

“Let’s Try That Again”

Rev. Leland Bond-Upson, given at 1st Unitarian of Honolulu, 2Jan11

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You may remember me telling you the first time I preached, that I liked food a little too much, and drink a little too much, and exercise a little too little? Well I spent 3 years losing 40 pounds, and gained 20 of it back in 4 months here.

I wasn’t content to just be happy to be here, and I started rewarding myself with things I truly, deeply know I shouldn’t eat or drink at all, let alone in excess. So now my pants are too tight and I have to do something, beginning right now.

Historically, I haven’t been a good Resolution-keeper. I can think of only one that I was successful with: I quit smoking, for the 1st time, in 1969, started again in the mid-1970s, quit again, started up in the late 70s, and quit for the 3rd and final time in February 1982.

We had moved to Marin Co 3 years earlier, after a two-year stint being urban pioneers in the W.A. of S.F. It was there we began our home remodeling, restoring an 1871 Italianate Victorian that had been chopped into two apartments into something resembling it’s former glory. This began a pattern that would see us buy, live in, and renovate five more times in the next 20 years.

We were making good money, got lucky with SHKEC, but made the most of it.

So now we were a couple of years in to living and fixing a 1950s ranch home on a hillside in Kent Woodlands. We’d gotten Christmas flannel nightshirts that were soft and warm, perfect for our mildly chilly Bay Area winters. I loved wearing it around the house. Deborah had one too, and her brother Chuck, and our friend

Jeffrey. And even though we had two babies by then, we still liked to do young-people things like sit around a glass table in our nightshirts, smoking cigarettes, drinking coffee, and playing fairly serious poker. (I came in 2nd recently).

So imagine how pleased I was to find a nice round burn-hole in my new nightshirt. Also, I had developed stinky yellow fingers on the index and middle fingers of my right hand. Also, the price of a pack was scheduled to go up to 50 cents a pack! My habit was a pack and a half a day, so I figured to save \$275 a year.

[I see with disbelief that a pack now costs about \$9. Apparently they're taxing tobacco to death. My habit today would cost me almost \$5,000 a year.]

So in the last week of February, 1982, I decided to quit again. Apparently, I was psychologically ready, because when the craving came, I dismissed it as "the devil." I was able to tell it, get behind me, Satan, you're just neuro-chemical reaction.

They say it takes 3 weeks to process and get through a big change like this. And that presumes you really and truly want to change something. And I noticed that by being resolute, and continuing to dismiss the craving as a Satanic temptation. I did it without pharmaceuticals, partly because I wanted to beat this thing on my own, and partly because I thought it gave me a better shot to, in effect, just say 'no.'

My wife at the time, Deborah, also smoked, and she wasn't quite ready to quit. So I had to go the rest of 1982 being around her and most of our gang still smoking. Didn't pay it no nevermind, because I had made my decision.

Deborah had quit as soon as she knew she was pregnant, both times, but both times resumed after she quit nursing.

However, 10 months later, on New Year's Day, 1983, she quit for the last time too, and we've been cigarette-free since then, saving well more than \$100,000, and untold health consequences.

OK—so I can do something like this. Now I need to turn that blinding willpower against excessive food and drink.

How 'bout you? What do you want to do or not do?

Letter-writing: everyone got supplies?

We now invite you to write down a few things you resolve to do or stop doing.

These resolutions are completely confidential. They will be kept by the Church and mailed back to you at the end of 2011. I'll say more about the Resolutions in a minute.

But first, please begin by addressing an envelop to yourself. If you're not sure exactly where you'll be a year from now, leave the address blank (but put your name somewhere on the evp.)

You can write one or more resolutions, or zero. I suggest you write three,

1. a resolution that you can probably keep—a 'safety' resolution, so to speak;
2. something that is more of a challenge, but possible given sufficient resolve and mindfulness; and finally,
3. something that is a stretch, that perhaps can only be dreamed of, or only begun, at this point—something that you would very much like to do (or refrain from doing) that you could do, if habit, and lack of will were no object.

No peeking at your neighbors' work!

Whatever you have written, fold your sheet and put it in envelope, seal it, and put it in the baskets the ushers will now pass around