

The Reprieve: District 8 AA Newsletter



"We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a **daily** reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."

Thu., July 13, 2017

Mason and Thurston Counties, Washington

4 pages.



Early Sunday morning at the Alano Club in Oly: a review of a simulated meeting.

The Sunday Morning AA Meeting at 7 at the Alano Club, which always starts promptly seven minutes late, is a horse of a different color.

Maybe by concept but more likely by impromptu design of some of the regulars who attend the meeting, there is a lot of good natured banter in working their way through the usual readings: the AA Preamble, How It Works, the Promises and the 12 Traditions and the Responsibility Statement.

The readings were sort of contracted out: various members at random read a Step, and there were ironic interruptions as when "At some of these we balked," and suddenly everyone in the room starts going balk! balk! balk!

Then someone reads a selection from *As Bill Sees It (ASBI)*. But the sharing on the reading is sincere, heartfelt and meaningful, sometimes with tears, sometimes with laughter. Sentences or phrases from the reading are often singled out and commented on.

And then it's over. A last comment, a burning desire, and then everyone stands and says The Lord's Prayer as we hold hands and say, shaking our hands, Keep coming back, it works if you work it. ●



Alano Club, 120 Olympia Ave., NE

PAULA'S STORY: *I love my recovery.*

Paula G. suggested we meet at her home. She has lived in Olympia for 24 years. The spacious and uncluttered house is brimming with sunlight on this glorious summer day, and the yard around has no grass, only flowers, most of them in raised beds, and edibles too, blueberries coming on strong, and some crunchy sweet sugar peas that she gave us right off the vine. Everything in the garden looks healthy and well tended. There's a hot tub by the patio, just outside the back door.

She shows me around the house, the poem on the wall about her father by one of her brothers, some family pictures on the wall of her office. There's her father, and a glamorous photo of her mother who was early on a famous singer of blues on the radio. She has a colorful tile-covered airtight stove in the main room of the house, of course not in use on this warm day.

Paula was born in 1956. She is 61.

Where were you born?

White Plains, New York, she says.

I knew that was just north of New York City. Grew up there? I ask. She nods.

What was growing up in White Plains like?

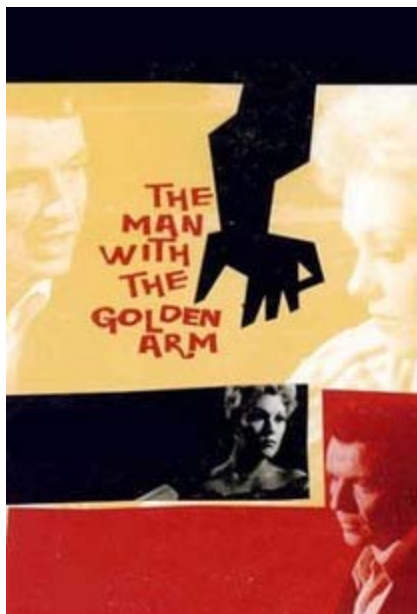
Privileged and affluent Paula says, laughing. She has curly blonde hair on top, cut short, merry hazel eyes, freckles and a frequent grin and laugh.

My father was head of an advertising firm. Mom was a housewife, a "princess." **I was raised in a wealth of the material but lived in a desert of emotional sharing and warmth.** We had everything material, but emotionally...nothing. Dead. My father was always gone. He was a workaholic. Mom was an alcoholic until I was 5. My father told her to sober up or he'd leave her, and so she did. But my father died of a heart attack early on. I was only 5. I had three older brothers. After Dad died everyone kind of went to their own part of the house and we didn't relate. I was raised by my mother, but she had no emotional skills. When Dad died, I thought uh-oh, I'm stuck with Mom...and she was unavailable. She was overwhelmed being a parent.

I got kicked out of private school for drinking when I was just 14. My mother sent me to the Devereux School for Emotionally Disturbed Children. It's near Philadelphia, 125 miles away. I was angry, a very angry kid. My mother was embarrassed. I was ostracized from the family. I was the one with the problems, the identified patient. I only went home on holidays.

What was it like then? I ask her.

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The Man with the Golden Arm: a review

It's 1955 and movies about drug addiction are not welcomed by the film board. Otto Preminger had to work to get Nelson Algren's 1949 book, "The Man with the Golden Arm," into the movies. Even then, the drug in question (heroin) could not be mentioned by name. Sixty-two years later, this seems quaint, and it may be wondered if the movie is worth viewing by people like us.

But the emotions played by Frank Sinatra as Frankie Machine are solidly done. Machine is a professional card dealer and drug addict newly out of prison and clean; and the two women in the movie who have an interest in him, Eleanor Parker as his wife, Zosh, and Kim Novak as his friend are also well acted. Good performances too by Darren McGavin as the drug dealer and ----- as Frankie's sidekick.

So we will watch Frankie's relapsing into drug use with interest, even while seeming inevitable to us, recognizing as we do his embracing the *don't's* of staying clean: *Don't* go back to your old haunts, *don't* go back to your old friends, and above all *don't* hang out with your former drug dealer, among others. Frankie still drinks, but apparently not to excess.

The best part and most authentic part of the movie is his self-detoxing. But the best scene is early on, when Frankie, just out of prison, comes back to the old neighborhood and sees through the window of an old haunt, a bar and watches, briefly, his old drug dealer teasing a one-armed drunk into dancing a jig to get a drink of whiskey. It's a sad moment and an emblem of the depths to which alcoholism drive us.



The Reprieve is published monthly by District 8 of Washington AA for Mason and Thurston Counties. Contact the editor, Charley K., through their website at newsletter@aadistrict8.org Or phone him at 785-564-1118, leave a message and he will likely return your call the same day. We appreciate your comments and suggestions for improvement. We welcome your contributions.

There will be a print copy of each issue in your group's announcement folder. If you want the newsletter sent to your email, go to the District 8 website aadistrict8.org and sign up. The newsletter will come to your mailbox as a pdf.

Contact us by email through the website to leave a comment, or when you have news or an article that you think might be of interest to your fellow alcoholics in Mason and Thurston counties.

There stands the glass by Webb Pierce

Take five minutes off and go to Google and type in *You Tube, Webb Pierce singing "There Stands the Glass"* and watch and hear him sing this great alcohol-soaked tune all dressed up in his music note suit. Pierce was the most popular country singer of his day, and a hard drinker himself. The lyrics printed below suggest that he knew very good and well what he was writing and singing about.



There stands the glass that will ease all my pain
 That will settle my brain-- it's my first one today.
 There stands the glass that will hide all my tears
 That will drown all my fears, brother I'm on my way.
 I'm wondering where you are tonight
 I'm wondering if you are all right
 I wonder if you think of me in my misery.
 There stands the glass, fill it up to the brim
 Til my troubles grow dim, it's my first one today

---Webb Pierce

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Oh, it was horrible, Paula says with a laugh. Nothing there. It was not home, it was just wandering around in this mansion, no community at all.

I graduated from high school at Devereux, and then I went off to college.

Where'd you go? I ask her.

To the University of Montana in Missoula.

Why there?

I opened up a map and saw the name Missoula, and I thought why not there? I don't remember much about the place because I was always loaded. I liked hard alcohol, sweet drinks, I'd get loaded, throw up and have a good time. **I smoked dope alone, drank with other people.**

My first day there I got out my bag of pot walked down the dormitory hall asked a gal I never met before to get high (she became my closest lifetime friend and she was not addicted to anything) and hiked up a mountain next to the university to watch the sun set in a cannabis cloud of smoke.

I majored in criminology, played lots of racketball, and spent time partying with lots of other people. I had a love affair with pot, I loved what it did for me. I drank too, of course, hard alcohol, tequila especially. My favorite place to hang out was called the Top Hat.

Why did you study criminology?

It was something I could relate to, Paula said.

I was in graduate school at the University of Seattle by the time I got sober. I was working in the youth jail also at the time, in addictions and rehab counseling.

Why did you choose Seattle?

I thought that it would provide me with good employment opportunities and it was a good graduate school.

I got sober on February 3, 1983. I was then 27 years old. I got sober because I was so unhappy. I was digging through my garbage can looking for my drugs, and suddenly I thought "what am I doing?". That was my moment of clarity. Here I was 27, a graduate student, and I was going through the garbage pail.

I realized then I had a problem. I entered recovery because I was sick in my soul. I had no legal problems and my outsides looked great. But a pretty wrapping can hide an enormous amount of emotional compost.

I had a problem, and that's when I started going to AA. It was what my mom did when she realized she had to sober up; so that's what I did. I went to Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first meetings I thought they were all religious freaks, but I kept going back. I fell in love with it later when I let down my defenses. I did not announce it was my first meeting or frankly say anything until I had quite a while in and could give the false impression I knew what I was talking about.

We both laugh.

I went there daily before work at a juvenile detention facility. I did not have a sponsor until I was three years sober.

Did having a sponsor change things? I asked. The pace? The focus?

It forced me to be honest and live in the steps.

Scariest moment in recovery was after doing my very first 4th step: I broke out in hives all over my body. After doing the 4th Step I realized that I was not as different as others in AA.

Most meaningful thing in my recovery was writing a love letter to my mom for Christmas as an amends. It instantly restored a broken relationship which had been fueled by my expectations for her to be something she was not. Doing this has positively impacted every relationship I have been in since then with friends, family and my partner.

How so?

I gained more acceptance, compassion and love for others. I became more flexible and less judgmental.

My mom died at age 83 and I was there to hold her hand as we became quite close after my amends. I miss her deeply today.

In 1993 I moved here to Olympia, got hired to run a place for chemically dependent pregnant women. I did this for twenty years. Then in 2013 I went into private practice. I preferred to do my own thing, sitting and talking one on one.

My recovery made it possible to have some great adventures and, for example, go to an AA meeting in Kenya with tribal members there with their spears and shield. Recovery made it possible to grow up and not be so selfish and ego driven.

I expected everyone to give me a parade just for being sober when no one else cared. But my mother said when I told her I'd sobered up she all she said was "That's nice."

Before recovery my happiest place was the Top Hat bar in Missoula Montana or being totally blitzed out in the woods. **Today the happiest place for me is either in the garden at home with my partner, in a meeting, or spending time with my family whom I love with all my heart. I love my three big brothers. I wasn't able to truly love anyone before my recovery.**

I used to go to Happy Hour five days a week. Now I go to 2 or 3 meetings a week, and I sponsor people. I have lived here in this house for 11 years.

I love AA because there were no rules and I was allowed to just be me no matter how tacky I was in a meeting. I was shown grace.

In 2008 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's. In 2012 I had brain surgery. They put probes in my brain for the PD, so I could walk.

Feel the bumps, Paula said. She leans forward and I feel two distinct bumps on her head.

I'm really wired, she says.

Weren't we all, I said, and we both laughed.

I'm good for about 9 years So 2021...then I'm hoping for something else.

My friends help me with the continual progressive acceptance required of this journey. AA helped me see that we all get something as we age. I was 53 when I was diagnosed. It has helped me to deal with this. I am not a victim. I get on with my life the best I can. I have learned to ask for help when needed. Step 3—"Turn my will and my life over to the care of God

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as I understand Him”— keeping this in mind is essential for my well-being.

The character defect that causes the most trouble for me and others is believing the lie that I know what is best for others and try to be a bossy pants in others lives. **Thinking I know more than their higher power is delusional, and utterly ridiculous.**

Where did you get your witty and sometimes saucy manner?

My witty manner, Paula says, grinning, was a family trait that we all practiced at the dinner table till I was 13 and before I went off to Devereux.

But life today is pretty sweet. I spend time at the gym to walk a couple miles per day and lift weights, in the summertime I garden as I am able, I read, go to meetings, spend time with friends, go to movies, work with sponsees,, but mostly I laugh a lot at myself and life.

In “Fantasia” a silent cartoon movie by Disney set to classical music there is a scene of dancing elephants and other animals in tutus. They are joyful, funny and appear to be having a great time. That, essentially, is my recovery. •

We are grateful to Paula for sharing her story.

The 7/27 Challenge to help fund AA

How about it? On 7/27--that's July 27--you are invited/implored to contribute \$7.27 to the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous by writing a check for that amount or giving in cash earmarked for the GSO of Alcoholics Anonymous. Give at your Home Group.

Somebody Up There in New York has figured out that if everyone in AA were to donate \$7.27 on that date, AA would be solvent for a solid year.

Doesn't seem like a lot to ask...skip that burger and power drink and instead, give to our beautiful and life-saving Program!

We are not a glum lot!



An unreconstructed drunk walked into a psychiatrist's office. Doc, he said, you gotta help me, my brother's crazy, he thinks he's a chicken! Well, the doctor said, bring him in and I'll fix him. The drunk shrugged, Well, I can't--we need the eggs.



Elmer, a tipling farmer, owned two farms five miles apart. When the well went dry on one, he herded his hogs to the other twice every day so they could drink water. "But Elmer," a friend said, "doesn't that take a lot of time?"

"Yes, it does," Elmer said. "But what's time to a hog?"



So this drunk walks into a bar, sits down and demands a drink. "Get out" says the bartender. "I don't serve drunks here." The drunk staggers out the front door only to come back in through the side door. He sits at the bar, bangs his fist and demands a drink. "I just told you to get out, didn't I? Now LEAVE!". The drunk gets off his stool, stumbles out the side door and, comes back inside through the back door. Once again, he sits at the bar and loudly asks for a drink. The bartender, now glaring mad, looks at the drunk and yells "I TOLD YOU, NO DRUNKS ALLOWED, NOW GET OUT!!!". The drunk looks up at the bartender and slurs "How many bars do you work at, anyway?"