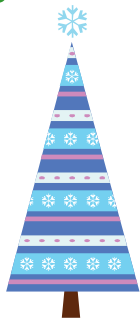


Java Journal



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2010

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From The Archives

Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine June 2007. (Vol. 64 No. 1)

From Wish List To Gratitude List Unlikely riches and satisfied needs

If you could write your own ticket to the rest of your life right now, you'd short-change yourself by a long shot." My sponsor glanced inward as if remembering something of his own experience.

I was arguing with him about this loving God he claimed was overseeing things and whom I should learn to trust. I was three months sober after twenty years drinking and drug-ging, a hostile divorce in the works, the IRS serving notice, holed up in a rented room, scraping by on small fix-it jobs, and I was telling him I could conjure a pretty good picture of what my life would look like if there really was a loving God. I had my five-year plan, so why wait for something better from The Big Guy?

Savvy to alcoholism and my personal shortcomings, he agreed I probably had a pretty vivid imagination. We could talk about my five-year plan sometime. But how was I doing today? Was I asking for help? Was I reaching out to others? Was I making progress on that Fourth Step?

I was easily distracted. Besides, today wasn't going well, and was about to get much worse.

My substance abuse counselor took a different tack. He encouraged me to write down what life on my own terms would look like. "If you want to get what you want, first you have to know what you want," he said with a wink. What he didn't say, but what I've come to understand since, is that, "You can't al-

ways get what you want. But if you try--if you try, try, try--you get what you need." But that was years down the line.

A week later I swaggered into the counselor's office, wish list in hand, ready to show this guy he wasn't treating just any old small-time loser. People had said my whole life that I had great potential. Also that I never lived up to it. But I had vision, a direction. While cleaning up the wreckage of my past, I had my eye on all that life would be. . .some day.

Starting with a twenty-acre spread and my custom-designed house on the south side of a local mountain, I talked my way down the list: a new truck for me every year, a station wagon for a pretty blond wife and three well-behaved kids, the thirty-foot sloop we'd all go sailing in on blissful summer weekends, the vacations to Italy and New Zealand, the second home in Hawaii, the substantial real estate investments that would fuel all this, maybe a bid for political office. A believer in hard work (if not always an active one), I emphasized the reputation I'd earn for custom building with my waiting list of eager clients from a wealthy coastal town I couldn't then afford to rent an apartment in. A smart guy with great potential could expect nothing less, right? If there was a loving God, and I lived a sober life and played by all his rules?

The counselor sighed. He looked pained, searching for a gentle way to break bad news. "It sounds like you don't like yourself very much right now," he said.

When I told my sponsor about this little exercise, he raised the same patient smile and asked what I'd learned. I grasped what

(Continued on page 2)

**Lack of power,
that was our
dilemma.**

**We had to find a
power by which
we could live,
and it had to be a
power greater
than ourselves**

From the Archives (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

both men tried telling me, but only in an intellectual sense. It was just information in my head until I'd lived sober and on life's terms for another decade, and grew up some in the process. When asked what a good life would look like, I created a list of things--my pile of stuff--that other people could admire and comment on about how successful I was. Because I didn't like myself very much at the time and was incapable of being part of a lasting relationship, I needed that pile of stuff, if only as a fantasy, to believe that I was worth anything at all.

Missing from that list were:

- 1) The surprising mix of people with whom I'd share the saving grace of AA.
- 2) Any reference to AA's Ninth Step Promises coming true in my life.
- 3) A sober partner with whom to share the serenity, courage, and wisdom of AA for a lifetime.
- 4) Coming to accept and love the family I grew up in, including my alcoholic father, who died four years before I got sober.
- 5) Work that is both enthralling and a service to others.
- 6) Feeling comfortable in my own skin, even when I make mistakes.
- 7) The burning desire to learn, to be open-minded, to seek God's will in troubling situations where experience and understanding aren't enough.
- 8) Good health.
- 9) A quiet excitement for what each day will bring.
- 10) Freedom from the burden of self.
- 11) Wonder, mystery, and gratitude at how failure and conflict are resolved by listening,

patience, prayer, persistence; and with a visceral sense of personal growth.

All missing from that first list. In fact, today I have none of the stuff intended to impress my counselor with my vision of success. But I know that, had I been granted all those trappings and none of what's come to be meaningful and valuable to me, I would have truly short-changed myself.

I own a few nice things that are useful or fun, including an absurdly expensive bicycle (also not on the list) that I ride with unreasonable pleasure and to no one's benefit. But it's not likely my net worth will ever approach what I pictured at three months sober. Job, home, car, furnishings are all modest by American standards. Taken together, though, they're more than I'm able to fully use or properly take care of. My cup runneth over.

Money, things, reputation, power are still of value, but only relative to the time they grant to explore new ways of living and working with others. So I've given up trying to determine or even guess where I'm headed. But I do know why.

There's a final item on my gratitude list:

12) I've surrendered to the will of what I know is a loving God. One whose ways are mysterious to me, but to whom, based on experience, I entrust my own.

A friend in the Fellowship claims worldly success is simpler than it looks anyway. "All you have to do is do the right thing at the right time and do it right." Simple maybe. But impossible on my own unaided resources. And thank God for that. Thank God.

Anonymous Maine,

Monthly Laughs



"My sponsor says I'm living in the wreckage of my future."

Traditions Checklist

These questions were originally published in the AA Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many AA groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

1. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility? Do I ever give the impression that there really *is* an "AA opinion" on Antabuse? Tranquilizers? Doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? The federal or state government? Legalizing marijuana? Vitamins? Al-Anon? Alateen?
2. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I am stating the "AA opinion"?
3. What in AA history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?
4. Have I had a similar experience in my own AA life?
5. What would AA be without this Tradition? Where would I be?
6. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious ways?
7. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside AA? Inside AA?

CONCERNED FRIEND:

What makes you drink so much?

Stubborn alcoholic:

Nothing. I'm a volunteer.

AA's Newsletter for the Greater Tri-City Area

Central Office Bookstore

102 E. Kennewick Ave. (upstairs at the Alano Club)

POBox 6675 Kennewick, WA 99336

Hours of Operation

Mon - Thu, 11:30 am—1:30 pm and 6:00—8:00 pm;

Sat 10:00 am—2:00 pm; Fri and Sat by appt.

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Please Contact The Java Journal Editor With the Following Info:

- Events, announcements, fellowship information, Journal corrections;
- Your email if you would like to receive the Journal in your inbox once a month.

Responsibility Statement

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,

I want the hand of A.A. always to be there

And for that I am Responsible

-2009-2010 A.A. Service Manual



Calendar of Events



Ladies Potluck & Speaker Meeting. Benton REA Community Room 6095 W. Van Viesen. West Richland, WA 99353. 11:00AM Potluck. 12:15PM Speaker—Gina H. with 21 Years Sober. Questions call 509-378-4646 or email: rainbow7964@hotmail.com	Sat December 4

Looking for a Service Position?

<p>The Central Office Bookstore needs volunteers with a min. of 1 year sobriety. Volunteers are needed for the Tuesday and Wednesday day shifts and for alternating Saturdays</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Monday thru Thursday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM—1:30 PM • 6:00 PM — 8:00 PM <p style="text-align: center;">Saturdays 10:00AM—2:00 PM</p>	<p>Contact Angie 509-378-4120</p>
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