

NEWSLETTER for the Fellowship

MAY 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.

A.A. Launch Pad

I was sitting at a meeting recently when I heard a very young, and very sincere, single mother of two sharing that her first experience in A.A. was the thought of having to do all this stuff **for the rest of her life**, and she **didn't find it too comforting**. It sounded to me that, from her perspective, **she knew that she had to do it**, but it **wasn't going to be easy or fun**. I admired her for her **courage and conviction**, and I tried to encourage her by explaining things that I had experienced when I was faced with the life changing challenges of sobriety. I was the father of a boy, was in the Navy, and was divorced. It was a difficult time but I had to go through it, drinking or not. I began the process of recovery in a slow, methodical and thorough way, and I came out a stronger person for it. I likened it to the first **Apollo space mission to the moon**. It goes something like this:

When you first see the size of this space craft and consider the amount of energy it would take to put it into space, it is hard to fathom. After the countdown is complete, the engines fire and a tremendous amount of flame and smoke engulf the entire area. [And] in a few moments, it slowly starts to lift off. As it lumbers its first few hundred feet, it is expending a tremendous amount of fuel. Slowly it starts to gain momentum and pick up speed—still shuddering along. Soon the booster tanks are depleted and they are ejected, and the main tanks begin to propel it further along the flight path with even more thrust as it is reaching for orbit. Next, the main tank is depleted just before orbit and is ejected. What is left is a very small portion of what left the launch pad. Soon the craft leaves orbit and heads toward the moon, and **something else happens that sometimes goes unnoticed**. Somewhere between the earth and the moon, the gravitational pull of the moon has more influence on the craft than the earth's has, and it is gently drawn along its path. Very little energy is needed at this point except for minor course corrections.

In A.A., when we first get started, it appears to be an insurmountable task, and it requires a tremendous amount of effort just to get off the launch pad. Not every launch is successful,

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Rowing Up the River

After he started feeling worse sober, he realized that he needed to do things differently.

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 n mental gymnastics my church wanted me to perform as a youth. I didn't feel insane until a while 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. [It] was even worse that I couldn't work out what it was.

I seemed to get the message 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 started seeking meetings that were more about recovery, more about the message rather than the mess.

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and some of us don't make it the first time. [We] have to exert all that energy in each successive attempt. As we do get on our way, it starts to get easier as we increase our momentum. Much of the burden falls away as we make progress, and the going gets easier as we head for our objective. When we go through the Twelve Steps, we finally reach orbit.

After we are satisfied that everything is in order, we can now set out for the moon. If we stay on course, the spiritual gravity of values we have adopted in the A.A. program will far outweigh the negative gravity of the past; as long as we eject all the dead weight that held us down. As we continue to adjust the day to day mistakes that we make and adopt an unselfish approach to life somewhere along the flight path, we will cross that line where we are drawn towards a life of peace and serenity that is hard to imagine when we are sitting on the launch pad. The most important part of the journey is the lift off. If we can get through that most difficult time, it does get easier. And then we need only to stay the course.

Submitted by,

Rick R., Poway, CA

Rowing

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Sometimes I would hear someone in a meeting say that insanity is doing the same thing over and over and thinking 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 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 see now 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 feelings, 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, the 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 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 and 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 or 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 it 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, Fort Lauderdale, FL

TWO THINGS TO REMEMBER IN LIFE:

"Take care of your
thoughts when you
are alone", and
"Take care of your
words when you
are with people."

Inspiring and Positive Quotes
Via the Internet

My Best Day Sober (Good or Bad)

My name is Brian, and I am an alcoholic. In my area of Texas, we usually give the date on which our continuous sobriety began. This, of course, is optional, but I seldom have heard anyone share their strength, hope, and experience in A.A. who did not at some time during the course of the conversation make reference to how long they have been sober. I have not had a drink of alcohol since January 1, 1964. I was thirty-eight, middle-aged and young, at the time, and now I am middle-aged and older.

I tell you this to explain that I have had over 13,000 days of continuous sobriety [This was first published in the December 2000 *Grapevine* and in our September 2007 edition.] in A.A., and life in general has been good. In retrospect, some of my best days sober might not have been the happiest days, and some of my saddest days were not my worst days sober. In fact, some of my better days in sobriety may have been those days when I knew that a drink would have temporarily reduced the pain, but I did not drink.

It was a very sad day when my wife received word that she had been diagnosed with "The Big C." but I did not consider taking a drink, so it was a very good day. It was a very happy day when the doctor announced that surgery had corrected the problem completely. I did not need to drink to celebrate, so it was a very good day. It was a very sad day when our baby son was diagnosed as having a seemingly unacceptable birth defect. I did not need to drink, so it was a very

Intergroup Minutes April 18, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Ted B. who led us in the Serenity Prayer. In attendance were Ted B., Jim F., Betty B., Bill P., Mark C., Joey R., Dolly S., and Roxy G. Bill P. read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were accepted. Bill P. also thanked Carl O. for doing a good job in his absence. The Twelve Traditions were read by Chad F.

Treasurer's Report: Chad F. gave the report. As of March 31, 2015 there was a balance of \$16,057.62 in savings, \$7,122.02 in the C.D., and \$6,522.81 in the checking account. The total income for March was \$3,393.55. March expenses before literature was \$15.40. Literature sales were \$678.49. The net income was \$309.09. The report was accepted as read.

Ways and Means Report: Joey R. mentioned we may have the Founders' Day Picnic on July 27, 2015.

Webmaster's Report: Jim F. stated that the website is now under Central Office's control. We have had 2,000 hits, 2,121 newcomer questions, and 2,129 hits on the literature.

Newsletter Report: Betty B. reported we now have 36 paid subscriptions.

Office Manager's Report: Craig B. reported the office had 169 information calls and no 12 Step calls. Call forwarding had 108 information calls and two 12 Step calls. He also stated that we are no longer paying unemployment tax due to our charitable organization tax status. Our bookkeeper is going back two years for more refunds.

Old Business: There was none.

New Business: The "Young at Heart" committee Chairman is Roxy G. She stated the committee is tentatively scheduling a July 4th Barn Dance and Hayride with a possible Speaker Meeting. More information will be forthcoming.

The next Intergroup Meeting will be March 16, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill P., Secretary

good day. It was a very happy day when the doctor announced that the problem had been completely corrected. I did not need a drink to celebrate, so it was a very good day.

It was a very unhappy day when I realized that circumstances beyond my control had made continuing my employment of thirty years unacceptable. As the result of my having acquired, through the practice of the principles of the A.A. program, the courage to resign from the position with dignity, rather than become bitter, it was a good day.

I have had the God-given privilege of walking through many

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dark valleys with friends who could not or would not accept this simple program of sobriety, but I stayed sober, so these were good days for me. I have shared the joy of walking on many mountaintops as I watched seemingly hopeless alcoholics obtain and maintain continuous sobriety. These were good days. There have been deaths of relatives and friends through suicide and murder, accidents and illness. But I stayed sober, so these were not all bad days for me, either.

My brother's son did not like war, but he willingly went to Vietnam. He was eighteen. During the very first hour of his very first day of action he was killed. This was not a good day. [But] before joining A.A., I might have become bitter. So in a sense, this was not as bad a day as it could have been—for me.

There have been too many thousands of days and too many seemingly miraculous events in my sober A.A. life for me to single out on day as the best. So, in keeping with one of the last things our beloved co-founder, Dr. Bob, told his friend and co-founder, Bill W., I have adopted the philosophy of "Keep it simple." Therefore, since today marks not only the last day of my life to this date, but also the first day of the rest of my life. And since I have come to believe the best is yet to come, I think today has been my best day sober.

Brian G., Lubbock Texas

Via, *The Bender*, Corpus Christi, TX; via, *A.A. Grapevine*,
December 2000

Upcoming Events

Intergroup meets the third Saturday of each month at Central Office at 9:30 a.m. Please have your Intergroup Reps. plan on attending.

June 12—14, 2015

The High Desert Sunshine of the Spirit Convention will be held at the Ambassador Hotel in Victorville, CA (Soon to be Holiday Inn [again!]). This is a new date for the convention so plan on attending and supporting it. Flyers are available at Central Office, or you can download them at the website, www.highdesertconvention.com or www.victorvalleyaa.org.

September 19, 2015

H & I Roundup at Horsemen's Center in Apple Valley, CA. More information will be forthcoming.

And Finally . . .

The following are some of the ingenious ways alcohol was smuggled during prohibition:



(Maybe not this one so much!) ↑

And the fun that followed:



Believe me; I know this is really not fun! In fact these pictures make me want to gag! Betty B.

All pictures are via the Internet