

# The Reprieve: District 8



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

September 10, 2018

Mason and Thurston Counties, Washington State

4 pages



## THE SERENITY PRAYER, THEN AND NOW

AA is a great program and it works in large part because it is simply common sense.

The Serenity Prayer is a great prayer because it's common sense.

The SP we say over and over—sometimes several times a day or more—as we know it and say it was written by one Reinhold Niebuhr, a famous American philosopher and theologian who lived from 1892-1971. (At left.)



Here's the official account from p. 196 of *Coming of Age: a brief history of Alcoholics Anonymous*: ...a news clipping whose

content was to become famous was called to our attention by a New York member, newsman Jack. It was an obituary notice from a New York paper. Underneath a routine account of the one who had died there appeared these words: "God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot

continued on page 3, bottom



## Now Hear This!?

When I was a kid sailing the seven seas old Bertolini, the bo'sun of the watch, would get on the horn at midnight as we sailed the North Atlantic. First he'd blow into the thing to make sure it was turned on. Then he'd say Now hear this! Now hear this! We are x miles from New York and we are x miles from Bremerhaven. And then he would say, in a voice that always made me think of Dracula, All ships clocks will be retarded one hour during the night.

This is what I think of when I think about my hearing. Now at 80 I don't hear this. I don't hear that, either. At meetings I lean toward my wife and fellow member and whisper, What'd she say? What'd he say? Because I don't hear. Though we attend 5 to 7 meetings a week, I'd guess I don't hear 35% of the sharings—some meetings less, some meetings more. And when I look at the other old folks in meetings, I'd guess they have just as much trouble as I do.

At the beginning I thought this was just a case of bad hearing aids. So I got new ones and cranked them up and...I couldn't hear much better. Of course the obvious thing is to be as close to the speaker as possible, and read his or her lips if at all possible. (This skill comes naturally to us as we strain to hear.) But in a large meeting, and most of the meetings I've been to in District 8 are fairly large, you can't sit close to everybody.

And, hey, this is AA, and not every sharer wants to be heard. Some pull their caps down, some look this way or that, some look up as if they were talking to God (and they probably are) and some even look down at the

floor. Many lower their voices or put their hands over their mouths, or raise their voice and then suddenly lower their voice. This isn't Toastmasters, it's AA.

For all that, most of those present seem to get it. They laugh, they smile, they nod their head, they understand what the sharer is saying. And I don't. I'm missing something. I'm missing a lot.

Sure, I understand, it's important just to be there, to be present and accounted for. That's big. And for many of the speakers, the important thing to them is to speak, to feel they are there with us, they are members too.

But it's still frustrating not to hear what my brothers and sisters in AA are saying. So I've given it all some thought.

Somewhere in there in blaming the room and others I got to thinking about, hey, maybe it's me.

You can't hear if you don't listen.

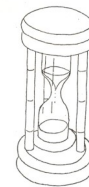
Why would I not listen if I say I want to hear? The fact is, even taking into account age-related hearing loss, chain-saw and heating with wood for 40 years hearing loss, loud-music hearing loss, a good part of what I don't hear is because of ambient noises in my own head.

I have voices in my head—lots of them. I have been an anxiety case since I was a young kid. I have had voices in my head ever since then. With AA they have lessened, but they are still there. These voices are saying, Oh, what are you going to say? Or,

continued on page 3, top

# JOURNALING IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

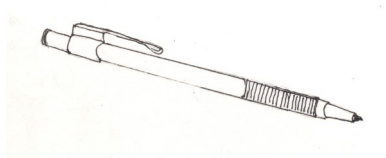
In almost any meeting it's not unusual to see someone writing...taking notes or writing in a spiral notebook. And maybe some of those folks diddling a smart phone are actually writing in a journal...who can say? Certainly if you ask anyone in AA if they keep a journal, it's quite common to get a yes answer.



If you do keep a journal for your life and/or your life in AA, it's a good idea not to be too particular about what you write. That is, don't dot every i and cross every t and don't obsess about spelling or grammar. Just get the basic words down, the ideas or whatever it is your working on. Don't try to write the last draft first. By all means if your way is working for you, do it your way.

Our 4th Step is usually written out, and if you do it in a journal, it'll be there for you to elaborate later on. You can always edit a page, but it's hard to edit a blank page.

If you journal at night, a 10th Step entry--"continued to take a personal inventory"--is a good idea. It's easy to forget the good stuff you did as well as the not-so-good.



**Here are ten suggestions to get you started and keep you going :**

- 1. Set a minimum number of words and write that number at least, every day.**
- 2. Write in the same place if at all possible.**
- 3. Write at about the same time if at all possible.**
- 4. Write whatever you feel like writing. The only bad writing is a blank page.**
- 5. Don't think in front of a blank page or screen. Keep a list of writing prompts at hand .**
- 6. Don't show your journal to anybody.**
- 7. Don't edit or rework your writing. Write fast and let it go.**
- 8. Don't go back and re-read what you've written.**
- 9. Use photos if you have them. Think of writing long captions. Don't worry about being organized.**
- 10. Don't skip a day. Better to write any old thing than not at all**

The old joke goes that if you take an infinite number of monkeys and give them an infinite number of typewriters and an infinite amount of time, then they will write all the great books.

The late great comedian Bob Newhart did a routine about a couple of lab technicians in attendance with the infinite number of monkeys. It's very funny and it's been preserved on You Tube. Check it out for a wonderfully hilarious couple of minutes.

Nor is this monkey conundrum just an old joke--it's really a serious mathematical probability inquiry. According to Wikipedia, no less, the infinite monkey theorem states that a monkey hitting keys at random on a typewriter keyboard for an infinite amount of time will almost surely type a given text, such as the complete works of Shakespeare.



**The Reprieve** is published monthly, more or less, by District 8 of Washington AA for Mason and Thurston Counties. This is the September, 2018 issue, made available electronically on Mon., September 10, 2018.

You may contact the editor, Charley K., through their website

[newletter@aadistrict8.org](mailto:newletter@aadistrict8.org)

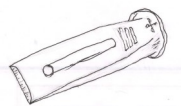
or phone him at 785-564-1118, leave a message and he will likely return your call the same day.

We appreciate your comments and suggestions for improvement. We welcome your contributions of articles.

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](http://aadistrict8.org) and sign up. The newsletter will come to your mailbox as a pdf.

June K. did the art and layout of this issue.

"The thin edge of the wedge."



## Now Hear This! ? *continued*

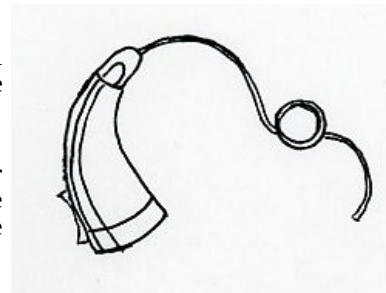
look at that guy over there with the Texas cap on his head, or the woman with a babe in arms, or...just about anything. My eyes and my mind take it all in and the voices in my head all take note.

It's my job to at least lower some of these voices. The work of lowering my anxiety level is at least some of my work in AA. Problem is that, as with all my problems, the closer I get to solving them the more they are there to some degree. Patience, patience, and more patience is required. Meditation and prayer. And a new battery when required!

There are other problems that interfere with hearing that afflict old people. For example, as we age, we cannot process what we hear as rapidly as younger people. We are not stupid, just slow.

Thanks for letting me share. (I hope you were able to hear me!) --Charley K., home group Foglifters in Olympia.

If you have something to share on this or any other topic and would like to, please send it to the editor and we'll get it in the next issue.



## Serenity Prayer...*continued*

*from page 1 page 3*

change, courage to change the things I can and wisdom to know the difference."

Never had we seen so much AA in so few words. While Ruth and I were admiring the prayer, and wondering how to use it, friend Howard walked into the office. Confirming our own ideas, he exclaimed, "We ought to print this on cards and pop one into every piece of mail that goes out of here. I'll pay for the first printing." For several years afterward we followed his suggestion and with amazing speed the Serenity Prayer came into general use and took its place alongside our two other favorites the Lord's Prayer and the Prayer of St. Francis.

No one can tell for sure who first wrote the Serenity Prayer. Some say it came from the early Greeks; others think it was from the pen of an anonymous English poet; still others claim it was written by an American naval officer; and Jack Alexander, who once researched the matter, attributes it to the Rev. Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary. Anyhow, we have the prayer and it is said thousands of times daily. We count its writer among our great benefactors.

But consider these prayers, mantras, incantations or just wise sayings—whatever you want to call them—that came before the SP.

Mother Goose (who could have more common sense than her?)—

For every ailment under the sun  
There is a remedy, or there is none;  
If there be one, try to find it;  
If there be none, never mind it.  
(1729)



Or going back a lot further in history and maybe a bit more respectably, to the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55 to 135 AD)—pictured below. He advises:

"Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens.

An Indian scholar suggested:

If there's a remedy when trouble strikes,  
What reason is there for dejection?  
And if there is no help for it,  
What use is there in being glum?

The only trouble with these ancient words is that they are not prayers, and without the attitude of prayer there is no humility. And, as the 12 and 12 of AA says, without humility, we have n't much.



Thanks to Frank B. for his help with this article.

