



Sara-Mana InterGroup

The March 2017 Issue
District 4, Area 15

AASRO.org

How Has AA Changed Your Life? Seasoned Alcoholics Weigh in.

I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing Cliff B., Simone C., Eileen M., and Bert C. – representing over 150 years of sobriety! Even before I started to coordinate this article, I was awestruck by the raw enthusiasm that I found when I asked for help with this story.

My initial question to these kind souls was, “How Have You Changed Over the Years?” - What I received while I was talking with them was *so much more*.
Christine R.

Cliff B. Sobriety Date: January 31, 1968

I owe my health, wealth, happiness, and serenity to this life saving program. There is more to A.A. than sobriety. It is the beginning of a wonderful journey that brings our life into a beautiful serenity. We climb into stages that we never knew were inside our potential of a good and helping relationship with ourselves, others, and our higher power as we understand him.

This is done through our 12 steps and the great fellowship available to us. We are lucky to have this fellowship and it is made available to the chosen few who were picked to carry the message. I took full

availability and achieved an unbelievable level I chose to call the 4th dimension (A higher degree of understanding).

My journey started normally and at 14, things changed - my first drink and years of tremendous grief and unhappiness. At 16, I had 35 indictments and I drank daily until I was 33 years old. During this period of time, I had numerous assault and batteries, armed robberies. I did not have the courage to commit suicide but I wanted to die.

At 33, I was sentenced to prison for bank robbery involvement and I was told no parole without participation in A.A. I went for 2 years to make parole. I was not granted parole but I decided to change from being ON the program to being in the program.

I have been married 43 years (love it and her). My sobriety date is Jan 31, 1968. I have not had a drink since that date and I really do not weigh that as an option to solving any of my problems.

If I feel bad, I go to a meeting, or call my sponsor. Remember our God gives us the opportunities, but we make the choices to follow them through. Do not analyze the Big Book but utilize it. May your journey be as great as mine. (49+ years).

Simone C. Sobriety Date: April 25, 1967

Before AA I actually thought we were born being restless, irritable and discontent. I found alcohol at the age of 14 and thought I had found the answer to being restless, irritable and discontent.

Coming to AA at 26, I was even more restless, irritable and discontent, plus I had no desire to live. By working and applying the 12 steps to my life, I am no longer that selfish, dishonest, impatient and fearful person.

Calmness, peace and serenity has taken the place of being restless, irritable and discontent.

The biggest change is I have a relationship with my Higher Power. I have become a strong independent woman. I rely on and consciously turn my thinking and action over to the care of God, and seek his his will for me on a daily basis.

Going through the steps wasn't enough for me. I had to learn to live and apply them to my daily life.

I don't know what happen to that young woman who was so sick with all that shame and guilt. I feel as though she has died. I don't think or act that way anymore. There's a part of me that feels sorry for her, but I know I am not that person any more.

My willingness take another woman taking through the steps, helps me to continue to grow and change. I want it all, but I hope I never get it all.

Eileen M. Sobriety Date: May 21, 1989

My name is Eileen M. I was born in upstate NY to a large Irish Catholic family. My sobriety date is May 21, 1989. I was 39 when I walked into my first AA meeting!

I was asked to share how I have grown and changed in my recovery and through the fellowship of AA.

Looking back over these last 27 years, I marvel at how my recovery and meetings have defined me. I guess also growing older in recovery has also helped to create in me the ability to live out the principles of AA. I think and feel the greatest area of growth is in becoming real.

I changed my focus away from what others will think or say and more about what is right at this moment in God's time for me.

I shared with a member of my home group, R.O.S.E., a group in Sarasota, that I am in a place now where all of the pieces have come together. Physically! Spiritually Mentally! Emotionally! That is not to say I get to cruise along in this spot without work!

I have learned over the years that issues I thought would destroy me or my sobriety had the opposite effect! I have learned to keep open to my Higher Power's Will for me. I have ceased to micro-manage outcomes and expectations.

None of my growth is anything I controlled. As I work with other women in recovery and take them through the 12 Steps, I am aware of my Higher Power's light radiating in me.

Recovery has given me a loving, caring and gentle God! A God who is

approachable and inviting! Today I speak and listen to my Higher Power with an openness that has evolved over time!

My experiences in these past 27 years have not always been good ones. They have indeed all been growth-filled! I have learned that my perception must stay positive if I wish to stay in the center of serenity,

As I re-work my Steps this time, I find many lessons learned and new awareness to where my God is directing me.

I am blessed to be married to another recovering person, Elliott S., and together we hold each other accountable for living the joyful life of sobriety.

We keep our focus on our own recovery. We attend meetings regularly. We have a daily contact with our Higher. We don't take ourselves too seriously.

I keep going to meetings because I need to hear what others share and I need to continue to share my experience, strength and hope. So when someone says, "Why do you keep going to meetings after all this time?", I always have that answer. I want to keep growing and becoming the woman I was created to be.

Bert C. Sobriety Date: March 11, 1967

"I went to my first AA meeting on March 13, 1967 - the topic was, "Alcoholism is a Disease, NOT a moral problem". Bert C. tells me, "I felt confused and inferior. I wasn't comfortable around anyone and I was indifferent about everything! I was ashamed of myself."

Bert then goes on to explain that since he's accepted the 12 steps into his life, he's now comfortable under any circumstance or in any condition. "I could talk to anyone, now!"

"The sixth step, to me, is the toughest - Were entirely ready to have God remove all (my) defects of character." Bert says, "The 11th Step is my job"- Sought through prayer and meditation to improve (my) conscious contact with God as (I understand) Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

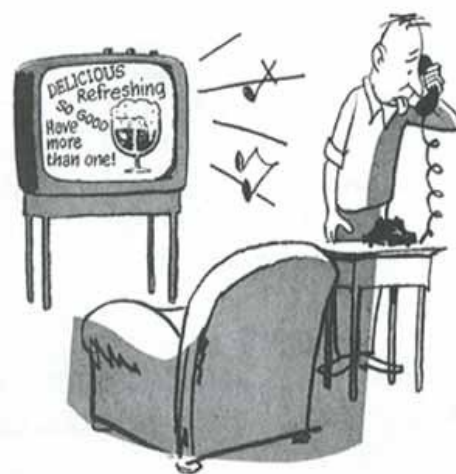
Bert lives a full life, and is says that God has 'blessed' his life. But he's careful to point out, "Its not about being hostage to material stuff".

He has been highly active in service work in Intergroup in Baltimore, where he resides.

"I use the Big Book as a blue print for my life!"

Newcomer's Nook

This section is dedicated to the newcomer - contributions are encouraged



"Now is a good time for a word from my sponsor!"
- Grapevine,
August, 2012

Standing on Three Legs

Jenny M.

When I finally found AA, I desperately needed: love, support, the Steps, a sponsor, Good Orderly Direction and the fellowship of the groups. Together, they put me on the path of Recovery.

Participating in my home group, following the gentle suggestions of my sponsor and other experienced members of AA, introduced me to Unity. I felt a part of rather than apart from the wonderful, recovering members of that group. By making coffee, greeting, listening, sharing, hugging and participating, I began to stop *judging* and started relating.

I learned to practice the Traditions and felt the joy of giving, which gradually replaced the expectations and resentments I had in my selfish "taking" mode. I found I could be *myself without focusing on myself*.

After clearing the wreckage of my past and becoming more comfortable with this glorious new way of living, my sponsor and others said I was ready for Service. Not just the service within groups and by sponsoring newcomers, although that is also rightly considered service and fulfillment of the twelfth step. My guiding angels meant I should be part of General Service and give to AA as a whole.

I became a member of a committee, then later became the General Service Representative (GSR) of my home group. It is in these servant roles that I really learned how to be honest and responsible to others. Enthusiasm often takes me beyond my experience level, and I have learned to rely on my Higher Power and accept help from others.

My ego regularly takes a beating, and I am becoming more teachable. Following the Concepts of Service has helped me feel the gratitude of recovery and experience the Promises of the program more fully than ever before.

The three legacies, **Recovery, Unity,** and **Service**, are the three legs that my AA life is balanced on. My sober life is more effectively supported when I rely on all three, and each aspect is strengthened by the other two. I need to take the twelve steps, but also the twelve traditions and twelve concepts on my daily walk.

It would have been too much for me to accept when I first became a member of AA, but now I cannot think of living any other way. The richness of this life is greater than any material wealth or social recognition. I am complete as a part of the uniquely loving and supportive community of AA.

Help Keep the Doors of Your Central Office Open!

District 4's Central Office,
serving Sarasota and
Manatee Counties, is a
vital part of our strong AA
community. Please help us
reach our goal of
\$30,000.00 by April 16.
Contribute Today!

Open Envelopes available
at your meetings and at
the Central Office!

Dear Alkie,

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

Q. I've been sober for several years but recently had a slip. Didn't get drunk, nothing bad happened, only I know. Now what?

A. Slip means Sobriety Lost Its Priority! You made a mistake that could be fatal and you having no consequences can destroy your acceptance of powerlessness. Confess to your sponsor – pick up a 24 - hour chip at your home group – reset your sobriety date – study the Doctor's Opinion again. Have courage -- as alcoholics, many of us have made the same mistake. Recovery 'demands rigorous honesty' and we advise you be 'fearless and thorough' with your restart.

Q. OK – you're right! I'll commit to 90 meetings in 90 days but I'm a busy guy. So, what's the right number of meetings I need to attend after 3 months?

A. You seem to be a slow learner with an attitude problem! There is no magic number! You need to frequently go to meetings UNTIL you want to go to meetings. Because that's where your friends can help you and just maybe you can help someone else. Remember, if you think you need a meeting - you probably do; if you don't think you need a meeting- you definitely do.

Q. I'm not a religious person and find the 3rd step confusing. Can you explain in everyday terms?

A. For me, the key is found in a phrase in the prayer on p 63; "relieve me of the bondage of self". A character trait alcoholics share is selfishness – focusing on our needs before anyone else. This step says to me 'get over yourself –you're not that important and are powerless over people, places and things'. The simple prayer ends with the thought – "those I would help". Selflessness is a basis for serenity and sobriety.

**GULF GATE NOON GROUP
MARKS 26TH YEAR WITH LUNCH**

The Gulf Gate Noon Group marked its 26th year in existence with a lunch attended by more than 100 home group members, other AAs, and guests on March 12. The sandwich menu in the Covenant Presbyterian Church Community room was provided by Publix, with side dishes pot-lucked by group members coordinated by Event Facilitator Joan H.

The Gulf Gate Noon Group has grown into one of District 4's most responsible groups and ranks among leading groups in contributions to Central Office, Intergroup, and General Service. It meets each weekday at noon (Big Book Monday, open discussion Tuesday and Thursday, 12 & 12 Wednesday, and Speaker Friday) at the church on the south Trail just north of Sarasota Square. It is a favorite A.A destination for seasonal visitors.
—Edgar C.



**FEBRUARY
HELPLINE TOTALS**

AA Meeting Time/Location	268
AA Meeting in Lieu of 12 Step Call	21
Actual 12 Step Call	6
Al-Anon	10
Special Needs	11
Miscellaneous	26
Total Calls	342

ANNIVERSARIES

Bay Group

- February**
Maureen H. 24
Karen 11
Bobby M. 5
Kenn R. 4
Marcus 3
Bobby S. 2

Donut Hole

- January**
Arthur R 34
Peg F 17
John B 12
David 6
Paul L 5
February
Donna F 1
Buffalo Bob 9
John B 9
Karen B 9
Sharon T 8

Early Big Book

- February**
John T. 54
Sue Anne C. 17

Friends of the Pelican

- February**
Norman D. 35
Jay C. 20
Margie M. 8

Gulf Gate Noon

- February**
Jack L. 43
Bob K. 41
Betsy W. 28

Happy Cookie Hour

- February**
Shaun S. 28
Jerry D. 9
Karen 9
Patrick O. 6
Scotty T. 6
Bart M. 5
Joanna K. 2

Lakewood Ranch 12&12

- February**
Barbara 31
Michelle D. 25
Karen C. 16
Leslie S. 14

Monday Nite Men's

- February**
Jose R. 23

Pass-It-On

- February**
Bob R. 44
Jeff 34

Primary Porpoise

- February**
Judy J. 35
John G. 20
Linda H. 16

Serenity Room

- February**
Bari R. 38
Rick H. 20
Barbara S. 9

St Armand's Noon

- January**
Ellen J. 30
Francoise D. 28
Ann F. 21
Stephanie R. 13
Mary Beth C. 7
Kelly E. 7
Brenda B. 5
Mike C. 5
February
Janet W. 29
Cyd P. 14

Sunrise

- February**
Carol D. 21
John F. 14
Jamie K. 5
Jim L. 5
Tina R. 3
Bernard G. 2

Women in the Solution

- February**
Judy 29
Donna P. 14
Helen Y. 9

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. Feb anniversaries appear in March issue.

The 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.

SERVICE WORK AVAILABLE!

The Sara Mana Helpline has morning and evening shifts available! One year of continuous sobriety required. For more information, contact saramanahelpline@gmail.com