

What most frustrated the doctors at Purdue was their inability to make an accurate diagnosis of Cody's illness. He weakened so quickly; they were unable to stabilize him enough to do the surgery and invasive tests that might have helped him. Even an autopsy did not provide a definitive answer. They think Cody had an autoimmune system deficiency (probably hereditary) that left him highly susceptible to any virus or infection. In short, the hepatitis that Cody contracted destroyed his liver. This irony was not lost on me. The liver disease that had awaited me had, instead, killed Cody.

In his novel Eight Million Ways To Die, Lawrence Block's Matt Scudder character's new sobriety is sorely tested. He looks at the bottle of whiskey he just bought as it sits on his bureau. He notices how the amber liquid refracts the light from the bare bulb overhead. To paraphrase, he thinks that this is what alcohol does—filters the light of a reality too harsh to look at with the naked eye. My sobriety to this point had in many ways been sheltered from this light. Re-hab was a very sheltered environment. In the months after that I went to a lot of meetings and AA became a big part of my life, but I also built a little comfort zone for myself. Cody and I spent a lot of time together—just the two of us. We took a lot of walks. He took a lot of naps. I read a lot—the Big Book, of course, and also the entire Matt Scudder series (16 novels in all). Cody's attachment to me was a reminder of the hurt I had caused in the past, but also the possibility of redemption in the future. Cody helped keep me safe and sober. His death had the harsh light of a reality I was not sure I wanted.

I started to write this story then to try to sort things out, but I was too sad, too bereft, too angry. Instead I went to meetings and talked and listened. The very first meeting I went to after we returned from Purdue was amazing. Before my turn to speak, one, two and then three people spoke of losses they incurred and of difficulties they faced in

this holiday season. I was awed by the collective determination in that room to face these problems and not to drink.

I also read the Big Book with particular attention to the sixth chapter, "Into Action" and specific attention to the Promises made in the discussion of the Ninth Step. In the earliest months of my sobriety, I noticed small things, good things happening. Coincidences probably, I thought. But still, when I was trying to get sober there came a time when, without any tangible reasons, I just knew that I could get and stay sober. I choose not to analyze this but simply accept it as intervention of something beyond my consciousness. Maybe, in this same way, the Promises are not to be analyzed or understood—simply accepted.

I don't know that I've been "painstaking about this phase of (my) development" but I tried to live the Principles and I did not drink. And a short time after Cody died good things began to happen. These were material changes at first but emotional and spiritual progress followed. I found that the light of reality could be harsh but it also illuminated goodness and beauty. I embrace this reality and my life today is far better than what I had when I was drinking.

A year later, I still think about Cody almost every day. This makes me sad sometimes but more often and more each day I think of the good times we had and all that he gave to me. And I am grateful. Even before Cody got sick, I would think about the amends I owed him. Would staying sober be making amends? Would the sober time with him someday outweigh the drunken times? Now, I wonder if that time was enough. I think so; I hope so but I'm not sure. So I guess I'll have to be sober a while longer.

That's all I have. I'll keep coming back.

CASO Corner

By Laura Gonzalez, CASO Manager

Hi all!! It's that time of the year again. For some, that might mean preparing for the upcoming Holidays. For us here at the Office it is our year end season which will mean that we will be conducting an inventory and our annual audit (this is not as bad as it sounds). This will require that our office be closed on December 25th & 31st for the Holidays. However, the bookstore will be closed from December 24th through January 2nd of 2008.

I would like to share with you the Thanksgiving Appeal letter that has been sent out to the fellowship. I would also like to take a moment, on behalf of the Chicago Area Service Office, to thank you for your continued support of this newsletter, Here's How.

Your Chicago Area Service Office (CASO) carries out the tasks of Alcoholics Anonymous that cannot be done by any single Group. CASO is where many alcoholics make their first contact with A.A. and where thousands of A.A. members call for meeting information. It is the public face of A.A. here in the Chicagoland Area. It provides the structure—the backbone—for our A.A. service work.

I would like to extend a warm and heart-filled thank you to those of you that give up your precious time volunteering at CASO or the Area level of service. We cannot possibly reach out to the thousands of alcoholics that call for help without you. There are many of you that come in to answer telephones. We receive about 30,000 calls a year. Some of you come in to our bookstore and help us stock shelves, pack orders, make beginner kits, barcode thousands of products and stuff mailings such as this one. Others are willing to take 12th step work from those calling Alcoholics Anonymous for the first time.

We are still in need from those of you who would be willing to come in and take a shift to answer the telephones. We need your help to ensure the telephones are always being answered, and that there are members willing to take 12th step calls. Can you believe that we continue to struggle to keep the shifts filled and to find 12th step workers? I encourage you to call the office for more information.

There are those of you that give up some of your evenings to do service work at the group level such as being a GSR. Did you know that there are 3252 meetings in Area 19 and only 23% have GSR's? That means that 75% of you may not know what is going on at the Central Service Office, the Area level, National and International levels?

We are asking for your involvement at the Area level. Did you know that you have a voice in the Chicagoland Area 19 Alcoholics Anonymous? Every voice counts; we want to make sure that yours is

An Article From the Archives.....

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE

"The more things change, the more they stay the same." This is a cliché I have come to appreciate more and more as the years go by in A.A.

When I first came around six years ago, many of the meetings I attended were in treatment facilities. Though many of the patients wore street clothing, they could be identified by the white plastic wrist band which is such a common sight in hospitals. We all shared our experience, strength and hope for an hour or two, whether we were residents of that facility or just another alcoholic from the community who needed a meeting.

Several years went by and I returned to one of those meetings held in a recovery unit of a local hospital. I was stunned to see how the unit had shrunk. Only two or three in-patients attended that meeting. They were the in their first fragile days of sobriety, and they were the entire patient load for the evening. This was a far cry from the bustling floor I had seen two years earlier, with twenty to thirty in-patients packing a small day room that the hospital had reserved for the meeting.

When I returned the following week, I was greeted with another grim surprise. Those shaky newcomers were gone. They had been replaced by two or three new recruits. Where had my new friends gone? I found out that the hospital only kept the patients for three to five days, since that was the length of stay the insurance companies covered.

I was very concerned. What was to become of those seeking sobriety if they were discharged from a unit

while their palms were still sweating? Finally, the recovery floor of this particular hospital had closed all together. I have since noticed that many treatment centers and hospital drug/alcohol abuse units have shut down, or greatly curtailed their activities in recent years. The monies to pay for these professional services have dried up. Alcoholism just isn't profitable anymore.

Then it came to me. I needn't have worried, because Alcoholics Anonymous has *not* shutdown. The program is still here for people who want it, whatever their circumstances, finances, religious beliefs, age, profession, race or gender. Our Traditions state that A.A. should remain forever non-professional, and that the issue of money should never divert us from our primary purpose. That primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. This is, in effect, A.A.'s bottom line.

With the modest amount of seed money given our founders in the formative years of our fellowship, A.A. has remained self-supporting for over sixty years. Outside contributions are declined, and there is even a limit placed on how much one member can donate within a year. All to keep principles ahead of personalities.

I treasure the memory of those hospital meetings early in my sobriety, but I needn't have worried, because the more things change, the more they stay the same. A.A. has gone back to its roots of one alcoholic helping another, instead of leaving it to the professionals.

Diana S.
Chicago, IL.

Poems by Santronya S.

"L.E.T.T.E.R.S. to My Disease"

This affliction called Addiction
They say it's a disease for sure
Let me dissect this disease for you
Which has been said to have no cure
Dis - Absence or opposite of, not
Ease - Freedom from worry, pain or
trouble
Let me break it down for you again

D.I.S.E.A.S.E.
Find out what it means to me

D. Discomfort. That's all I ever felt.
I. Insufferable. Like snow that just won't melt.

S. Sick. Which is how you made my mind.
E. Easy. That's what I was all the time.
A. Again and Again. Same mistakes. I was lost.
S. Searching for another one at any and all costs.
But E is Eternal like the Power from above.
And its also for the Energy That I feel from his love.

Now I'm like R. Kelly and I believe I can fly
But my R is for Recovery
As every day goes by.

Answer Key to Crossword Puzzle



Not a Glum Lot

Phil S.

A short time ago, having a good time was not something I associated with sobriety. In fact, when I came to my first AA meetings, I had the overwhelming sense that the fun and exciting part of life was over. At the time, I didn't care; I just wanted the horrific, life-controlling alcoholic sprees to stop. I was in a desperate place, and willing to try anything that would keep me under control, no matter what kind of a boring sloth it turned me into. Much to my surprise, my first weeks and months of Alcoholics Anonymous were filled with a fair amount of laughter. Almost immediately, I stumbled upon people who were interesting to talk to and at the same time interested in what was going on in my life. I found myself having real conversations with people who wanted nothing from me.

Ever so slowly, I became genuinely interested in other people. These "other people" invited me to movies, dinners, coffee shops, comic book signings, readings, concerts, parties, watches, card parties, softball games, retreats and art openings. And to these events I arrived sober, each time feeling a little less awkward, and craving my instant liquid comfort still less. Soon, it wasn't enough to just show up and take what I needed from a particular group of people: my sponsor advised me to consider what I could bring to a social event before attending. What can I bring to this gathering? I still can't ever really think of an answer that doesn't start me ego-stroking. The general idea works for me, in that it gives my mindset the slightest little nudge that it needs. I thoroughly enjoy not obsessing about myself every moment of the day. Whenever I do start feeling down, I'm almost always caught up in something that's not going my way. If I can push these feelings away and focus on someone or

something else, I'm free.

One of the most enjoyable parts of sobriety is the freedom. When released from my very real obsession to drink, I found a new spark of spontaneity in life. It's no longer a certainty that I will spend my day thinking about, planning, and scheming around alcohol. Without all of that spinning around constantly, I can relax, work hard, and live. I don't get this freedom from simply not drinking; if it were this simple, I would have been a contented, well-rounded person before my drinking career began. I was not, and unless I work a spiritual program of change I don't get this freedom.

There is a certain contagious energy in a group of people who have recently regained their freedom. I feel like I'm a part of a strange group of people. We are, by nature, not easily satisfied. We have usually given other ways of life more than a few attempts and we've kept searching for something more. We know how to have a good time, and now without alcohol, we absolutely insist on enjoying life.

TIPS FOR A SOBER AND JOYOUS HOLIDAY

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober – an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-around ball without a drop of alcohol.

1. Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or

central office, and volunteer to give a lead, help with dishes or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.

2. Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.

3. Keep your A.A. telephone list with you at all times. If a drinking urge or panic comes, postpone everything else until you've called an A.A. member.

4. Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.

5. Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.

6. If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. member with you, keep some candy handy.

7. Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.

8. Call your sponsor – or a member of AA.

9. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks and letters.

10. Don't get worked up about all those holiday temptations. Remember, "one day at a time."

11. Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts, but this year, you can give love.

12. "Having had a..." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.

heard. The General Service Representative (GSR) is considered one of the most important jobs in A.A. The GSR is the trusted servant responsible for linking your group to A.A. as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the thoughts of your group to the General Service Conference Delegate who will take your group's conscience to the General Service Conference. Please contact your Group & Fellowship Services Coordinator Geoff Cochran at (312) 346-1475 for more information.

Thanks to your continued support we can produce our bi-monthly newsletter Here's How. We have a very dedicated committee that works very hard for you! You may view past issues of the newsletter on our website www.chicagoaa.org. You may already have a subscription and are enjoying the newsletter. We mail this newsletter all over the United States as far as Hawaii & internationally to members in Africa & China. It is a wonderful tool for those who are unable to get to a meeting or for those who have moved away from Chicago and want to stay connected.

I encourage you to sign up for a subscription. We are in need of articles - I encourage you to write an article. If you can share your experience, strength and hope, then you have an article just waiting to be submitted. We are often delayed in printing the newsletter due to lack of material. You may mail, e-mail (caso@chicagoaa.org) or fax [(312) 346-5477] your submissions.

Because of your continued patronage we can provide you with the best possible service at your Chicago Area Service Office Bookstore. Did you know the Bookstore processed 10,500 sales this year and of those sales 19% were mail orders? We have sent packages to British Columbia, Canada, Guam, Hawaii, Ireland, Mexico, Paris and as far as Japan.

CASO cannot do these things without the kind support of the fellowship. We celebrate November as Gratitude month. This gives us an opportunity to give back a bit of what we so freely received. Your tax-deductible contribution to CASO is a gift that helps carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. We ask that you help us by sending in your contribution - anything feasible in your budget. Many AA's contribute \$1-\$2 for every year they have been sober plus \$5 for their Here's How subscription renewal and another \$5 for someone who could not afford it. This appeal is a part of our budget - it helps fund committees, pay rent, and pays your Chicago Area Service Office workers. We are successfully able to reach thousands of alcoholics each year due to your past contributions. Thank you.

Your generous contribution means that an alcoholic is on this end of the phone 24/7. Every day, members of A.A. selflessly give freely of their time to sit and answer phones so that when any alcoholic, any time, reaches out for help, the hand of A.A. will be there. They need an office to go to, telephones to answer, desks and directories to refer to and coordinated lists of both meetings and 12-step-

pers to do their job. And when those volunteers go home, more volunteers freely take up the task from home, answering calls throughout the night, until the office opens again.

Your generous contribution means that kids in schools and programs around Chicago can learn about Alcoholics Anonymous, that there is a solution to a drinking problem. Our Public Information Committee and the Cooperation with the Professional Community committees go to hundreds of schools, events, fairs, conventions and other gatherings. They let people know A.A. is there and that alcoholics are not alone.

Your generous contribution means that for those who cannot hear, the AA message can see it spoken to them though sign language, or can read it through Braille. Our Special Needs Committee responds to those who need a little extra service, so that signed meetings and special equipment are available to help make A.A. accessible to everyone who has a drinking problem.

Your generous contribution means that thousands of A.A. members can come together to share their experience, strength and hope. Each year, Chicago A.A. holds special events that help bring together A.A.s from all over the area to celebrate and share their recovery.

Your generous contribution helps preserve our heritage. A.A. has a rich history and Chicago has been an integral part of that almost from the beginning. Volunteers share our space to gather the historical materials from past and present to preserve our fellowship and its program for those yet to come. Their displays make our story available to carry the message, and show that we are each a small part of a great whole.

Our Co-Founder Bill W said it best, "I try hard to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion that we can never know." Because of people like you who have come before me and the Central Service Office like this one I have heard the message of AA and have been able to experience the promises as outlined in the text Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you for my sobriety.

Laura N Gonzalez
Chicago Area Service Office Manager

"Thousands of people or loved ones are afflicted with the disease of alcoholism. We are already helping, but we can only do more if we receive more help. Please help those who are yet to come to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Send us your tax-deductible contribution right now."

I wish you all a safe and joyous season for you and your loved ones.

Here's How
Newsletter

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WE NEED YOUR STORIES!

Tell us about "what it was like, what happened and what it is like now." In upcoming issues, Here's How will publish your stories about:

Practicing the Principles in All Our Affairs

January – February Issue
Last day for submission – January 31

Came to Believe

March – April Issue
Last day for submission – March 31

Growth

May – June Issue
Last day for submission – May 31

e-mail: hereshow@chicagoAA.org with submissions

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Y.A.N.A.

Laura H.

For the past several years I have been fortunate to work, in various capacities, on the entertainment for several conferences in Chicago. These "AA shows" rival the dances and sometimes the main speakers in popularity I am proud to say.

It is my guess that I have been called on to help these conferences because I trained at Second City in Sketch Comedy. On my fourth step I admitted to my sponsor that I wanted to study comedy. My sponsor said, "Start with one class." Thanks to AA and the God I found here I had the power to learn and complete the beginning program at Second City and go on to the Conservatory program as well. I discovered my passion there and feel honored to give back to the Fellowship the fruits of my labor. We do sober Sketch Comedy, and the jokes are all about Alcoholism in all it's forms.

I have been able to write and perform my material and the material of my fellows. Most recently I got to direct some other sober actors and help edit their written material. That was a huge honor and I am overwhelmed at the amount of talent I had to work with.

Entertainment, as a service commitment, is a pretty "sexy" commitment, in that it is a lot more fun than say, Registration. There is a great feeling that comes when you make an audience laugh, more so than when you give them their name tags. Nevertheless, I know members that serve in any capacity in service get great rewards and make friends and receive spiritual experience.

And producing the entertainment, holding the rehearsals, memorizing the lines, arranging the practice space and coordinating the busy schedules of the sober talent are often gruesome tasks. But all service, in the end, is well worth it.

My greatest challenge so far, besides time, is how to get people involved. Unfortunately, there are more requirements to perform than just willingness and sobri-

ety. There needs to be some actual acting ability on the part of the volunteers, and the ability to sacrifice even more time to rehearse and take direction. Then there is always the walk through the fear.

I hope you'll come out to We Are Not Saints this January 11th, 12th and 13th or come to the Illinois State Conference in Spring 2008. There are great speakers and panels and come check out the sober comedy. If you're a drunk, or even an Al-anon, the jokes are all aimed at you. AA audiences are the best in the world. I wanted this article to be a little less austere and report-ish so I am attaching a song we wrote and we will perform to show you just how glum we are not.

It's a country tune called "Go On Down"-

Verse 1

I was a drinker
A really bad thinker
I quit drinkin'
I got dry
I shelved my beer
found so much fear
and so much pain
I wanted to die

Chorus

They said go down
to a 12 step meetin'
Go on down or up the street
Get yerself a real Big Blue Book
get yerself sobriety

Verse 2

I was deranged
needin' to change
I had no power
to see it through
I took them steps
with people's help
I got better
and you can too

Chorus 2

If you go up
to a 12-step meetin'
There is one right up yer street
Get yerself a big book sponsor
Get yerself serenity

Bridge ("Take it way _."
_: "I think I will."
(_ clogs to musical bridge)

Verse 3

If your a drinker
a really bad stinker
got wet brain
or dry to the bone
there's a place
that can hep ya'
can 12 step ya
you can call home

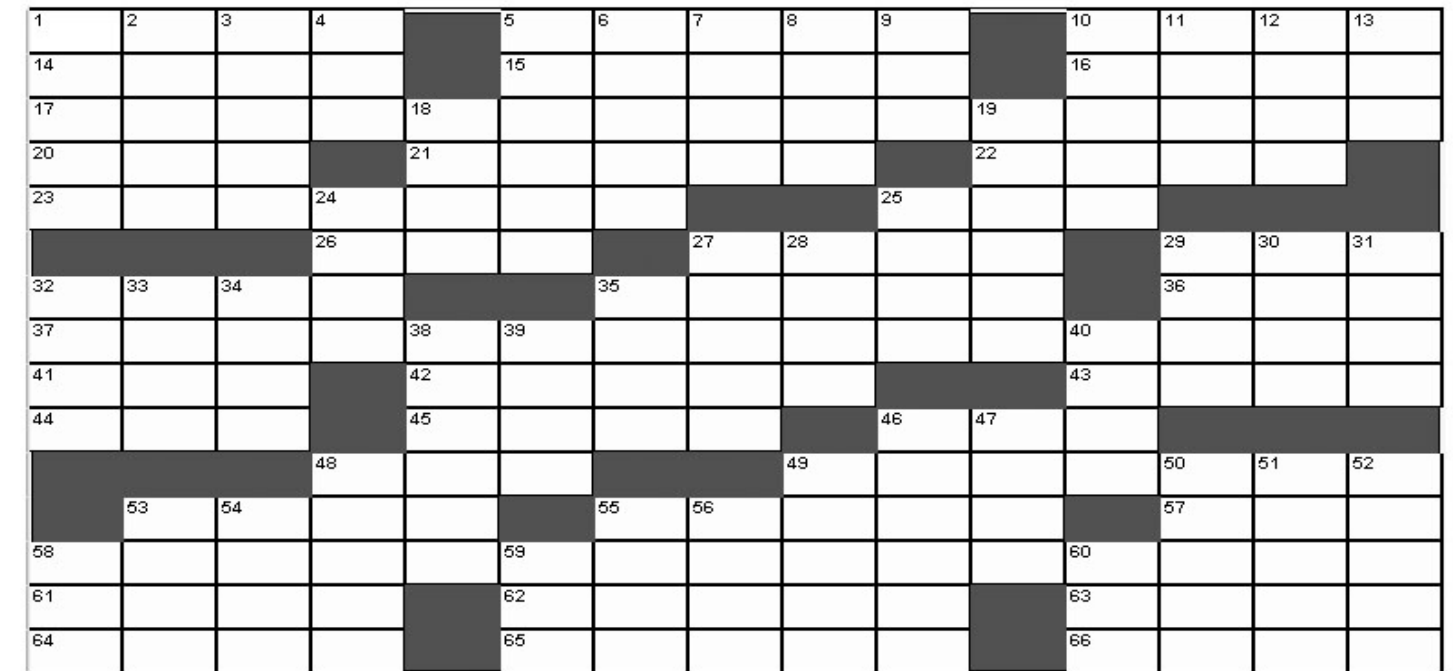
Chorus 3

And we're here
at the 12-step meetin'
And we'll bet
It ain't like what you think
let us help you
put yer fears down
let us help you put down the drink
let us help you put down the drink!

Well, I think it's funny and I hope you will too. Thanks for giving me the chance to carry the message in such a fun way. And if I don't see you at the show, maybe I'll see you at the Registration table where I will also be performing!

Here's How Would Like to Thank this Month's Volunteers

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|----------|
| Ada S | Dina P | Matt S |
| Adam S | Dylan H | Mike B |
| Alan R | Erica P | Mike R |
| Amanda L | Greg S | Pamela W |
| Barbara U | Gregory M | Pat K |
| Bill B | Holly B | Pete B |
| Billy Mc | Isa V | Ray M |
| Bob H | Jacob G | Rickey O |
| Bob K | Jason D | Rita B |
| Bob K | Jason H | Rob F |
| Brien J | Jeff R | Robin M |
| Caroline R | Jerry N | Roger L |
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| Christian T | John C | Sam S |
| Christine C | Kathleen R | Sarah L |
| Dan D | Kevin B | Sydney A |
| Dave H | Lauren G | Tim A |
| Dave L | Lorie G | Tom B |
| David M | Marilyn C | Tom Z |
| Debora N | Maritza G | Trina S |
| Denise C | Marvin J | |



We Are Not a Glum Lot

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

HEARD IN THE ROOMS

"I was violating my standards faster than I could lower them"

ACROSS

- 1. Temples
- 5. Grassless Area
- 10. ____ am
- 14. Like ____ of...
- 15. Window
- 16. That's a ____
- 17. How not to be glum after a meeting
- 20. Spanish Queen
- 21. De Leon
- 22. A Horne
- 23. Vend All
- 25. Simple Sugar
- 26. An Asner's
- 27. Tear
- 29. Pagoda
- 32. Movie dog
- 35. A movement
- 36. Where leaders are
- 37. What not to take

- 41. New resident's course
- 42. Harden
- 43. Asian money
- 44. Mineo
- 45. Snoopy
- 46. Arab group
- 47. Ways abbr
- 49. Stirred
- 53. Bosc
- 55. Destined
- 57. Zionist group
- 58. Do it, you're not glum
- 61. Pain
- 62. Inert gas
- 63. Commanded
- 64. Uncles
- 65. Brush and ____
- 66. Rosebud

DOWN

- 1. Salary
- 2. Do Step 9
- 3. Complete
- 4. Type of cone
- 5. Open
- 6. We glum, ____ not
- 7. Assorted abbr.
- 8. Safe
- 9. ____ Carte
- 10. What to go on
- 11. Alda
- 12. Nature's Power
- 13. Bank abbr.
- 18. footless
- 19. Irish city
- 24. Regan's father
- 25. In the past
- 27. How to cook pinto beans
- 28. Facility
- 29. ____ shalt not

- 30. Type of Marine
- 31. org.
- 32. Naval replies
- 33. Sammy
- 34. Jethro
- 35. Also
- 38. Guard
- 39. Son of Seth
- 40. Two pronouns
- 46. Primps
- 47. Mineral depositys
- 48. Garden tools
- 49. A musketeer
- 50. Fiber
- 51. Practice piece
- 52. Sedated
- 53. Woodpecker
- 54. Repeat
- 55. Roll up
- 58. Krazy ____
- 59. Lout
- 60. Am. Wghts

LIFE: UNMANAGEABLE

