

# The Reprieve: District 8 AA



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

August 2019

Mason and Thurston Counties, Washington State

4 pages.

## The AA Doldrums

With 11 years' sobriety and age 81, I am probably in the middle, at best, of my sobriety. I might make it another ten years but that would put me at 90 plus. More likely I will shuffle off my mortal coil in the next five years of so.

At any rate, I find myself spiritually in the doldrums. I used to go faithfully to AA daily or oftener; now I find myself going 4 or 5 meetings a week, and a little...bored. I am going to meetings and hearing a lot of advice. Over the years I've sponsored 15 or so men, not always successfully. So many disappear on the cusp of Step Four!

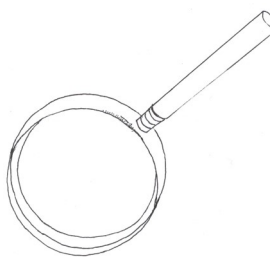
One guy, an old man like me, arrived at the appointed hour to start on the Fourth and looked at his watch and suddenly remembered an appointment he just couldn't put off. Most simply vanish. At 81 I'm too old and infirm to do much of this. I do other things for service work, like edit this newsletter. I try to share at meetings in a way that is helpful without being too advisory or avuncular.

I know if I stop going to meetings, though, I'll lapse into spiritual stalemate. I could even relapse, though I feel that is unlikely. I just don't have the taste for alcohol anymore. But I want to continue to grow in emotional sobriety. So I work at writing about my life and watching myself struggle to be a decent and useful human being. When I was a kid, my parents always told me, Get your hands out of your pockets, Charley, and make yourself useful! And while you're at it, get a smile on your face! And so I trudge on, if not the road to happy destiny then at least a road to some destiny more or less happy. Years ago one of my many psychiatrists told me I was a neurotic and Freud said that the function of psychoanalysis wasn't to cure me, it was just to turn my neuroticism into "ordinary unhappiness." I hope I can do a little better than that.

## Musings from an Older Alcoholic

When I walked thru the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous, I was 71 years old. I will soon be 74, and even with life's ups and downs, it has been the best 2 ½ plus years of my adult life.

Coming to my first AA meeting, straight from a six week detox and rehab from a hospital in Tukwilla, I surveyed the room of happy, laughing and amiable drunks, and wondered how would fit in. Just a few days earlier, I had been in a room with my peers, stringing beads on fishline, making bracelets. I still have mine and cherish it to this day.



My road to the bottom descent with the expected time for a decision, live ther way. Luckily for me,

was a slow but chaotic crash at the end. It was or die. I didn't come ei- my wife did!

As a youngster and a teenager, I always felt like the chosen one; and it appeared that everyone around me treated me like that. The need to succeed, excel and please everyone was always there, although not always realized. The underlying fear of failure was a constant companion and always with me. It was no uncommon to use others and discard them for my own gain on my way to the top. It soon became apparent that alcoholic made it easier to overcome the fears and rationalize the misuse of others.

I'm not sure when alcohol went from being my best friend helping me to navigate my life as the man I thought I should be to the drug that ruled my life. It was probably around my 30th year when my ten year marriage to a wonderful woman ended in divorce. She left with my two adorable daughters, and anything of value I hadn't managed to drink away.

I still didn't think I was an alcoholic. Instead I fully believed I was nuts and used alcoholic to calm my insane thinking. It wasn't until many years later that a doctor diagnosed "severe anxiety," and prescribed opioids to settle my nerves. At this point, I was relieved to find out I wasn't insane but just an alcoholic with anxiety. I could manage that!

For the next twenty years or so I managed my alcoholic disease by daily drinking and passing out at night versus just going to sleep. Self-loathing, fear and pity were with me always. For all the bad that I did to myself, I managed to hold a job, own a home, be a passable dad to my daughters and most importantly fined and marry a beautiful, wonderful and supportive woman. I guess you would say I was a functioning alcoholic.

This way of living finally came crashing down in my 70th year. My new doctor had finally weaned me off opioids and was trying to get me to cut down on my drinking. I probably spilled more each day with my shaking hands that he wanted me to drink in a week.

I soon made no excuse or pretense for my going to work and just stayed

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The Reprive is published monthly, more or less, by District 8 of Washington AA for Mason and Thurston Counties. This is the August 2019 issue.

Contact the editor, Charley K., through their website:

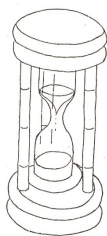
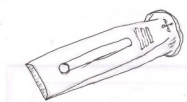
[newletter@aadistrict8.org](mailto:newletter@aadistrict8.org) or phone him at 785-564-1118, leave a message and he will likely return your call the same day.

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

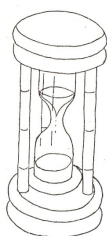
There will be a print copy of each issue in your group's announcement folder. If you want the newsletter sent to your email, go to the District 8 website [aadistrict8.org](http://aadistrict8.org) and sign up. The newsletter will come to your mailbox as a pdf.

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

"The thin edge of the wedge."



**We welcome contributors of material: personal AA statements and comments, complaints, articles about AA matters. If you have an idea but need help with putting it into words, we'd be glad to help. Stories can be simply a few hundred words up to about a thousand. Call the editor, Charley K., at 785-564-1118 or email him at [charleylifestory@gmail.com](mailto:charleylifestory@gmail.com)**



## When will civilians/normies catch up with AA?

Of course this headline above is intended humorously. But an article like this one, excerpted below, kind of makes you wonder. This is excerpted from a recent article in the New York Times by Tim Herrera, the Smarter Living Editor:

One of my favorite party games is to ask a group of people this question: What is your oldest or most cherished grudge?

Without fail, every person unloads with shockingly specific, intimate detail about their grudge. Career slights (intentional or not), offhand-yet-cutting remarks, bitter friendship dissolutions; nothing is too small when it comes to grudges."

But what does holding onto grudges really get us, [the article continues] aside from amusing anecdotes at parties? And what could we gain from giving them up?

I posed this question on Twitter last week, asking if people had ever given up on a grudge and, if so, how that made them feel.

"Yeah pretty much most of them since entering my 30s," one respondent said. "It feels cleansing to free up the brain space."

"I felt neutral!!" one more wrote. "Like I just couldn't be bothered anymore but also I didn't feel relieved or anything. Just indifferent."

The replies kept coming in: "Great. Really free." "Only after getting my revenge." "It was, of course, a relief, but also a kind of let down. It's exciting and fulfilling to hold a grudge." "Forgiveness is the most rewarding lesson you never stop learning from." "Bored." "Liberated. Most of the time if they've got my hatred they kind of own me." A few people replied simply: "No." (As for me, I gave all of my grudges back to the universe last year, and it felt amazing.)

But my favorite response was the most introspective one I got: "I felt very, very mature. I admitted that my feelings were valid for my situation at the time, but allowed myself to reshape my thinking/attitude



based on my personal growth experiences since then. Physically, I felt lighter, but that sounds cliché haha."

Yes, it does sound cliché, but it's also a feeling that is backed by the science and research of forgiveness. Really.

A 2006 study, published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology as part of the Stanford Forgiveness Project, suggested that "skills-based forgiveness training may prove effective in reducing anger as a coping style, reducing perceived stress and physical health symptoms, and thereby may help reduce" the stress we put on our

immune and cardiovascular systems. Further, a study published this year found that carrying anger into old age is associated with higher levels of inflammation and chronic illness. Another study from this year found that anger reduces our ability to see things from other people's perspective.

"Holding onto a grudge really is an ineffective strategy for dealing with a life situation that you haven't been able to master. That's the reality of it," said Dr. Frederic Luskin, founder of the Stanford Forgiveness Project.

"Whenever you can't grieve and assimilate what has happened, you hold it in a certain way," he said. "If it's bitterness, you hold it with anger. If it's hopeless, you hold it with despair. But both of those are psychophysiological responses to an inability to cope, and they both do mental and physical damage."

At the same time, he said, the converse is true: Full forgiveness can more or less reverse these negative repercussions of holding onto anger and grudges..."

Okay. Good stuff—three cheers for the New York Times in 2019—something like 80 plus years after the publication of the Big Book which has quite a lot to say about dealing with resentments, not even to mention what has been shared at the thousands of meetings in AA held all over the world in all those years. ●

## *The Silent Twelfth Step*

### A parable

This is a story I heard or read some time ago. It was about a man named Curtis.

Curtis realized he hadn't heard from, or seen, his sponsee David in several weeks. David was pretty much a loner and lived in a nice little cabin in the woods outside town.

One evening he decided to drive out and see him since David didn't use phones or have a computer. He got to the cabin and was greeted with, "Come in" when he knocked on the door. He found David sitting in front of a fire with a bottle on the floor next to him. He neither looked up nor said a word, just stared into the fire. Curtis pulled a chair next to David and sat down, saying nothing. Both of them just sat there, staring silently at the fire. After a good little while, Curtis reached for the poker and stirred the coals a little bit. He selected a good sized coal and ulled it away from the fire so it was laying in front of David. Slowly the coal dulled from bright orange to a grayish orange and then to just a dull gray.

It looked like it was dead.

Then Curtis used the poker to push the coal slowly back towards the fire. It started to glow just a little bit and continued to brighten the closer it got to the fire.

Finally it was once again glowing brightly. Curtis never said a word; just got up, put his chair back where he found it, and left.

A couple days later, at his home group meeting, Curtis was filled with joy when he spotted David, talking and laughing with with other members of the home group.

David saw Curtis and smiled and nodded his head.

— contributed by Gary R., Friday Night Men's Step Study

#### Musings...continued from page 1

home and drank all day. I was losing control of bodily functions, finding it hard to keep me balance and falling a lot. I couldn't face family or friends. I just wanted to be by myself and drink the pain and fears away.

The turning point for me came when I finally faced the fork in the road and had to decide which path to take: Keep drinking and die a horrific death or stop drinking and hope for a better life. I made the right decision.

Right from my first meeting at the Moment to Moment group of AA I sensed a feeling of welcome, peace and understanding.

I was home! It didn't take long to find a sponsor and start working the Steps. I learned to share but more importantly to listen to others share, especially the old timers—most younger than me. Service was encouraged and I started by being the set up and cookie guy. GSR and chairing meetings soon followed. I now have two sponsees who help keep me grounded and give me far more than I give them. Most of all, I treasure the relationship I have forged with my Higher Power (whom I choose to call God).

None of this dramatic turn around for an old alcoholic could have been possible without Alcoholics Anonymous.

I will be forever in your debt.

— Steve B., Moment to Moment

**2<sup>nd</sup> Annual MTM & 3-5-7-11  
BBQ**

ENJOY FELLOWSHIP & FOOD WITH ALL THE OLDTIMER'S  
AND NEWCOMERS, FRIENDS AND FAMILY.  
BRING YOUR FAVORITE POTLUCK!

MONDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2019	STARTS AT 11 AM – 2 PM	AA MEETING AT 1 PM
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## A Moment of Silence

To reflect on why we're here

I like the moment of silence at the start of meetings. I like how the chattering slowly quietens down and there is finally "silence". I feel it brings us all together and reminds me to focus on the issue at hand, which is alcoholism. It's like a clean, new sheet of paper, ready for the stories to be written down and shared with others.

When I first started attending AA meetings I had no doubt as to why I was there. It was because I was court ordered to attend two meetings a week, for two years or my deferred prosecution for driving under the influence of alcohol would be rescinded. I would then have a DUI conviction on my record. I really didn't want the financial and restrictive impacts that would bring so I was resigned to going to meetings for two years.

Once I found a meeting I felt comfortable in, and had members I could identify with, I started to enjoy the meetings and came to believe that I could learn things that would make my life more enjoyable and maybe even make me a better person.

When I started thinking about why I was here, without the "court ordered" reason at the forefront, I let my mind wander and slowly, over time, I found a common theme. I've always liked simple, concise directions so I boiled all my reasons down to these basic things; I am here because;

I need to be here,  
I want to be here,  
I get to be here,  
and for that, I am grateful.

Now, in that moment of silence, I repeat that mantra to myself and then let my mind wander on those things, and about the still suffering alcoholic.

I need to be here: I am an alcoholic. Left to my own devices, I will drink again, and if I drink again, my life will become unmanageable and I may die. I am given a daily reprieve from my alcoholism based on my

spiritual condition. I need meetings to nourish my spiritual contact with God. I can't do it alone, in a room talking to myself or even reading spiritual books. I need the presence of other living human beings to truly feel a conscious contact with the God of my understanding. I need the power of a group conscious to raise

my awareness of the good in the world and to feel that I am a part of it. I need the reminder that I can be of service to others by sharing my experiences, strengths, and hopes and listening to theirs. I need to share my feelings with others to truly understand them myself. Sometimes, I just have a feeling that I am not in a good place, that I am not being a comfort to my partner, or that my world view is becoming too dark, and I know that if I go to a meeting, that feeling will go away and I can be the kind of person I want to be and lead the life I want to lead.

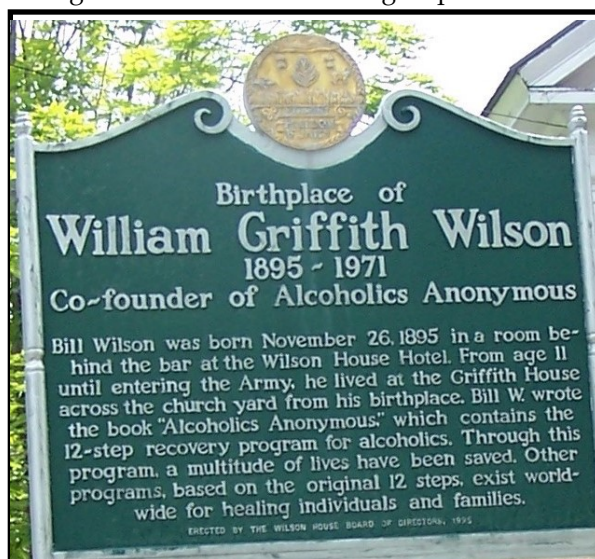
I want to be here: I enjoy meetings. I enjoy the visiting before the meeting, the meeting itself and the gatherings after the meeting. I very much enjoy being around people that are trying to understand and improve their lives, not just for themselves, but also for the people around them. I enjoy being around people that I feel truly know me and that I really know. I love the wisdom that evolves from our group conscious as we think deeply about a common subject and share our experiences, strengths and hopes. I read once that stories are the box that the truth comes in. When we share our stories, we are giving presents to those around us and when we listen to others stories, we are receiving gifts. Some of these gifts are kind of like socks and underwear for birthdays, we need them but don't get really excited. Some, however, are like a wonderful new tool that we can't wait to get home and try out.

I get to be here: Because a group

of people who were at one time, complete strangers to me, gather together, I get to enjoy and benefit from their wisdom. Because we all agree to adhere to the traditions we have very little conflict and disagreement at our meetings. Because a church or some other organization rents us rooms to meet in regularly, I have a safe, warm place to share fellowship. Because some volunteer organizes and produces a schedule I can find a meeting on any day and almost any time. Because another volunteer mans the hotline, I can find a meeting in about any city I happen to be in. Because volunteers work in the district office I can get AA literature. The chain goes all the way back to Bill and Bob's first encounter when the idea of one alcoholic talking to another alcoholic took hold. All of these things need to have happened in order for me to not be one of the still suffering alcoholics.

And for that I am grateful: I realize how lucky I am to have a solution to my disease of alcoholism. Through no efforts of my own, I was guided to a miraculous organization that is just barely an organization. It's so simple and yet so powerful. I believe it was divinely inspired, and I'm not even sure I know what that means. What I do know is that I am happy today and it would not have been possible without the unselfish efforts of thousands of people around the world. Without the experiences, strengths and hopes of all of you, and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous I would not enjoy the serenity I sometimes take for granted, and that's when I need to go to a meeting.

— Contributed by Gary R.



If you're ever in or near the small town of East Dorset, Vermont, be sure to stop by Bill W.'s birthplace and boyhood home. It is an AA shrine. We spent a couple of hours looking around. There was to be a meeting in a couple of hours but unfortunately we had to be somewhere else and couldn't stay. Google it before you go. They have a good website.