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DEVELOPMENT OF A LINE OF GREETING CARDS FOR ALCOHOLICS AND

THOSE IMPACTED BY ALCOHOLISM

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BY

ALICE C. MILLIGAN

Thesis Advisor

Michael S. McGraw, Ph.D.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Corporate and Public Communincations Seton Hall University

2001

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank and recognize her husband, David, for his unwavering love, support and encouragement throughout the research and writing of this thesis project. She would also like to express her gratitude to her father, without whom she would not have had the experiences to draw from in creating this project. The author also expresses her appreciation to Norman and Adele Milligan for their love and support and Dr. Michael McGraw for his guidance and advice in developing this project. Finally, many thanks to Paula DiDonato for the photographs that made the cards real.

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Research Question

Do the greeting cards that are widely accessible and available in today's marketplace target alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism? This project will explore the opportunity to create inspirational greeting cards that focus on this audience.

Purpose of the Project

The author will look at the purchasing demographics and trends in the greeting card industry and demonstrate synergies between that population and the growing population of alcoholics. This project will also demonstrate that greeting cards that specifically address alcoholism focus primarily on recovery and the alcoholic and have limited distribution. This creates an opportunity for more mainstream inspirational greeting cards that address the emotions and needs of the alcoholic as well as those whose lives are touched by alcoholism. Furthermore, recognition of alcoholism as a disease, the incorporation and protection of alcoholics under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the increasing number of people impacted by the disease has reduced the stigma attached to it. Although some sufferers and their friends and families conceal the problem, it is now a choice and less a way of life.

As an adult child of an alcoholic, the author understands the emotions and aspects of alcoholism and how it can impact lives. The author has also experienced first-hand the need to express feelings, give support, and reach out to siblings, parent, and friends who have been impacted by this disease in a way that is meaningful, specific, and non-verbal. Because of the volatility of emotions or situations and the likelihood of dysfunctional relationships associated with alcoholism, a communication vehicle that helps individuals express their feelings in a sensitive, open, thoughtful, and discrete fashion is necessary at times. The author designed a line of prototype cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism that are suitable for mainstream distribution.

Objectives

In undertaking this project the author has three main objectives. The first is to determine whether there is a greeting card product that currently targets alcoholics and their friends and families. Do cards that target alcoholics or alcoholism exist? If so, what types, what is the focus and are they readily available? The second is to explore the synergies between the greeting card marketplace in the United States and the population impacted by alcoholism. Are there similarities between alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism and the population that purchases greeting cards? Do the trends in the greeting card industry support the demand for this type of emotional and honest communication? The third objective is to develop a prototype line of greeting cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism. The author strives to meet these objectives through a review of the literature, personal observations and explorations, and the development of a line of greeting cards.

Definition of Terms

<u>Alcoholism</u>: A chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal. It is characterized by continuous or periodic: impaired

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Chapter I

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INTRODUCTION

Greeting cards have long been a method of communication used within the United States. They have the power to touch people in many ways and have the ability to elicit a wide range of emotions. The year 1998 marked the 56th consecutive year of increased retail sales in the ink-on-paper greeting card industry. Today, this industry generates more than \$7 billion in retail sales from consumer purchases of more than 6 billion cards in the United States (2000 Greeting Card Industry Directory, 2000). According to the Greeting Card Association, 90% of all U.S. households purchase at least one greeting card per year. Since 1993, the number of households purchasing greeting cards has grown more than 6% and retail sales have increased almost 20%. Women continue to purchase approximately 80% of all greeting cards (2000 Greeting Card Industry Directory, 2000). There are significant trends demonstrating an increase in the sale of everyday-general friendship cards and an increased need for more emotion-based me-to-you messages in the form of greetings.

A strong majority of consumers enjoy sending greeting cards and consider them a thoughtful and special method of communication. They make it easier for the sender to express their feelings, have sentimental value, and connect the sender and recipient in a tactile, highly personal way. Greeting cards are also affordable and, for the most part, widely accessible. There is a greeting card for control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably denial (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. 2000).

<u>Alcoholic:</u> A person who suffers from alcoholism. A person who drinks alcoholic liquors habitually and to excess (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 1982).

<u>Progressive</u>: The disease persists over time and physical, emotional, and social changes are often cumulative and may progress as drinking continues (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. 2000).

<u>Denial</u>: A psychological defense mechanism disavowing the significance of events designed to reduce awareness of the fact that alcohol use is the cause of an individual's problems rather than a solution to those problems. Denial is an integral part of the disease (National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. 2000).

Limitations

A limitation to this project is that it focuses on alcoholics and alcoholism and greeting cards in the United States. These theories may apply internationally as well, however, the author finds it necessary to limit research to one country.

The second limitation is that the project limits the assessment to alcoholics and alcoholism. The author recognizes that many of the emotions, needs, and demographics may exist for other addictions such as, gambling, drugs, overeating, and so forth. However, the author is most personally familiar with alcohol related issues and therefore chose to concentrate on this area. The third limitation is that the project focuses on paper-based greeting cards. As the Internet has grown, so has the popularity and use of electronic greeting cards. However, the author chose paper-based cards for the prototypes due to the nature and sensitivity of the subject matter and its widespread availability. Although the growth of electronic communication has been widely publicized, it is estimated that by 2003 only 65% of households will have personal computers and only 58% of households will have Internet access (Greeting Card Industry Directory, 2000).

The final two limitations encountered by the author were a) a lack of information and resources specific to the area of inspirational greeting cards available for alcoholics and friends and families from the perspective of support organizations for alcoholism such alcoholics anonymous; and, b) the lack of willingness of greeting card companies to provide information around this subject since most are privately held and view revealing such information as a competitive threat. These limitations in themselves, however, support the premise that the greeting cards proposed in this project are neither widely available, nor widely known.

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Chapter II

PERSPECTIVES ON GREETING CARD COMMUNICATIONS AND ALCOHOLISM

Introduction

Through personal experience, the author perceived a gap in the current marketplace for inspirational greeting cards addressing the needs of alcoholics and those impacted by alcohol addiction. As a result the author began a search to investigate three main areas. First, to determine whether there is a greeting card product that currently targets alcoholics and their friends and families. Second, to explore the synergies between the greeting card marketplace in the United States and the population impacted by alcoholism. Third, to develop a prototype line of greeting cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism. The author chose to investigate these areas through a literature review, personal observations, and an in-store and Internet search for existing greeting cards targeted at alcoholism.

Demographic Synergies

By reviewing literature associated with greeting cards and alcoholism, the author noted several corresponding trends within the increasing population of alcoholics and the primary purchasers of greeting cards. In 1998, women made up one-third of the Alcoholics Anonymous population (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1998). There are also approximately 1 million women alcoholics within the United States. According to the Greeting Card Association (2000), women

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purchase 80% of the greeting cards sold in the United States. Not only is there a substantial population of female alcoholics, but women are also associated with the male population of alcoholics: mothers, sisters, daughters, wives. Today, approximately 14 million Americans, 7.4% of the population, meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism (Grant, Harford, Dawson, Chou, DuFour, & Pickering, 1994). Also, more than one half of American Adults have a close family member who has or has had alcoholism (Dawson & Grant 1998). The estimated economic cost of alcohol abuse was \$184.6 billion for 1998 alone or roughly \$638 for every man, woman, and child living in the United States that year (Harwood, 2000). The research provides evidence that there are similarities between the population impacted by alcoholism and the population that purchases greeting cards within the United States. It also demonstrates that the population impacted by alcoholism is growing.

Emerging Greeting Card Markets

Greeting card manufacturers are looking for growing and emerging card markets. Although the greeting card industry sold over \$7 billion in cards in 1998, sales are flattening and earnings are lackluster despite a robust economy (Stodghill & Keith, 1999). Greeting card manufacturers and producers are constantly looking for new, emerging markets and new, different card lines. The content of greeting cards is changing along with the economics and greeting card publishers and manufacturers have begun to recognize and capitalize on a growing trend toward more emotion-based, me-to-you type cards. In 1996, manufacturers introduced lines of women-to-women cards tackling subjects

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alcoholism that other family members are seriously affected by the alcoholic (Gravitz & Bowden 1985). Family life within actively alcoholic homes is inconsistent, unpredictable, arbitrary, and chaotic. This environment creates a family that has difficulty with showing emotions, with intimacy, and with having fun (Gravitz & Bowden 1985). This can be referred to as a dysfunctional family. Within alcoholic relationships, individual friends and family members may experience low self-esteem, seek approval and affirmation, and feel they are different from other people. The emotions and difficulties in communicating that characterize alcoholic relationships make those impacted by the disease strong targets for emotion-based greeting cards from both a purchasing and receiving perspective. The growing trends in the need for more frank, personal greeting cards are also consistent with the potential needs of those impacted by alcoholism. Emotion-based greeting cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism could provide an outlet for them to express difficult emotions they are unable to verbalize.

Also, the nature of alcoholism and the alcohol dependence is progressive and follows a pattern over time as indicated in the following description by Ludwig (1988):

- Salience of drinking behavior. Alcohol consumption takes residence over other important activities despite negative physical and social consequences.
- Tolerance. More and more alcohol is required over time to produce the same effects.

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- 3. Withdrawal symptoms. Alcohol use increases, sudden drops in intake or blood alcohol level tend to be associated with physical withdrawal symptoms such as shakiness, agitation, insomnia, and confusion.
- 4. Use of alcohol to avoid withdrawal.
- 5. Compulsion to use alcohol. Individuals experience a growing compulsion, desire, or craving for alcohol, especially during attempts to curb its use, as well as impaired ability to reduce the amount consumed.
- 6. Readdiction potential or recovery and relapse. As individuals experience a growing lack of control over the frequency and amount of alcohol intake or experience its negative consequences, they may desire to quit drinking on a temporary or even permanent basis. However, following a variable period of abstinence, individuals have a tendency to revert rapidly to old drinking patterns after beginning to drink again. (p. 135–136)

The readdictive potential of alcoholism can also contribute to the need for emotion-based, inspirational greeting cards and along with the research, the author's personal experience supports this as well. There are many milestones and pitfalls associated with alcoholism's recovery and relapse. The author believes this creates the opportunity to celebrate, encourage, and support the alcoholic through the many stages of alcoholism and for those impacted by alcoholism to do the same for each other. This need is not so much occasion driven like the traditional greeting card marketplace, but requires the availability of more everyday, alternative greeting cards.

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Internet Search

In order to research the availability of inspirational greeting cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcohol abuse, the author conducted a personal search. She scanned widely known Internet electronic card sites including Hallmark, Blue Mountain, and Carlton. On these broad market sites, her search uncovered the availability of emotion-based electronic greeting cards that addressed illness, death and sympathy, relationship issues, and so forth. The inspirational cards she found were focused on difficult situations that, to the extent of her search, were not specific to alcoholics and their friends and families. The author did uncover greeting cards targeted at alcoholics on smaller, lesswidely known Internet sites through key word searches. These cards were primarily focused on the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step Program. They focused on key milestones in the alcoholic's recovery. For example, recognizing 30, 60, or 90 days of sobriety or on program slogans such as "Easy Does It" or "Let Go and Let God". Most were focused on the alcoholic, and, few were targeted at individuals impacted by alcoholism.

In Store Search

The author conducted a limited search of greeting card stores in the New York and New Jersey area. The search consisted of two Hallmark greeting card stores and four retail stores that sold greeting cards along with other products. The search uncovered findings similar to the Internet search. The stores carried emotion-based and inspirational greeting cards addressing illness, death and sympathy, relationship issues, support, and so forth. However, they were

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focused on difficult situations that were not specific to alcoholics and their friends and families.

Personal Observations

The author contacted Alcoholics Anonymous headquarters to inquire about greeting cards targeted at alcoholics and those impacted by alcoholism. They had limited information on the subject and suggested an Internet search as a means to gather any additional information.

The author canvassed friends, family, and co-workers that are alcoholics or have been impacted by alcoholism to determine whether they had information on inspirational greeting cards. Some had knowledge of specific, targeted greeting cards as referenced above. However, most had no knowledge of any greeting cards associated with Alcoholism including those that were members of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon. Personally, the author noted that prior to this thesis project, she had no knowledge of greeting cards targeted at this audience. Also, gathering information to support this thesis project was difficult to find or access, again supporting the notion that these cards are neither widely known nor widely accessible.

Literature Search

In order to explore the synergies between the greeting card marketplace in the United States and the population impacted by alcoholism, the author conducted a review of available literature. This review consisted of two main areas. The first gathered information regarding the greeting card industry and

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trends in the greeting card marketplace. The second focused on alcoholism and its impact on the alcoholic and their friends and family.

Several resources were used to investigate the greeting card industry and current and future trends. The Greeting Card Association, a nationwide industry trade organization, provides audiotapes, written information, an annual directory, and a web site all focused on providing information on the greeting card industry. Through this association, the author found sources of information on the past, current and future trends in consumer greeting card purchases as well as the demographics of the marketplace. They also provide a list of over 2,000 greeting card manufacturers and publishers that identifies the nature and type of cards they produce. Since many greeting card manufacturers and publishers are privately held, the Greeting Card Association is one of the few resources available to provide this type of industry information to the general public. Also, on-line resources such as American Demographics

(www.americandemographics.com) and Britannica.com (www.britannica.com) were good sources for on greeting card marketplace trends, industry sizing, and greeting card lines.

In order to gather information regarding alcoholism, statistics, and impact, the author used a number of resources. On-line sources such as American Demographics and Britannica.com were good sources for definitions and financial and statistical impact data. Targeted on-line sources such as the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and

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Control and Prevention, and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and

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Virtual Serenity Cards

Grant Me The Secondly...

Sending a card is easy, just follow the instructions at each step along the way. The cards are stored in a non-indexed directory so only you & the recipient will have access to the card. This directory is also pretty secure from spammers, so send your card knowing you will not end up on any junk list.

After you have completed the card, you will be shown a preview. If you do not like your card, you may edit it & then send it, or just cancel the request. The recipient will receive an e-mail advising where to find the card.

STEP #1: Pick a Picture

Please select a picture from the list below using the Radio Button selector. You may only pick one picture per card. If you want to see a full size image of a picture, just click on it & it will open in a new window. Close the window to return to this page.

	c	You Are A Miracle AA: Keep Coming Back		
	c	Serenity Prayer God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can & the wisdom to know the difference.		
One at a Time	0	One Day at a Time Live in the now.		
	c	Relax God is in Charge Help someone turn it over to their Higher Power.		

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	0	Progess Not Perfection A gentle reminder that our progress is what counts & perfection is not attainable.	
	0	Keep it Simple	
	0	Third Step Prayer God I offer myself to thee to build with me & to do with me as thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do thy will	
Исср Солла (ВЦСК 1655 2000 Солла (Солла (Сола (Солла (Солла (Солла (Солла (Солла (Со	0	Keep Coming Back It gets better. Then it gets worse. Then it gets real. Then it gets different. Then it gets real different.	
	0	Seventh Step Prayer My Creator, I am now willing that you should hav all of me, good & bad	
	c	AA Symbol Congratulations! Keep coming back, it works, i really does.	
	0	God Danced the day <u>you</u> were born.	
	c	Recovery is an <i>inside</i> job.	

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Recovery Ps. Local		
The Best SPONSOR on Eyrak	o	The Best Sponsor on Earth Let your sponsor know how you feel about them.
E T	o	One Day at a Time
do	c	Life is a Dance When You Do the Steps

STEP #2: Name & Email Information

In the boxes below, please enter both your's & the recipient's name & e-mail addresses.

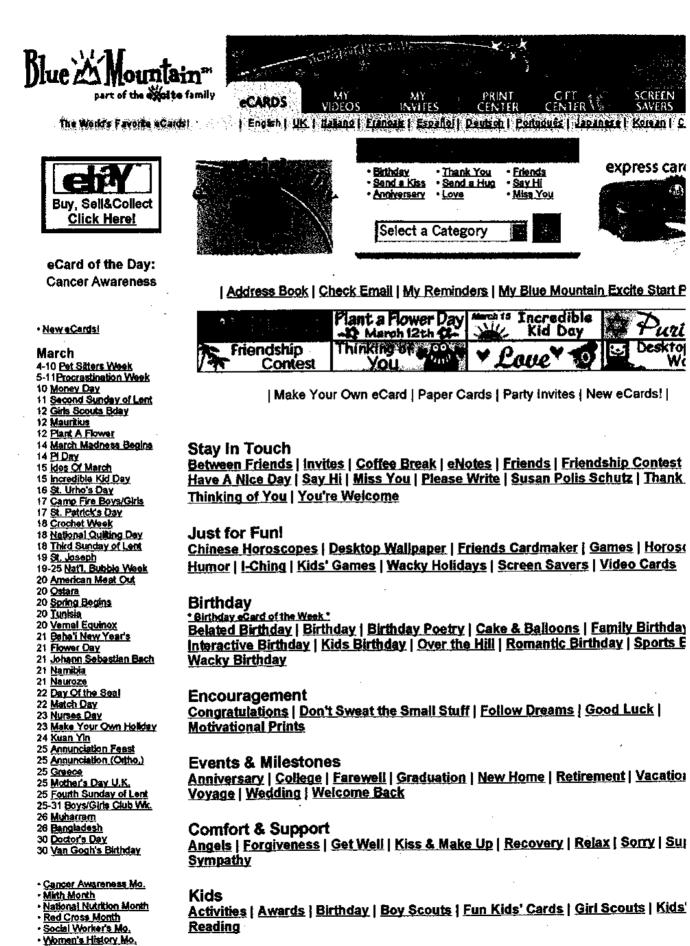
Please be Certain of Recipient's Email Address

Your Name:	
Your E-Mail Address:	
Recipient's Name:	
Recipient's E-Mail Address:	·]

STEP #3: Select Your Text & Background Colors Using the two selector pulldowns below, please select your text & background colors. Do not use the same colors for the text & background or the text will not be visible!

Text		1 _ · ·	White
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		Dadigiouria	the second se

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http://www.bluemountain.com/







Blue Mountain | Excite | Related Cards



Send Paper Cards | Go to My Address Book



Sometimes You Have to Wing it... by Kristin



Everyone is a Work in Progress by Ashlev



It's Going to Be OK... by Barin Taylor



Acceptance Poem by Regina Hill

Visdor know the dif



1 . .	
「 ない ちょうかい ちょうしょう	
- Y	

Congratulations by Collin McCarty



May You Find Hope by Ashley



Life is Hard.... by Ashley



As You Recover Poem by Susan Hickman Sater



You Deserve the Best by Poem by Susan Polis Schutz



Make Me an Instrument of by St. Francis of Assisi

Related Cards: Support Poetry | Support | Congratulations | Follow Your Dreams | Good Luck

Back to top

Frequently Asked Questions Advertise on Blue Mountain Press Releases Jobs@Excite

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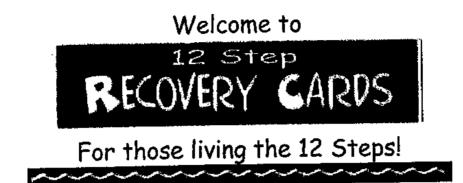
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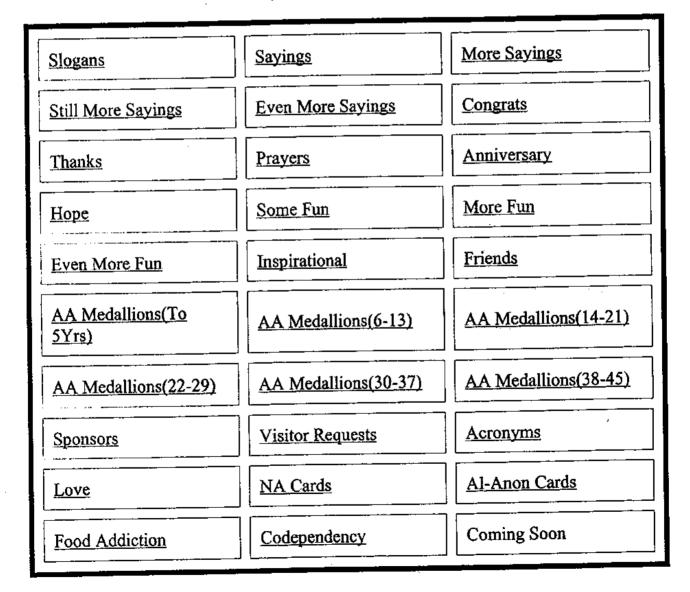
http://www.bluemountain.com/eng3/recovery/

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Make Someone's Day! Send a Postcard!

Click your selected category

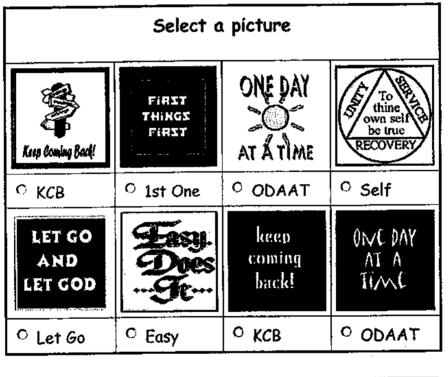


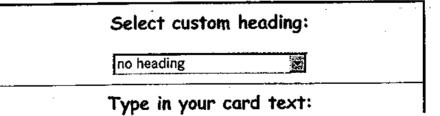
New cards are added regularly, please stop back often!

'SLOGANS'

Send your postcard here

Click here to see larger view of cards!



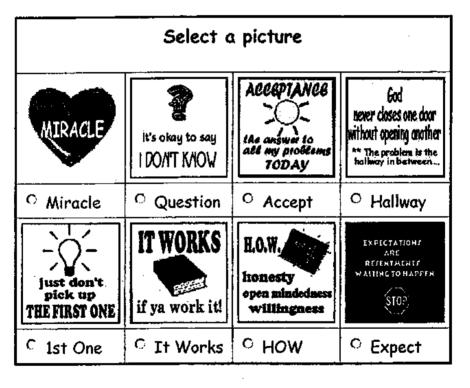


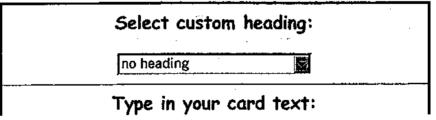


'SAYINGS'

Send your postcard here

Click here to see larger view of cards!



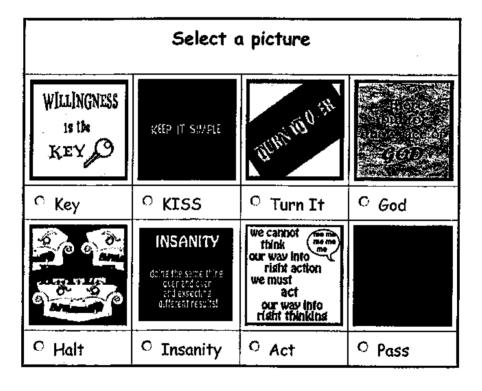


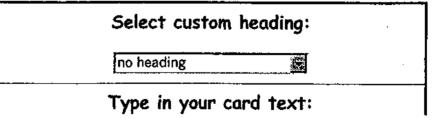


'SAYINGS 2'

Send your postcard here

<u>Click here to see larger view of cards!</u>





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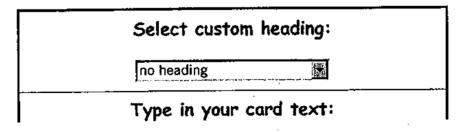


STILL MORE SAYINGS!

Send your postcard here

<u>Click here to see larger view of cards!</u>

Select a picture			
Expect A MB&CLE	PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION	I can't 🔆 🔆 He can I'll let Him	There are no Coincidences
° X Miracle	O PNP	C I Can't	^O Coincidences
RECOVERY is a process not an event	More will be revealed	God never gives us more than we can handle	God did not bring yoa this far to desert yoa now
O Process	C Revealed	° Handle	° God





Cards of hope for those recovering from alcohol & drug addiction

There are millions of cards printed every year that celebrate anything from birthdays to weddings to Bah-Mitzvahs. These cards bring us joy, make us feel loved, and help us through difficult times. Why then, with so many cards out there, is there not one single card celebrating freedom from the most crippling, life-shattering disease of all?

Alcoholism.

Recovery Cards is the answer to the void that fills card shelves in stores all over this world. These original cards are funny, touching, and most importantly, help you say 'way to go' to a special friend or loved-one who is working day to day to remain free of drugs or alcohol.

If you're interested, you can order a set of 10 cards for only \$19.95. Just go to our <u>ordering information</u> page to print out a form, and then mail it to *Recovery Cards*.

Sample Cards Order Information Email Recovery Cards

Visit Alcoholics Anonymous

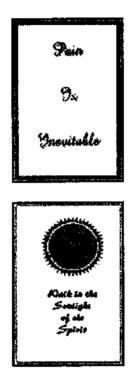
Recovery Cards. All rights reserved. Copyright @ 1996.



These are just a few of the cards that are available.

There are a variety of birthday and inspirational cards available.

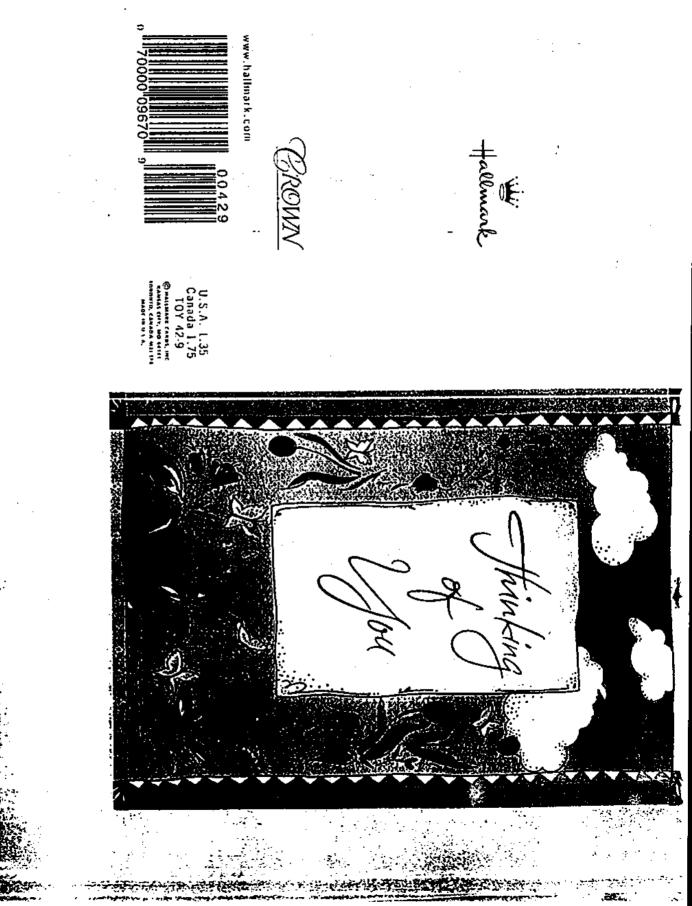
(Click on a thumbnail for a larger view)



APPENDIX B

IN STORE SEARCH SAMPLES

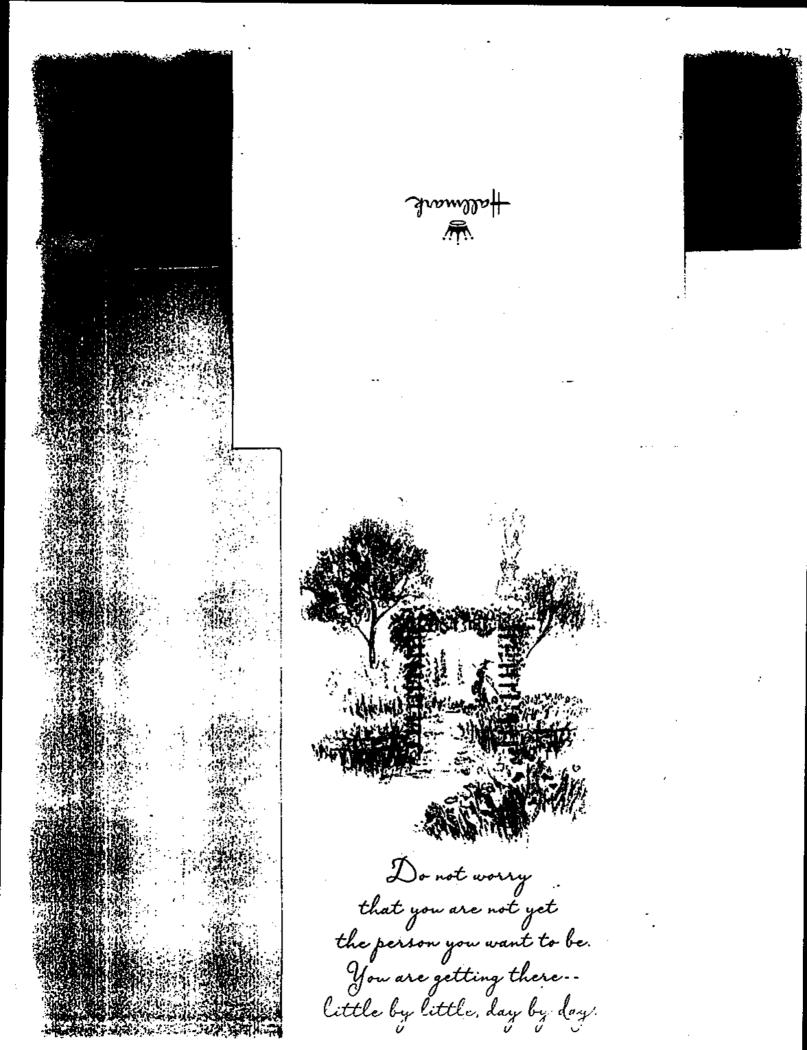
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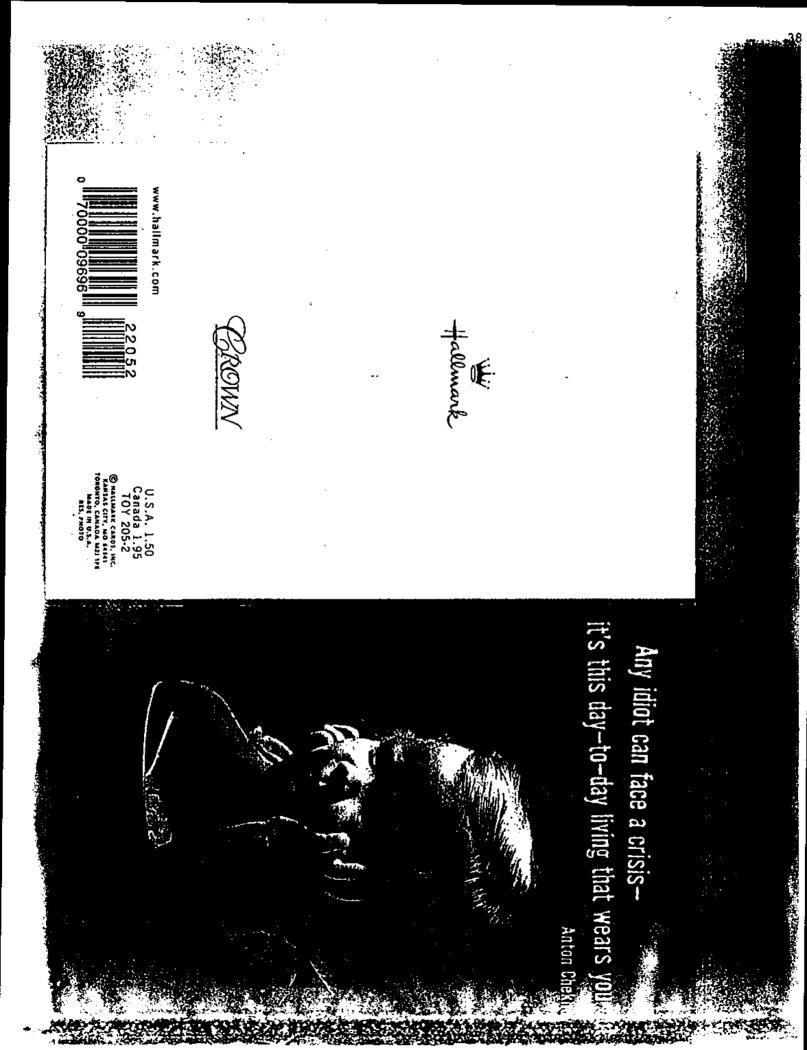


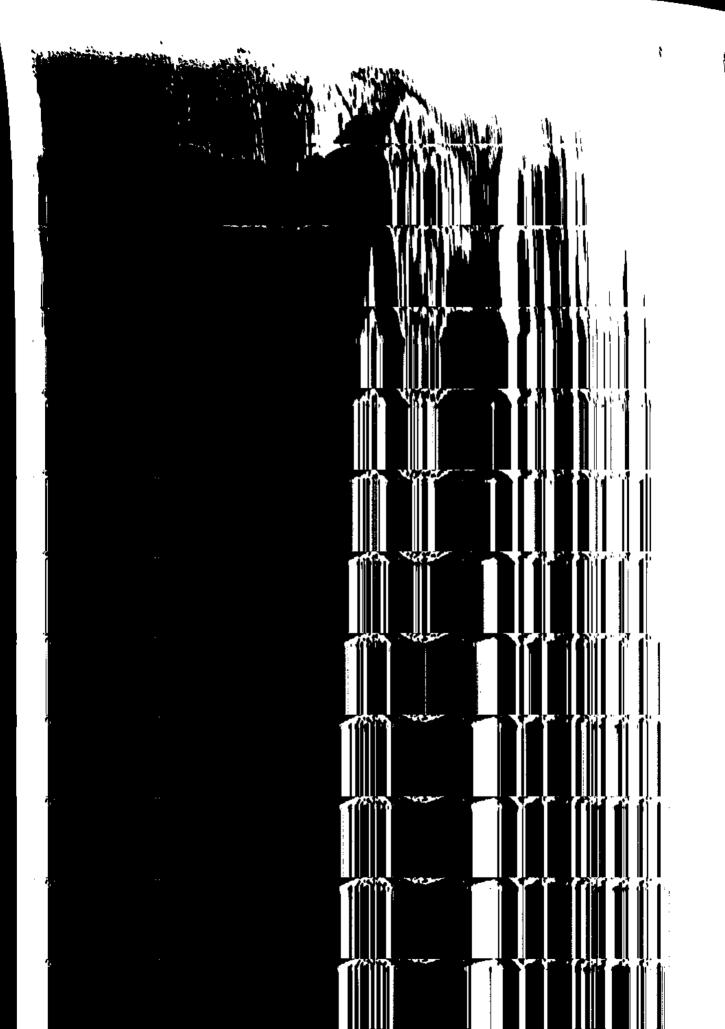
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www.hallmark.com 36 Hallmark GROWIN CHALLMARK CARDS, INC KANSAS CITY, MO 44141 U.S.A. 2.25 Canada 2.75 OY 59-6 avious time right now, and I wish there were something I could do) know you're and the frustration you must feel...







THESIS PROJECT AND DESCRIPTION

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