



**The following testimony was from a Client who attended the Villa in 1976 and wanted to share her story in the hopes she could help other women who had an addiction and were in desperate need of help. It was originally published in The Villa Newsletter – Villa Vignettes.**

*It was New Year's Eve morning and the driver for Renfrew Detoxification Centre deposited me on the doorstep of The Villa. Secretary Betty Avery met me. She introduced me to Nurse-Director Jean Mackie, who explained The Villa's purpose: to help women with an alcohol problem. And, did I have one!*

*For about 10 years on and off, I had tried half-heartedly to stay away from booze. I went to a few A. A. meetings in Calgary and Grande Prairie. I even spent 28 days at Henwood Recovery Centre outside Edmonton. I listened, but I didn't hear. I learned a lot about alcoholism. But that couldn't apply to me!*

*On Christmas Day, when my son drove me home from his family's Christmas dinner, he suggested coldly and with no outward emotion "Mom, why don't you go on social assistance, check in at the queen's Hotel and drink yourself to death." An engraved invitation to suicide. And I didn't want to die!*

*The next morning, my son phoned my boss and gave him a phone number and a name for me to call if I wanted help. I wanted help! I finally admitted I was defeated. That number was Renfrew and there, in a week I dried out. It was at Renfrew I heard of The Villa and I asked to be sent there. It was the best decision of my life.*

*At The Villa I started to eat properly, to sleep without the drugging effect of several triples. I talked honestly to my counsellor. In my mind, she planted ideas which eventually took root: that alcoholism is a disease and is nothing to be ashamed of; that I had to be completely honest with myself and with others. I had to get rid of my feelings of guilt and shame. Sure, I was a lush, but I found all the other residents were too, and we talked about ourselves in group therapy. It was a confessional of women, each of whom had reached her own personal bottom.*

*I started to go to A.A. meetings, as many as I could get to. This time I heard. Gradually my mind was sorting itself out. Physically I was feeling good. At The Villa I always had someone to talk to, another resident, or a staff member. Or I could sit quietly by myself and think. I was at The Villa for two months.*

*The usual 28 day course then was extended because part of our recovery treatment was a life skills program at AADAC and it was*



*closed for extensive remodeling. Honestly, I was THAT slow a learner!*

*I had training in home nursing and went back to it when I left The Villa. Through Doreen, I found a little housekeeping flat, I worked hard. I threw myself into the A.A. Program.*

*Last Christmas Day I had my second birthday in A.A. Two years without a drink. Two of the best years I can remember. Two years ago I was sick, broke, bankrupt in every area of my life. Today I have family, friends, money in the bank and a way of life through A.A. I had never thought possible. It was at The Villa I started the road back.*

*As you read this, I will be on my job which has taken me to Palm Springs for two months. From poolside in California, this recovered alcoholic says, "Thank you, Villa and Staff!"*

*~ FJW*

*Villa*

*Vignettes*