



ALKI-LINE



TAKE ONE, IT'S FREE

The Area 11 A.A. Newsletter Vol. 29 No. 1 February 2020 – March 2020

The Gift of Desperation

Self-destruction was my path. I had been a blackout drinker from my first drink at the age of 12. I was a daily drinker by 19, convinced I would die an alcoholic death. Alcohol made all of my decisions for me and none of them were good. I was unemployable but still employed. I had been physically dependent and mentally obsessed with alcohol for as long as I could remember. Random people along the way had suggested that Alcoholics Anonymous might be a good place for me to go. I would immediately dismiss the idea for I was unique. A person like me could not stop drinking. Alcoholic death was looming at the end of the path.

A series of events and a suicidal ideation landed me in the psychiatric ward of the local hospital. I was beaten and broken, but at the same time I had this strange sensation of clarity. My mind had been under the influence continuously for the past 22 years. I was given an A.A. schedule book at my discharge. A few hours later I opened that book and went to my first “sober” A.A. meeting in the cafeteria of that same hospital. I did not set out to get or stay sober. It was more of an experiment initially. I didn’t stop at the liquor store or a bar on my way home that night. I woke up the next day and was amazed that I had not picked up a drink. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that I would accumulate any length of sobriety. I also never thought that I would have a positive attitude, the respect of others and laughter in my life.

I have received all of those gifts and more as a result of working the program of recovery as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I attended meetings on a daily basis for the first few years and I have never stopped attending meetings. I have walked women through the steps repeatedly over the past 17 years. Doing this has kept me working the Steps and practicing them in my life. I owe absolutely everything I have to Alcoholics Anonymous. I am forever grateful for my sobriety.

–Melissa M.

El Regalo de la Desesperación

La autodestrucción era mi camino. Yo había sido una bebedora que se perdía en lagunas mentales desde mi primer bebida a la edad de 12 años. Yo bebía a diario desde los 19 años, convencida de que iba a morir por muerte alcohólica. El alcohol tomaba todas las decisiones por mí y ninguna de ellas era buena. Yo no era digna de ser empleada pero aun así tenía empleo. Hasta donde puedo recordar me había vuelto físicamente dependiente y mentalmente obsesionada con el alcohol. En el camino, personas al azar me habían sugerido que Alcohólicos Anónimos tal vez sería un buen lugar a donde yo debía ir. Inmediatamente yo descartaba la idea ya que yo era única. Una persona como yo no podía dejar de beber. Una muerte alcohólica era inminente al final del camino.

Una serie de eventos y la formación de ideas suicidas me llevaron a terminar en la sala psiquiátrica del hospital local. Estaba derrotada y destrozada pero a la misma vez tenía una extraña sensación de claridad. Mi mente había estado bajo la influencia continuamente durante los últimos 22 años. Me dieron un libro de horarios de A.A. al ser dada de alta. Unas cuantas horas después yo abrí aquel libro y fui a mi primera reunión de A.A. “sobria” en la cafetería de ese mismo hospital. Yo no iba en busca de encontrar ni de mantenerme sobria. Inicialmente era más bien un experimento. Yo no pasé a la licorería ni al bar en mi camino a casa esa noche. Desperté al día siguiente y quedé asombrada de que no había bebido. Nunca, ni en sueños pensé que iba a acumular ninguna cantidad de sobriedad. Tampoco pensé que iba a tener una actitud positiva, el respeto de otros, ni risas en mi vida.

He recibido todos esos regalos y más como resultado de trabajar el programa de recuperación según está descrito en el Libro Grande de Alcohólicos Anónimos. Yo asistí a reuniones a diario durante los primeros cuantos años y nunca he dejado de asistir a reuniones. He encaminado a mujeres a través de los pasos repetidas veces durante los últimos 17 años. Hacer esto me ha mantenido a mí continuamente trabajando los Pasos y practicándolos en mi vida. Le debo absolutamente todo lo que tengo a Alcohólicos Anónimos. Estoy eternamente agradecida por mi sobriedad.

–Melissa M.



Go Ahead, Criticize Me

I have a love-hate relationship with criticism. At a recent “As Bill Sees It” A.A. meeting, the chair turned to page 326, “Welcome Criticism.” I shared at the meeting that I don’t welcome criticism. However, if I don’t, how will I ever grow. Okay, sure, some people offer criticism from a self-centered position. Their ego gets between the criticism and me or you. Those kinds of criticism hurt. The criticism from loved ones still hurts, but maybe not as much.

Whether it is a criticism of this article, my projects, plans or anything, my ego rushes to the rescue. Rescue me from what? For me it is self-preservation at its finest. My ego and I have been together a long time and it looks out for me. (It is so big it has its own car). When I receive criticism, I have to ask myself if the criticism is valid. If I think it is valid, then I look into my behavior. Oh, I was acting like a jerk, or I said things because I wasn’t tolerant. As is often the case, my ego ran rough-shod over its cousin, humility. My humility has more tire tracks on it than I care to admit to.

Since gaining sobriety, I examine the criticism with one foot on my ego. With the eyes of humility, I try to see if the criticism is valid. If not, then it is discarded. If yes, then I take a hard look at why the criticism is appropriate. I discover that I want to be right whether the facts support my opinion or not. I like to make or remake things or situations to align them with my personality. I want to punish people because they don’t do things my way. My most recent character defect is that I want to feel superior. When I drove around with the top down in my sports car on a sunny day I used to think, “Everybody look at me.” I have now changed my thought to, “Thank you God for this glorious day and my sobriety. And oh, by the way, thanks for the convertible.” It’s the same action but a different thought. I am a work in progress and I find that criticism is the sandpaper to take off the rough edges.

In addition to helpful external criticism, I have begun to add internal self-criticism. You don’t see this, but I do. My current restoration project is dealing with when I act, say or gossip something to boost my self-esteem. Typically, it is a criticism or sarcastic remark which is on my lips or in my deeds without a conscious thought. I must constantly remind myself that I am okay and you are okay. Towards correcting this behavior, I have begun the practice of offering a prayer for that person’s success and well-being. Wow, what a change!

Go ahead, criticize me. In sobriety, I am growing, sometimes slowly, sometimes poorly. At the very least, I owe it to myself and others to examine my deficiencies. Thanks for your criticism. You are welcome.

– Al Di.

God Sent Me to A.A.

Reach for what you cannot feel
Dream for what you cannot see
Think the thoughts you’ll never understand
Be the person you thought you could not stand
Say what you cannot hear
Feel the pain you hold so dear
Ask who not owns your soul
Know you cannot take control
Give thanks for what you have not gotten
Sorrow for what you wish forgotten
Teach the lessons you know not well
Leave the sinful bonds of hell
Pray for the brotherhood of man
Hurry, hurry while we still can

– Dyllan B., Manchester

My Last Excuse

It’s been 8 years this time.

Right before Thanksgiving eight years ago at age 52, I found myself in yet another 28-day program. As I sat there, I wondered what the common denominator in all of my previous failures was. No matter the length or quality of my sobriety, I always found an excuse to stop attending meetings. I didn’t like the format; it was too far away; it was an inconvenient time; I don’t like the people. Armed with these excuses, I would inevitably find myself with a drink in hand once again. Trusted sponsors and fellow alcoholics dispelled all of these excuses: don’t like the format, then go to a different meeting; too far away or inconvenient time, then how far would you go for a drink or how often did you close the bar; I don’t like the people, then put principles before personalities. Even though all of my somewhat lame excuses were shot down and I was offered support, I would still end up drunk.

During this most recent 28-day stay, I made a resolution that I would find at least one meeting and get involved by greeting folks at the door, making coffee or chairing a meeting. I wanted to get to know fellow alcoholics and let them know me. This was scary stuff.

Upon returning home, I found a home group and always had a commitment. I was a regular at several other meetings and always came early to set up, clean up, and did whatever was asked.

In a few months, I realized some of my old excuses had returned. I knew with all certainty that if I stopped going to meetings I was doomed to drink. I told myself to continue going to meetings at all cost. I did my best to get some value out of the meetings I attended and I always had a commit-



ment. Somehow, I also found that I came to like a lot of the people at the meetings.

One day the light bulb went on: I am an atheist. This was my last excuse. The reason that I was uncomfortable and felt apart from, rather than a part of, was that my personal belief (or non-belief) system didn't agree with what I was hearing, reading, and thought I had to believe. With that knowledge, I decided I would find a way for a non-theist like myself. I thought there must be others. The religious overtones in the 12 Steps never really bothered me as they are suggested and not required. I found use for some and none for others. I started not participating or pretending to participate in any ritual, reading or prayer. At the end of meetings when the Lord's Prayer was recited, I would quietly stand outside the circle until the meeting ended. This was working for me; I kept up with meetings and stayed involved. I even sponsored a couple of guys. I was making a go of it but still felt alone or at least different and not a part of the A.A. community. However, I was not going anywhere.

One night, about three years ago, as the group started assembling for the evening prayer, I got up as usual and went outside. A gentleman followed me and said, "I notice you never stick around for the prayers." I thought here we go again: another well-meaning alcoholic is going to try and convince me that I need to find God, G.O.D, a doorknob, or some form of Higher Power. I explained my situation to him with no holds barred. He nodded, patted me on the shoulder and said, "You are not alone." This man has decades of sobriety, attends lots of meetings and is active in the program. We talked for a bit and he told me of his efforts to get enough non-theists, agnostics, and atheists together to start a secular meeting. I joined the quest and have never looked back. To date, we have started two secular open A.A. meetings that are well attended. We spread the message that A.A. is available to anyone who wants it. There is interest in our surrounding area to start more meetings. I have never been more fired up to help another alcoholic, more devoted to service in A.A. or more content in my sobriety.

You see, my last excuse is no longer valid.

— *Joel D.*

Morning Prayer

God saved my life
I walk free only by his grace
I am a manifestation of his miraculous power
Every breath I take, I take in gratitude.

— *John S.*

I Almost Didn't Make It

There I was at day 45, January 7, 2018, and I almost didn't make it. I had stayed around the people, places and things of my past and that morning, the reality of my situation came to me. I woke up to go to a morning meeting but I started to sweat and my stomach started to feel bad. I took some medicine praying for it to work. Twenty minutes later, the sickness overcame me and went on for a few hours. I cried. I called my sponsor, but she didn't answer. That wasn't my first call: that one was for drugs, but it wasn't answered either. I got on my knees and begged God to make it stop. When it settled, I went to sleep. When I awoke, I went to an A.A. meeting still feeling nervous, jittery, and miserable.

From early on, I knew I was an addict and I had begun my quest to stop. It took nearly two years and countless "day ones." How far to the bottom did I need to go? My addiction to both alcohol and drugs had taken all I was willing to give. I wanted my sobriety, I needed my sobriety. I didn't know how much until it nearly left. I had fought hard to get to day 45 and I needed day 46.

I am absolutely, beyond a shadow of a doubt, admitting wholeheartedly that I am completely and utterly powerless over alcohol and drugs and that my life was definitely unmanageable. I am not looking to drink or use responsibly. I'm looking to stay clean and sober for as long as God will allow. I'm happy to say, as I'm reading this on December 2, 2019 after just celebrating two years of continuous sobriety and clean time, that I'm grateful to all those who helped me with my sobriety.

— *Carolyn, East Haven*

Show Me Love

Out of the wreckage
Out of the gloom
All we know is where we are
In a magic room
We come in from
Silent words said
But letters from hell
Are things we dread
I got to say
This picnic is for you
And I and sunshine
Under a sky of blue
But oh yeah
Everything is alright
Come and get your love
This morning under sunlight

— *Bobby R., Simsbury.*



Steering the District 6 Corrections Group

When I was first elected as chairperson of the District 6 Corrections Group, it seemed like I had a daunting task ahead of me. The members of this now bilingual service group, Beyond the Walls/Mas Alia de los Muro, were getting restless because the clearances required to enter corrections facilities had not yet been approved. Since then, we have elected members to interim GSR, treasurer and co-treasurer positions and have chosen times when we would meet. We went for the orientation to get our clearances and watched two films, "Carrying the Message Behind These Walls" and "A New Freedom". A few of us are now cleared to enter the Department of Corrections facilities. With the help of the District 9 corrections chairperson and the service reps, we are also being allowed into Danbury Federal Penitentiary, a first for A.A. in Connecticut. With the assistance of the District 5 corrections chairperson, we are also chairing a meeting at a halfway house in Bridgeport.

My A.A. experience is so much more rewarding than I could have ever imagined. To help me, I have a mentor in Joe W. and a service sponsor, Josh K., as well. Carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers has not been this exciting and new probably since I had my last drink over 16 years ago. As a group, we all look forward to a fulfilling this commitment to corrections service.

— Richard F., Stamford

Win a Grapevine Subscription



The writer of one accepted submission for the June-July 2020 issue of the *Alki-Line*, your Area 11 newsletter, chosen at random, will receive a **one-year subscription** to the *Grapevine, International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Share your story, essay, article, or poetry with others in recovery through the *Alki-Line*. We are accepting submissions of one page or less and make sure you identify it as being an entry for the contest.

Don't miss this chance not only to contribute your experience, strength and hope but also to enjoy your *Grapevine* subscription!

Submit by **May 1, 2020** using:

Email: alki-line@ct-aa.org

Mail: Alki-Line, P.O. Box 7060, Meriden, CT 06450

Save the Date

Northeast Regional A.A. Service Assembly (NERAASA)

February 21 – 23, 2020

Radisson Nashua, 11 Tara Blvd.

Nashua, NH 03062

Came 2 Believe 2020 Retreat

February 28 – March 1, 2020

Red Lion Inn, 100 Berlin Road

Cromwell, CT 06416

Area 11 Pre-conference Assembly

March 28, 2020; 9 AM – 3 PM

Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield St.

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Area 11 A.A. Round Up

April 26, 2020; 9 AM – 3 PM

Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield St.

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Spring Assembly

May 9, 2020; 9 AM – 2:30 PM

Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield St.

Wethersfield, CT 06109

Soberfest 2020

June 5 – 7, 2020

Odetah Camping Resort, 38 Bozrah Street Ext.,

Bozrah, CT 06334

2020 A.A. International Convention

July 2 – 5, 2020, Detroit, MI

We Want To Hear From You!

Share your stories, essays, articles, poetry, etc... with others through the Alki-Line. We are accepting submissions of one page or less:

Email: alki-line@ct-aa.org

Mail: Alki-Line, P.O. Box 7060, Meriden, CT 06450

Hand material to a GSR

¡Queremos saber más de Usted!

Mándenos las historias personales, los ensayos, las opiniones, la poesía, etc... y entérenos más de usted en el Alki-Line. Se puede entregar una página o menos de las historias a una de los siguiente:

Por el correos electrónicos: alki-line@ct-aa.org

Por el correos: Alki-Line, P.O. Box 7060, Meriden, CT 06450

O De mano a su GSR or Representativo de Alki-Line

Alki-Line

This newsletter is by and for alcoholics; however, we review submissions by all interested in the A.A. program of recovery. Material may be edited for clarity and length. This newsletter and earlier issues can be downloaded at www.ct-aa.org.

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