

NNIG MONTHLY MEETING SPEAKER



May 14, 2022
June G., Oxnard, CA
Carson City
They Nearly Lost All
Speaker at 7:00
Silver Legacy Silver Baron Rm 1-6

Silver Legacy · 407 North Virginia St., Reno · Doors open at 6:30

May, 2022

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GENERAL WARRANTIES OF THE NORTHERN NEVADA INTERGROUP ASSOCIATION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

In all its proceedings, the Intergroup Association observes the spirit of AA Traditions, taking great care that the Intergroup Association never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus a reserve be its prudent financial principal; that none of the Intergroup Association members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decision be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that no Intergroup Association action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that though the Intergroup Association may act for the service of AA Groups in the Northern Nevada area and parts of Northern California, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Intergroup Association itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

(The above is adapted and modified from "The AA Service Manual", and AA Co-Founder Bill W's. Twelve Concepts for World Service; Concept XII, as adopted by the General Service Conference on April 26, 1962. This adaptation of copyrighted AA material has been approved by the General Service Board)

CENTRAL OFFICE

436 S. Rock Blvd.,
Sparks, NV 89431
Monday thru Friday
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Saturday 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

24 Hour Answering Service:

(775) 355-1151 Fax: (775) 355-1560

EMAIL: officemanager@nnig.org

Web Site/Meeting Schedule: nnig.org

The Bracer: nnigbracer@gmail.com



NORTHERN NEVADA INTERGROUP

The Cement That Binds Us

It seems to me, after attending meetings for the past thirty-four years, that Tradition Five has been gradually chipped away by individuals having problems other than alcoholism. Many of the meetings I have attended have discussions about other drugs; occasionally, there is not even a mention of alcohol or recovery from its grasp. At a recent convention in California, the main speaker at the big Saturday night meeting spent forty-five minutes talking about his cocaine use and never mentioned alcohol or the Twelve Steps of recovery. I find this to be more common than not nowadays.

Why is our primary purpose becoming diluted? Well, having discussed this with many young AAs, I'm told that most AA members now are "dually addicted." There seems to be a common statement issuing from most of those individuals: "I know this is an AA meeting, but drugs are a part of my story so I'm going to mention them too." And they do! Now, it can be rationalized that if "each group has but one primary purpose--to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers," then maybe that particular group's message concerns drugs other than alcohol. But what, then, is "the message" the group carries to the alcoholic who still suffers?

Few AA members, old-timers and newcomers, have ever read the third paragraph of the dust cover of the Big Book, wherein it tells that the AA message is to be found in the text of that book. I've noticed that many AAs read the Big Book but few study it, and fewer still follow its suggestions.

It is not uncommon to hear a member state, "I work my own program." In my home group, on Tuesday nights, we discuss the written program as it is in the Big Book and how it has helped each of us to a better way of life. We have a caveat in our opening message before the Preamble asking that only alcoholics share at our meeting. But we say that all are welcome. This seems to work pretty well and as a result we have good AA discussions certainly helpful to our newcomers.

My home group's primary purpose is to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Some of those have much sobriety, because the alcoholic who still suffers is not necessarily a newcomer. However, when newcomers do show up at our home group we try to focus our discussion on what's in the Big Book and how it can help them if they are willing to follow some simple suggestions.

I think that without Tradition Five there could not be an AA program. I believe that the Twelve Traditions are the cement that binds us together into a cohesive society. For my part, I hold an informal study group at my home for newer members of my home group. We study the program so that all of us can better fulfill our "real purpose" as it states on page 77 of the Big Book. **BY: TOM H. | PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA**

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Elections for Steering Committee & NNIG Chairpersons
June 7th. See all positions available on Page 5!





Recovery Step Five:

"Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

Three

Unity Tradition Five:

"Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Legacies

Service Concept Five:

"Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered."

Concept V - Right of Appeal Assures that Minority Opinion will be Heard and that Personal Grievances will be Addressed.

Throughout his writings on the Twelve Concepts our founder expresses an underlying principle on which the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous is based, that it always be democratic in spirit, thought and action. Maintaining a "Right of Appeal" is important to this. Appeal provides for a response when there is disagreement with any action, or when any procedure is thought to fall too far short of the democratic ideal Bill envisioned.

While at my first General Service Area Assembly I was surprised to find that taking a vote on a matter did not always bring an end to the discussion. After the vote was taken, the Chairperson kept the discussion open by asking whether anyone who had voted in the minority, the losing side, wanted to speak further. This was a purposeful and planned exercise of the right of appeal. It added assurance that all opinions were adequately heard, and had not been overrun by a hasty vote or an impatient majority. As I continued to attend Assemblies I witnessed several situations in which an expressed minority opinion changed the eventual outcome, and led to a much better decision.

As Bill says it, "To increase the actual *spirit of democracy* by special deference to minority opinion is, we think, better than to follow blindly the rule which always insists on an unqualified dominance by a slight majority vote". Bill recognizes that a majority vote may not always lead to the best, fairest, most appropriate or right decision.

Applications of the right of appeal include the right to petition. This becomes important when any minority, or even a majority, feels that a decision was made by someone who may not have had the authority to make that decision, when a decision is made without adequate debate and discussion, or when the decision is felt to be wrong or not in the best interest of the whole of A.A. Bill says that in A.A.'s world services both appeal and petition have always been used well.

"Right of Appeal" includes the right of an A.A. employee or member to appeal and request a hearing regarding a personal grievance. One of the underlying principles of the right to appeal is that we respect everyone's experiences as well as what they have to say based on those experiences. Even if they might be wrong they have a right to be heard and, many times, they may have a better idea than what the majority thought best.

Some of the enemies of the spirit of democracy include impatience, apathy, self-seeking, uninformed or angry majorities, and the exercise of too much personal power. Bill says that A.A. has no room for any of these.

Bill reminds us in the text of Concept V that any alcoholic can be a member of A.A. the moment he says he is. He has a right to belong no matter what he thinks or believes. "Ours is indeed a large charter of minority privileges and liberties." Appeal is a method for assuring that these liberties and privileges are always respected and maintained as we work together in A.A. service.

This is a 12 part series written by members of the 12 Concepts Study Group in Reno, Nevada. Efforts were made to use simple, everyday language. Each concept is written by an individual member of the group and is not necessarily the opinion of AA as a whole or NNIG. We hope this series will help our community to understand the Concepts and bring interest to those wanting to know more about them. Revised May, 2017.

NNIG & AREA EVENTS

EVENTS HOSTED BY NORTHERN NEVADA INTERGROUP TO SUPPORT CENTRAL OFFICE

NNIG Monthly Speaker Meetings

Silver Legacy – 407 North Virginia Street, Reno 89501



Monthly Speaker Meeting
Doors open at 6:30 PM
Speaker at 7:00 PM



All meetings located in Silver Barron Room 1-6
Unless otherwise noted

May 14, 2022

Host Group – Carson City They Lost

Nearly All

Speaker – June G. – Oxnard CA

June 11, 2022

Host Group – Alano Jaywalkers
Speaker - Barbara M. Sparks NV

July 9, 2022

Host Group- Fernley Kiss
Speaker Don L. – Bellingham WA.

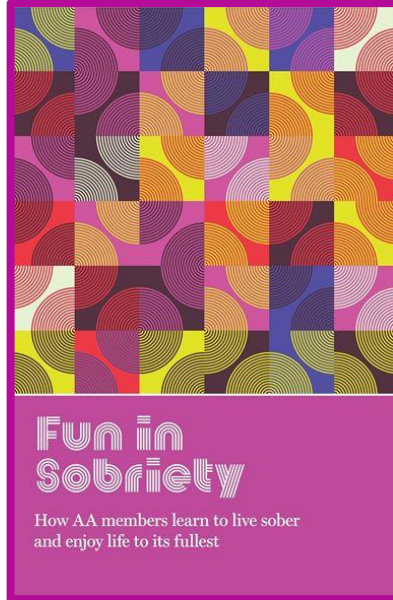
August 13, 2022

Host Group- Minden/Garnerville Group
Speaker- Mike S. - Riverside

Speaker Chair – Kevin B. (775) 470-4614
Need more info call: Central Office – (775) 355-1151
Join us for dinner at Cafe Central inside the Silver legacy @ 5pm

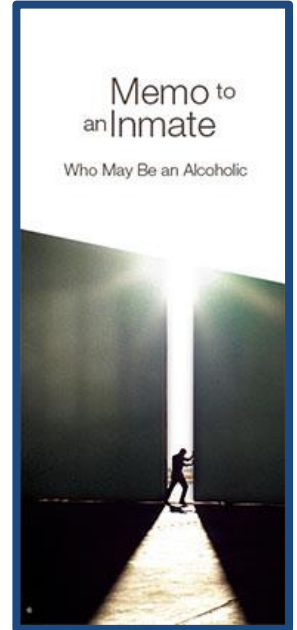
BOOK OF THE MONTH

\$2 OFF



PAMPHLET OF THE MONTH

\$0.40



OTHER AREA EVENTS

FOUNDERS DAY 2022

Dr. Bob
Bill W.

SATURDAY JUNE 18, 2022, 11-3PM

BOWERS MANSION - WASHOE VALLEY

BURGERS & HOT DOGS WITH SIDE DISHES WILL BE SERVED

POTLUCK - CHIPS & DESSERTS ONLY

\$5 SUGGESTED CONTRIBUTION

RAFFLE!! GAMES!! FELLOWSHIP!!

Thank You!

Thank you to the Chairpersons and Steering Committee

With Elections next month this will be the last of how we view this NNIG meeting, things will change next month, just as life does. This has been an extraordinary two years for this fellowship. We have gone through what we hope is the end of a global pandemic, the shutdown of all A.A. meetings, learning to navigate through a new way of sharing our experience, strength and hope through online meetings. The cancellations of events, the replanning of events with Covid still in the air, through it all you all have stayed and honored your commitments, I want to commend you. Thank you to all the chairpersons that are rotating out I am sure we will see you on this happy road of service. To those of you that will continue on serving, thank you, everyone involved with NNIG, you all have helped me one way or another to learn and grow as your coordinator for the central office and as a fellow alcoholic. Thank you.

2022

A

VISION FOR YOU

RENO SPRING FESTIVAL

Saturday, May 21st

Circus Circus Hotel Casino
500 North Sierra Street,
Lower level convention center
Mandalay Rooms 4 & 5
\$20.00 per person
No charge for Alateen members
Registration Form @
<https://renospringfestival.com>

Central office report from Ronda H. May 3, 2022

Volunteer hours- 148 hours

Calls into Central Office:

- Calls for AA help - 4
- Calls for Alanon/Alateen - 0
- Meeting information- 61
- Retail/merchandise- 12
- Other 12 step programs- 2
- Events - 4
- Business/Central office- 66
- Total calls - 149
- Visitors – 234, 1 dog- Smoky
- Book of the month - Grapevines "Having Fun in Sobriety"
- Pamphlet – "Memo to an Inmate who May Be an Alcoholic"
- Please mention the Bracer at your Home group meeting
- Website add 20,408 Pageviews w/8,987 of those looking up the meetings
- Big Books are \$10 for a trial basis

Meeting information is so very important.

Ronda
Central Office Manager



Previous Birthdays

April 2022



Paul 31 Years

March

Kent L. 40 Years

Kim D. 45 Years

February

Skip 22 Years

December

Sean S. - 32 Years

Mystery Person!!

- 34 Years

November 2021

Rich T. - 33 Years

Shawn - 30 Years

October 2021

Sharon F. - 37 Years

Nancy T. - 36 Years

September 2021

Phil S. 43 Years

Mike 26 Years

August 2021

Linda G. 29 Years

Danny S. 19 Years

JULY 2021

Barbara M. 46 Years

Joanne P. 9 Years

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Donn T - 31 Years!!!

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Joni S. 26 Years

Ron T. 10 Years

Ann G. TLOT

Donn T. 31 Years



Charlette

I waited all night to see the sun rise ... and then it dawned on me.

Did you know you can share your sobriety and gratitude in a practical way by joining the A.A. Birthday Club? Sign Up today and be featured in the Bracer Birthday Club section of the Bracer. Show your Support for your NNIG & Central Office, Join the Birthday Club. A donation of only one dollar for every year of your sobriety. Envelopes available at Central Office, NNIG Business Meeting or Intergroup Representatives

Please respect all meeting place mandates about face coverings.

Positive Step Group
6:30 pm Friday
345 S. Wells
Reno

Whole in the Soul
Tuesday 7pm
510 Greenbrae Dr.
Sparks

AA ANSWERING SERVICE NUMBERS

Reno, Sparks, Carson City and all of Northern Nevada: (775) 355-1151
Las Vegas and all of Southern Nevada: (702) 598-1888
Mammoth Lake: (760) 934-3434
North Lake Tahoe: (530) 546-1126
South Lake Tahoe: (530) 541-1243
Susanville, CA: (775) 355-1151
White Pine County/Ely: (775) 296-0656 Jim C.

Living Sober Noon Friday
10 North Center Street
Fernley

AA WAY OF LIFE
5:30 PM WEDNESDAY
412 WEST MUSSER ST.
CARSON CITY

N.N.I.G. STEERING COMMITTEE
 Last Tuesday of each month, 5:30 PM
 Central Office, 436 S. Rock Blvd., Sparks

N.N.I.G. BUSINESS MEETING
 First Tuesday of each month, 6:30 PM
 Alano Club, 1640 Prater Way, Sparks

N.N.I.G. MONTHLY SPEAKER MEETING
 7:00 PM Silver Legacy - Silver Baron A
 2nd Saturday of the month

N.N.I.G. H&I
 First Monday of each month, 5:30 PM
 Central Office 436 S. Rock Blvd., Sparks



District Meetings

DISTRICT-2 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:30 Central Office
 Zoom # 91904741396 Password D2

DISTRICT 4 First Thursday of each month, 7:00 PM-
 Zoom ID: 876 7717 4234 PW: District4

DISTRICT 6 2nd Sunday of even numbered months-
 For information email district6@nevadaarea42.org

DISTRICT 8 First Sunday, 3:30 p.m. on odd months
 Call (760) 937-8407

DISTRICT 10A Third Sunday of every other month, 1:30 PM
 680 River St. Elko, NV

DISTRICT 10B Dark since 2017

DISTRICT 11 Only holds meetings 4 time a year, call DCM

DISTRICT 12 2nd Saturday of each Month at 5:00 PM- 457
 Esmeralda Street Wolf Center, Fallon NV

DISTRICT 14 3rd Wed of each "Odd" month at 6:00 PM -265
 Bear Street in Kings Beach CA

DISTRICT 16 Meeting is held 3rd Tuesday of the month
 Sparks Family Christian Church 510 Greenbrae
 Blvd 6:00PM-7:00PM

DISTRICT 18 DARK DISTRICT

DISTRICT 20 Third Saturday of Jan, Mar, May, Aug & Oct
 10:30 AM- Contact DCM @ district20@nevadaarea42.org for location

DISTRICT 22 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month 6:30 PM @
 Central Office

AREA CLUBS

Reno / Sparks Clubs
 Alano Club Sparks, 1640 Prater Way (775) 359-2727
 Driars Club Reno 345 S. Wells Avenue (775) 324-9210
 Triangle Club Reno 635 S Wells Avenue (775) 324-7977

Clubs outside Reno/Sparks Area
 Alano Club Carson City, 1800 HWY 50 East (775) 882-0443
 Bishop Alano Club (760) 873-6700
 Elko Alano Club (775) 738-4747
 Las Vegas Triangle Club (702) 435-0597
 South Lake Tahoe (530) 541-1243



5TH STEP PRAYER

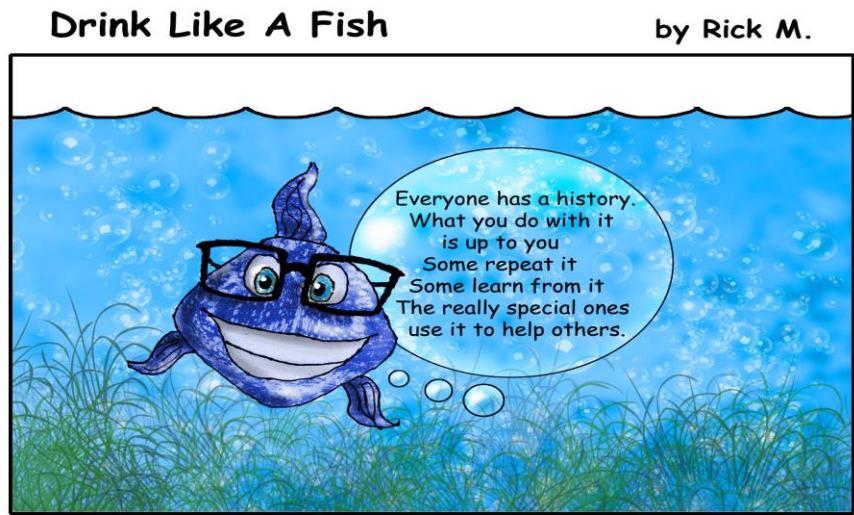
God, I thank you from the bottom of my heart that I know you better. Help me become aware of anything I have omitted discussing with another person. Help me to do what is necessary to walk a free man at last.

AMEN
 (p. 75 88)

POSITIONS AVAILABLE FOR ELECTIONS JUNE 7, 2022

POSITIONS	SOBRIETY
Steering Committee	
CHAIRPERSON	5 Years
VICE-CHAIR	5 Years
SECRETARY	2 Years
TREASURE	5 Years
2-INTERGROUP LIASONS	2 Years
NNIG Chairpersons	
Activities Events - Chair	4 Years
Answering Service - Chair	2 Years
CPC/PI - Cooperation with the Professional Community - Chair	2 Years
Public Information - Chair	2 Years
H&I - Chair	2 Years
Bridging the Gap - Chair	2 Years
Corrections - Chair	2 Years
Treatment - Chair	2 Years
Pink Can, Literature	2 Years
Monthly Speaker Meeting - Chair	2 Years
Sunshine Committee - Chair	2 Years
Web Site - Chair	2 Years

Look in the Operating Procedures on the website at nng.org for qualifications for these positions, find the one that fits you, or someone you know, and come to the June meeting for elections.



NNIG/Central Office Group Contributions 2022

Group	April	YTD	Group	April	YTD
3rd Tradition Secular Group			Happy Hour Reno		600.00
4th Dimension- ON-LINE		93.36	South Reno on Sunday		
A Way Home		99.50	Knuckleheads		30.00
Alano Brown Baggers		50.00			
Alano Dawn Patrol			Ladies of the Evening		
Alano Jaywalkers	285.00	285.00	Ladies of the Lake		53.04
Alano Open Heart Open Mind		133.00			
Amen Maintenance Meeting			Minden Saturday Night Fever	240.00	240.00
Back Room Group	169.69	384.91	Minden Stephanie Way Group	281.00	399.61
Back to Basics Saturday Night	87.00	202.00	Minden Wednesday Night Live		48.60
Battle Mountain Fellowship		20.00	Minden/Gardnerville Group	290.20	290.20
Beginners are Winners On-Line Group		482.40	NNIG Business Meeting	33.00	81.00
Buena Vista Group		100.00	Mt Rose Recovery Room	266.50	1846.25
Caring & Sharing in Stead	308.29	563.12			
Carson After Shifters			Pyramid Way Discussion Group		
Carson Big Book Experience		60.00	RTC Monday Night Mens		
Carson Brown Baggers			RTC Afternoon Delight		
Carson Dr. Bob Nightngales			RTC Almost Heaven	100.00	400.00
Carson Early Birds		1341.67	RTC Grapevine/Big Book		
Carson Fallen Women			RTC Aloha Group	554.48	1470.71
Carson Happy Hour	533.85	533.85	RTC Big Book Study		50.00
Carson Happy, Joyous and Free		45.53	RTC Beginners are Winners	287.00	287.00
Carson Jay-Walkers Men's		100.00	RTC Coffee with Bill		
Carson Men's NO BS Stag			RTC Don't Trip Music Meeting		
Carson Sandbaggers	200.00	400.00	RTC Just for Today Women		
Carson Sisters in Sobriety		100.00	RTC How We Stay Stopped	125.00	125.00
Carson Sunday Morning Fire Station		460.00	Positive Acceptance Group		252.00
Carson Valley Gratitude		501.00	RTC Mid-Day Group		
Carson Women's Night Out		330.00	RTC Champions of Sobriety		
Chester Fellowship			RTC Mid-Day Group ON-LINE		129.08
Chester Saturday Night Group			RTC Recien Llegados		
Choices		100.00	RTC New Awakenings Group	380.00	717.38
Cornerstone Group		150.00	RTC Little Rascals	50.00	150.00
Crystal Bay Nooners	50.00	200.00	RTC Sober N Sane		100.00
Dayton Friday Night Rule 62		300.00	RTC Men's Trudgers	160.00	160.00
Dayton Red Rooster		150.00	RTC Seniors in Sobriety		75.00
Decompression Chamber/online	92.61	414.94	Recien ilegados		50.00
Deer Park Rebels			Sisters in Sobriety		
District 14	100.00	750.00	Sisters of Sobriety SOS	104.39	287.92
District 2		33.00			
District 22	50.00	213.00	South Shore Group	60.00	120.00
District 6			Spring Festival	30.00	77.46
Double R at Noon	450.00	450.00	Southside Group	168.30	506.01
Driar's Oldtimer, Newcomers			Step 1		
Driar's Serenity Night Owls		50.00	Sunnyside Group	900.00	900.00
Eye Operner		987.00	The Shop		
Fallon Fallen Women's AA Meeting	25.00	25.00	Susanville Wed Womens		
Fallon Grapevine Online		20.00	Tahoe City Fellowship	750.00	750.00
Fernley Groups			The Rock Group	78.00	185.50
Fireside Group			Truckee Dawn Patrol	100.00	400.00
Galena Friday Night			Truckee Fellowship		
Ground Zero		94.00	Truckee River Men's Stag	350.80	878.80
Grupo Accion		30.00	The Next Chapter		
Grupo Fe Y Esoeranza			Virgina City Plug in the Jug		
Grupo La Nueva Luz	10.00	30.00	Verdi Greener Pastures		50.00
Grupo Latino			Westwood AA		
Grupo Nueva Vida			Whole in the Ground Sunnyside		300.00
Jamesville God Grant Me			Willing to go to any Lengths	144.00	144.00
Jamesville Women's Monday Night					
			Minden Language of the Heart		40.00
			Our Group Big Book		
			Out and Sober		
			Serenity on Sundays		200.00
			The Twilight Zone		
			Wednesday Night Beginners Meeting		
			Weekend Warriors		
			Whole in the Soul		80.00
			Women's New Beginnings		128.70
			Women's New Harmony		175.00

Total 7,814.11 23,060.54

My name is Richard Anderson

What is your sobriety date? 11/17/1986

What is your home group? Sunnyside

Where did you get sober at? Huntington

Beach. My home group there was Huntington Beach Downtowners.



Please briefly describe your drinking. I went to work every day. I would eat my lunch at first break. I worked for LA county and at my half hour lunch I would drink a pitcher beer and go back to work. Later on in the day I would get in the county truck and drive over to get a half pint to drink. At 2:30 it's time for me to go home, I would stop to get a couple of Long Island ice teas in the cans to drink those on the way home. By the time my former wife got home she would ask "have you been drinking" and I would tell her, yeah just a couple. That's how my drinking went on a daily basis. I used to go play golf on the weekends so I could get away from her so I could drink. She screwed that up and she decided to play golf too. So that kind of ruined that.

How did you find Alcoholics Anonymous? I took up bowling and I would bowl on Wednesday night. Thursday morning, my arm was all bloody I decided to call for help so I got the phone book out looking for places to go to help me with my drinking problem. My wife at the time decided to stay home that day. She asked what I was doing. I told her I was looking for help. I found this place to call and they said it was an outpatient program. I asked what does it consist of and was told it's Monday night Wednesday night and Saturday morning half a day. And I said oh no I can't go on Wednesday Night that's my bowling night and the lady asked "what's more important bowling or your life?". That's when I decided to sign up because back then (1986) they took insurance. I went down there, and after signing up, they said "we're going to an A.A. meeting tonight you want to go with us"? And I said "yeah sure", so I went with them to the AA meeting. I forgot that the judges sent me when I was 19 to Alcoholics Anonymous. I only went to get my court card signed. So that's how I got back into A.A. I only stayed 7 months and I drank for 2 weeks. My sponsor told me I had to put A.A. first in my life. So that's what I did and so that's why my sobriety date became 11/17/86.

When you were first getting sober what did you think of AA, what was your impression? I started going to the Huntington Beach Downtowners meeting, their meetings were an hour and a half from 8:00 to 9:30 on Friday nights. They had a newcomer meeting before the main meeting that was from 6:30 to 7:30 and I went to that meeting before the main meeting. I started listening to what they had to say. I started relating to what a lot of people are saying about their drinking, what got them to A.A. and what it was like for them. I remember they were laughing, and scratching having a good time and laugh about stuff. Telling their war stories of all their drinking, wrecking cars, marriages and everything else. And they all laughed about it and I thought man I don't know, I'm kind of finding this different, kind of weird but I related to what they're saying. I've been around about a month and this one guy got up and took a one-year chip at the Downtowner's meeting. His name was Vince, he had this big old beard that looked like Jesus. And I'm thinking if that sick sob can make it, maybe I got a shot. I heard him talk about sponsorship so after the meeting I asked someone who would be a good sponsor and they pointed me in the direction of another guy I asked to be my sponsor. He said yes and I found myself going through the steps really fast which really didn't work for me because step 3 didn't stick with me and that's why I drank after 7 months. I was already on step 9 after 7 months and I hadn't fully comprehended step 3 of the higher power yet. I got another sponsor, and I went through the steps and I got to step 3. We were going to meetings after work. Taking meetings to VA hospitals and places like that. So, we've been doing that for 5 or 6 months. He asked me one day "What step are you on?". I said three. He started laughing and asked "how long does it take for you to make a decision"? He got me on step 3 and said put your shoes under the bed so when you get up in the morning, get on your knees and ask God to help you to not take a drink that day. We moved on with the rest the steps. I got all 12 of them done before my year birthday! They all seemed happy at the meetings, and I was miserable when I got there. I figured I might as well do what they're doing. Because I wanted to be happy, laughing and scratching again too!

What has been most useful for you that you've learned from Alcoholics Anonymous throughout your whole sobriety? One of the main things was the part of the book where it says God is either everything or He is nothing. Since I had trouble with step 3, that was the one I had to rely upon the most. I also remembered what an old timer said; "just don't drink no matter what. Go to a meeting every day, talk to an alcoholic every day." Just keep doing that, your life will change. They said life is going to change, it's

going to get different, it was going to get better. I stayed long enough to see that this was true. I was told that I'm not God and I shouldn't judge others. I was told by my sponsor I needed to focus on what my hands are doing. Not what everybody else is doing or not doing because it didn't matter. I can't change other people I can only change myself. And I could only do that through God's help and the steps. When I got in a pinch early on, I would go to the serenity prayer a lot, that would get me through rough times. My life wasn't getting any better drinking so I figured out Alcoholics Anonymous was getting better and I was getting better. It's funny, when I got better, the people around me got better. Funny how that works.

Is there anything different about Reno A.A. than the others places you have lived at? If you don't think where you got sober was the best place then you are probably not done drinking. I think A.A. in Huntington Beach was awesome. When we moved to Reno, I told Nancy this Reno A.A. is pretty damn good, she agreed, it's a lot like Huntington Beach. We like Alcoholics Anonymous here. Right away it's been good to us. Hopefully we have been good for them.

Secret Shame

Painful memories rose to the surface after working the Fourth Step

Once upon a time, long, long ago, I was out with a schoolmate and we were very far from home. In order to get home quickly, for we were already late for dinner, we decided to hitchhike. The man who picked us up had other interests for little boys, and when he did drop us off, we had him do so a few blocks from home. We knew something was wrong, though we weren't sure what, and we didn't want him to know where we lived.

In the subsequent years, as I looked back on that experience and realized what had happened, I became very angry with my mother. I've continued to blame her for that for most of my life; why the hell was I out hitchhiking at night and no older than second grade?

I was never going to tell anybody about that experience. I did an initial Fourth and Fifth Step, sure. But I didn't include that. That didn't have anything to do with my drinking, did it? No. Maybe it added a little fuel to the fire of resentments against my mother, but, hey, she was in my Fourth Step. I had plenty of other reasons to resent her and be angry with her, I didn't need to get into... well, into *that*. So I left it out. It was my business, not yours, not my sponsor's, nobody's but mine.

Then, at seven and a half years of sobriety, I was back into the deep pit of self. Life was dark, dull, gray, no fun. Why did I keep trudging on? It has been said in our program that we work at the speed of pain. Well, I was hurting and my God guided me. I told my wife that I felt I had more work to do. She said, "It's inside of you." I told my sponsor and he said, "It's about time!" I felt like I'd come home.

I decided that I'd do another Fourth Step, and when I started working, *that* came out. I was scared. But I kept writing. I wrote and wrote. I even wrote to myself "You know, if you were to be real honest, you'd write about..." so I did. The real issues came out. It had taken seven and a half years but they were out ("Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly sometimes slowly.") I went to my sponsor's house and we talked. I told him about my anger toward my mother because she had let me be out, late, in the dark, hitchhiking. I cried--I cried those big tears of hurt and shame. But those tears turned to laughter when my sponsor lovingly said to me, "Is it possible that your mother didn't know where you were that night? Is it possible you had lied to her? And do you think that she told you, 'If it's ever late and dark and you're in a hurry to get home, go ahead and hitchhike'? Do you think she said that to you?" The absurdity of my position became quite clear. How could I not laugh? I'm an alcoholic and I'd been self-centered for so long regarding this issue. From my first awareness of what had happened, I'd seen it as my mother's fault; I'd been the victim. In the course of a Fifth Step, I saw the truth. Immediately, years of resentments, anger, and anguish melted away. I laughed so hard I cried (again).

Some people, I'm sure, are screaming, "Outside issue! Outside issue!" But this is not an outside issue. I uncovered the feelings in AA. The causes are not outside issues--they are an integral part of my experience, strength, and hope. I'm not an alcoholic because of this experience, but because I am a recovering alcoholic in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I was able to work through it. My story will help at least one other alcoholic, I know. Had I not heard a similar story at the group level, I'm not sure I'd have ever faced it either. BY: LEE C. | NIPOMO, CALIFORNIA



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