



JULY/AUGUST 2017

## DISTRICT #30 NEWSLETTER

### FRIENDS of **BILL W.**

[www.aadistrict30va.org](http://www.aadistrict30va.org)

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**Statement of Purpose:** "Friends of Bill W." is the newsletter for A.A. District #30 in Virginia. It provides a VOICE that will cultivate the SPIRIT of our district's common welfare and A.A. unity. Opinions or content in articles and letters are solely those of the contributor. The editorial team reserves the right to edit materials for length and content. Quotations from A.A. literature are copyrighted and reprinted with permission from its source.

#### Pass It On

When considering the term "Pass it on", the first response and natural inclination I have is to want to go on about sponsorship and putting my hand out to the newcomer at meetings. While these two aspects of "passing it on" are of the utmost importance to the newcomer and the persons trying to get and stay sober and are absolutely vital to the continuing potency and legacy of Alcoholics Anonymous there is another equally important part of "passing it on"

PRACTICE the principals of AA to the best of my ability on a daily basis. Every day it becomes a little more natural to "pass it on" by example. As my sponsor likes to say "We may be the only copy of a Big Book that someone gets to see". With Love to all, Eric C. "Pass It On"

#### Independence Day

On July 4, 1776 the thirteen American colonies declared their independence and regarded themselves as a new nation. The Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence declaring the United States of America free of all control and influence from the British Empire. Likewise, each day in Alcoholics Anonymous is Independence Day for millions of us hopeless, helpless alcoholics who gain our freedom from drinking.

Let me share with you what happened on my personal independence day from my incomprehensible demoralized alcoholic drinking. I was at our weekly Speakers Meeting. This particular week we had an out-of-town lady speaker. Till this day, I cannot remember her name, but I was immediately drawn to her. She spoke of her experience, strength and hope

as a gift she wished to share, and that she was obligated to share. That it was about truth. That it was about healing. She knew how to do it, and she was going to tell me how to gain our independence from drinking. It seemed that I was alone in the audience, and it was just the three of us - the magnificent woman, God, and an oddly curious me. So my personal messenger is recalling her childhood, conveying her drunkalogue and beaming about early recovery. She then begins walking me through the steps. I'm mesmerized. All of a sudden I'm more than riveted. I'm on the edge of my seat and she is glowing. She is telling me what my problem has been for a long, long time. She explains God's will to me as it relates to Step 3. I did Step 3 a few times. I figured I was all set. I was cool with God. What was happening here? I knew I must listen carefully. I knew that it was coming, like that long awaited rescue in Cast Away or the day Dorothy finally woke up in her bed at the end of the Wizard of Oz. It was the moment I was waiting for. The Definition of God's will: if it is Honest, Unselfish, Loving and Pure. And if I should find that one of those pieces is missing - then it is my will. I realized then and there that I had been waiting for that answer to that prayer, that moment, on that day, in that chair from that woman. It clicked. It was a miracle. I understood so much and it was like I was transported to a beautiful new place. A Fourth Dimension I suspect.

Knowing this formula has helped me every single day to declare my independence and has changed my life in so many ways that I can't possibly tell you in this story. Another time perhaps. Another component to this story is what happened last Sunday night at another meeting. I shared about this moment of learning what God's Will is and a fellow from the floor told me that on the flower pot next to Bill Wilson's grave the inscription reads: Honest, Unselfish, Loving, Pure. Come to find out these are called the Four Absolutes - created by the Oxford Group. It is an amazing thing to have this kind of history come to life in my little corner of it. These four absolutes are beautiful gifts that have brought enthusiasm and freedom to my life from alcoholic drinking. A dear friend

has told me that enthusiasm means – God inspired. What a miracle to have enthusiasm today!

If you are let down by these personal revelations of mine, please don't be disappointed. I can promise you that if you are as sick as I was, do what I did and just keep coming. An amazing independence day has happened to me and will definitely happen to you too. It's a promise, on page 83 in the Big Book is written, "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." I can't tell you how long it will take. It's God's promise to us alcoholics. Just please believe me. And if you can't do that, just believe that I believe. What can it hurt? Keep coming until you experience your personal independence day. ---Anonymous

### **My Story – The Real Alcoholic**

During my more than 30-year drinking career, I never was able to concede to my inner most being that I was a real alcoholic. I never believed that my drinking fell into the



category of being classified as a real alcoholic. I used every form of self-deception and experimentation possible trying to prove to myself and others that I was

the exception to the rule. I was not a real alcoholic, I was merely a social drinker. I tried for many years to control my drinking. I tried limiting the number of drinks, always driving and drinking, always drinking alone, controlled drinking every day, drinking mostly Bourbon. You name it, I tried it, always attempting to learn how to gain control and drink like a gentleman.

To some avail, the first person who tried to convince me that I had a drinking problem was my wife who was a naval officer at that time. So that really got my attention, as she was the Human Resources Management Officer and told me that she thought I had a drinking problem. Also, she informed me that there was an opening at the Naval Hospital. So I signed myself into treatment. At that time no one could have convinced me that I was a real alcoholic. I was willing to accept their treatment as it was only for two months, plus it would take the heat off and get my wife off my back. Therefore, I was scheduled to attend a 60-day treatment program. I stopped drinking, I felt better, and I learned a lot about the disease of alcoholism. The treatment stay still didn't convince me that I was a real alcoholic. In early recovery I had no real desire to stop drinking.

I could not wrap my mind around the idea of never taking another drink for the rest of my life. What was lurking in the

back of my sick mind was the thought as described in Chapter Three – More About Alcoholism. I had the notion that someday I would become immune to alcohol and be able to drink normally. However, I saw the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic". I held on to these reservations and my alcoholic mind kept telling me I was not a real alcoholic. I was not like these bunch of drunks. I was unique. I was a retired naval officer with a college education. How could I be a real alcoholic? With a few months sober, I found a sponsor and got involved with my own recovery.

My sponsor was patient with me. He informed me that A.A. worked because it was not my idea. There was a Higher Power and it wasn't me. Wow! What a concept. So I sat down, shut up, and listened to what my sponsor had to say. He also told me that I was going to have to get involved in service towards others. Thank God I listened to my sponsor's sound advice and I kept coming back! I was pissed by what some of the Old-timers had to say during the A.A. meetings, but none the less their comments right-sized me and saved my life.

One day I had a spiritual awakening that led me to realize that no human power could have relieved my suffering, but God could and would if he were sought. Because of this realization, I found hope from my incomprehensible demoralization caused by my alcoholism. The spiritual awakening that I had resulted in me experiencing an entire psychic change which produced an active change in my attitude, ideas, and behavior. It happened to me just like Dr. William D. Silkworth stated on page xxvii, "The Doctor's Opinion, ...strange as this may seem to those who do not understand—once a psychic change has occurred, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired to ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol..." The only effort necessary for me was to become willing to take suggestions from someone other than myself.

I did just that. I took the 12 Steps of A.A. with my sponsor and I found that 'something more than a human power' that had produced my essential psychic change. By going to meetings daily, working with my sponsor, and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety, I was able to find the "We" of Alcoholics Anonymous. Evidence of my psychic change is that I care about people, have picked up only one A.A. 90-day token, and after almost 40 years I have not found it necessary to take that first drink. So long as I remind myself one-day-at-a-time that I am a real alcoholic, I never have to take that first drink for the rest of my life. -- Larry the Real Alcoholic

## **Bringing Meetings to the Jail**

Shortly after my first year of sobriety, I heard an impassioned plea for help bringing meetings to the jail at a Saturday evening meeting in Fredericksburg. It was the second time I'd heard help was needed, and my conscience began to gnaw at me. I'd always felt that visiting prisoners was one of the hardest things to do, yet one of the most important. At the end of the meeting I approached the person asking for help, and my Friday evenings were suddenly no longer my own.

While going to the jail can be a very intimidating encounter, the confidence and heartfelt passion of my mentor eased the process of walking the long hallway to what they term "B Cluster" at the jail. Eventually, I would bring the meeting to the women by myself most Fridays, and in time, especially after prayer, the sense of coldness in an unfriendly environment began to be replaced by the presence of the sunlight of the spirit. When my mission began to waver, I'd remember that it could have been me in their shoes. After all, who among us hasn't driven home having had too much to drink to say the least? At other times, one of the inmates might tear-up saying how important it was that we were there for them. Sometimes it is at a meeting in the community that an A.A. member will approach me, thanking me for having been there for them when they were in jail. There has always been a reminder of my purpose and the reward of gratitude along the way.

Currently, our district takes five meetings to the jail, two of which are women's meetings on Tuesday evenings at 7:00 pm and Thursdays at 2:00 pm. We don't often go alone these days as we have a dedicated group of women who offer their time on a weekly basis. Since opioid deaths now lead traffic fatalities as the number one cause of death in Virginia, both alcoholism and addiction are becoming front page news on a weekly basis. There has never been a more urgent call to action, and we are blessed with the ability to bring the solution where it is most needed, to the Rappahannock Regional Jail. --Leah F.

## **Newcomer's Corner – A Beginner's View**

Fifteen months ago my life changed, how to learn to live without alcohol. It seemed impossible, insurmountable, but by the grace of God, the love and dedication of my wife Pat, and AA, I have found that new freedom, one day at a time. I also found two days that no longer hold importance, yesterday and tomorrow, but for today, this 24 hours, I don't drink. I don't get drunk.

Early there was detox, rehabilitation, and voluntary counseling. In those sessions the counselor kept asking, "Gone to AA yet? You need to go to AA." Someone getting payed to help me was telling me to go get help for free, so I did. My first meeting, in and out, close call but I made it. My second

meeting, it happened, I got up the courage to introduce myself, get the 24 hour chip and a Where and When with a bunch of people's names and numbers I did not know, and heard, "Keep Coming Back." I did not understand then how important these people and all the others like them are and would become, how quickly they have become my mentors and friends.

I have to go to meetings. Period. Early on I understood, "sit up front, shut up, you don't know nuthin." But I still felt an occasional need to speak, and prove that very suggestion a truth every time, or at least that is what I would tell myself afterwards in the car on the way home, you better shut up and listen more. I learned there are little golden nuggets dropped in these rooms, suggestions, life lessons, experience, I listen and have become an avid collector of these gems.

I read the Big Book, 12 and 12, Daily Reflections, and pray regularly. I try to be helpful and active in the rooms. I have a sponsor right now I am displaying one of my worst character faults, procrastination. He is showing one of his best character traits, patience.

Alcohol was my life, all consuming, but it is now reined in by grace, serenity, acceptance, faith and salvation. Alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful, it is still there, it is important that I never forget my last drink, remember the depth of pain, desperation and despair. I know the path is narrow, the road long, not just getting sober, but recovery, attaining sobriety. Thank you all for the greatest gift, my 24-hour chip and being there for me one day at a time, I owe you my life. God bless you all, I'll shut up now. –Dave B.

## **My Detox Experience**

To say that I was terrified is not near how I felt in the days leading to my entering detox. Until that day, all I knew about detox and rehab is what I had seen in movies. I really had no idea what to expect. I thought I was going to a spa or retreat, and I would be calm, clean, and sober 15 days later when I returned home. That turned out not to be the case.

I had drank all the booze I could find before leaving for rehab. Once I arrived, a clerk took my bags and gave me a brief tour. The booze I had drank started wearing off, and I felt terrified and out of place. I kept thinking if I could just go home, but there I was two hours from home with no car, no money, and no cell phone. I was trapped, shaking, and drying out. My sterile room had two beds and a small bathroom. It was just like the Marine Corps barracks at Camp Lejeune. I spent my first night alone. The next few nights I really don't remember, and the days that followed are still a blur.

The rehab center had a very set schedule: up at 5:00 a.m. for triage, meds, and blood work; shower, dress, get breakfast, go to life skill classes; lunch, classes or activities; dinner, free time, AA meeting, free time; meds, bed, lights out at 11:00 p.m. It took me six days before I knew this. I was up and moving around the building all day, but I don't remember showering or eating. What I do remember is sitting in classes with my head resting against the wall and wanting to die. Who knew that stopping booze that was killing me might kill me? The sweats, shakes, itching, vomiting, diarrhea, and fever were only the tip of the iceberg. Months after that awful treatment experience, I was still fighting the physical part of staying sober. They say to stay until the miracle happens. Well, for me it has. I am still a work in progress, and thanks to A.A. and family, each day is better 24 hours at a time. I'm so thankful that I survived detox. – Submitted by Marlene

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You know you've been in AA a few 24 hrs. when... You know someone's life story but not their last name. *By Kristin & Gang*

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**Readers' response to:** We got only one responses to *Mr. Unfaithful and Betrayed*. A friend of his said his behavior may be one of the reasons why *Mr. Unfaithful and Betrayed* is a chronic relapser. A.A. is an honest program based on our spiritual condition. He went on to say, when he was practicing dishonesty himself as a way of life he found it hard to practice a 12 Step program when he couldn't even get past the honesty required in Step One. In fact, he wasn't able to get sober and stay sober until he started practicing honesty in all his affairs, most especially relationships.

Dear *Miss Gabby*,  
How do you tell when 2 alcoholics are on their 1st date? – There's a U-Haul parked in the driveway. How do I stop this obsessive behavior? We meet, move in, then realize we hate each other. Help!!! –*Signed, Miss Desperate*

Miss Gabby would love to hear your experience, strength, and hope; email [friendofbillw82@gmail.com](mailto:friendofbillw82@gmail.com). Want to get the word out about your anniversary, an event, or articles, no problem. The article word count should be 1 to 400 words maximum. Send to address above.

**Birthdays and Announcements**

**July**

Robert M. 9 yrs.  
24<sup>th</sup> Tish G. 17 yrs. 12x12 Stafford  
Lawson 14 yrs.  
18<sup>th</sup> Janet 19yrs. Vision For You  
Philip D. 11 yrs.

**August**

3<sup>rd</sup> Marie H. 19 yrs. Women Sunporch  
7<sup>th</sup> Margret P. 17 yrs. 10:30 Sun Serenity

**Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, District #30 Meeting;** American Legion Post #55, 461 Woodford Street, at 7:00 p.m.

**July 4<sup>th</sup> District #30 Picnic** at Lorelei Park off Levells Rd, bring a dish/dessert to share. First burger off the grill at 11:00 a.m.

**FLOAT YPAA, "Head Above Water" Tubing Event – July 15<sup>th</sup> @ 10:30 am – 1:00 pm;** James River Reeling & Rafting, 265 Ferry Street, Scottsville, VA 24590; Cost \$25.

**2017 VAC Summer Meeting, July 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00 pm – 5:00 pm;** Best Western Lee-Jackson Inn & Conference Center, 711 Millwood Avenue, Winchester, VA 22601.

**17<sup>th</sup> Annual Valley Campout – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> @ 12:00 pm – 12:00 pm;** Natural Chimneys Regional Park, 94 Natural Chimneys Lane, Mt. Solon, VA 22843; Cost \$30.

**Roanoke Women's Workshop – August 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> @ 3:00 pm – 11:30 am;** Smith Mountain Lake 4H Conference Center, 775 Hermatige Road, Wirtz, VA 22843; Cost \$135.

**2017 VAC Convention – August 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00 pm – 12:00 pm;** Hilton Garden Inn & Conference Center, 100 East Constance Road, Suffolk, VA; Cost \$30.

**Hot-Line Subcommittee Volunteers Needed:** If you want to keep drinking that's your business; but, if you want to stop drinking, that's our business. Call (540) 752-2228.

<p>I'm George, the topic for tonight is the importance of passing it on. Our message should be one of attraction rather than promotion.</p> <p>Misfits Group </p>	<p>George, I like sponsorship and putting my hand out to the newcomer after a meeting.</p>	<p>I pass it on by practicing @!x@!* Honesty, Compassion, and Tolerance. I may be the only Big Book some @#!* sees.</p>	<p>Roger, you are so right, living by example helps keep me sober as well as pass it on.</p>