



The Road

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



Volume 1, Issue 11

York Area Intergroup

May 2004

Termites of My Soul

ANONYMOUS

My son started his first job today. That may not sound like much to most people and I suppose it isn't much to anyone except him. But to me his first job is another one of those milestones on my road of recovery because it is likely I wouldn't have lived to see it had I kept on drinking. My son was only three when I found AA. He'll be 19 in about six weeks. My drinking was pretty bad by then. It was almost daily except for hangover days when I was too sick to drink; just the smell of a beer turned my stomach. But my health wasn't the only thing getting worse. I was beginning to do some things that I had never done. One of them was to become physically as well as verbally abusive to my little boy. One night his mother stopped me from shaking him like a rag doll in a foolish attempt to make him stop crying. I was in and out of a blackout at the time; but I remember enough that I still cringe at the thought of it. My son had stayed awake longer than he should have waiting for his Dad to come home and read him his favorite bedtime story. When I finally staggered in I was literally seeing double. If you've ever tried to read anything in that condition you know how frustrating it can be. Add a crying kid to the mix and any active drunk would have felt justified in getting a little upset...right? It's not a pleasant thing to look upon the man I was then.

After I came into AA and started working the steps events like the night I abused my son showed up on my fourth step inventory. I discussed this with my sponsor and became willing to turn it over in my fifth and sixth steps. In the seventh, I gave it to God as best I could. I've been taking it back and turning it over repeatedly ever since.

Cont'd on page 2, see **Termites**

STEP 5

ANONYMOUS

Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

As alcoholics, we have suffered for years under misconceptions and misinformation and skewed personal values. We have seen our alcoholism as a moral issue instead of an illness. We have been filled with guilt and shame because we gave up our morals when we **HAD TO** have another drink. Since coming into A.A., we have often struggled with ideas that are new to some of us as we try to work the Steps to the best of our ability. Now we face a daunting challenge in Step Five --- to be honest and thorough with someone else about what we have done and the reasons why.

Almost without exception, we still have unrealistic expectations about how this is going to work. We **KNOW** that our guilt and shame are going to beat us into the ground, and we desperately shy away from revealing the worst of our experiences. We know how we feel about what we have done --- the anger and self-loathing --- and we expect that any decent person would hate us for what we did. **BUT** --- after we really get down to the real thing with the right person -- usually our Sponsor -- we are amazed at the acceptance, love, and understanding we are shown. The illness aspect of alcoholism is accentuated. We are reminded that we are not alone in our experiences or in our recovery. Almost invariably, we experience a vast sense of relief that the whole truth is finally out and we lived through it.

This Step is **ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL** in clearing away the wreckage of our past. It opens the door to a new way of living. It literally gives us a new life.

Cont'd on page 3, see **STEP 5**

EVENTS CALENDAR

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 Dise-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

Termites *continued from page 1*

You see, the verbal abuse I inflicted on my son continued well into recovery. I would scream at him for not keeping his room clean, for not taking out the trash, for not calling if he was going to be late coming home from the mall, etc. My son seems to have taken his raging Dad in stride. In fact, I suspect I probably looked like a paper tiger to him since after most of these outbursts I would make my amends and spend a great deal of time beating myself up for being a terrible father. My sponsor assured me all this was totally unnecessary. He reminded me that a parent has to discipline his child. When I explained my behavior to him he would agree that a calmer approach would have been better but he didn't see what I was doing as abusive. I suppose that's a matter of opinion. All I can say for sure is as I continue to grow spiritually yelling at my son, or anyone, has become increasingly unacceptable to me.

Today I do much better and my relationship with my son is good. We do many things together even though he is showing more and more independence, which is as it should be. What I'm left with is the guilt. To me, guilt is just self-pity masquerading as humility. There is nothing humble in constantly berating myself for not being a perfect father. A truly humble person, as our literature says, takes a calm, objective view of himself accepting what he finds for what it is and, through the steps, trying to correct what is most objectionable. An essential part of this process is to take proper account of the assets as well as the liabilities found in any honest moral inventory. My disease, of course, kicks against this sane and rational approach. It wants me to morbidly rehash a single night from nearly sixteen years ago as if by feeling miserable all over again I could somehow wipe it completely off the ledger. Like termites, these thoughts nibble away at my soul and rob me of serenity and, more importantly, my full potential as a loving father to my son in the one period in his life when I can still make a positive contribution; the present.

Termites, as everyone knows, are parasites that thrive and multiply in dark places hidden from view. They live on the vitals of the host and slowly devour it until, one day; a collapse reveals too late what damage has been done. A house cannot be sold until it first passes a termite inspection. Later, a wise homeowner will watch for telltale signs of infestation so corrective measures can be taken before it's too late. These measures are usually beyond the capabilities of the average person so a professional is called to deal with the problem in a thorough and decisive manner. The one who relies on the professional would not think of interfering while the work is being done; common sense dictates that the matter be left in far more capable hands. And so, the termites are defeated and the structure can go on fulfilling its purpose.

Like the homeowner armed with the phone number of a good exterminator, I have all the tools for dealing with

stinking thinking at my fingertips if I will just use them. Something that helps to revive my sagging hopes is to imagine what my son's life might have been like had I never gotten sober. That night so long ago would have merely been the first of many such increasingly terrible episodes. How long would it have been before my wife would have been forced to flee the mad man I certainly would have become? If this isn't enough, I can always remember that during the last sixteen years my son wasn't the only child in our little family who has been growing up. His sober Dad has been learning to live life on life's terms right along side of him. Who am I to say that this example hasn't been at least partly good? It certainly has been far better than the example I would have been as a hopeless drunk.

So, if you should hear some nibbling sounds in the crawl spaces of your mind on some lonely and self-absorbed night don't despair. Reach for the phone and call your sponsor or ask the real Professional to exterminate those termites of your soul. Remember, they hate the light.

ACCEPTANCE

ANONYMOUS

When I was deep into my addiction, I couldn't accept anything. Everything was unfair because I couldn't get my way or have what I wanted when I wanted it. I raged at my powerlessness because it was what I feared the most. When I came into A.A., Chapter Five in the Big Book was specific about the need for honesty, and I learned how to acknowledge what is. Still didn't like it, but I was trying to learn to live life on life's terms.

Then I got deep into Steps 4-5-6-7 that teaches me how to change the way I think and act and feel and to learn the reasons why. It is often said that in the act of doing, we come to understand, and I eventually came to understand that I didn't have to stay powerless. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. But maybe you can make him thirsty.

Today, I am back to living life on MY terms, but my terms have changed. I now acknowledge that life is what it is, but I am no longer helpless in the face of what is. I no longer rage at the unfairness in the world, but try to influence it in a positive way. If no one stands up to be counted, then nothing changes. Today I want to be a part of the solution instead of part of the problem, and I like myself a whole lot better for trying to help instead of just cursing. How can YOU help to make this a better place?

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.

STEP 5 *continued from page 1*

Just like any new thing, it takes some time to learn what to do and how and why, but this is the point where we begin to put the past behind us and feel better every day.

Years from now, you will look back with gratitude and relief that you did a good job at this point. Do not carry your burden any longer. Name it out loud and then let it go.

Just Getting Started

Rose H.

I'm only eighteen days into a sober life. WOW is this ever hard! The alcohol felt better going in than going out of my body. The symptoms of getting sober are many and some are down right weird. For a four day period I felt like a bobble head doll. At times I felt like a gawky teenager. My arms and legs seem to have a mind of their own, just ask all the people that I have spilled coffee on. Speaking of my mind when does it get back to normal? It feels like my head is full of lumpy oatmeal making it hard to think. What is up with these drinking dreams? Apparently when I stopped putting alcohol in my body I forgot to tell my brain. Alcohol is wicked stuff! Maybe I pickled too many brain cells during my glory days of drinking. A.A. tells me that I need to change everything about my life. No one told me that my body would become a stranger to me also. Seriously I don't know what to expect next.

Everyone in the fellowship has been great. I feel like I have come home. For the first time in my life I feel understood instead of different. It is wonderful the way the rooms welcome a newcomer. I truly look forward to the meetings. I am learning so much about my disease. I really want what happy sober people have. The way that everyone shares makes a newcomer feel at ease. I am amazing at how it works but it does. I'm glad that I can see it working because I want to live a sober life. A.A. is truly great!

I have already found one benefit from staying clean; my garbage is much easier to take out. It is much lighter because it does not have all those empty bottles in it. Another benefit is how awesome ice cream taste now. I think I'm in love; looking forward to the next eighteen days one day at a time. Easy does it.

I like to write and I hope it is a way of doing service. If not well this will be good fodder for the bottom of a trash can. What counts is that I'm sober and writing helps me share. First things first! It does work if you work it.

DISTRICT 45 A.A. HISTORY

Bernie K.

Many of you are probably not aware of the rich history of A.A. in District 45. Did you know that the York Area Group was formed in 1946? Did you know that we still have many artifacts from those early days? Did you know that Bill Wilson sent a letter of congratulations to York Area Group for their 20th anniversary? Did you know that a book was written about our history and was published in 1990? Did you know that a new book is being planned for possible publication in 2005?

Many events have happened in the last fifteen years. Many new groups have come into being. We want to include everything. We want to include your group's history. We want your individual stories. We want to mention your artifacts. Help us.

District 45 Archives is beginning now to collect the stories. Have your Group Secretary write your history and sent it to District. If you need help, contact District 45 Archives Chairperson, Bernie K. at 993-3316 or at 318-0589. The Archives Committee will help your Group.

THE ORIGIN OF LAST CALL

During March of 2003 a few A.A. members of the now gone Colonial Group plus some new members decided to hold meetings in a sober house located at 149 North Queen Street in York. They hoped to keep an inner city meeting in York but did not have the means to do so officially at first. Business meetings were held to try and keep Colonial Group alive but circumstances prevented this from happening. Those of us meeting at 149 N. Queen Street started to look for a location to start a new group. We wanted to stay in the downtown York area and maintain a meeting schedule similar to what the Colonial Group had. We held meetings nightly at 7PM until we found a location in January of 2004. We meet at 205 East Philadelphia Street. The Last Call Group offers 16 meetings each week. A majority of A.A.s at the meetins are new-comers and we need people with some experience the carry the message. Despite criticism and constant controversy the message is carried at the Last call Group; come join us.

Have you been thinking about writing an article for "The Road"? Join us and share your wisdom.

June will mark the beginning of our second year.

Hope to hear from you.

**Tomorrow's hope means more
than yesterday's mistakes.**

The Four Absolutes

ANONYMOUS

So what are the four absolutes? I can't find them in the Big Book and I recently heard an old timer talking about them at the meeting before the meeting. I kept my mouth shut and just listen to him talk but I couldn't for the life of me remember reading about them. So I searched. A few weeks had passed and another old timer came in to the same meeting and said to me hey I have something I think you might like and he handed me a pamphlet entitled "The Four Absolutes". Isn't cool how this program works?

Where did the four absolutes come from? The four absolutes were borrowed from the Oxford Group. The Oxford Group is the predecessor of A.A. The four absolutes are not mentioned by name very often today but their essence is easily found in the Big Book. The four absolutes are not A.A. conference approved because when they were used by A.A. there was no such thing as "conference approval". "The Four Absolutes" pamphlet is still published by the Cleveland Central Committee of A.A. A copy can be ordered by calling the Intergroup at (216) 241-7387 (Cleveland) or (330) 253-8181 (Akron).

During the early days of A.A. before the Twelve Steps existed the Four Absolutes were used as a "yardstick" according to Dr. Bob. "Almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardstick of the absolutes and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can't be very far out of the way" state Dr. Bob in 1948.

Get The Road at home!

That's right you can have The Road delivered by e-mail. "What do I need to do?" you ask. It is easy; just e-mail me at the e-mail address listed below. Tell me that you would like the road e-mailed to you. "OK so what does it cost?" you ask. Nothing it is FREE! I will send it to your work e-mail if you wish too.

The Four Absolutes can help us discover God's will for us. Bill W. included the Four Absolutes in the Big Book when he describes steps 4,5,10 & 11 but he did not specifically mention them. He discussed what we alcoholics are more familiar with: resentment, fear, dishonesty and self-seeking. These are not God's will they are self will and the opposite of the Four Absolutes.

So what are the Four Absolutes? They are: honesty, unselfishness, love and purity. These are very useful for taking our own inventory and for deciding what the right thing to do is.

HONESTY may be the most difficult of the Four Absolutes for us to develop. We are very good at dishonesty not only with others but especially with our selves. How many years did it take us to admit that we can not control our drinking? I could list many more examples of how I've been dishonest to myself and I bet that the more I work the Steps the more examples I will discover. Honesty must be actively sought; it takes daily effort.

UNSELFISHNESS is a cornerstone of our spirituality. Service is to be done unselfishly. I always need to ask myself why I do service work. Do I do it to stay sober or do I do it to good for someone else? How do my actions affect others? If any of the things I do affect others in a negative way my actions may be selfish.

LOVE is a thing of beauty. We know little about beauty from our drinking and much about ugliness. To show love is to give of your self. Each of us is obligated to give back in return for the gift of a second life that we have been given. We have the opportunity to offer our selves to help another suffering alcoholic to discover a new way of living. Love is giving this gift away.

PURITY is the quality of our mind and heart. Purity is suggestion I often hear from my sponsor "Do the next right thing". We know what is right and wrong. We knew right from wrong even when drinking, alcohol just helps us forget about the right thing and made accepting the wrong a little easier while we were drunk but in the morning we knew.

There are four questions that will help us use the Four Absolutes in our recoveries: Is it true or false? How will this affect others? Is it ugly or beautiful? Is it right or wrong?

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.