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Osseo AA Newsletter

Suburban North Alano Vol. 2 Issue 2

www.OsseoAA.org

“One Day at a Time”

It's Back to School Time!!

It's hard for me to believe that a year has come and gone since I was elected to chair the board meetings.

It is a privilege and an honor to hold that position. I would like to think of us, (the board), as a pretty calm group. We had no high expectations of leaving any great legacies. Our goals were simple. The bills came in and they got paid. The air conditioning broke and it was fixed. All the mechanics of running a building are a simple matter when everyone helps. This board and the membership steps up when there is a project that needs attention.

I do feel that the duties of the board go beyond those duties. It has an obligation to the “Spirit” of the club. For sobriety to grow there has to be a calm and relaxing atmosphere with no fear of disclosure or gossip. There is room for improvement in the gossip area. I would challenge every member to walk away from members when gossip occurs, but not before you make it clear why you are leaving. Every one of us is responsible to protect our safe environment. No gossip is O.K.

There is one thing that the board feels good about and wishes it could take credit for, but it can't because it was the membership that stepped up to the plate and made it happen, and that is the Squad Leaders Council. The council had great attendance and it took a strong place in the operation and decision-making of the club. A little favor the board would like to ask of the outgoing squad leaders: please help the new squad leaders get orientated to the Squad Leaders Counsel and their other duties.

Joe R.

Trusted Servant

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Want to Contribute?

- Contact Bob G. or any Board Member with stories or suggestions
- Check the website often as it's constantly changing. It's also a good way to keep up with the news. If you have club news, please send it in.
- Edited by: Julee E.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Well, we've made our list and became willing. Now what do we do? For me, this is still an ongoing process. I still meet people whom I haven't thought about in over thirty years and realize that I must make an amend to them.

The first person on my list was me. I had harmed myself as much as anyone. Self deceit and lying were as harmful to me as the alcohol. I think I actually made my first amend (to myself) while still in a treatment program, when I admitted to Step One and then came to believe in a Power greater than myself in Step Two, and finally decided to let God take care of me in Step Three.

Of course, we have to use a little discretion while doing Step Nine. We need to look at the second half of the step. Would the amend injure someone? We can take care of amends like that in a Fifth Step or with a clergy member, if so inclined.

This is just a little passage that I discovered while researching this step: "Credibility of amends assumes that damaging behavior has been treated and changed during steps 1, by not drinking, and 2 through 8, by achieving non abusive sobriety." The greatest amend we can make is showing that we no longer drink and have a God as we understand Him, in our life again.

If you want to change who you are, change what you do.

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The Big Book is like a cookbook - you can read it all day long and starve. You have to take the action.

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If you stay humble, you will not stumble.

XXXXXX

Our neighbor's window looks much cleaner if we first wash our own.

XXXXXX

Yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, today is cash in hand, spend it wisely.

New Board Members

Stan R. sq.7

Keith R sq.17

Rebecca M sq. 12

Dave B sq.86

Sandra S. sq. 7

First alternate Vivek U. sq. 12 **Second Alternate** Arnold G. sq. H2

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

To me, Nine serves as a critical operating rule for our group rather than some of our earlier traditions that are more like fundamental philosophical commandments. I have always thought of the tradition as commandments with the first few defining the "thou shall nots" and the later one defining the "how thou shall not". Tradition 9 falls in the latter, and serves the critical purpose of creating an atmosphere of egalitarianism that allows alcoholics to grow and prosper in their recovery as part of the collective, even though we represent varying backgrounds and thought processes. If one thinks of organization, the most extreme case is the military, where individual thought is discouraged, and the other extreme could be AA, where we live in what I think of as organized chaos. It is this' organized chaos, this lack of hierarchy and bureaucracy, this lack of appointed organizational thought leaders and absence of organization that to me continues to grow the fellowship and provide a refuge for the recovering alcoholic, in an environment where the only thing he or she has to concern themselves with is their own recovery program, and how it can benefit from the collective.

When Tradition Nine was first written, it said that "Alcoholics Anonymous needs the least possible organization." In years since then, we have changed our minds about that. Today, we are able to say with assurance that Alcoholics Anonymous--A.A. as a whole--should never be organized at all. Then, in seeming contradiction, we proceed to create special service boards and committees which in themselves are organized. How, then, can we have an unorganized movement which can and does create a service organization for itself? Scanning this puzzler, people say, "What do they mean, no organization?"

Well, let's see. Did anyone ever hear of a nation, a church, a political party, even a benevolent association that had no membership rules? Did anyone ever hear of a society which couldn't somehow discipline its members and enforce obedience to necessary rules and regulations? Doesn't nearly every society on earth give authority to some of it's members to impose obedience upon the rest and to punish or expel offenders? Therefore, every nation, in fact every form of society, has to be a government administered by human beings. Power to direct or govern is the essence of organization everywhere.

Yes, Alcoholics Anonymous is an exception. It does not conform to this pattern. Neither its General Service Conference, its Foundation Board,* nor the humblest group committee can issue a single directive to an A.A. member and make it stick, let alone mete out any punishment. We've tried it lots of times, but utter failure is always the result. Groups have tried to expel members, but the banished have come back to sit in the meeting place, saying "This is life for us; you can't keep us out". Committees have instructed many an A.A. to stop working on a chronic backslider, only to be told: "How I do my Twelfth Step work is my business. Who are you to judge?" This doesn't mean an A.A. won't take advice or suggestions from more experienced members, but he\she surely won't take orders. Who is more unpopular than the old timer A.A., full of wisdom, who moves to another area and tries to tell the group there how to run its business? He\she and all like him\her who view with alarm for the good of A.A., meet the most stubborn resistance or, worse still, laughter.

You might think A.A.'s headquarters in New York would be an exception. Surely, the people there would have to have some authority. But long ago, trustees and staff members alike found they could do no more than make suggestions, and very mild ones at that. They even had to coin a couple sentences which still go into half the letters they write: "Of course, you are at perfect liberty to handle this matter any way you please. But the majority experience in A.A. does seem to suggest..."Now, that attitude is far more removed from central government, isn't it? We recognize that alcoholics can't be dictated to-individually or collectively.

At this juncture, we can hear a churchman exclaim, "They are making disobedience a virtue." He is joined by a psychiatrist who says, "Defiant brats!" They won't grow up and conform to social usage! The man in the street says, I don't understand it. They must be nuts!" But all these observers have overlooked something unique in Alcoholics Anonymous. Unless each A.A. member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he/she almost certainly signs his own death warrant. His drunkenness and dissolution are not penalties inflicted by people in authority; they result from his personal disobedience to spiritual principles

I found the checklist below very useful in helping define how Tradition Nine is supposed to work. - First printed in Grapevine - June 1970 (© The checklist is a reprint from June 1970, Grapevine

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?

I can remember times when others thought I was the boss of my AA group because it was newly formed and I was one of the founders of the group then the steering committee pretty much ran the meetings but as soon as the group got strong enough we held group business meetings where the members of the group expressed their ideas on how to run the meetings the group conscience took over and the steering committee was dissolved and it became a meeting from our group conscience

2. Do I resist formal aspects of AA because I fear them as authoritative?

I resist some aspects of AA because I feel some of our traditions are way to often represented

In a fashion not consistent to carrying the message to all who suffer from alcoholism some in our fellowship turn the tradition around to serve their own purpose not the good of all --Bill W when writing the traditions said there is always room to improve on them --and I strongly believe they are not etched in stone never to be changed to reflect the needs of 2005 not 1946

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?

For me to survive and stay sober myself I need to use all the elements of AA because I am responsible to anyone who reaches out for help from alcoholism and this includes all the many people who come to our doors that are dual addicted I can not help half a person So their experiences must be heard not criticized by others who can't identify with them after all AA is not about just one persons thoughts

4. Do I exercise patience and humility in any AA job I take?

Having serve in many positions in the AA structure I had to have lots of patience and humility to serve all in AA yes even the minority opinions of our group members they have the right to be heard and this is part of my duties as a servant to make sure they are heard even when I personally think they are wrong who knows I could be the one wrong its up to the group conscience to say what they want not me but I do have the right to express myself in the groups business meetings even it I am in the minority I have to right to speak

5. Am I aware of all those to whom I am responsible in any AA job?

Yes I am aware of all who I serve in the fellowship of AA and by being aware I have been asked to fill many service positions in my years of sobriety if I were not aware of this the groups conscience would not have elected me to serve them in the first place I know what it is to be a trusted servent of my group my district my inter group my area and on up the world services

6. Why doesn't every AA group need a constitution and bylaws?

It is clear now that we ought never name boards to govern us but it is equally clear that we shall always need to authorize workers to serve us It is the difference between the spirit of vested authority and the spirit of service It is in this spirit of service that we give the AA Group's conscience the voice of our group and the power to carry out there wishes

Tradition three clearly states "You are an A.A. member if you say so. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out. No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications - even your crimes - we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out. We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had. So you're an A.A. member the minute you declare yourself."

7. Have I learned to step out of an AA job gracefully and profit there by when the time comes?

Yes the very purpose of any position in AA is to normally serve for a two year period and then rotate into another position in this way we get to know how the whole service structure from the group down to the GSO works and profit from our experiences in serving our groups districts inter groups and area's there is a vast amount of service work to be performed and by rotating we best serve the common good of all

8. What has rotation to do with anonymity? Or humility?

Our goal is personal sobriety our services bring sobriety within reach of all who want it

What would happen if the meeting all closed because nobody wanted to open the doors make the coffee greet people at the doors we stay whole because we have to anonymity is the key to all our service work we do not do it to gain recognition we do it to survive we do not need praise or any pat on the back for staying sober and helping other Humility allows us to do all this anonymously wealth prestige or power could tempt us if we did not have that humility to remember For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience--- the real voice of Alcoholics Anonymous

Talk doesn't cook rice.

--Chinese proverb

Some of us are crazy about self-help books, inspirational tapes, and personal improvement seminars. We'll buy or sign up for anything, whatever the price, if it promises revolutionary insights or a foolproof new system. We want relief in a day and deliverance in a weekend. And we want the expert of the hour to do it for us.

There's nothing wrong with wishing, of course. But there's a lot wrong with kidding ourselves as a way of life. Think about it: If progress could be bought, we wouldn't need to be meditating. If personal transformation resulted from collecting new ideas, we'd have been transformed long ago. Exploring is great. And looking for all the inspiration and wisdom we can find is necessary for growth. But changing is doing. All the plans and schemes for improvement put together won't change a thing if we don't put the principles into daily practice. Even catchy words are just words.

Today, I will take the best plan I have and put it into action. Today, I will say less and do more.

It takes more courage to reveal insecurities than to hide them, more strength to relate to people than to dominate them, more "manhood" to abide by thought-out principles rather than blind reflex. Toughness is in the soul and spirit, not in muscles and an immature mind.

--Alex Karras

SPONSORSHIP

(Lois W., 1967 Conference Digest)

Good evening everybody! There seem to be more young faces here today than at any previous Conference – younger, gayer, and happier. Let's hope we'll accomplish just as much or more than any Conference so far! Sue asked me to say a few words on sponsorship.

The practice of sponsorship has been greatly neglected in Al-Anon. Its importance in the approach to newcomers should not be overlooked by us. When an older member takes a newcomer under her wing and gives her friendship and understanding, the new member can respond to the program more quickly and many a doubtful prospect can be encouraged to continue her interest in Al-Anon who otherwise might go away disheartened.

In the old days of AA to which I am always harking back, members often took a prospect into their homes and not only helped him to live the program but gave him bed, board, clothing, carfare –nursing him in a thousand ways. But that kind of sponsorship was never feasible in Al-Anon and I'm not sure that it was a good practice anyway – except for the A.A.'s that were doing the sponsoring. It was good for them.

However, it would be very helpful if Al-Anon adopted many of the present day AA Sponsors' customs. To make sure that all newcomers are well received, the group appoints a special committee which not only greets all new arrivals but sees that they each have an appropriate, understanding Sponsor, one who appeals to the new member. Some Al-Anon groups do this now, of course, and it would be fun to see in how many of your home groups this kind of sponsorship is practiced. (Calls for raise of hands) There must be at least fifteen hands raised. That's very encouraging.

The initial Al-Anon contact is sometimes the one most suited to undertake the responsibility of sponsorship. This includes befriending the beginner, accompanying her to meetings, calling her during the week, and listening to her story, perhaps over and over again, thus making oneself a sounding board against which the new member can pour out her pent up emotions. When the beginner has this outlet, she is not so apt to want to spill over at meetings, which, we all know, is undesirable. The Sponsor's example can also be of great help to the recent arrival who thus learns what to do and what not to do.

When the new member is ready, the Sponsor should explain how gratitude can be expressed in service, the life-blood of Al-Anon. She can show how the phrase, "Keep it simple" really relates to the program, reminding us not to "fancy it up", but does not refer to the service structure as it is sometimes interpreted to do. A service structure is necessary if there is to be any order or efficiency in "carrying the message". It does not complicate but simplifies the whole fabric of the fellowship, doing so particularly in relation to one of Al-Anon's most important responsibilities, the practice of the Twelfth Step all over the world.

There is another phrase the Sponsor should explain if necessary, but not use, as it gives the wrong impression—"This is a selfish program." Our program, of course, is not a selfish one. Generally what the users of this phrase are trying to say is that the program is one of self-development and improvement, in order to be of more use to others.

So when we try to sponsor newcomers, aiding them to live by the Al-Anon program, we are not only benefiting them but strengthening ourselves as well.

Thank you very much.

The Day I Came Into The Walls of AA

by: Jenny B.

Fridley, MN, January 4, 2007. I stepped out of my car, trembling with fear, and trembling from detoxification. I had on wind pants, shoes with no socks (in the middle of winter) and a beat-up sweatshirt with no jacket. My appearance on the outside, almost matched the appearance in my inside. I was battered, weak, pale, ripped up, a mess to say the very least!

As I walked over to the front door, I looked back briefly at how I had gotten here. I quickly shook those thoughts off, and, remembered the 'real' reason I was here. Andrew, my son, was facing time and treatment. He was home on an ankle bracelet. I had tried to get him to come with me. Since his refusal to do so, I had decided, I'll set an example. My thinking was, if he went to the meetings, the penalties he was facing, may be lessened. Shaking off my deep inner thoughts, I returned to the easy thought, "Thirty days Jenny. Just thirty days." This was the plan. Andrew's court date was in thirty days, and I was going to remain sober during this time. I was going to attend these meetings, in hopes that Andrew would eventually follow. In Thirty days, Andrew would be sent away, and I could resume drinking. Thirty days, I just kept repeating to myself. I could do that.....I've been sober for nine months the two times I was pregnant. Thirty days. Thirty Days, and sober for nine months. "You're not an alcoholic, Jenny. You made it nine months twice." Who was I trying to fool? Myself. I knew damn well I was an alcoholic. I had no problem freely saying it, either. Actually accepting it.....NEVER!

The walk across the parking lot from car to front door, seemed like it took forever, yet, there I was. What was I thinking??? It's 8:30 am!!! I took a deep breath, pulled the door, and out rolled the smoke. I walked through the doors and was greeted by two old men sitting by the phone, smoking, drinking coffee and smiling. Why would anyone smile in this place? Who would smile at this messed-up life of an alcoholic? Instinctually, I rolled my eyes. The guys stood up and shook my hand introducing themselves. I told them my name and they asked me if I had ever been here. Where are you from? Is this your first AA meeting? On and on with the questions. Why do these guys care? What's the angle? I was pretty sure they were going to try to convert me to some cult. I had no money, and I was also pretty sure, I was going to have to pay for something. All I could get out is "Where's the bathroom?"

Looking at myself in the mirror, I was disgusted. I was never able to look in the mirror and smile at myself, or be pleased at what I saw. As usual, I shook my head, again rolled my eyes, and splashed some cold water on my face. Thirty days! Here we go!

I walked across the smoked-filled room. As I walked, a man walked up to me and started walking beside me. His name was Al. He asked me if I was here for a meeting. DUH!!! What else would I be doing at a 'crap hole' like this? He showed me the room where the meeting was going to be held, and he was going to be leading it.

I entered a small, smoke-filled room. The chairs were around a table. Damn! There was no back row to sit in. No place I could be where I wouldn't be noticed. Who was I kidding? I stuck out like a sore thumb. I sat as close to the door as I could, just in case I needed to escape, which I was feeling like I already needed to do. A lady, who looked 'put together' sat down next to me. She had the same amount of sobriety I had. How did she look so good? This wasn't her first rodeo! She knew all the right things to say. As she talked, I could smell the stale booze on her breath. The room started to fill. People were laughing, talking, and enjoying themselves. How can this be? What is with these people?

I remember the meeting started, and I remember the focus went directly to me and the girl next to me. Beyond that, I don't have any recollection of the actual meeting. The next thing that happened will stay with me forever.

The door opened, and a man entered with a woman, holding her under the arm as to hold her up. Her head was shaved, she looked like she was in her seventies' (she was in her 40's). She stumbled, and had tremors. Everyone greeted her. "Hi Patty." "Welcome back Patty." (where had she been?) Great to see you again, Pat-

ty". She sat down directly across the table from me. I could see now that she had had a stroke. As she slurred her words, she said, "Thanks everyone. Thanks for accepting me back". I had no idea what this was all about. I just sat there and stared at her. When it was her turn to talk, she explained that she had just gotten home from the hospital, after a relapse. She had had a stroke, a brain aneurism. She would never be the same again. I stared so hard at this woman as she shared her story. Honestly, I didn't pay much attention to the story, I was just paying attention to the way she looked. I felt as though I was looking in the mirror. For the first time, I was scared to death. This was I! I gulped hard, but the tears started flowing anyway, hot down my pale cheeks. Soon I was bawling. At that very moment, the thought of thirty days left me. I did not want to be that woman sitting across from me, and I was well on my way. It scared me to death. This was the point when for the first time in my life, I accepted my alcoholism. The thought of alcoholism dropped from my head down to my heart and sunk there, heavy, yet hopeful. I don't remember anything else at that meeting, just the woman across the table, named Patty. I never saw that woman again. It was almost as though she was sent there for me. This woman helped save my life.

After the meeting, and after feeling this acceptance, I knew I had to do something, but I had no idea what. Al introduced me to his wife, Jackie. She was playing a hand held game of solitaire. (Strange the little things I remember about that day!) Jackie asked me the same questions everyone had been asking. Is this your first meeting? They all said "Welcome", and Jackie was no exception. She continued to talk, and I continued to pay no attention. By this time, I had already forgotten where the bathroom was. My mind was so very foggy. I can't believe I couldn't even remember where the bathroom was. I interrupted Jackie, "Where are the bathrooms?" She stood up and walked me over to the front door. I remembered where they were. I thought she was escorting me out of the building. Instead, she grabbed a schedule, gave it to me, and said "You will need a sponsor too, someone that you can talk to one on one, someone that will help you with all of this." She said, "Come back to the table when you are done."

When I came back to the table, she explained more about AA, and about sponsorship. She gave me the schedule of meetings, and circled the ones she attended. She wrote down her phone number and said, to call me anytime. It was at that point I asked her to be my sponsor. (That is a completely different story for a later time.) I remember her saying, "Jenny, if you are looking for the easier, softer way, I'm not the sponsor for you. You might as well just move along and ask someone else. (It was as if she was looking right into my mind) I expect you to call me every day, and I suggest that you go to ninety meetings in ninety days." What? That many meetings? Is this woman crazy? Turned out I went to ninety and even more. She gave me a Big Book, and The Little Red Book. She asked me to call her later.

I walked across the room to leave. I held my head a little bit higher. I felt a sense of relief for the first time in my life. I let out a long deep breath, a sigh. I felt like everything was going to be okay. I did not know how or what was going to happen, and at that point, I didn't care. The thought of thirty days was gone. For once, I felt a calm presence. The men who greeted me when I arrived, now opened the door for me to leave. "Come back. Look forward to seeing you soon." I could not believe the words coming out of my mouth. "Okay, thanks. See you tomorrow!" I knew I had just found my new home.

In the long run, it's easier to carry out our Higher Power's will than our own.