

Anonymous Times

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July/August 2008

Meeting at Gate 12

By Laurel

Sometime in the early 1990's I was treating a woman in an intensive out patient chemical dependency group. Let's call her 'Grace.' Grace was a flight attendant and had been suspended from her job with a major airline due to her untreated alcoholism. She had been stealing the little miniature liquor bottles and drinking in airport bars in uniform, etc. Her employer, realizing she needed treatment sent her to us.



After the eight week program, I suggested to her it might be a good idea to solidify her foundation in recovery before returning to work as she would be working in a high-risk environment (serving alcohol, being out of town alone, etc. Grace did, however, return to

work shortly after completing outpatient treatment. One day while she was departing from a plane at the end of long day, a major craving for alcohol overpowered her.

There she was, in the Los Angeles International Airport pulling her roller-bag behind her when this massive craving to drink came over her. She tried to just 'think through it,' or 'just forget about it,' but it was way too powerful. It was so powerful, in fact, that she had resigned to herself that she would just go drink. Grace thought, Oh, heck with it, I'll get another job.... or maybe no one will find out anyway. But deep down inside Grace did not want to drink. She truly had wanted to stay sober, but she was in trouble.

On her way to the bar in the airport, Grace had a moment of sanity. She stopped, picked up the airport paging-phone and said, 'Will you please page friends of Bill W.,' she paused, quickly looking around for an empty gate, "to come to Gate 12?"

Within minutes, over the paging system in the LA International Airport came, 'Will friends of Bill W. please come to Gate 12. Will friends of Bill W. please come to Gate 12. Most people in recovery know that asking if you are a friend of Bill W. is an anonymous way to identify yourself as a member of AA.

In less than five minutes there were about fifteen people at that gate from all over the world. That brought tears of amazement, relief and joy to Grace. They had a little meeting there in that empty gate, total strangers prior to that moment. Grace discovered that two of those people had gotten out of their boarding lines and missed their flights to answer that call for help. They had remembered what they had seen on many walls of meeting rooms: 'When anyone, anywhere reaches out their hand for help, I want the hand of AA to be there and for that I am responsible.

Grace did not drink that day. I would venture to guess that none of the people who came to Gate 12 drank that day either. Instead Grace had a moment of sanity, realized she could not do it on her own, took the action of asking for help and received it immediately. This help is available to all of us if we want it and sincerely ask for it. It never fails.

NORTH ORANGE COUNTY CENTRAL OFFICE

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Fullerton, CA 92831

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Women Sharing in Recovery!

By Laura J.

A few years ago, my Sponsor suggested that she, her Sponsees and some women in the program start writing a gratitude list every day by E-mail. We have been doing this faithfully, and the number of people on this list continues to grow. It has become a powerful tool in our sobriety and we have developed a close network of sober women.

Recently, one of the women on the list celebrated 3 years of sobriety. On her birthday, this is the gratitude list she sent:



I just want to thank all of you for my three years sober today. I could not have had any of this without each of you. Each of you beautiful ladies is a

huge part of my sobriety and have each influenced me in a way that has allowed me to grow into a sober woman.

I am grateful for...

Krissy- you are my sober sister and best friend. Thank you for loving me and teaching me how to be a friend.

Laura- I am grateful for your spirituality. The relationship you have with your HP is a model for me and thank you for letting him work through you.

Karen- you are so generous!! I love your heart and your honesty. I hope that someday if I ever have kids, I could be as loving a mother as you are with your little one.

Bernadette- you are adorable. Thank you for reminding me of what it is to suit up and show up and learn to be a sober female member of AA.

Jennifer- you keep me sober. Thank you for being someone who lives this program day in, day out. You are my rock and you teach me to be honest about my feelings.

Jenny- thank you for fun and for fellowship. You are my light.

Lara- you are my sponsor, my main squeeze. Thank you for imparting all you have been taught and walk through life with me. I could not/would not be here without you. Thank you for saving a life.

Sue- thank you for being an example. I see your dedication to your inner self, your program, and your family and I am inspired.

Trish- I am grateful that you are AA rain or shine, and you teach me how to walk through life with honesty and directness that I have never know before.

Janine- I am blessed to know you. Thank you for trudging this path; your grace and dignity have stamped my heart forever. Love you all, thank you for my birthday.

NOC Central Office BULLETIN BOARD

**H&I
2ND SUNDAY
July 13 & August 10**

**Orange County Hospitals
and
Institutions Committee**
2nd Sunday of each mo.
Institutions Committee:
4-5 pm
(Orientation at 3:15 pm)

Hospitals Committee:
6-7 pm
(Orientation at 3:15 pm)
Garden Grove Alano Club
9845
Belfast
Garden Grove
Call (949) 278-5173

**NOCPIC
2ND WEDNESDAY
July 9 and August 13**

**North Orange County Public
Information Committee**

*Learn about sharing the mes-
sage with Non-AA people
like high school and college
students.*

Meets at 6:30 p.m. on the 2nd
Wednesday of every month at
NOCCO
1111 E. Commonwealth, Ste.
D,
Fullerton
If you have questions, call
Brian K. at
714-658-4581

**INTERGROUP
2ND WEDNESDAY
July 9 & August 13**

**North Orange County
Intergroup Association**

*Be an intergroup
representative for
your meeting.*

Meeting at 7:30 p.m. on the
2nd Wednesday of every
month at 109 E. Wilshire
Fullerton
(First Christian Church)

**VOLUNTEER MEETING
SATURDAY July 12
at 10 a.m.**

CENTRAL OFFICE
holds a quarterly
volunteer meeting on the 2nd
Sat. every three months.
Coffee and donuts provided.

Learn how to fill shifts at Cen-
tral Office, be of service and
meet fellow volunteers.

Call 714-773-4357
for information

MEETING 10 A.M.

15 Years Sober

Gratitude Highlights This Woman's Story

By Becki

Wow, what a difference 15 years can make sober. My name is Becki and I just celebrated 15 years of sobriety on May 10th. I got sober at 21 years old; when I walked into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous I was not too happy to be here. I was very angry that I was Alcoholic and I could never drink again. I really believed that I was going to get taught how to drink like a lady.

Well I learned differently. I learned that if I wanted a different way of living, I needed to change not just a few things, but everything. I am not a very happy drunk. I am

I learned that if I wanted a different way of living, I needed to change not just a few things, but everything.

very mean, vindictive and violent. I did not care how I affected anyone that I came in contact with. Growing up, I was always insecure and always envious of everyone. Then I took my first drink and thought I was it and I did not care anymore. I tried to control my drinking a lot, but once I picked up that first drink, I was on a run and could not stop or control anything.

I was also a very big bar drinker. I would open the bars, stay all day until closing time. I would make sure that I had enough alcohol to get me through the night while the bars were closed. I did this regularly. I was like a tornado tearing through all my loved ones' lives. My loved ones never knew what I would do next. I really did love them and wanted to do better. But I also did not really care either, once I had mind altering substances in my body.

Sober at 21

I drank for 10 years. Since I got sober at 21, that means I took my first drink at 11. I am a mother of two today and my oldest is 10; he is just a couple of months away from when I took my first drink. I am so grateful, though, that I am sober and had my children sober, because I get to break the cycle. I have had my kids in Alateen, trying to show them a different way. I am so grateful that I get to give my children a better way of life than I was given.

I know that my parents did the best that they could do, but it is not fun growing up when your father is beating on your mother while your mother is denying that it is happening. My Mom and Dad got divorced when I was 7 and my Mom had to work three jobs to take care of my sister,

brother, and I. She was never at home, so I basically got to do whatever I wanted; believe me I surely did.

My sister was only 9 and my brother was only 5. Because my Dad was not in the picture anymore, and my Mom was never around, my sister raised my brother and me. A 9 year old does not know how to raise or take care of kids, so she tried to teach us with violence herself. Consequently, I also turned to violence. It was a long 10 years of drinking and using. I have been stabbed, kidnapped, and beaten by plenty of men.

I am so grateful that I do not have to place myself in situations like that anymore. I know that if I was not drinking I would not have experienced so much grief. Alcoholics Anonymous has allowed me to grow up and to become a lady, a friend, a Wife, a Mother, a Sister, and a daughter. I am very active in the program and am blessed to be able to attend a lot of meetings, have lots of commitments, and be able to be of service to other alcoholics.

Sponsorship

What a true gift and a true blessing it is to be able to sponsor woman and have them trust me enough to share with me things that they need to share. What a true blessing also to have my children love me unconditionally (which would never be if I was drunk). I am completely blessed to have a husband that loves me and is faithful; we are trudging the road together.

I am also so extremely grateful that I have my Mother, sister, brother, and also my Father in my life without any violence between anyone and they all support my recovery. I am so grateful to all the women who have helped me in so many ways through the years. I love my sponsor so much because she loves me and gives me suggestions towards being a better person in every aspect of my life. She is a gift from God.

I am so grateful that I chose to grab on to Alcoholics Anonymous and do what is suggested (go to meetings, work the steps, and call your sponsor). If I do not pick up a drink one day at a time, the time just seems to accumulate and ends up being a whole heck of a lot of one day at a times, which has turned into a whole lot of years.

I have never had it so good, and I am so blessed to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.



UPCOMING EVENTS!

Annual Picnic in Yorba Linda

The 6 a.m. Attitude Modification Meeting in Yorba Linda will host its annual potluck picnic July 12, 2008 at Hurless Barton Park in Yorba Linda. The event will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Hamburgers and hot dogs will be provided.

Bring your entire family, lawn chairs and games. Children and pets are welcome.

Additional information can be obtained by calling George E. at (714) 779-6211 or Pat B. at (714) 742-6119. The park is located at 4601 Casa Loma Ave. Yorba Linda, CA 92886.

Northern California Summer Conference

The Northern California Council of Alcoholics Anonymous will hold its 61st Annual Summer Conference July 18-20, 2008 at the San Ramon Marriott Hotel in San Ramon, CA.

The three-day event kicks off at 2 p.m. Friday, July 18, and will feature meetings, workshops, and a dance, among other activities. Pre-registration for the event is \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

Visit the NCCAA web site at <http://www.ncc-aa.org> for additional information.

ALL DRESSED UP and NO PLACE TO GO?

Don't forget to pick up your Orange County A.A. Meeting Directory, available at Central Office, Clubs and Fellowship Halls. For less than the price of a cup of coffee (54 cents including tax), you'll have the latest meeting information at your fingertips. Buy one for yourself and one for a friend – it's a great way to welcome a newcomer to the fellowship!

Looking for something to do?

Here are some upcoming events
that might be of interest

Area Service Committee Meeting: August 10, 2008 – 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

On August 10th, 2008, District 15* will host the Area Service Committee Meeting. Approximately 150 GSRs will be attending and **WE NEED YOUR HELP!** Opportunities to volunteer are plentiful and include setting up, greeting and/or registering attendees (coffee and donuts to be provided free).

Volunteers also are needed to help serve lunch (yes, you get to eat too!), help with clean-up or just be there to lend a hand. If you are interested, please email Pete K. at pmk92807@yahoo.com with your contact info and choice of job and I'll contact you when we get more details.

*District 15 includes parts of Anaheim, Brea, La Habra, Placentia and Yorba Linda. More info is available at www.msca09aa.org

Regularly Scheduled NOC Meetings

North Orange County Intergroup Association
2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.
109 E. Wilshire, Fullerton (First Christian Church)

Orange County Hospitals and Institutions Committee
2nd Sunday of each month as follows:
Institutions Committee: 4-5 p.m. (3:15 p.m. Orientation)

Hospitals Committee: 6-7 p.m. (5:15 p.m. orientation)
Garden Grove Alano Club, 9845 Belfast, Garden Grove

Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)
1st Saturday of each month at 9 a.m.
202 W. Broadway, Anaheim

North Orange County Hispanic Intergroup Association
Every Friday at 8 p.m.
330 N. State College Blvd., Ste. 207, Anaheim
Call (714) 956-7243 for information

North Orange County Public Information Committee
2nd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.
NOCCO, 1111 E. Commonwealth, Ste D, Fullerton
For information call Brian K. (714) 658-4581

BIRTHDAY DONATIONS



July

Norm R 22 years
 Gary L. 15 years
 Moses H. 13 years
 Jerry Cox Real Alcoholic Eternity
 and missed very much.

IS SOMEBODY SPECIAL CELEBRATING A BIRTHDAY?

Gold, silver and tri-plated chips can be pre-ordered through Central Office. Specialty medallions like sponsor chips, friendship chips and women/men in recovery are also available. All orders must be pre-paid and require one-week for delivery.

PUBLISH YOUR BIRTHDAY or SOBRIETY STORY TODAY!

To publish your birthday, send us your name, sobriety date and your contribution check (DO NOT SEND CASH) in the mail to: North Orange County Central Office, 1111 E. Commonwealth, Ste. D, Fullerton, CA 92831.

THE ANONYMOUS TIMES online in Color!

The Anonymous Times is once again available online at <http://www.aanoc.com>, as well as at your favorite meeting. Online it can be downloaded to your computer and printed in color.

Also, if you have a story to tell, feel free to submit it to us at aatimes@aanoc.com. Limit stories to 700 words or less (sorry, no poetry) and confine the subject matter to alcoholism.

Stories may be edited for space and clarity.

CHECK IT OUT – DUDE! YOUNG PEOPLE'S AA MEETINGS!

Sunday

Fullerton 6:00 pm 216 N. Malden (Alano Club)
 Orange 7:00 pm 261 N. Glassell@Chapman
 (The Ugly Mug)

Monday

Irvine 7:30 pm Wild Bunch Men's Step Study
 5001 Newport Coast Dr. Mari-
 ners Church (Port Kid Zone
 room)

Tuesday

Anaheim Hills 7:30 pm Step Study/Kaiser Lakeview-Bsmt.
 Dana Point 7:30 pm Campfire Beach Meeting
 (Winter) 34451 Ensenada
 Pl. @ D.P. Harbor Dr. - Boat
 House (Youth Center)
 (November thru March)

Wednesday

Irvine 7:30 pm Wild Bunch Beginner Q&A
 18842 Teller Ave. @ Campus
 (New Song Church
 Newport Beach 8:30 pm Topic Discussion, 414 E. 32nd St.
 Yorba Linda 8:00 pm Topic Discussion, 5320 Richfield Rd.
 Garden Grove 8:00 pm Young People's Meeting
 7212 Chapman Ave. @ Knott Ave.
 (Serenity Hall) 797-G4

Thursday

Costa Mesa 8:00 pm Moorehead Podium Call-up
 2476 Newport Blvd. @ Fair
 (Oddfellows Hall)
 Laguna Beach 8:00 pm Romper Room Beginners
 20456 Laguna Canyon Rd.

Friday

Anaheim Hills 8:00 pm Discussion-411 Lakeview Ave.
 @ 91 Fwy. (Medical Building,
 Basement, Rm # B-4)
 Huntington Beach 7:00 pm Seacliff, 225 7th St., Garage
 #1 @ Olive
 Irvine 7:30 pm Boys in Sobriety
 4400 Barranca & Culver

Saturday

Rancho Santa 7:30 pm RSM 1 Hour Discussion
 Margarita 30322 Via Con Dios (Church)

Subscriptions/Gifts

Treat yourself or a friend to the A.T. for only \$6.00 a year! Send your name and address:

Name _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Please send this along with \$_____ for _____ subscriptions at \$6.00 per year to:

ANONYMOUS TIMES: 1111 COMMONWEALTH Ave. Ste. D, FULLERTON, CA 92831 Phone: 714-773-4357

“God Speaks Through Others” Ode to Big John

I's been a long road together in AA as friends..... I met you almost 24 years ago on the street. You said you were a baker and I knew some day you would bring me a freshly baked loaf of bread, but you never did!!! We stayed friends and saw each other at meetings, and then I stopped going to AA meetings for about 2 years.

Somehow, God managed to put us back together again at Stater Bros. Market when I happened to run into you and your wife. You were so happy to see me; the first thing you asked me was, “What meeting are you going to?” I made up some meeting, gave you just enough information to satisfy you!!! About two weeks later there you were again, asking me, “What meeting are you going to?” I went home and told Shirley we better start shopping at Vons.

About a month later I spotted you and your wife in an aisle at Stater Bros. once again. So I went down the next aisle and here you came with the same question. That's when I figured you were stalking me. I began looking for your car in the parking lot. Finally, you saw me again and invited me to the Thursday night meeting and said, “I'll be looking for you.” So I went and I'm glad that you got me back in the fellowship. John, you have been a friend who has always showed me unconditional love and interest.

You have always “been there” for me during my

surgery and my depression. I have seen you show this love through sponsoring many men in this organization. You always greeted new comers, especially the Ladies, and made them feel welcome. You always went to the hospital to visit sick members of our fellowship. Your service

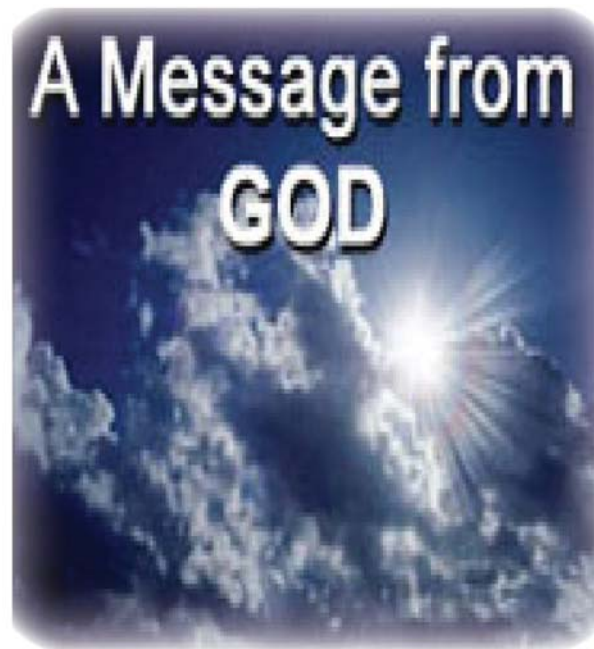
in Central Office and taking 12 step calls on your home phone on weekends was remarkable.

I'm glad that God sent me to the hospital your last Thursday afternoon. I knew you heard me talking to you and telling you how all your friends (especially your girlfriends) were praying for you. I saw the smile on your

face and the peace. I'll miss you old buddy, but we'll meet again in the Big Meeting in the Sky. I love you, and I know you are with us all here today.

Love, Jerry H.

P.S. Thanks for all the money I won from you in our 22 year old poker game. I wonder if they give poker lessons in heaven???



Central Office Needs You!

Central Office needs Volunteers to be on the 12 Step Phone List.

If you are interested, call Central Office at (714) 773-4357.

Various times are available. Those who are interested in helping another alcoholic will have Central Office phone calls forwarded to their home phones for a certain time period each week.

SPEAKER MEETINGS: July/August 2008



Anonymous Times would like to publish your list of speakers for September/October, 2008.

Contact Central Office
or email to aatimes@aanoc.com.
Deadline for publication is August 15, 2008.

Friday 8:00 p.m.	La Habra Speaker Meeting 631 N. Euclid, La Habra (Church, 1 block south of Whittier Blvd.) July 4 TBD July 11 Wendy S., Anaheim July 18 Lisa J., Los Angeles July 25 Gary M., Hollywood Aug. 1 John L., Garden Grove Aug. 8 Kevin H., O.C. Aug. 15 Jeff Livesay, Long Beach Aug. 22 TBD Aug. 29 Paul H., Bellflower	Saturday 8:00 pm Liverpool Speaker 4861 Liverpool (Messiah Lutheran Church) Yorba Linda, CA July 5 Robert M., Orange July 12 Ed M., Fullerton July 19 Roxy, Fullerton July 26 Lauren P., Whittier
Friday 7:30 p.m.	Dreams Come True Speaker 109 E Wilshire, Fullerton 92832 First Christian Church July 4th surprise July 11 Dave S, Fullerton July 18 Tami P., Chatsworth July 25 Birthday Aug. 1 Bruce S., Fullerton Aug. 8 Wendy S., Fullerton Aug. 15 Jeff, Cypress Aug. 22 Andrea, Anaheim Aug 29, Birthday speaker	Sunday 8 p.m. Fireside Speaker Meeting 8150 Knott Ave., Buena Park CA July 6 Mickey B., Santa Monica July 13 Roxy T., La Palma 7/20 Robin N., Placentia 7/27 Kip C. , Vista 8/3 Deloris M., Huntington Beach 8/10 Chris H., Orange county 8/17 Frank C., Los Angles 8/24 Miles E. , Long Beach 8/31 Sallie R. , Glendora
Saturday 8:00 p.m.	Oddfellows Speaker 109 E Wilshire, Fullerton 92832 First Christian Church July 5 Christeen M. - Paramount July 12 Lynn D. - Riverside July 19 Norma S. - Seal Beach July 26 Roger "Duck" - Fullerton Aug. 2 Mike H. - Huntington Beach Aug. 9 Bubbles O. - Fullerton Aug. 16 Tiffany C. - Fullerton Aug. 23 Darrell F. - Los Angeles Aug. 30 SURPRISE	Friday ??? No Puffers Speaker's ???????, Orange July 4th Surprise, Ice Cream July 11th Don D., Orange July 18th David P. Santa Ana July 25th TBD

**SHOW UP AND HEAR THE
MESSAGE OF RECOVERY**

From the Editor

Editor Qualifies for A.A. Membership

By Moses H.

That day being licensed to practice law did not mean what it means to me today. Back then I still allowed pride to have a day, in my case just about six years. In those six years, my motto was if you could afford it, I would find a way to promote and sell your position.

Conscience and the practice of law were truly strange bedfellows. I had taken the solemn oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the laws of California and by letter I would do that, however in my spirit I was lacking.

I put no systems in place to become a meaningful lawyer. Helping people with their problems from a good heart just wasn't what they wanted to hear. They all seemed to want to know that no matter what they had done, they were entitled to win. Within a year I was a full-blown drunk, it was the only way I could stomach my decisions. My wife left me and I celebrated by getting even more drunk. I had always believed that receipt of a license to practice law would relieve me of my self-loathing attitude; but to the contrary, it just increased the disgust I had for myself.

One more time I found myself echoing the words of Paul—"...the good that I would do I do not, but the evil that lurks within my flesh I do--what will save me from my wretched self?"

Morning Joy

Joy comes in the morning! That morning finally arrived. One day I found myself sitting in a room of alcoholics who proclaimed their disgusting position with gladness and humor. How and why would anybody want to proclaim knowledge of such a devastating condition? You can't find a cure until you know the condition, if you don't think its broken why fix it? These people had come to believe and realize that acknowledgement of the condition created a possibility of cure.

Now when I found out that my cure was based on a daily basis and could only be permanent from minute to minute as long as I refrained from the consumption of alcohol or other mind altering substance, I found no joy in the cure. But what I did know was that I no longer wanted to live in the pain of self. Self- will run wild. Undisciplined, uncaring, selfish conduct had to give way to discipline, caring and selflessness.

I had to accept the words of Saint Francis of Assisi as my own:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love,

Where there is injury, pardon

Where there is doubt, faith,

Where there is despair, hope,

Where there is darkness, light,

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, not so much to be understood as to understand, not so much to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we awake to eternal life

It has taken every day of ten years to daily make the choice to accept this prayer.

Today my God wakes me with Joy, and Joy encompasses me all the day long. Yes, I still have trials and tribulation, but I have learned to live life on life's terms. No creature born of woman that matures leaves this world without a personal definition of pain. There is an old spiritual song that goes, "...and he walks with me and he talks with me, and he tells me I am his own."

Today, that is the God of my understanding.

Central Office Needs Volunteers

Central office has openings to answer phones on the following days and times:

Tuesday 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Tuesday 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Thursday 12 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

A minimum six months of continuous sobriety is recommended. Those interested are asked you call Central Office at (714) 773-4357.

Answering phones at Central Office is a vital way to be of service, help yourself stay sober and bring the message of recovery to those who seek it.

Living life on life's terms

Family Pet Helps Alcoholic Understand Reality

By Rose L.

Before I was in recovery, I never understood what it was to "live life on life's terms." I always wanted my way; I only saw life from my narrow perspective. My point of view was the right one, and everyone else would be so much better off if they did things my way.

I would forge through the day collecting resentments, whenever people would challenge my wisdom, or things just didn't go my way. Life was so difficult, and I could never enjoy the simple blessings that were right in front of me.

My world became so shallow, without meaning or purpose. I

When my younger son died, Reggie came to live with me. It was the last piece of my son that I had to hang on to.

drank to numb the pain and escape reality. I liked the effect alcohol had on my life. Oblivion is that wonderful state of mind, where I don't have a care in the world. That is until I come to, and realize the mess my life has become. I then begin the process of taking control of the situation, until the effort is too much, and I long for the drink again.....it always ended that way, alcohol then nothing else matters.

Everyone in recovery has reached their bottom. That moment of clarity, where you realize you can't stop drinking. "But, for the grace of God" is a slogan that reminds me how I escaped the path that leads to insanity or death. I have seen many take that road, because they missed the path of grace. It is the 12 Steps, which give a "spiritual awakening" to all who seek it.

Send Us Your Story Online!

Articles for the Anonymous Times can now be submitted on the NOCCO website: aanoc.com. Also, send us your letters and suggestions in the mail.

North Orange County Central Office 1111 Commonwealth, Suite D, Fullerton, CA 92831

I was walking along a path at my ranch when I saw green leaves on the oak tree. Then a butterfly appeared, and all around me my world open up to a new realm of beauty. I began to see that I had missed so many blessings.

One of them was my dog, Reggie who was always there for me. He would sense when I was sad and come and lay next to me. He had been with us since he was a puppy; my younger son had wanted a dog for so long. My older son came to live with us and he gave Reggie a voice.



We were all laughing about something one day, and Reggie threw his head back as if he was chuckling, with his mouth open and tongue hanging out. My older son pretended he was Reggie talking, and Reggie began to comment on various things throughout the day. It made life fun and gave us a new way to communicate.

So many times Reggie would come and comfort us. Such a simple pleasure to enjoy. When my younger son died, Reggie came to live with me. It was the last piece of my son that I had to hang on to.

Last week I had to put Reggie down. He was 13yrs old and in pain and lost the use of his hind legs. The hard part was that he belonged to my son, who had lost his life to the disease of alcoholism. He committed suicide at the age of 20. This is one of those moments that you have to "live life on life's terms". I had to accept that to let go of Reggie was the most merciful thing I could do. My older son and I went together to the vet. We cried and said goodbye to our friend.

I realize that life is full of good times and sad times. I have learned to see things differently. You see my older son and I didn't really get a chance to mourn the loss of my son and his brother together. We were able to have that moment together and it was a sad moment. It represented more than we realized. It was a goodbye to a chapter in our story....until we meet again.

Then my son spoke for Reggie one last time "I'm with John now, see you when it's your turn". We could smile about that, because death is a part of life. Our memory will always be with us, and I have bonded with my son in a deeper way. I can now see reality the way it is, and I don't have to drink over my feelings anymore.

Believe that It Works If You Work It

By Bonnie H.

The speaker finished by saying, "I've talked long enough. I've said all the things I needed to hear." The audience applauded. We all knew that John had spoken the truth, that what he had shared had helped him as much or more than it helped us.

That's how it works, our program. By sharing our stories with each other, we strengthen our sobriety. As an "old timer," I agreed with him. I've been sitting in these rooms for over twenty years now. The miracle of "two or more gather together" keeps on working one more time.

Not everyone gets this. Some people cannot truly get honest with themselves. But for those of us who utilize the "we" that is the first word in our book, Alcoholics Anonymous, we are reassured and strengthened by each other.

It wasn't always this simple. In the beginning, I remember mostly chaos. My life then was turmoil of vicissitudes. I used to brag that I lived in the "briar patch" and thought that was a good thing. Part of me secretly cherished the albeit faux excitement of living in a dysfunctional alcoholic home. I didn't know it then, but I had become so numb that only wild extremes in my daily life provided the stimulus to keep me going. I smugly used to say, "I don't get mad, I get even."

The time was 1986. Jack and I had been married for twenty-six years and our daughters were 16 and 12. Our alcoholic merry-go-round had been going on for our whole marriage. Jack was the "real" alcoholic, and I, poor thing, was the victim who drank because I had to live with him. Our oldest daughter was running with a bad crowd, and would frequently disappear for hours or days. I would go out looking for her. Here again my thinking was warped. I would cruise around looking for her friends who I considered my friends also, asking if they knew where she was. Many times these "friends" would actually tell me where I could find her. Then I alone, or with Jack, would go and get her and bring her home.

Our marriage was operating on automatic pilot. We rarely went anywhere together. Mostly Jack would be out of it and asleep by the time I got home from work at about 6:30 p.m. The afternoons were the hardest. I would get calls while at work -- between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., from one of the girls, or Jack. He was home and there had been another blow up. One time I got a call from Carrie's Junior High. Jack had gone to pick her up after school. She saw that he was intoxicated and refused to get into the car with him. The Principal called me to ask me what

to do. Normally, I was not able to leave my job of running an extended day care center during the busiest time of the day. But on this day, I had no choice.

Another time I got a call from home. Jack had decided that Carrie should lose the privilege of having her own television. He was carrying it down the hall and she tackled him.

The girls didn't like to bring home friends after school because they never knew what kind of mood he would be in. Often he would yell and verbally abuse them.

These events were commonplace. Usually the violence only lasted a couple of hours. Then Jack would go to bed to sleep it off. We all looked forward to that time for then the house was quiet and safe.

As a Director of a Child Care Center, I knew all about child abuse, children considered "at risk" and needing help. However, oddly, I blocked out the elephant in the living room and was in denial about the seriousness of the problem. Every time there were a few days of peace, I would convince myself that things were getting better. Of course, this was not true.

In September, our family doctor convinced Jack to seek treatment at an in patient facility. Those were the days of huge numbers of people enrolling in two to four week programs. At the AA meetings, there would be large groups of patients wearing hospital wristbands. I was taking a psychology class at Fullerton College. My professor was a member of AA. My semester project was titled, "Children of Alcoholics." Slowly I was learning about this family disease.

We, the girls and I, would attend family meetings where counselors would try to get us to face reality and "do something" about our sad home lives. I learned that Jack provided us with the perfect scapegoat for our problems. If only he would get sober, everything would be all right. That was my mind set at the time. I was attending Alanon meetings but not finding solutions.

We didn't want to deal with the issues like Wendy's poor choice of friends, her drinking, and her failure to function at school. Or my continued "better living through chemistry" that I found necessary. I only drank

Continued ...



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wine, and took a few pills, some to get going in the morning, and of course, some to come down at night. We only smoked pot sometimes. It was always available as we were growing it in the backyard. And I didn't drink during the day ever.

Our youngest daughter, the one who was the victim in the event I shared about at the Junior High, was getting madder and madder. She would go out into the street in front of our house and scream, "I hate you. I hope you die." A psychiatrist told me that words were her only weapon, and she used them frequently. She had been an honor student, a cheerleader, popular with friends, but the shell was cracking. Even she was hospitalized for a month in a hospital for unmanageable children. The doctors there told us she would be fine if we (her parents) took control of our lives.

I know how this sounds. You're probably thinking, how could she not see this immense problem. How could she not take action? But I was numb. I only knew to make it look as good as possible on the outside, thinking that our lives then would be OK. I used work as an escape. I had started full time work in 1982, which "protected" me from some of the reality.

Eventually, one of Wendy's counselors at the adolescent facility confronted me and told me that I should be going to AA meetings -- for me. He told me that I needed to focus on myself. What an original idea! I had said something like, "Isn't there anything (drug) that's OK (to use)?"

By January 4, 1988, I was done. I finally achieved sobriety for myself. I began the long road of recovery. I got a wonderful sponsor that I still have today. During 1986, 1987 and 1988, our family was engaged in every form of therapy. Fortunately for us, we had good insurance and they paid over ten thousand dollars in therapy fees in one year alone, not counting the hospital programs. We had individual, family and couples therapy. We had therapy every day. We all went to AA meetings, but often sat separately and even drove separate cars.

Wendy got sober at seventeen and today has twenty-one years to celebrate! She spent 69 days as an inpatient at "New Beginnings" program at Placentia Linda Hospital. With more therapy and family meetings, we slowly learned to deal with reality and that change required each of us to actually do something different than we had always done.

Wendy came home a new girl, made new sober friends, graduated from high school, and graduated from college. Wow, how wonderful that was! She continues to sponsor other girls today.

Jack went in and out of four hospital programs over a period of a few years. He was the one our book talks about as not being able to be fully honest with himself. He really wanted to want to be sober. But Jack had many skeletons in his closet and for years tortured himself about not being sober. He got sicker by the year. He developed pancreatitis, type one diabetes, liver disease, and oral cancer. When he died in 2006 of pulmonary fibrosis, he had achieved two years of sobriety at last. In 2005, he finally got a sponsor he could relate to, and started working his program. Unfortunately it was too little and too late. His body could not be salvaged. He really did have the addictive personality; he smoked until a year before his death and only quit because he couldn't breathe any more. I had been his co-dependent for so many years that I still worry about him today. Is he in heaven? Wherever he is, he doesn't have me to take care of him.

Carrie made a turn around after graduating from high school. After a year of world travel with a friend, she got down to business, applied to UCSD on her own, and graduated in 2000 with a biology degree. Then she moved to Hawaii, attended University of Hawaii, and now has a Master's degree. She does have scars, though, and still is not married. I think she has trust problems with men. As a popular song goes, "...you can sew it up but you can still see the tear."

For myself, I have maintained my sobriety. I have grown, one day at a time, and remain active in Alcoholics Anonymous. Our disease is insidious, waiting for the opportune moment to raise its ugly head. I know that now. I also learned that during the active part of alcoholism, I was frozen in my emotional maturity. So even though I was 43 when I got sober, I was still functionally about 20. I had never learned to take responsibility for my own actions. I was extremely self-centered. I understand the phrase, "I am a grateful alcoholic!"

Alcoholism has nothing to do with intelligence; among our members are doctors and other highly educated people. It affects millions of people, either directly or in families. In fact, almost everyone is touched one way or another by this disease. The good news is that many more people today know and recognize that they need help. We are so fortunate here in Orange County. We have literally hundreds of meetings to choose from every week. Some are devoted to young people, to professionals, to women or men. There are closed meetings and those that are open. If you aren't comfortable with one meeting, there are many others to try.

Today I am proud to be a member of this highly effective organization.

Acceptance is the Key to Recovery

By Sue S.

Coming in to Alcoholics Anonymous I have had to accept the fact that I am an alcoholic and always will be an alcoholic. I started drinking sporadically when I was 15 and it became part of my daily routine from the age of 21 on. I grew up in an alcoholic family thinking it was a way of life.



After losing my sister and brother due to alcohol and then my parents' sad demise, I began to question its power over me. Basically, with everything that had gone on I had literally felt God had abandoned

me and a drink was the only way I could escape my feelings of despair. The trouble was it actually seemed to make things worse. There was just no way out.

Another blow hit me when I was faced with the realization that one of my daughters was now chemically dependant. I had tried to stop drinking so many times, but somehow ended up back where I started. My only answer was to find an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and see how I could stop what seemed to be like my slow suicide.

I can remember being told to read the Big Book and to accept the fact that not only could I not drink for 24 hours that this program is one day at a time. Next, I was to find a sponsor to help me work the 12 steps upon which the program is based, and whose suggestions would guide me in a better life in day at a time.

So far, with a little over two years I have found that it

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works if I work it and keep it my priority in life. Besides, I now know that God has always been there for me at all times and will continue to be there and guide me through the ups and downs that I may face each day. Definitely, I have learned that Acceptance is the Key.

Captured Quips from California Jack

The wit and wisdom of Bill and Bob's friends.

From the Big Book, pg. 38 (4th ed) ...

"However intellectual we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane."

....I've got 3 brain cells left and they have 6 opinions.

Worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but you don't get nowhere.

And sometimes life ain't all peaches and orgasms. Religion is for people who are afraid of going to hell, spirituality is for people who've been there.

WHY is a management question and you aren't in management.

Son, if you're ever gonna quit drinking, you have to stop drinking first.

If it wasn't for procrastination I probably wouldn't have anything to do.

Do I want to be happy or do I want to be right?

Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.

I have a limited partnership with God: I do the work and let God do the worrying,

If you don't have any socks you can't pull them up.

Do you have a quote that you think should be added to the list? Send it to California Jack, c/o Anonymous Times at aatimes@aanoc.com.