

Shades of Grey - Spring 1999 Issue

Under 90 Days

The Pick Up

Eons ago, when I was twenty something, in between husbands, and "Aids" followed the word "band", "pick up" meant meeting a cute guy in a bar and taking him home. Greysheet has given this term new meaning. And although the definitions differ, the connotation is equally negative, and the common thread is the morning after feelings.

After six months of pink cloud Greysheet abstinence, abstinence which came probably too easily but which I sported proudly and triumphantly like a shiny new bike, I decided to "pick up." Being too smart or perhaps too cowardly to go out with carbos, I ate protein after. Let me back track. For the past week or two before that - heck - make that a month, I became my own higher power. Many times, after dinner, like a rat in more ways than one, I would eat a teeny-tiny piece of cheese. And maybe my protein at mealtimes wasn't exactly four ounces. After all some proteins are heavier than others. Right? Was I abstinent? I told myself I was. After all, I wasn't putting the poisonous white flour, and sugar into my body. Was I eating in between

meals? Well, I guess it depends upon your definition of "eating." Is a teeny-tiny piece of cheese eating? So I lied to myself and the community until the night I ate enough protein to have qualified as a meal portion. I wasn't hungry. I was unhappy! I was and am going through a (medical) crisis and that is why I ate. NOT! I ate because I ate - because as a compulsive overeater, I would eat no matter what.

The sun rose anyway the next morning as I called my sponsor and my sponsees, fessed up at the meetings, and went back to Day One. I know that it's not about me having more time than you and everyday is really Day One, and all we really have is Day One. I know that intellectually. But hey, I'm a competitive gal, and emotionally, I felt and still feel tinges of humiliation, shame, embarrassment, self-loathing, and (Jewish) guilt. I had to give up two sponsees and booking two meetings (although they were already all booked). I still want to crawl into a hole every time I raise my hand and say the day that I am on.

But do you want to know the worst of it? Do you think it's that I let myself down? Is it that I let the community down? The worst of it was the morning after feeling.

P.G. (pre- Greysheet) I would wake up in the morning and my first thought was "What diet am I on; did I stay on it yesterday or did I binge?" My mood for the day would be governed by the answer. A Greysheeteer once said that she loved waking up abstinent. SHE LOVED WAKING UP ABSTINENT. What a concept! For six months, I loved waking up abstinent. And

then one day I didn't wake up abstinent. And it was heartbreaking! And even though I did not binge or eat sugar or white flour, I felt as if I did. I felt tired and hungry and cranky and hopeless. I considered not going to work and spending the day in bed or worse.

So here I am 31 days later - abstinent and grateful to this community. My food is clean again like the smell of clothes hanging outside on the line, and my renewed commitment is stronger than ever. I have no doubts that if I had picked up carbos that I would not be writing this today, and that I would be back on the road to 220 pounds+, high blood pressure, and self-loathing. So thank you Higher Power and Greysheet Community for seven months of sugar free and white flour free recovery and 31 days of abstinence.

Did I say 31? I meant DAY ONE. That's all we have, and that's more than I had ever hoped for.

Iris H., New York City, N.Y.

A New Members' Opinion on Sponsorship

As a teenager, I would dream about my perfect man. Later the quest for perfection was sought for the perfect mechanic, gynecologist, internist, beautician, and best friend. After all, if a girl has a great guy, great mechanic, great doctors, great best friend, great beautician she's all set. Right? ENTER GREYSHEET. The quest for the perfect sponsor makes the other searches pale by far. Silly me who

thought the most intimate relationship one could have is a sexual one, regardless of the preference, I now know that the hardest search in my life and the most intimate relationship I have ever had to date is with my sponsor.

A sponsor is the person to whom you turn over your food on a daily basis. Can you get more intimate than that? She/he is the one you call when you make a "mistake" and feel so totally ridiculous for calling somebody because you spilled extra oil in your salad or want to change your food or ran out of protein and need extra soy beans or are going to a restaurant last minute or forget to eat something. She/he is the one to whom you tell how much you have lost every month and how many meetings you went to this, week and why you are pissed and resentful and want to give it all up. And if you are lucky, really really lucky, you and she/he even become friends!

My modus operandi growing up was to depend upon myself, lean on nobody, and trust nobody else to get the job done. Independence, freethinking, and free spiritedness have been my Higher Powers. Nobody-mother, husbands, etc., ever told me what to do. ENTER GREYSHEET AND THE TWELVE STEPS.

Trusting a sponsor is a major leap of faith and like other relationships, it has to fit like a glove to work. Sometimes people are afraid to change sponsors or sponsees. We don't like hurting people's feelings, we feel sorry for people, we don't have just the right words, etc. I know. I've been there too.

I am new to this program. After forty-one days of Greysheet abstinence, I have gone through four sponsors. The reasons differ although I speak often to one of my former sponsors who is a tremendous source of strength and support to me. She was only a temp sponsor, and our times did not fit. So as a newcomer myself, I suggest to other newcomers that you find a sponsor based upon the following formula: She/he has what you want and you are willing to do what she/he does - whether it's a combination of a good program, serenity, time in Greysheet, time in AA or other Twelve Step Programs, etc. The time to call is compatible for both of you. (I am not a morning person and could not call early in the morning.) She/he is available the bulk of the time and does not create a relationship between you and her/his answering machine. She/he is knowledgeable about the food plan and is willing to get answers from her/his own sponsor if she/he does not have them. She/he is SANE. This is primo. Sanity to me means not giving a hard time for having to call five minutes late or wanting to make a food change. The basic element is that the sponsor realizes that you will be doing this a day at a time for the rest of your life and is "flexible." She/he has time for you and does not make you feel that they are doing you a favor by taking your food and talking to you. Your personalities fit and there is no discomfort, agitation in talking to this person. You feel comfortable asking questions regardless of how silly they may seem to you. You get appropriate responses. You are comfortable with the line.

I know some of you will take umbrage with the last suggestion. When I came to program, I was appropriately desperate. When my sponsor said jump, I did say "How high?" I knew nothing about lines. That was then. This is now. I now know that one day at a time I will be doing this the rest of my life and I firmly believe that I have the right to choose whether I want to cup or weigh, to flex or not flex. This is not a two-week diet. This is a life plan and choosing does not mean non-surrender some people would have us believe.

Keep looking until you find the sponsorship relationship that works for you. Fortunately for me, I struck gold with my fifth and hopefully last sponsor. She is available to me despite her own busy life, tells me to read certain parts of the Big Book when I complain about resentments, maintains a wonderful program herself despite numerous "no matter whats", has time in another program. She travels a long distance to give me support when needed, is funny, bright and witty - just like me. Magically, I who cannot connect with people and have not made a new friend in the last millennium, have found a (new) friend in my sponsor. *Iris H., New York City, N.Y.*

Our Voices

The Surprising Gifts

When I first came into this program, I remember hearing over and over again... that all I had to do was weigh and measure three

meals a day off the Greysheet without exception... and everything else would follow. My life would become better. Being the stubborn skeptic I was, I held that up as an example of how questionable this program and everyone in it was. You were all a little weird and suspect. Now I am about to celebrate my one year anniversary coming back from a one-and-a-half year relapse, when I couldn't put together three days of back- to- back abstinence. I'm here to say that everything about that phrase now makes complete sense to me. So if there are any of you out there, like me, "closet" skeptics, let me try to help you see what I couldn't or wouldn't for so long. Let me share my list of gifts with you, that the act of weighing and measuring offer me on a daily basis.

1. **GUILT FREE EATING:** Each day I'm given a reprieve from self-loathing and feeling a sense of failure, as I continually broke my promise to myself not to eat compulsively. Now I can keep that promise as I begin to accept my powerlessness over food, and that I have an eating disorder (an allergy to certain foods). It is not about my lack of "will-power." I have a disease, and there is a solution.
2. **SELF-ESTEEM:** Each day I weigh and measure and manage not to break my promise to myself, I carefully rebuild that damaged self which was always waiting hand in hand with my disease, ready to tell me I was "less-than," and would

always be a "loser." Each day I now know I'm a winner if all I do is weigh and measure off the Greysheet. And... the weight does come off! And... the self-esteem does come into my life.

3. **DISCIPLINE:** Each day I get a chance to practice consistency in my behavior. I may not always want to hop and shop, I may feel a loss of spontaneity when it comes to going to restaurants, but when I follow the Greysheet daily, I feel so much better about myself. This discipline sets me free.
4. **BOUNDARIES:** Each day I get to learn I have boundaries around my food, and by choosing not to eat those foods which activate my disease, or being in places or with people that are toxic, I'm making a choice to do what is good for me. I'm taking care of all my needs. This begins to define who I am more effectively through my actions, than anything else I do on a daily basis.
5. **SERENITY:** Each day I have an opportunity to have a spiritual experience through weighing and measuring my food. A chance to have a conscious contact with my Higher Power, (whom I choose to call God). I must practice rigorous honesty around my food, and very often alone in my kitchen. So it's just between God and myself. As I learn to surrender my will, I am reminded I am not doing this

alone. God is there to guide me, but I must take the action and be open to his will.

6. **ABUNDANCE:** Each day I get to eat foods I love which are on the Greysheet. I'm amazed at how much my cups and scale can hold. I feel truly provided for, because I believe you're not deprived when you're getting what you want.
7. **HUMILITY:** Each day when I have to take my cup and scale out in public, I am reminded that I must ask for help, to get through the situation. I am different, but also I have a solution that is saving my life. So even when it's uncomfortable, it is an affirmation of who I am and to what lengths I must go to surrender my judgmental attitudes of the past. If I accept what I do, others will simply have to.
8. **A POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Each day I get a chance to shift my negative attitudes through the gift of clarity I get from weighing and measuring. I get to work on my character defects, by working the steps, and I get to refocus my priorities. I must work very hard to establish this on a daily basis, but without the foundation of weighing and measuring daily, I know I couldn't manage it.
9. **HOPE:** Each day I get to have hope about the life I am beginning to build with my new found clarity and positive attitude changes, that can

bring me to a place of contented abstinence.

10. A CHANCE AT LIFE: Each day I get closer to living a life that is richer and deeper in it's personal relationships than I've ever known before. I am a slow learner, and although I'd like to get on with it, I know I need to rid myself of the emotional and spiritual poisons which have been for so long in my heart and mind...just as I've begun to rid myself of the physical poisons in the form of the foods we must avoid. It is through this daily act of putting my food on a scale and in a cup I can feel the possibility of letting joy in. Slowly, very slowly, the negative emotions of fear, selfishness, procrastination, envy, anger, and the most destructive of all, resentment, are being replaced with my surrender to God's will. I have a long way to go on my journey, but I am willing and open, due to this community. So let me thank all of you for being there when I most needed your support, patience and love. No food tastes as good as abstinence feels. That is the ultimate gift of this truly wonderful program, and I can say that with an open heart. I'm truly grateful to be a part of our remarkable fellowship.

Ruth A., New York City, N.Y.

A Young Miracle

Hi. I'm Mary and I'm a compulsive overeater. I weigh and measure three meals a day off the grey sheet, I write them down and commit them. I don't eat in between those meals no matter what. Abstinence is the most important thing to me.

I am eight years old and have been on Greysheet since September 6, 1998. This is the hardest and the easiest thing that I do. It is easy because I don't crave all the other food I used to eat. It is hard because when people eat in front of me and go to fast food places I don't eat the same food. It would be hard to bring my food to a birthday party. I have been fat since I was a baby. I hated being fat, but I loved to eat and eat. The first diet I went on was Weight Watchers. I counted all my points and lost twenty pounds very fast. The day I got to goal the Weight Watcher lady told me to eat whatever I wanted and that I didn't have to be so careful. I ate whatever I wanted and whatever anyone else wanted. I started to gain weight really fast. I always tried to eat only one, but it didn't work out for me. I started crying a lot to my mom, but I couldn't stop eating. My mom and dad took me back and forth to Weight Watchers a few more times but I couldn't stick to it. I cried a lot. I gained 45 pounds. I couldn't wear any of the clothes that I loved and that all my friends wore, so I cried more. In third grade the kids don't like you if you are fat. After enough trips to Weight Watchers my mom found out about a kids 12 Step meeting in Suffolk County. We went there

together. I could tell my mom was upset because my mom was already in Greysheet, and all the people that were leading the kids meeting were fat. The lady was very nice but she told me we would not discuss food. The lady told me the other kids that had tried another 12-Step program had given up because they weren't losing any weight. The lady told me she wasn't going to come because kids weren't showing up, but one of the women in the group called her, so then she came to talk to me. My mom didn't want me to go back to that meeting after that and I really didn't want to go back there either.

Shortly after that I asked my mom if I could do Greysheet. I tried it for a week and I wanted to have McDonald's with my friends so I told my mom I didn't want to do Greysheet any more. I was eating a lot and crying a lot. I hated being fat and I knew I couldn't stop eating. I told my mom I wanted to do Greysheet no matter how hard it is. My mom talked to her sponsor who has done Greysheet for a long time and she knew a lot more about food than my mom. The only thing different that children get in Grey Sheet is a fruit at each meal and half cup vegetables are full cups right from the beginning. Everything else is the same. Most days I find Grey Sheet pretty easy now. In the beginning it was hard. People in Greysheet have been really good to me. I'd like to say who, but my mom just told me I can't.

I had a really hard time on Halloween. That is not my favorite holiday any more. I didn't eat no matter what. I dressed up and went trick or treating with my friends and

my sister, but when I got home I gave all my junk to my brother.

The hardest day I had in Greysheet was the day I forgot my lunch at home when I went to school. I realized I forgot it when I was on the bus. The bus driver let me call home from her cell phone because I was really upset. When I called home everyone was gone for work. I got really upset because I thought the school would make me eat the school lunch. My mom was going to a party and forgot food for it and went home and went to the answering machine and heard my message and the teacher's message and the principal's message. She came right up to school with my lunch. My mom asked me if I wanted to come home, but the teacher said I could eat in class. I felt really embarrassed because my carrots sounded really loud. I will never forget that. That was the worst for me.

The good thing is I have lost 31 pounds so far, and I don't cry a lot any more which is good. People in school like me more now. I can buy clothes I love now, which is really fun. I don't have to think about my sister taking the last one in a box because I don't eat that stuff any more. I don't have to worry that my dad will wake up and catch me eating sweets on the couch at 6:00 in the morning. I used to hide food in the couch when I heard him coming out to get ready for work. It sounds funny to me now but it wasn't funny then because I used to feel very scared that my dad would catch me eating.

People in Greysheet say you start your good life when you start Greysheet and I am starting my good life really young. Thank

you to my family and other Greysheeters who have helped me so much.

Mary D., Middle Island, N.Y.

A Way of Living

Hi to all our fellow Greysheeters! My name is Esther S. I am a compulsive overeater. I, like you, weigh and measure three meals a day from our Greysheet. I write them down and commit them to my sponsor every day. I don't eat in between no matter what; abstinence is the most important thing in my life and it is the best thing I do for myself, just for today. On October 2nd this year I passed a milestone in Greysheet, 10 years of abstinence from this deadly disease - all by weighing and measuring no matter what.

When I joined Greysheet on Oct. 2, 1988, there were not too many Greysheet meetings around. At that time I was going to Riverdale and NYC meetings. I remember Greysheet people saying they would go to any length for their abstinence. What stands out in my head is a Greysheet always coming from Manhattan where she lives to the Riverdale meetings every week. She drove her van and brought whomever she could with her. This is going to any length and doing H.P.'s service at the same time. I have learned so much from this Greysheet and we stay in touch even 10 years later. (Sometimes I literally pinch myself to see if this 10 years has really gone by - it's amazing!). Another Greysheet, who has become my dearest, most precious friend, has shown me so much about myself and

addiction, and how not to eat no matter what. A special friend who has had one of the worst no-matter-what's and continued to W&M and continues today doing the same as we do. I say all this because when I was into the food 10 years ago I didn't have any friends. Today I know how to pick and choose whom I want in my life for the rest of my life. And this is only a part of the blessings. I have received from my H.P. just by W&M no matter what - I'm going through a little rough time (life on life's terms) and the love and outpouring of help I've been receiving is part of the blessing too! Greysheeters are so caring and loving and always ready to help, no matter what gossip we may hear. We are all caring people and God's children under "one roof." If it wasn't for one of my sponsees I might have gone back to the food - yes, even after 10 years this disease does not go away. I am so grateful not only to all who have helped but to all Greysheeters because you do what I do no matter what. If you are new or returning to Greysheet, do what was strongly suggested to me 10 years ago and is still up front in my mind. Keep coming to meetings, find a sponsor, follow your sponsor's guidance, get telephone numbers and use them, put your slippers on and relax. This is not a diet. "It is a way of living." History is currently in the making and I am so grateful to be a part of it all. This is yet another blessing to all of us. Wow! Our own 12 step program, a miracle! Thank you all for your abstinence one meal at a time!

Esther S., Long Island, N.Y.

Living The Program

It's 2:00 a.m. I can't sleep. A dear friend of mine is out of work. She calls hysterical. She has \$40 to her name. All my financial fears and vulnerability issues are brought to the surface. My friend always seemed as strong as could be. Anger is her aura. Now she sounds fragile and petrified. I make a phone call to another close friend. I run out this scenario. I realize there is no right or wrong in my next decision, but I do see that life is about giving and helping - not as in my life savings, but in a little. I decide to lend her some money. None of this process would have taken place in the old days because at the first sign of uncomfortableness or panic within me, I would have reached for the food instead of the phone. Middle of the night anxiety was always squelched with the refrigerator or "take out." In regular 12-Step meetings I even tried keeping my food in a neighbor's refrigerator, only to end up eating her food and mine when she wasn't there. Never did I work through anything! In Greysheet, there are no choices. I don't eat no matter what, I get in touch with my gut, I turn to God and I take action.

Almost three years ago (amazing) - I bought a small, adorable Maltese. Up until that point, I hardly acknowledged the existence of animals. One of my friends had eight cats and one dog. I barely saw them. Another friend had a 17-year-old furry lump in her bed. Purchasing and keeping Morris was an incredible process. Excitement and fear

took over me as I held him in the pet store. I wrestled for two hours with the decision to buy him. Once I handed over my Visa and took him home I went into a total panic. My neat and "perfect" apartment was turned upside down. He was urinating every where; he was chewing the furniture; he was whimpering in the crate. I was projecting years down the road and obsessing how he would die, what it would feel like. I had this inner feeling that keeps Morris a deeper issue than I realized. Still -- I didn't care; I was definitely returning him. This time though a dear sponsee who wouldn't let me off the phone until I saw my fear and compulsive behavior in returning him, through another friend who came over every morning to put medicine in his mouth, and through another Greysheeter sponsee who insisted I use her dog trainer, I not only made it through - but am not the proud "mom" of an almost three year old pup. Morris has opened my heart, not only to the animal kingdom, but also to my need for love, my wanting to date, my fragility. He has helped me to enjoy my home and stop "running around" every evening. I've learned about unconditional love. I've learned that I can care and be responsible for another living thing. I've traveled with Morris and met fabulous people. He also helps me to feel more complete, less alone. I've seen I not only can walk him early in the morning, but that I can actually enjoy it. I sleep with him. We cuddle. He has a fabulous "aunt" in our program that I can count on to love and take care of him should I need it. None of this would I have experienced in the old days. Food would

have seemed like the answer and this long process which in writing may seem like nothing would never have occurred. My job is another place of mixed emotions - joy, laughter, fear, anxiety, highs, lows, and stress. All of my financial insecurity arises there. Every year I think I'm not going to do well and each year I do better (I'm in sales in the garment center). Two years ago I was able to put down artificial sweeteners and coffee. They are definitely abstinent on Greysheet, but for me they were now covering up the next layer of issues that I had to deal with. I was being run by black iced coffee in a blender with tons of Equal. Tons of Equal. Every time I had an emotion I did or did not want to deal with, I'd drown in sugar free gum, diet coke (red and white can only) and peach diet Snapple. Again with the help of my sponsor and dear Greysheet friend I worked this as I had the food. And it actually felt more difficult. I let go of one substance at a time, and made a call before I picked up. Today I have none of the above and am dealing with "reality." I can tell my boss not to speak to me in a certain way. I can see my jealousies, competitiveness, and insecurities at work. I can see where my life is unbalanced and try to change it. I can date and finally speak up and say what I want and don't want. I am dealing in therapy with issues rather than food stories. I love and appreciate my parents unconditionally. I can experience and feel. All of this is due to weighing and measuring my food, going to meetings, service, sponsoring, speaking to my sponsor, and "inner circle" friends, staying connected

with my Higher Power, and NOT EATING NO MATTER WHAT!

Headaches, aging parents, a stomach that never seems to get flat, elective surgery, bleeding ulcers, vacations, business trips, weddings, Kosher affairs, business dinners, dates - all of this is possible to get through abstinely. With time it gets easier. I cannot speak enough about the benefits of Greysheet abstinence. I knew many years ago when I was "visiting" for 5 years (I had been a member of another 12-Step program for 17 years but could not stay abstinent since I didn't even know truly what it meant since food plans were always an "option" to modify (?) change or not use) that this program was about more than the food. I heard self-esteem here. I inwardly knew that if you could send back food in a restaurant because it wasn't right, you'd one day be able to speak up in other areas. I saw people getting their dreams realized instead of just speaking about them. I identified with the food stories but couldn't dream of doing it without exception. Then the time came almost eight years ago when I'd reached my bottom in the program. It wasn't my worse binge, but I was definitely weakened. My mind was constantly obsessed with calories and conversations with food. I had lost the power to chose, never knowing when food would "get" me. I was on my way to an AA Step Three meeting when I "found myself" at Jan Haus in a Greysheet meeting. Thank you H.P. I was angry and irritable that night which surprised me since I really liked and admired the people in those rooms. This particular Friday I was full of

judgments. The speaker was crazy, she was chewing too much gum; the others were obsessed with their scales, etc., etc. Someone suggested I listen. "Perhaps," she said, "God wanted you here tonight for a reason and you never have to come back again." Of course, you know the rest - I heard my story. I surrendered and from that first weighed and measured dinner, Feb. 22, 1991, I was full, content and obsession free. I swear by this program. I live it. I breathe it. It's not always easy, but it's definitely worth it. We have grown so much since I've joined. We are now incorporated. There will soon be a hot line, Greysheet literature, a way to reach more people. I'm proud to be part of GSAWS, Inc. I'm proud to be a member of Greysheet. I'm proud to be writing an article for Shades of Grey. I'm grateful, one day at a time, that I DON'T EAT NO MATTER WHAT!

Love and Spirituality,
Mona H., New York City, N.Y.

Entering a New Phase

I was very glad to be at the Round-Up this year, if only briefly. I cut away at the lunch break to shuttle to Chicago where my beau had been staying on business. On Sunday, atop the Hancock tower, he asked me if I would marry him. I've wanted to since I met him almost three years ago. I said "yes!" The feeling was incredible; very quiet and subtle, and very personal. Something inside me shifted and I knew I was entering a new phase in my life. It's so hard to describe. How do I

explain that seven years ago I was eating non-stop and because of that was forced to live in a VW van. Today I live in a beautiful house near the beach, with a dog, and I am engaged to be married! How do I explain that? Before I was abstinent I had only one feeling I could handle and that was comfortably numb. Now in abstinence I have all the rainbow of feelings ... including extreme sadness and extreme joy. Instead of picking up I just become grateful that at this "extreme" time I am not eating over it. When I was eating the only thing I ever planned was a binge! When am I going to be able to eat? How much can I eat? How much money do I have to eat? Today I am planning a wedding! Thank you Greysheet, Thank you Family *Angela E., Los Angeles, CA.*

Gratitude from A to Z

As my 17th Greysheet abstinent New Year approaches I am reminded of the gift of not having to make resolutions to change my life completely, which never worked for me and only left me defeated before I even began. I have so much to be thankful for as I live my program, one day at a time, and receive the gift of change as a result. An "alphabet gratitude list" helps keep me focused on all the good things I have in my life today:

- A. Abstinence (from the Greysheet without exception is the most important thing to me.)
- B. Belief (that I can recover - this program works if I work it.)
- C. Courage (to take risks, even when I am scared.)
- D. Desperation (which got me to Greysheet and keeps me weighing and measuring.)
- E. Enough (there is a limit and a boundary - finally I can leave the table satisfied.)
- F. Freedom (from having to figure out the food - my former full-time job.)
- G. Greysheet (gave me my truth, thank God - I cannot handle sugar and carbohydrates.)
- H. Humor (has been restored in abstinence, especially about myself.)
- I. Interests (I can pursue this great world now that my food obsession has been removed.)
- J. Joy (especially in the little things: arriving on time, reaching out, a hug from my niece.)
- K. Kabocha squash (a delight I would never have otherwise known!)
- L. Laura (I finally have me. And it all started with being true to myself with the food.)
- M. Meetings (which give me support, a community, a feeling of belonging, and all of you!)
- N. No Matter What (which is the backbone of my program - I do this without exception.)
- O. Open-mindedness (allowed me to try this program even though I thought it was crazy!)
- P. Present (I was always regretting yesterday or planning for tomorrow. Today is all I have.)
- Q. Questions (I still keep asking them - what a relief I don't have to know it all.)
- R. Reprieve (if I work this program, I have a daily reprieve from bingeing, dieting, vomiting, etc...)
- S. Surrender (Greysheet is my way of life. What a gift to embrace it and not have to fight it.)
- T. Taste (can now taste my food - instead of shoveling it in, and it is delicious!)
- U. Unity (I am grateful that we are in this together, doing what I could never do alone.)
- V. Vigilance (to keep doing this even when it's hard, even when I'd rather not.)

- W. Waiting (I can let the process of recovery work in me, I do not have to "make it happen.")
- X. expect (the best! I have hope for greater things to come - proven by my own experience.)
- Y. Yes (is a word I now say when I mean it. I no longer have to hide. Yes to life!)
- Z. Zipper (I used to lay on the floor to zip up my jeans - ouch! Those days are gone!)

So here are a few of the thousands of things I am grateful for in abstinence. It helps me to put them on paper and to remember how good my life is and how fortunate I am to be living in the solution. I wish you all an abstinent and delicious 1999, one day at a time.

Laura D., New York City, N.Y.

Spring Break

We were on our way to Ruidoso, New Mexico, for our fourth skiing trip. After turning 50, we took up skiing, at least 2 days a year--every other year or so. It's pretty hard to get much skiing expertise in Texas! I never became any good at skiing. Being able to successfully negotiate the "bunny" slopes was my biggest thrill. I usually fell getting off the ski lift chair, requiring help to get back up on my skis. As I look back, I can't understand what kept me going back for more. The few minutes of exhilaration doesn't seem to be enough of a reward. Was I trying to overcome one of my many fears of "losing control"? This time when I fell as I got off the ski lift chair, I felt and heard a crack! I had broken my right femur--the largest bone in the human body! I'll skip all the pain, all the help I got at Ski Apache, in the ambulance and in the hospital and go straight to the story of how a few of my fears proved unfounded. Thanks to God's gift, I have been abstinent for 17 years and 10 months. All that time, whenever I heard that someone in our Grey Sheet group had to go to the hospital, one of my fears would arise. I feared going to the hospital because I imagined that I would not be able to be abstinent there. I imagined that "medical people" would say, "You don't need to do that. Just eat what we give you." When I woke up the day after surgery to put a rod in my femur, I was greeted by the hospital dietitian with copy of the Grey Sheet in her hand. When my husband had filled out all

the paperwork for me, he had them make this copy for her. She asked me questions to clarify the amounts and the way to prepare the food. Every meal served to me during my stay in the Lincoln County Medical Center in Ruidoso was abstinent food. My husband brought backup and measuring cups, spoons, and scale. My fears were laid to rest.

From my first panicky call to my sponsor from the hospital, I have received SO MUCH help, love, and support from my Austin Grey Sheet Community! I feel very humble and grateful. My sponsor met me at the airport and stayed with me until my husband could drive our car home. Almost every day the first week I was home, someone from my Grey Sheet Community came over, fixed my food, brought food, and showed me their love and concern. I cannot put weight on my right leg and am walking with crutches and a walker. I can't drive. I have many volunteers from Grey Sheet to drive me to meetings. I cannot thank my Community enough! I am truly blessed!
Kay H., Austin, TX

Editor's Corner

Well dear Greysheeters, happy belated New Year to you all! Winter is in full swing, but it is not too late to report that the Eighth Annual New York Greysheet Round-Up last fall was the biggest gathering of Greysheeters ever. A total of 291 people attended the day-and-a-half event. Sixty-seven out-of-towners attended from California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida,

Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and even Israel. The weather on both days was marvelous and the feedback was that a good time was had by all. Now -- on to planning number nine.

Alison, K., New York City, N.Y.

Bulletin Board

The Tuesday and Thursday, 5:30 p.m. **Qualification** meetings at West Park Presbyterian Church decided that the last Thursday of each month will be an anniversary meeting. Celebrants with a year or more of abstinence, as we define it, are welcome and invited to share.