

July 2020

£1

The Fellowship's  
RECOVERY MAGAZINE

# share

Produced for members  
by members

Our Meeting Between Meetings



# Behind Bars

## THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we *understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



## share

The Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous  
in England & Wales

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# share

our meeting in print

JULY 2020

## In this issue...

Tradition Seven 'Please Put A Penny In The Old Man's Hat...'	4
AA AND PRISON	
Unconditional Surrender	7
A Better Understanding	9
Hope Behind Bars	10
It Works	10
Freedom From Fear	12
Free As A Bird	13
Panic Not!	15
Serving Our Prisons	17
Shaun's Road To Recovery	18
There But For The Grace Of God...	20
The Night The Bomb Was Dropped	22
Starting My Journey... Part One	23
A Work In Progress	25
Staying Sober In The Pandemic	27
The Share Interview: Recorded Via Telephone – Bryn	28
Editorial	3
AA Conference Approved Books New Items and Revised Prices	i
Literature Order Form	iv
<b>shareback</b> : Letters	31

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## the preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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# editorial

Dear Reader

**W**ELCOME to our July edition featuring articles from members with experience of prisons either as guests or who have done service in prisons. SHARE has received a good response from members contributing articles for this issue and we thank you for taking the time to write for us. Some groups, intergroups and Regions send copies of SHARE into prisons as our magazine format can be distributed to inmates quite easily. If you are reading SHARE whilst in prison we would love to hear from you about your Experience, Strength and Hope. Please write to GSO York at the address listed at the front of SHARE, either by email or a handwritten letter. We hope as always that those reading our magazine will find it helpful in their recovery and 'Our Meeting Between Meetings.'

SHARE is now available to download from our AA Website. The SHARE team would be interested to hear your feedback on our OnLine format and what you think about it.

Tradition Seven. It is very much part of our AA Tradition to pass the pot in a meeting. The disruption to our normal meetings has removed that physical pot but Tradition Seven still applies to our Fellowship and meetings. The telephone helplines that many of us used to find AA need our support, The AA Website, supporting service for Public Information, our General Service Offices and many other parts of our Fellowship need financial resources. Is your OnLine group passing the virtual pot? Are you continuing to support and action Tradition Seven?

\*\*\*\* \* \* \*

## NEXT MONTH: STEP EIGHT

*We invite articles on your experience, strength and hope. This month we are particularly looking for those on Steps and Traditions Nine and Ten for the September and October 2020 issues.*



TRADITION SEVEN:  
“Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

# TRADITION SEVEN ‘PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE OLD MAN’S HAT...’

**S**O goes a line in an old Christmas carol that shot into my memory during a recent AA business meeting. We were discussing the topic of the Seventh Tradition; how much money is contributed when the hat is passed around the room towards the end of each meeting, the principle of the ‘Overflowing Hat’ and how wisely this money is spent by the trusted servants throughout the Fellowship.

The final point first; since the earliest days of our wonderful Fellowship, recovering drunks have debated and sometimes even fought about how best to

spend the money collected. Bill was stone broke throughout the late 30s and 40s, which must have been difficult for him and

*“I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.”*

(BB p.xxxii)

Lois personally. Yet, the principle of applying 100% of the collected money to the execution of our primary purpose was firmly established during this period. Whether for literature, public information initiatives, group, intergroup, Region, Conference expenses or the like, we have been trained to spend the Seventh Tradition funds

wisely and to scrutinize how well we are doing. We also established clearly that no member of the Fellowship should be denied the

opportunity of doing service due to any difficult personal financial circumstances.

The principle of the 'Overflowing Hat' is set out clearly in a short brochure provided free of charge by GSO in York. According to this principle, money contributed at group level should be used wisely for the day-to-day expenses of that group. Part of the wisdom is to set aside a sufficient prudent reserve, which can be drawn upon should unforeseen circumstances dictate. There are stories, for example, of miscalculations and/or insufficient financial controlling (we are not saints!), treasurers deciding to do further research into whether they are real alcoholics (thereby taking some funds entrusted to their care to finance the research!) and

sometimes extreme volatility, from time to time, in the volume of contributions.

Any surplus over and above current expenses and the prudent reserve, should be passed downward to the next level, i.e. the intergroup. Here the same principle applies, with any surplus going down to Region. When Region has carried out its duties to the Fellowship and 'the still suffering alcoholic' any money left over is passed down to the General Services Office. Each level of the Fellowship it thereby encouraged to do all it can to fulfil our Primary Purpose within its own sphere of influence and pass on any surplus to the next level, whereby all are obliged, in line with our Traditions and the ethos of accountability, to publish (at

## Tradition 7

In view of current circumstances if members wish to make contributions directly to GSO please find details below.

Members can make their contribution direct to GSO by bank transfer see below.

***In the payment reference or message option please put Tradition 7 member donation / group donation / intergroup / region as appropriate***

***With Gratitude and Love***

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the least) annual financial reports accessible to those they serve.

Which brings me to the final point; how much each of us contributes. I must confess that I felt directly addressed by the person in the recent business meeting when she said, “Even today in 2019 many people still put in £1, just as we did a decade ago. We don’t see our contribution in terms of what needs to be done to fulfil our Primary Purpose or in relation to the amount we were prepared to spend on drink in the past or on that latte today.”

*“Grant me strength...to do your bidding.”*  
(BB p.76)

Boom! She was right. While I was broke (several periods lasting multiple quarters) it was quite reasonable for me to limit my contribution to £1 or 50p, that the Promises be fulfilled. This is no longer the case.

I cannot, on reflection, justify spending £3.50 on my latte while putting only £1 in the pot. I am grateful for this wake-up call, which I gladly share with you by means of this article.

Have a sunny sober day.

PATRICK L

# TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

## Tradition Seven



**Every AA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions.**

1. Honestly now, do I do all I can to help AA (my group, my service structure, my GSO) remain self-supporting? Could I put a little more into the basket on behalf of the new person who can't afford it yet? How generous was I when drunk in a bar?
2. Do I understand self-supporting to include not just my group but the AA service structure and GSO?
3. Do I understand why it is important for GSO to refuse finance from government or other sources when it is short of funds?
4. Do I accept that groups should not receive any subsidies from hospitals or prisons to run groups for patients or inmates?
5. Is it more important to get a big AA collection from a few people, or a smaller collection in which more members participate?
6. Is a group treasurer's report unimportant AA business? How does the treasurer feel about it?
7. How important in my recovery is the feeling of self-respect, rather than the feeling of always being under obligation for charity received?

# AA AND PRISON



## UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

**H**I I am George a recovering alcoholic. My life started 46 years ago in a prison cell, I was in for a higher crime, to be removed from society, felt like the living dead, was alcoholic and had many mental health issues, having had a pathological breakdown. From that point of 46 years ago AA saved my life and gave me a life. I was in a maximum secure psychiatric prison which ran on psychotherapy treatment. There was an AA group there then thanks to pioneers like Max Glatt who was a good friend of our psychiatrist, he was very pro-AA. AA was part of my recovery but coupled with that was the relationship I had with my first sponsor in AA. If I had not found him at the meetings I would not have survived of that I am sure. He along with AA was my dual stepping stone to eventual sanity.

We had a feedback system there, the latest statistic for long term alcoholic prisoners was a 13% recovery and 87% failure rate.

Kevin said up in his cell that night, "George, what's going to make us part of the 13% and not part of the 87%???????" Today I know the answer to that, it's called AA and The Doctors Opinion and Chapter Five in the Big Book. Of course everything else that goes with that,

*"...and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch."*

(BB p.13)

not just the reading and study of it, but equally important the application of it,

*"Faith without works was dead."* (BB p. 14) It meant an unconditional surrender to AA as a way of life. I was not

surrendering to some religion or cult, I was surrendering to a recovery Programme that was going to save my life. We spoke back then about it being an 'Inside job' and with the eventual deflation of self. I got this and what it was about.

Not drinking, not a choice or an option. If you had my war story, you would not want to talk about it in a room or glorify or romanticise in any way. Meetings, home groups, sponsorship, service.

Study of the Traditions that protect our single purpose Fellowship. AA is proven to be the really only reliable long term Programme for us that is available worldwide.

Forget the debating societies, "If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it - then you ready to take certain steps." (BB p.58) It works for those that want it, and for those that do it.

I still go into a medium secure unit and it greatly benefits me in every way. I only have one message and it was given to me by AA. I go

in to carry the AA message if I can. I do not need the reminders, I will never forget my drinking.

Through AA I have had a life and responsibilities too. I am in my tenth year of retirement now, and it is life on life's terms. Old age is un-explored territory but AA has the solutions. I am still in contact with Kevin daily and we are a couple of AA miracles. I need to say that because it's given me back my self-worth. Double winners, we have stayed in AA and out of prison. Thank you for my life.

GEORGE

*"...I am now willing that you should have all of me..."*

(BB p.76)

## FOR GORDON THERE WERE STILL PLENTY OF YETiS



# A BETTER UNDERSTANDING

I AM 37 and I am currently in HMP. Since being here I have engaged with AA and have to say it has helped me a lot. I feel better for going every time and could listen to the stories all day. I now have a better understanding about my problem with alcohol and have some important changes I want to happen in my life.

I realise that we all have difficulties and how we can come back from them and build on the little bit of strength and support we get from others then we can all stand together and fight our

alcohol addiction together, getting stronger every day. The people who come in to help every week may sometimes see me quiet and a bit reserved but that's only because I have a lot going on with other issues. I can honestly say that they are the reason I go to AA meetings and will continue to do so. I have felt better with their help and I can't thank them enough. Here's to a good healthy long future together. We will be better because we deserve it and we are all worth it.

CHRIS, HMP



## Short is Sweet

We would like to thank our contributors for the amazing number of articles over last few months – the response has been wonderful.

We really appreciate all the experience, strength and hope expressed in your articles and would like to re-iterate 'Short is Sweet'.

Articles over 1,000 words will not be considered for publication.

Often most articles rated by our team and put forward for publication are less than 500 words.

# HOPE BEHIND BARS

**H**I, my name is Terry and I would like to share my story. Well, when I was young, about 15, I started to drink with some friends. I don't know why. I think it was just to fit in because everyone was drinking. I started to like it.

I just remember drinking every day. Me and my old mate would go into off-licences, grab loads of drink and just run off without paying. Then, as I got a sentence for burglary, I said to myself, "I am never going to drink no more." So, two years later I got out and I met my partner, we were together for ten years. She kept me away from my old ways but I would sometimes go to the pub.

*"Never was there enough of what we thought we wanted."*

(12&12 p.72)

I thought I had it under control, but I understand now I hadn't. I then turned one day and got done for drink driving – I got two years prison. While in prison I got introduced to a drug to deal with the addiction. I thought this will stop me drinking but when I got out, I just seemed to get worse. I got out and I started to drink more – like every other day I was drinking a litre of vodka. I ended up getting locked up again.

I am starting to go to AA meetings every Thursday for which I am grateful. I am reading the Big Book now and am hoping to get a sponsor soon to take me through the Steps.

TERRY, HMP

---

## IT WORKS

**H**ELLO. My name is Clive and this is my story.

I am an alcoholic and I have been for some time. But I have turned my life around because I have been sober for five years from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014. When I look back at things I had done or said to people when I was drinking, I know that I had problems. Drink was controlling my life and disturbing my family and relationships with others.

I was losing my family. When 2009 came I was divorced and I could not see my three kids because I was drinking a lot. When I was drinking, I would wake up in the mornings and I would not know what I had done the night before. I had been in hospital a number of times and I have been in the police station for drunken behaviour. This was normally my life and I thought this was the life for others too so

without doubt I carried on and then I lost it all.

In 2014 I woke up when my younger son was born. I said to myself that I was going to stop drinking for good. At first it was hard, but I did it and now I have my kids back and all my family which is a great feeling.

When I came to prison, I asked them for an AA meeting and when I was transferred, I got to AA meetings. When we are in the AA meetings it reminds me where I was before I stopped drinking and how far I have come and what I can do. I also can help others to sobriety. Even though I have done five years sober, I have more work

to do and at the start of every day I wake up and say, "No drink today."

There are reasons for me to drink but there is a lot more reasons not to drink at all. I am thanking the AA members for their support and far more.

*CLIVE, HMP*

## DECLARATION OF UNITY

**This we owe to AA's future.  
To place our common  
welfare first; to keep our  
Fellowship united; for on AA  
unity depend our lives and  
the lives of those to come.**

# CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

**Alcoholics Anonymous UK is constantly updating  
information on our AA UK Website**

**[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News)**

This includes:

General guidance about Covid19

Help and guidance about  
On-Line meetings

Links to On-Line AA meetings

Link to update meeting details

Guidance about On-Line  
Anonymity

Links to Share and Roundabout  
On-Line

Help for Newcomers

Tradition Seven

Literature orders

Other websites claiming to be  
connected to AA

GSO requests that we avoid calling the London, York or Glasgow office for general enquiries but rather email to: **[gso@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](mailto:gso@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)**

# FREEDOM FROM FEAR

THE police surrounded the house just before 7am. I was three and a half months sober, attending meetings and with a draft of Step Four ready for the next meeting with my sponsor. The police seized my Step Four, questioned me at the station for eleven hours, then released me on strict bail conditions. The Crown Court judge sentenced me to 18 months, and so I went down. I had always just about got away with everything before. What had gone wrong now? Especially as I had a spiritual Programme on my side. It wasn't fair. Or was it? As I was handcuffed and led down to be stripped, searched and insulted, all I could think of was what I had heard at meetings – acceptance is the key. During the long days, I stripped down and searched what I had learned from AA members for what actually worked. Especially in really bad conditions. The rock-solid things I found were these:

First, on waking each day I reminded myself I had had enough of drink and drugs. Full stop. That was it. It was over. I had been given that moment of clarity. I kept it in front of me moment by moment. And I was prepared to go to any length. No matter what, including during this time in prison.

Second, about God, I found that I had left the debating society forever. There was a difference between good and bad, and I had been on the wrong side. I used to think I could keep one step ahead of God and consequences. Do enough good things like keep bringing the money in for my family, and it would balance out the bad things like the drink and the drugs. I was wrong. As the Big

*“...our crippling handicap has been our lack of humility.”*

(12&12 p.72)

Book suggested, I had to ask God's protection and care with complete abandon. Exercise periods, association times, and the shower blocks in a traditional 19th century UK prison reminded me that lack of power was my dilemma. The spiritual life was no longer a theory for me, I had to live it. I prayed a lot. My spot check inventory looked like this. I had the clothes I stood up in, mattress, sheet, blanket, extra newspapers to help keep warm. And bits of knotted stringy bits from a former occupant for swinging stuff to others out of the window. A priest had brought me a copy of an old Bible which I read a lot. Nothing else.

My thoughts turned to the Step Five I had done with my sponsor about a month before going down. Resentments, fears and harms done; those were the titles of the sheets. But now they

weren't just words on paper. I found facts and faced facts about myself, and my thinking changed forever. Prison is a good place for Steps Six and Seven. I thought I was an independent, self-employed, self-reliant man who ran his own life. What I faced up to for the first time, is that my shortcomings ran me. Fear, greed, selfishness to name just three were running the show. Not me. Worse still, I was the opposite of independent. I was totally dependent on people and things – women, sex, money, position in society, a desperate desire to look good in all circumstances. In case anyone got to see my fear underneath. I lived a life where I would rather have died than asked for help. It nearly killed me. I had had enough of fear. And I was willing to ask for God's help. Someone greater than me said the truth shall make you free. I was released early on appeal. I had opportunity to make amends

to my aged parents before their death – by showing up in their lives again, sane and in my right mind.

My first job came after two more years, not in top management with a grandiose CV, but by having the gift of humility to sign on at the local job centre and ask for help from a back-to-work counsellor. I began a series of jobs where for the first time I was right-sized and honest. Nothing to hide and nothing to fear. I was happier than I had ever been. And I met someone outside of AA who I've been happily married to for over 15 years. AA says, "No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others." (BB p.84) I would rather not have gone down so far. But that's what it took for this man to be set free from fear. And ask for help. God bless you all.

*DOMINIC J, London*

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## FREE AS A BIRD

**A**S I read February's issue of SHARE, I contemplate just how powerless I am.

On the second day after arriving in a new prison I visited the library. Subconsciously I picked up a book on addictive thoughts. I spent that night in horrible withdrawals reading of the

insidiousness of addiction – in my case alcohol, substances and behaviours. AA slogans were quoted again and again in the book, "One Day at a Time", "Live and Let Live", "Let Go and Let God" – suddenly and most unexpectedly I had a craving not for destruction – but one for recovery. Years ago, an old timer

warned me, “Be careful about going out of AA (ie drinking) because you can never guarantee when you will get back.” These words I will never forget, it was at this point I got back, it was at this point that they seemed most true. I went to bed that night thinking of AA and continued doing so well after awakening the next morning. My religion requires of me that I pray five times daily and I knew also that the best time for God to hear my personal petitions is after the set prayer, obligatory prayers. I prayed honestly and fearlessly particularly on two occasions that Saturday evening and a ‘Dawn prayer’ on the Sunday morning. The next morning, I crossed the landing to speak to a couple of other inmates, with whom I associated. I was lost in a trance that morning, I was pondering life, its meaning and wondering why God had dealt me such a hand, when out of the blue I heard an American female accent call out, “AA” from somewhere above me. My ears pricked up and I thought I heard wrong when a

*“For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all.”*

*(12&12 p.71)*

bubbly lady in a summery dress appeared at the stairs separating the 1’s from the 2’s. I approached her and enquired whether she had spoken of AA, she said “Yes.”. I felt relief, I enquired if I could put my name on the list to which she responded with heart-felt enthusiasm, “You can come to the meeting upstairs with me right now.”

And so the birth of truly spiritual recovery, a journey of emotional upheaval versus spiritual contentment. Now I find myself blessed and privileged not just to attend and share at the meeting but I carry the box and for the time being I’m meeting the secretary and throughout the prison I can now be the hand of AA.

One day I will be released back to London, able to attend meetings and do service in the Fellowship, the Fellowship which explained to me who I am, what I am and what I have to do. Thank you for SHARE, I love you all, and but for the grace of God go I.

SEAMUS, HMP



**SHARE is now available online on the AA Website.**

The link is: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News>

You can then find a link to download the magazine – **Our Meeting Between Meetings** – needed now more than ever!

# PANIC NOT!

WHEN my sponsor suggested to me that I started to go to intergroup meetings and do service, I replied that I would, when I had a better understanding of the Traditions. He said that I would learn about the Traditions by going to intergroup meetings and doing service.

So, my service at intergroup began. After I had been taken to a couple of intergroup business meetings, I found myself agreeing to be Probation Liaison Officer, I was friends with the previous member doing the job so being twelve-stepped into the position was a joy. After I had been doing this service rather half-heartedly for six months or so, the intergroup realised that we had no Prison LO. After some discussion it was put forward to combine the Probation and Prison LO positions, a vote was taken and I found myself carrying the AA message into the one prison in our intergroup area.

This was a category C prison, fortunately with a history of AA meetings. It was straightforward to get the meeting reinstated and I was able to make up a list of twenty local members who were willing and able to attend the prison meeting, so it was my

job to pass on the individuals' details to the prison gate for identification and clearance for access. In those days we were allowed to take in cigarettes and sweets, which did encourage some attendees. Sometimes there was a bit of an exodus after the chair had finished and the fags and sweets had run out.

*“...humility... now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient which can give us serenity.”  
(12&12 ps.75,76)*

Even though the prison held over four hundred inmates the AA meetings rarely made it into double figures. One memory from that time I have is when the prison sponsor attending the meeting mistook the ‘Panic Button’ for the light switch, within seconds half a dozen burly prison guards burst into the room to find a very peaceful meeting going on. It was around this time that females were allowed to go into male prisons to attend the AA meeting. The elderly lady who came with me one evening was terrified, but she did the chair and the meeting was fine, she and I were equally relieved but for different reasons. Then as we were walking out towards the main gate we received a tirade of abuse through a window, we were identified as AA members with abuse – that was my only negative experience during my time as Prison LO. The elderly

# SHARE ALWAYS NEEDS A GOOD PHOTO



- Pictures need to be 2MB in size for printing.
- Share gets lots of pictures of flowers and trees.
- Share likes pictures which capture the alcoholic's attention.
- Quirky is good!

Please send to:  
AAShare@gsogb.org.uk

lady survived and died sober some years later.

There were rumours that the prison was going to close. I made enquiries with the prison but was unable to find out any information. Then one day my home phone rang and it was the prison chaplain, asking if I could give him a copy of 'As Bill Sees It' for an inmate, I was able to provide it for him. Sometime later I was informed that the prison was to close. After we held the last meeting, I was asked to remove the AA literature. I arranged to visit on my own to do this, some was kept in the library and the rest was in the meeting room. I started to collect the books together for removal and I noticed that some of them had been written in, donated by old timers I had never met. I found it a spiritual experience to realise that any AA book purchased can be left available to be read by anyone. The person who paid for the book may never meet the reader but the message has been carried. In case you were wondering, I know of at least one inmate from that meeting who is still sober some thirty years later.

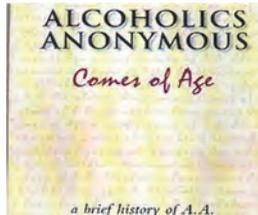
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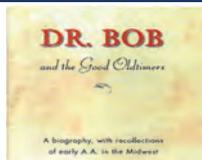
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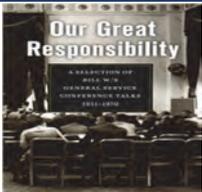
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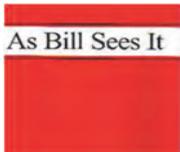
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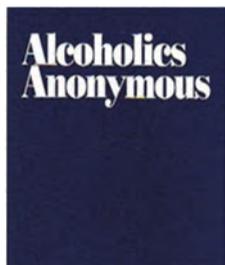
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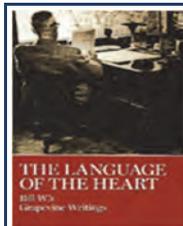


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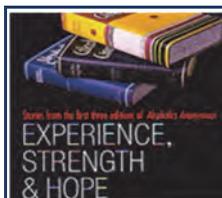
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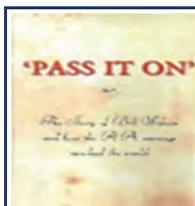
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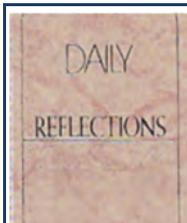
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# SERVING OUR PRISONS

**M**Y name's Stuart, I'm a grateful recovering alki. Still grateful, sat here at home in the lockdown, no prison meetings, and only video conferencing for AA contact. So really missing what used to be normality. I have been involved in Prison service for 27 years, initially at the Dana prison in Shrewsbury, until it closed, now at Berwyn Prison, Wrexham, the largest prison in the UK, which only opened about three years ago. I am both PLO and a member of a small group of us that hold the weekly meetings within the education block inside the prison.

We have an excellent relationship with the substance misuse team. Up until the lockdown, we were getting approximately ten to twelve men at the newcomers' meeting, held between 2pm and 3pm and the same amount at our regular meeting following on between 3pm and 4pm, every Monday. We had started to get a man from the regular group to share at the newcomers' meeting – this went down very well. I do believe at least

one of the men has submitted an article to SHARE. A couple of our prison group met a man recently released at the local Mini Convention, what a pleasure it was to see him free and sober. Made the effort of getting to the meeting (80-mile round trip) so pleasing and worthwhile.

If any member of AA is considering a service position, try prison service, you won't be disappointed. I look on my Monday Prison meeting as my favourite meeting of the week, and to see the men changing as they accept the problem is fantastic. Although I've been sober for 30 years in AA, I've had my problems but special friends (some say sponsors) have always been there to help me through. I don't have and never have had a belief in God, but 'Good Orderly Direction' – yes. My Higher Power is The Power of Example, and it has served me well so far, As long as I stay away from the first drink, attend meetings, DO SERVICE, I'm a happy ex-drunk.

STUART

## STOP PRESS!!!

**GSO York have decided to make back copies of SHARE magazine freely available to prisons by applying to GSO via your Region.**

# SHAUN'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

**H**ELLO, my name is Shaun and I am an alcoholic. My life has been a struggle through health issues. In 1986 for four years I suffered from cancer, had internal bleeding and needed a valve put in my liver. I recovered from this and was able to function and work, but in 2007 I had a bad accident and fell off a ladder, breaking both of my heels. The pain was unbearable and although I was prescribed painkillers, I also self-medicated, using alcohol and drugs to help me through this. It was at this point in my life that I realised that I depended on alcohol. I was soon becoming addicted and started drinking in the mornings, as well as taking drugs. I drank up to three bottles of red wine a day, and took to dealing in counterfeit money to feed my addiction, my life was spiralling out of control. Eventually, I got busted. It was on an evening when I was in my local, I was supposed to be going to a party, but missed the taxi and the others left without me. It was at this point that as I had driven to the pub, I thought that I should drive home again. The police were waiting for me as they had been tipped off, I was arrested for drink driving. I knew that the landlord

*“...because we were still trying to play God ourselves.”*

*(12&12 p.74)*

didn't like me, and so had a huge resentment toward him, as the police informer. After my arrest, my car and house were searched, finding counterfeit money and drugs, and this led me to being charged with more than just drink driving. It took about year before I was brought to court. And so I was sentenced to 15 months in prison (this is no place for an alcoholic) and was so bad that I needed to go on a detox course of medication, this caused me mental health problems. I damaged my cell, was hallucinating, self-harming, it was like a living hell.

At one point it was suggested I attended an AA meeting whilst in prison. There was a male member there who seemed to understand my fears, and weaknesses. I was shaking that much I couldn't hold a pen, let alone spell my name, but I kept going to the meetings. Also, I would be given SHARE magazines, and would read them. Eventually I was diagnosed with mental health problems, and was released early from prison (on tag) and from there I went to stay with my mum, and was able to spend time with my two sons again. The day after my release was significant, because the man I met in prison from AA

came to see me, he took me to my first meeting outside of prison. I felt very emotional, and saw these people really cared about me, so much so that after three meetings it helped me to talk about myself. Slowly I shared more and they understood without judging me or putting me down. I started to get to as many meetings as I could, gaining confidence. Also reading the Steps and Big Book really helped.

About six months later, I asked my AA friend from those prison meetings to be my sponsor. He agreed to this and up to now we have made progress, doing the Steps and am now currently doing Step Five. I love, "We arrived in different ships, but we are all in the same boat now."

Although I have some awful prison memories, I have overcome these, and found forgiveness for those in my past, ditching the word 'blame' for wrongs that happened to me. Through being in AA I have reached a year of sobriety, and have restored the pride again, although my health is still an issue, I can cope with life on life's terms.

Maybe in the future I will be able to go back into prison, as an AA volunteer, offering my support and giving hope as part of this giving back, as I have been freely given. And so, to any newcomer I say stick with it, keep coming back, read and find a sponsor,  
Yours in Fellowship

SHAUN, Lincoln



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# THERE BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD...

I AM a grateful, recovering alcoholic. Six years ago, I was facing a six-month jail sentence for a drink-driving charge. I do not remember driving as I was in black-out, following a work's party before Christmas. I do remember being pulled over, breathalysed by the roadside and being arrested. At the station they took my fingerprints, DNA and photo – I was now a criminal. My alcoholism had sent me to new depths of darkness. I spent a long night in a cell, wondering how my life had ended up like this...

I grew up in a loving home, doing well at school, attending church and Sunday School. I had gone to University after my A-Levels and had a successful career as a crew manager for an airline. However, when they asked if there was anyone they should call for me, I had to say no. I was living alone, no boyfriend, no best friends, no family (they were in Ireland) – I had no one. What success? Even King Alcohol, my 'best friend' had turned on me, stranding me in this place. In desperation I turned to the Lord in prayer. I prayed to the God of my childhood to remove alcohol from my life and

*“...we began to feel humility as something more than a condition of grovelling despair.”*

(12&12 p.75)

help me change to be the person I was meant to be. I meant every word, with every fibre of my being. The next morning, the police released me from custody, they gave me my court date and a small card with the phone number for AA on it, saying, “These people can help.” I had never heard that before. I was reminded of my

prayer and knew I was holding the ‘Keys to the Kingdom’ in my hand. I committed to go to AA that moment. That was my last drunk.

I hired a lawyer and went to court, the most humbling, ego-deflating experience of my life. I cried and hung my head

in shame as I explained that I was sorry. I was given a two-year driving ban, a fine and 40 hours community service. Because it was my first offence, I avoided the six-month jail time.

In AA I have always been involved in service, from setting up rooms, doing the teas, to being greeter, secretary, GSR and now Public Information Convener. But especially I enjoy my service as a prison sponsor in Northern Ireland. The men who attend AA do so voluntarily and are always

pleased to see us. They thank us for giving of our time to come in and run the meeting. I try to help them see that they were ill, if they had known better, they would have done better. They are not bad people trying to be good, they are sick people trying to get well. As we share our experience, strength and hope, they come to see that alcohol is to blame for their crimes. If they had been sober, they probably wouldn't have been in a certain situation; they wouldn't have chosen to steal that car, rob that person, attack that individual, strike their wife, frighten their children etc. They are filled with guilt, shame and remorse. They have lost everything, even their freedom. But through AA meetings and time away from alcohol, they come to gain a new perspective about themselves and the nature of their drinking. They are filled with hope, and fear, about getting out. How, when the time comes, are they going to resist the temptation to drink? To go back to their old lives? How are they to change? We witness the hopes and fears of these individuals and share words of encouragement and insist that life without alcohol is possible. After all, we ourselves have done it!

I consider myself lucky. I am always filled with more gratitude when leaving the prison meeting than when I went in. I am reminded that it is a 'yet' for me, "There but for the grace of God...".

JOANNE

## "Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship"



How about putting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) and sending an article on how sponsorship has impacted

on your AA journey – for our "Sponsorship" feature in SHARE September 2020 issue.

*"If you do what I did, you'll get what I got", said my sponsor.*

*"Am I helping those I sponsor find what works best for them?".*

What has been your Experience?  
What Strength have you found?  
What Hope do you have?

Just a few lines, or more (up to a 1,000 words) on the trials and tribulations, the rewards and progress made, while working closely with another alcoholic, would be welcome.



Please read the "Terms" on the Title page and send your contribution to:

The Editor, SHARE,  
General Service Office, PO Box 1,  
10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ

Or email your article to:  
[AAShare@gsgb.org.uk](mailto:AAShare@gsgb.org.uk)

# THE NIGHT THE BOMB WAS DROPPED

ONCE upon a time, a drink problem for me was having two hands and only one mouth. There were happy memories from my hilarious drinking days – long before alcohol took over and nearly took my life. Such as the night I thought the nuclear bomb had been dropped. And the time I had to flee a pub with a friend – I'd knocked a full pint of beer inside an upright piano just as the pianist was about to play. The night of the 'nuclear bomb attack' was part of a pilgrimage I made with a friend and colleague who was a professional photographer. We used to go on regular drinking holidays – whisky drinking tours of Scotland and beer drinking tours of the Norfolk Broads. One of our favourite beers was brewed in Suffolk. We decided there was no better place to sample it than where it was made – the Sole Bay Brewery in Southwold, Suffolk. Extremely drunk, I staggered into the gents' lavatory at the pub next door. It was outside and had no roof. Suddenly, everything went blindingly white. The entire sky was lit up in a way I'd never seen before. I thought the Russians had dropped a nuclear bomb on Ipswich. What I hadn't realised was the nearest lighthouse for ships was in the centre of Southwold –

and the giant beam had lit up the sky for miles.

Those were my happy days, of careless, care-free drinking. In those days, alcohol did things **for** me – took away my worries and gave me confidence. Eventually, alcohol did things **to** me – made me fearful, anxious and alone. Memories of those happy drinking days kept me in denial for years. In my world, alcoholics lived on benches and slept in doorways. I couldn't be an alcoholic – I used to have fun. But that fun didn't last. The end of my drinking saw me alone, divorced, without friends and facing the prospect of unemployment.

My photographic friend once took a picture of myself and a colleague playing pranks in the office after a trip to the pub. My prankster friend and the man who took the photo might still be alive if they'd found the Rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. We were all serious drinkers, never in a sociable way. AA not only saved my life; it gave me a new one – far better than the old. Today, I still have that photo. The only other person in the picture died of cancer. I'm the only one connected to it who found AA, and a Higher Power who has looked after me all those years. I'm the only person related to that photo who is still alive.

ANON

# STARTING MY JOURNEY... PART ONE

**H**ELLO there! My name's Sarah and I'm an alcoholic. I am a fledgling member of this Fellowship and I just wanted to share with you the beginning of my journey so far. I don't want to dwell on my active drinking, like many it started early as social drinking, got out of control, prescription meds got involved and it got really messy. After a particularly difficult spell over last winter I was on my way towards a complete breakdown. I just couldn't put on the brakes and I couldn't see the wood for the trees.

I don't know how I made the decision to go into rehab, but one Saturday morning in January my husband took the dogs out and I found myself on the chat-line with a local rehab facility. By the time he returned from his walk I had booked myself in for 28 days starting the following Saturday. They had a single room and they could fit me in on the dates I wanted. I don't know who was more shocked me or my husband. Then the fear set in, how the hell were we going to afford this, what were work going to think, my family etc. etc. etc? The next week was a nail-biting wait, but one morning just before I went off to rehab a letter plopped onto our doormat. It was regarding an

ISA my mother had taken out. My mum had died four years previously and I had looked after her finances, I was her POA and her executor. I didn't know anything about this ISA, the letter said what amount there was available and how to cash it in. It covered two-thirds of the cost of rehab. What a stroke of luck!

*"...our thinking about humility commences to have a wider meaning."*

(12&12 p.75)

The few people I did tell about rehab all encouraged me, they hugged me and a few of them cried along with me. I entered rehab, the look on my poor husband's face when he left me there will always stay with me.

I was anxious, but it had been my choice to go and I wanted to give it my all. So from day one I joined in – the walk that was leaving just as I was being shown to my room, I joined it. The no-pub pub-quiz the first night – I joined it, I did everything I could to the best of my ability. I realised early on I had been allocated the senior counsellor, we got on very well. I was so thankful for being her client because it was not all plain sailing. In my first week I had to deal with a really upsetting situation, but my counsellor was just fantastic. She rightly told me that dealing with something difficult in rehab was a blessing, because I was in a safe environment and could not pick

up, which I'm pretty sure I would have done at home. I was also very blessed with the group I was put into. They were such a lovely group of caring, kind, sensitive but challenging folk like me.

My second day in rehab was a Sunday. I got to watch all the other clients meeting their families and going out for a couple of hours. Although I felt a little odd knowing I wouldn't be seeing my husband for another week it made me realise that this time was about me. This was probably the only chance in my adult life I would ever have this time to focus on myself, and to think about how I got in this state. So the next four weeks I spent time in my room writing a journal

*"It meant destruction of self-centredness."*

(BB p.14)

and completing the work that was given to me on Steps One, Two and Three. For the first time in a long time I was just me, not a wife, daughter, boss, or friend. I was just me.

All sorts of excitements went on in rehab, people walking out, people being thrown out, people coming in in various stages of desperation, romances, fights, and so it went on. I loved watching how things evolved and I kept my journal religiously every day. I haven't looked at it since I left rehab, but one day I will...

SARAH

*(Part Two of Sarah's journey will be published in August. Editor.)*

## SHARE is our story, share yours

**There are many AA members who are unable to go to meetings; the housebound, some single parents with children, those in the armed services, on oil rigs, in prisons or hospitals, who rely on SHARE for their meeting between meetings – and sometimes instead of one. Please take the time to write and share your experience, strength and hope with them.**

Whether you are a newcomer, old-timer, or just an ordinary member we would like to hear your story just like at any other meeting. Not only that but putting pen to paper can enhance your own sobriety and that of the whole Fellowship.

You don't need to be a polished author. Spelling and grammar will all be amended if necessary. You can write just a few lines or more, up to about a 1,000 words, but we do not publish poetry or obituaries.



Each issue of SHARE always features that month's corresponding Step and Tradition (January Step/Tradition 1 through to December Step/Tradition 12). We need your article at least two months before the relevant topic is due to appear, for example, for Step or Tradition Three (March) by mid-January, and so a.

*Send your contribution to:* The Editor, SHARE, General Service Office, PO Box 1,10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ Or e-mail your article to: [AAShare@gsogb.org.uk](mailto:AAShare@gsogb.org.uk)

# A WORK IN PROGRESS

WHEN I started going to meetings, about ten years ago, a member of my group had just come back from a relapse. He had been sober in AA for 25 years. He had thought he had been working the Steps. Yet he had relapsed. He believed, as I do, that anyone who works the Steps thoroughly stays sober. What Steps, then, had he not been doing properly? His answer was: Six and Seven. He had become overconfident in his recovery and ceased to regard himself as subject to character defects. He had therefore not worked the Steps with a sincere willingness to change. As a result, he had become discontented and restless, then relapsed. He returned to the Steps with enthusiasm and remained sober until his death a few years later.

Even though I was a newcomer, those reflections made sense to me and I came to believe that Steps Six and Seven are the key to long-term recovery. I still believe that. I see recovery as a path of continual character development, continual progress towards an ideal of spiritual perfection. I like that: it keeps recovery fresh and interesting. And as long as I work the Steps with this attitude, I feel my character is improving and I am heading in a good direction. It helps me feel good about myself.

*“...the final crushing of our self-sufficiency...”*  
(12&12 p74)

*“...the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA’s Twelve Steps.”* (12&12 p.71 Step Seven). Humility features in at least two ways at Step Six. First, I need always keep in mind that however much my character has improved over years of Step work, I remain defective – ‘a work in progress’. Second, I need to recognise that I lack the power to remove my defects by myself.

I could not wish or will away my compulsion to drink. And when the compulsion was on me, I did not have the power to resist it. Similarly, I can’t wish or will away my defects. And when they flare up, my powers to resist them are very limited. If I want my character to improve, I need to work hard at the Steps with a heartfelt willingness to change. I believe that if I do, there are natural conditions, forces and processes in the universe that will gradually remove the defects. It’s a bit like having a shower. If I want to get clean, I need soap, shampoo and a brush. I use these and the water washes away the dirt. If I want my character to get clean, I need the Steps. I use these and the flow of the universe washes away the defects.

Before I came to AA, I had been a hardcore drunk for most of my life. The alcohol nullified my emotions and masked my defects. When I

stopped drinking, I was subject to an onslaught of emotions that I couldn't properly understand or identify. They drove me insane! Eleven months into recovery, I was sectioned for 28 days. I had never been subject to anything approaching literal psychosis before. And I haven't since. These emotions were driven by ego. I had lost my job which had provided a satisfying persona to present to myself and to others. Without this persona, any threat to my image of myself resulted in anger and resentment. Through inventory, I came to understand that much of this resentment was driven by fear of being less than others. After years of sharing, prayer, meditation and service, resentments are now just minor distractions. I don't allow them to fester or stir things up in my head. I don't act on them. I simply observe them, distance myself from them and, if they don't disappear, do some Step work on them.

I like to select one or two specific defects to target at any given time. I am currently working on spiritual pride and greed. I still have low self-esteem and a consequent desire to appear better than others. I spend a lot of time doing service in AA and this provides opportunities for my infantile ego to try to make me appear superior, "Look at me: I do more and better service than others. I know so much. Yet I am so very humble!". I catch myself thinking this way and trying to make others notice my great virtues. I see that these thoughts

and wants are driven by feelings of inadequacy and a desire to show off. They take my mind away from the goal of serving others and towards the goals of being admired and obeyed. Spiritual pride undermines spirituality. (ref. 'Humility for Today' by Bill W. AA Grapevine, June 1961). My spiritual pride is an ugly nuisance. I am genuinely and deeply willing for it to be removed.

Before I sobered up, I lost my career. I was terrified of not having enough money. This is part of what drove me insane. It turned out that my financial situation is good. I have more than I thought I wanted. I have more than I need for a roof over my head, decent food, hot and cold running water. I should be delighted with my material situation. And to be consistent with my views, I should give very generously to charity. All this is clear to me, in theory. But I talk the talk better than I walk the walk. I worry: if I live long, will I have enough? I waste energy needlessly trying to secure my finances. I indulge myself in expensive treats. I suspect much of this is driven by pride. I feel that my material wealth makes me appear powerful, important or attractive. Other defects involved are self-reliance and self-will. I hope that one day I can truly take it to heart that material wealth is fool's gold. A far greater reward would be brought by freedom from misguided fears and desires: serenity. I am definitely still a work in progress.

ANON

# STAYING SOBER IN THE PANDEMIC

I HAVE been reflecting on this. I asked myself what am I doing now that is different to what I did a few months ago before I became aware of the Covid-19? Surprisingly I am not doing things that differently. I still do meetings (online of course), but I have attended more meetings in the past few weeks than I did before. I keep in touch with people in recovery but more than I did before. I have been praying to my Higher Power as I have always done, morning and night, but this has more depth and urgency about it now. I have dipped into the AA literature more than I used to, particularly relating to emotional sobriety. So, all in all I think I am engaging in my Programme in a more meaningful way than I used to. So why is that? Again, if I look back over my 18 years of being in the Programme and living life without alcohol, I have in challenging times or in anticipation of difficulty, upped my meetings and prayer.

I am grateful that I had support to set up our online meeting and chair that meeting, which has helped me to continue serving the group. We have kept to the

original format of the meeting and this helps some of those at the meeting to do service by reading from various cards and books. The five minutes of meditation during the meeting works as well online as it did face to face.

*“Humility, as a word and as an ideal, has a very bad time of it in our world.”*

(12&12 p.71)

So, whilst living in a pandemic is a novel experience for me, and I feel I am doing things differently, I'm not really. It just feels like that because all of the above are done without any face to face contact with my recovery Fellowship.

Instead I make do with seeing their dear familiar faces on a screen. Occasionally, I see people that I used to know when I attended meetings in other parts of the UK and the world. In fact, that has been a real positive, as I have reconnected with old friends in the Programme, and in doing so made new friends. So, all in all I guess I just have to keep doing what I have always done (knowing this has kept me away from that first drink), that is go to meetings, keep in touch with the Fellowship and converse with my Higher Power.

ANON

# SHARE INTERVIEW

RECORDED VIA  
TELEPHONE - BRYN



**Q** Thanks for doing this.

What brought you to the Fellowship Bryn?

**A** I was at the very bottom. There was someone who belonged to my running club, he came to see me. My wife had just left and I was left on my own in Massachusetts. This man said he thought that I was ready and he took me along to Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Q** Can I ask how long you'd been drinking?

**A** 22-23 years, something like that. I first started going into pubs when I was about 17.

**Q** When you first came to AA what was your mind-set?

**A** I first came in the United States. At my first meeting there were about 100 people in a big church hall. A man talked about fear and I understood what he was talking about – he was a big man who shouldn't have been frightened of

anything or anyone. As he talked I realised he was just like me. Others came in and I just felt as though that I belonged there, that I was one of them.

**Q** Did you stay sober from your first meeting?

**A** No. I subsequently came back to the UK, got a job working in construction and was in a hell of a state. What I haven't mentioned is that I tried to commit suicide previously and I was terrified it was going to happen again. I was white knuckling it. I gave up the ghost and came back to AA

**Q** When you first came back how did you feel?

**A** I felt safe, I wasn't particularly bothered about what others thought. I was safe for a couple of hours, get a cup of tea and not think about a drink which had been occupying my mind for a lot of the time.

**Q** Did you get a sponsor?

**A** Not straight away. I started going back to the meetings and got a sponsor. Although I wasn't particularly teachable and it didn't really do me any good really.

**Q** During your years in AA what's your experience of service?

**A** Well I did it initially because I thought I was the best thing since sliced bread, that AA was so lucky to have me. That was my motivation. What I've found is that it doesn't matter what the motivation is, it can only be of benefit. I've done every position at group level. Anybody who asks me, that's what I suggest to them.

**Q** If there's a newcomer or a member who is struggling reading this, what would you say to them?

**A** Well I would say there are certain things only AA can do. You get a Home group. You get a sponsor, who's done the Steps - who's been sober a little while not just somebody who's two months ahead of you, this person leads you through the steps. I would just add this, after about three years in I reached another bottom. That's when I had to get somebody who was going to show me the way. There's various other things that people say to new members but I think the basics are get a Home group, get a sponsor. Otherwise drifters drift. That's what I would say.

**Q** Bryn, thanks for doing this.

**A** You're welcome.

## Want to know more about the early days of our wonderful Fellowship?

THEN CHECK OUT

### **'Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970**

LISTED ON GSO LITERATURE ORDER FORM

After years of painstaking research and transcription of recordings, this volume offers a timeless and timely insight into Bill W.'s innovative thinking, giving readers around the world a window into how Alcoholics Anonymous moves forward in unity.



# **AA GB 75th Anniversary Convention 10-12 June 2022 Leeds Direct Arena**

**Website <https://www.aa75.co.uk/>**

## **Early Bird Registration Now Open**

**Our convention will be a time for AA members, from GB and beyond together with AI-Anon Family Groups, family and visitors to celebrate AA 75 years at this event with big meetings being held in the large theatre style stadium and other meetings and activities will take place throughout the weekend within the arena complex.**

**We know many are excited about the 75th Anniversary Convention, please keep checking the website for updates and some random facts as they become available.**

A photograph of the Leeds Direct Arena at night, illuminated with blue and white lights. The arena's facade is a complex, geometric structure of hexagonal and pentagonal panels.

**Email address: [info@aa75.co.uk](mailto:info@aa75.co.uk)**

# shareback

If you have identified with anything in SHARE, or wish to express a personal opinion based on your experience, share it with us. Write a letter of not more than 300 words and enclosing a contact name and address (not for publication) to:

**Share Back, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ.**  
or **E Mail AAShare@sogb.org.uk**

## LETTER TO A PRISON GROUP, 1949:

*Every A.A. has been, in a sense, a prisoner. Each of us has walled himself out of society; each has known social stigma. The lot of you folks has been even more difficult: In your case, society has also built a wall around you. But there isn't any really essential difference, a fact that practically all A.A.'s now know. Therefore, when you members come into the world of A.A. on the outside, you can be sure that no one will care a fig that you have done time. What you are trying to be - not what you were - is all that counts with us."*  
(As Bill Sees It p.234)

BILL W

## JOINING UP THE DOTS...

WAS it a moment of clarity or a brush with reality? All I remember is I knew, "I can't do this anymore". Someone once said to me, "An alky's not done 'til he's done". I asked what that meant. The answer, "You have to have every single drink to prove you can't do it anymore".

I'd also heard the realisation wasn't dramatic...no thunderbolts or lightning flashes. No volcanic eruptions. It was a simple argument...on the phone. It was a Monday evening in the month of May. I'd phoned my ex-wife to check on progress on the sale of our house. My wife had already divorced me, because of my drinking. When I heard the house wasn't selling, I was furious....as usual. I shouted abuse down the phone, and slammed the handset down. Then I picked it up, redialled and apologised profusely. As I always did. Then I put the handset down, gently this time. I gazed out of the window and realised....every time I drank, I got drunk. And I ended up in an argument. The truth dawned... I'd never, ever, have a relationship with anyone...ever again. And by 'relationship', I didn't mean a marriage or civil partnership. It referred to any dealings, with anyone. The woman in the paper shop, the man in the dry cleaners; the bus driver, train driver, colleague, neighbour....anyone.

I fell asleep that Monday night. When I awoke on the Tuesday morning, I didn't want to drink. The compulsion had gone. That's when I decided to do what I'd been told 18 months earlier....stay away from the first drink, and get to an AA meeting. I went to at least one meeting, every single day. I got a sponsor, worked through the Steps and embarked on a brand-new life. AA didn't become my life....but it became my way of life.

That night of my final drink, my final argument and my final moment of clarity was the moment of truth. I'd finally joined up the dots, and they spelled the word, 'A...l...c...o...h...o...l...i...c'

JEFF B, Warwickshire

## HAPPY GO DRINKY...

*IT never occurred to me that people might have resentments towards **me**.*

*I'd read in the Big Book that resentments were 'the "number one" offender.' (p.64). I'd worked through the Steps with my sponsor, and made that fearless and thorough moral inventory of myself. I gave considerable thought and had much discussion on my 'grudge list' to work through my resentments towards others. I knew that my drinking had caused much hurt and damage, and I set about making my amends to those I had affected. I began by staying sober a day at a time, doing what I was supposed to do - being a good father, a trusted friend to my former wife, a dependable work colleague, kind neighbour and a useful member of society. I also learned to become **reasonable**.*

*It wasn't until my third year of sobriety that another dimension struck me. I was taking voluntary redundancy from my job - again after considerable thought and discussion. As my departure date approached, I joked that I could "go after people on my hit list.". Then someone said to me: "But you could be on someone else's hit list."*

*That made me think. It had never occurred to me that others might not like me, nor have resentments towards **me**. Kind, generous, genial little old me? A while later, I was in contact again with the parents of a former girlfriend. She was someone I'd harboured resentments against years earlier. She'd been seeing someone else behind my back. I harboured that resentment, and eventually finished with her to marry someone else. Two decades later, when I was in sobriety, I attended her father's funeral. I became friends again with my 'ex' and would visit her elderly mother. After a time, it became clear the parents had been disappointed in **me** - my relationship with their daughter had finished their hopes she would go to university. The fact that neither of us, nor any of our friends, went to university didn't matter - it was **their** hope, and **I** was their disappointment.*

*Looking at life from someone else's direction is a sobering experience in itself. History does get re-written. I'd always thought of myself as 'happy go lucky'. As an AA friend of mine says: "Happy go lucky became happy go drinky..."*

ANON

# THE TWELVE CONCEPTS

## for World Service

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To ensure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees and executives – with a traditional ‘Right of Decision’.
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional ‘Right of Participation’, allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional ‘Right of Appeal’ ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognise that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never performs acts of government and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.



God grant me the **SERENITY**  
to **ACCEPT** the things  
I cannot change  
**COURAGE** to change the things  
I can and **WISDOM** to  
know the difference