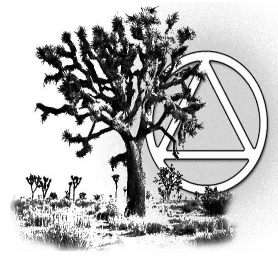


NEWSLETTER for the Fellowship

AUGUST 2015

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I Am Responsible

When anyone, anywhere, Reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A. to always be there. And for that: I am responsible.

The Road to Sobriety

A Life After Sobriety

Sobriety. What does that mean? I never heard words alcoholic or sobriety. I've been around alcohol as a child, with all the craziness. I was never going to be like that!

Well, here I am. My son's counselor suggested I go to A.A. Me—I've not had a drink in nine months! But here I came. Why? God only knows. You could not teach me anything. I am an adult! My life has been good. Four children, four husbands; nothing wrong there that I could see. It was hard in the beginning. After all I had a job, car, children, a bank account, and friends. We all drank. There was no problem. No 502s, jail, hospital; I was just fine.

Here I am today. Thirty-three years later. I am free — from the bondage of self. Stinking thinking, rationalization, justification, controlling, impatience, selfishness, etc., etc.; all are gone—for today.

I live happy, joyous and free most of the time. Today my friends are real. And so am I.

Thank you, God, A.A., and the women who have taught me how to live.

Sincerely,

Kathy G., Hesperia, CA

I used to think that peace of mind was highly overrated. Then I worked the Steps and came to understand a peace that I had never known.

Rowing Up the River

Before I picked up a drink at the somewhat late age of 19, I thought there must be something wrong with me, even reading books on psychology and psychiatry to try to figure it out. Those thoughts and feelings were no longer a concern for a while after I started drinking, as drinking made me feel the way other people looked, and I was able to join the party. It gave me a feeling of well being, a false one but I believed the lie.

When I got to A.A., the first three Steps looked like the mental gymnastics my church wanted me to perform as a youth. I didn't feel insane until awhile after I went off my liquid medication, but then I felt like I'd discovered a new kind of mental illness. I experienced mood swings, anxiety, fear, and seldom missed a mole hill to turn into a mountain. I often felt impending doom and it didn't occur to me that it might just be that doom is not impending and that this just meant that my feelings were setting off a false alarm. They were all mixed up, lacking labels and seemed to tell me that something was dreadfully amiss in my life, and it was even worse that I couldn't work out what it was.

I got sober in Sydney in 1974 when there was a lot of talk about drinking in meetings and very little about recovery. The message I seemed to get was that the problem was alcohol and the solution was recovery, so I should be OK if I'd stopped drinking. I wondered if I was really an alcoholic because my job as a high school teacher seemed even harder to handle, partly because my mood swings made me a nice guy one day and a tyrant the next. I only started to figure out what the real problem was after I heard a guy on a tape I bought on a trip back to the U.S. to visit family say, "The second and fifth drinks are caused by alcohol, but the first is caused by sobriety. It just gets so rotten you've got to drink."

This helped me to understand that A.A. is about staying sober, not just getting reminded that I shouldn't drink. I

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started seeking meetings that were more about recovery, more about the message rather than the mess.

Sometimes I would hear someone in a meeting say that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and thinking that I could get different results. I was still doing that with an over-eating problem when I was nearly 30 years sober, thinking that I was eating sensibly and this would eventually mean that I would start losing weight even though there was no evidence of that happening. I think now that that may be the truth but not the whole truth.

I came across someone recently who said that insanity is a misperception of reality. I feel now that I went through life wearing dark colored glasses that only began to clear and eventually even have a bit of a rosy tint when I'd been sober and working the Steps for some time.

I can now see that the way I see the world is affected as much by what is inside me as what is outside. I recall a woman in a meeting say that she couldn't do much about her feeling, but she could change her attitudes and the feelings tend to follow. My feelings no longer bother me as they are like warning signs when there is no longer anything to warn me about.

I have come across three definitions of sanity that seem clear and simple to me:

1. The ability to adjust to reality.
2. Living in harmony with reality.
3. Seeing things as they really are.

When I came across the first of these in a novel, it seemed that this was what the Steps, Traditions, Serenity Prayer and a lot of the slogans in meetings were really about; adjusting to reality. Reality was once something that I tried to escape. I did this with fantasy, daydreaming and involvement with books, TV, movies, and thought-absorbing activities long before I started drinking, to take my mind off what I thought was happening rather than trying to deal with it. I now feel that there was never anything wrong with reality; just that my alcoholism caused me to perceive it as a monster. I'm quite fond of it now. It is like in the fellowship where we love and accept each other as we are and not in spite of what we are.

I had a "kill the messenger" approach to uncomfortable feelings. Someone once explained to me that my feelings are a bit like the warning lights and indicators on a car's dashboard.

When I got sober, it seemed that most of them were flashing and they lacked labels; just telling me that just about everything was wrong with me and my life. Over time, they got labels and began, at least occasionally, providing me with useful information. For example, a feeling of guilt could get me

to try to work out why I feel guilty and try to do something about it. I could stop or start doing something, pray or try to make amends. This is quite different from my old method of just trying to erase the disturbing feeling by drinking. That is like reacting to a flashing oil light on a dashboard by grabbing a hammer and bashing it.

Getting comfortable with reality has a lot to do with understanding myself. For me, this has mostly been a process of going to a lot of meetings to see myself reflected in others. As they opened up about themselves, I could often identify and open up about myself, finding what was really there.

I recall a guy on a tape saying that he didn't feel all that different from the guy that got to A.A. to stop drinking, but the rest of the world seemed to get much more beautiful, unthreatening and populated by nice folks. This seems to have a lot to do with becoming less self-centered and living a good sober life, no longer dwelling on and amongst the unpleasant parts of life.

I know that there are those who feel that the only insanity we need be concerned with is the insane thinking that might tell me that I could drink again. There seem to be many in A.A. for whom this is true, perhaps the same members who [feel] that they are happily sober going to the occasional meeting and without the need to work Steps of have a Higher Power in their life. I am not one of those and do not envy them because I enjoy doing what I have found I need to do to maintain contented sobriety. I used to wonder if contentment was a valid goal as it seemed to be related to complacency.

The way I see with now is that there is nothing wrong with being content with a life spent rowing up the river of recovery. But I have to avoid getting content with where I am on the river and thinking that I can stay in that part of the river even if I stop rowing.

Jim, Tasmania

Via, Room 502,
Broward County Intergroup, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Six Little Stories

1. Once the villagers decided to pray for rain. On the day of prayer all the people gathered. But only one boy came with an umbrella.

That's FAITH.

2. When you throw a baby in the air she laughs, because she knows you will catch her.

That's TRUST.

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3. Every night we go to bed without any assurance of being alive the next morning; but still we set the alarms to wake us up.

That's HOPE.

4. We plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

That's CONFIDENCE.

5. We see the world suffering, but still we get married.

That's LOVE.

On an old man's shirt was written a cute sentence: "I am not 72 years old. I am still 16 with 56 years of Experience.

That's ATTITUDE.

Do you live your life like the above six stories?

Submitted by,

Sue Ellen J., Lilburn, GA



Have you ever wondered how the custom of handing out Raised Center A.A. medallions began? The story behind this tradition is a story of innovation and strength of the recovery fellowship.

One of the brightest highlights in Wendell's history is our role in the area of support for the millions of people worldwide who have fought – and are still fighting – the battle of [alcoholism]. In early 1973, Bill Westman, a recovering alcoholic wanted to do something to fortify the will of the groups and individuals he spoke with. Bill designed and had Wendell's produce a coin bearing the two large As on one side of the medallion and the Serenity Prayer on the reverse. His advice to all was to "carry this in your pocket or purse and when temptation is great, reach into your pocket and feel the medallion and remember your struggle to get this far." Thousands of the medallions were given to individuals and attendees of his Founders Group. Always thinking of his fellow

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Intergroup Minutes June 20, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Helen M. who led us in the Serenity Prayer.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read by Bill P. and were accepted as corrected. Bill thanked Carl O. for the fine job he did during his absence.

Carl O. read the Twelve Traditions.

Treasurer's Report: In Chad F.'s absence, Carl read the report. As of June 30, 2015, there was a balance of \$18,588.01 in savings, \$7,124.62 in the C.D., and \$4,575.87 in the checking account. The total income for June was \$3,727.58. The total expenses for June were \$2,900.47, which gave us a net income of before literature sales of \$827.11. Literature sales were \$1,679.57 and purchases were \$3,594.98, which gave us a net income of negative \$1,088.30. The Treasurer's Report was accepted.

Office Manager's Report: Craig B. reported there were 123 visitors to the office in June as well as 184 information calls that resulted in two 12 Step calls. Call forwarding had 119 information calls and five 12 Step calls. There is a close out sale on some tri-plate medallions and chips.

Old Business: The 4th of July Barbeque and Barn Dance was a success we were told. There was no money donated to Intergroup as of this meeting.

Announcements: Tomorrow, July 19, 2015, Craig B. will celebrate 26 years of sobriety! Congratulations to Alcoholics Anonymous and Craig! The H & I Roundup will be September 19, 2015 at Horsemen's Center in Apple Valley.

The August 2015 Intergroup meeting will be dark due to vacations.

Betty B. motioned to adjourn the meeting, Carl O. seconded the motion, and the meeting was closed at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill P., Secretary

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members, Bill decided he wanted a design that would have individual meaning for each person who carried one. He knew the medallion as originally designed would feel much like change in the pocket or purse so he changed the design by adding a raised center with the actual time the person had been sober.

The process of making the medallion with the raised center was labor intensive as each medallion had to have the raised center soldered onto the coin and the demand for the medallion was soon overwhelming. Bill worked with Wendell's and developed the one piece, die struck circle/triangle medallion with the anniversary in Roman numerals in the center raised section. When designing his new medallion, Bill used the phrase "To Thine Own Self Be True" as he felt every recovering person should make their journey to sobriety a personal responsibility. Bill used "The Man in the Glass" as a guideline for his own sobriety and felt if he could "look that man in the face," he would be successful in his journey. Bill chose to surround the circle/triangle with the wording "Recovery, Unity, Service" as they exemplify the meaning of one's commitment to sobriety. The process of producing these medallions may have changed through the years but the commitment of the man who inspired them remains the same. We are aware that the medallion has been copied and although that is a form of flattery, the intent and fellowship that goes into Wendell's medallions can never be duplicated because they are inspired by a man who, although struggling with his own addiction, wanted to offer support to others.

Whether the medallion is our original antiqued bronze, or painted, or pure silver or gold, its meaning never changes – it is a symbol of strength and survival and is carried by millions throughout the world . . . This is the legacy of Wendell's own Bill Westman and although Bill is enjoying a well deserved retirement, Wendell's continues to furnish the recovering community with quality reminders of their will to succeed.

Upcoming Events

Intergroup meets the third Saturday of each month (except for August 16, 2015) at Central Office at 9:30 a.m. Please have your Intergroup Reps. plan on attending.

September 5—6, 2015

Big Book Seminar by John S. from Conway, MO Barstow Alano Club, 121 White St., Barstow CA. For more information call, Bill P. – 760-646-1592, Ron M. – 760-559-1070, or Joe H. – 760-220-4971. The Seminar will be free of charge; however, the 7th Tradition will be passed to pay for the hall rental. Lunch will be available for a small cost.

September 19, 2015

H & I Roundup at Horsemen's Center in Apple Valley, CA. For more information contact Linda K. at 760-269-6748 or Wayne U. at 760-885-9195.

October 3—4, 2015

Celebration of Love at The Place, 32794 Old Woman Springs Rd., in Lucerne Valley, CA (two doors down from the liquor store). Speaker time are 9:00 a.m.—8:30 p.m. Breakfast on both days at 7:00 a.m. with a BBQ at noon. Sunday at 5:00 p.m. will be a potluck. For more information call Melody at 760-596-2476 or Beckie at 760-605-1738.

November 6—8, 2015

28th Annual Inland Empire Convention, Double Tree Inn, San Bernardino, CA (formerly The Hilton). Visit www.ieaac.org for more information.

And Finally . . .

