

Keep In Touch

June 2002

Announcements

The Area website address is as follows:
www.area62.org
Check out K.I.T. & other committees -
Please sign the Guest Register!

Correction: Pat D. is in District 50.

Wanted: Old Grapevines
to put into Archives.

~ REMEMBER ~

October KIT Topic:
Special Edition:
"Tools for Recovery"

KIT (Keep In Touch) presents the experience and opinions of members of Alcoholics Anonymous on the disease of alcoholism. Opinions expressed here are not those of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or the South Carolina Area Assembly.

Please do not be alarmed if your story did not appear in this issue of KIT. Your story or article will be incorporated in a future issue. If for any reason the KIT Committee has decided not to publish an article that has been submitted, we will try to contact you.

The KIT Committee Members would like to thank everyone for taking the time to write an article for this publication. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding the publication of KIT, please contact a KIT Committee Representative. We welcome your feedback.

Do You Just Belong?

Are you an active member,
The kind that would be missed?
Or are you just contented
That your name is on the list?

Do you attend the meetings
And mingle with the flock
Or do you meet in private
And criticize and knock?

Do you take an active part
To help the work along?
Or are you satisfied to be
The kind that just belongs?

Do you work on committees,
To this there is no trick;
Or leave the work to just a few
And talk about the clique?

Please come to the meetings often,
And help with hand and heart.
Don't just be a member
But take an active part.

Think this over, members,
You know what's right from wrong.
Are you an active member,
Or do you just belong?

 -Anonymous

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES, DISTRICT HAPPENINGS, OR CALENDER OF EVENTS

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The next KIT publication will be presented in October at the Area Assembly. What events are happening in your district or group between October through January of 2002 that you would like published? **Deadlines for submission of articles is Sept. 1st, 2002.**

Calendar of Events;

Founders Day
District 70, 71, 72 & 73
Charleston, SC
June 16th, 2002
11:30 am
For Info: Call Tri Co Intergroup - 723-9633

Dist. 61 Intergroup Founders Day Banquet
1st Presbyterian Church
Hilton Head, SC
June 22, 2002

Dist. 61 Annual Picnic w/Intergroup & Dist. 60
Sergeant Jasper State Park
Hardeeville, SC
September 2002 (TBA)

58th SE Regional Conference & the 50th WV State Conference
Charleston, WV
August 8 - 10, 2002

SE Regional Forum
Huntsville, AL
November 15 - 17, 2002
(DCM's should get info 6 to 8 weeks before Forum)

56th Annual SC State Convention
Sheraton, N. Charleston, Hotel Charleston SC
March 6 - 9, 2003
"The Joy of Living"

57th Annual SC State Convention
The Embassy Suites
March 18 - 21, 2004
"The Sunlight of the Spirit"

Next Area Committee Meeting
September 8, 2002 @ 10:00 am

Next Area Assembly
October 5 & 6 @ 10:00 am



Delegate's Corner

Area Convention Report: Darwin H., Past Delegate, reported for the 2001 Area 62 Convention and SE Regional Conference. Please remember our Conventions are not for profit. The 2001 was a great success in every way. Final report: The Host Committee was able to return all but \$670.00 of the seed money. We spent over \$8000.00 for coffee, and the Committee people fought for every penny they could. The 2004 Convention will be at the Embassy Suites in Greenville, March 18-21. Rooms, \$109-139 a night. And, 2005, in Columbia.

Gerald T. reported on preparations for the 55th Annual Area 62 Convention at the Landmark hotel in Myrtle Beach, February 28 through March 3, 2002. Expecting 300+ attendance, \$15 for early registration and \$20 at the door. The schedule includes 5 speakers and a History of AA presentation. Great prices still available for rooms (\$40-50) at Myrtle Beach, but get your registration before February 5th. They hope to be fully self-supporting.

Kay I. reported on the 56th Area Convention to be held at the Sheraton North Charleston Hotel, March 6 through 9, 2003. \$20 registration fee. Rooms will be \$94 a night. The theme is "The Joy of Living." The Alanon speaker will be Dr. Bob's son, and they have lined up other inspiring speakers as well. Call me to help.

Delegate's Report: Patty W., Area 62 Delegate, said she is honored to serve and looking forward to her first General Service Conference in New York in April. She schedules Delegate Reports at your request; two are already lined up. See you at the State Convention in Myrtle Beach; a celebration of our program. She also plans for the 58th SE Regional Conference in Charleston, West Virginia, in August, and the SE Regional Forum in Huntsville, Alabama, in the fall. The Forums, presented every other year by GSO, are inspiring, like our Assemblies, but more. Read the "Structures & Procedures." It is your document, the guideline for how we all fit together in service in South Carolina. She will serve on two Conference Committees, Archives and CPC. She is studying the Conference Agenda and everything she can find to prepare herself. Use the Area Web Site for group, district, and Committee information. As trusted servants, we all do well to remember the importance of serving each other and the Three Legacies of AA, Recover, Service, and Unity. Wedding plans in April.

Alternate Delegate's Report: El N. thanked the Assembly for the honor of serving as your Alternate Delegate. She outlined her responsibilities: 1) Treasurer of the Area Convention Committee, the only AA event sponsored by the Area Assembly. Our Conventions are funded by a separate account, now totaling \$9,946.85. The fund provides seed money to the Convention Host Committees to set up the hotel deposits and speaker arrangements. As Treasurer, she will report to you the financial proceedings of our Conventions.

2) She is available for Traditions Workshops, especially our 7th tradition, where money and spirituality mix. She is available in this capacity to your districts, groups, and other AA events. Example of how your dollar works; Polish members in her home group receiving a translated Big Book and a chance at sobriety.

Conference Report: April 22 - 27, 2002 at The Crowne Plaza Times Square in Manhattan.

Literature: The text in the book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, written by Bill W. will remain as is, recognizing the Fellowship's feeling that Bill's writings be retained as originally published. (It was suggested that taking into consideration previous Conference Advisory Actions addressing the historical context of Bill W.'s writings, that the trustees Literature Committee consider adding a statement to the Forward of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions explaining the historical context of Bill's writings and report back to the 2003 Conference.)

Although the committee acknowledged the importance of electronic meetings to some A.A. members, the sentence "Fundamentally, though, the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group around the corner is only one of format." In the last paragraph of the Forward to the Fourth Edition will be deleted in future printings of the Big Book.

The revised complimentary service material "Concepts Checklist" (F-91) was reviewed and gratitude was expressed to the trustees' Literature Committee for their service in completing the revision.

The literature committee considered at length the request for a new edition of the Spanish Big book and took no action as a widely expressed need was not exhibited at this time.

After careful consideration of the request to restore "The Doctor's Opinion" to page 1 as published in the First Edition of the Big Book from 1939 to 1955 in future printings of the Big Book, the committee agreed to take no action.

Agenda - The Theme for the 2003 General Service Conference will be: "Living A.A.'s Principles Through Sponsorship."

The Correctional Facilities committee suggested that the "Corrections Correspondence Service" pamphlet (F-26) in English and (FS-82) in Spanish be listed in catalogs of our A.A. Conference-approved Literature and Other Service Material. The committee remarked on the importance of sharing about this service at assemblies, forums and other A.A. events. It was noted that sharing of personal experience with this service would encourage more members to participate.

Report and Charter - The map of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada are to be added to The A.A. Service Manual.

The "List of General Service Conference Area Web Sites" are to be added to the Canadian, Eastern and Western United States A.A. Directories.

The pamphlet "So The Courts Sent You To AA and You Hate The Idea" was discussed at length. The Committee decided to let that stand as an area/district decision and did not recommend making it Conference Approved.

International Conventions/Regional Forums:

Immigration laws are being studied and an advisory about crossing the border to Canada will be published in BOX 459, be posted on the AA Website, and be sent to all area delegates, DCMs and GSRs.

Frequently Asked Questions About A.A. Web Sites (F-101) - This Service Material from the General Service Office has been revised 4/02 and is available by calling Group Services at G.S.O.

As South Carolina's Delegate I acted on behalf of the best interests of A.A. as a whole. I used my rights of decision and participation. I voiced my opinion. Thank you for trusting me with such a great responsibility. As we look toward the future let us become more involved with Conference Agenda Items as an Area so that your voice be better heard. A Pre-Conference Assembly would be one way to achieve this. Reviewing and discussing agenda items by individual committee and the assembly would make South Carolina more a part of AA as a whole.

I have several Conference Reports scheduled for upcoming district meetings. I would welcome the opportunity to share with your district my personal reflections of the General Service conference and trips to the General Service Office and Stepping Stones.

With Gratitude, Love and Service,

Patty T.

Delegate, Area 62 - Panel 52

Oscar Sez....



before A.A.

"My Bud perspective was always what I left behind and it kept me from seeing where I was going."
Mackie W.

"I'm gonna try it one more time."
JoAnne G.

"What am I doing here?
I should've gone to a meeting!"
Reggie S.

"Who gave me this crappy beer? I ordered a martini!"
Bob

"Retrospectively yours!"
Cheryl C.

Danny sez...Keep Oscar sez out!
Danny B.

- UPDATE -

I HAVE WONDERFUL NEWS FOR ALL ABOUT OSCAR. HE HAS DECIDED TO COME OFF THE ROAD AND SEEK HELP. IT TAKES WHAT IT TAKES AND WE HOPE THAT WAS HIS LAST ROAD TRIP.



after A.A.

Funny Thing About Changing...

Before I got sober I sought help. But I wasn't looking for help for my own drinking problem. I wanted help with everyone else's drinking problem.

I had been raised by an alcoholic father and a mother who was a pill popper and what I thought I needed was someone who could appreciate and understand what I had been through. Someone who could offer me some sympathy. Maybe tell me how badly I had been treated. The last thing I wanted to do was change myself. What I really wanted to find out was how to be more effective in getting what I wanted from others.

Imagine my shock when a lady with thirty seven years of sobriety looked me in the eye and told me that I had better start working on my own problems. And that I should start by admitting to my wife that I was an alcoholic.

Suddenly a change came over me. I felt an enormous load being lifted from my shoulders. It was a powerful, physical, real feeling. I felt completely different. Shortly afterwards, the people in my Alanon group told me I looked different. I did not realize it at the time, but God had just removed from me the desire to drink, along with the mental obsession that we often equate with the "ism" part of our malady.

I floated on a pink cloud for weeks. People warned me that it wouldn't last, that I had better work hard on changing myself because that floating feeling was going to be replaced with a lot of ups and downs. They were right. I hit the ground hard. But I had my AA group, I had the steps, I had a sponsor, and I had a supportive family.

Today, I thank God for that tough old lady who had been a member of Bill Wilson's AA group in New York who could see right through me. I thank God for my first home group that kept repeating the message that I had to change me, not everyone else around me.

It's been almost sixteen years since God changed me into a sober alcoholic. Since then I've had a lot of struggles and I've made a lot of mistakes. Probably more mistakes and more troubles than when I had been drinking. But all that means is that I still have plenty of changing to do.

When I stop changing, that's when I will probably have to go back to drinking. And who wants to do that?



Owen J.

Concept II: When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference - excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter - the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.



Reprinted from *The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated* with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

A New Life

Singleness of purpose and responsibility go hand in hand with me. I have found that by working the steps and with others that I'm able to stay sober and enjoy a life of fulfillment and peace. I can do more for myself if I work for my friends and family. My service work for my groups and District help me to learn and grow. Thanks to others in my life.

AA has brought me to a better way to life, without my insane craziness for alcohol, and bad friends. I'm working with others, I see how I'm not the only crazy sick person, it was AA that gave me my life back and for that I will do anything to keep that change in my life.

So, I stay in meetings as much as I can, do service work and do what I can to help someone else. To give back what was given to me so freely.



Rob C.
District 40

What is an Alcoholic?

ALCOHOLICS are;

ARTISTS: They are always drawing their own conclusions.

HISTORIANS: They prepare case histories.

JUDGES: They daily sentence themselves to sobriety.

PREACHERS: Of the word "Don't take the first drink."

SCULPTORS: They mold a new life.

UNSUNG MEDICAL HEROES: They arrest the progress of a baffling disease.

What are alcoholics? God Knows...

They are you and I, Us and We.

We're too good to be true - to alcohol!

A member of the Westfield Group, N.J. (in the flesh, and a member in spirit, of Alcoholics Anonymous Everywhere)

From the May 1960 issue of The Grapevine



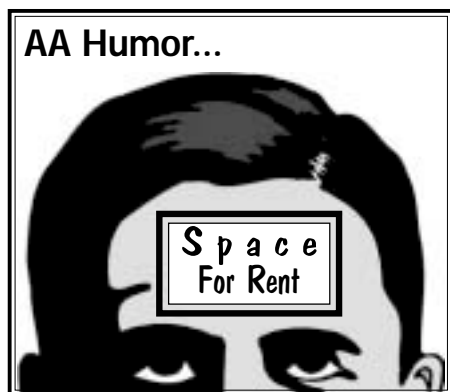
Responsibility

It is a miracle that I, an alcoholic, can join Alcoholic Anonymous, pick up some of the tools of the program, and become a responsible productive citizen. But I like to think of responsibility in yet another way today.

Today I have the ability to respond. That is my new meaning for "response-ability". When I drank, I became numb and absent from my own life. I was absent from my family, friends and work too. Alcoholics Anonymous taught me how to live without the alcohol, and today I am very much present for my family, friends and job. I like to think of the AA program (and life) as a contest - the kind where you must be present to win.

I can sit at home and think about the steps or read AA

literature, but only when I'm present in the meeting halls, talking with other recovering alcoholics or going on twelve-step calls am I truly a winner in this program. I must be present to win - at AA meetings and in life.



Belinda

The Awakening

Part Two

By Author Unknown

So, you learn to stand on your own and to take care of yourself...
and in the process a sense of safety and security
is born of self-reliance.

You stop judging and pointing fingers and you begin to accept people as they are and to overlook their shortcomings and human frailties...
and in the process a sense of peace and contentment
is born of forgiveness.

You realize that much of the way you view yourself, and the world around you, is as a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche.

And you begin to sift through all the junk you've been fed about how you should behave, how you should look, how much you should weigh, what you should wear, what you should do for a living, how much money you should make, what you should drive, how and where you should live, who you should marry, the importance of having and raising children, and what you owe your parents, family, and friends.

You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. And you begin reassessing and redefining who you are and what you really stand for.

You learn the difference between wanting and needing and you begin to discard the doctrines and values you've outgrown, or should never have bought into to begin with...
and in the process you learn to go with your instincts.

You learn that it is truly in giving that we receive.

And that there is power and glory in creating and contributing and you stop maneuvering through life merely as a "consumer" looking for your next fix.

You learn the principles such as honesty and integrity are not the outdated ideals of a bygone era but the mortar that holds together the foundation upon which you must build a life.

You learn that you don't know everything, it's not your job to save the world and that you can't teach a pig to sing.

You learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility and the importance of setting boundaries and learning to say NO.

You learn that the only cross to bear is the one you choose to carry and that martyrs get burned at the stake.

Then you learn about love.

How to love, how much to give in love, when to stop giving and when to walk away.

You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not as you would have them be.

You stop trying to control people, situations and outcomes.

And you learn that alone does not mean lonely.

Continued in next KIT

AA's Singleness of Purpose

David T., Primary Purpose Group, Spartanburg SC

Recently, I received a call from a newcomer through the "Bridge the Gap" Program that our district conducts with treatment centers in this area. I met him upon his release from the facility and took him to a meeting of my home group Monday Night. As newcomers do in my group, he sat quietly and listened and all was well.

The following Wednesday, he met me for a meeting that we carry to the Spartanburg Detox. During the meeting, he introduced himself as an addict and proceeded to share a little bit on the problems he has had with drugs. Following the meeting, as I was giving him a copy of our book, I decided to have a talk with him regarding his sharing. I asked, "I noticed that you introduced yourself as an addict and I need to ask, do you have a problem with alcohol?" He shared, "No, I haven't had a drink in over a year and a half. I don't like alcohol and never really drank too much, my problem is with the drugs." I then asked, "If you don't have an alcohol problem, then why are you coming to AA meetings?" His response was "When I was in the treatment center, they told me to come to AA because there is more recovery there."

I explained to him that I was not trying to make him feel unwelcome in AA, but in order to be of help to him, I had to know where he was coming from. He again stated that he never has had a problem with alcohol, that drinking does not create the craving that it does in alcoholics of our type. Knowing that many alcoholics of our type reach their "bottom" through the aid of drugs and only later come to discover and admit to their alcoholism, I did not presume that he was non-alcoholic or that AA was not the path of recovery for him. I told him "I will help you to get started in recovery and we will begin by studying the Doctor's Opinion in the Big Book and I suggest you read that as soon as possible. I will help, but I will only help if you attend NA meetings in addition to your AA meetings. This is because there will come a time and place where you will have to take suggestions to stay sober that go against your nature - things you don't want to do - and if you are not absolutely convinced that the person giving you the suggestions has overcome the same problem you have, you will not follow the suggestions that may save your life."

That is where we parted and I did not hear from him for a week. I had been thinking that I had run a newcomer off when I got a call from him. He said, "I just wanted to let you know that I am all right. I am going to NA and have a home group that I like and am going to pick a sponsor this week. I just want to thank you for your help and I'll call once a week to let you know how it's going."

Why am I telling this story? I guess I feel that it shows real growth in my AA program. In the past, I would have been more comfortable to welcome this non-alcoholic addict and attempt to sponsor him in AA. It makes me feel better to be all-inclusive, to say all are welcome, to play the good Samaritan to one and all. I would have chosen my comfort over his welfare and the welfare of AA. My efforts to sponsor non-alcoholics in AA have always failed and I now realize the way to be of real help is to help the non-alcoholic find the help he needs from those best equipped to give this help. Singleness of purpose not only benefits AA as a whole, but those who seek recovery for whatever problem they have. There are many fine Twelve Step programs out there whose singleness of purpose makes them best equipped to help the non-alcoholic addict, gambler, co-dependent, etc. My failure to realize this and direct these persons to the program they need is selfish and ego-rewarding, choosing what feels good to me over what is right for them. We do not have all the answers for all the problems known to man.

What we do have is an answer for one very particular problem - alcoholism as defined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. When I take a drink, I get a craving for another drink that eliminates all control over how much I drink or what I do in the process. And most importantly, knowledge of this fact will never keep me from taking the next drink. It is a progressive and fatal malady that we have come to view as a disease process involving an allergic, or abnormal, reaction to alcohol coupled with a mental obsession for more of the same.

Our program began when one alcoholic, seeking to keep himself sober, sought out another alcoholic with whom he shared his experience with this particular problem. Dr. Bob, who was only going to listen for 15 minutes, spent over 6 hours because, as he said of Bill; "He was the first living human with whom I had ever talked who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience". Dr. Bob was then able to accept the solution because of his assurance that Bill had overcome a problem common to his own.

So it was then and is still today. Our greatest asset as recovered alcoholics is our past. Whether in a meeting, on the answering service, or one-on-one, we use our past experience with alcohol to reach the still-suffering alcoholic. It is through our stories of alcoholism that we help the alcoholic overcome his feelings of difference and isolation and accept the solution that we have to offer. As an alcoholic, I had many defenses against those who would talk to me of my drinking, but I had no defense against you when you spoke to me of your drinking. It was through hearing these stories that denial fell away and hope was born for myself and countless others like me.

I am an alcoholic. I have a drug history as long as my alcoholism, but I am not an addict. The stories I have heard of addicts, gamblers, and so on elicit sympathy from me, but do not reach that place in me of identification that I find in the story of another alcoholic - that place where I actually begin to feel the pain experienced by the speaker and relate his experience to my own. Thank God you had alcoholics speak to me of alcoholism when I came into AA. Because identification is so vital to the recovery of alcoholics like myself, I do not wish to risk weakening my effectiveness by speaking of drug use in an AA meeting.

We alcoholics come with many "related disorders" of drugs, gambling, overeating, sex, depression, anxiety, and so on, but by choosing to join AA we have chosen a common ground on which to relate to one another - alcoholism and recovery from alcoholism. Given the diversity of people and problems in AA, the unity necessary to function as a group would be impossible and our effectiveness with newcomers diminished if we did not keep our focus on our common problem. I have to relate myself to the group as a whole for my own recovery and the recovery of those I would help. I would hate to see the day in AA where an alcoholic's chance to recover was dependent upon whether we had the "right" person with the "right" set of problems for him that day on the answering service, Twelve Step call, and so on. I would hate to see the day when any real alcoholic finds himself unable to relate to a speaker or discussion due to too much talk of problems other than alcoholism that he does not possess. I want every alcoholic to have the chance I had to enter an AA meeting and come to realize, as I did, that "those people are like me and maybe if I do what they did it will work for me too."

I'm sorry to inform those who don't know it already, but AA is not all-inclusive, nor was it ever intended to be. We developed from a narrowing of the broad objectives of the Oxford Group to focus on helping alcoholics only. We are still strong, the Oxford Group is not. Many fine organizations have come and gone because of their inability to stick to one thing they do well. Many organizations have failed because they lacked the humility to realize their limitations. Tradition Three states "our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism." Members may have as many "related disorders" or problems as they wish, but to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, one must have alcoholism and a desire to stop drinking.

Many fine Twelve Step programs have developed out of our program because their members knew the importance of identification in recovery and sought to create a place where maximum identification, and therefore maximum recovery, was possible for their particular problem. In this day and age, anyone seeking help can find a group to deal with his particular problem. Our job is not to try to expand our program to fit all situations or persons, but to grow in effectiveness at the one simple thing that we do well. It is not always the easy path to stand on this principle, as arguments on this topic often run to extremes. I am learning that if we keep in mind that "to be helpful is our only aim," we can maintain our singleness of purpose with kindness, compassion, and tolerance. By doing so, we may see to it that Alcoholics Anonymous continues to be the single most effective treatment for alcoholism in recorded history and that all those who suffer from alcoholism may find the hand of AA when they reach out for help.

Twin City Group District # 80

I, Nelson G.D., took my last drink November 11, 1970. Moved back to Johnsonville, in August 1971, to my home place across from the Methodist Church on Hwy. 41-51. Where I met preacher Bill E. I told him I was a recovering alcoholic and that one of the ways to stay sober was to help other alcoholics get sober. And if he knew anyone that needed help to let me know. He said that was God sent, that "they" the church was trying to start a group. They had a house rented and money in the bank to support it. I told him that I didn't think that was the way it worked. AA members, not the church, started those AA groups and that seemed to confuse him. I left a copy of the Big Book for him to read and thought the book would explain better than I could. After a week, I spoke to him again, and he said he understood completely what I was talking about. And that he knew another known alcoholic in the area and that was Dalton T. Who I went to visit and met for the first time. We became instant friends and we started going to meetings together in Florence, Georgetown and Myrtle Beach. There was only one group in Myrtle Beach. It was downtown and upstairs in 2 small rooms. Dalton and I traveled many highway miles going to meetings. My AA birthday was coming up November 11, 1971. Dalton and I drove to Goldsboro, NC where I picked up my one-year chip. My sponsor was Morton C., who spoke at our first area meeting in Johnsonville. He shared the program with his wife, Martha. While in NC, Dalton and I decided to start a group. A friend in Goldsboro, Wade W. a recovering alcoholic, who worked with the crisis line, gave us a box of AA literature to start our group, under one condition, that we wouldn't get drunk on the way back to Johnsonville.

Dalton and I contacted Dr. King (Mrs.) in Florence, who was in charge of the health center in Johnsonville, who gave us permission to hold our AA meetings, once a week. We started out on Thursday Nights, so it wouldn't conflict with other group meetings. The reason we chose the health center was so we wouldn't appear to be affiliated with any church.

Primarily visitors from other AA groups supported us. Many times there was only I, my wife Gloria, Dalton, and his wife Lucille.

We were so thankful that the other surrounding groups supported and visited the Twin City Group, to help keep us alive.

Thanks to the AA way and God, Dalton stayed sober until he died in 1996, and Gloria and I are still together, sober and happy.



Twin City Health Center
1971 - Present



Nelson G.D.

**MY
HIGHER
POWER
SAYS:**

A lot of kneeling will keep you
in good standing.
(with God)

Don't put a question mark where
God puts a period.

Exercise daily, walk with God.



Submitted by **Wayne E.**

Reaching Out

The Gratitude Group's meeting location is within a few blocks of Clemson University. Frequently, we have guests at our open meetings who have elected to participate in the Pre-Trial Intervention Program. The PTI program allows individuals the opportunity to complete community service and/or attend AA meetings and, in return, clear their record of minor offenses. These minor offenses are most often open container and drinking under age. On several occasions, when our PTI guests outnumber regular members, we will ask each PTI guest to write down one question they would like to ask related to alcohol or alcoholism. The questions are then drawn from a hat and posed to the regular members. There are two side benefits which flow from these meetings; first, the PTI guests show a more intense interest in the meeting and, second, our younger, regular members tend to participate more actively in the discussion. The following are my twelve favorite questions:

1. Was it scary to quit drinking? What were you afraid of?
2. Are you considered an alcoholic if you drink to get drunk?
3. Is alcoholism a "disease" or a "choice"?
4. Now that you are in AA, how hard is it to go without a drink?
5. How long did it take you to realize you were an alcoholic?
6. Is alcoholism genetic?
7. Do you have to go to meetings the rest of your life?
8. How can you be in the college atmosphere and turn down alcohol?
9. Did anyone's alcoholism turn to physical violence?
10. How do you know if you are an alcoholic?
11. How do you feel about being around friends who still drink?
12. How long does the average person have to be in the program before they stop drinking?



Best Regards,
Bob

Change

It seems that we were always searching for something or someone to “make” us happy. Always trying to grab more out of life’s pleasures than was normal or even reasonable. Every time we did this, we eventually wound up being disappointed, and even though we could always rationalize a reason for it to be “their” fault, we can see always rationalize a reason for it to be “their” fault, we can see now where nobody was to blame. We just demanded more than was normal.

When we start the long journey towards finding a new way of life, we realize finally that we are not alone. We see others around us trying to learn to live just as we are. It is a relief to find that although we suspected we were different from the rest of the world, we were just different from most of it. There are millions of people just like us who went the same way we did only to find the bottom of what seemed a bottomless pit. Loneliness, frustration, and despair brought us to the realization that we could not overcome our illness without help. Upon finding that help and making a start at the new life, we learn that in order to continue to grow, we must help others along the way.

What a shock it is to find that what was once our greatest weakness has become our greatest asset. We are in a unique position to help those who are still suffering to find out how to live without alcohol. Doctors, wives, parents, children, employers, and countless others have tried to help, and with the best of efforts only to watch us return to the bottle. It is only through the identification with fellow sufferers that we can open our eyes and see what is plain to everyone else.

We go to meetings, talk to other people in recovery, get telephone numbers, and use them. Somebody offers us a Big Book and we begin to read and study it. We hear people talking about working the steps, and we make a decision to try. It seems to have worked for them, and if so then it can work for us too. Soon someone asks us what we are doing differently. They try to figure it out. Did we change our hair? Have we gained weight? There seems to be a different look in our eyes. Maybe it is just that they can see our eyes. Usually others notice the change in our personality long before we do.

Since this is a life journey, we must continue to live by the principles that we are taught in our program. We must be honest, open-minded and willing. Not only honest to others, but more importantly honest to ourselves. We have spent a lifetime fooling ourselves by living in a make believe world, now we must get honest to live. Open-minded to learn from others the ways that they have used the steps to help them grow spiritually fit and gain the ability to do what must be done to continue to grow. Willing to go to any length to maintain sobriety at all costs. What costs? Our lives were literally wasted before we got here, so how could we say that anything is too much to do in order to live. We certainly do what we have to do for the other basic needs to live, why should sobriety be any different?

We find that we can be of unique benefit to our world. People begin to trust us, our lives become worth living again. Some days seem to be long and difficult. Those are the days when we hang on and work hard to stay sober. After the crisis is over we can look back and find growth in those situations. There is a saying about no pain no gain, well our pain has forced us to make great gains in this program. No pain that we can ever have now can be as bad as the loneliness, frustration, and despair that we felt towards ourselves when we knew our actions were killing us, yet we could not stop! What could be more painful???

As the days go by, we realize we have a whole host of new friends. Some who have been in the program longer, and some not so long, but we know we can count on them to be understanding and helpful when we are carrying a heavy load. What a relief it is to know that whatever we have going on today, we can talk to someone and work things out without destroying ourselves and those around us.

Faith, it is said, is the opposite of Fear. Fear and Faith cannot live in the same house. When we see the simple steps leading towards spiritual growth begin to work, our Faith grows. Faith breeds confidence. We not only believe in a God of our understanding we come to know Him. We also learn that that contact must be maintained on a daily basis. Isn't it good to know that as long as we follow a few simple suggestions, that we never have to face our problems alone again. We have tapped into a Power so great that we never have to drink again.

Now all this sounds simple and it is, but nobody ever said it was easy. It is easy when we follow the simple suggestions we are given, but we are an undisciplined bunch. We have the times when we follow the program and all is good. Then if we are not careful we can slip into being lazy about spiritual growth. We never achieve the level of spirituality that would allow us to skip meditation and prayer on a daily basis. Just a few days out of contact and we can get right back into old ways of thinking. If we are not careful and allow this to manifest itself in our actions we are in danger of going right back to our old selves. We need always remember that we are powerless and our power must come from a source much greater than ourselves. That source must come from a God of our understanding. Nowhere in the program does it say how you should understand, that changes with growth. As long as we are willing to grow, willing to change and maintain contact with God, we will always continue to grow in understanding and spiritual ways of life.



**Submitted by a Member
of District #80
Dillon County Group**

Single Message

In my billfold is a sentence from a message I heard from at a speaker meeting in my 4th month. I've carried it for over 13 years. When I had 3 years, the morning after his talk, I heard a roundup speaker yell curses at the crew; the ticket agent; the taxi driver; the very skies above because his plane was delayed. And I thought how blessed I was that I didn't hear him the 4th month. You see, I believed everything I heard, and I'm afraid I might have walked away from AA devastated if the speaker at 3 years had been the one at 4 months. He lied, because he was NOT the changed man he'd said he was the night before.

Recently I heard a speaker carry a religious message along with her program message. This speaker was charismatic and had a wonderful, humorous talk, given to hundreds of people. But it concluded with suggestions that the AA message was first given by “a man 2000 years ago” and that our message is that of “the Sermon on the Mount”. She lied, because she was NOT the changed woman she'd said she was. She had to control. She gave HER message, not the fellowship's.

I was disturbed. What would this talk have done to me when I was 4 months sober and not ready for a religion? What if I were a Muslim newcomer? AA is supposed to be without affiliation to a denomination, to a religious sect. It was a reminder to me to never underestimate the impact my talk could have, unknowingly, on a fellow AA or Alanon or Alateen, and to stay strictly within our traditions when speaking. I may mention my religious beliefs, just as I may mention my drug yearnings, ONLY as these relate to my alcoholism, and then I must clearly state that these are MINE - my beliefs, my opinions, my longings - and have nothing to do with Alcoholics Anonymous.

I am grateful that our South Carolina groups are free from subtle proselytizing. I am thankful that I've never heard anyone from our Area take advantage of an AA podium to persuade a newcomer to believe anything other than the single message we are all qualified to carry.



Mary

