the back of my mind. Walk lightly around its path and think things through, and when I feel that I'm on edge, take that next step. Solid ground is found through faith



Karl Marks



Karl Marks

The Greatest Task

Gary Mitchell

The greatest task I believe I've accomplished in life is trusting something "supernatural" or a "higher power" if you will, with my entire life, body, mind and soul. With having said that, I'm speaking about God of Israel...the creator of Heaven and earth according to the Holy Bible. To begin with... it's a strenuous challenge to trust something you can't see or touch. Some may not believe in him and I respect that because of freewill. However I've learned no matter what or who you are, people believe in something regardless what it is. I choose to believe in God the father, his son Jesus and the Holy Spirit. My journey through life since I stepped out on faith in 2007 has been an interesting one. All things have worked together for good including my current living situations. There have been blessings in disguise, and as for me, I've changed and matured significantly for the better.

Worthy to be Praised

Mark Davidson

Well I used to wonder
about it all the women, the drugs, and the alcohol
took forty long years of my life
then came the fall
Glory Alleluia,
He's worthy to be praised.

I wanna thank you Jesus
Jesus for blessing me
my eyes are wide open now
and now I truly see
I'm loving these changes God put upon me
Glory Alleluia, He's worthy to be praised.

He's worthy, His mercy, He's worthy to be praised
when in times I'm troubled I just call out His name
there were times in my life I thought I was insane
Glory Alleluia, He's worthy to be praised.

So I humble myself to you, my Lord
and get right down on my knees
that Sunday worship feeling come to me daily.
Glory Alleluia, He's worthy to be praised.

He's worthy, His mercy, worthy to be praised
when in times I'm troubled I just call out his name
I say Jesus, Jesus, Jesus this I pray
Glory Alleluia, He's worthy to be praised Glory Alleluia,
He's worthy to be praised.



Karl Marks

Like a seed that's planted deep in the dirt, we must push through
the dirt in life to flower along the way, but then it rains.

Dirt turns to mud. Next is the withering of the bud. The past matters
not, and I tell you why, life's a joke. We're born to die.

Mark Davidson

Sadness, So Overpowering

Karl Marks

The sadness, so overpowering, the truck pulled away, the woman and her child put out on the streets, you call yourself Christian, slum lord and Christian, whatever that means it seems diametrically opposed.

I go in to clean what little is left of their past happiness. A birthday card, a ragged doll, crayons, and coloring books. Tears well up as I shovel the fossils of this family's lives into a trash bag.

The phone rings, we need it cleaned up and fixed quickly, I have twenty houses that are unrented. My pockets are hurting. I will send the deacon to help you. That's one of my better houses.

Did she say deacon or demon? The anger building up like bile chokes me. And I think of this fine Christian lady worried only about her 20 pieces of silver.

All of a sudden I have a plan, there is a gallon of paint thinner that I conveniently spill next to the heater. Quietly I go outside and the house begins to burn. What righteous fire. The sirens come as the fire consumes the edifice. Heart pounding, I think, "put this in your f—ing collection, Plata."

The Face of a Stranger

DeAnn Jarman

Who is this woman I see before me?
Will she grow old like the crone?
Is she what she intended to be?
Or is her destiny still unknown?
Is she a sister or mother?
A friend like no other?
Or is she deceptive and mean?
Introverted, secretly falling apart at the seam.
Her brow lowers as she ponders,
Searching for the meaning of life.
Is it destined to be brutal, filled with strife?
Or is there a higher power that intervenes in her darkest hour?
Will she once again know love's immortal kiss,
Or is she damned to be alone?
Will it come to her by winged dove,
Or will her heart inevitably turn to stone?
Has she lost her chance at happiness,
Or is this a brand new start?
Will she accept love's endless grasp?
Or build a brick wall inside her heart?
Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Can't you tell when she's about to fall?
Save her from her heart's dead dark embrace.
For can't you see...the woman in the mirror...is me.



Karl Marks

He Comes to Me Nightly

DeAnn Jarman

He comes to me nightly, a vision of life's true intention. Will he be there forever loving me, or will I awake only to have it shatter like broken window panes in a glass house of hopes and dreams. Taking my heart and soul with him. The soul giving way to love's true meaning. Oneness. One heart beating in its own strange synchronicity. For what is love but a blindless emotion. A sense of longing, desire, willingness to scatter thoughts and fears to the wind for that momentary divinity with hopes of everlasting bliss. A sense of falling into nothingness. Butterflies becoming bats. The heart skipping beats surely will explode in your chest. Winded, breathless before that first kiss. Time stands still and the world disappears.

Sales Tax

Donna

Our state has more tax than any other:

I think we need to cut back on tax on fuel and gas.

We are not hurting the corporate when we buy 50 gallons in this state or just enough to get some out this state to a cheaper fuel stop. But we are hurting those who work here. Especially those who work in 7.25 to 9.00 an hour brackets. This could help those pay on electric, food, or even start a saving? Tracking industries do what they call, boycott NC. Fuel taxes are so high. It cost us lots of jobs instead of create more. If sales are not up then they don't hire. It's no need. I think lower taxes here. Let lottery make it up. We have the higher and most taxes in US. The only one higher is Arkansas with 7.5 sales tax rate. I feel this way cause there is recession on job market is very hard to get jobs. More than ever more or on employment or even lost their employment. Gas is one of the first things if we can't afford. How can you be up and out looking. Especially those in other towns with no transportation. Maybe this would also boost our economy.

Untitled

Anonymous

I saw a bus burn

I saw someone crash into a parked car

I saw an old man cuss me out

I saw someone bark at a squirrel

I saw a bus flashing to call 911

I saw a hawk land right in front of me and eat road kill

Chapel Hill is a model of the world

There is diversity and there is good and there is bad

There are people to help you and to hurt you

There are places to sleep where you're not supposed to

There is shelter but there is a price for it,

free food that costs a lot

There is humility and patience to be found in a life

that needs hope to survive.

A Turmoil of Conspicuous Theory

Robert P. Keairnes III

A turmoil of conspicuous theory
Which qualities are indecisive and weary
A sense of tyranny and energies
Flowing together subliminally
Throwing answers
Remarkably witnessing what can be
My memories, my brain drenched in the past
Insane all you do is play games
The two in full moon light's view
Not pain but a might's new
To prove
The lane is open
But walked past hoping
To unmask the masked for copying youths
Not understanding what's banding the sane youths
Like a chain of questions but with no proof
So what to do I ask myself
Questions felt and the answer dealt
With the help of hearing
Steering well.

In the direction which the few chose dwell
A non-fearing spell
Can't upon myself
It's spelled of exquisite taste and nothing else
Knowledge of haste along with something felt
An energy dwells within
Only to begin
Forgiving sins
When you acquired to give in
But wait
Nothing else left by a simple debate
Which spins the wheel of fate, a simple act to relate
With no hate
So what's fake and what isn't?
What's plain and what's vicious?
What's it mean to witness
the unknown superstitious?
Attain visions made to listen
Poetry made a way to release the tension
It's like a mission.
The instant the pen meets paper

To tell my life in letters

A simple thought to ease and make things better.

For whatever

Purpose it's to see

Elapsed in unspoken dreams

What seems to create the question

Of who what where when why

And how can we gain perfection?

Gain the right direction; neglections

Worth fixing by attaining comprehension

Just take away the tension.

Because the vision I have

is worth the listen.



Karl Marks

Once

From the Soul of a Virtuous Man

Helping people smile is the best way that I express myself without being about myself. Being better than the best servant, I can be continuously diligent and consistent. If you think about it, when you get great service anywhere, it stays with you every time you visit that place, when the service is from the heart. Being able to be part of a difference in even just one life is difficult, unless done through service from the heart, a genuine servant's heart.

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Joe

The Fight

Gwen Miller

The heart wants to love
yet we hate
The heart wants to understand
yet we are confused
The heart wants equality
yet we try to dominate one another

The heart wants peace yet we fight
The heart wants to give but we are greedy
The heart wants to help yet we destroy
The heart wants to care but yet we are insensitive

We must OVERCOME HATE
We must OVERCOME violence
We must OVERCOME greed
We must OVERCOME fighting
We must OVERCOME cruelty

We must overcome all that tears people apart
And concentrate on all that brings people together
We are in trouble
From the needy to the greedy
It begins with you
Homeless and not homeless

The Biggest Prize

DeAnn Jarman

Somehow, along the way, I found me.
Found a reason to fight for that which I believe.
Found a reason to be...now I love being me.

Fighting the repression in a world caught up in a recession.
Fighting to stay alive.
Fighting for those with silenced voices doesn't make me weak
if it helps us all strive.

We must not go silent into the night
for our own country we must fight.
Change starts within us all.

Will you heed the call to freedom's plight?
If given the choice, I will be the one voice to speak for us all.
Out of the ashes we all will arise to claim the biggest prize...

FREEDOM FOR US ALL.

*In dedication to all my friends at Talking Sidewalks for helping me find
my voice and my children Nic, Matt and Jesse for believing in me*



Hunter

To be Perfect

From the Soul of a Virtuous Man

What once was there is now gone

What once was felt is cut out

What once was did is now stopped

What once was held is laid down

What once was a flame is now snuffed

What once was words to live by is now forgotten

What once was love is now endured love

What once was confidence is now dead

What once was walking in company is now walking alone

Thanks for nothing!

The Sound of an Empty Stomach

Karl Marks

The sound of an empty stomach, the growl, the cry.
What the F—, richest country in the world.
1 in 5 children live in poverty.
Where is the shame, bloated, bulbous, beelzebub,
ranting and raving about the deficit.
Balance the budget on the back of the poor.
The elderly, the disenfranchised
They have no voice, they have no lobbyists!!!!
America, it's soul sold long ago to the highest bidder.
A child looks up at the flag, this is his country too,
Where is it for him, no high rise office, educational budget's cut,
his future, part of a third world reality.
My country tis of thee,
Now land of poverty,
The answer to policy,
Will it change.
Robber barons return,
Working for both parties,
Enriching their lives,
On the back of the poor.

Still Homeless

Michael Jenkins

A lot of people think when you got your own place, you got it made, it's all peaches and cream. You know, you got your own key you can open up the door, you at home, you can relax, do whatever— no. It's not like that. It's nice to have your own, but I still feel homeless out here because I'm still struggling. I'm still trying to make ends meet. I am homeless, even though I got my own. I always got to keep that in the back of my head because I know what I've been through out in the world. Because I never thought it'd happen to me. And it did.

Cause like say, I was homeless, I'm still homeless. Even though I got my own, I'm still homeless, I'm struggling, I'm fighting everyday to make ends meet. And somehow through the grace of God, I'm making it. But I still don't forget my people and where I come from cause I figure, if I can do it, so can they.

I know what they're struggling for and what they're going through, because to me, I'm still just like them. Only difference is I just got my own key to open my own door. Me, at any time, at any place, I feel like I'm gonna be back here on the streets. Because sooner or later I might not be able to pay that bill. Rent man ain't gonna give you two or three months to catch up. You know?

I don't even have my gas on, and sooner later water's gonna kick back in too. I just barely get enough money to pay my bills. Sometimes I have to go without eatin', and that's letting me know I'm still homeless and I'm still struggling. I'm still trying to get them stones and blocks out of my way.

Yes it's good to have you're own place, but always remember: that's why you left home, that's why you left those kids behind, that's why you left you're wife behind. Because you weren't strong enough to stand and fight for what you wanted. You didn't want to take them through the agony and pain that you going through, so you left. But they still suffering, because now they don't know where you at or how you're doing. If you're going through something and you lose that job, sit down at the table with your family and talk about it. Explain to them what's going on. Don't hide it. Some people get up every morning like they're going to work. That's crazy! Be straight up with it. Say, hey, I lost my job, I'm still trying to get another job. Stand up to the responsibilities, don't run from it. Accept it. Fight. Say, babe, I got you, we came through this together, we gonna make it together.

The world ain't nothing nice. The world that we—yeah, I say we—the world that we live in out here as a homeless person, ain't nothing nice about that.

You know they say, you take one step, God will take two. I'm like what're you talking about? But I understand what they're saying now. You try to help yourself, somebody else will try to pick you up. If you ain't trying to help yourself and better yourself, who is gonna wanna help you?

Always remember you could lose it all in one day and be homeless, and how would you feel? Would you blow your brains out? Would you be able to accept it? Would you give up on yourself?

No. You're a fighter. Stand strong.



Mark Davidson



Mariah Moore

F— It!

Allen Dubey

What is it all worth?

Ashes to Ashes back six feet in the Earth.

Pile up Dollars and try to make sense,

Rows of pickets and my little white fence.

Cable and DSL, Water, Electric,

the days fly by, life is so hectic.

Smile and wave,

taking advantage as I walk past wondering,

who's pondering of what is my worth.

F— it.

I think to myself, I'll just get high,

as I walk down the sidewalk,

and life passes me by.

Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness

Dawn

For the longest time, I was trying to figure out what I was doing to screw up my life. Then I realized it was time to examine myself and see where this all began.

When I moved into my first apartment, I was nineteen. It was a nice setup. I was to stay in school and my rent, utilities and I would have fifty dollars in my pockets every week. This was not enough for me. I had to have the relationship too.

When you start giving in to the feelings of loneliness, you can open yourself to anything. This man was dating me when I moved into my place and we stayed together for about three years. He was not the man of my dreams, more of my nightmares. He never worked and he was doing nothing to help me get ahead. I wanted someone in my life, but I settled for him. He said he was tired of having people in our life. He told me that he would take care of me and I was dumb enough to believe that a man with no job was going to take care of me. So we moved into my third apartment, while I was thinking that he was going to take care of me but this didn't happen.

This was the first time that I was homeless. I was estranged from my family and didn't have anywhere to go. I was scared and couldn't figure out what to do. I had a friend that was getting a place and said that I could stay with her. At this time, I am homeless and when I moved in with her it was fine for a little while, but it didn't last long. At the time, the only income that I had was General Relief which was \$100 a month and I used that to pay my part of the rent. My friend was not paying rent because she was dating the landlord. I would say that was about six months of wondering about when he was going to put me out. I soon went and moved in with my aunt and her family.

Finally, a safe place to stay, but it did not last long. While I was staying with my aunt, her husband came on to me and so that meant I had to find somewhere else to live. I never told my aunt that her husband came on to me, but I just told her I needed to find somewhere else to live and she suggested that I go live with her friend. So, I went and stayed with her friend and that was a nasty situation. If I had children, I wouldn't want them in that

environment. So, I asked my aunt if I could move back in there with her and her kids. I stayed there for a while. I can remember I was out with one of my friends and I had called my aunt and asked her if she had taken care of her business. She said that her husband had not returned for her to take care of her business. I said I had just seen him riding around with another woman. So, instead of my aunt taking my side and believing me, she kicked me to the curb and told me to get out.

I had to find somewhere else to live. I told one of the ladies that used to work at the children's home what was going on. She asked her daughter if I could move in with them. So, I stayed there and then eventually she got tired of staying with her daughter and she moved out, but I continued to stay with the daughter. Considering, I still didn't have a job, I tried to go to college and I got involved with some men at college and ended up flunking out of school. At this point, I was just really tired. One of my friends, a girl I called my sister, was talking to me about going to church. So, I started going to church and I saw my self-confidence starting to grow because of the relationship that I had with my Heavenly Father. And the more my relationship grew with the father, the stronger my confidence got. Then, I went out and actually found a job. Then, more and more, I finally decided that I needed a place of my own because the people that I was staying with felt like I thought I was better than them.

So, I got my own place. I stayed there for five years by myself. At this time, my relationship was growing closer and closer with the Heavenly Father and I was getting more confident but I was having that lonely feeling again. Sometimes, when it's time for a change in my life, I don't like change. So, for one thing, it was time for me to leave the job I was at and I didn't want to leave it because it was a good paying job. Finally, the rent got financially straining so I started looking for something cheaper. But, I also forgot that God was taking care of me the whole time I took my eyes off of him as my supplier of all my needs. So, I moved into a place that was cheaper. That started a downward spiral out of control. Because I got involved with the guy next door to me. And that was the first mistake because he didn't believe in Jesus and he believed you didn't have to get married and you could just have sex whenever you want. And my head had gotten big because I was out in the ministry, doing my thing.



DeAnn Jarman

Well, I got rid of him. But my next mistake was there was this guy broken down on the side of the street. I pulled over to help him. He saw my Bible and he started quoting scripture and telling me how much he loves God. And that's what really made me think he was the one. It was a scam all along. That same day that I met him, I picked him up that evening and we whirled around and talked. He was explaining his situation and I told him he could move in with me. As I got to know him, we would pray, we would read the Bible together and I'm thinking this is the God-sent one. Because we wanted this so bad, I wanted to be married and I wanted a relationship so bad, I set myself up to get taken down bad. What I failed to realize, the man was a crackhead.

In less than six months, I lost my job, I lost my apartment, I lost my car and I still wasn't at rock bottom. And the reason why I say I still wasn't at rock bottom because I still allowed myself to get involved with someone else even when I was out on the streets. The worst part was, I had to go back and ask my father if I could stay with him. And I hadn't lived at home since I was 11 years old. Now, I have to go by his rules and regulations. It's like being a child again.

But that wasn't bad enough. I was starting to date another guy, the alcoholic. We're dating, he comes over and he locks me and him out of the house. So, I have to call my dad to come let me in the house. I leave the guy sitting out on the picnic table. When I thought my dad was gone, I sneak him back in the house. Then, my dad comes back in and sees the alcoholic sitting up there with

no socks and shoes on. They speak, they are cordial. My dad leaves. The next day, my dad tells me I have to find somewhere else to live because he couldn't have just anybody up in his house. While he's asking me, "do you have anywhere else to go?" I'm like, "I'm living in your house. I'm homeless and you're asking do I have anywhere else to stay?" So, I told him I would go to the homeless shelter. Now, this was the first time that I was completely homeless—without a house, without anyone to ask, "could I stay with you"—completely homeless.

So, I went and stayed in the homeless shelter. Still tugging this alcoholic around with me and his clothes. He would take a nap in the middle of the sidewalk and somebody would steal his stuff. So, I had to keep his stuff with me. The alcoholic couldn't stay at the shelter because he didn't like the fact that he had to go to church to get something to eat or even have a place to stay. He felt like the religious aspect of it was being shoved down his throat. So, we went to stay with one of his friends. I would get up at 4:30 am every day to go to work. While we were still staying with his friend, his friend told him that he couldn't take care of a grown woman, so we had to find somewhere else to stay. Mind you, I was the only one working.

I tried to go back to the homeless shelter, but they told me I wasn't allowed back. So, this is when we started staying in the hotel. Even through this process, I was still working everyday and I had to walk at least 3 miles to work while he would be laying the hotel room drunk all day. So then, after seven months of being homeless, I finally got a real job, not temporary agencies. So, I had a real job, I was determined to get a real place again.

So, "Return of the Crackhead." He comes and finds me downtown. He's telling me "I know you're my wife, I know we're meant to be together." And I am so much wanting to believe this. And I go sobbing "You just don't know how much you hurt me." He says "I'll never do this to you again." I'm contemplating while I'm sitting here with this crackhead, knowing that the alcoholic was waiting the hotel room for me to return, should I just leave the alcoholic high and dry? Or do I return to him? And, of course, I left with the crackhead.

He tells me he has a place for me to stay, but we have to find us another place because there was a stipulation in the place he was staying: the roommate was in jail and he would be out any day. So, we have to find another place to stay, and I'm thinking this is the one. First, we look in the paper to find a place

and we called this one landlord, explained our situation, told him we had to get out of this place because it wasn't a good environment. So, the landlord let us move in. He wanted \$1200, but he let us move in with \$200 and we paid down the rest. Well, I paid down the rest. My stuff was stored at my father's house, so I called my father and asked him if he could bring it over. When my father arrived, the crackhead went down and greeted my father and asked him if he could have my hand in marriage. My father, of course, said "Yes, of course, I would love to have you as my son-in-law." Occasionally, he would have his daughter over and every time he would have her over, he would be talking about how much he loves me and how much he wanted to marry me. I'm really believing that this is the one, because we've been through so much (that he's put me through). I was loving the idea, because this is something that I wanted so badly. The crackhead finally got a job and he was paying the utilities. So, after getting his first job that he really didn't like, he got a better job. I come home from work and I see a washer, a dryer, and a dining room table and I'm like, "where did all this money come from?" He went to Rent-A-Center. And now the apartment is fully furnished and he tells me it's time for me to get out. He proceeds to carry all of my stuff down and leave it sitting in the snow.

I'm trying to find somewhere warm to sleep because I couldn't call anyone in my family. So, I found the place on the children's hospital parking deck steps—it was heated. The next day, I go back downtown and I meet back up with the alcoholic. He's upset with me because I left him with no money and he was out on the streets. He didn't know where I had been for the last two or three months. He was talking about how much I hurt him and how he could never trust me again. That very night, he breaks into a friend of his' van and strips the ignition and starts the van so we could have somewhere warm to sleep. The next day, he tells me I need to find somewhere to stay so he wouldn't have to worry about me. So, I call my grandmother and ask my grandmother if I could stay with her for a few days. Grandma said yes. I would still meet up with him every day after work, though, or we would talk on the phone. While I was staying with my grandmother, I was looking in the paper, determined to find an apartment. One of my friends told me about a church that paid for hotel rooms for homeless people in another city. So, I called the church and we caught the bus and

went out to the church and they paid for a hotel room for us for two weeks. Our last day there, we had to go back to the other city because it was only paid for until the first of the year. Buses don't run on New Year's Day, so we had to walk at least 15 or 20 miles. I went to another shelter and stayed there.

I would call different apartments in the paper and they would be calling my place of employment, leaving messages for me to come look at a place. At the time, I was a home health aide and my client's house was the place where the calls were coming. The daughter of my client answered the phone one day and found out that I was looking for a place to stay. She responded to me and told me that she had a place—an apartment up the street from my client—and it had been empty for a year. She told me I could move into it and asked me how much I could afford. So, here I am, in another place. I explained to the landlord that I had an alcoholic boyfriend and that he would be moving in with me. And being in his drunken stupor, he didn't believe that we were moving into a place.

Shortly after we move into the place, he asks me for some money so he could get something to drink. Not thinking the idiot would steal something from me, I told him to go in my purse and get some money out. When I later look in my purse, I see all the money is gone—my whole paycheck—and it was time to pay rent again. When he returned, I said, "Are you stupid? Are you trying to get put back on the streets? Wasn't seven months long enough for you?" Me feeling sorry for him, knowing the whole state of his mind and everything that was going on, I let him stay. I finally talked him into rehab because he wanted to get custody of his children.

So, he goes to rehab. One of the stipulations is that he had to find a job while he was there. He finds two jobs. Now, we need a car. So, I asked my landlord if I could skip two months rent and get a car. I get the car so I would be able to take him back and forth to work. And he's like: "I need both of these jobs so we can catch up on these bills." One of the jobs was a full-time position with benefits. The other job is working in a bar—what do you think?! Does an alcoholic need to work in a bar? NO! So, I tell him, you don't need to work in a bar, considering that you're in rehab trying to overcome your addiction to alcohol. But, he insists that this is just so we can get ahead. So, he is saying that the first paycheck we would put towards the money that we owe the landlord.

So, the first paycheck—he disappears. He disappears and I go looking for him because I usually picked him up at the bar after he would get off of work, and he is nowhere to be found. So, I go back home, next day, no call, I don't hear from him. So, finally, two days later, I go through this phone that he left at the apartment. And I find this number. I call the number and he answers. So, I'm like, "who's phone is this?" Because, the phone I bought him is sitting right there for me to find the number in it. So, I ask him if he's coming home. He says he would be there later on. I was saving for another car because the first car I bought was a piece of crap. So, he asked me where the money was for that. He told me had found somebody that he could buy a car from. So, he returns, and when he returns, the person that brings him back parks in our neighbor's driveway—he gets out of the car and she gets out of the car. First of all, he doesn't think I would see it because he was in the neighbor's driveway. But, I was standing in the kitchen window, I saw it all. I go to the door and tell him he needs to come over right away. So, he's trying to brush me off because he knows he got busted. So, he comes over and I'm wanting to be in this relationship so bad.

He's saying "she's just a friend, she's taking me to get a car." So, I let this slide. He asked me for the money again, so I go down to my client's house and get the money to go get this car, supposedly. I gave him the money—about \$900 in cash. It's getting close to his time of work, so I'm calling him on the new phone again. He answers, I asked him if he was going to work, and he said he would be home shortly. I told him he needed to go to work. He said he was too tired and needed to get some rest. He said he had a hard weekend—not with me. So, he comes home and goes to sleep. Next day, we discuss what went on that weekend. He starts acting strange and doesn't want to explain. This new friend shows up again. He's telling me to get some clothes ready because he was going over to another friend's house to get changed and go to work. So, I tell him to pack up all of his stuff and take it with him. He insisted there was nothing going on between him and the new friend, but I didn't believe him. A couple of days later, he returned and I made sure that he took all of his stuff with him. Now, that was the end of him.

*Mark Davidson*

Now, at this time, I'm lonely again. I was just going through a phase because I wanted to get over him. Sometimes, to get over someone, we use someone else to take their place—I was using several somebodies to take his place. Then, I finally got tired and settled down with one. And the one I settled down with was just a weekend fling. I only saw him on the weekends. He was a nice guy, but he still wasn't what I was looking for. So, at that time I was still praying and asking God to give me a way of escape and getting out of this situation I was in. So, I ended up moving to North Carolina.

That wasn't the end of my man problems. As soon as I moved to North Carolina, so much wanting a change, I didn't know that I would have to change within. I got involved with someone that pursued me. I knew it was wrong, but I didn't resist. Now, I have lost my best friend and her family behind this. This was my wake-up call to let me know that it was time to look at me and the choices that I have made. It was a hard vision, but I see it clearly now. If I put me first and look out for me, what I need will appear, whether it be comfort, love, or a place to stay. But, I have to keep me first, and God first of all. My answer is not in a man, it is in God above, and the more I trust him, the more he comforts me and shows me the way I need to go.

In Memory

We feel, think and see love.

We help others
feel, think, and see love.

We see a better and more loving
universe created.

Barney Ray Cobb
1951— 2011

This issue of Talking Sidewalks is in honor and memory of Barney Ray Cobb. Ray passed away during the production of this issue, and will long be remembered by the Talking Sidewalks family as someone who cared for his neighbors and friends and always made us laugh.

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