

## CAN NORMAL DRINKERS UNDERSTAND?

There are two older adults who have given me emotional support for many years: an uncle and a family friend. They have no problem with alcohol. In early sobriety, I told them about my drinking and recovery. I tried to explain “in a general way” the depth of my sickness and rebirth when I got sober.

But I got frustrated as I talked. I could see they weren’t getting it. How could I have lived in such deep denial? What was this about a certain day when my alcoholism became obvious to me and I was suddenly relieved? I simply didn’t register that I was relieved to know what had been wrong with me all these years and relieved by my Higher Power of my need to drink again, one day at a time. I called this change a gift. However they could not see that I was sicker than I knew through no bad intentions, and I got well through no good works. They were kind enough not to criticize my drinking. Instead they praised me for my courage in recovery, along with a warning not to drink again for the sake of the children. Nice sentiments, but I was really disappointed because I wanted them, of all people, to understand.

I think I know why they had to restructure my story. For them, it’s common sense and morality. I wasn’t sleep-walking all those years; I had to have known. Now that I was sober, I should have the fortitude to stay that way, or so it seemed to them. And yet the truth is, when I was drinking, I had little or no idea what I was doing. And since coming into A.A. I have “worked the program,” but it had rarely felt like work. To be sober feels like who I am ... just like drinking felt like who I was. My change was a fundamental rearrangement, as Dr. Silkworth might say. My uncle and friend may never have experienced that kind of change, so they had no basis for identification. But they did have one way to look at me – through the lens of virtue.

There’s a \$25 word! Virtues are habits by which a person usually acts in line with community values. What normal drinkers miss is that alcoholics can appear to be a community member, but, deep down, live outside any community. Like most alcoholics, I felt I didn’t belong. All I knew about myself was that I wasn’t one of “you”. It’s not that I did bad things (which I did); rather, I walked in the dark. It’s not that I do good things now (occasionally); rather I walk in my Higher Powers light. That’s why active alcoholics cannot develop these habits called virtues, and that’s why we are natural liars, cheaters and thieves.

At best, we can act a role. At worst, there’s the sociopath who has no conscience. A true sociopath is probably hard-wired. I don’t believe alcoholics are sociopaths, but we might be called “honorary sociopaths.” When we are sober, we have a conscience, to a point, and can be remorseful, to a point. But it’s really about belonging: a sense of mutual understanding with those around me which is necessary to develop virtuous habits. While we live in the disease and especially when we are drunk, we cannot really understand what’s wrong with our behavior — not because we are better than others, but because we don’t belong with others in the community of virtue, except perhaps to play the game. On the other hand, when drinking, we suddenly do belong ... we belong with the drinkers and obsess about drinking more to belong more!

[Continued on page five]

LIFELINE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
CENTRAL OFFICE OF SALT LAKE CITY, INC.

We welcome your correspondence and will publish your material, space permitting, if it meets editorial criteria. Share your experience, strength and hope with another alcoholic. For a free subscription or to submit articles, suggestions or contributions, contact Central Office of Salt Lake City:

CENTRAL OFFICE OF SALT LAKE CITY, INC.

80 West Louise Avenue
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115

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CENTRAL OFFICE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Central Office is to provide the basic services listed, to include, but not limited to:

- To carry the A.A. message and help those individuals who suffer from alcoholism;
to maintain a 24-hour Twelve-Step phone service;
to answer phone inquiries as needed;
to compile, update and print meeting lists;
to maintain A.A.-approved literature for sale to members and the public;
and to print and distribute a newsletter.

Specifically excluded shall be the operation of any club, clubhouse or drying-out place, and acts in violation of the Twelve Traditions of A.A.



Let us never be a closed corporation; let us never deny our experience, for whatever it may be worth, to the world around us. Let our individual members heed the call to every field of human endeavor. Let them carry the experience and spirit of A.A. into all these affairs, for whatever good they may accomplish. For not only has God saved us from alcoholism; the world has recieved us back into its citizenship."

A.A. Comes of Age, pp. 232-233

Suiting up and Showing Up

Groups Represented At the Central Office Reps Meeting for:

June 2008

- AN A.A. GROUP
A CLOSED GROUP
NOT A GLUM LOT
5:15 HAPPY HOUR
YOUNG AND ALIVE
12 O'CLOCK HIGH
BIGUGLIES
FOOTHILL
CITY AT SEVEN
SOBER SISTERS
CAME TO BELIEVE
SPIRITUAL QUEST
AFTERNOONERS
COME AS YOU ARE
OFF THE CUFF
HILLCREST GROUP
10TH STEP GROUP
A WAY OUT
SUNDAY BREAKFAST
HAPPY DESTINY
CHAPTER 5
MAGNA FRIENDLY
974 GROUP
AS BILL SEES IT
HONEY'S
EARLY FRIENDSHIP
NOMADIC LUNCH
UNITY LUNCH
HIGHLAND GROUP
BY THE BOOK

Is Your Group Represented?

The next C.O. Reps Meeting is the second Tuesday of the month at 7:00 P.M. at Central Office, 80 West Louise Ave. (2680 West)

Please visit our website for meeting information. www.saltlakeaa.org

To reduce our costs, Central Office would like to update our mailing list for the LIFELINE. If you have moved please contact C.O. at 484-7871 Thank you.

*Upcoming Events,*

and Schedule Changes

July 11th — 13th; **26th Annual Great Outdoors Campout**, Defa's Ranch, UT.

Info: Laura lee Hulsey @ 801.388.7078

August 1st — 3rd; **Maple Grove Campout**, Maple Grove, UT.

August 14th — 17th; **Indian Creek Campout** near Huntington, UT.

August 24th; **Central Office Picnic**, Murray Park, Pavilion 5 Murray, UT.

August 29th — 31st; **2008 Pacific Region Forum**, Doubletree Hotel, Spokane, WA.

Info: General Service Office @ 212.870.3400' or www.aa.org, or,  
mikemc2@comcast.net

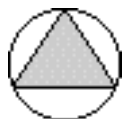
September 5th — 7th; **Women's Big Book Retreat**, Provo Canyon UT.

September 19th — 21st; **CC+H2O, Men's Spiritual Retreat**, Lava Hot Springs, ID.

Info: James B. @ 801.232.1514 or email joheeb@gmail.com

Rick N. @ 801.301.1058 or rick@selectcomfortsystem.com

February 12th — 15th, 2009; **45th International Women's Conference**, Salt Lake City,  
UT.



**A.A. Central Office of Salt Lake** will be hosting a **12 Step Call Workshop** on Saturday, August 9th, 2008 at 2:30 p.m. The workshop will last until three-thirty p.m.

Those interested please call Camille @ 801.916.0831 or Bill @ 801.604.0511



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**Grantsville has a New Meeting!**

The **Grantsville Good News** is meeting at 151 Cooley Street (the V.F.W.) in Grantsville on Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. This is an open meeting.

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“It would be a product of false pride to claim that A.A. is a cure-all, even for alcoholism.”

*A.A. Comes of Age*, p. 232  
**As Bill Sees It**, p. 285

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR BIRTHDAYS!**

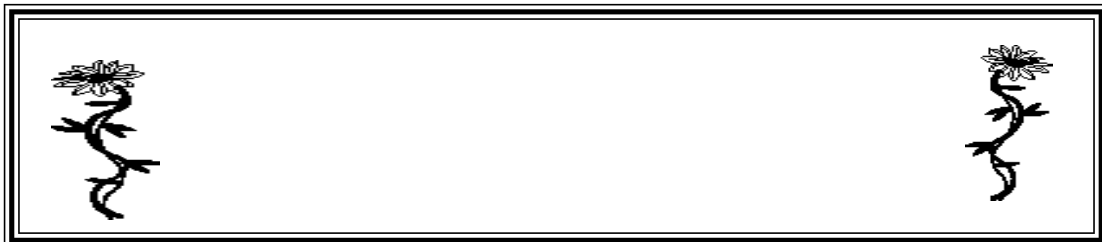


Improve the quality of your sobriety and get out of yourself! Central Office needs volunteers for service work. We need people for 12-Step calls, stuffing envelopes, answering the telephone, et cetera. If you are interested contact Central Office at 484-7871.



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

**Alcoholics Anonymous**, page 85



“Normal. . .” from page one

Since normal drinkers have lived in a community all their lives and have developed some degree of virtue, it takes unusual imagination to sense what it’s like not to be part of every-day life. Community membership is so basic, so human if you will, that for normal drinkers, to be alive is to be “a part of.” Therefore they cannot really understand us alcoholics. There have been wonderful exceptions: Dr. Silkworth, The Rev. Dr. Sam Shoemaker, The Rev. Ed Dowling, S. J., the psychiatrists, Dr. Henry Tiebout and Dr Carl Jung, etc, in the early days of A.A.. I’m sure many doctors, therapists, members of the clergy and practitioners of various kinds have an equal understanding today. I hope there are people like that in your life.

But suppose there aren’t. What can we do to help our normal friends and family “get it” about alcoholism.? The simple answer is: not much. In a perfect world, all whom we love would join Al-Anon. Unfortunately, that won’t happen. Maybe we can encourage membership (with humility), but if this doesn’t work, there’s Plan B.

Plan B. has two stages. The first stage is to join their world slowly, developing those habits of life called virtues. In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Bill W. lists the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Anger, Greed, Lust, Gluttony, Envy, and Sloth (p. 48). He doesn’t mention the Seven Cardinal Virtues which were named in the same European tradition: Faith, Hope, Love, Courage, Prudence, Temperance, and Justice. Here’s what they mean:

Faith: “Came to believe...”

Hope: “We share our experience, strength and hope.”

Love: “Love and tolerance is our code.”

Courage: “Face Everything And Recover.”

Prudence: “If you don’t want a haircut, stay out of the barbershop.”

Temperance: Better known today as balance.

Justice: Being fair, giving others what they desire – usually more then we think!

The first part of Plan B is to develop the habits that have those seven traditional names. The “game plan” for development is the Steps. This will build trust. We alcoholics, who seemed so mysteriously problematic, will become members of a community, perhaps for the first time.

The second part of Plan B is to use that trust to “carry the message” of the gift of sobriety. There may be many individuals who will never understand what it was like not to belong – or what it was like to receive the gift of a new life – but I think we have to try. This isn’t exactly 12<sup>th</sup> Step work; on the other hand, it has to be a service to normal drinkers and alcoholics alike if more normal drinkers come to understand what our disease and recovery are all about.

— anonymous —

## A Nude Awakening

Ever dream you were in a restaurant and had no clothes on? Or that you were in an AA meeting naked as a jaybird? Well, for us fortunate recovering alcoholics at a nudist camp ensconced amid the magnificent Douglas firs of the Oregon forest, it’s not a dream, it’s a reality.

Welcome to the Nude Beginnings meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is David and I’m an alcoholic. I am also, among other things, a nudist and a chef.

When it came time for me to semi-retire, it was only natural that I should semi-retire from the world of textiles

continued on page 6

“Nude. . . .” continued

(clothes, to you) and live permanently and year-round in a nudist camp. I found one near Tucson, Arizona, where I could spend the long winter months, and one near Eugene, Oregon, where I could enjoy the summers. The camp in Oregon also needed someone to operate it’s small restaurant on weekends. What could be better for a semi-retired chef?

Before I even opened the front door of the cafe (now known as David’s Bistro-in-the-Buff), I hung two beautifully done plaques near the cash register, where everyone could see them. One said “Live and Let Live,” and the other said “Happy, Joyous, and Free.” Next to the exit door, appropriately enough, I placed a third message which proclaimed, “Keep Coming Back.” The signs mean something to nonalcoholics, too, of course, but the real joy comes when an AA member spots them, surmises just who might have put the up, and discreetly asks me, “Are you a friend of Bill W.?”

However the greatest thing these proverbs did was to bring enough of us AA folk together so that we could have our very own AA meeting right here in camp.

On Saturday evening the restaurant closes at six o’clock. The crew puts things away, finishes the clean-up work, makes fresh coffee, and at seven-thirty we open the doors again for the meeting.

It’s an open meeting closely patterned after the seven A.M. Attitude Adjustment Hour in Palm Desert, California — the meeting that got me sober and saved my life. We try to maintain an upbeat, positive exchange right smack in the middle of now.

There were four of us at our first gathering: Betty with thirty-one years, Roy with twenty, Robin with five, and me with nine. So great was our joy at what we were doing that faces beamed, eyes sparkled, and laughter abounded. It was a pretty giddy affair. Then as Sue and Patsy and Keith heard about our meetings and came in, the excitement started all over again. Sue celebrated her first birthday with us, Patsy, her sixth, and Betty’s daughter Michelle, who had also joined us, celebrated her fifth. Two nonalcoholic visitors attend regularly, as does a member of Al-anon. And because we are primarily a summer resort with many visitors, we get AA people who are here only for a weekend or so.

We’re not sure what will happen come October or November, because the chilly rains of the Oregon winter aren’t too conducive to running around outside in the all-together. Camp business declines drastically, the restaurant goes into hibernation, and some of us leave for sunnier, if not greener, pastures. Nevertheless, you can rest assured the AA slogans will remain in the boarded-up Bistro in-the-Buff, and come springtime, we will return and some trusted servant will again be saying those magical words, “Welcome to the Nude Beginnings meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is — and I’m and alcoholic.”

The real idea of all this is to show that AA is indeed everywhere. Next year we plan on having a midnight meeting in the hot tub — as soon as we can find a waterproof Big Book!

So come visit us.

Come celebrate your birthday.

And wear your birthday suit.

David W., Marana, Arizona  
**The Best of the Grapevine**, Vol. III  
pages 67-69

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### **Ourselves as Individuals**

Human beings are never quite alike, so each of us, when making an inventory, will need to determine what his individual character defects are. Having found the shoes that fit, he ought to step into them and walk with new confidence that he is at last on the right track.

**The Twelve and Twelve**, page 48,  
*As Bill Sees It*, page 281



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