

# The Story Behind the Story

## By Carolyn H, Florida North

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February 2014 Gail A and I had just started going to Stepping Stones Treatment Center to talk to families. After a couple of meetings, the director asked us to tell our Al-Anon Success Story. A new Al-Anon was quick to tell about her son who had gone through the treatment center and was clean and sober. I froze because my son had not gotten sober after two treatment centers. In fact he committed suicide and died about 25 years ago. What kind of hope is that? Then I realized, **I am my Al-Anon success story.**

Soon afterwards in March, I attended the North Florida Area Service Workshop in Melbourne. We were asked to write about a service experience, not to worry about the spelling or the grammar. Just write. So I did about the experience above. Our Alternate Delegate gathered them up and mailed them in a large manila envelope. I promptly forgot about it.

At Flo D.'s funeral several years ago, we received butterfly bush seeds. Mine has grown and multiplied and returned each spring. I have tried to bring butterfly bush flowers inside as cut flowers and they wilt before getting to the vase. This November, Jacksonville had its first almost freeze. The butterfly bush flowers were so pretty, I decided to try anyway. Sure enough they stayed pretty and grew 4 caterpillars. I watched as they grew and ate away at the leaves. One day I happened to see the largest caterpillar turning inside out and forming a beautiful light green chrysalis. A day later, it was trimmed in gold so I knew it was a monarch.

I was visiting my sister the last week of December, so I missed the butterfly coming out of the chrysalis. A couple of days later I found it!!! It lazed around as the weather is cool this year for at least two weeks.

Every year I chose a different Daily Reader for my Morning Prayer time. This 2015, I am reading "Having Had a Spiritual Awakening" and the first part is how to see God in Nature. I thought this was God's gift to me to go along with my butterfly story. But there is more....

January 30th I received my February Forum. Page 5 has my very first published story and much to my surprise, a lovely photo of a monarch butterfly. It looks just like the one we put on my son's grave marker those many years ago. I still tear up every time I look at the page. So much of this is beyond anything I could have planned or even thought of doing. You may call it a coincidence, but with this many things falling into place, I chose to believe it certainly is a "God Thing".

## 'Progress Not Perfection'

Recently, a writing project I am working on was the subject of constructive criticism. Thanks to Al-Anon, I was able to quickly incorporate the feedback into the project and thank, without reservation, the people who helped me...

I am frustrated that the criticism still felt uncomfortable. I don't like being imperfect. Just for today, I am working on recognizing my progress. I know I did the right thing, so I am sure my Higher Power will lift my negative attitude in its own time.

*By Rob L., New Jersey*

## I am not alone

Al-Anon is my biggest blessing and the reason for my greatest gratitude today. The program has introduced me to a Higher Power who is able to move me out of the way in order to do His work.

After my son went through four treatment programs, his numerous trips to the Emergency Room, countless job losses, and car accidents, I had become a shell—with an empty bank account and void of compassion.

Through the Twelve Steps, a Sponsor, and loving feedback in the rooms of recovery, I have learned to re-engage in my own life with absolute assurance that I am not alone. I can work productively, and I can carry the message of hope to others who have lived my pain.

*By Martha N., Arizona*

*Photo by D & L H., MB*



*Photo by Soren S., WA*

## I am my Al-Anon success story

I practice my Twelve Steps by being there for others—because someone was there, in the alcohol treatment center where my loved one was, to tell me about Al-Anon.

Last week we were asked to share an Al-Anon success story. I had an immediate inner crisis because my son went through two treatment centers, never experienced the joy of sobriety, and killed himself at age 18.

Then my Al-Anon program kicked in and I realized that I am my Al-Anon success story—I have survived. Al-Anon held me lovingly in its arms until I regained my mental

health. After many written Fourth and Fifth Steps and active meditation, I let go of thinking that I should have done more, blaming my husband for being an alcoholic, and being angry that my son didn't find sobriety.

I finally understood the disease of alcoholism better and realized how it affected me. Today, I can honestly say I am happy. So no matter what happens to "them," our opening says it best, "I can be happy whether the alcoholic is drinking or not."

*By Carolyn H., Florida*