

My Path to Gainful Employment

A poem by: Randy Bross

I am a realistic man,
I knew that it was a pipe dream,
If I thought I could make a living,
On my poetry.
I wanted to offer my talent of writing.
I gave it some thought,
The answer arrived to me.
I ought to pursue a career in journalism,
Where I would find a viable avenue,
To see my efforts in print.
I was determined,
To get my foot in the door,
By making an impression.
I honed my skills,
I made it to the place,
Where I thought I chose a career.
I parlayed,
A part as a co-op education student,
For my hometown newspaper,
Into one where I was staff,
For the campus newspaper,
At my university,
Then my academic path
Was cut short.
I wouldn't know it at the time,
But later found it to be mental illness,

To be the cruel blow,
That ended my scholarly times.
I thought I landed back on my feet,
When a correspondent position,
Though an unpaid volunteer position came up.
I thought it was enough to see my contribution in print.
I was ecstatic at first,
But without a wage,
After a while,
And I thought I wasn't encouraged,
Not being told I was vital to the operation.
I lost the zest for it.
So I quit.
I thought something of the same would arrive.
I cursed my bi-polar disorder for taking away,
The potential I thought was awaiting me.
There was no outlet for me.
I didn't know what to do with myself.
Thankfully a door opened one day,
It gave me a place of belonging,
A feeling of acceptance.
I could forget whatever my secret shames were.
It was a Canadian Mental Health Association leisure links site,
Named the Loft.
I was free to sit over a cup of coffee,
And come out of my shell,
At the level of comfort I was suited to.

As good as the loft is,
For not making me feel ashamed,
There was a part of me,

That itched to make a contribution,
Not only there,
But away from the safety of its closure.
I longed to earn myself respect,
And play a vital part of the community.
While making a healthy wage,
In addition to what is there with,
Disability benefits.

The only pressure put on me,
Was the pressure I was
Putting on myself.
I wanted more from myself,
And for me.
I had it in my mind,
That I was not living a respectable life.
When I make this statement,
I know that it is disputed,
By my family,
And the friends that I have.
The truth as I see it,
Is that I am going,
To benefit by working,
And still have my attendance,
At the leisure links site.

In the meantime,
To have myself get out of my apartment,
One of my social workers asked me,
How I would feel about volunteering my time.
I was willing to do so.

She set me up with the Hanover Habitat for Humanity Re-Store.

For the time I was there,

It provided me an adequate excuse,

To come out into the community.

I am not what is considered an expert,

In home repair and improvement,

But that was not a deterrent,

For the people who watched over me.

They were happy they had another two hands,

To lend their service,

And a back to handle some of the burden.

I am happy to the Re-Store for the role,

It played towards me,

Getting employment.

I don't remember if I did say if I had,

Bi-polar disorder during my time there,

And if I did no one made me feel,

Like I had a detriment.

I had hoped for the best,

That I could be helped,

When I went to the HARC agency,

That serves in helping find employment,

For people with disabilities.

The realistic part of me,

Knew it was going to take some time.

The first time hadn't worked out as I would have liked,

But in retrospect I am happy it wasn't a success.

I am sure some people could be happy being a dishwasher.

I wasn't one of them.

Time had elapsed,

But nothing was coming,
And then to my pleasant surprise,
Some employment became available,
That I am able to handle.
If more hours become available,
I would like that.
Mind you it isn't a dream job in reporting,
But that won't prevent me,
From performing to the best,
Of my abilities.
Mind you nothing is saying that I will,
Not return to the field of journalism,
Or finding luster in poetry.

With the position I am in now,
I have gained gainful employment.
While having the best of both worlds,
Where I can remain with the leisure links site.
I have the advantage,
Of having more incoming pay,
And I hope the opportunity arrives,
For me to use the money,
For a chance to see more of the world,
As well as the chance to treat myself,
Because I have to treat myself well,
And not expect others to do it for me.
Besides it can't be taken with me,
To where I'll end up.