

*Alden Cadwell on Judging People by Appearances (shortened)*

I remember walking into my halfway house where I was to spend the next six months, and the first guy I met had more piercings than I could count and a huge tattoo on the left side of his face. I wanted nothing to do with him. About a week later, Jim asked me what he had done to me to make me so hostile to him. I had no real answer for him because there was nothing except his appearance that I used to justify my distaste for him. I apologized to him and then we had one of the most eye-opening conversations I've ever had. We disagreed on everything, but we respected each other's opinions. I'm telling you this story to illustrate that from the least likely people come the best learning experiences. I consider Jim to be one of the most influential people in my life. He forced me to see that appearance truly means nothing and that substance is everything. I now try to give everyone my respect. Most of the time it is my self-centeredness that gets in the way of accepting other peoples' faults. One of the great things about Pasquaney is that we try our best to strip away the unessential things. We wear uniforms, we have no valuables, and we share everything. But we can still find differences. My challenge to you is, when you find the differences, to thrive in them and learn from them, because they will be your biggest asset. From my experiences I have found that there is no better way to expand my horizons than learning from my exact opposite. But what you will most often find is what you perceive to be your opposite, is more like you, than you first thought.