



Central Oregon's

CONSCIOUS CONTACT

AA HOTLINE – (541) 548-0440 January 1, 2016

JANUARY HAPPENINGS

Area Updates . . .

My commitment as Editor of the Conscious Contact ends December 31, 2015, but I have been asked and have agreed to fill in until a new Editor can be found.

Please consider this position. It is very gratifying and quite easy to do. Takes about 2 hours per month and the online Grapevine website is an excellent resource for articles.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being the Editor. It kept me sober!

Would you like your birthday listed in the Conscious Contact? If so, please email me, Judy W., at newsletter@coigaa.org, and let me know the month before and I'll be sure to include you!

INTERGROUP OFFICERS

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Chairperson@coigaa.org

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OUR INTERGROUP OFFICE

M-F 9:00 am -1:00 pm
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(541) 923-8199 www.coigaa.org

OREGON AREA TREASURY

1900 NE 3RD Street
Suite 106-172
Bend OR 97701

DISTRICT 5

P. O. Box 7241
Bend OR 97708

GENERAL SERVICE BOARD

Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459
New York NY 10164-0371

AA HOTLINE



Shifts available: Wednesday 1 pm to 5 pm;
Wednesday 5 pm to 9 pm; Thursday 9 pm to Friday 9 am.

To qualify you must:

- Have a working telephone
- Have 6 months of sobriety
- Have an AA sponsor
- Be working the AA steps
- Be attending AA meetings regularly
- Participate in a brief training

If you are willing to give back what
was so freely given to you, please call:

Hotline Chairman: Samantha R. (541) 604-5319

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



Barbara C.	01/13/93
Christine K.	01/28/90
Darlene J.	01/13/14
Elizabeth A.	01/07/79
Heidi S.	01/25/07
Kim T.	01/10/90
Mari R.	01/23/10
Pat R.	01/11/87
Rynda C.	01/01/88
Sandy B.	01/24/11
Toni M.	01/10/14

(Let us know when your birthday is,
and you'll be in the newsletter. *Ed.*)

MEETING CHANGES

CULVER

Wednesday 6:30p.m. Nuts & Bolts, now meets at Culver Christian Church, 501 4th Ave.

FOSSIL

Friday 7:00 pm. Fossil Methodist Church, 1004 Main Street. The name of the meeting is "Primary Purpose."

LA PINE

Friday 9:30 am. *NEW.* Sober Chicks, Huntington Hut, 52379 Huntington Road, La Pine.

Step One – We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.

BEFORE I came to AA, I took Step One slowly, over a period of years. It was not AA people who helped me with it. Instead, it was all the nonalcoholics who misunderstood and mistreated both me and my disease. In retrospect, I am grateful for their harshness. It forced me to AA, twenty-five years ago this month.

That first faltering step I took to AA recovery was not placed exactly in the First of the twelve footprints left us as a guide by the earliest AA members. But before I came to AA I had begun to realize that my drinking was causing me trouble. This, of course, was hard to believe; so many other people who drank did not get into trouble. My life presented a tough sequence of problems, yes; but I argued (with myself) that drinking surely was not the cause. Fate had just handed me unfair breaks: my family, my love life, my bosses and jobs, my unsteady finances, my friends, my insomnia, my nervousness.

So I desperately kept trying to prove that drinking was not one of my problems. If I was a failure at drinking, rather than a success, it wasn't for lack of trying! Looking back, it is not so hard to understand now why it was difficult for me, as it has been for others, to accept this inability to drink (for which pharmacological addiction provides a simple explanation). The rewards, pleasures, and gratifications of drinking were so overpoweringly great. Drinking was easy to do, and it worked almost instantaneously, anesthetizing any discomfort as if by magic. It was socially acceptable; my whole social life, all the activities I considered fun, were accompanied by drinking.

The idea of *not* drinking was so unfamiliar to me that it was frightening. If I thought of a nondrinking life at all, I thought of it as a cheerless existence devoid of grace and charm. To give up drinking would mean turning into the bluenosed, narrow-minded, Puritan type.

It is important now for me to remember that my entire style of life was at stake, not just the apparent benefits of alcohol. Lying to people and sinking into gloomy self-pity were habits neither unfamiliar to me nor frightening. I was thoroughly comfortable with them--even, in a way, found them enjoyable. Besides, "I was drunk at the time" was a marvelous excuse to have when I did shameful things.

Giving up drinking, then, looked like an unpleasant, unendurably long-term proposition. Anyhow, it wouldn't be necessary, would it, *if* other people would just change?

But they didn't. They got worse. My family, in their displeasure with me, pointed clearly to drinking as the source of my troubles. Friends who expressed concern and bosses who fired me helped drive home that truth. Kind strangers and bartenders who shook their beads while being helpful all said, in effect, "You should not drink." A cop who jailed me for being drunk and disorderly, a doctor who scolded me for drinking too much, a grocer who wanted his money, and a bouncer who shoved me out a tavern door all reinforced the lesson.

My repeated solo failures to "do better" kept building an interior despair which finally crushed my false reasoning and false pride. Hung there at the edge of madness, I read a newspaper story about AA.

And so, on the day I first telephoned AA, I was not struggling too hard against the mountains of undeniable proof that my life was one awful mess because of my drinking. I had also already admitted, unwillingly, that I could not handle alcohol.

Those admissions of mine are not necessarily identical to scientific diagnosis of the disease

of alcoholism, of course. Any well-trained physician, alcoholism counselor, or other professional familiar with Dr. Jellinek's classic list of the symptoms of alcoholism, can correctly determine whether or not a given drinker has the symptoms.

But such diagnosis by another person is not a step toward recovery for the drinker--until he himself takes the First Step. I took it blindly at the start, and that was not the best way for me, although any beginning is better than none. In subsequent AA years, through conscious, systematic efforts to understand and practice all the Steps, I have found that they repeatedly come to have new and surprising values.

For me, the hardest part of that First Step has been in the implications of the statement that my life had become unmanageable. With the effects of booze a bit behind me, I could see more plainly than ever what a mess my life was, what a job lay before me. And it became clearer than ever that, in order to stay sober, I had to undertake a mammoth overhaul of myself in many aspects which, at first, seemed unrelated to drinking.

In short, stepping into the first footprint that led from the dismal swamp of alcoholism toward the sunlight of sobriety would not take me far enough. Would I muddle along on some little trail of my own in the weeds, vaguely paralleling the clearly marked AA road? Or would I choose to follow in the exact footsteps of the AAs who had preceded? The choice was up to me. I could do either, but I had to cover the whole trail if I wanted to get where the others were. Since I had already taken Step One, I could decide to stop right there. I could just dry up, period. I could survive like a raisin the rest of my life.

Going the whole route looked too hard--until someone said to me, "One step at a time." So I looked ahead, along the path marked by the footprints of hope, commitment, and action. All around me were many happy, sober people who had walked that path. Listening intently to their stories, I heard some more horrifying than mine, others less so. But it was plain that all these alcoholics had once *felt* the same hopelessness, fear, pain, and anger I had experienced. It was also obvious that people with drinking troubles like mine could come out of them and--unbelievable as it seemed at first--laugh at them! It was evident, too, that these people had much knowledge of alcoholism that I did not have. They knew that it was an illness, that it could deceive its victims, that the danger lay in the first drink.

They had some magic or information, secrets or power which I lacked, but which might get me out of the fix I was in. I had to believe what I saw: that some power wiser, stronger, or greater than mine could restore me to health. Next came a decision I did not even notice making at the time: to try this AA plan of theirs, even though I did not understand it. Some said it was God doing the good work, but I saw unbelievers like me being helped, too. So what had I to lose by going along?

Beginning with the First Step, I have found the following Steps out of alcoholism to be true and benevolent. I still know of no other suggestions more effective as a program of recovery.

B.L.
Manhattan, NY
January 1970 Grapevine

Tradition One – Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

If the first words I heard in AA eased me into the First Step, it was the second statement that gave me instant hope, making me feel better right away. Now, thirty-one years later, I believe that second sentence I heard contained the healing idea of our then-unwritten First Tradition.

The first words were: "Are you having trouble with your drinking?"

Totally unprepared for *that* question, before I knew what I was doing I had nodded a truthful "Yes." It was a wobbly lurch toward Step One. (Later, I slipped off, but finally climbed back.)

My new friend smiled and said calmly, "Well, I'm a drunk myself; come on in, and let's talk it over." In effect she invited me to participate in Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity."

Her description of herself struck me dumb with amazement, even relief. So I mutely followed that wonderful woman into another room, to talk it over. At that moment, I would have followed her to Hades, of course, hooked by her unashamed revelation that she was a . . . well, what she said.

"Drunk" was a word I resented, as adjective or noun. It had always disgusted me, until she said it about herself as simply as she might have said she was a woman or a citizen or on a diet.

She said, "There are lots of us who have alcoholism, and we're now getting over it."

I was not alone! A sob of relief welled up.

My friend then told me, unemotionally, about her drinking, and carefully asked no questions about me or mine.

In that wonderful book *Thirst for Freedom*, David Stewart points out the tremendous helping power of empathy. I wonder why it is not talked about more, either by professional observers of AA or by us. The empathy of those first AAs I met certainly struck a mighty blow against my drinking and gave me a huge shove toward recovery. It is, I believe, a manifestation of our First Tradition, and it goes considerably deeper than simply identifying. We go on to imitate good examples of sobriety. And in twelfth-stepping, we put ourselves in another person's place in order to help.

The empathy around me seemed to elicit some in me, which was the first genuine concern for someone else's welfare I had ever felt. And it had another benign effect on me. Like some other alcoholics, I had felt the most outcast, lonely person on the earth a long time before I came to AA. In the rosy glow of first drinks, I had felt set apart, above others. Special. Better. Unique. That's an isolated spot, with room for only one. Maudlin hours later, sloppy drunk or trying to sober up, I had felt just as alone. A special bastard, worse than anyone else, uniquely loathsome and not worth caring about. Alone again--ostracized, undesired, and undesirable.

Now, surely it takes an acrobatic, if not an alcoholic, egotism to flip-flop continually in order to retain a distinction like that--to be either an unappreciated, Christ-like genius or a uniquely horrible specimen. But practice had made me good at it, and I was almost never as conscious of anyone or anything else as I was continuously aware of me and my specialness. Even when I was not conscious of it, it permeated all I did and said.

My first AA greeter's second statement, "I'm a drunk myself," shattered a lot of my claim to being so specially different. It was exactly what my sick ego needed to hear. Then her tale of alcoholism and recovery in the company of other alcoholics quickly demonstrated that I was far less powerful than the AAs staying sober together. Thus, it seems to me that the principle of anonymity is rooted in these words: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity."

Does this mean I must put the welfare of AA before my own? To answer, I ask myself another question: Would I have any welfare of my own at all if it were not for AA?

Does this Tradition mean we should stifle unpopular or dissenting voices among us? I think it means the opposite. Suppose you and I have opinions poles apart about psychiatry, religion, AA public information activity, or the Steps. Must each of us not respect the other's opinion if we want to stand together in sobriety? I don't mean tolerate; I mean really *respect*. Learning to work together amicably despite differences is a part of becoming mature, I suspect, and something I had no clue to before AA.

The words of our First Tradition had not been written the first day I walked into AA. But when my AA friends assured me we could all stay sober together, although we had not been able to do it alone, I believe they were acting out the Tradition.

The Tradition also seems to me an echo of what Bill W. discovered in 1935 in Akron, Ohio, when he realized he urgently needed to talk to another alcoholic to keep himself sober.

On that long-ago day of my own entry into AA, as soon as I heard the implied invitation to join, I longed to be in that company. I'll always be grateful that I soon was, and I have been so ever since.

Our togetherness, our common welfare, our Fellowship mean so much to me that I am puzzled when someone fliply remarks, "The Traditions are for groups, of course, not members. They are there to hold the movement together." Not the members? "The Steps, not the Traditions, are for recovery."

Did any of us recover on our own? Didn't unity with other alcoholics in AA help a bit? Does anyone in AA believe he or she was not helped to recover by the knowledge that we are all afloat on the same life raft? Isn't that the First Tradition?

Ego deflation is important in my recovery, and this Tradition bears on that, too, it seems to me. To the extent that I have experienced anonymity in the spiritual sense, it grows from Tradition One, our unity. It seems to me worth sacrificing some ego satisfactions for, such as those of being recognized as some kind of Alcoholics Anonymous committee member or officer or speaker or Grapevine contributor. The bonds that hold us together seem to me greatly worth cherishing.

B. L.
Manhattan, New York

HELP WANTED!



CO Birthday Committee Chair

- ❖ 2 years continued sobriety / 2 year commitment term
- ❖ Working knowledge of the 12 Traditions
- ❖ Should be someone well acquainted with the CO AA community

The committee chair is responsible for getting the speakers as well as making sure all the other service positions on the committee are filled, and covered.

NO NEED to leave your Home Group to be part of this meeting as it is not a group, but once a month meeting that is put on by a committee. The CO Birthday committee is made up of members from different groups all over Central Oregon.

“Independent (*non-home group*) AA meetings are recommended only for meetings such as anniversary or speaker format meetings held *less* than once a week, and taking in *less* than \$150 per month 7th tradition. Although this type of meeting does not normally contribute to AA as a whole, it should still be fully self-supporting declining outside contributions.

For more information, to see script or meeting format, or to enquire more about what this position entails, please contact Carrie B., outgoing committee chair at 541-788-7276 or JandCblake@gmail.com.

WE AGNOSTICS

This meeting's purpose is for us to stay sober and to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. This is meant to be a safe place where alcoholics feel comfortable with any higher power they choose. Members are encouraged to share their personal spiritual experience or lack thereof, without having to accept anyone else's beliefs or having to deny their own. Again, this meeting's focus is recovery from alcoholism rather than anti-anything.

Wednesdays, 7:00 pm, TEC

Open topic/discussion meeting.

All are welcome.

We are not a glum lot . . .

A computer lets you make mistakes faster than any other invention--with the possible exception of tequila.

It's two o'clock in the morning. The phone rings. A very drunk voice asks, "Harry there?" "There's no Harry here," growls the half-asleep owner of the phone. "You've got the wrong number."

Five minutes later the phone rings again. "Lemme talk to Harry."

"You've got the wrong number!"

Another five minutes and the same thing.

"Harry?"

"No!"

Five more minutes go by. The phone rings. This time the irate but wise citizen answers, "Alcoholics Anonymous!"

The phone goes dead and stays quiet for the rest of the night.

A drunk was reading the newspaper and on page one was a picture of a controversial politician and his gorgeous wife. Jealous, the drunk turned to his wife and said, "It's unfair that the biggest jerks in the world have the most beautiful wives."

Without missing a beat, his wife smiled and replied, "Why, thank you, dear."

A few friends were playing a trivia game one night. It was a very drunk lady's turn and she got a science question: "If you are in a vacuum and someone calls your name, can you hear it?" She thought for a minute or two, and then asked, "Is it on or off?"

Two drunks were adrift on a raft in the ocean. They had just about given up hope of rescue. One began to pray, "Oh, Lord. We've led a worthless life. We've been unkind to our wives and we've neglected our children. We've drunk too much. But if you'll save us, we promise that we'll stop." The other drunk shouted, "Hold it! I think I see land!"

Randall's drinking had cost him a series of jobs, but he was finally employed as a warehouse forklift operator. One day, he lost control of the forklift and damaged \$5,000 of merchandise. The boss said he was going to withhold 10 percent of each of his paychecks until the damage was paid off.

"Finally!" Randall said. "Job security!"

For the past three years, I've volunteered a few nights a week at our Alano Club, serving sodas and snacks behind the counter. I have met scores of AAs and their children, who often hide out with me while their parents attend meetings.

I was in the foyer of a movie theater when a boy, about 13, broke away from a group of friends and came over to say hi. He was the son of a member at the club. When he returned to his friends, I overheard one ask: "Who was the old guy you were talking to?"

"Oh, he's cool," the young man replied. "He's the bartender where my dad goes for his AA."



calling all artists!

We are looking for artists to donate their work for the 2nd annual silent art auction. All proceeds will go to support the 2016 Area Assembly hosted by district 5.

Get those creative juices flowing! Auction will be held May 7, 2016

For more information contact Bonnie at theartfulbird@gmail.com



Can & Bottle Drive



Support Our 2016
Oregon Area Assembly

Drop Off Location: Phoenix Framing

1404 NE 3rd Street, Bend
541-382-6293
Across from the Red Lion

Hours: Mon/Fri 10:00 to 6:00 Sat. 9:30 to 1:30

SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

Are you looking for a "serious" service commitment? Please consider the jail program. This is certainly not meant to degrade any form of service in AA, but going into the jail to conduct meetings is quite serious. You are sharing your experience, strength and hope with folks that may be at the lowest point of their lives. And yes, we have people in this program whose lives have been changed and have changed those of others.

Do you want to know more? Please contact Duncan L at 541-213-8883 or request an application by email duncbird@gmail.com

There are only two orientations per year with the next in January so if you have an interest, call or email right now!



PANCAKE BREAKFAST

SPEAKER MEETING

DAVE H.

SATURDAY FEB 6, 2016

9:30-NOON

Enjoy a short stack for a Tall cause

You are invited to a Pancake Breakfast/Speaker Meeting Fundraiser to support District 5 hosting the September 2016 Oregon Area Assembly at the Deschutes County Fairgrounds



\$10.00

FOOD FUN
FELLOWSHIP

BREAKFAST @ 9:30
SPEAKER @ 10:30

EGGS, PANCAKES,
SAUSAGE, COFFEE,
TEA

PROCEEDS
BENEFIT 2016 OR
AREA ASSEMBLY

TEC/BROOKS HALL

469 NW Wall St.
Bend, OR 97701



Church Of The Nazarene
1270 NE 27th St, Bend, OR

January speaker: Harry P.
40 years sobriety

Birthday Cake, Raffle, Sober Swag and more!
Finishing with a sobriety countdown of total
years represented by all the attendees!

JANUARY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 There will be NO CO Speaker Mtg. tonight.	2 Redmond Potluck/ Speaker meeting. Food at 6:00; speaker at 7:00.
3	4	5 Tuesday Night AA Speaker Mtg. 7 pm Church of the Nazarene	6	7	8	9
10 District 5 GSR Mtg. 4 pm. TEC	11	12	13 LaPine Potluck Speaker Mtg. 6 pm La Pine Community Church. The Finley Butte Rd. LaPine	14	15 CO Speaker Mtg. 7pm, Eastmont Church. Speakers:	16
17	18	19 Entertainment Committee Meeting 7:00 pm TEC	20	21	22	23 CO Potluck and Speaker Meeting Food 6:00 pm Speakers 7:00 pm Brooks Hall
24 IGR Advisory Board Mtg. 5-5:30 IGR Mtg. 5:30 pm TEC	25 Step Sisters Speaker Mtg. 7pm TEC	26	27	28	29 Bend Birthday Meeting. 7:00 pm Church of the Nazarene. Speaker: Harry P. (40 years)	30
31						

FEBRUARY 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 Tuesday Night AA Speaker Mtg. 7 pm Church of the Nazarene	3	3	5 CO Speaker Mtg. 7pm, Eastmont Church. Speakers:	6 Redmond Potluck/ Speaker meeting. Food at 6 pm; speaker at 7 pm Pancake Breakfast Speaker Meeting 9:30 am – noon. Brooks Hall
7	8	9	10 LaPine Potluck Speaker Mtg. 6 pm La Pine Community Church. The Finley Butte Rd. LaPine	11	12	13
14 District 5 GSR Mtg. 4 pm. TEC	15	16 Entertainment Committee Meeting 7:00 pm TEC	17	18	19 CO Speaker Mtg. 7pm, Eastmont Church. Speakers:	20
21	22 Step Sisters Speaker Mtg. 7pm TEC	23	24	25	26 Bend Birthday Meeting. 7:00 pm Church of the Nazarene. Speaker:	27 CO Potluck and Speaker Meeting Food 6:00 pm Speakers 7:00 pm Brooks Hall, Bend
28 IGR Advisory Board Mtg. 5-5:30 IGR Mtg. 5:30 pm TEC						