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Java Journal



From The Archives

Reprinted with permission from the AA Grapevine September 1967. (Vol. 24 No. 4)

Come On! Be Happy, Too The author of "He Who Loses His Life" looked back over twenty plus years of sobriety.

In the late 1960's, the Grapevine ran a series of updates written by AA members whose stories had appeared in the Second (and subsequently the Third) Edition of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. We are happy to present these stories again, as they serve to elucidate the kind of spiritual growth each author felt he or she had made since their Big Book stories were written.

Twenty years later? Dry, one day at a time, for twenty years? Once that would have seemed an unendurable sentence to be faced. In retrospect, the years have been so busy, so happy, so full of fulfillment that no one of those seven thousand three hundred days has been long enough. And I have been happy--not frivolously and determinedly cheerful--but deep down happy. A happiness so basic that it can withstand the occasional shocks of anger, frustration, impatience and bone fatigue that once would have sent me to the nearest and quickest alcoholic escape.

Fifteen years ago I wrote my story for the Big Book. In it I said that I belong to the school of AA thought which teaches that successful membership in AA frees us, so that we may range the world--in a manner of speaking--like any other human being. Practically expressed, this viewpoint means that I do not feel the necessity of going to meetings constantly. I go whenever I have a Twelfth Step case to work with (I never turn down a Twelfth Step case) and on my anni-

versary. I do not go out looking for Twelfth Step cases as a means of insuring my continuing sobriety. Yet I always tell new friends and even casual strangers, when I am in their company and they are having a drink, why I do not drink: I am in AA. A friend has remarked that she considers me the alcoholic the least anonymous she ever heard of. This procedure has brought me more than a few Twelfth Step cases. Always it elicits inquiries and usually intense interest about the unorganized organization called AA. If there is this interest, I explain briefly my own experience before and after joining AA, smile, accept congratulations, secretly giving thanks inside myself for the philosophy I have hooked onto. For I am hooked on AA; that is the most certain thing I know. And it makes me happy to shoot arrows into the air.

I also believe that as soon as they are a bit competent in AA, the newcomers should carry the Twelfth Step work. That's how I got well--doing constant and intense Twelfth Step work, privately, in groups and in hospitals. I did it for a number of years, joyously. Now when I acquire a new customer, as soon as it's sensible to do so, I transfer him to an AA member younger in AA than I am, and so (I am convinced) provide him with some of the help and opportunity he needs to better himself as well as the new candidate.

I keep liquor in my home and serve it to friends. I literally do not want any. It's no deprivation for me to act as bartender for everyone excepting myself. I go to cocktail parties early and leave early, before my friends and the other guests get silly and argumentative and boring. I have served my

(Continued on page 2)

Amend

To change for the better; to improve.

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Promptly

Done, performed, delivered, etc. at once or without delay.

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From the Archives (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

time paying back for the boredom I inflicted on others when I got drunk. Sometimes I pick up a Twelfth Step case at one of these parties.

Anyone tailing me as I move around the big city where I live might think me a liar and a hypocrite, for on occasion I go--alone--into a bar. The answer is simple: from the old, bad days I know where the washrooms are and, of course, when you gotta go, you gotta go. American cities are notoriously short of this kind of convenience; the most likely place always is in a bar.

My intent in writing such details is, hopefully, to reassure the candidate for AA who hesitates about coming to that first meeting or keeping on coming. Joining AA does not mean to me the taking of perpetual vows of abstinence through years that loom ahead bleakly. Of course this is why we have the twenty-four-hour plan. But even so, two years before I achieved sobriety in AA, a friend told me not to come near her again until I had been sober for ten years. I yelled, "I'd rather be dead than face such a terrible future!" Her reply did not comfort me: "Keep on as you are and you will be dead." I knew that; but I did not know that in achieving sobriety in AA I'd also achieve the freest kind of freedom, if freedom can be qualified. I would achieve the freedom of choice. I'd like all hesitant candidates to know that and to accept it: that they are not necessarily committing themselves to a life of bondage, however healing that bondage might be.

No one would be in despair because his body cannot handle strawberries. Well, my body just can't handle alcohol, that's all. It so happens I've had my gall bladder out and can't eat grapes, but that circumstance does not make me contemplate suicide. (The doctors assured me that my past drinking had

nothing to do with the gall bladder trouble, for any possibly curious readers of this essay.)

Now, while I go to meetings only occasionally, I use AA daily, hourly, I might say every waking hour of my life. I have to deal with a lot of people. Frequently, I am in the position of being able to help them in many ways. Thanks to AA, I am more tolerant and, I hope, more understanding of others. A certain former impatience is minimized; I'm working on it. The sarcasm is replaced by--at least in intention--wit, or maybe just good humor, good nature. I hope I am easier to live with. And behind the anonymity of this essay, I will confess to a joy that approaches smugness in performing good deeds, also kept anonymous, if possible. You wouldn't think that at my age anyone could be so naive? Ah, truly, it is more blessed to give than to receive. Let not your right hand know what your left hand doeth. Retire to a private place for your prayers. Bread cast on the waters, and so on. Believe me, it's all true. At least, it's true for me.

Selfishly, for me, the best is that I'm in command. No compulsion by anything drives me to actions that I don't really want to do, don't approve of, and know are wrong. I hope I am no less human for being dry, twenty-years-plus dry, in AA.

The bad old years, the years of suffocating in the deep morass of alcoholism, are years I could have used to good advantage had I not been trapped by this hideous disease. There were seven or eight years before I found AA--oh, how I could have used those years! But they were not wasted; they stripped me of everything, including self-respect; but they made me ready for the happiness of the last twenty years in AA.

Come on, man, join us! Be happy, too. All you have to do to change your life is change your mind.

E.B.R.

Manhattan, New York

Monthly Laughs



"Now my brother John. . . He's a guy who really NEEDS A.A."

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 Nine: AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve..

1. Do I still try to boss things in AA?
2. Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative
3. Am I mature enough to understand and use all elements of the AA program—even if no one makes me do so- with a sense of personal responsibility
4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?
5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?
6. Why doesn't every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?
7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully—and profit thereby—when the time comes?
8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? With humility?

Responsible

having a capacity
for moral decisions
and therefore
accountable;
capable of rational
thought or action

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AA's Newsletter for the

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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.

Monthly Prayer: Ninth Step Prayer

God give me the strength and direction to do the right thing no matter what the consequences may be. Help me to consider others and not harm them in any way. Help me to consult with others before I take any actions that would cause me to be sorry. Help me to not repeat such behaviors. Show me the way of Patience, Tolerance, Kindliness, and Love and help me live the spiritual life.

(p. 78-80 BB via www.silkworth.net/aa/prayer.html)



Calendar of Events



Pancake Feed. Children's Christmas Party fundraiser. Alano Club Kennewick in the Café. Suggested \$5 donation 9AM to 12PM (noon).	Sat 2 October
A Vision for You. Women's Retreat. Brighton Creek Conference Center www.brightoncreek.org . \$115.00 for the whole weekend. This includes registration, 5 delicious meals and lodging. Contact Rose W: 360-539-6122 (rosewolfe35711@yahoo.com) or Kris M: 360-280-1645 (krism52@gmail.com)	Fri-Sat 1-2 October
2010 Washington State East Area 92 Fall Assembly. Bonner's Ferry, ID	15-17 October
Spaghetti Feed. Children's Christmas Party fundraiser. Alano Club Kennewick in the Café. Suggested \$5 donation. 4PM to 6PM	16 October
Halloween Dance. Costume contest, children's activities and games, 50/50 raffle, water and soda provided by alateen. Finger food potluck is appreciated. 418 Yelm ST. First Lutheran Church \$5 at the door. For more info contact Kasey at 206-300-3960.	30 October