

Inside: A new kind of family



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Me, Too !!

I just never fit-in. No matter where I was or who I was with, I always felt there was something better if only I could find it. At the same time I knew never to mention that I felt sad or lonely. I was already keeping secrets of the heart. I was 14 years old when I had my first drink of alcohol. It tasted nasty but I knew I was on to something big! For the first time ever, I found the party and alcohol became the answer to becoming comfortable in my own skin forever.



I got married, had two girls, also worked as a bank teller and made great friends. At the annual Christmas Party, we arrived for the open bar. After about 30 minutes, I had consumed three whiskey sours and had to leave because of loud and inappropriate behavior. I never felt embarrassed because the joy of alcohol replaced all feelings of being different. This became a way of life and I functioned very well, thank you very much. Somewhere in our literature is a couplet that says it all: "Alcohol gave me wings to fly and then it took away the sky". That's what happened to me.

One week-end I didn't take a drink and thought "this is easy, tra-la, tra-la".



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Several hours later while at work, I had the mother of all panic attacks. I left work, called a cab and headed home. I remember thinking "I need a drink" and realized I was into alcohol withdrawal. I paid the cabbie and ran to the bottle of gin, drinking it until I felt OK. I made a vow then never be without alcohol and never to try to stop drinking again. I kept that vow for many more years. Alcohol let me live in a world foreign to me. Eventually, God got me to AA and AA got me to God and a spiritual way of life.

I became a maintenance drinker. I wanted to put down the never-ending drink and never could. I was so done with alcohol and could not stop. Desperate and frightened I asked God to help me and I received the first of many spiritual messages, "Go to AA". I went to my first AA meeting the next morning, after finishing off the remainder of a bottle of gin. The whole meeting was a "me, too" experience. In one hour's time, on that Sunday morning January 7, 1979, I had my last drink of alcohol and my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Amazing. A true miracle.

Life became a do-over. I got a sponsor and started the steps. Step Two became a stepping stone; I was not restored to sanity, I had never been sane. The promises have all come true



for me. I seek the bountiful gift of some patience, some kindly and tolerant views, replacing calamity with serenity and replacing fear with faith. I love the suggestion of "progress not perfection. The obsession to drink was lifted at that first meeting. I was told that we never have to drink again if we didn't want to and that we never had to drink again if we did want to. Today there are wonderful women in my life. I tell them they are my change of life babies—they came into my life and everything changed for me.

My first husband passed away and I did not find it necessary to pick up a drink but made sure to go to plenty of meetings. Three years into widowhood, in meditation with my Higher Power, I told Him that I was content to have had my 38 year marriage and was OK with being a single recovering alcoholic. You all know God's sense of humor. Within a month HE came to a meeting and we fell "in like" with each other. We will celebrate 23 years of sober marriage in January and our individual programs gift us with mutual on-going love for Alcoholics Anonymous.

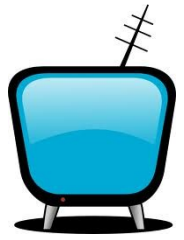
In a "Vision for You" it says, "you will surely meet some of us.." So, let's all remain "some" and may God bless us and keep us til then. I love and thank all of the AA family for living a life beyond anything one could imagine. There's a love for Sister and Mother but there's no love in the world like one alcoholic for another.

Elizabeth A.



Where everybody knows my name

I GREW up watching a lot of TV sitcoms, and recall "All in the Family," where Archie Bunker sat for hours in his chair saying, "Shut up, Edith, and get me a beer." I also remember the show "Cheers," where everyone hollered out "Norm!" and the theme song about "where everybody knows your name, where they're always glad you came." Truthfully, I always loved that feeling of walking into a bar, having the bartender pour my beverage of choice, and people chime out my name, welcoming me home.



My story is not a scripted show with built-in laugh tracks, but it is truly a reality show. Most of my family was out of state, so as a hard-working single woman, loneliness was one of the things that led to my drinking more. It was also one of the things that I struggled with as I began my sobriety, letting go of many friends and activities that had come to define my very existence. Yet as I write, I realize that I'm beginning to have a new home.

I will always remember the Friday night I came to my first AA meeting. I had called an AA-related clubhouse earlier to find out about meeting times. When I walked in that evening, I must have had the deer in the headlights look of the newbie, because someone quickly invited me to sit at the counter and have a cup of coffee before the meeting started. Another guy got a packet of pamphlets and a phone list together for me. I walked into the meeting and tried to pick up on the conversations and the jargon in the room. There seemed to be several people speaking at different times. "Twelve Steps" I'd heard of. "Twelve Promises"? Not a clue. "How It Works"? Totally foreign, and it didn't explain anything just then.

I quickly realized that there were many rituals involved with the meetings and I'd just have to watch and figure it out. They went around the room introducing themselves and when it came to me, I sobbed, "I'm Jill and I'm an alcoholic," choking on every word as it came out of my mouth. Flash forward to another meeting.

I came to the Saturday morning meeting feeling a bit befuddled. I had just celebrated my fifth month of sobriety and my bellybutton birthday earlier in the week, and was contrasting how great it was to have a sober birthday hinged with morning and evening meetings in contrast to the year before when I'd started with Bloody Marys in the morning, drinks with lunch, wine with a pedicure, dinner and drinks, a few birthday shots and then on to a night of karaoke and booze. Yes, I was feeling good about my newfound sobriety, and beginning to feel secure in it. I was also cleaning my house in other ways.

But this week, three people I knew from the club had relapsed. I began thinking about the people I had seen come in and out the door in this short period of time. This scared the heck out of me. How would I protect my own sobriety? I did not want to become a relapse statistic. As one of the guys was fond of saying, "I know I have another drunk in me, but I don't know if I have another recovery." Another old-timer spoke of the need to allow his Higher Power to be a part of the program, and how he'd been in AA forever, but continued to relapse until he could turn it over to God. The next gentleman said, "I never learned to read very well, but I learned to listen. I listen to audio tapes and CDs from the Big Book, from the Grapevine and from meetings and speakers." He concluded with his favorite line, "You've got to take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth and listen." The next old-timer razzed the first one for being in the program "200 years" and the group laughed, but then he talked about what those fellows had been through over the last three decades, and how important it is to listen. "Listen to your sponsor, your peers and all the wisdom that is within. While everybody's story may have some unique elements, there are also those elements that are universal. That's why we nod in agreement, in empathy, in understanding. And remember to watch their faces as you listen. You will learn much."

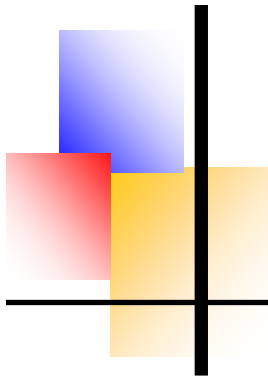
The words he spoke to our newcomer went right to my heart as I was struggling with work on my Fourth Step. "There is nothing you can do, nothing you can say, that somebody here hasn't already done. You can't shock us. We are here, and we will love you, encourage you, support you and kick your butt when it needs it. All you have to do is want to be sober. All you have to do is not take the first drink." As I write now, recalling that meeting, I realize that nothing I am sharing here is really different than what you will hear at any meeting. Rather it was all the good, simple AA wisdom combined. But that is the beauty of AA. Some way, somehow, every meeting I go to seems to have exactly what I need to hear that day and a profound sense of wisdom pervades it.

What a wonderful motley crew, what a wonderful family in sobriety. It struck me then that AA has been around since 1935, and is celebrating its 75th anniversary, but in this room alone there was the collective wisdom and insights of well more than 150 years of sobriety! I've been in the program five months, and already feel so attached to these people, their stories, and their journeys. I have already gone to funerals of family members. I go to lunch with girlfriends, and nod when I see a fellow from AA at church or the local coffee shop. There is no longer a sense of embarrassment at being "one of them."



Just like any big family, we can drive each other nuts once in a while. That's why it is good to go to other meetings at different locations, but I always come home to my family at this club and the variety of the meetings held there. Here, I know someone will notice when I've not been at a meeting in a few days and call and see how it's going, or welcome me back with a question of, "Are you doing OK?" There I know Jeannie or Kris or Beth or Karen will call to see if I need a ride to a meeting. Betty will pull out an energy drink for me when she sees me walk in the door toward the counter. There I know Terry will always tease me for walking in late, Jeff will be at the counter to shout "Jillybean" when I walk in, Ron will hand me a root beer candy, and as I sit next to my friend Jill in a meeting she will say, "I'm Jill and I'm an alcoholic," and I will look at her and say, "No, I'm Jill and I'm an alcoholic," and we will all laugh. And with that, I pass.

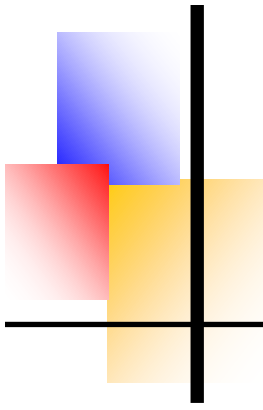
Jill M, West Bend, Wisconsin



JANUARY 2012

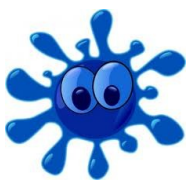
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 Tuesday night Speaker mtg 7pm	4	5	6 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm	7 Redmond pot- luck, speaker mtg—6 pm;
8 District 5 GSR mtg 4 pm TEC	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 Madras birthday Mtg-7:30 pm	18 Potluck Speaker Meeting, La Pine 6 pm	19	20 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm	21
22 IGR Advisory Board mtg-5 pm IGR mtg-5:30 TEC	23	24	25	26	27 Bend Milestone- Meeting TEC 7p	28
29	30					
Bend Mileston Meeting Central Oregon Speaker Meeting District 5 GSR Meeting Intergroup Advisory Board Meeting Intergroup IGR Meeting Intergroup Potluck Speaker Meet- ing La Pine Potluck Speaker Meeting Madras Birthday Meeting Redmond Potluck Speaker Meeting Tuesday Speaker Meeting Tumalo Speaker Meeting Pine Forest Grange Hall (PFGH)		Trinity Episcopal Church (TEC) Environmental Center TEC TEC TEC St. Helen's Room La Pine Park & Rec Building Jefferson Cnty Library Rodriguez Annex Redmond Community Church Nazarene Church Fellowship Hall PFGH			469 NW Wall Street 16 NW Kansas, Bend 469 Wall Street, Bend 469 NW Wall Street, Bend 469 NW Wall Street, Bend Idaho Street, Bend 16405 12 1st Street, La Pine 134 S.E. E Street, Madras 10 & Cedar, Redmond 1270 NE 27th, Bend Bruce Avenue, Tumalo 63214 Boyd Acres Road, Bend	

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FEBRUARY 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm	4 Redmond pot- luck, speaker mtg—6 pm;
5	6	7 Tuesday Night Speaker Mtg 7 pm	8	9	10	11
12 District 5 GSR mtg 4 pm TEC	13	14	15 Potluck Speaker Meeting, La Pine 6 pm	16	17 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm	18
19	20	21 Madras birthday Mtg-7:30 pm	22	23	24 Bend Milestone meeting 7 pm	25
26 IGR Advisory Board mtg-5 pm IGR mtg-5:30 TEC	27	28	29			
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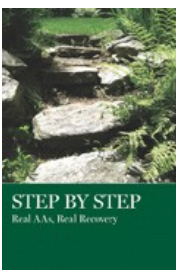
ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

Each year, Grapevine holds a competition for photographers to be featured in our Wall Calendar. We'd love to see your most striking photographs that reflect the joy of living, serenity and other sobriety themes. Contributors of selected photos will receive complimentary copies of the 2013 Calendar and Pocket Planner.

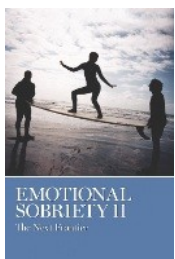
- Entries must be received by March 1, 2012. They cannot be returned and may be considered for magazine illustrations.
- Submit digital images on CDS, along with printouts, or email to gveditorial@aagrapevine.org. Include contact information. Please note: Digital files must be high resolution—300 dps minimum.
- Mail entries to:
Art Editor, Grapevine,
475 Riverside Drive,
New York, NY 10115
- For more information, visit aagrapevine.org



Books/Resources



Real AAs, Real Recovery shows how AA members of all ages and all lifestyles from around the world; spiritual, religious and atheists; newcomers and old-timers have recovered and found a new way of life by working the Twelve Steps. \$10.95 each



In Emotional Sobriety II, you'll read heartfelt insights of several dozen sober seekers whose articles in the Grapevine offer insights that can light the way to our own "quiet place in bright sunshine." \$9.95 each

ORDER THROUGH AAGRAPEVINE.ORG

JANUARY Sobriety Milestones

Attitude Adjustment

Bruce C	1/6/82	30 years
Joel K	1/2/09	3 years
John S	1/1/11	1 year
Jon W	1/28/09	3 years
Karen H	1/1/08	4 years
Larry S	1/2/03	9 years
Steve C	1/11/11	1 year
Tim B	1/1/85	27 years
Tom M	1/14/10	2 years

Redmond SOS

Bryan K	1/28/92	20 years
Mikey L	1/6/96	16 years

Prineville STS

Lynn L	1/4/03	9 years
Jeanna S	1/11/00	12 years
Mark L	1/19/87	25 years
Bud J	1/1/03	9 years
Rob D	1/1/91	21 years
Larry C	1/15/77	35 years
Roy B	1/26/06	6 years
Breana V	1/14/11	1 year
Ashlin R	1/1/11	1 year

Willing to go to any lengths

Jonny Webb	1/1/87	25 years
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New Horizons

Barbara C	1/13/93	19 years
Erin B	1/27/11	1 year
Rachel H	1/7/08	3 years
Cam K	1/24/11	1 year
Kenny H	1/2/09	3 years

Primary Purpose

Elizabeth A	1/7/79	33 years
Jordan T	1/15/10	2 years
Debbie R	1/15/01	11 years



Upcoming Events

BEND has been selected for the statewide Service Assembly for September 2012! This event will take LOTS of help from the AA Community over the next nine months.

FUND RAISER "Pool Party"



Saturday January 28, 2012
5-7 pm

Cascade Swim Ctr, Redmond
465 SW Rimrock Way
(next to Remond High)

Swim races, games, competitions; hot dogs, chips, sodas deserts and more!

Info: Roberto F. 541-977-3073
Don F. 541-480-5639



JANUARY Sobriety Milestones

W F S

Samantha R	1/1/10	2 years
Denise	1/7/08	4 years
Pat R	1/11/87	25 years
Jane L	1/29/91	21 years
Mike S	1/31/11	1 year

ABC

Heidi S	1/25/07	5 years
David M	1/30/97	15 years
Wayne M	1/31/99	13 years

TREASURER'S REPORT

DONATIONS SUMMARY

2011 Group	11/16/11 to 12/15/11	Year to Date
24 and Alive	150.00	1,600.00
As Men See It		833.00
Attitude Adjustment	153.00	715.00
Back to the Big Book	58.00	195.42
Burns Group		50.00
Chicks with Chips		162.75
Culver Nuts & Bolts		136.00
Eastside Earlyrisers		736.75
Easy Does It		300.00
First things First		45.00
Going to Any Lengths		100.00
High Noon		190.00
Home Away From Hope		33.50
Issues & Tissues		53.00
Living in the Solution		57.00
Madras Oasis Group	100.00	550.00
Make My Day	30.00	70.75
Meditation Meeting		30.67
Men's Book Study	67.03	276.13
Men's Stag Meeting	20.00	195.00
Men's Straight Talk		100.00
New Horizon	198.50	1,426.50
Not a Glum Lot		808.60
Primary Purpose		317.83
Redmond Rebels		139.58
Rule 62 Group	19.27	19.27
Safe Harbor		460.82
Saturday Morning Alive		470.00
Saturday Nite Live		100.00
Sisters in Sobriety		180.22
Sober Desire	88.00	305.00
Sobriety Maintenance	36.25	36.25
S.O.S. Group		160.00
S.O.B. Group		150.00
Spiritual Awakening		194.98
Step Sisters		328.99
Steps to Sobriety		306.00
Sunriver Open Group		56.00
Terrebonne Trudgers	40.00	40.00
The Serenity Group		125.00
Tuesday Nite AA-Bend	150.00	519.50
Wednesday Stag Meeting		50.00
WFS		311.85
Anonymous		45.00
Potluck	230.72	1,204.90
Total Contributions	1,340.77	14,186.26

TRADITION SEVEN: MONEY IS A TOOL

EVER since I began in service, I have constantly heard about the need for money in AA to support many different functions and purposes. I just wanted to step on my soapbox for a minute and tell you what I have come to see about our Seventh Tradition in AA. When I first walked in the doors I was confronted with a lot of people who seemed to be concerned with me and with my well-being. I didn't understand why these people who didn't know me seemed to want to help me. I couldn't help but be suspicious of their seeming lack of motive.

Then they passed a basket for money. This, I thought, must be the catch: my money. So, just to spite them all, I abstained from putting my dollar in that basket. However, this did not change anyone's response to me even over time. And I began to see that there was something more to their concern. After a month or so, I decided to go to coffee with a family that had been inviting me to join them for some time. I remember feeling very uncomfortable to be interrupting their family during lunch; they were all so happy and so intimately close to one another. Regardless, they sat me down at the table and began to include me in the conversation. After a while, it became apparent that these people were not related at all. And an overwhelming feeling overcame me as I realized that, like me, they were all outsiders grafted into a family of recovery.

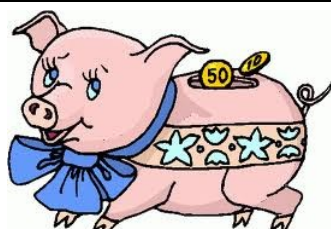
Soon my money began to go into the basket, and there was still no change in how I was treated. Over the years, I have begun to see why these people loved me and wanted so badly to help me. When I see a newcomer I understand, because I was in that person's shoes and have been given a priceless gift that saved me. It gave me a life. I want to see those people get what I was given.

I know it isn't about money. It is about sharing a message of hope and life with someone who has lost both. My money is nothing more than a tool used to help us get that gift to the next person who will have it.

Wes H, Idaho



My sponsor says I have to learn from the mistakes of others because I'll never have time to make them all myself.





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