



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.

NOVEMBER /DECEMBER 2014

Central Office (941) 351-4818

Sara-Mana District 4, Area 15

How He Found His Future Late in Life

By Jim L

I found hope for the future rather late in life. Somehow I got serious about my alcohol addiction problem and the program of A.A. at age 69 after many failures.

Oh, I led a charmed life in spite of 50 years of heavy daily drinking – reasonably physically healthy, reasonably successful career, in a pleasant (but pointless) retirement. Family relations were frayed, but that’s to be expected after a few divorces. Never lost a job, never got a DUI, and never went to rehab, no accidents, and no fist fights. I was just a serious social drinker.

Well, that’s not totally true. I did suspect something was wrong in my 40’s and had serious flirtations with A.A. on several occasions over the

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Mind Your A.A. Manners—Part 1 of 2

Long-Timer Suggests Etiquette for Meetings

By Ross B

I don’t pretend to speak for A.A. After attending thousands of meetings regularly over the last 34 years in numerous states and countries, I’ve found certain courtesies go a long way toward love and understanding between A.A. members in meetings.

1) Punctuality - Come to meetings on time, whenever possible. Better yet, come early and stay late. Make yourself available to speak with your fellow A.A.s before and after the meeting. Also, coming in late or leaving early may be disrupting to others. (Of course, sometimes it can’t be avoided and attending part of a meeting is better than not going at all.)



All those “trite” slogans are really memorable digests of lessons learned slowly and painfully.

Because neither Intergroup nor General Service will meet in December, 2014, thus limiting distribution of this newsletter, this edition is the last one of 2014

2) Respect Others – While someone is sharing in a meeting, don’t talk to another person, send text messages, go through your appointment book, write and pass notes, etc. The person sharing deserves undivided attention. Also, try not to get up and move about, get coffee, etc. while someone is sharing. It’s distracting to the person sharing and to others in the meeting.

3) Sharing - The A.A. Preamble says we “share our experience, strength, and hope with each other...” Sharing my experience means I talk about me. I don’t comment on or directly respond to what someone else shares. That’s my opinion or judg-

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Hundreds Coming for January Quarterly Meeting Here at Hyatt

Hundreds of south Florida A.A.s will come to Sarasota’s Hyatt hotel Jan. 9-11, 2015 for the Winter Quarterly Assembly of the groups in Delegate Area 15.

Many volunteers are needed to help with registration, hospitality, and the fellowship which has made Sara-Mana one of the most popular sites for quarterly gatherings, which have attracted as many as 700 attendees in the past. Call the Central Office for information on volunteering

Registration for programs and speakers at the quarterly is free. The Saturday night banquet is \$44 and tickets are available at Central Office.

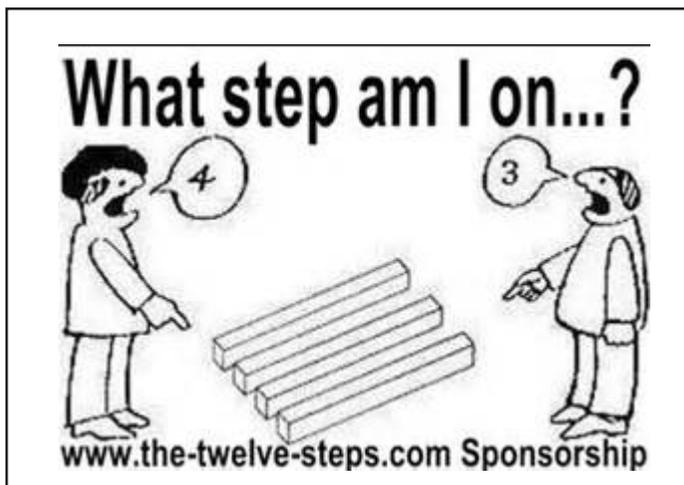
The primary purpose of Area 15 is to provide a forum for sharing collective 12th Step experience – how best to carry the A.A. message in South Florida, the Bahamas, U.S. Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, Antigua, St Maarten & Cayman Islands.

Central Office Open House Dec. 6

Central Office will host its annual Holiday Open House in the facility at 1748 Independence Blvd. on Dec. 6 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The day’s program includes food, refreshments, fellowship, a holiday sale, and a special surprise (you must be there to find out what it is!) Join us in unity, service, and recovery.

Take the rum out of a fruitcake and you’ve still got a fruitcake. —By an Anonymous Fruitcake



Is “Enoughness” at the Heart of the Spiritual Awakening?

By: William G

“Mr. Rockefeller, with all your millions, how much is enough?”

“... A little bit more...”

With our “instincts gone astray” and our “restless and irritable discontent,” we alcoholics intimately know that feeling. “If only I had MORE, then I’d be happy” is what my disease tells me.

What the program tells me is: “If we place our instincts (for more) first, we have got the cart before the horse; we shall be pulled backward into disillusionment”.

Bitter, painful and often repeated experience teaches us that nothing “out there” will ever fill the hole “in here”. A superior exterior will never fix my inferior interior. It really is an inside job.

So, what is this spiritual awakening that we are told is “THE” result of the steps? My years in the New Age movement sold me on the idea that it would be “transcendental”— the clouds would part, the angels would sing and I’d be “transformed” to a state of perpetual enlightened bliss. Do I need to tell you this never “manifested” for me? Might it be as simple as finally acquiring a feeling of “enoughness”?

In sobriety I’m happy to say I’ve moved from “I’ve had enough!” to “I have enough...”

Just Another Bozo on the Bus

After a lifetime praying for ever more “power, property and prestige,” how is it that today I’m happy to be just another bozo on the bus?

What miracle took place that allows me to recognize that it truly is extraordinary to be ordinary?

The Zen masters say, “Before enlightenment, chop wood, carry water; after enlightenment, chop wood, carry water.” How is it that nothing changed yet everything is different? Maybe it has to do with practicing the prayer passed down from A.A.’s Montreal founder, Big Dave: “God, grant me a grateful heart.”—Ryan R.

“Orange Suit” Memory Stops Him from Pulling Relapse Trigger

What I have to do for myself if a fleeting drinking thought comes to mind is to make it a point to “think the drink through” to its logical conclusion. These days it is HIGHLY unlikely that stopping off at a bar and drinking would net me any young, compliant, ego-stroking young women, but it likely WOULD net me yet another opportunity to try on some ill fitting orange clothing.

The thought of wearing ill fitting orange clothing and the attendant humiliation and loss of personal liberty goes a LONG way toward quelling the “euphoric recall.” For others who do not have the advantage of having experienced a stay in the local drunk tank, their own personal version of hell will, no doubt, do nicely. —Frank I

Mind Your A.A. Manners

(Continued from Page 1)

ment, not my experience. Step Ten cautions me about hiding a bad motive under a good one. Even though I tell myself I am trying to be helpful, aren’t I really playing the big shot, showing that I know the answers to others’ problems? I need to be mindful not to become intoxicated by the sound of my own voice!

(Exception: if you are chairing the meeting and need to interrupt for the benefit of the group. i.e., re-direct someone who is talking about outside issues, or cut off someone who is speaking so long that they are effectively preventing others from getting their fair share of time to speak. You might want to politely suggest to the person that he or she talk to a member after the meeting.)

If I want to try to help someone who shares a problem in a meeting, I can share my experience by recounting how I handled a similar situation. If I want to direct my remarks to someone specifically, I can speak with that person after the meeting, in private, and ask if they’d like feedback or suggestions.

How about giving advice to help someone? Unsolicited advice, no matter how well intentioned, can have the sting of criticism. It may well result in driving the person away. How about when someone specifically asks me for my advice? If I’ve had personal experience with the issue and I think I may be able to help, I first add the caveat that it’s only my opinion based upon my limited experience, and I may be wrong!

We say “what comes from the heart goes to the heart.” I believe I contribute most when I honestly share what is going on with me now. I know I get more out of listening to those who share their current problems and how they are struggling to work through them, than from those who share about their past difficulties after they have been resolved. The “language of the heart” is different from reporting facts, or giving my opinions. Isn’t that how our whole fellowship began? Bill and Dr. Bob sharing and identifying with one another? **Part 2 next issue**

A coincidence is when MY will and God’s will coincide

How She Became a God-Seeking Missile

By Keli S.

We read the phrase from chapter 5 of the Big Book, “God could and would if he were sought,” at most meetings, but what does it really mean?

The Big Book, the Steps, and the program of recovery are there for me to develop a relationship with a Higher Power. From my earliest memories I remember having a longing for something, I had an emptiness inside me. My first addiction was food, then it was sex, then around the same time, alcohol, then drugs, then exercise, then spending.

I had a gaping hole in my gut that I tried filling with anything. I have a God-shaped hole! A hole that only God can fill. Through the program of A.A., that hole is gradually closing up, being filled with the love of a Power greater than myself. It’s not perfect by any means, I’m not about to float off on a spiritual cloud, but I have become a God-seeking missile!

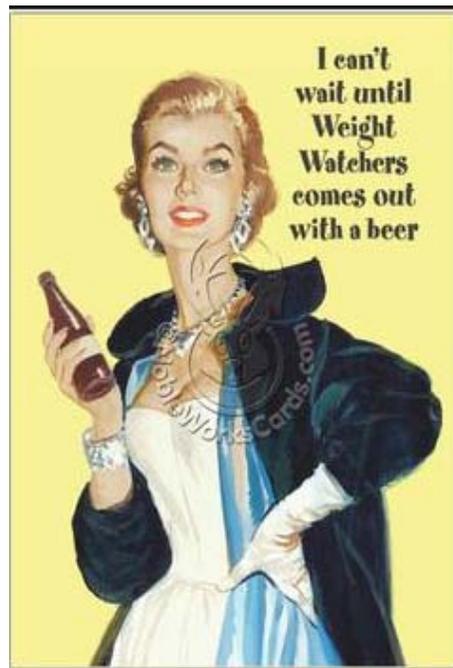
Late in Life, He Finally Finds His Future

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years. But a highly tuned sense of denial convinced me I misdiagnosed myself. I understood the basic facts of alcohol addiction, but that part about being a progressive disease getting worse over time didn’t apply – I was in control.

Retirement gave me the chance to do what I always wanted – drinking without restraint. Strangely, my wife seemed to be happier spending more and more time away from home. Meanwhile my few friends mysteriously became unavailable when I called. But that was fine, since self-imposed isolation had set in. Just the dog and me, Law and Order reruns and as much booze as I wanted – what a life! Hopeless despite being blessed; serving out my sentence until the end.

Then came the 3 a.m. dog walk when I fell to the ground and couldn’t get up – too drunk to stand or black-out. Crawling on concrete for hundreds of feet is tough on the body but does focus the mind. At long last, the most important thought in recovery



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came to me – “God, please help me”.

A meeting I once attended welcomed me back without judgment, a kind man took a chance on being my sponsor, and slowly I began to awaken from my stupor. Trying to live the steps, making A.A. friends, doing service work and my higher power is restoring my joy in living.

If you are, or care about an older, lonely, failed drunk like I was — take heart. Just go to an A.A. meeting with an open mind, surrender, ask for help, and you will find you are not alone. If A.A. can work for me, it can work for anyone who wants a future of hope, not dread.

Film on A.A.’s History

On Tuesday, Nov. 25, your District 4 Literature Committee will present a 6 p.m. showing at Central Office of the updated video “Markings on the Journey”, a brief (35 min.) history of AA. Please enter through the back door and bring a friend - or come and make one!

Dear Alkie

“Alkie” is a long-time member of A.A. His comments are based on his own strength, hope, and experience and are not reflections of any official A.A. position or practice.

Q. I just got my 90-day chip and feel great. Problem is I’m getting bored with all the repetition of you people. Do you think I can cut back on meetings?

A. If you’re like most of us, we need to be told something ten different ways before we understand (and accept) one time. And the reason you have been going to meetings is you repeatedly drank without “getting bored.” Meetings are for forming bonds with fellow sufferers; it’s called fellowship – why don’t you join us!

Q. One of the most famous ideas of A.A. is “one day at a time”. Why the focus on such a short term?

A. Most of us couldn’t remember from one day to the next that we were alcoholic. Just for practice, when we share in a meeting, we introduce ourselves by name and a something like “and I’m an alcoholic”. It’s not because we forget *who* we are, but have to fight denial of *what* we are. Remember, it’s called alcoholism not alcoholism!

Q. I’ve been sober for several years but I still struggle with mood swings – some days I’m energetic and giddy; other days I’m so depressed, I can’t get out of bed. My sponsor says I may need more help than she can give. What should I do?

A. You have a wise sponsor. A.A. is one of the most successful public and individual health programs, but it is not meant to address all problems. Some of us may need the help of a mental health professional, and you shouldn’t be ashamed to seek it. Like all professionals, some are excellent and some may not work for you. Always tell a therapist at your first appointment that you are in recovery and may have an addictive personality.

Face the facts: There’s no way to improve your past.

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 Ave. Group September

Leslie W. 30
Marta B. 17
Steve H. 11
Tom W. 6

October

Sandi D. 11
Lynn S. 2

Bee Ridge East October

Dave T. 29
Bill M. 2

Early Big Book September:

George D. 31
Jude B. 5

October:

Jeanette J. 31
Dave. 30
Jean S. 30
Linda K. 11
Crismas C. 8
John W. 8
Cheryl W. 6
Jacqueline O. 6
Dave P. 1

First 100 October

Doug K. 39
Pamela K. 38
Dan S. 20
Jacque C. 8
Preston S. 3

Friends of the Pelican October

Barbara B. 40
Dick C. 32
Erika V. 25
Christie J. 6

From the Heart October

Sandy C. 3
Patty J. 2
Nancy N. 1

Gulf Gate Noon October

Dee 20
Mark 6
Olivia 2

Happy Cookie Hour August

Parris 27
Dolores G. 25
Elizabeth 18
Kristen B. 16
Bob C. 15
Molly 14
Lisa 13
John H. 4
John G. 2
Gary W. 2
Krissy 1

September

Joan Mc. 40
Ben. 33
Dudley. 19
Lollie R. 12
Larry D. 7
Stephanie A. 4
Jeff Mc. 4
Chris C. 3
John 1

Kensington Park September

Tom L. 30
Dave T. 29
Vinnie T. 27
Dan R. 26
Laura B. 22
Sharon K. 16
Wanda L. 12
Alice B. 9
Joe D. 8

Oasis Goup October

Ron G. 5

Primary Porpoise Group October

Lucia T. 58
Clark W. 8

Saturday Night Speakers September

Greg M. 20
Joe M. 4
Mike S. 16

Serenity Room October

Marci J. 30
Dennis S. 22
Val A.C. 14
Larry P. 4
Lynn S. 2
Ruth G. 1
Shawn B. 1

St. Armand's Noon September

Ruth G. 33
Paul W. 20
Tracey D. 20
Terry C. 19
Sharon K. 16
David D. 12
October
Lucia T. 58
Lucia B. 34
Leslie F. 31
Ken J. 25
Jean G. 17
Clark W. 8
Julie 6
Joe I. 4

Sunrise October

Maura. 14
Brian C. 2
Trisha 1

"Woman Of Hope" October

Donna D. 36
Ruth R. 32
Jeanette 19
Terese V. 9
Cecelia M. 6
Janet 3
Sharon B. 1

Under the Rainbow October

Kathy S. 3
Mike W, 1

Upcoming Events

OPEN HOUSE AT CENTRAL

OFFICE: Dec. 6

NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER AND SPEAKER (No dance):

Faith Presbyterian
Church, 1201 N. Beneva
Road, Sarasota

3 New Meetings

Monday & Thursday 10:00 am

Lighthouse Group
Trinity Methodist
Church
3200 Manatee Ave.
Bradenton, Fl.

Thursday 7:30 pm

Fresh Start Sisters in
Sobriety
Gratitude Room
1819 5th Street West -
off 17th Ave.
Bradenton, Fl.

Saturday 1:00 pm

1st Edition Group
Siesta Key Chapel
4614 Gleason Ave.
Sarasota, Fl.

Please use the word
ANNIVERSARIES
in the subject line
when you email
entries for notice
here, else they get lost
amid the spam & junk

Because Intergroup
and General Service
will not meet in
December, this issue
is the last newsletter
of 2014.

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.

