



The Road



(...as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny)

Volume 1, Issue 8

York Area Intergroup

January/February 2004

Why Do I Journal?

Ann K.

When I was asked why I journal and why it is important to my recovery; I was pointed to two things: First the 10th step which tells me to "continue to take personal inventory" and secondly to Father Martin who says that gratitude is an action.

It probably helped that I had been a diary keeper in my youth, continued to keep a journal of special events and trips and kept a day by day account of my time in treatment. Not to be over-looked was my sponsor's encouragement to keep a gratitude list.

How does my journal help me? At the end of the day, it gives me the opportunity to review my day, to know if there is anything left unattended, needing to be improved, any amend made or needing to be made. I then can focus on those things for which I am grateful. This is the time to "count my blessings". I then make my prayer list including the names of those for whom I pray and a list of prayers answered.

This quiet time of reflection leaves me with a sense of peace and serenity and allows me to end my day with gratitude for the recovery program of AA and my sobriety.

Why Go To Meetings

Anonymous.

Last night I went to a meeting, which was normal for me on that night of the week. It was a meeting night for me. Open discussion. The smell of coffee brewing. The friendly talk and sincere laughter of familiar faces with a generous number of newcomers included reminding me why I was there. Then the meeting started and all that changed.

First, no one had a topic so the chairperson, who had stepped in when the one who had volunteered didn't show up, had to improvise one. She chose the importance of going to meetings. Someone mentioned the familiar AA slogan "meeting makers make it" and that seemed to bring out some strongly held opinions. One person took exception saying that nowhere in the Big Book does it say such a thing; that taking the steps is what keeps him sober. Another person talked of the importance of doing a "90 in 90" as their rehab counselor had advised. This prompted another member to observe that the "Big Book" doesn't say anything about a certain number of meetings in so many days. In fact, they went on to say, the earliest AA's didn't have many meetings to attend; and they stayed sober. Others shared in a similar vein back and forth, point then counter-point. Finally, one person spoke at great length, mostly off topic, while several other members tried to get the chairperson's attention in hopes of getting her to cut the long-winded member off. What everyone said was all relevant to AA. Even the person who may have talked a little too long had something to contribute. Still, I was left with the nagging feeling that there was more than a little animosity in the air. I sensed that some people might have wanted to have things their way. I confess to feeling a little of the same. *Continued on page 2*

EVENTS CALENDAR

February 3 Intergroup Meeting
(meets 1st Tue. each month)
Otterbein UM 301 W Phila. 7PM

February 14 Dinner Dance
Holiday Inn 334 Arsenal Rd (Rt. 30)
Dinner & Dance \$24 / Dance only \$5
Speaker 7:30-8:30 call 751-6890

February 24 District 45
Covenant Moravian (meets 4th Tue.
each month) 901 Cape Horn Rd

Awakening

Kimberly W.

Surrounded by blessings

Life's little gifts

Starting to understand

My perception shifts

Open my eyes to this new
beginning

Stop trying to lose

Learn to start wining

Watch the world as its
wonders unfold

Breathe in the warmth

Push out the cold

Thankful for the little
things

Learn to focus on the good
and not the bad

Knowing nothing worth
having is easily had

Surrounded by blessings

Like the first mornings

dew

That blankets the earth and
makes it anew

No time for regret

Don't hold onto the past

Don't ever forget

But let go fast

No GOD, no peace. Know GOD, know peace.

Still, it was a good meeting. I've never been to a bad one; just some that weren't as good as others. That's fine. I am not owed an awe-inspiring meeting every time I show up in a church basement. Nevertheless, I was still thinking about last night's meeting on my way to work this morning. One question kept coming to mind. Why go to meetings? More specifically, why do I go to meetings? The answer wasn't as easy to detect as I thought it should be.

Essentially, I go to meetings because I believe it is a vital part of staying sober for me. While I have no way of proving it, I believe that without meetings to remind me of what I am it would be all too easy to grow complacent and self-satisfied. I believe I am capable of becoming so absorbed in myself that I would eventually lose all of what I have been given in this program and, sooner or later, I would drink. The closest thing to proof I have is my way of living before AA. I couldn't stand life inside my own skin. Getting drunk took that feeling away for a time until one day it stopped working. I struggled on for a couple of years after that trying to rekindle the old spark but it was dead. I've talked to enough people who have come back to AA following a relapse to believe I would not be the one exception to this pattern.

But if I came to meetings solely to get this reminder, no matter how needed it may be, I don't feel it would be enough. I know deep down that I need more. I need to take what AA has to offer but, more importantly, I need to give back what I've taken. Sometimes giving back means letting those with differing opinions have their say while I sit in respectful silence. Sometimes giving back means I need to take a stand and speak my mind if I feel someone is speaking nonsense about this program. Of course, I had better be prepared to receive as much as I shell out if I take this position and I should never do it in a meeting. I should speak to the person in private and from the perspective of my own experience in the program rather than from some presumed lofty perch of wisdom. Then there are times when the most important thing I have to offer is my patience, understanding and tolerance for the member who preaches, who strays far from the topic, and goes on and on while others fidget and talk at business meetings of imposing time limits on sharing. I need to remember the unconditional love my home group showed me when I held a service position for years because I was doubtful anyone else could do the job. Through that experience I learned that jobs in AA exist for three main reasons. Ranked in order of importance they are: 1) to teach the newer members to be a part of something, often for the first time in their lives, and to begin to get out of themselves, 2) to teach the

older member how to let go in love and service so others may have their chance to grow and 3) to do the chores of the group that makes it possible to carry the group's message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

While it hasn't been that easy for me to say why I go to meetings, it's a cinch to say why I don't. I don't go to an AA meeting to be judged, ridiculed or ordered around. I don't go to hear someone preach about his or her dogmatic interpretation of our literature as if they had been sitting at Bill's elbow when he and the other pioneers wrote it. I am tired of being reminded, in an authoritative manner, that the Big Book is just the first 164 pages. This, no doubt, would come as a news flash to the general service conferences that approved the last three editions. Incidentally, it would also surprise Bill W. who was the biggest advocate of the story section as being essential in helping the reader identify with his or her fellow alcoholics. To Bill the stories serve the same purpose as a couple of real live drunks on a twelfth step call but how many times have I heard the opposite at meetings?

Fortunately, I don't have the power to decide what kind of meeting I'm going to walk into on any given day. I say fortunately because there are times when I wish I had this power. If I become conceited enough to think I should preach about the Big Book or belittle another member in a meeting by offering my unsolicited opinions on what they've just shared, then AA has an unofficial name for me; bleeding deacon. This is a not so subtle reminder that I need to stay right-sized; that I have to remember that I'm not as important as I like to think I am and that everyone has a right to his or her opinion.

Maybe writing this article is being conceited and preachy. If I am guilty of that, I apologize. However, before you draw that conclusion consider this; how does one stand up in AA for what they believe is right without risking a label like bleeding deacon? My only answer is to try to remain as anonymous as possible. Anonymity is the greatest spiritual principle our fellowship has. It is so powerful it took years for the founders to begin to perceive its true significance. With anonymity, my ego remains in check. This, in turn, helps me to focus on the issue at hand rather than thinking about some agenda of my own to advance. Most of all, it helps me to remember that I should be doing the will of my higher power and not my own. And where did I learn this? At meetings. What started as a necessity for staying sober has grown into a means of learning how to be one among my fellow alcoholics and to try to practice the principles of AA in all aspects of my life.

But enough about me; why do you go to meetings?

Humiliation is your pain received from what others may think of you.

Humility is your grateful admission to God of His will in your life.

RECOVERED

Anonymous

Page iii. of the Big Book has, at the top of the page, "Alcoholics Anonymous". Immediately under that it reads, "The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism." Recovered? What do you think they meant by that?

There is no question that alcoholism is permanent, progressive, and fatal. We will all die with it. Some of us may go back out and die from it. It's obvious that that is not what is meant.

Many of us started drinking before we moved out on our own. Some of us didn't start drinking until we were adults for many years. Almost all of us experienced what we considered to be a "normal" life; that is, no major problems, working, paying our bills, raising families and so on. Then, as drinking began to take its toll of us, that "normalcy" began to slip away from us. Disagreements arose. Problems multiplied. Money became tighter and tighter. We began failing to live up to our responsibilities. Therefore, it is in this context that we may become "recovered" back into our ability to make rational decisions and live up to our responsibilities. Through the practice of the A.A. program, we may recover our former good status with our family, friends and community, thereby recovering what we once lost.

MY OPINION ON DRUG ABUSE

Bernie K.

We all know about drug addiction and how that is a separate issue from Alcoholics Anonymous. There are among our A.A. members, however, some who may be abusing prescription drugs without even knowing it.

Somewhere along the way, District 45 has picked up some people who seemingly believe that A.A. is all we need to get sober, stay sober, and lead useful, productive lives. As a result of this belief, they are openly advocating that OTHERS (and maybe themselves) STOP TAKING DRUGS PRESCRIBED BY DOCTORS. This course of action is not only extremely dangerous to those who foolishly follow this ridiculous advice, it is also a case of CRIMINALLY PRACTICING MEDICINE WITHOUT A LICENSE for those advocates.

We ALL came to A.A. with a wide variety of stupid ideas that just didn't work and that ended up making us and everyone around us miserable, even though we may have had the best intentions in the world. I have no doubt in my mind that those who advocate stopping medicine have very good intentions, but exactly like all PRACTICING alcoholics they are still wrong, even when they think they are right or are justified. Giving unlicensed medical advice is so dangerous that very strict laws have been written to protect the general population from this insanity. Hopefully, YOU do not engage in either offering or taking advice from anyone other than a licensed physician.

As always, Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues, but I certainly do. Refusing to take medicine as prescribed is every bit as much drug abuse as taking too much. Do YOU want to be a drug abuser? The cost is higher than you may think.

A "Functional Alcoholic"?

Anonymous

I heard the phrase "functional alcoholic" the other day at a meeting and it got me wondering if there is truly such a thing. Maybe I missed something in the Big Book about functional alcoholics. I searched the first three chapters for the phrase "functional alcoholic" and found it no where. I could not even find the word functional. I mostly saw phrases that referred to lack of function. I've come to the conclusion that the myth of the "functional alcoholic" must be in the definition of functional. I'm not much on fancy dictionary definitions so lets keep it simple; to me functional is best defined as doing the intending purpose or working the way it should.

So what does it mean for a person to be functional? According to the Big Book, chapter 3 alcoholics have lost the ability to control their drinking. Attempts to control our drinking led to incomprehensible demoralization, we get worse never better. Why can't I drink like a gentleman? He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Let him drink for the day and he frequently becomes disgustingly and even dangerously antisocial. We are without defense against the first drink. I could go on for many lines yet and this is just from a few pages in chapters 1-3. No where can I find anything that would suggest functional alcoholic more like dysfunctional.

Dysfunctional best describes my active alcoholism. Even though I showed up for work and thought I was doing a great job (and probably did some days) functional would not describe me. I was quick tempered, moody, selfish beyond description, angry and full of resentment. None of this is functional.

But alas there is such a thing as a functional alcoholic. A functional alcoholic would be a sober or recovering alcoholic. Only by working a program of recovery as described by Alcoholics Anonymous are we able to perform our intended purpose. So what is my purpose? Again the Big Book has the answers. ***"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"*** Wow, step 11, now that is doing what we ought to do. Praying for God's definition of functional, that works for me. ***"Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*** Step 12, how can we be dysfunctional if we are doing service work that helps other alcoholics or just other people?

What kind of alcoholic do I want to be? Dysfunctional all I need do is take that first drink, stop going to meetings, stop praying, stop calling other AA's, stop working the steps, stop doing service work. Functional all I need to do is keep working the steps, go to meetings, don't drink, pick up the phone, keep doing service work. Today I'm a functional alcoholic. I still show up for work but with no ill effects of the night before and just try to do my best.

News Letter Changes

The Road is much like our recovery; it grows and changes as time passes. I have received many good ideas over the past several months and some of those will become part of The Road. New in March will be a focus on a home group. The 8AM group will be the first featured group. I need a home group and a writer for the April issue. This is a great opportunity to get the word out about your home group.

Another new feature will be an archives article. The York area has a rich and long recovery history. Who was the first AA in York and when? What group has been around the longest? What were the old George Street meetings like?

New this month is a MY OPINION article. This is what it is just one person's opinion. Just as any article they can be submitted anonymously. I will not print the names of other AA's or home groups an article though.

If you have a question ask the staff at The Road, we will find answers or suggestions. An ask it basket type format.

You can also expect to see articles on various service positions and the people that serve in them. What does District 45 do? How is York Area Intergroup different from District 45? What is Public Information? Who is our DCM? What does a GSR do?

Look for features on the step and tradition that corresponds with the number of the month. The March issue will have an article on step and tradition 3. This feature can be a compilation from several authors so feel free to contribute. The more of us that are involved the better the better the articles will be.

We at The Road are hoping to bring the York Area a news letter that reflects the quality of recovery in this area. We welcome your suggestions.

the ten practical points of recovery found in alcoholics anonymous, 4th edition

- 1) "...thoroughly followed our path." p.58 line 2
- 2) "...completely give themselves..." p.58 line 3
- 3) "...developing...rigorous honesty." p.58 line 9
- 4) "...willing to go to any length..." p.58 line 18
- 5) "...fearless and thorough..." p.58 line 23
- 6) "...let go absolutely." p.58 line 25
- 7) "...asked his protection and care with complete abandon." p.59 line 5
- 8) "...the steps we took..." p.59 line 7
- 9) "...do not be discouraged." p.60 line 7
- 10) "...willing to grow along spiritual lines." p.60 line 9

Thank you to those who submitted material for this issue!

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of AA or York Area Intergroup. All submissions are greatly appreciated but sometimes editing must be to accommodate the format. Articles can be hand written, typed or emailed. Submissions can be any length; a page or two or a paragraph or two. To submit articles for the March issue I can be reached at:

email me at: salmomark@hotmail.com

land mail at: Mark L
116 Maple Street
Wrightsville, PA 17368

I can also be reached by visiting York Area's updated and improved website @
www.york-pa-aa.org/

Share your experience, strength, hope & wisdom with a pen.