



MAY/JUNE 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.

#### Founders' Day

Thousands of people from all over the world are expected to visit Akron, Ohio the birth city of A.A. the weekend of June 9, 10, 11, 2017 to celebrate Founders' Day in commemoration of our Fellowships 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday. There will be events such as A.A. and Al-Anon speaker meetings, spiritual panel, old-timer panels, live concerts, music and dancing which will be held all weekend long at the University of Akron, Stan Hywet Hall, and Gardens' Gate Lodge - 714 N. Portage, which was dedicated as the birthplace of A.A. in the year 2000. Mount Peace Cemetery where Dr. Bob is buried, is also a site of pilgrimage for many A.A. members.

Many of us plan to visit the Mayflower Manor where Bill Wilson - aka Bill W. - made the desperate telephone call in 1935 that would start him down the path to co-founding A.A. The stranger he dialed connected him with Dr. Robert Smith - aka Dr. Bob - who was struggling with alcoholism too. They became sober together and that day marked the day that Dr. Bob took his last drank. This was believed to have been the first A.A. meeting. That Mother's Day in 1935 at the Gate Lodge between two admitted alcoholics, Bill W. and Dr. Bob, the miracle of sobriety happened. Originally this was a meeting that was supposed to have lasted only minutes, but somehow turned into several hours and became the underpinnings of a movement that gave birth to ALL 12 Step programs in existence. -- Editor

#### Religion vs Spirituality

In light of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) June 10<sup>th</sup> Founders Day, I would like to say that A.A. is not a religion, it is a spiritual discipline. I ran across this article that explained this concept of Religion vs Spirituality better than I ever

could. The jest of the article was that the conscious practice of the principles of the 12 Steps and their virtues of honesty, hope, faith, courage, integrity, willingness, humility, brotherly love, justice, perseverance, prayer and meditation, and service to one another, in all our daily affairs is a spiritual discipline. This spiritual discipline requires rigorous honesty and perseverance. A responsibility to our fellows, to our Higher Power, each as we understand or don't understand it, and to ourselves. The A.A. 12 Steps are basically a vehicle for living out our daily lives sober, one day at a time. In A.A. we gain spirituality through the practice of rigorous spiritual discipline, which may or may not be addressed by any particular religion to which a person adheres.

Prior to coming into A.A. I had contact with religion, but had no spirituality or understanding of it. I was a drunk and was very much undisciplined. As a drunk I had attended many different churches with many different congregations, in hopes of getting something right, but it made no sense to me, I could not discipline myself. And of course, as a result of my lack of discipline, of trust, of understanding and of faith, it didn't work for me. There was no end of frustration and despair, because I could see it working for others, and had not the discipline to do what they did, so that it would work for me too.

On coming into the spiritual program of A.A. my confusion was such that I finally asked one of my sponsors, a clever old man: What is the difference between religion and spirituality? He answered by telling me to put my particular concept of the creator aside for a moment, and compare the difference between religion and spirituality. My sponsor continued to say, "The way I see it, religion is man made by man to suit the needs of man. Therefore, Religion - talks the talk, while the Spirituality - walks the walk. In spirituality, we honor the existence of all creation including ourselves. As we practice the spirituality of the 12 Steps in all our affairs, we are walking the talk one day at a time."

Now that makes sense to me, now I can walk the talk of my religion or the lack of it by practicing the 12 Steps in all aspects of my life. I know that I am on a spiritual path, the good red road of life, that this day shall be one of grace and

gratitude, that I may know peace and be content, sober-minded and fully alive to the sufficiency of grace and generosity of our Higher Power. The discipline of spirituality and the daily practice of the 12 Steps WORK, It really does!!! – Submitted by Karl K.

### **My Story**

**My Path to Acceptance** – to believe or recognize as valid;



regard as true; to trust. Upon first entering the rooms of AA my vocabulary grew exponentially, not in the number, but in the depth of meaning. Hope – without which

would not be here tomorrow. Acceptance – without which I would not be here today.

As a child I learned to be self-sufficient emotionally and to be a peace keeper in my home; a survival tool which served me well. As I declared my independence into adulthood these survival tools were no longer useful leading to a dysfunctional acceptance about myself. Mistakes made and emotional responses caused feelings and beliefs of total and complete lack of self-worth. Suicidal ideation pervaded. You know what I found to help ignore these feelings? Alcohol. And I think we all know how well that worked out. Imagine my dismay when I realized that removing alcohol did not remove my belief of self-worthlessness.

A concept often heard in A.A. circles is allowing others to love and accept you until you love and accept yourself; the words I academically understood but the meaning behind that concept was foreign. I recall the first time I experienced a hint of a positive self-acceptance. Upon completion of my initial fourth and fifth steps I learned I was not a bad person and if I squinted hard enough I could see myself as a decent person. Around that same time I heard a woman share in a meeting that through recovery she learned to love herself – talk about feelings of hope in hearing those words. This hope and my initial acceptance was my fuel to keep coming back.

My recovery trail initially was winding and dark with glimpses of light from my internal light bulb. Over the years I tried to push aside that shroud of darkness, that shroud of now useless survival tools (-aka- character defects). You know what? I found it easier to allow the light to penetrate the darkness. My internal light bulb alone was not bright enough. As I walked that trail I accepted help from my friends and fellows, my counselor and the Spirit of the Universe. Together our light shed the shroud of darkness to reveal my true self.

I have been involved in a women's literature study and finally realized that these people are not tolerating me but they like me. I talk with and hug people in meetings and realize my fellows are not tolerating me but are genuinely pleased to see me. A dear friend of mine unexpectedly died. This friend loved and believed in me since the first day we met – who am I to have doubted her. The spirit of the universe weaves all energy and light together; why not mine? So you see, my fellows loved me before I could.

Through ten years of existing without alcohol my values of self-acceptance has evolved from negative to positive. Liking who I am now allows me to make healthier decisions. Talk about hope. I learned to like myself in ten years which means loving myself is around the corner – IF I KEEP COMING BACK! -- By Kirstin G.

### **District Committee Member**

Hello Fredericksburg,

Thanks again to all who helped out during the Spring Assembly at the registration table, hospitality room, recovery meeting and lots of coffee. Most importantly to the GSR that were there for your groups voice to be heard. Thanks for letting me serve -- Jim C. --

### **Butt Prints in the Sand**

One night I had a wondrous dream,  
One set of footprints there was on the scene,  
Where are my foot prints? I said with a roar.  
I only see my HP's foot prints along the shore.  
But then I noticed strange prints begin to appear,  
So I asked HP, "What have we here?  
Those prints are too large, too round and neat,  
And too big to be prints of my tiny feet."  
He responded, "My child," in a somber tone,  
For miles I carried you, I never left you alone.  
You disobeyed, you would not grow,  
The walk of faith you refused to know.  
My carrying you kept you crippled in a rut,  
So I saved your life by dropping you on your butt.  
In life there comes a time,  
When a sponsor you must find.  
Take suggestions, work 12 steps and take a stand,  
Or your butt will stay right here in the sand.

-- Unknown Author, Submitted by Lizzy

### **Newcomer's Corner**

When I asked a newcomer to share in the Friends of Bill W. Newsletter what step he was on, he told me he was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Step and to my surprise, "out of the mouth of babes", this is what Gerard F. submitted: I'm currently on Step Three – "*We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*" What is the distinction between turning our will and our lives "*over to*

God” and turning our will and our lives over “to the care of God”? I have been told it is a distinction that can have life-saving or life-threatening consequences for an alcoholic in recovery; so, I’m trying to take that closer look that can make all the difference.

On the surface of things, to turn one’s will *over* to God implies an abrogation of personal responsibility for one’s actions and duties. It implies a spiritual laziness that would have God do all the work for our personal transformation. Looking deeper, it might also suggest a “cop-out” of another sort: a kind of refusal to do the work of searching for self that is required in the later steps of recovery. To turn one’s will and life over to God becomes (ironically) an attempt to erase, ignore, or otherwise annihilate the *self* we have done so much to create ... something like: “Here God, have this drunk I’ve created. I don’t want this model anymore. Might I trade it in for a newer, improved version?”

Of course this won’t do for real recovery. (Oh Darn it!) On the other hand, to turn our will and our lives over to the “*care of God as we understood Him*” implies a request for help more than a relinquishment of our responsibility. One way to view this giving of our lives to the care of God might be to see us as putting our will and our lives under God’s stewardship. To care for something often means to be a steward of it, like a steward of a resource. The caretaker of the park or the museum, for example; or, to be a caretaker of the world.

We can let God be the steward of our will and our life -- guiding it, using it for His advantage, which is to everyone’s benefit after all; and, perhaps most of all we can submit to God’s “good government” over us -- letting Him correct our excesses, prune our overgrowths, and encourage the blossoming of our nascent virtues and sleeping strengths.

To turn it over to His care is to enter into a partnership with God for the betterment of our lives. Each is to do his part. And *we* must do a lot -- perhaps most of the work. Some bargain! You might exclaim. God might seem to have the better deal in all of this -- Hmm? And yet, He is God, after all. He deserves it. But do we forget what we stand to gain in this partnership? Our selfhood corrected and restored, our happiness and peace of mind assured, our very lives and (dare I say) our lives hereafter are all on the spreadsheet in this merger. So how can we think we are getting the worse of the deal?

To care for others is similar to offering charity to those who need it. Charity is bestowing love and material help where it is needed and where it is oftentimes asked for. It is bestowed by the giver because of sincere motives and

out of an abundance. In a similar way, to care for the sick is to nurture them to health when they can’t do it themselves. The caregiver often must make selfless sacrifices of time and effort to do this. Both of these related ideas about “care” and tie in to our idea of what the “*care of God*” really means for the recovering alcoholic. We can let God care for our wills and our lives -- which do need to be governed and shaped in early recovery -- because God is capable, abundant, and benevolent. The will of God wants to give his care to our imperfect wills. Thus, this Step 3 partnership asks something from us as well as from God; and it benefits us at least as much as it benefits His designs and purposes in the greater landscape of His plan. – By Gerard F.

### **Step Eight – My Forgiveness Step**

For me, Step 8 was my forgiveness step. When I was preparing to make my list in the 8th Step I realized that there was more than just making columns of the immediate, maybe's, and never. The step says that we have to become willing to make these amends, and I did know that meant that I would have to forgive them in order for the process to begin. I know today that forgiveness is an act of love and tolerance as we humans make mistakes. I know for me personally this idea of growing up in public has been a difficult one to say the least; I still find that things come out of my mouth before I have a chance to get them back. I then have to practice the tenth step in order to make things right. I was told early on in sobriety that I could not ask for forgiveness unless I could practice it first. This was a time in my life when I had to ask myself if there is anyone that I have in my life that truly needs forgiveness. I realized I had to do my best to practice giving that forgiveness of the 8th Steps to them. I used to hear when I was young that God forgives those that ask, and that was all you had to go.

Rather than choose to do the right thing for the right reason, I used that forgiveness concept as permission to do anything that I wanted to do. And so long as I asked God to forgive me everything would be alright. I know today that there is more to forgiveness than just asking. I know that I have to try and make things right the best that I can. I have to stop doing whatever it was that put me in the position to ask in the first place. I also know today that when I am asked to forgive another person, it is not for me to judge anyone. I need to show them the same tolerance and patience that I have sought for myself when I ask others for forgiveness. I use forgiveness today to help me to be the person that I think my Higher Power wants me to be.

I was buried alive under years and years of hate and resentment that was eating me like a cancer of my soul. My anguish, pain, and suffering was one of the reasons that

I found it necessary to drink. One day while trying to write my 8th Step amends list, I realized that I needed forgiveness too. In order to receive the forgiveness that I needed for harming others, I must first forgive others who harmed me in order to heal my own soul sickness. The forgiveness was not for the other persons who harmed me. The forgiveness was for me. When I realized that I must forgive myself and those who harmed me in order to stay sober, it was a turning point in my recovery. Because of learning how to forgive, I haven't taken that first drink in over 10 years. Today I am not on a dry drunk collecting A.A. yearly sobriety chips. Today I am a reasonably happy person. Today I am joyous and free. -by Brad

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You know you've been in AA a few 24 hrs. when...

You know having a burning desire has nothing to do with SEX. Or when you have to think twice before answering, "How do you know that person?" *Written By Kirstin and Gang*

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**Readers' response to:** "... He drank alcoholically for 20 years, celebrated his 1st year of sobriety and his wife filed for a divorce". Mr. Sober and Divorced you are not alone, some of our readers experienced the same thing too. One reader said as long as he was working long hours and passing out drunk in the basement his wife was in martial blitz, but as soon as he started trying to participate in home life she totally blocked his efforts and moved out. Many others experienced unforgiveness that killed any change of love. Some said the divorce was the best thing that could have ever happen to them - they got a brand new mate to go along with their brand new life of sobriety.

**Dear Miss Gabby,**

I was totally devastated when I discovered that my girlfriend was cheating on me. I don't know if I can find it in my heart to forgive her betrayal. Also, I'm afraid to tell her that I was cheating too. Maybe she will not forgive me for my unfaithfulness either. -Signed, Mr. Unfaithful and Betrayed

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 the same e-mail address above.

**Birthdays and Announcements**

**May**

Sandy L. 11 yrs.  
Anne K. L. 23 yrs.  
Tianna S. 1 yr.

**June**

Buzz H. 35 yrs.  
Craig S. 42 yrs.  
Margret D. 29 yrs.  
Jim S. 15 yrs.  
Ponytail Rick 27 yrs.  
NY Mike 33 yrs.  
Russell C. 8 yrs.  
Brent the Man 9 yrs.  
Philip D. 11 yrs.

**Every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday, District #30 Meeting;** 1201 Caroline Street, Rappahannock Library, Theater Wing at 7:00 p.m.

**May 13<sup>th</sup> VAC Archives Annual Open House,** at 12:00 noon doors open, cookout begins and at 2:00 pm Old-Timers Panel starts. 1320 Ohio Street, Suite B, Waynesboro, VA 22980

**Annual Canoe Trip** to the Shenandoah River is always the first weekend in June. So stay on the lookout for flyers with time and location details.

**July 3<sup>rd</sup> See the Nationals vs the Mets** - at Nationals Park in Washington D.C. \$35 deposit due May 20th, \$30 balance due June 3<sup>rd</sup>. US Coachways Bus leaves at 3:45 pm from 25 South Gateway Drive, Fredericksburg and departs Nationals Park at 10:00 pm. See Rick at the Tuesday Night Misfits for details and questions.

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

**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.

**I'm A Friend Of Bill W.**

Misfits Group