



On the web at aasrq.org

Sara-Mana Intergroup

P.O. Box 3075 1748 Independence Blvd., #B2, Sarasota, FL

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

SEPTEMBER 2014

Central Office (941) 951-4818

Sara-Mana District 4, Area 15

Still Powerless Today, But Understands It

By Margarita F

Today I am powerless. Powerless over other people's behaviors affecting the reputation and character of some one very close to me. My old behavior would have been counter character assassination to offset the character assassination that is occurring. I have learned that the response would be useless, only building resentments and allowing that person to live rent-free in my head.

I chose not to do that today. I know that the God of my Understanding is well aware of what is going on and will take care of the situation.

Perhaps not in the way my "evil" thinking would like, but it will be handled in the way it is supposed to. And I can return to sanity, understanding that nothing happens in this world by mistake. There is a larger plan and it is not mine.

Then and Now

Long-Time Member Notes Changes in A.A.

By Carol K

The author of this two-part work has more than 30 years in Sarasota A.A. and reflects on the changes she has seen over the years.

There's a definite contrast from 1970 A.A. to 2014 A.A.

Then: There were ashtrays to clean.

Now: No ashtrays. Terrible loss of a service job!

Then: There were no "cross talk police." Members helped newcomers to understand the program with comments, sometimes during the meeting, sometimes afterward.

Now: Today's crosstalk police were



Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, was asked late in life what he would change in the Big Book if he were writing it then. He said, just one word . . . "never" instead of "rarely," referring to the beginning of Chapter 5: "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path . . ."

born of a posse of patients newly released from the early '70s burgeoning rehab business. Patients were not allowed to cross talk during group therapy sessions in the rehab or psychiatrist's office, and they brought that concept to A.A. meetings, exuberantly yelling "no cross talk" when someone was addressed directly

Then: We closed with the Lord's Prayer with our hands at our side, or perhaps resting on the back of a chair as we stood behind it. We did not hold hands.

Now: We hold hands, and at the end of the prayer, or responsibility theme,

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I Have This Disease Called Alcoholism...

By Jennifer A

At 51, I had drunk alcoholically for 30 years. It was a miracle that I could even remember my own name to say, "I'm Jennifer and I'm an alcoholic." I said it tearfully, reluctantly, at my second meeting. You see, I wanted what you had.

The laughter I heard at meetings was contagious. It had only been 24 hours since my first meeting and I couldn't remember most of what was said. The first meeting was kind of a blur. I remember being greeted, told that I was the most important person in the room and that we read Step 1 in the 12 & 12.

Then, I was given a *Where and When*, told my disease was not my fault and to try to go to a meeting a day for the first 90 days of this recovery. Immediately, I made up my mind to commit to doing "90 in 90." It was the only way; the beginning of a willingness to go to any length. I

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How He Found His Higher Power

I began to develop a sense of trust in my A.A. home group and in the ideals of the fellowship as a manifestation of a Power greater than myself.

Although for many years I did not come to an acceptance of a God who intervened personally and directly in the lives of individuals, I was able to accept the idea of a force that moved in the rooms and animated A.A. members with a sense of unconditional love.

From "Tightrope" page 367, 4th Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous



How District Service Helped One A.A. Member “Give Back”

By Mick G.

General Service Recording Secretary for District 4.

I want to share what an experience it has been getting back into service work and how it came about.

I was lucky enough to attend the 2010 A.A. International Conference in San Antonio, TX. (which happens to be my home town). I was only able to attend for one day, but I was so blown away by that one day I thought I must give back what has been given to me. When I got back to Sarasota I asked at my home group who was our General Service Representative and of course it wound up being me.

It has been a very rewarding experience doing service work.

I started attending the monthly GSR meeting. I did what I've done in the past, “suit up & show up.” I slowly began to understand how business runs in the meetings and what General Service was about. I took notes and brought back information to my group, but it always fell on deaf ears. I was about to come to the end of my term as GSR and I knew I had to stay in service. The recording secretary position was open so I gave some thought to standing for the position.

I knew the previous secretary and I was sure I could get some advice from her. So after speaking to a few people at the May meeting of 2011 I stood for the balance of the recording secretary's term. I got a TON of help from many people. Before I know it the term that I was filling ended. Our current and incoming chair asked me to stay for another two years and since I was just getting the hang of it I accepted.

The simple version of what I do starts with the recording of the GS meeting. The District bought a Sony digital recorder. It's features: 4GB, PC& MAC compatible, USB battery charger & more. I take a few notes but since the recorder is running, everything is available to refer back to when the minutes are created. To create the minutes I summarize what gets said. What I have come to learn at the at the Quarterly meetings is that each District does them differently. Hopefully I received reports from all of the committee chairs so those get copied and pasted into the document. I scrub last names, reread what I have compiled and double check again. Then I email them out. I try to get the minutes done a week after the GS meeting.

If you have an interest in doing this job you will need to be computer literate. BUT as it was expressed by our Area 15 Delegate at the July Quarterly meeting, if someone stands they need to be allowed the opportunity to serve.

I think I have a few more years of service left in me and there are many positions to be filled. I don't think I can ever repay what A.A. and the fellowship have done for me. But I can continue to do service work.

If you'd like to know more about the recording secretary job, contact me at secrtyd4@live.com.

This illustration for an A.A. group poster supports the headline **SUDDENLY IT GOT SCARY** and asks the problem drinker when his “fun” turned into a disease.

Then and Now

(Continued from Page 1)

or the serenity prayer, pump our held hands up and down while chanting “Keep coming back; it works if you work it, so work it because you're worth it”.

Then: We didn't hug. In 1970 we were cautious because we felt we didn't know someone's background, especially women, to know if they had been abused. The exception I remember was during the time I was the A.A. sponsor of an Alateen group where the “warm fuzzies” hugs were a staple. I don't know what they do today with all the children's issues of which we have to be aware.

Now: We hug. I'm a discriminate hugger and like to reserve hugs for people I know well.

Then: Where I grew up in the program, all meetings were closed meetings except for the open District Speaker meeting every Tuesday night. There were no closed meetings on Tuesday nights; all groups were expected to attend the open meeting, and groups took turns chairing and providing speakers.

Now: Most meetings in our district are open.

Then: We didn't have the blue card, “Singleness of Purpose,” because the people at the closed meetings were there because of Tradition 3: “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

Now: We have the “Singleness of Purpose” card because most meetings are open.

(More from Carol K next month.)

Go to Any Length

(Continued from Page 1)

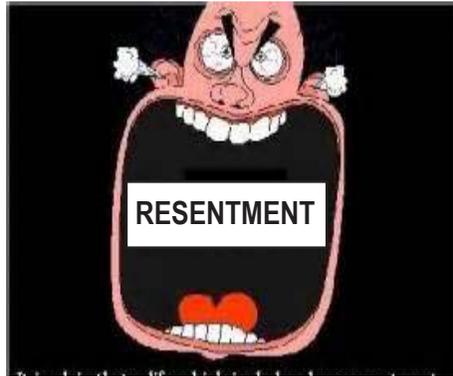
was then asked if I could make it until tomorrow night's meeting without a drink. I said, yes again confidently, not knowing how hard it would be to keep that commitment.

You see, I have this disease called alcoholism that makes me want to drink to dispel a physical craving. So, I may tell someone I can go without a drink — really believe I can go without aforementioned drink — only to find myself in a bar or liquor store against my will by 6 o'clock the next evening. There would be no further excuses from this day forward. God and I and A.A. were now a team, a "we" to stay in the solution, our solution.

I had been willing to ask for help and got a sponsor very early in the program. That was a first, admitting I needed help. There would be more firsts. I picked up suggestions at meetings that really worked for me. I asked God to remove the obsession to drink. Following the removal of the physical craving to drink alcohol, the obsession of my mind to drink alcohol was also removed. The Doctor's Opinion in *Alcoholics Anonymous* explained it to me. I began to know why I drank. Learning about and accepting my disease have enabled my recovery.

Freedom, hope, and courage to go to any length accompanied by joy started to replace hopelessness, weariness, remorse, and shame. I also noticed that the people who said that they had worked the steps were healthy, happy and confident. I found that my new plan for living took work, willingness and lots of yeses. Can you make coffee, Jennifer? No problem. Chair a meeting? Of course. Speak and tell your story? Wow, another first! Nobody had ever cared what I had to say about anything. The Promises were coming true.

Fast forward to today. I have four years in AA. Why I got sober must have been the result of God's Grace. God's Grace also gives us the courage to attend our first meeting. I had been praying fervently for the weeks prior to that meeting to be able to stop drinking and I believe in my heart that God finally answered my prayer.



Steps 8 and 9 are keys to ridding ourselves of resentments, which are the number one problem that recovering alcoholics face. For many, it is true that after an A.A. member forgets everything else, he or she will still harbor long-held resentments.

3 FOR SEPTEMBER

STEP 9: "Made direct amends to such people whenever possible except when to do so would injure them or others." It speaks volumes to me that this step doesn't use the terms "apology" or "apologize." When I was active I was a tremendous apologizer but I never had one ounce of remorse nor a desire to rectify. I just wanted to get out of the jam I was in at that moment. So my apologies were never sincere. "Amend" means to change. My dictionary says "to change for the better; improve; to remove or correct faults." That is a lot different than a phony "I'm sorry." Last, the guidance of a sponsor is mandatory. Do not, under any circumstances, attempt any amend without consulting your sponsor. (*Comment by Anonymous.*)

TRADITION 9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

CONCEPT 9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

Dear Alkie

"Alkie" is a long-time member of A.A. Her comments are based on her own personal strength, hope, and experience and are not reflections of any official A.A. position or practice.

Dear Alkie: My sponsor is going out of town for about three weeks and I'm in a panic. I'm new and I don't know a lot of people yet. Please help.

Alkie: Well, here's what I would do. I would ask my sponsor to get me a replacement for the time she/he will be away. The obvious choice would be your "grand-sponsor," the person who sponsors your sponsor.

Make sure you meet this person and talk on the phone a few times so you feel comfortable.

Even when I have to travel, I make sure to talk to my sponslings. For most of us, that's not a problem. And since you're new, it's a good idea to get to know others in your meetings. Ask for phone numbers and start calling people. I know it's hard — they call it the "hundred pound phone" — but do it anyway, okay? You'll be soooo glad you did. I promise!

Dear Alkie: I have five years in the program now. Can I ease back on meetings?

Alkie: In Manhattan, where I got sober, they used to say "It takes five years to get your marbles (brains) back. And another five years to know what to do with them."

I have 25 years of sobriety and I go to eight meetings a week. That's why I have 25 years!

So the answer to your question is a resounding NO.

Heard at Meetings

"I'm not much, but I'm all I think about."

"My psychiatrist needs me."

"I was Wild Bill at night and Sweet William in the morning."

ANNIVERSARIES

Groups: email birthdays to newsletter@AAsrq.org and put ANNIVERSARIES in the subject line. Cutoff for the newsletter is the last day of the month. Do not send anniversaries for future months: i.e. February anniversaries appear in March.

63rd Avenue

August

Jan F. 37
John T. 2

Attitude Adjustment

August

Jaime C. 13
Mike A. 9
Ken H. 7
Jay W. 2

Donut Hour

August

Kathy A. 4
Mike W. 3
Michelle 1
Robin D. 1
Ryan L. 1
Mason 1

Early Bird Group

July

Sher K. 15

First 100

August

Wayne Z. 10
Mike P. 9
Alexander N. 5
Bill R. 2
Ami F. 1

Friends of the Pelican

August

Frank G. 31
Joe R. 14
Peggy P. 6
Don J. 6
Mike R. 4
Carolyn B. 2
Diane N. 2
Amy E. 1
Gayle H. 1

From the Heart

August

Cyndy C. 21
Hillary G. 18
Janice R. 5

Kensington Park

August

Gerri V. 8
Rick P. 6
Ann W. 5

Lakewood Ranch

12 & 12 August

DeAnn K. 11
Rebecca Z. 5

Monday Nite Mens

August

Grateful Ed 38

Primary Porpoise

August

Victoria G. 26
Steven B. 10
Susie T. 8

Serenity Room

August

Jan 37
Debi R. 16
Ted S. 8
Phil H. 2

Sober Living

August

Ron A. 10
Arnie J. 1

St. Armand's Noon

July

Bill D. 41
Luann L. 35
Dave S. 11
Robyn D. 11
Stan 7
Mitchell G. 6
J.W. 5
Shawndra 5

August

Erwin B. 30
Brian L. 20
Loretta B. 6
Sue S. 2

Sunrise

August

Bob S. 22
David B. 8
Jens A. 5
Rey C. 5
Martina C. 4
Rick H. 3
Jim N. 2

Woman Of Hope

August

Alice O. 26
Wendy M. 23
Marietta L. 23
Cyndy L. 16
Alice C. 11
Fran S. 8
Dianne 7
Rebecca Z. 5
Debra D. 1

Upcoming Events

GRATITUDE DINNER:

Nov. 15 Menno-nite Church, Bahia Vista, Sarasota

OPEN HOUSE AT CENTRAL

OFFICE: Dec. 6

NEW YEAR'S

EVE DANCE:

Location to be announced.

“A.A. Saved My Life”; He Repays Through Service

By Ross B

Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life. Without it I would have undoubtedly continued down the inevitable road towards jails, institutions, or death.

How can I ever repay A.A. for 34 years of sober life? With it came a Higher Power, family, friends, meaningful work, and a sense of purpose. I've asked myself, why was I so fortunate? There are certainly people more deserving than I. Those who weren't nearly as selfish, hurtful, and irresponsible.

I often think about those who didn't survive. As with many of us, I've lost friends and loved ones who never received the gift of sobriety. Also, anyone who stays in A.A. for any length of time has seen the many A.A.'s who go back to drinking and never regain their sobriety. The only reason that has ever made any sense to me is — my Higher Power brought me to A.A. and fulfills my needs because He has work for me to do.

That has turned out, to be the “gift that keeps giving.” Now that I've been able to retire, in no small part because I got sober, I have more free time. What better way to show my gratitude than to carry the message to another suffering alcoholic? What better way to ensure my sobriety for another day than to give away what was freely given to me? What better way to take the focus off of myself and pay A.A. back? The best part is that when I do service, I feel His pleasure.

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The main purpose of this newsletter is to inform, connect and entertain. TO SUBMIT ITEMS TO THE NEWSLETTER:

Anniversaries, articles and meeting notices should be sent to newsletter@AAsrq.org. Submit material as attachments or directly in an email. Include your first name, group and type of item being sent. Deadline is the last day of the month. Submissions may be edited for length or content. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily those of A.A., Sara-Mana Intergroup or the Central Office, located at #B-2, 1748 Independence Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone 941.351.4818.