



The Road



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

Volume 1, Issue 10

York Area Intergroup

April 2004

DRUNK DREAMS

Anonymous

Every now and then I wake up in the middle of the night with the sickening feeling that I'm drunk. For a few panic-stricken seconds I frantically search my memory trying to reconstruct my last conscious moments the way I used to do on hangover mornings when I had no idea how I'd gotten home or even what day it was. I can almost taste the disgusting morning mouth taste that is the result of having drunk more than a gallon or of beer the night before. For a brief but awful time I am filled with the remorse and self-loathing that I remember so well from my last drunk; only this is worse since, now, I have the horrifying realization that I may have relapsed. To drink again after so many years in AA is my worst nightmare.

And then it hits me. I've had another drunk dream. Gradually, the panic is replaced by an overwhelming sense of relief and calm. A dream. It was just a dream. Slowly my heart returns to its normal pace, the sweat on my forehead begins to evaporate and I am once again back in the world of the sane and sober. It wasn't a return to the living dead after all.

The dream itself isn't much to speak of. Only rarely do my drunk dreams start out with the good times of my early drinking days. Most often they take place in the present where, for no apparent reason, I'm in a bar or a friend's house and I'm drinking. I seldom dream about starting to drink. I just seem to be drinking naturally. Its as if the most normal

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MY FIRST STEP FOUR

Anonymous

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Step four is the first step that involves "vigorous action". I began a personal house cleaning. During my active drinking I never thought that I had any serious flaws compared to other people. People that tried to tell me about my defects I dismissed as being unstable and out of touch with reality. I often heard from several people that I'm self-centered and selfish but it never dawned on me that they were right until I came to A.A. I was never willing to take a serious look at my own actions. Step four is a frightening step at first but I was told to just evaluate myself the same way that I have evaluated others. I already knew how to take inventory I just never took my own. I still had some problem seeing the whole picture until I discovered that what I dislike in other people is the same thing I dislike about myself.

My first step four involved four different inventories: resentments, fears, sex conduct and harm to others.

Pages 64-65 in the Big Book gave me excellent instruction on how to take a resentment inventory. The Big Book says the following about resentment:

"Resentment is the "number one" offender. It destroys more alcoholics than ANYTHING else. From it stem ALL forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."

WOW! I realized that resentment might be a major problem in my life. The Big Book also states **"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper."** It was suggested to me that I make four columns on a piece of notebook paper.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

APRIL 25: GSR WORKSHOP

Noon to 4PM: Church of the Mediator, 17th & Turner Street, Allentown, PA

Area GSR Committee - "Getting Active in Service" - food and drink provided

MAY 16: 1st Area 59 MiniAssembly

"What Is Our Primary Purpose"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

Philadelphia Protestant Home
6500 Tabor Road, Philadelphia, PA 19111

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

Deadline: May 6, 2004

Make check out to: EPGSA

Mail to: MS Dalley, 210 W. Crystal Lake Ave, Apt. #135-C, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

JUNE 6: 2nd Area 59 MiniAssembly

"Our Singleness of Purpose"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

Elizabethtown Friendship Fire Company, 171 N. Mount Joy St., Elizabethtown, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

Deadline: May 26, 2004

Make check out to: EPGSA

Mail to: Dora Disc-Herzog, 620 Enfield Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601

JUNE 13: Hilltop Group Picnic

JUNE 27: 3rd Area 59 MiniAssembly

"What Is the Message"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

The Scottish Rite, 300 Market Street, Williamsport, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

JULY 11: 4th Area 59 MiniAssembly

"Cooperation Without Affiliation"

8AM registration - sessions begin at 9AM

Ramada Inn, Delaware Water Gap, PA

Registration: \$15 (includes hot lunch)

Deadline: July 1, 2004

Make check out to: EPGSA

Mail to: John Tyler, 8 Spencer Street, Apt #1, Carbondale, PA 18407

AUGUST 8: Intergroup PICNIC

11AM-5PM

Ruffed Grouse Pavilion
Rocky Ridge County Park

DRUNK DREAMS *continued from page 1*

thing in the world is for me to drink. Only later in the dream do I begin to feel uneasy. That's when the rationalization starts. "Well, my dream-self will say, 'I'll stop after this one.'" Or, "just a couple of beers can't hurt me." My favorite is "after all this time sober, I can handle it."

I don't believe any of this. Since getting sober I've never had these thoughts consciously. But here they are, loud and clear, in my dreams. So, what does it mean? The first time I had a drunk dream, I called my sponsor in a panic thinking I had lost the program; that I was about to actually get drunk. He assured me drunk dreams are normal for most recovering alcoholics; that they are an indication that we are still drunks no matter how long we've been sober or how well we work the program. Most of all, they are dreams and can't become real unless we give them power over us by believing we will get drunk. I accepted his assurances then and I offer much the same thing to men I sponsor today. But I'd like to add a bit more. I believe drunk dreams are the means by which my disease still talks to me in its loudest, most insistent voice. During my waking hours my disease must content itself with whispers such as "you're no good and you never will be," or "you can't do this thing; why even try." Sometimes, my disease talks to me without using any specific thoughts at all. I'll simply feel irritable, self-pitying or some other form of self-centeredness. But in my dreams, my disease is in my face and telling me "you're a drunk and you want to drink, so drink. You can handle it. You know you want to. No one will know. You can stop anytime you want."

Drunk dreams seem to happen less when I am in a good spiritual space. When I am agitated or trying to control things I can't control, drunk dreams will happen more often. I can go many months without a dream but I don't think I've ever gone more than a year without having one. Today, as unpleasant as they are drunk dreams no longer cause me much worry. I recognize them for the symptoms they are. When they occur, I try to take a spot check inventory to see where I might be falling off the beam. Am I trying to control people or circumstances? Is fear becoming a problem once again and, if so, why have I not surrendered these fears? Maybe, I've fallen into a rut spiritually and need to change something or get more involved in carrying the message.

Seen in this light, my drunk dreams are, for me, a necessary, if painful, reminder that in AA, you grow or you go.

STEP FOUR

Anonymous

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a newcomer named John who was very uneasy about taking his Fourth Step, so he had put it off for weeks. Finally, one Sunday his Sponsor showed up at his door unexpectedly and said to him, "Get in the car. We're taking a little ride." Out in the country, the Sponsor stopped by a freshly plowed field, got out and opened the trunk of his car. He pulled out a gunny sack and handed it to John and said, "John, you see those field stones out there in the field? Well, they represent your resentments, frustrations, fears and shortcomings. I want you to fill up this sack with those stones until they feel about equal to how heavy you think your problems are." John filled his sack with 70 - 80 pounds of stone and turned to look at his Sponsor, who said, "Now throw that sack over your shoulder and go down to that end of the field and come back.", and John trudged on down and back again. Then he said, "Now go up to the other end of the field and come back.", and John panted his way up and back. Then he said, "Now go back down to the other and again and come back." John struggled down to the end and back again, sweating and panting for breath, feeling overheated and angry. "How long do I have to keep carrying these damned rocks?" cried John. "Well, John, they're YOUR resentments, angers and shortcomings. How long do you WANT to carry them?" We never deny an alcoholic their right to suffer.

HISTORY

District 45 Archives needs your help. District 45 Archives is now collecting oral, written and photographic history of AA in York County for use at Workshops, Assemblies and Conventions as exhibits. Any letters, photos, memories or artifacts that you may have are sincerely solicited. You will retain your articles unless you request the services of District 45 Archives for preservation for future generations. Group histories and "old-timers" memories are also sought. If you can help in any way, please contact:

Bernie K.
(717) 993-3316
(717) 318-0589

MY STEP FOUR *continued from page 1*

The top of the first column was labeled "I am resentful at" under which I listed people, institutions or principles. The second column was labeled "I'm resentful because". I was encouraged to be honest. No matter how petty the reasons seemed I listed them and kept it brief. The third column is "How this person, institution or principle affects me". The affected was many times my pride, money security, sex relations and self-esteem. I was told not to complete the fourth column until I did the first three. The last column was labeled "My actions that contributed to the resentment". I could not imagine that I had contributed to my own resentment at first but I was reminded that the suggestion was to do the first three columns and my sponsor would help with the fourth later.

I really loved my resentments and I loved to justify them to any one that would listen; this made me feel "better than". Little did I know that resentment did nothing but make me spiritually sick. Step four was deeply spiritual for me. Every moment spent resenting someone or something pushed me farther away from God. I was told that I have no right to be resentful toward any one including myself. (Regrets are resentments toward your self. I had to list regrets too.) One of my "good" excuses for drinking was to feel better because I was mad at so and so and this is what they did to poor little me. This type of thinking was something I had to stop or I would drink again. I had to treat those who upset me as if they were sick. Love and tolerance, it was so much easier to write than to practice in all of my affairs. It was also pointed out to me that those whom I resented were just not doing what I thought they should be doing, more self-centeredness. When I decided what other people should do I immediately created expectations which were doomed to become resentments. It was suggested to me to look in the Big Book for the word resentment on the following pages: **64, 66, 70, 117, 145, 325 and 552.**

Now about that fourth column. This was the spiritual part for me. I was asked to examine actions on my part that caused the resentment. No person has ever caused me to be resentful. I caused me to be resentful. I choose to resent, be angry and even hate or now I can choose to forgive, accept people as they are and to love all people even those I don't like all that much. I was told that we are all God's children and I should treat other people like a creation of God's because they are. Identifying my role was difficult. I had to ask myself how I agitated others, fostered ill will, did I make something out of nothing, did I distort the truth, did I intentionally seek out those I resented to confront them and so on. All I really needed to do was think back to what people had already said to me. I was many times accused of doing these very same things but I was never willing to be honest with myself.

People have been telling me for years what was wrong with me; I just didn't listen. A moment of clarity came the first time I admitted to myself that I and only I am the cause

any resentment I ever had or ever will have. All I needed to do to rid myself of resentment was pray for the person I resented. Try it, pick one person you resent; pray for them everyday for two weeks.

The next inventory was my fear inventory. In the Big Book (page 67) fear is described as "an evil corroding thread, responsible for circumstances that we did not deserve and fear ought to be classed with stealing". I was completely fear driven. Fear for me was the result of a lack of faith. I never thought I got what I deserved or needed. I feared other less deserving people would get the things I wanted and needed and I believed that if I used my will I could get everything. I did not realize that God always gave me what I needed. My fears were always larger than real life too. I used my fears to project what would happen in certain situations. The only way my projections would come true was if I used my will to make things happen. My fears never had much truth to them. I feared open and honest relationships with others; I feared being hurt but always destroyed any meaningful relationship and ended up feeling hurt (resentment). I feared that people would find out about the turmoil that existed in my home and that it was actually important to the world. Fact is people already knew and I'm just not that important. I feared that people would discover that my life was one lie after another. I feared living my life the way I had for far too many years and only saw one way to escape that fear. I feared admitting to myself that I am an alcoholic which points out the lie that fears really are. Today I consider being an alcoholic that is a member of A.A. a blessing and nothing to fear.

Again my fears inventory had four columns. The first column was labeled "Things I fear" and I listed all of my fears. Some of the people, institutions and principles on my resentment list made it onto my fear list. The second column was "Why do I fear them?" Again this was self explanatory and required a good dose of honesty. The third column was "How am I contributing to this fear?" I was asked to look at my selfishness and self centeredness again to find the answers. The last column was "What is a better way?" Basically I had to turn my fears over to God and trust Him. I was reminded that God will not give me something that I can not handle with Him.

Step four was about finding out what God wants me to be. The negative traits and behaviors that I inventoried were a result of my alcoholism. Step four helped me identify the source of all my problems, me, self-will and the solution, God and God's-will. Below is a prayer I said when I worked my fourth step:

Dear God, it is I who have made my life a mess. I have done it, but I cannot undo it. I desperately need Your help. My mistakes are mine, and I will begin a searching and fearless truth-finding inventory. I will write down the exact nature of my wrongs. I pray for the strength to complete the task. Amen.

The Alcoholic

Rose H.

I had a bad day, I need a drink,
I just react I don't think!

One drink and I'll head for the door,
But I can't stop, I need one more.

What did I do, I can't remember last week,
Where is my car? I must hunt and seek.

Another day another drink I must take,
Fourth time this month, for work I am late.

I'm driving my friends and family crazy, my boss is mad,
Drinking is supposed to feel good, but it is oh so bad.

I'm sick and tired, my excuses are lame,
I've lost everything and alcohol is the blame!

So off to AA. I hesitantly go,
They are all sober! What do they know?

I listened, I learned, I gave it a try
AA. is awesome, my oh my.

As a true alcoholic, I'll tell you brother,
AA. is so good, I think I'll have another! (meeting that is)

... and a ...

Anonymous

My name is Dumbo and I'm an alcoholic. And a drug addict. And a heroin addict. And a crack addict. And a free-base addict. And a sex addict. And a gambling addict. And a cigarette addict. And a food addict. And an emotions addict. And a dog addict. And a coffee addict. And an "and a" addict. I want to be someone special, someone more important than you, someone more desperate than you, someone MORE than you. I feel really sorry for myself, and I think you should feel sorry for me, too. I think you should understand that I am worse off than you and that that is why I use so many curse words. Because I'm special, you should know that I'm already familiar with some of these Steps, especially the ones that don't work. I don't care about your "singleness of purpose", whatever that's supposed to be. I also don't care about that "injuring others" baloney. Grow up, for crying out loud. I have a right to name myself anything I want. Get used to it. That "unity" bull is just an excuse to make me do something I don't want to do. You don't REALLY care about me, or you would do things MY way. I KNOW that it is YOUR job to get me sober, but you aren't doing a very good job of it. It's all your fault. And a ... That's only SOME of the reasons why I'm an "and a" addict

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Meet and Eat Group April Speakers Schedule
April 2: Larry S. 12 years
April 9: Spanish Pam 14 years
April 16: Darryl D. 8 years
April 23: Patricia L. 34 years
April 30: Jim P. 45 years
Home Groups send me your speakers schedule and it will be printed in The Road. Also send me names of home group members celebrating anniversaries I will print those too.

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.

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