

## **Hooked On Recovery**

July 7, 2006

*Funnel Cake*

*"It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feeling we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.*

*If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics these things are poison."*  
~Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 66

A couple weekends ago, the Valentines headed down to Wildwood, New Jersey. I had never been there. Back in January the soccer team got an email from the Beach Blast advertising for teams to come to their beach tournament. Keep in mind, it was quite cold and gray and miserable, so the idea had a lot of appeal. Playing soccer on the beach? Barefoot? Sounds fun. Let's do it.

In the middle of the five hour trip I was wondering why we were doing it. The phrase "seemed like a good idea at the time" haunted me. (Rabbit Trail: Somebody help me about driving through New York City, do you have to go by way of Cleveland to avoid traffic?) However, the allure of Morey's Piers, the boardwalk, the amusement parks, and the water parks filled the kids with anticipation. They were excited. We detoured to Atlantic City and drove the coastline all the way down to Wildwood, figuring we would never pass this way again and in effect turned a five-hour drive into seven hours. Matthew was pretty good I guess; his first "are we there yet?" didn't surface until 20 minutes into the trip.

I had never heard of funnel cake until I got to Wildwood. It's New Jersey's version of fried dough. They float a cylinder in hot oil; pour in pancake (?) batter making streams and squiggles of fried gooey stuff that sticks together. They flip it a few times until just a little crunchy and then heap on piles of powdered sugar. Funnel cake is not only delicious it is also very healthy for you. I experienced one the first night we cruised the boardwalk, so I knew that they agreed with my system. The next day, I had just coached two beach soccer games (winning one and getting patted in the other), spent two solid hours in a water park in the rain sliding through tubes, on tubes, on mats, on ropes and had worn myself out. Just when I thought I was headed back to the motel for some rest and a World Cup game on TV, Joshua and Sami ran into some friends from the team and started in on the rides... oh no. Luckily, I was offered some relief by understanding parents and they sent me away assuring me that my kids were no problem.

Temporarily free, I set off on the long walk to the room. I stopped at the end of the pier and craving a funnel cake, I ordered one for the walk back. A girl, who was busy making a thousand cups of fresh lemonade (who knows why – nobody was in line), took my \$4.87 and shouted to another girl to make one funnel cake. She poured the batter, fried it for awhile, took it out of the mold and flipped it over. She was adding the sugar when another guy ordered a funnel cake and walked to where I was waiting. Having just finished a masterpiece of fried dough, she looked up

and handed my funnel cake to the wrong guy! I was shocked. With absolutely no clue and no remorse, this guy stuck his grubby old finger in the middle of my cake and walked off.

Now, usually I would not make a big deal of something like that, but I was tired, hungry, cold and my feet were really sore. I walked up to the girl making the lemonade and asked for my money back. She was reluctant. ‘Why?’ she asked. ‘Because she gave my funnel cake to another guy and I don’t want to wait any longer!’ I whined with great intensity. Next a manager came over, maybe 18 years old and wanted my receipt. My receipt? I stuck my hand in the wet pocket of my bathing suit and gave him some paper that fell apart as soon as he touched it. After taking a long time to write out a new receipt, he handed me my money in silence.

What makes me act like such a brat sometimes? Part of me, the dangerous part of me, can rationalize just about anything. That voice said, ‘Phillip, you’ve been too ‘soft’ for too long. You’ve been letting people step on you. For a long time now, you have gone out of your way to be understanding, meeting people in the middle, sacrificing and compromising. What have you gotten for all your trouble? Somebody else got your funnel cake. You’re not a doormat you know! Nice job back there. It’s about time.’

I was having this self-talk as I trudged on down the boardwalk, trying to convince myself I was righteous in my anger. Then a phrase from the Big Book reared its head so I couldn’t ignore it. ‘Anger... the dubious luxury of normal men’. Damn. I couldn’t afford to be angry. I couldn’t afford a justifiable resentment. I realized I was tired, my feet really hurt, and that I was still upset at getting pased in the second soccer game. So, with a visible shrug, I let it go to the best of my ability. Maybe I should have gone back and apologized, but I didn’t.

I stopped at another stand and bought a funnel cake. With strawberries.

*"Dubious luxury." How often have I remembered those words. It's not just anger that's best left to non-alcoholics; I built a list including justifiable resentment, self-pity, judgmentalism, self-righteousness, false pride and false humility. I'm always surprised to read the actual quote. So well have the principles of the program been drummed into me that I keep thinking all of these defects are listed too. Thank God I can't afford them--or I surely would indulge in them.*  
~Bill Wilson, author of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Hooked on Recovery* is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at [phillip@ccar.us](mailto:phillip@ccar.us). Visit the website at [www.ccar.us](http://www.ccar.us) to read the entire series.