

Volume 14 Issue 5

May 2012

Knowing and Doing

My first AA meeting was July 9th 1998. I was battered and bruised when I showed up. I mean that literally. It was the summer between my junior and senior year of high school and while most people my age were enjoying their time off from school I was in rehab. It turns out that as per usual, I was enjoying my time off a little too much.

It was a typical summer night in Michigan, and I was engaging in a usual activity -- drinking. In many ways, it was like every other summer night, but this one ended very differently. I had grown somewhat accustomed to waking up in strange places, not knowing how I had gotten there. I had even woken up in my car before.



This was the first time I had woken up in my car, however, when it was upside down; and certainly the first time it was upside down in a swamp!

Oregon Area Treasury 1900 N.E. 3rd Street Suite 106-172 Bend, OR 97701

Address Information

District 5 P. O. Box 7241 Bend, OR 97708

General Service Board Grand Central Station P. O. Box 459 New York, NY 10164-0371



HOTLINE: 541-548-0440

Central Oregon Intergroup Office M - F 9:00 - 5:00 214 NW 6th Street Redmond, OR 97756 541-923-8199 www.coigaa.org

Intergroup Officers

CHAIRPERSON Jerry R. 541-408-0627 chairperson@coigaa.org

VICE CHAIRPERSON OPEN

> SECRETARY Patti O. 541-771-5452

> TREASURER l inda 541-408-5086

ENTERTAINMENT CHAIR Erik J. 541-993-4979 entertainment@coigaa.org

NEWSLETTER CHAIR Eileen F. 541-408-7073 newsletter@coigaa.org

SCHEDULE CHAIR Shari A. 541.420.9831 schedule@coigaa.org

HOTLINE CHAIR Sherrill H. 504-717-6175 hotline@coigaa.org

> POTLUCK CHAIR Alan 541-948-0341 potluck@coigaa.org

WEBSITE CHAIR Mark 541-410-1719 webmaster@coigaa.org

DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEMBER Kim A. 541-420-9722

ADVISORY BOARD COMMITTEE

Bill B 541.633-6640 Shari A. 541-420-9831 Doug 610-864-1976 Steve G 541-385-7827 "If there is one thing I have learned in my time in the program it is this --



an intellectual understanding does not necessarily translate into an ability. "

It can be a sobering experience to wake up in your car upside down in a swamp. Not for *this* alcoholic, though! Since it was 2am and on a back-country road, I didn't have to worry about getting caught. When I woke up I did what I thought was right -- I fled the scene. I walked to my house a couple miles away, and woke up my sister and I told her I needed help. She immediately called a nearby rehab facility and got me checked in. My first AA meeting was in that rehab facility.

I really wanted to get sober and had considered it a few times before my accident. I learned a lot in rehab; I identified with everyone in there with me. All of it made sense; And yet, I hadn't had enough. My entire drinking career was only about five years long, and despite flipping my car into a swamp during a blackout, a stint in rehab and a couple of various alcohol related offenses in the past – I still wanted to do it <u>my way</u>.

From July 1998 to February 10th of 2000 I spent time in limbo, not really wanting to drink, but not really wanting to stay sober either. I stayed alcohol free for nine straight monthsI even went to about four AA meetings after rehab. I figured I knew the basics so I didn't need to go to AA meetings ALL the time.

If there is one thing I have learned in my time in the program it is this -- an intellectual understanding does not necessarily translate into an ability. I knew I was an alcoholic long before I woke up in the swamp. Simply knowing didn't give me the ability to do anything about it. I had to learn that the hard way. My last drink was February 10th, 2000. I was 19 years old, and a freshman in college. I swore over and over that I was going to quit between my rehab and my sobriety date and I sincerely meant it every time. Sobriety stuck for me when I made back into the rooms and took directions. I got a sponsor, went to 90 meetings in 90 days, worked the steps to the best of my ability and I stayed sober by doing what was directed.

When I moved from Michigan to Central Oregon in 2006 it took me a long time to get comfortable in the AA community here. And again, I knew I needed the fellowship, but I lacked in the *doing* part. And I suffered from my alcoholism as a result. After a couple of years doing the minimum, I came to the conclusion that I didn't need meetings. I am sure I don't need to explain that that plan didn't work out too well: I went crazy. And as an alcoholic, I am the *last one* to know when I go crazy.

One thing that has become crystal clear to me is that I don't need to take a drink to suffer from alcoholism. In fact alcohol has not been a problem for me in more than 12 years. My alcoholism, however, has never left me. I have had to learn (the hard way) that my recovery from alcoholism has a lot less to do with *knowing* than it does with *doing*.

I have learned that the solution to my alcoholism is the same at 12 years as it was at 12 days. *Knowing that* is only PART of the solution; actually *doing what works* is the OTHER part. I have had to relearn over and over something I heard when I first got sober and that is, "I can't think my way into better acting, I have to act my way into better thinking".

-Griff



Excerpts from: **The Professor and The Paradox**; *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 1st ed.

In connection with this idea, let me pass on what I consider the four paradoxes of how A.A. works. (A paradox, you probably already know, is a statement which is seemingly self-contradictory; a statement which appears to be false, but which, upon careful examination, in certain instances proves to be true.)



We SURRENDER TO WIN. On the face of it, surrendering certainly does not seem like winning. But it is in A.A. Only after we have come to the end of our rope, hit a stone wall in some aspect of our lives beyond which we can go no further; only when we hit "bottom" in despair and surrender, can we accomplish sobriety which we could never accomplish before. We must, and we do, surrender in order to win.

We GIVE AWAY TO KEEP. That seems absurd and untrue. How can you keep anything if you give it away? Rut in order to keep whatever it is we get in A.A., we must go about giving it away to others, for no fees or rewards of any kind. When we cannot afford to give away what we have received so freely in A.A., we had better get ready for our next "drunk." It will happen every time. We've got to continue to give it away in order to keep it.

We SUFFER TO GET WELL. There is no way to escape the terrible suffering of remorse and regret and shame and embarrassment which starts us on the road to getting well from our affliction. There is no new way to shake out a hangover. It's painful. And for us, necessarily so. I told this to a friend of mine as he sat weaving to and fro on the side of the bed, in terrible shape, about to die for some paraldehyde. I said, "Lost John"-that's his nickname-"Lost John, you know you're going to have to do a certain amount of shaking sooner or later." "Well," he said, "for God's sake let's make it later!" We suffer to get well.

We DIE TO LIVE. That is a beautiful paradox straight out of the Biblical idea of being "born again" or "losing one's life to find it. When we work at our Twelve Steps, the old life of guzzling and fuzzy thinking, and all that goes with it, gradually dies, and we acquire a different and a better way of life. As our short-comings are removed, one life of us dies, and another life of us lives. We in A.A. die to live.

Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.

MYSTERIOUS PARADOXES

Such is the paradox of A.A. regeneration: strength arising out of complete defeat and weakness, the loss of one's old life as a condition for finding a new one.

A.A. COMES OF AGE, p. 46



What glorious mysteries paradoxes are! They do not compute, yet when recognized and accepted, they reaffirm something in the universe beyond human logic. When I face a fear, I am given courage; when I support a brother or sister, my capacity to love myself is increased; when I accept pain as part of the growing experience of life, I realize a greater happiness; when I look at my dark side, I am brought into new light; when I accept my vulnerabilities and surrender to a Higher Power, I am graced with unforeseen strength. I stumbled through the doors of A.A. in disgrace, expecting nothing from life, and I have been given hope and dignity. Miraculously, the only way to keep the gifts of the program is to pass them on.

MAY2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Tuesday night Speaker mtg 7pm	2	3	4 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm Speakers: KIM T/ MARK T	5 Redmond pot- luck, speaker mtg—6 pm;
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 ART SILENT AUCTION BROOKS HALL 6-8 pm
13 District 5 GSR mtg 4 pm TEC	14	15 Madras birthday Mtg-7:30 pm	16 Potluck Speaker Meeting, La Pine 6 pm	17	18 CO speaker mtg- 7 pm Speakers: SHARIE B/ CODY M.	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Bend Milestone- Meeting TEC 7p	26 Intergroup Pot- luck TEC Brooks Hall 6pm
27 IGR Advisory Board mtg-5 pm IGR mtg-5:30	28	29	30	31		
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JUNE 2012

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

phone call to our sponsor? Finishing that Fourth Step? Or how about that crazy share we blurt out at our home group? For each of us, it's different, depending on the day. But one thing we do know ... if we trust our Higher Power and pick up the basic tools of AA, we have a good chance of not picking up that drink today.

In this special May "Back to the Basics" issue, we feature stories about some of the great tools that keep us on the beam. In "Learning to Walk," working the Steps helped a man finally become an adult. In "We Open Up," a member tells how sharing keeps him sober and grateful. The power of a loving, firm sponsor is featured in "Stitch and Giggle." And a new guy gets pulled into his home group through fun times and fellowship in Pool Party."

You can find these stories and many more on the AA Grapevine Web site.

TREASURER'S REPORT

DONATIONS SUMMARY

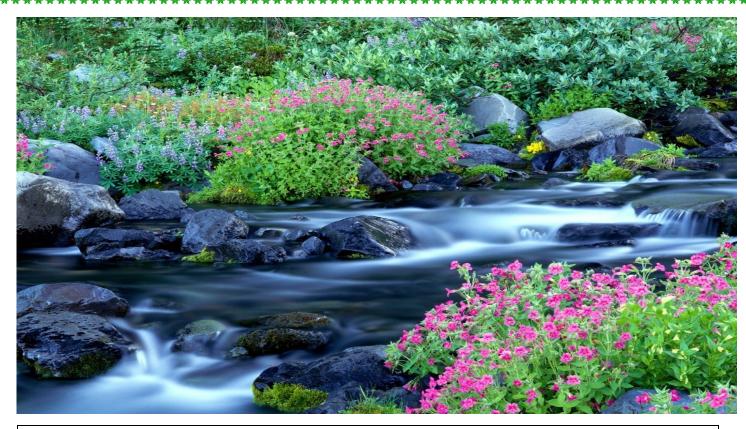
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