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Osseo AA Newsletter

Suburban North Alano Vol. 1 Issue 9

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"One Day at a Time"



Happy Father's Day



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Help!!!

- *We still need contributors. If it's just me writing, you're going to get bored.*
- *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 Dani B.*

Hi to everyone.

Summer is fast approaching and the weather is getting nicer by the day. It's a great time of year to just sit back and watch things grow. Grass, flowers, trees and other AA members. This is my most favorite time of the entire year. All of winters mistakes and events are covered with a new brilliance of greens, reds, purples and every other color under the rainbow.

For many, fishing is the "thing" to do when the weather is nice. For others it's their lawn and garden. And yet others, myself included, just like to take it easy and enjoy natures renewal. I could spend hours sitting next to a Lilac bush. It's natures greatest scent. I love the smell of new cut hay and the bales they make after it's dried. It reminds me of my much younger years.

These are all things that I missed when I was drinking. I could never take time out of my busy drinking schedule to watch the birds nor the bees. I was much too involved with my intoxication. I even hated to take time to mow the grass when I was drinking. I was too preoccupied.

This is reminiscent of our AA members. We come into the program with a coating of winter soot. After a period of growth, new leaves and blossoms start to sprout. Our new members (and sometimes older members) begin to get their spring foliage. It's really inspiring to see them grow and change. That's what this program is all about.

When someone relatively new to AA seems to be "getting it", it makes me realize that they are actually helping my program too. For me, seeing them start a new life of sobriety and honesty is the greatest joy in the program.

Remember, we can't keep it unless we give it away.

Have a great Summer!!!

Next month read all about the adventures of Bud, Marge, Norm and Betty as they go to the 1975 AA International Convention in Denver, Colorado. The month after we'll thrill you with their excursion to New Orleans for the 1980 International Convention. They are both humorous and heartwarming. Stay tuned and keep reading our newsletter!

Tradition Six

by: Karen E.

“An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

This tradition directly applies to operating a club that houses A.A. meetings. It requires a distinct separation between the ownership of/responsibility for the property and an A.A. group, whose primary purpose is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. More direct guidance is found in the long version of this tradition:

“Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to A.A. should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An A.A. group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to A.A., such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the A.A. name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those people who financially support them. For clubs, A.A. managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside A.A. – and medically supervised. While an A.A. group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An A.A. group can bind itself to no one.”

I have often overheard conversations that confuse A.A. and the club, especially among newcomers. As many of you may remember, there was quite a controversy over the website and the music it played (i.e. associating A.A. with religion). This was ultimately resolved because the website was for the Alano Club, not A.A., therefore representing only its pledging members, not A.A.

Some additional, and important, differences between the Groups and the Club:

A.A. Groups

- Called squads at this club
- Primary purpose is to carry its message to other alcoholics
- Steps guide individual recovery, and traditions guide group interaction
- Register separately with A.A.
- Could meet at any location and still be a group
- Pay rent for the use of space at this club
- Are self supporting through contributions (passing the basket) – excess funds are used as the group decides (donations to Intergroup, AA World Services, District, Area, etc.)

Suburban North Alano

- Does not share A.A. name
- Primary purpose is to own real estate in which A.A. meetings are held
- Funding is received by charging rent to groups that meet in the building and from pledging members.

- Fund raising activities can also be held.
- Main expenditures are building maintenance and real estate insurance. I believe our Board also provides literature and medallion supplies as a service to the groups, but there are other locations where the groups do this.

I believe that “crossing the lines” can happen relatively often at this Alano and another I attend regularly. For example, as it relates to the upcoming picnic, I do not understand how requiring that each A.A. Group provide a \$35 donation, bring a food item and perform a task is maintaining the separation envisioned in Tradition Six. While I am happy to support this function, it is in my role as a financial supporter of the Alano Club (i.e. a pledging member).

In the Sunday group I attend, a member chided that we get on with the business of A.A. instead of talking about picnics, which is not why we are meeting. While the comment rubbed some people, including me, the wrong way, I wonder if there wasn't a lesson in the Sixth Tradition there!

Friendship with oneself is very important because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world.

--Eleanor Roosevelt

What do we need from a friend? Let's think about that for a moment and see if it applies to how we treat ourselves.

Let's start with the basics: A friend is for us, not against us. That means a friend won't do anything to harm us if he or she can possibly help it. A friend is there for us when we need understanding, tells us the truth, and does the things he or she promises to do. A friend likes to be around us, thinks we are a good person, and believe we are honest. A friend shares what is going on in his or her life and cares about what is going on in ours. A friend does things to help us feel happy. A friend forgives us when we ask for forgiveness.

We do these things for our friends. And we do a much better job of them now that we are sober. But do we do them for ourselves? It's a question worth thinking about: *Am I a good friend to myself?*

Handle Today's Problems Today

Many of us face seemingly insurmountable difficulties, perhaps because of our compulsion or simply through misfortune. Whatever the scale of our problems, "One day at a time" and "First things first" are keys to handling them.

Today, we can deal only with today's problems. One of today's problems, of course, may be worrying about the future. A good method of handling that problem is to turn concern about it over to our Higher Power.

But when we do have work that clearly should be done today, we must carry through with it. It's neither reasonable nor sensible to put off things that we can and should do today.

There are certain tasks and responsibilities that must be dealt with today. I will not put them off.

Alcoholics Anonymous means many things to many people. For some alcoholics, a strict, rigorous adherence to the twelve steps, twelve traditions, and Big Book can mean the difference between life and death. For other alcoholics, a more liberal approach and understanding of the twelve steps, twelve traditions, and Big Book has allowed them to take what they need and leave the rest thus upholding A.A.'s ideology of unconditional acceptance and support. And yet still for some alcoholics and some non-alcoholics alike, A.A. is simply a cult. For me, I've at one point or another seen A.A. from all three of these perspectives.

Over the course of my short six years being sober, my relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous has been a personally-volatile one. I'm grateful for the fact that sobriety is still the single most important factor in my life, it has enabled everything else. But yet in true alcoholic fashion, my sober involvement hasn't always been graceful. Through trial and error, I've incessantly built a strong sober network consisting of people and ideas which reflect the sober lifestyle I strive for, it's my personal inner-circle of sorts. But naturally for every positive there lurks a negative. I've also had my moments of both silently and vocally accusing a particular member or group of having a malicious agenda from time to time. I've questioned if some individuals or groups are acting in the best interest of A.A. or just unknowingly twisting A.A. ideology to empower and anoint themselves with a false sense of authority on recovery. Their self-rationalizing, erratic behavior misguides both themselves and others in falsely assuming their personal belief-threshold within A.A. as universally applicable to all.

As I've just so descriptively illustrated, I've been all over the radar with Alcoholics Anonymous. At one end of the spectrum, I've entertained thoughts and investigated accusations regarding alleged conspiracies and corruption within Alcoholics Anonymous. And at the other end of the spectrum, I've become a witness to many significant positive life changes and personal achievements within my sobriety solely due to being an alcoholic in recovery. I'm very proud of my accomplishments, but despite all the positive effects sobriety and A.A. has had in my life, I'm still a cynic. I always expect corruption, divisiveness, and conspiracies on all levels and am more or less surprised when there's not. And yes, I've even applied my cynicism to A.A.

One instance of my cynicism conveniently comes to mind. Throughout my sobriety, I've analytically observed parallels between individualized belief systems in Alcoholics Anonymous and organized religion. Generally speaking, I discerned there are fundamentalists, moderates, and progressives when it comes to people adhering to either doctrine or the twelve steps. In this instance, my cynicism originated when I began to inherently believe that different personal belief systems may potentially cause enormous divisiveness among alcoholics. I think that the biggest source of divisiveness comes from those who are not open to different perspectives, and who believe that their way is the only way through recovery. That in itself could be considered a form of closed-minded religious fundamentalism. If we don't strictly adhere to the twelve steps of the Big Book, we're not going to Hell, but in certain people's eyes, we're condemned in a different way. I see the people who renounce organized religion and those who believe in it, yet still preach their own A.A. ideology as hypocritical and possibly detrimental to an A.A. newcomer.

At one point, I recall even feeling compelled to attempt the unification of alcoholics on all levels. Ironically, I began to eagerly anticipate the few-and-far-between instances where I could engage in a sort of passive debate with an unassuming soul with a conflicting A.A. creed other than my

own. I suppose I was attempting to convert them to Doug-ology. I ultimately came to the conclusion that the divisiveness would cease to exist if everybody just believed what I believe. That's when I decided I was single-handedly going to resolve this issue by embarking on a simple crusade. However, the light bulb of insanity eventually turned on when I realized that's probably exactly what Jim Jones and David Koresh ultimately concluded regarding their notorious predicaments, too. It was an enlightening revelation.

And yet despite all my over-analytical cynicism and character defects, I have still found a home within Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm an alcoholic and I've committed to staying sober in A.A. The people at Suburban North Alano and the compassionate, broadminded ideology of Alcoholics Anonymous have been very instrumental in my life. The Big Book, twelve steps, and twelve traditions are key factors in my life and I take them very seriously. However, the Big Book is not a divine entity and, in my opinion, it should not be treated like doctrine. And that's the best part about A.A.: I can take what I need and leave the rest. I focus on what works for me and not what I think is wrong with A.A. A negative point of view will not help my sobriety which is the ultimate goal. There are millions of members in Alcoholics Anonymous. Though we are all afflicted with the same disease or allergy, there are millions of personalities consisting of millions of experiences. These lives have been shaped by a number of various biological and social factors. Just like I wouldn't ask a Buddhist to convert to Christianity, I wouldn't ask a fellow A.A. goer to convert to Doug-ology. We all have different thresholds for personal beliefs and no one way is better than another. I encourage others to take what they need from A.A. while recognizing that there may be more than one way within the A.A. way.

Taking it slowly

Let's not make haste and demand perfection at once - this would only blind us. If we are impatient, we cannot work a daily program. But by exercising patience, we learn to recognize daily opportunities for growth.

It is worth waiting for, striving for, and working to develop a relationship with our Higher Power. It cannot be done overnight. Let's not go too fast, but count each day as a new opportunity.

Am I learning to take it slowly?

One could say that I had a happy childhood, although I showed little talent for being happy.

-- Samuel Beckett

Our choices in relationships, careers, lifestyle, and expression of feelings and talents are often the result of our upbringing. Has the social climate changed significantly since our childhood? Have our family systems changed? Can we find ways to change old, ineffective behaviors?

Recovery offers us the gifts of responsibility and self-forgiveness. Now, as we begin to change, we can let go of the past and its pain. Our ability to change often starts by embracing our inner selves with forgiving, adult arms. In this act, we take responsibility for our own happiness, nurturing ourselves toward the new life we are finding in recovery.

We are earning our own love in a whole new way. We respect and honor our physical selves with rest, exercise, and nutritional food. We stimulate our minds with new ideas and experiences. And we send our spirits soaring through conscious contact with our Higher Power. We feel worthy of love, and even have enough to give some away. Now we are learning the talent for being happy.

Squad Leaders Meeting

Minutes from the Squad leaders meeting

By Monica

The meeting was held on Wednesday June 4th. I want to thank everyone that attended the meeting.

There were only two things brought up. First, was the Annual Picnic, it will be held on the 26th of July. From 3pm-9pm. Food will be served from 5-7pm. Games will also be held, with prizes.

It was agreed by all who attended that each squad will contribute \$35 and also sign up to bring one of the items from the list. (see the bulletin board for the list and what your squad is bringing.) I also asked for all squad leaders to try and drum up some help for the day of the picnic. If you can help cleaning up or with games, please let your squad leader know.

Lastly, It was announced that the fishing trip for the 21st of June would be cancelled due to lack of interest.

Board Meeting

The board met on June 11, 2008 at 7:00 PM. All members were present with the exception of Jim K. The board agreed to switch the building insurance to another carrier. Reasoning was: more coverage (\$1,000,000.00) and greater coverage on the building itself. The policy ends up less money than we have been paying. It was also discussed that we open the building to other groups (CA, NA, OA and such). After conferring with AAWS and Minneapolis Intergroup, it was decided that we need to focus on the alcoholic. Outside groups would not be allowed at this time. It was also brought up that people would like a horseshoe pit at the club. It was decided that horseshoes would be okay to do as long as it doesn't interfere with meetings. The pit would be located directly behind the building close to the sidewalk. Rudy is in charge of the installation. If you have comments, suggestions or questions, please see Rudy. All of our bills are paid and we still have a few dollars left in the account. The financials will be posted on the bulletin board. The meeting was adjourned with the Lords Prayer shortly after 7:30 PM.

We learn to expect the unexpected.

Serenity and satisfaction come not when we achieve some measure of precarious temporary control, but when we learn to expect the unexpected. They come when we learn the art of responding to change and accommodating the ever-shifting circumstances of our lives.

We did not choose our journey before we were born. We did not choose the fact that this journey will end in death. Naturally we want to control what we can and our lives are better when we do so. But the best part of the adventure comes in taking what life brings to us and learning how to make it work. No amount of blaming, criticism, soul-searching, or grumpiness will ever unearth the reasons why changes happen.

Our relationship can be corroded by the acid of blame, but it becomes stronger when we join together as a team to cope with the events that shape our lives.

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

I HAVE attacked Step Six many times. It has attacked me in return. We have had open warfare, and we have had moratoriums. For periods of time, I have purposely ignored this Step. Often, I have stated that it did not make sense to me.

The battle began some years back, when I regularly attended Step-discussion meetings. I had done my best on the first five Steps, I thought. I had even made a written list of all my defects. They counted up to twenty-seven.

Following the example of an old-timer friend of mine, whose quality of sobriety I admired, I printed, in ink, each one of my separate defects on a white poker chip. Then all twenty-seven chips went into a small, fat, yellow pitcher. Every morning on awaking, I plunged my hand into it (like picking a number from a goldfish bowl) and came up with the "chip for today." The defect might be anger, fear, pride, resentment, gossip, snobbery, self-pity, and so on, but whichever one it was had to be concentrated upon for the next 24 hours, and either reduced to a minimum or cast away.

It was a kind of game. I enjoyed wrestling with one "defect" a day. I felt I was making progress, really working the AA program. It hadn't yet occurred to me that I had gone overboard on this "defect" business. Twenty-seven indeed! How is that for the "pride" defect? Of course, most of them were not serious flaws of character, such as the inability to be honest with oneself. Most were bad habits possessed, in some degree, by most humans.

Nevertheless, I kept up this game for two or three years, telling many AA friends about it and urging them to go and do likewise. I explained that, although the Step suggested that God would remove these defects when and if I became ready to let go of them, I was of the school that believed in the saying "Pray for potatoes, but reach for the hoe." I did ask my Higher Power to lend a hand on the day's defect I happened to confront, but I felt that He expected me to use energy on rooting it out of my character.

Still, these dozens of defects I had laid claim to kept cropping up again and again, over and over. It seemed that the harder I fought them, the harder they fought back. I became quite discouraged. I decided I had been willing, I had tried, and I would now let Number Six, and myself, have a vacation. I put the little yellow pitcher on a shelf behind some books and only now and then dipped into it. I kept busy and active in AA; I felt comfortable being sober; I was trying to practice the AA principles in all my affairs. Then, out of nowhere, came a deep resentment toward an AA friend. I agonized over it, prayed over it, but discussed it with no one. I had insomnia, indigestion, and fatigue. (Any good doctor can tell you that negative emotions make people physically ill.)

Fortunately, just about that time our group was slated for discussion of Step Six. I opened my copy of *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and read the Step all the way through. Although I had read it many times before, it seemed as if I saw its meaning for the first time. I gathered

that, instead of fighting mightily against a defect, I had to let go of it. Just simply open up my hands, my heart, and my mind and say to my Higher Power. "Here it is, this defect. I give it to you. Please remove it from me." In this case, it was the bitter and destructive resentment that I wished to be rid of. And so it happened. It faded away and never returned.

Since then, I have followed the same procedure on other serious emotional problems, with the same result. I just have to keep in mind that if I am not 100 percent sincere in my willingness to be rid of the problem, the procedure won't work. I have come to realize that Step Six means exactly what it says. No more, no less. When, and if, I become ready to have painful, inhibiting, or long-standing flaws removed, they will be. Not always permanently, not all of them. But if and when they return, they will be weaker and much easier to let go of. As for all those bad habits I once listed as defects, I am trying to arrest them a day at a time, as I do my alcoholism.

A little progress has been made on pride. I can now admit that most of my troubles stem from one large and glaring defect: self-centeredness. For how can I wallow in self-pity, weep over resentments, be sick with righteous anger, ache with envy, tense up with fears and anxieties unless all my thoughts are exclusively on poor me?

A long time ago, a very wise man, Marcus Aurelius, wrote: "A man's life is what his thoughts make it." Through Step Six, I have learned how true this is. I may never comprehend it fully, yet I know its value to me. It calls forth the most precious asset any recovering alcoholic can have: the willingness to get out of the driver's seat, to stop trying to run the show. I need to keep the Sixth Step message of letting go and letting God in my own thoughts at all times.

When it seems we have no recourse, we can always pray.

Coming to believe that a Higher Power can help us and relieve us of our worry may take time if we have spent years trying to stop someone's drinking or worrying about how to keep the family together. From others in this program we can learn the steps to take. Becoming willing to pray is the first one.

We'll soon discover that the power of prayer is awesome. Here are six compelling reasons why:

- (1) Prayer promises relief when we are anxious.
- (2) Prayer connects us with our Higher Power when we feel isolated and full of fear.
- (3) Prayer frees our minds from the obsession to plan other people's lives.
- (4) Prayer helps us take action when we feel compelled to change the circumstances of our lives.
- (5) Prayer becomes a wonderful resource to draw on when living through our painful moments.
- (6) And prayer gives us the willingness to accept God's solution for every problem that plagues us.

I will utilize prayer today every time I wonder what I should do.