

I had known Jim from the 1970s on, as financial public relations contact at CBS, Warner Brothers, ABC and Abernathy/MacGregor. I remember him from the drinking days, and the non-drinking days, though I was not paying much attention to the latter when I desperately came to him for help in 1987 for what I thought was a nervous breakdown. I asked him for the name of a psychiatrist, which he gave me, but that didn't work, and he came up to my home in Connecticut (getting him to leave NYC was a testament in itself!), and recommended Caron. I was so desperate to be "fixed" that I took his advice, not understanding why I would be going there if my problems were mental, and I didn't drink like my image of a Bowery alcoholic (though there was no day I didn't drink). At the time, I was not only not aware of Caron, but knew nothing about alcoholism, AA, nor the fact that Jim was in recovery. After a month there, I came to understand what alcoholism was and that I was one. Also, that the slogan that it's 10% drinking (which I did every night) and 90% thinking was the explanation for my condition. From my experience at Caron, I also loved the slogan, "if the cure works, chances are you have the disease". And it did work, because of Caron and Jim.

While I had a bit of a shock initially at the spiritual part of the program, I know I had a "God moment" when I realized that of all the people I could have asked for help, I picked the only one I knew who had the answer. And he happened to be my closest friend. In retrospect, this was kind of ironic, since Jim's forte was not that part of the program.

Jim was unique-he loved to come off as gruff and sarcastic, with an elegant style, but he was a softie at heart, though he'd never admit it. His efforts not only for Caron, but AA in general, were wide and legendary, including work in Cuba, where he met Maria Hendrickson, a great Caron asset, and in Russia among other places. His fundraising skills for Caron were immense, in part because every prospect fell for both the cause and the charm.

I miss Jim greatly, thinking of him on what would have been his 80th birthday in January, and his 40th in sobriety last August. I miss our annual visits to Caron to celebrate our mutual anniversaries the first week of every August when we would tell our stories to the patient community in what was our Alma Mater.

Dennis Leibowitz

