



THE ROAD BACK

includes AA News Sheet

JUL - DEC 2022
ISSUE NO. 439

Kindness is like snow, it beautifies everything it covers

Editorial

It's a crisp Winter morning outside as we get to work on this issue of the Road Back, there's a crisp touch of frost. The tell-tale signs of the season are all around us. The Christmas lights have started to decorate the neighbourhoods, Christmas trees are appearing, there's a feeling of Jingle Bells in the air. It won't be long until children begin their Christmas Holidays, and most of us start to take a break from our normal activities and wind down.

Even the garden shrubs and plants have finally rested to recharge before they once again prepare for Spring. The days of the week are also like seasons, they keep changing and adapting with the ebb and flow of the climate around us. In an odd way, we do the same thing. When AAs have a celebration or holiday, we often make plans to protect ourselves too. Christmas is no exception. We may find new meetings in different counties or even countries. It can be quite a challenging time as so many people seem to focus activities around alcohol. With this in mind we have included some tips for staying sober over the holiday season in this issue, hopefully they will be helpful for those that struggle through this time of the year.

The AA News Sheet section in this issue will give our members an overview of the new rejuvenated AA website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie and what it has to offer. There is also included some useful service material for our members to read.

The editorial team still strive to make this publication more about you and your stories. By sharing your story in the Road Back, you just might help someone out there who has yet to find the sobriety that we have found in AA.

Perhaps you would consider writing a few paragraphs to contribute toward future issues. Maybe share your experience of the Christmas and the New Year for the next issue? Did you experience your first meeting abroad or in a different town? I can recall going to one of my first meetings on foreign soil. I didn't realise it was not an English-speaking meeting, and my only real language was English. When I sat at the meeting the pressure, relief and tension lifted even before the meeting started, because the language did not matter. We are all part of the AA family, we are part of something, where you don't need words to communicate with each other. How about memories of your first sober flight, party, gig or concert. They are all huge firsts for alcoholics.

Our next edition will be in the Springtime so please get the ink running or get typing on the keyboard, we depend on your stories to keep this publication alive. Your story can be anything up to 500 words. Don't worry about grammar or spelling, it's the heart of your story that is important and how it can help others.

Send your story via an email to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or by letter to GSO in Dublin and look out for your story in a future edition.

Until next time, please continue to keep safe, sober and well.

The Editorial Team.

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Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any casues.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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My Road To Recovery

Lost, isolated, alone, scared, fearful, full of anxiety and depression, only a black hole of emptiness sat right in front of me. No idea of the solution, falling deeper into the depths of alcoholism, the disease of diseases. Hitting not yet, more not yet and still more not yet to come. When was it all going to end, how and where would I find the solution to end all this chaos and misery from a life that had become completely unmanageable?

The answer was God, Our Lady, my Higher Power, AA fellowship, AA meetings, AA members and a power that was much greater than myself that could and would restore me to sanity if I sought it. I finally listened and took the suggested advice of dear AA members to get help to treat the alcoholism by going into a treatment centre which was Cuan Mhuire Coolarne Co. Galway. Little did I realise the spiritual awakening that would occur inside of me whilst in Cuan Mhuire which I'm eternally grateful for today, and always will be for the rest of my life.

The road back to recovery was by no means easy, there was a lot of eternal pain that needed to be released and dealt with. The hurts from the past were dealt with and left within the walls of Cuan Mhuire Coolarne. My faith in God and Our Lady was restored, this was the beginning of an incredible new life filled with the simple gifts of life, heaps of daily gratitude, going to bed sober at night and arising in the morning sober again.

My courage, determination, faith, hope and strength have been restored. I keep my programme alive every single day to guide me continuously on the right path of sobriety. Every day and night I pray to God, Our Lady and my higher power to give me strength, guidance, serenity, courage and wisdom.

I never lose sight that my sobriety comes 1st and I must keep it within the 24hrs which is the greatest solution for myself to maintain my sobriety along with routine and structure to my day of self-discipline.

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The serenity prayer along with the AA slogans, AA meetings, AA fellowship, AA Literature and outside help keep me so strong today. I keep my feet firmly on the ground so as I never lose sight of anything, I'm not perfect nor do I strive for perfection because I'm only human. In life I cannot change anyone else, I can only change myself. The past is gone, the present is here, and I have a future of incredible wonderful endless gifts of opportunities waiting for me, as long as I firmly remember that it's One Day At A Time. God bless you all.

Gemma, Tullamore

“I CHOSE SOBER BECAUSE
I WANTED A BETTER LIFE.
I STAY SOBER BECAUSE
I GOT ONE.”

Comfort In My Own Skin

One of the most vivid memories I have from early sobriety is of a recognition, not an action. I looked in the faces of the sober women I was meeting and saw a light, a serenity in their faces. I remember the moment when the light shone and spoke to me—I wanted that. What I recognize now is that light is a gift of sobriety that is mine today: comfort in my own skin.

The sober women who sponsored me and in other ways extended the hand of AA to me were comfortable in their own skin. They had taken the 12 Steps and were practicing them in their daily lives. They had turned their will and their lives over to a power greater than themselves.

I can't say when I first felt what I had recognized in those women, when I first felt comfortable in my own skin. It may have been the time when I realized while on my way to the airport that I was going to miss my flight and there was absolutely nothing I could do about it.

I accepted that without worry, anxiety, fear or anger. I was powerless over that situation. Although I was powerless over the circumstance, I was not powerless over my attitude. I felt comfortable in my own skin.

In sobriety, I have experienced the loss of my parents and daughter, as well as other relations and many dear friends. I mourned them and felt deep and painful sadness. Because I had taken the 12 Steps and continued to follow the design for living, they offer, I was able to fully grieve.

The desire to drink had been removed which meant I felt those losses. I felt them and was able to share my experience with other alcoholics.

“although I was powerless over the circumstance, I was not powerless over my attitude. I felt comfortable in my own skin”

The 12 Steps have given me a way of living that allows me to accept life on life's terms. By trusting in my Higher Power, I am comfortable in my own skin today and can offer to others what has been so freely given to me.

When life disappoints or devastates, I have learned through the example of sober women and men, and through my own experience, that I can practice acceptance and be comfortable in my own skin.

**JW
County Galway**

AS BILL SEES IT pg.111

Impatience with other people is one of my principal failings. Following a slow car in a no-passing lane, or waiting in a restaurant for the check, drives me to distraction. Before I give God a chance to slow me down, I explode, and that's what I call being quicker than God. That repeated experience gave me an idea. I thought if I could look down on these events from God's point of view, I might better control my feelings and behaviour

. I tried it and when I encountered the next slow driver, I levitated and looked down on the other car and upon myself.

I saw an elderly couple driving along, happily chatting about their grandchildren. They were followed by me – bug-eyed and red of face – who had no time schedule to mee anyway. I looked so silly that I dopped back to reality and slowed down. Seeing things from God's angle of vision can be very relaxing.



Hello My Name is Michael, and I'm an Alcoholic

My earliest recollections were arrival to Miss O'Neill's class on my first day of school, still to this day that memory makes me feel fearful. I remember my mum was wearing yellow top with white jeans as I was clinging to her leg or chest. I did not want to go in there. I was dark, everyone was looking at me Miss O'Neill took me in, and I remember kicking around the shin and crying my eyes out. I spent most of the day staring out the window waiting for my mum to return. This was continued for a while in 5th class. I won an art competition which won the school computers or some funds for computers. The local newspaper came to photograph me, and I remember the feeling, it was amazing to be singled out for something and I was rewarded with a hearing test which concluded I might be dyslexic. I was to start in a school on lower Baggot Street for 6th class and as I entered the school a feeling came over me, that nobody knew me here. I could pretend to be somebody that I wasn't for a solid year. I lied through my teeth about everything. I sat an entrance exam for tech where I met one of my, still to this day best friends John. We were placed in the same class but about a week later our year head gave us another test and separated John from most of us into a higher class. He later went on to be a teacher in the same school. I struggled in school I couldn't wait to leave I was constantly looking out the window restless and discontented. I had a horrible feeling that I was going to get found out for what I don't know. I really could have done with a drink at this time.

I went away with a football team to a place called Newcastle Emily in Wales. I was just after falling in love with a girl called Joyce, a niece of the bar owner where we were staying. Joyce had invited me to a barn dance out of the country. I had no interest in country and western music.

I was a Liam Gallagher wannabe, but I went along. I cracked open this bottle put it to my lips and drank as much as I could. As I passed it to Joyce a feeling came over me of calmness it ran to every cell and every part of my body it lit me up. I had always considered myself cool but never felt it at that very moment the way Joyce and her cousin were looking at me and probably everybody else there. I felt for the first time in my life I was cool, like I'd always been searching for something to take me out of myself. I found it. I had arrived. I started drinking pints of cider for the rest of the evening. I woke up upside down in my sleeping bag. I was sure I was in a coffin and kicked my way out kicking and screaming. It was freezing cold our chaperones were laughing at me as they sat at the bar drinking. I pulled myself together and sat with them and started drinking again. I had a blackout that night.

"I woke up upside down in my sleeping bag I was sure I was in a coffin"

This sort of drinking continued for a while. I got into some trouble, and I moved out of home. Not long after this I met a lovely girl called Sarah she was the first person to talk to me about my drinking. I had been arrested one St. Patrick's night at about 6am, they released me. To get into my home I had to make a promise through the letterbox to stop drinking and that we could settle down get married, but had to swear to stop drinking first. I needed to get back in the house so that was me done with drink. On our wedding day about a year later, after being dry for a year, I felt very uncomfortable. Next, I was drunk. Looking back on that year now blamed my first wife as my reason for not being able to drink as I should.

Not long after our wedding I found myself alone in an apartment in Dublin. I could drink as I wanted. On my first day there I got 24 cans. As a cracked open the first one I remember sitting back thinking there's no one going to tell me anything about my drinking ever again. After drinking most of the cans a horrible feeling came over me, the drink had started to work, not like before, and I made my way to the pub and blacked out. Drink took a different direction at this time, binge drinking.

In the process of renting out a house I had met a beautiful young woman Mary, she was dealing with my house rental. While I was away in London Mary contacted me in relation to the house. We struck up a conversation on Valentine's Day she knew my story with my first wife. I fell head over heels in love with her, I still am to this day. Mary seemed accepting at the start of my drinking as she felt sorry for me. While she was pregnant with our son, her mum got very sick, Mary was the one mainly looking after her. She had planned one night to move into her mum's home to care for her. I remember hearing this news and my first thought was what about me.

One Monday morning I was in the town where I lived, and caught a glimpse of a man I had not seen for a while. He was radiant. I knew this man before, I had worked alongside him. I spoke to him as I stood into the entrance of the bar, he said "Mikey, I'm not drinking and I'm going to my meetings". At this stage I was still drinking. I would stay dry for weeks or months but always followed by a massive binge. It was horrible feeling after three days drinking, I was in absolute despair, frustration, fear, horrible sense of guilt and shame.

"he let me in, sat me down and he 12th stepped me into AA. He told me as I left don't pick up the first drink and you can't get drunk"

One morning my wife handed me our young son, I nearly could not hold him. I turned on the TV and heard the sinner's prayer at the end of a Joel Osteen sermon. I remember that morning, I appreciated Jesus into my life. After a three-day binge I walked to get my Jeep, parked outside the local bar. Mary had been at me about my drinking, and I desperately needed help. As I walked to get my Jeep that Tuesday morning, it felt like the hand of God came down and touched me. It felt like He had guided me past my Jeep, past the bar (where I was sure to go and get a cure) and around the corner to that members front door.

I remember knocking on his front door and he popped his head out the window and said "oh Mikey the eyes are dead in your head". He sat me down and he 12th stepped me into AA. He told me as I left "don't pick up the first drink and you can't get drunk". I went home and drank lemon and ginger tea for most of the day to rehydrate. I went back into his house at 8pm that evening and he brought me to my first AA meeting. I heard a girl talking about how alone she felt in an office of 25 people, most of the week she wanted to get out to drink. I felt the exact same most of my life. I continue to attend this meeting with Paddy, he really helped me along. At this meeting he handed me the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous and told me to find somebody that I could relate to that might help me with the book. At my third meeting I asked a Frank to be my sponsor.

We sat down twice a week it felt like he had a lot of time for me. I asked him why he spent so much time with me. He told me that his sponsor spent the same amount of time with him and only asked one thing of him. If anyone asked him for help with the Big Book, that he would do the same, and asked me to follow it on. I was taken through the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, and I had a profound spiritual renewal in step 4 and step 5, like I shed a skin like a stinking old coat I had been wearing all my life. I had been given the power to take it off.

We looked honestly at my character defects and prayed to God to remove them. We worked on making amends. One of the greatest gifts I received from working through the steps was to feel like I can talk to people. Firstly I could communicate with my own family, then with people around me. To this day it is the best thing that has ever happened to me. I always felt like I had a voice but I couldn't express myself properly. I'll be eternally grateful to my sponsor, the patience of my wife, my praying mother and all my friends in AA for allowing me to finally find myself again.

I remember speaking at a convention in the same room that me and my second wife got married in. Sober for the first time in my life, right there, right then, talking about a new freedom, I absolutely felt like I did not want to be anywhere else but with those people. I cannot remember a time where I felt that secure, safe and protected. I have enjoyed speaking ever since.

I was asked to attend a meeting for the deaf and hard of hearing with a very good friend of mine, we got on the train at 8.30am in the morning for a lunchtime meeting in Dublin. This experience was had a profound effect on me as I was trying to explain my story to a deaf lady, through the interpreter.

After the meeting I asked her about the movements she made when I was talking about God and she explained something to me about God through sign language, her own speech to this to this day is one of the most spiritual things that ever happened to me.

Another time, I was asked to do Gaelic training for the 6 to 9 year olds in our local GAA club. In the Big Book it talks about being rocket into the fourth dimension of existence. This was to be my first real experience of this. My son was close to me, I divided about 40 children into pairs, there was one little girl who was close to my son. She said she had no one to team up with, and before I could say anything my little beautiful son looked at me and then at her and said "it's ok, I'll team up with you". I was rocketed into the fourth dimension right there right then. I felt the nearness of my creator, I'll never forget this moment, it was like time stood still.

Me and my wife pray every morning and every night, my wife is a graceful member of Al Anon. I owe AA my life. I can repay my sponsor by helping whenever anyone asks me. To see another man's eyes light up is the greatest gift. Thank you for my life.

Michael T

Daily Reflection

True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.

TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, pp. 124-25

A Grateful Alcoholic

My last blowout drunk was during Electric Picnic 2017, after a weekend filled with whiskey and cider mixed with a touch of psychosis and near losing my freaking mind, I knew things had to change. I woke up in a field in Laois on that Monday morning swearing off drink for one last time. I was a daily drinker for maybe four years, in denial to the extent of my unmanageability for 20 more! Within a week I was experiencing the DT's, by Friday I had a seizure. Within a month I was assigned to the Mental Health services, armed with a script for antidepressants and Xanax and a will and a want to change my life. In November I started seeing my HSE appointed addiction counsellor by the first week of January 2018 I found myself in the rooms of AA. I did some controlled drinking maybe 5/6 times in those initial months of recovery, since finding AA I have not had one drop, one day at a time.

An unmanageable life earned my place in that seat, that much was obvious. I had lost myself, lost my reason, lost my spark and damn near lost my mind. That first meeting I knew I had 'arrived', for the first time in 38 years, finally I came home. I was welcomed from the moment I entered the room. I could not understand why these strangers were so nice to me, I was full of self-resentment, unable to look at myself in a mirror let alone anyone in the eye. Yet these beautiful strangers welcomed me with open arms, and I could feel the love in the room, that energy blew me away. As the meeting progressed, in some way or the other I identified with each and every member. I realised I was not alone. I realised that other people felt like I did, understood my pain and self-loathing and I realised that these kindred spirits were happy, healthy, and living life to the fullest. Happy?!?!? Sober?!?!?!? Accepting me?!?!?!?

A pagan whose concept of a higher power was not traditional. It didn't have to be traditional they told me, so long as I was willing to believe a power greater than myself work its magic, I could have what they had. SOLD!!!!

Today I'm sober, I'm content, I'm prescription free, I'm working the steps and I've finally found myself. The real me, that 11-year-old who stopped maturing once she had her first taste of Harp lager finally got a chance to grow up. Fellowship has been fundamental to my recovery, the people I have met in the rooms of AA have become my life blood, my kith and kin. We identify, the narrative is different but the deep stuff that's the same!!!! Fellowship is next level connection. They held me in those early days, encouraged me not to lift a drink one day at a time, one hour, one minute and at times one second at a time. They shared their experience, strength and hope and in time I began to share mine. As the weeks progressed to months the compulsion to drink lifted. As the months progressed into years the compulsion to react lifted as I finally accept life for what it is Four years and counting I would not swap this life for all the bourbon in Kentucky. Being part of something so sacred and real has allowed me to unravel my truth and set myself free. I have experienced joy like no other and have achieved more in these years than I ever could have in the 38 previous. Now I too welcome new members with love in my heart and light in my soul, this journey is special really and truly special. I would not be where I am today without the fellowship. The new members are as important to me as I was to others on that faithful January night. The gratitude I hold for the fellowship of AA goes beyond these words, there are no words strong enough to express my undying love and unconditional positive regard for this fellowship. All I can say is... Thank you AA, THANK YOU!

Gra B

I Needed Help

I'm James. I'm an alcoholic. My last drink was a little over 19 months ago. It was August 2020. I was sitting on a pub's terrace in Czechia, with a full bank account and nothing to do until the school year started up again in September.

The sun would have split crocodile skin. Some of my co-teachers were sitting at the table with me, chucking the pints back just as fast as I was. There was a new teacher who'd just arrived from Cavan sitting to my right. She had stopped drinking when the first COVID-19 lockdown hit. Australia hadn't worked out and she was afraid that she'd kill one of her family members if she woke up at home with a hangover.

That morning I had promised myself I wouldn't drink until I made dinner. That was a long couple of hours: strumming idly at the guitar; reading a book while tap-dancing my fingers across the table; chain-smoking out my window and watching as shoppers and family went past, laughing and joking in the fine weather. Then around 14:00 my mate texted me an invitation for a beer and I said "Just the one, brother."

4 or 5 hours later, I was on the verge of making a very important point, which would be more strongly made, I thought, if I quenched a cigarette in my fist as I made it. Don't ask me what the point was. The lady from Cavan said, when we were both a few weeks into the program, "It was just to be dramatic."

After another few pints I was losing the run of my sentences halfway through them. This was good stuff I was trying to say, and I was forgetting it mid-word! So I lit another Marlboro and took one long drag before pressing it into the blisters from the first one. Someone said I should go home.

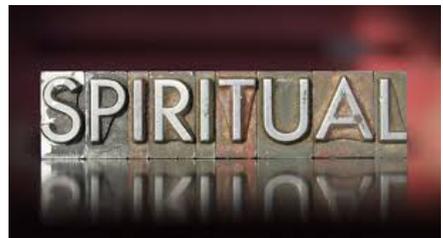
I woke up with the dawn the next morning, hobbled to the bathroom, gagged when the smell of puke hit me. Back in bed, staring at the wall, I remembered that my father had always called AA "a community." I looked at the line of blisters running from the heel of my palm and up along my middle finger. One man could only have so many "cooking accidents." I needed help.

"now the words come easily. I don't forget my sentences halfway through. I can write down exactly what happened to me without flinching"

Help is a big word. It means putting aside everything I think I know, all those old ideas, and doing things that I not only don't want to do, but that are other people's ideas. Accepting AA's help means admitting that my way doesn't work. It requires a humility that comes to few people naturally, and that I had to beat myself into over countless pints, years of self-harm, a suicide attempt, and, eventually, the 12 Steps. Only the latter has worked.

It also means that the courageousness and humility that brought me to AA have become attainable. Now the words come easily. I don't forget my sentences halfway through. I can write down exactly what happened to me without flinching.

Anon



Two of The Richest People I Ever Met

The first person was the greatest living example of our AA programme in action I ever saw and the most loving human being it has been my privilege to call a friend. He was not always the most lovable. If I had a fiver for every time I felt like strangling him, I would be a rich man. That's because he had this uncompromising way of hitting me with the truth and, to be honest, he could be an old crank at times. He certainly wasn't perfect. I was meant to meet him.

In his house one day, we were talking about nothing much, and an incredible thing happened. He was not a pretty sight at the best of times and he sat there unshaven, just out of bed, teeth out. (When we were heading off to a meeting he always used to say, 'Have teeth, will travel'. Once, I was driving home after dropping him off, and there were the teeth grinning at me from the dashboard of the car.) Belly hanging over the trousers, feet encased in the customary garish socks (canary yellow, if I remember correctly) and a pair of carpet slippers, he had the ever-lit cigarette in his hand (for breakfast: 'Clears the chest'). I looked at him and he was shining. I can't describe the experience any other way.

The second person was a nineteen-year-old country girl; gauche, even old-fashioned in the eyes of the world. Pretty, extrovert, sparkling; she was not an AA member, but she lived our way of life. My first job in sobriety was working in a factory and I met her there. I was meant to meet her.

I was just beginning to experience the wonders of our programme, to discover the eternal truths and used to regale her for hours about it. I know now she had more of this way of life in her little finger than I'll ever see. She didn't talk about it: she just lived it. Nevertheless, she would listen to me with a quiet smile.

Once she asked me to tell her how I got to AA, so I related the tale of the final drunk and the miracle that happened: I looked up and she was in tears. She cried because she was happy for me.

She was the first person who broke down the wall I had built around myself, around the real me, around my emotions. She was the first person who loved me enough to do that: took the rebuffs, the keep-your-distance attitude that I practised automatically. She lost her temper one day after a particularly strong snub and launched into me. 'You!' she said. 'You won't let people love you.'

Then she died - nineteen years old. My sponsor told me that she had achieved more in her nineteen years than most people do in a lifetime and I believed him. She had a fast car which she drove without fear. One night another car drove out in front of her and that was that. For the first time in my life, I cried for another human being.

Just after hearing the news, the last thing I wanted to happen did happen: a fellow AA member walked in on me. I told him about it. 'Do you believe?' he asked. I said yes. 'Well then,' he said and spread his hands and I knew what he meant. 'Let go. You're only holding her back.'

Guess who appeared after that - your man with the teeth (only he had them in this time). For the rest of the day, he just took over, took me completely under his wing. Didn't say a lot, just practised love: stayed with me all day, informed me that I was going to his house for dinner and then suggested we go to a meeting. (It only struck me some time afterward that his choice of an open meeting was deliberate. He knew I wouldn't be asked to share: I couldn't have anyway.)

I've learned in AA that that's love – the sum total of little thoughts and actions, always thinking of the other person.

And now he's dead, too – the old fellow. (Mind you, we called him a few worse things when he was alive. You know what? He revelled in them.) It happened the day after he was twenty-eight years sober. ('Gone to the Big Meeting,' he used to say of others.)

I still feel their presence very strongly at times. I still see their example. In fact, I've learned more from them since they died than before. Love in action. The two richest people I ever met and they shared their riches with me.

I didn't sit down to write this, you know. It just sort of happened.

I still see their example. In fact, I've learned more from them since they died than before. Love in action. The two richest people I ever met and they shared their riches with me. I didn't sit down to write this, you know. It just sort of happened.

Albert P
Lisburn Road Group
Belfast

Charity

I recently had the opportunity to attend a memorial service for a dear friend and fellow AA member who passed during the first lockdown in 2020, a time when the world was on hold, but life and death continued.

Before the service began, I was sitting reflecting on the impact she has had on my sobriety and my life and what she had shown me through her example. She passed on 1st May and reading the reflection in the 24hour book that morning I couldn't but think how appropriate it was.

"The A.A. program is one of charity because the real meaning of the word charity is to care enough about other people to really want to help them. To get the full benefit of the program, we must try to help other alcoholics. We may try to help somebody and think we have failed, but the seed we have planted may bear fruit some time. We never know the results even a word of ours might have. But the main thing is to have charity for others, a real desire to help them, whether we succeed or not".

Her grand sponsor Sackville of Dublin wrote in his story "It continues to try to teach me the real charity, the charity that gives time and good will and service, and not just money". She certainly embodied this, and I couldn't but be grateful to have been the recipient of this real charity for 20 years and been shown how to apply it in my own life through her wonderful example. Rest easy my friend and thank you for everything.

Fiona D

The Spiritual Market

I went to the spiritual market
To find the finest and freshest there
Intriguing concepts and essentials
A whole raft of religious fayre

Some hawked their produce loudly
Shouting damnation and hell
Some burned perfumed incense
Alluring to my sense of smell

Coming upon a simple stall
Its products only few
No promotions or special offers
What was available was all on view

An old man of a quiet disposition
Inquired what kind of menu I'd like
I outlined my long list of dishes
He said go and try somewhere else

Feeling dismissed and rejected
My pride hit the floor
What I offer is based on attraction he said
The only requirement --- your hunger for

You can experience the full market range
Making exotic and sensuous dishes
It may take you several lives to complete
For some desires cannot be resisted

The enigma of the profound drew me in
My simple appetite began to grow
He would offer his unique ingredients
But the cooking would all be my own

Liam Ó B
(Attributed to the
Impersonal Consciousness)

Apologies for a print error in the April-June issue of the Road Back. The poem 'Winnowed' on page 13 should be attributed to Liam O'B

Heard at Meetings

When all else
fails
follow
instructions

Sobriety is
about now
- not then
or when

I take reality
one day at
a time!

Learn from
yesterday,
live for
today - hope
for tomorrow

Acceptance
is being
grateful
for what
happens

If you want
to have the
last say in an
argument try
saying: "I guess
you're right"

AA News Sheet

JUL - DEC 2022

2022 - Changes in GSO

Great News! Now that most of the covid disruptions that have affected us have subsided, we are focusing on improving our services and one of the great announcements is that the Literature Shop in GSO is open again five days a week, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5.00pm and open through lunch.

One of the changes that occurred during the year included two of our staff members moving on to pastures new, we are grateful to them for their service to AA throughout their time in GSO and wish them well on their new journeys.

The other significant change is the introduction of two new staff members, Michael and Karen. They recently started working alongside Barbara in GSO and have proven great additions to the team in the office.

For the past few weeks, the new office team has been working hard to ensure that normal service resumes e.g., literature orders, Group Information Sheets, website updates and so on are being processed efficiently, along with answering the daily calls from people looking for guidance. We trust that you will give them your support and understanding as they transition into their new roles and learn more about the intricacies of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Website – www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Finally, after many months of planning, and updating, our new and refreshed website was launched during the summer. It has bedded in quite well since then. The colour theme has changed and most of the content. We added a lot of new parts to try to help you - our members.

Here are some of the highlights we have picked out for you:

Find a Meeting

This was completely overhauled, and makes it easier to find meetings by day, time, meeting type etc. The meeting information is updated nightly, so the most up to date meeting information that groups provide GSO is available to view on the website.

If you need help or have a query in navigating the new Find a Meeting section, call GSO and a member of staff will be happy to help you find a meeting.

It is possible to print a meeting list from the website. Go to the meeting page. Search for all meetings in your county. Click the print button, this will provide approx. 20 meetings per page. These printouts might be useful as a list of current meetings for members of your group.

Online Group Information Sheet

Under the members section, there is now an online Group Information Sheet that we hope is much simpler to complete. Now, you can update the Group Information Sheet electronically without having to complete the entire form. So, if our meeting location hasn't changed, but time has, you can click on the check box to keep location as it is and only complete the parts that are changing. This form is also mobile friendly, so we hope it will be more useful to you. Please remember to include the EIRCODE/POSTCODE for your meeting address as this enables members to find your meeting without unnecessary difficulty.



Speaker Requests

We have also added an online AA Speaker Request form for schools to our website for professionals to access this service, this has already proven to be a popular tool. Of course, the efficiency of this service is also dependent on Intergroups having an effective public information service set up.

Daily Reflections

The book Daily Reflections is very popular with AAs. The new website now allows members to view an online quote from this book. It automatically refreshes every day to show you the quote of the day. There is also a small calendar that will show you quotes from other days, simply click on the date that interests you to view the quote. We hope you enjoy this new addition to the website.

The Big Book

The Big Book is now available to read from our website – free! This is not to take away from the printed version, it's just another way for people to have access to such a useful resource. It's categorised into Introduction (1-9), then Chapters (1-11), Personal Stories, then Appendices, just as the printed version is.

Starter Pack

Many of you are familiar with the blue wallet (starter) pack. It was given to many of us early in our recovery to help us decide if AA was for us. Most of the pamphlets included in the wallet pack are now available in an online version. Go to 'New to AA' tab, the Starter Pack is available to view as a dropdown option. This can be useful starting point for many who are new to AA. It contains Questions & Answers on Sponsorship, Is AA for You? A Newcomer Asks, Who Me?, 15 Points (for an alcoholic to consider when you have an urge to drink), Just for Today Card & 12 x 12 Wallet Card.

Upcoming Events Pages

The events page has been reorganised, to show all approved upcoming events in a calendar style. We have broken the categories down into:

- Conventions in Ireland
- International Conventions
- One Day Events
- Information Events

It's a great place to go to see what events are upcoming or perhaps to plan where you might go over the next few months. Normally if you click on event, the event poster will also be displayed...once it's supplied to us!

It's our plan that Upcoming Events can be used for Public Meetings, making them easier to find members of the public. This information should be submitted through the relevant official AA Mailbox so be sure to have your group's mailbox setup and working. Contact GSO for details.

News & Updates Section

In recent years there has been a need to keep members updated with information regarding Covid regulations and restrictions. Members found it especially useful to be able refer to the website to verify information so we've added the News and Updates section and will keep it current with material of interest to members.

Subscribe to Updates

We have received feedback that members would also like to personally receive information and updates electronically so individual members can subscribe to this service now. If you've already subscribed, please be patient with us, you should hear from us soon. It is possible unsubscribe from this list at any time by clicking on the unsubscribe link in all emails.

Online Literature Shop

We completely revamped the online shop, updated the content, and tried to make the entire shopping experience simpler. We expanded the payment options to include credit card/debit cards, PayPal, Google Pay & Apple Pay so it's now easier to pay.

Online Contributions

This process is simpler now for members too as we accept Google/Apple Pay, along with credit cards. Soon, we hope it will be possible to make contributions via PayPal too.

Plans are afoot to develop the website further and liaise with our publishers so that we can have many of AA leaflets and pamphlets available in pdf format.

Road Back e-publication

Many of the more recent back editions are available to view from the website. If you prefer a hardcopy, it is possible to print directly from the website. Remember the Road Back now incorporates the AA News Sheet!

GSO Literature Shop in GSO

The most efficient way to place orders is via our online shop. Orders will be shipped to your shipping address saving you the need to travel to collect orders. We also accept most payment types including Visa, Mastercard, PayPal, Google Pay and Apple Pay.

If you are unable to order online, the AA shop is open now open to visitors each Monday to Friday 9.30am and 5.00 pm.

We encourage visitors to pre-order literature items so your order can be ready for you when you arrive. Order Forms are available to download from our website or can be posted to you.

As groups reopen the demand for literature has increased so please be patient with us as while we process orders.

AA Structure Queries

In recent months we added a new service for AA members that have queries relating to the service structure but are unsure where to go to for guidance. Members can now send these types of queries to aastructurequeries@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

This is a voluntary service, someone from AA will respond as soon as possible, the aim is to respond within 48 hours. Please remember that this service is for AA structure queries only, the service does provide meeting information or other general information relating to AA – this information is available on the website or by contacting GSO.

Annual General Conference Meeting 2023

Is there something in AA, related to the structure that your group feels needs to be refreshed? How do you bring about change in AA?

The first thing that you should do is discuss the change or idea at your group's Group Conscience Meeting. If your group supports the idea, it should be written up as a motion outlining the change and providing as much supporting documentation as possible. Once agreed at your group conscience, the proposed motion should then be sent to your Area Secretary where your group representative will present it to Area members, normally at the next Area Meeting. Once it is discussed and agreed, it can be sent onto the Intergroup Secretary to be presented by the Area to Intergroup. Sometimes, the Area or Intergroup may make suggestions or ask for revisions for clarity, or in some instances may have reasons for it not to go forward. Once the motion is brought forward to Intergroup, and if Intergroup agrees that it should be sent to Conference, the Intergroup Secretary will send the motion to the board Secretary not less than 6 weeks prior to Conference.

Conference is planned around the weekend of 10-12th March 2023 so all motions need to have been agreed by your Intergroup and received by the Board Secretary on or before 27th January 2023.

If your first Intergroup of 2023 is after 27th January 2023, motions will need to have been agreed at your Intergroup in 2022 so they can be discussed at the 2023 General Service Conference Meeting.

Meeting of Conference in July & October 2022

A meeting of Conference was held online in July 2022 with a physical follow up in Tullamore in October 2022 to discuss the introduction and wording of a Code of Conduct for Conference Members. Great progress has been made on this so far by all members of Conference.

There is a is one remaining section to be discussed and finalised. This is scheduled to be discussed online in December 2022. Once the document is completed, we will inform all groups of the outcome.

How to have a Poster or Event posted to the Website

Do you know the process for getting an AA Event, Public Meeting or poster published on the website? Let's clarify the process for you. All AA approved events need to come through the Structure, so a Group needs to notify its Area, and the Area needs to notify Intergroup. The Intergroup Secretary will then notify GSO who will publish the information.

AA Groups, Areas and Intergroups should seek permission to use the official AA log in advance of publishing AA posters or material, the relevant Trustee can grant permission. This is normally requested at an Intergroup Meeting.

Unfortunately, if the request doesn't go through the structure in time, it can cause unnecessary delays in publishing. It's a good idea to plan early.

Printed Version of the AA Directory

We have received some enquiries about a reprint of the AA Directory. We plan to revisit this, but there still so many groups that have reopened, that GSO is not aware of and therefore can't be made available to members to attend. When we have a fuller picture of the actual meetings that have reopened, we can look at publishing a printed format of the meetings.

For those of you that have recently completed Group Information Sheets and notified GSO, a huge thank you! This ensures the still suffering alcoholic can find your meeting when they need it.

We don't depend on groups to just provide meeting information; we depend on groups to provide contact names and numbers too. This information is kept confidential for AAs only but is vital in passing 12th step calls to members.

You can contact GSO for the most efficient way of getting your information updated. Groups should use their registered number where possible i.e., L124, M344, U421, C45 as it helps us identify the correct group. Be assured there are procedural checks in place to ensure the information we receive is valid i.e., information will not be accepted from personal mailboxes or by phone.

Together we should aim to have an extended list of available meetings for our members and for newcomers... whether it's through the website or a printed format.

Young Persons Liason Officer

Are you an Area Secretary in Connaught, Leinster, Munster or Ulster? Have you emailed your Young Persons Liaison Officer (YPLO) to invite them to your Area or Intergroup meeting?

The YPLO is a new service position borrowed from the UK structure, agreed at our 2021 Conference AGM with the aim of helping young people get into service. Aren't we always looking for more people to do service? Let's see what we can do as a fellowship to make sure our doors are open for future generations, so they can receive the same welcome and chance at recovery as we have!

Don't wait! Email your local YPLO to invite them to your Area meeting:

connaughtyplo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
leinsteryplo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
munsteryplo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
ulsteryplo@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of A.A. always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible

Service work in AA is like a football game:
20,000 spectators - who might benefit from a little exercise -
are watching 22 players badly in need of a rest

Oops, Wrong Bar

The day after Christmas, two new guys strolled into his AA meeting. It's a toss-up on who was more surprised.

After almost eight years of being sober, I've been to a lot of AA meetings. I believe in the motto "meeting makers make it," so I still hit at least five meetings a week. Over the years, I thought I'd seen it all: arguments, tears, drunken outbursts, fights, birth and marriage announcements and memorials. But what happened today, the day after Christmas, well this was a new one.

My Wednesday morning meeting is held in a local Irish pub. We figure, heck, if we could spend hours getting drunk in bars, might as well spend an hour each week staying sober in one. Though we're a group, of drunks, the bar owner trusts us with his keys so we can have the meeting before he comes in to work for the day. Now, if that isn't a portrait of the Promises coming true, I don't know what is!

On this particular day, we had opened early to get the coffee brewing and set up the chairs when a couple of newcomers came. In. Both were still dressed in festive holiday sweaters, slacks and dress shoes. Old-timers call this time of the year "pledge-drive" season for AA, so we thought nothing of it and welcomed them in. We regulars got caught up in conversations sharing about our Christmas activities the day before.

After a while, I noticed that the newcomers were nowhere to be found. The bar we meet in is split in tow. One half, where our AA meeting is held, is actually a dance hall adjacent to the main bar area where the booze and drinking goes down.

I walked around to the bar area to find that the newcomers had fired up the jukebox and grabbed themselves a couple of beers.

They had a couple of twenties laid on the counter. Clearly, they were planning to stay for a while. I immediately knew there was a misunderstanding because they were just sitting there chatting away in the dimly lit bar, no doubt carrying on what I discovered was a Christmas bender. I had to laugh, because if irony could ever be caught in a simple picture frame this was it: a couple of holiday drunks enjoying their blackout stumble into a bar that was about to start an AA meeting!

"You guys here for the AA meeting?" I asked. They looked up from their beers like it was no big deal. "Nope," one of the guys said, "Just having a couple of beers."

"The think is," I said with the straightest fact I could muster, "the bar's not really open. We're having an AA meeting in the next room and you guys aren't allowed to be here unless you're here for the meeting."

"Why are you having an AA meeting in a bar?" one asked. "Yeah, that makes no sense," said the other.

I smiled. "You mean, wandering into an unattended bar and cracking your own beers at 7am makes any sense?" I suggested.

We all laughed in the way that only we drunks can. They were still confused, but I could plainly see the lines that had been crossed, and I remember crossing those same lines so often back when I was drinking.

Now, I've got no idea what a beer costs these days, but they were going to have to pay up. First Tradition means I protect the meeting's welfare, and that means keeping things square with the bar owner. I figured five bucks each was fair for the borrowed suds. "You can pound these beers, or toss them," I said, "but you can't stay in the bar...unless you'd like to join our meeting."

On of the guys actually considered staying for the meeting, but like drinking buddies do, they decided to continue on their way together. On their way out, they turned around and asked, "Where do we go now?" "Not quite sure," I replied, "it's been a while since I've been up drinking this early. But if you ever want to come back, we've got a seat for you." Back when I drank, I could find an occasion to drink on any day. But somehow, the holidays seem to kick it to another level for people of our kind.

I know I'll remember this particular morning forever, not only for how comical and ironic the situation was, but because I was sober – direct result of AA, continuing to work the Steps, and going to meetings. I used to worry that being sober would be boring, but here I am over 1,000 meetings in, and I've discovered that there really is never a dull moment.

Cory R. LA, reprinted from AA Grapevine, Dec 2019.

My Journey From Hopelessness to Hope

When I was asked by my boss and Line Manager would I be interested in participating in this BOOK OF HOPE by Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy, I jumped at the idea. Here is my story of my journey of what hope means to me.

I remember all those years ago when I ended up in treatment and been told whilst doing my first step and my worst drunk exercise, that I was a "hopeless case" and was probably not going to make it. It's hard to believe 25 years later; by taking it a day at a time I am no longer a hopeless case but have found hope and purpose in life. You make ask where I found that hope. Initially, I found hope by attending the Stanhope Centre, the support I received there was life changing. Today I work as member of their team, bring hope and guidance to others.

After treatment in Stanhope, I remember clearly carrying my worldly possessions over O'Connell Street bridge to Teach Mhuire in Gardiner Street, I was alone and uncertain of what my life would hold. As part of my journey I attended the AA meetings in Sherrard Street, sometimes attending meeting up to three times a day,

still lost and wondering what to do with my life. Gradually the miracle of hope began and I grew stronger, the fog of addiction and hopelessness began to shift and I was able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I don't think I would be where I am today if I did not have hope, which with time and perseverance rekindled my love of life.

I have been very blessed on my journey so far, things have a way of coming together when your life is on the right path. I continue on my journey of self discovery and to go to my recovery meetings regularly. I am currently work in the caring profession, giving back some of the goodness I have received from others.

I started work in the Clancy night shelter, and then 11 years with De Paul Ireland and to date I am back to where my journey began, at the Stanhope Centre. I am reminded every day that it is about never losing hope once you have found it. It's also about doing the daily things necessary to maintain recovery, like keeping in touch with other like minded people and remaining positive.

I would like to end with a quote " NEVER - NEVER - EVER GIVE UP ON FINDING HOPE "

John O'L

Hints for Self-Care over the Holiday Season

This holiday season will be like none we have experienced before. Christmas can be a challenging time for many alcoholics. As we continue on the road of recovery in AA, we must find a way to make self-care a priority, especially throughout the holiday season.

Make Self-Care a Priority

Give yourself the gift of time for yourself, we cannot be our very best if we are depleted. Find ways to celebrate the holiday season by taking care of your body, mind and soul. Make time for meditation and prayer. Proper nutrition and plenty of healthy physical movement will make you feel stronger, both physically and emotionally. Soothe your soul.

Increase AA Support

We can get overwhelmed with the erratic nature of the season anyway, but this year we have the added challenge of coping with COVID restrictions too. Make a plan for each day. Start with 12-step support as your priority. This could mean contacting someone in AA, commit to attend a meeting (or two) each day, now we also have online meetings as an option. The Alcoholics Anonymous website will provide an up to date list of meetings available. Check out the website's e-publication, section, there is plenty of AA sharing to be found in our online 'Road Back' e-publication.

Be mindful of time spent around others – know your limits

Stress can lead us to rationalise and convince ourselves we are entitled to a drink. Surround yourself with supportive loved ones that will help you follow the steps to staying and sober.

Celebrate relationships

Consider the holiday as an opportunity to rekindle old relationships with friends, make that call, send that email. Establish real connections with others inside and outside of AA.

Service, not self

When we can focus on others, we find more joy and gratitude. So look for ways to think about and serve others. These spiritual opportunities allow us to spread happiness and cheer to others. Treat it as one of the benefits of staying and sober; being able to have a clear mind and body to help others.

Eat well

The holidays don't give us a green light to overindulge. There's nothing worse than stuffing ourselves with too much sugar, carbs, and fat-laden foods that make us feel bad. So be proactive and choose healthy foods that will make you want to celebrate, not feel guilty.

Create new traditions

Celebrate the fact you are re-establishing your own life. As you affirm your new self on these festive days, you are choosing to celebrate the new, better, and sober life that you have created. It may mean volunteering to serve at local 12-Step support groups. Remember, giving is one of the best things you can do during the holidays.

Avoid relapse triggers

Of all triggers, the most significant can be emotional triggers. No matter if you are in recovery or not, the holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. Normal routines are nearly impossible to withstand particularly during COVID, we can get disrupted, frustrated and anxious. There may be increased demands from your spouse, partner or other family members, and this can put serious stress on your sobriety.

This can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, humiliation, embarrassment, anger depression. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Saying “no” is perfectly acceptable and it will protect you.

Maintain your spirituality

Our commercial world wants us to believe that joy can come from tinsel, booze, and shopping. It sells us the lie that happiness can be found in these. Instead, focus on the true spirit of the season. Regardless of your faith or spiritual beliefs, the holidays are really about two things: giving and gratitude. When we focus on these, the other things such as resentment, disappointment, anger, worry, self-loathing show up far less often and cannot find a foothold in our hearts.

Make sobriety your top priority!

Stay safe, well and sober 'One Day at a Time'



What Will You Give Your Family for Christmas?

For most of us, whatever our religious beliefs may or may not be, Christmas is a special occasion; we recognise it as a time of goodwill and fellowship as well as the celebration of a religious festival. It is a time when most of us are caught up in a tide of human warmth.

Unfortunately for mankind, the period of general benevolence for many people is limited to the duration of the round of parties and binges; and is aligned more to the spirituous than the spiritual.

Recovering alcoholics will remember, perhaps with a shudder their own antics at Christmases gone by and the temporary and treacherous glow that flowed from the bottle. They may also recall the awful results of their tipping, i

ncluding the deep hurt they caused others, especially their families, and may still remember the bitter remorse that gnawed them later.

Many of us felt little genuine goodwill to mankind in those barren days. We were often bitter people inside, no matter how much we tried to show a sociable face.

We were too choked with self-pity and too resentful and distrusting of others to allow deep affection to blossom in our hearts. We just didn't have the capacity for truly deep and sincere feelings of love and friendship and loyalty and probably instead, got our satisfaction from fantasising about our plots and schemes to humble and hurt whoever was the subject of our current resentments.

One of the facets of our recovery is the slow but steady growth of an ability to feel a generous and non-demanding love for our fellow beings. We are able to give of ourselves without using this as a lever to manipulate or possess others. We demand no reward.

This attitude of unconditional warmth and considerations is one of the best Christmas presents that recovering alcoholics can give to other people, especially to their families. It is a true mark of our new selves, our changed values and our growing maturity.

It is worth remembering at this time of the year, and through the rest of the year, too, how much our families mean to us. Many of us probably gain great comfort and strength through being part of a family, even though its various members may have moved away from home into new environments. We are still part of the particular little tribe.

One of the difficulties with a family, is that it is so easy for the people in it to take each other for granted. We have lived with each other for years, at least during the early part of our lives, and the others have generally been there when we needed them. The very act of being close to them may limit our ability to see their value to us – and their need for an affirmation of affection from us now and then.

This is something we recovering alcoholics should be conscious of because we now have so much to give and in many cases we owe our families so much. It may be that we can never repay in full the debit of misery and despair we ran up when we were engrossed in our selfish drinking, along with its selfish thought patterns. But at least we can go a long way towards wiping the slate clean.

And we can do it not just as a duty but because we are learning to love and be generous in a mature way as our gratitude grows. We learn, too, that real love does not demand perfection in the recipient. Through tolerance we can accept other people's faults as well as their virtues. "Courtesy, kindness, justice and love are the keynotes by which we may come into harmony with practically anybody" says the book '12 Steps and 12 Traditions'.

So, if you are wondering what to give your family or friends for Christmas, how about just letting them know how highly they rate on your scale of appreciation today. You don't have to do this with expensive gifts or elaborate ritual. Just courtesy, kindness, justice and love.

Reprinted from "The News" December 1982

Gratitude

I have gratitude for (one day at a time) of five years. This came about due to the rooms of AA and affiliated meetings. For the past three years I have given back and still do through service - my miracle. In service you meet all types of people (mostly sober) in the sober sense. But life is not all what it's cracked up to be, is it?

Of all the members I have met, it has been amazing to find that the people who gave what they got through "service" and helping the alcoholic in their journey through sponsorship and doing the steps have the best recovery.

As with everything in life there are talkers and there are the walkers. To truly "believe" you have to put your faith into practice, for it to really work.

This disease of ours is a horrendous malady of spirit, mind and body, a great leveller and if in doubt look around you and inside of yourself. If you still cannot see you will need to be "grateful" for what you have today and to put recovery to the forefront of your agenda. One of the ways would be through service to Alcoholics Anonymous. I found it to be a momentous step in my recovery to where I am now.

Damien



UNITY | SERVICE | RECOVERY

Humour



"I told him back in '68, 'Frank, if you leave AA, you are gonna die'. It took forty-one years, but I finally proved my point."



A newcomer was sitting in the back of the room before the meeting began, leafing frantically through the pages of the Big Book. An old timer noticed her activity and asked, "What are you looking for?" "Loopholes", the newcomer replied

How come if alcohol kills millions of brain cells, it never killed the ones that made me want to drink?

The Man On The Bench



It was a cold December evening and Jack took a quick look in the mirror before dashing out of the door on his way to his AA Meeting. Suddenly he thought, Perhaps my wife is right. I don't need to go tonight. I feel OK and don't want to drink.

He dismissed the idea and continued on his way. While walking, his attention was drawn to a dark figure sitting on a bench on the corner of the park. Getting closer, he was overwhelmed with the feeling that somehow he knew the man, but just couldn't seem to remember where from. The man on the bench mumbled – Merry Christmas Sir! And took a swig from his bottle of cider. Jack ignored him and continued walking.

He arrived at the meeting, sat in the back row near the door and closed his eyes. The meeting began, but Jack couldn't get the image of the man on the bench out of his mind. Where did he know him from?

The speaker was a man that Jack had heard many times before; someone he once looked up to as an example of what he himself could one day become. The meeting ended and the group went for a coffee, but Jack had decided weeks before that he couldn't tolerate the smoke and the coffee kept him awake at night.

So he slipped off without bothering his sponsor, who seemed busy anyway. Walking back through the park, Jack began to think how well his life was going. His new career was heading in the right direction and his wife couldn't seem to get enough of him.

He began to wonder if he wasn't taking this AA just a little too seriously. For some time now Jack hadn't been getting out of the group what he once did. The demands made on him were starting to interfere with his work and family commitments.

Perhaps he could carry the message at one of those less controlling groups and a sponsor who wouldn't expect as much of him. Arriving home he decided to get an early night. While his wife and children slept Jack tossed and turned as he thought about the figure on the bench.

Who was that man? He went downstairs to make himself a drink because he couldn't sleep. He began to ponder the wasted Sunday mornings doing service and the lost evenings when he could be cuddles up on the sofa with his wife. That got him think about the recent unreasonably harsh suggestion given to him by his sponsor. With a cold and heavy heart he decided the best thing for him to do was to leave the group and find a more understanding sponsor.

A few years later, on a fresh and frosty Christmas Eve, Jack was at home. He was waiting anxiously for his wife to return from a night out. It was getting late and he was getting angry. Where was she, who was she with? Why is she doing this to me?

Just before midnight a taxi pulled and he heard his wife get out and wish the driver Merry Christmas. That infuriated Jack and she got in, he grabbed her and threw her across the room, waking the children who stood at the top of the stairs in tears. His terrified wife ran up to comfort them. Jack stood alone among the ruins of what was once a happy home.

He suddenly noticed a hideous reflection in the shattered mirror. To his horror he saw the empty stare of the man on the bench looking back at him. Running out of the door and across the road in tears, he stopped and sat on the bench in the corner of the park.

What had gone wrong, why did he want to drink and why was he thinking of suicide?

Alone in the still of the night he remember his friends from he meeting, the ones who spent too much time doing service, the ones who took AA too seriously. Those were the happiest times of his life.

His old sponsor's words began to echo through his mind: "keep on walking the road, put AA first and try to be an example to others"

Sitting up abruptly he cried out – "YES, the others!" as he did so he fell out of bed with a bang, he realised it was all a very bad but very real dream. Jack reached for his Big Book, overjoyed with gratitude. He knew that if he continued to take the actions then he would continue to live sober and enjoy sobriety.

Anon

Grappling With Fear

Love and fear are opposites, I've read somewhere in the literature, and surely do not make good bedfellows. Today, finally, I am entirely ready to have God remove my fear. I'll have to let go and get to a meetin9 ASAP. Only in that room am I 100% guaranteed to feel fine (fear can bug me in my own bedroom) .

Do I really want to han9 onto my irrational fears? Is it fun to be afraid of my own shadow? Do I 9et a kick out of looking over my shoulder all the time to see who's ready to pounce on me? Am I still unreasonably scared of my old friend Mr. Booze who even comes to me in dreams'now and then? Am I still unreasonably scared of my old friend Mr. Booze who even comes to me in dreams'now and then? Do I even mistrust my best mates - the guys at the meetings

Do I even mistrust my best mates - the guys at the meetings who keep on telling me I'm okay, and who seem to want me back? Am I worried that the AA programme might steal too much of my precious time if I really give myself to it? No! Not at this precise moment, a Sunday morning in Spring, sitting at my desk, looking out of the big window, watching and listening to the blackbirds and the gulls in the blue sky, drinking my morning coffee, lighting a candle to HP, and saying: 'God grant me the serenity' Other Steps will await me and are there to gently soothe my anxious brain, no longer cluttered up with the pus of alcohol. There's a sponsor somewhere, too, patiently waiting to take me under his wing. Let me be humble enough to reach out my hand and take all this on board. I might need it for the long, sober journey through today.

Marcus

Just Another Wonderful Day

It's the festive season folks! And here I am afraid is an optimistic, happy piece to go with it. And lest you think that I have lost it, let me assure you that it was not always thus. I've had some pretty dreadful Christmases in the years gone by days filled with angst and anguish – days after filled with remorse and thoughts like: Oh did I really. Oh no. I couldn't have. Pooped he entire party? Oh Shit not again.

I was chatting to a fellow alcoholic this week. One who is about to face his first ever sober Christmas and is, not surprisingly, approaching it with a modicum of apprehension. I'm about to approach my sixth and the entire concept delights me. It is if I keep doing things the right way, going to be a very lekker day; one full of love and laughter, prezzies and promise. I'm always uncomfortable giving advice: at best I can only share what I have done and experienced as a kind of marker for those who can hear it. Ans I found myself rabbiting away as is my wont with great enthusiasm about sober Christmases and what they have meant to me.

When I started on this extraordinary voyage, I, too, was apprehensive. The first time I went to a restaurant I was glad to find it dimly lit so that other diners wouldn't easily notice that I wasn't ordering wine with my meal; would not notice the Alcoholic Mark of Cain upon my sober and sweating brow. A large table had been prepared for ten diners adjacent to mine.

As the party arrived I was surprised to notice that the wine glasses were being removed as each guest took their place. Fine I thought; fellow alcoholics. But I was too embarrassed and new and awkward to ask. Afterwards it dawned on me. The large table had been occupied by Muslim diners and alcohol of course was simply not on by religious proscription.

It was the first time I had truly realised that many people eschew alcohol for many reasons.

Or to put it another way, you don't have to be an alcoholic not to drink. That was a comfort and, as the one days at a time have passed, stays with me.

I am nowadays amazed at how many people simply do not drink alcohol. For whatever reason.

I no longer feel that drinking will somehow make me stand out from the crowd. Indeed I become more and more aware that my drinking was exactly what made me stand out.... Even though I did not know this at the time. And this Christmas will be even better! Joining the family will be Liz and my first grandchild who at seven months old, will be the first cynosure of the festive gathering. And alcohol very nearly caused me to miss his arrival as those who know me will have heard to the point of boredom. Alcohol very nearly killed me six years ago. Not only would I have missed Xavier's arrival and first Christmas, but so many other wonderful things that sobriety has brought. Most of them very simple, but no less delightful for that.

Like being able to install a sprinkler system in the tiny garden in which I take inordinate delight. The sprinkler system was inaugurated as the Suikerbos Windsor Water System just in time to welcome early rains to arrive but will soon come into its own. The SWWS, how alcoholically grandiose!

There is still a place for more lessons in humility amongst other things I can be woefully slow to pickup. Like being in a new job with a purpose, at exactly the time when I assured I would be slowing down towards the end of a career.

Like being able to attend meetings at which legions of fellow alcoholics share with me their deepest thoughts and fears and teach me how to cope with and express mine.

So, while I thoroughly understand the feeling of dread that comes with facing a celebration without the crutch that was alcohol. I am more and more comfortable with doing so myself. It's a lot better than hanging around looking for the next drink.

When can I ask for another one without raising too many eyebrows? Or how can I get to my car for a top up without anyone noticing? Or why is everyone staring at me? Or was that joke really inappropriate as the stares suggested? Or why have I just lost the thread of this conversation just as I was about to add something terribly important? Anyway why are they all staring at me again?

There are many Christmases past that I can only hazily recall. The last five I can remember in minute detail. Without help from photographs. And, with the help of AA, and the practicing of the principles, this will be one to remember too. Comfortably, happily and soberly.

Merry Christmas!

And by the way, a quick glance at the OED has MERRY as "pleasurable, agreeable, amusing, diverting, full of animated enjoyment and jolly". Nowhere does it suggest drunken!

So be happy, joyous and free this festive season.

And have fun!

Bill W.



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

66th

ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2023



HILLGROVE HOTEL & SPA
MONAGHAN, Co MONAGHAN

28th 29th 30th April 2023

Theme

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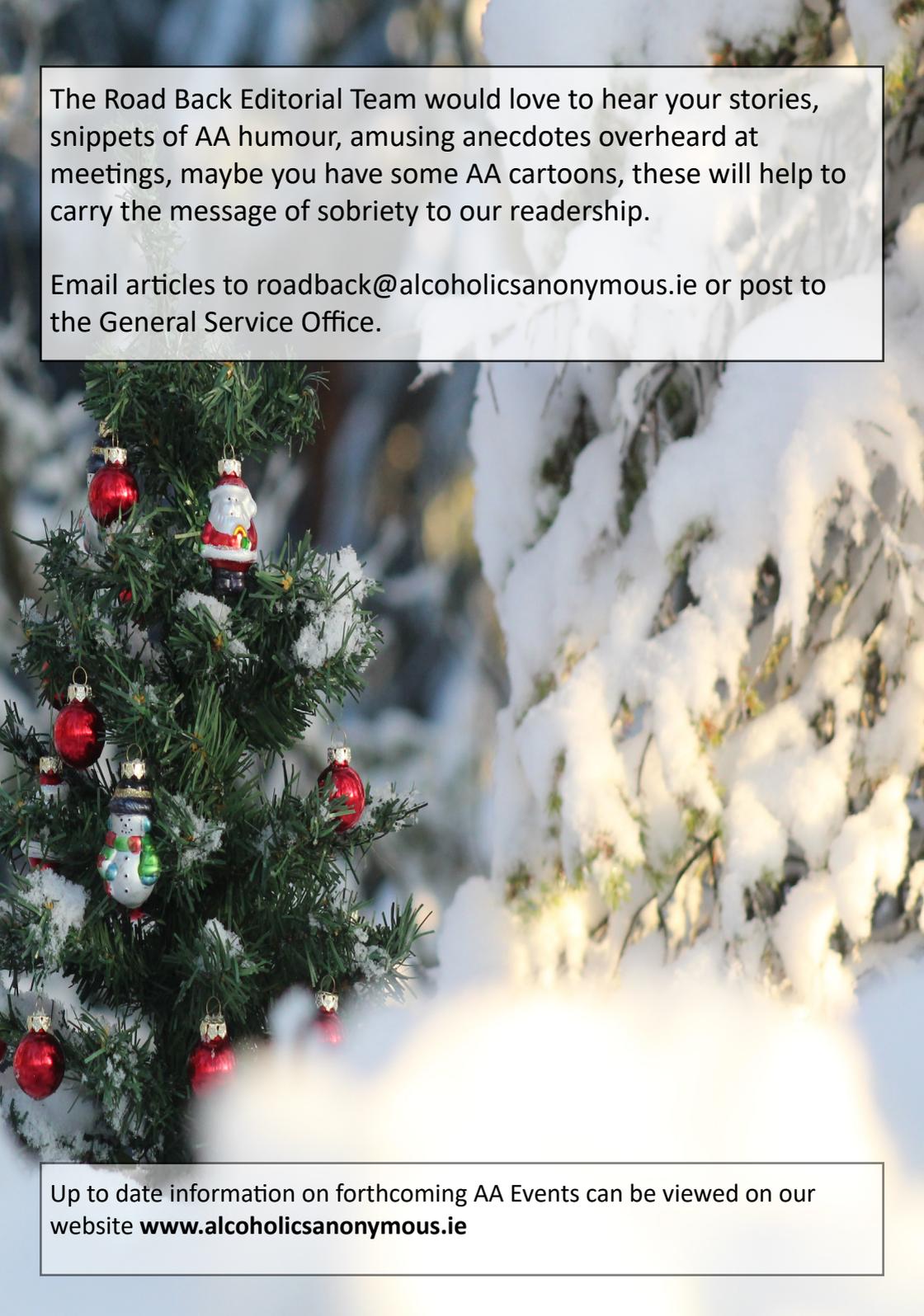
The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.





The Road Back Editorial Team would love to hear your stories, snippets of AA humour, amusing anecdotes overheard at meetings, maybe you have some AA cartoons, these will help to carry the message of sobriety to our readership.

Email articles to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or post to the General Service Office.

Up to date information on forthcoming AA Events can be viewed on our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie