

# 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."

Nov.9, 2017

Mason and Thurston Counties, Washington

4 pages.



## THE BIG BOOK

Alcoholics Anonymous, the book, has never been on the New York Times Best Seller list. It took 36 years to sell a million copies. But it has been designated one of the 88 "Books That Shaped America." It has been translated into 67 languages. So far it has sold close to 40 million copies.

The first draft of the book was written by a man who had less than four years' sobriety and completed by a group of men and women who had even less.

The fact that it was a cooperative effort, according to an AA press release, "reflecting the shared experience and consensus of the small membership then (nearly 100 members of the new organization) set in motion the democratic process of decision-making that characterizes A.A. today."

A.A. membership has grown to over two million with a presence in more than 170 countries. In District 8 there are about 120 meetings a week. Does anyone have a calculation as to how many active members there are in our District?

## On the road with Alcoholics Anonymous

If you have never travelled and gone to AA meetings on the road and you're going on a road trip, you are in for a treat. AA is everywhere. There is no time of day or night that any number of AA meetings are not being held throughout the world. A friend tells of attending meetings in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, and while another tells of attending what is supposedly the largest meeting in the world, the meetings of the Pacific Group in Southern California, yet another tells about a meeting of two people on Christmas morning in a tiny town in Kansas.

This doesn't happen because AA is widely promoted; it happens because AA is attractive—AA attracts us because we have found a common solution to our common problem.

But meetings are not always easy to find. If you are traveling through a sizeable town in the USA, and can arrange your schedule to fit, then no problem. Most cities have meetings morning, noon and night. Pick a city at random—say Cheyenne, Wyoming—and google AA meetings in Cheyenne—and you will easily find a meeting and probably at a time when you can make it if you're talking between 6 am and 10 pm. Simply google map the address and follow the GPS right to the door.

Usually the meeting in question will have a sign, but not always. You may find yourself at the right building (a church, a town hall, a school, sometimes even a police station—don't be alarmed!) but the building may be like the one we went to in Laramie, Wyoming, just a few weeks ago. We were directed to Room 260. It was Sunday morning. The huge building (later we found out it was the town's old high school) had several entrances—many entrances. We took our morning walk by going to various doors that were locked up tight as a tick until we finally went (counterintuitively) to the high capacity front doors where people were streaming in...and this turned out to be a church's services. None of the well-dressed and very courteous folks we asked seemed to know anything of an AA meeting.

We figured a room called 260 would be on the second floor. So we walked up the long stairs to the second floor. It seemed we found every single room with 2 something on the door except for 260. One room we opened the door of looked like a Sunday School class in session. Oops, 'cuse us, we said, and started to close the door. Oh, come on in, the leader, running a slide projector, said. Welcome. Is this an AA meeting? we asked. Everyone laughed. No, but you're welcome! We smiled and said thank you and went on.

*continued on p. 3*

## Movies for People Like Us



This may be the most famous movie about alcoholism ever made. It was released in 1945, and Ray Milland's strong performance as an alcoholic would-be writer won him an Oscar for Best Actor. Jane Wyman also gives a good performance as his loving girlfriend, and Howard da Silva is great as the bartender. (Only in a drunk movie would a bartender be playing a major role.)

This plot summary from Wikipedia will serve: Writer Don Birnam (Ray Milland) is on the wagon. Sober for only a few days, Don is supposed to be spending the weekend with his brother, Wick (Phillip Terry), but, eager for a drink, Don convinces his girlfriend (Jane Wyman) to take Wick to a show. Don, meanwhile, heads to his local bar and misses the train out of town. After recounting to the bartender how he developed a drinking problem, Don goes on a weekend-long bender that just might prove to be his last.

The Lost Weekend is an engrossing film, but finally it was, at least for this AA, a bit unsatisfying.

What does he do differently to sober up? He doesn't join AA, though it was around then and had been for several years. His girlfriend re-affirms her love for him and that she is going to stand by him no matter what, and he makes his own re-dedication to writing his book about his own drinking (called, rather tritely, *The Bottle*)...it just doesn't add up to recovery. It looks like the same-old, same old--yet another "frothy emotional appeal."

But this movie has some great scenes. Some of the best are at the beginning when we watch Birnam's manipulation of his girl friend and brother so that he can sneak drinking into his life even as he is supposedly staying dry—classic alcoholic behavior. His going to a hospital alcoholic ward and his experience with delirium tremens are also well done.



**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](mailto: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](http://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.

\$10 Tickets Before or At the Door  
 Turkey, Ham, Mashed Potatoes & Gravy provided.  
 Please bring Side Dishes by last table.  
 A-R: Hors d'oeuvres    F-Z: Salads  
 K-R: Side Dishes    S-Z: Desserts  
 Speaker! Raffle! Door Prizes!  
 Alcoholics Anonymous District 8  
**Gratitude Banquet**  
 November 11th  
 4:00 PM – 8:30 PM  
 Olympia High School  
 1302 North St. SE  
 Olympia, WA 98502  
 To be of service, contact Monte A. at  
[monte@aadistrict8.org](mailto:monte@aadistrict8.org)  
 (360) 937-8918

AA on the road *continued from page 1*

Finally about the time that Room 260 seemed as elusive as Rule 62, we found a door that had a small colorful sign that said ONE DAY AT A TIME, and we opened it eagerly. And there was our meeting, and a wonderful meeting it was of drunks just like us.

The joy of finding an AA meeting in a strange town far from home is that you walk into a roomful of utter strangers with whom you have more in common with than you do with any number of "normal" folks in your hometown. And so it was. Within a few minutes we realized we were in a roomful of our closest friends.

And this is no mere metaphor. Often as not if you stay around to schmooze a little, phone numbers and emails might be exchanged and you may find yourself a year later connecting with and corresponding with someone you met physically only once but have come to know quite well.

Yet finding a meeting in smaller towns may be a challenge. One dark night in another Wyoming town—Rawlins—we drove up and

down the poorly lit streets looking for a church address and were about to give up. It seemed that nothing was open, anywhere: the town seemed boarded up. But wait...we turned left and there on an otherwise deserted main street was a lighted store—a liquor store, as it happened. We looked at one another and laughed. Well, why not? We thought. I went in and asked the clerk, talking to a customer at the counter, if she knew where there was an AA meeting. The young clerk looked completely blank but the customer, a woman who looked for all the world like Ingrid Bergman and was holding a large bottle of vodka, immediately said, Turn left at the corner and go up the hill and you'll see a light at the back of the church parking lot.

It was a great meeting, seven people, all moving heaven and earth to stay sober, and the two of us. We almost wept to see their smiling faces on this dark and stormy night.

But inevitably you will find that you cannot find some meetings. Sometimes a meeting has been discontinued, and, this being AA where progress, not perfection, is sought, someone forgot to alter that

fact on the website. Once in the wilds of Manitoba, a meeting was to be held at a certain time in a room behind a Burger King, but though there was a BK, open and with burgers sizzling on the grill, there was no room behind.

If you follow the AA saying that there are no bad meetings, just the one you missed, you may carry around a small card often if not always available on the AA literature rack, the Meeting In A Pocket. This is a small card that fits in your wallet that has printed on it the Serenity Prayer, the AA Preamble, the 12 Traditions and the 12 Steps.

Once in Yreka, California, a meeting that was to be held at 2 pm was locked up tight. We sat on the steps in the warm sun, wondering what to do. In a moment, an old pickup truck came rumbling down the street and drew to a stop. Somehow we knew who it was. The driver got out and, smiling, walked toward us. Is there a meeting here? He asked. We laughed. There is now, I said, and I took out the little card. The three of us sat there on the steps (the Steps!) in the warm California sun and had a delightful meeting, became fast friends, and are still in touch to this day, some five years later.



**Presence (Summer 2005)**

An awkward silence rises up  
Between stories of shattered lives  
And intentions - true or not  
To harness that demon thing

Veins on the surface, broken teeth  
Dark circles and anger simmering underneath  
Contained in a dirty white room  
With slogans etched in white fluorescence on the wall

Gray sweats and sandals shift  
Reaching for a peace or place, not known  
We gather in towards each other and pray  
Our heads bowed in common humanity

In that stiff silence, I am still  
and know the line of circumstance  
is so thin as to be invisible  
and in that thought I know I am not alone

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The wind rises gently out of silent bright warmth  
Against the blue and wisps of white  
Cloaking rock and snow rising massively behind  
Haze and heat shimmer softens the whole  
and broken teeth of mountains old and new  
and blends forest and meadow greens

I pause and drop my eyes  
to hear wind shift against the insects drone  
The grasses and flowerheads bend and dance  
Impossible indigo and scarlet  
Soft white lace and purple aster  
Yellows no paint could ever match  
Scattered if arranged by hands

I rest in the well worn downward path  
Sweat drying to salt in the wind  
That comes like feathers  
And whispers

BE STILL, I AM HERE

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Inspired by the Thurston County Jail Meeting and a hike  
the following day at Mt. Rainer

--Vince S.