

LifeLine

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MOST OF US HAVE BEEN UNWILLING

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"Don't say that I didn't warn you!" That could have been an appropriate comment on the part of the God I have come to know and love. My drinking started in rather late, in comparison to the stories of many AAs, but the warning signals started in early. It was in my junior year in college that my best friend took the lead in getting us familiar with "Trader Vic's Book of Food and Drink" (we weren't concerned with the food), and adding to my college dormitory room: a liquor cabinet! A trip up the coast to San Francisco to his father's drug store enabled us to furnish the inside of that cabinet according to Trader Vic's specifications. Soon my room became the social center of the dormitory. A padlock protected the contents from the inquisitive eyes of maids, officials and the uninitiated. Before long I had reached the age of 21, and our conviviality spilled over into hotels and ballrooms.

Before two or three months had gone by, I became aware of an interesting side effect of alcohol consumption. After a specially "spirited" evening at some party I would notice, as I reviewed the events of that evening, that some parts of it were missing. Welcome to the blackout - warning number 1! After the initial shock, did I resolve to cut down? Yeah, right!

Actually, I was somewhat pleased with myself. It was as if I had graduated to a higher echelon. ("By every form of self deception and experimentation.") I was a two-fisted drinker who had entered the real world. When I had a blackout, that was a sign that I had had a really good time. Not too logical, perhaps. And it was a little frustrating to have to learn second hand just how "good" a time it had been; but that was all part of the game. My bowl of cherries (as in "Life is just a bowl of") was steadily getting marinated.

I don't know if emesis (later known as "barfing") is recognized as diagnostic of alcoholism or not. In any event, that's something I soon had. By this time I was in graduate school, and married. Life continued to revolve around the bottle, but drinking became more earnest. Recipes based on a foundation of 95% alcohol were exchanged. It's hard to say whether my stomach was my best friend or my worst enemy. The stomach enjoyed social drinking, but just as soon as things really got going and I was having a good time, the stomach became a wet blanket, and all that good liquor went down the drain. What was worse: I didn't feel like drinking any more; I didn't

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS CENTRAL OFFICE

HOURS

Weekdays 8:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M.
 Saturdays 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.
 Sundays & Holidays 10:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M.

2712 S. Grand Avenue
 Santa Ana, CA 92705
 Phone (714) 556-4555

From San Clemente, Dana Point, Laguna
 Beach & Capistrano Valley Areas -
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"Most of Us..."*(Continued from front page)*

feel like doing anything. It was time to go home. That accomplished two things in my drinking career. It brought almost all of my "fun" evenings to a sudden, sobering conclusion; and it shielded me from any but the mildest of hangovers. (It also put an abrupt end to my insistence that I was sober enough to drive; sometimes this happened when we were halfway home, and had to make an emergency stop. Helen, my wife, with great relief, would take over the wheel.)

That liquor got to my brain, but it didn't have too good a chance to poison the rest of my body. Is that good or bad? With hangovers, my twenty years of drinking might have been cut in half. However, each case is different. As my first sponsor, George, used to say, 'Don't cuss the road you came over if it lands you in a good place'.

There was actually one instance of a mega-hangover. We had a couple over to our house one night, and I made egg-nogs. Waking up the next morning, I discovered that we (mostly they) had left quite a bit. There it was, sitting on the table. Never one to let anything good go to waste, I finished it all up and went back to bed. I almost stayed there permanently. I had thought that the alcoholic environment of a strong eggnog would keep any germs at bay. NOT! For hours I lay there thinking that death - in addition to being imminent - would be preferable by far to what I was experiencing. The doctor seemed to think that my behavior towards that eggnog was not quite rational. Was that a warning sign? In my side of the story, I was the victim of an understandable error in judgement: underestimating the power of the enemy.

Another five years went by along the same pattern: drinking, parties, blackouts, barfing; it didn't seem to matter what my position was or where we were living. By this time I was a lowly university instructor, but the atmosphere was congenial. I soon found that drinking was a preferred occupation of my colleagues in the department. I didn't notice that they exercised a greater control over their drinking behavior than I did. Also, no one had the "stomach trouble" than I did. This was painfully evident at the home of the chairman of the department, when my stomach suddenly said to me, "I'm outta

here", and I tried desperately to make it up the staircase to the toilet. I didn't even come close! Now that just *had* to be a warning sign. At the time, though, it was just an "unfortunate accident - heh, heh". When I finally recognized it for what it was, I had been sober a number of months.

Another change in environment and position - an external change. The only internal change was a progressive moral and spiritual deterioration. Helen said to me at one point, "Do you think you might be an alcoholic?" "Nah", I said, "alcoholics never worry that they might be alcoholic." I don't know where that gem of wisdom came from, but an impartial observer (or a wife, actually) might perceive a finger pointing at me ... from my own words. I didn't perceive it as a warning, of course. The term "denial" had not started to circulate back in those days, but I could serve as a prime example.



One thing—perhaps it was the only thing—shook me up a little. It was such a little thing. There was an afternoon party at a colleague's house, and I had my share but just a *normal* amount - of Manhattans. I was in full possession of my faculties, didn't get sick, drove home a few blocks and back to pick up something I had forgotten, exchanged a few "stories", and otherwise participated in the conversation. When we returned home, Helen related to me some of the things I had said. I was thunderstruck. On the witness stand I would have denied, with deep inner conviction, that I had said them. Because I *knew* everything that had gone on that afternoon, and I "knew" I hadn't said those things. Yet I was convinced Helen was telling the truth. I was familiar, thoroughly familiar, with blackouts. But never before had I ever had a blackout without realizing it. Was that normal? Perhaps that was the beginning of my awakening. If so, it was a very prolonged awakening indeed.

The crisis came not too many months after this incident Helen had *had* it. Faced with the real threat of eviction and worse, I called AA. *Not* because I needed it. I had just made a solemn vow that I would never drink again, and I had convinced myself that I would stick to it. No problem! For Helen, though, there was an understandable credibility gap; hence the call to AA. In a peculiar way, you might say I came to AA by the back door.

Thereafter, for weeks and even months, I "masqueraded" as an alcoholic, because I was too chicken to come out and say "I'm not really an alcoholic, but I'm here to save my marriage. And besides, I want what you have." Yes, I really did want it. That was probably the real awakening. With God's help, I listened to what you were telling me, and I also participated; although I don't know now what I may have said.

Slowly the scales fell away from my eyes. Besides willingness, open-mindedness, and, yes, eventually, honesty, a few special things helped convince me. A nightmare, when I dreamed I got drunk. I don't think that could have been the dream of a nonalcoholic. Then the time when I had to meet a prestigious fellow professional, and the awe and fear I felt was almost unbearable; and it came to me while waiting, "If only I had a drink in my hand, there would be no problem." I knew enough by then to realize that there would be a BIG PROBLEM. But I learned from this what a large role shyness had played in my life, and how alcohol had dissolved that shyness - along with almost everything good in my life.

Awakening really hasn't stopped. For my first three or four years I had stopped going to church (where I had been a big shot who knew everybody there except the Lord); and the meetings, especially those in my home group, tore down the false spirituality and started replacing it with the genuine article. Then I was ready - and felt the need - to return to church, this time with a very different attitude. Awakening continued there. It has continued in AA. I am grateful that God has opened my eyes in these ways. I hope - and believe - that the awakening will never end.

E. S.
Huntington Beach, CA

AA BIRTHDAYS

Birthday Donations...

Many AA members celebrate their AA birthdays by sending a donation to Central Office. These donations help keep the doors of Central Office open, so that new members may get the same help so many of us have received. Some members send one or two dollars for each year of sobriety. Others make a personal donation monthly or on a quarterly basis. This month we'd like to extend thanks to:

Kathleen B.	Dana Point	5 years
Russ G.	Not Shown	9 years
Connie C.	Huntington Beach	12 years
Agnes E.	Encinitas	28 years



Happy
Birthday!

CENTRAL OFFICE'S ACTIVITY AUGUST 1995

TOTAL CALLS: 4,615	12StepCalls	MeetingInfo	General Info	Customers
OFFICE VOLUNTEERS (MAIN + SATELLITE)	119	1,871	1,577	435
CALL FORWARDING VOLUNTEERS	45	278	290	

Tradition of the Month

TRADITION TEN

"No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues—particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever."

Ask Yourself...

1. Do I ever give the impression that there really is an "A.A. opinion" on Antabuse? Tranquilizers? Doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? The federal or state government? Legalizing marijuana? Vitamins? Al-Anon? Alateen?

2. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression I am stating the "A.A. opinion?"

3. What in A.A. history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?

4. Have I had a similar experience in my own A.A. life?

5. What would A.A. be without this Tradition? Where would I be?

6. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious ways?

7. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside A.A.? Inside A.A.?

—Reprinted from the AA Grapevine Traditions Checklist

"Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have—the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them."

"Alcoholics Anonymous", page 124

BIRTHDAY GRATITUDE FOR:

Name: _____

Sobriety Date: _____

Years: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

From: _____

*Thank you for sharing
my gratitude.*

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UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR AA

The events listed below are for your information only. If you have any questions regarding any event, we suggest that you contact the organization conducting the event.

Sept. 29th-Oct. 1st, 1995
 44th Southern California Convention
 "Make Life a Masterpiece"
 Holiday Inn and Convention Center
 Bakersfield, California
 call: Joe W. (714) 847-3581, Kathy O.
 (909) 674-3022, Stu W. (619) 582-3943

**11th Annual O.C. Convention
 Planning Meetings**
 11th OCAAC, March 22-24th, 1996
 Red Lion Hotel, Costa Mesa, CA
 Open planning meetings 7:30 PM at the
 Roque Center, 9842 13th St. Garden Grv
 Oct. 18, 1995 Jan. 17, 1996
 Nov. 15, 1995 Feb. 21, 1996
 Dec. 20, 1995
 Walk-thru at the Red Lion March 1996

November 23-26, 1995
 29th Annual Las Vegas Roundup
 Riviera Hotel, 2901 Las Vegas Blvd. So.
 Las Vegas, NV 89109 (800) 634-6753
 For Info: The Round-up Committee
 P.O. Box 43177, Las Vegas NV 89116

IF YOU CAN talk, stand, sit, smile, saw,
 paint, hammer, drive, file, type, write,
 count, breathe or just tell jokes...

March 18-29, 1997
 50th Anniversary Convention
 of AA in Brazil
 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 For info: CENSAA/COC - Av. Rio Branco,
 57-s/201, Rio de Janeiro - Brazil Zip Code
 20001-004

WE NEED YOUR HELP!



THESE MIDNIGHT MEETINGS ATTRACT
 THE STRANGEST PEOPLE

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