



Sobriety in Stumptown

www.pdxaa.org
www.pdxaa.org

Portland Area Intergroup
825 NE 20th Ave,
Portland, OR
503-223-8569

August 2017
Volume 10, No. 8

August Stories and Art

by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Eighth Step and Tradition (including a special contribution from Garry, the Office Manager for Portland Area Intergroup), as well as a recovering alcoholic providing a travelogue from SE Asia, and a section for poetry, inspired by the Big Book and the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Step Eight

by George D. from Portland, OR

Made a list: Milk, eggs and cheese. Not a grocery list dummy. A regrets list; as in I really hurt my parents when at the age of 16, I ran away from home. Little did I know they truly loved me, nor did I know that on that day I would begin my long run into the depth of a liquor bottle.

The list I was asked to make I refer to as my regrets for it contained the harms I had done. The regrets I had made and the remorse I had carried on my shoulders and into the deepest recesses of my heart. The list of "Should of, could of, would of."

The step also contains "became willing." Once again, the steps, my sponsor and the fellowship of AA played a huge role in step 8. Time in sobriety was putting off the old George and teaching and growing a new George. Courage, acceptance, openness, willingness, and honesty replaced the old character defects.

The big book teaches us to bring up our list from the fourth step and if you're anything like me, honesty is taking its time growing; hence, it was necessary to add a few other things where I still felt remorse and regrets over. Armed with my notebook, I gave my sponsor a call and was invited to a venison dinner his wife was fixing. Gary started a fire in his outdoor pit and we were ready for one of those man to man talks folks of my generation know well. It was a warm day and I wondered why the fire. Turns out, the fire came in handy.

Step Eight

by Mike B. from Portland, OR

It's a good thing step seven gets you humble before you do this one. You really need to get over yourself so that you can think of the damage you did in your drinking career. I know THIS alcoholic was a selfish, lying SOB, who didn't think of other people's feelings and only gave as much as I needed to, to get what I wanted.

As I thought about the people I'd harmed, working back through the years, this helped me realize the consequences of my actions, revealing to me a different perspective in the world, that of other people! Mainly loved ones, family, friends, who had put up with my crap for years. I began to see me through their eyes, judge myself through their feelings. WOW! This helped me to get ready for Step Nine.

August

by Riley S, Portland, OR, in Tangerang, Indonesia

As far as meeting attendance, my Indonesian summer includes one meeting a week in Jakarta, which might not sound like much; but, it equates to over three hours worth of driving, to cover about 60 miles round trip. Last weekend it took us six hours to drive 90 miles, and we did that twice to get to Bandung—in central Java—and back. Traffic in Indonesia is atrocious. Sure you can call rush hour in Portland “bad traffic,” but that’s like calling the surf big wave riders brave in Northern California “massive.” There’s an entire classification of bigger waves known as tsunamis, which are more on par with the devastation that constitutes a traffic jam in Indonesia. That said the hardest part about the last meeting I went to was crossing the street to get food before it started. The scooters and motorbikes turned two lanes into six, and the Indonesian word for crosswalk is “trust in God.” In Indonesia just about everyone has a driver and we’re no different at the factory. Gas is about 50 cents a gallon, the Toyotas are about \$15,000 brand new, and Indonesia has one of the largest wage gaps in the world, so there is an ample supply of inexpensive drivers. Just as a comparison, to take Uber four or five miles here, will run you about two dollars. Point being, it’s pretty relaxing to jump in a car, put my headphones in and listen to some music en route to a meeting—regardless of the traffic.

I’ve met a number of sober people here, hundreds in fact, but that’s because Indonesia is the largest majority Muslim country in the world. With a population of 261 million it is about 90% Muslim, which means that many people in the country don’t drink alcohol. I’ve also met a handful of sober alcoholics from the United States, Indonesia, The Netherlands, and the UK. I’ve connected with three Americans: one from Jersey who got sober in Manhattan, one from Seattle, and one from Rancho Cucamonga, California. All have been a blessing. I call a handful of guys back home, I talk to the recovering ex-pats here, I go to one of several AA meetings a week in Jakarta, and I log into a weekly online meeting with my friends back home. It’s working—I’m staying sober and relatively sane. Granted work gets stressful, the humidity is uncomfortable, and the Indonesians display some cultural nuances that bother me; but I’m hanging in there. I joined one of the factory soccer teams, I play pool in the mess hall, a virtual private network grants me access to season four of “The Sopranos,” and I visit some of the world’s biggest shopping malls and eat at fancy restaurants with my Taiwanese coworkers—for about the same price as a burrito and a Jarrito back home.

While at times over the past month things have felt good, other times I get freaked out about what's going to happen next. This has been a pattern I've noticed—or rather my sponsor helped point out—while going to school without alcohol for medicine. Once things become challenging and I'm unsure how they will turn out, I get scared. The difference now is I keep showing up, and in just about every case things have worked out just fine. Pushing through a difficult grad program to make it to the internship phase, coming to Indonesia after deciding I wanted to go to Asia for my internship, figuring out how to do what is being asked of me while I'm here—all required a level of follow through that I never had while drinking. I used to be paralyzed by my own cyclical thinking as I tried to figure out what I wanted to do. I once dropped out of and re-enrolled in school twice in the same day as an undergrad. I still worry about what will happen next, but in spite of myself I keep showing up, which is a massive improvement from where I used to be. Now as I finish up the last month of my internship I know I just have to keep showing up, do the best I can, and turn the results over to God. Or something like that.

Tradition Eight

by Barbara E. from Portland, OR

The 8th Tradition about paying service workers has been a thorny issue for AA purists ever since meetings moved from people's homes back in the 1930s founding years to church basements or other facilities vital for growing membership.

By the time the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions was published in 1946, co-founder Bill Wilson had a decade of experience in initially operating out of a small office in New York City and handling the daily deluge of thousands of letters, calls, and telegrams that poured into the General Service Office. Sending replies and shipping cases of the Alcoholics Anonymous “big-book” and pamphlets to the four corners of the globe.

It was clear from his earliest days in that busy office that depending on recovering alcoholics to volunteer labor seven days a week for what had grown to be an immense job, would never work. Even members out in America's hinterlands answering telephone pleas for help—and then calling AAs to go on 12-step calls—usually were willing to do “hot-line” work for a day or two, but not 24/7.

Doing 12-step calls required one alcoholic talking to another, based on knowledge of the disease and how the program works. But office and shipping work can be done by “outsiders” such as experienced switchboard operators, typists, file clerks, stenographers, and shipping-room veterans. These were the “service workers” cited in the 8th Tradition who then (and now) were absolutely essential to running both GSO and the early Intergroup offices. As Bill said of not expecting members to carry the AA office loads “day in and day out” in those program's pioneer days:

Eight tons of books and literature per month do not package and channel themselves all over the world. Sacks of letters on every conceivable A.A. problem ranging from a lonely-heart Eskimo to the growing pains of thousands of groups must be answered by people who know. Right contacts with the world outside have to be maintained. A.A.'s lifelines have to be tended. So we hire A.A. staff members. We pay them well, and they earn what they get. They are professional secretaries, but they certainly are not professional A.A.'s.

A footnote indicated that if AA members had those skills and wanted a job, they certainly could

apply—and many did—to join the staff of the New York City office.

It should be emphasized, as it usually has been done for decades, that AA clubs are a separate and distinct entity from the AA program. They have had a history of joys such as paying off mortgages to keep doors open, dances, and "eatin' meetings, as well as woes ranging from fires, police arrivals, managers making off with the money or failing to pay vendors—and closures.

Also “service workers” do not include clerks in bookstores or literature shops, nor printers publishing our literature. Nor all the coinmakers, poker-chip producers, silver-dollar drillers and their wholesalers and sales agents. And don’t count institutional staffs at churches, schools, or other places where meetings are held—or medical/mental-health people. Nor fast-food franchisers who permit emergency back-room space when the guy/gal with the key fails to show up to open the door for meetings. To all these, I would add, the stationwagon owner who hosted a memorable, if cramped, 3rd-step session when Maryland’s Seneca Creek flooded the road to our meeting place.

Perhaps the best and clearest definition of who constitutes the 8th Tradition’s “service workers,” is just to include those full-time staffers at GSO and those at the regional Intergroup offices.

Tradition Eight

by Garry B. from Portland, OR

At central office, we do all that we can to keep the hand of A.A. outstretched to anyone looking for sobriety and freedom from alcohol. The primary purpose is to make A.A. as available as possible to those seeking help. The way we do it is with our hotline, the central office, and a long list of willing sober members of A.A. that will answer the phone 24 hours a day and carry out 12th step work when called to do so. Making it possible for groups to participate in 12th step work and acting as a liaison between meetings is daily work at a central office. Keeping the book store well stocked for groups, and having meeting schedules and flyers for events are the norm for most offices across the country. There is endless work that needs to be done, and yes, some of it is just folding and stapling. Maintaining the office requires patience, tolerance and an endless trek to learn new skills because we just can’t wait to fix things when they break and everyone who calls has priority.

Most drunks do not get sober, that is a fact! It is our job to help groups and members have the tools and support they need so A.A. is well known to the community, and how to reach us. We want anyone who asks for help from alcoholism to get it. Improving the odds of sobriety for the still suffering alcoholic is unending. A.A. was waiting for us when got here and we want to keep it ready for all others now and in the future. The cost to achieve having A.A. readily available as it was for us, requires time from volunteers, a dedicated staff for the offices, and financial support from the groups. When any one of these three crucial ingredients are slighted, our effectiveness is diminished. The general service office would not be able to do its work nor would central offices be able to do theirs without these three things.

A.A. would be nothing without the many thousands of volunteers we have across the country. However, these volunteers would be hard pressed to volunteer instead of having jobs to support their families. They must work to pay their bills. Then they can freely support the program that has given them their lives back. Also true is that A.A. meetings could not function without contributions from the members. We must pay rent, buy refreshments and have literature for the

new people that walk into the rooms. The same again applies to all the A.A. offices across the country, without contributions from groups and members, the offices would be skeletons compared to well-funded service centers. With that comes the fact that we must hire fulltime employees if we are to expect our offices to support the groups, members and the person that is on the brink of sobriety!

I must say that the hardest part of being a paid staffer or a “special worker” is when a group or member is critical of anyone working for A.A. and being paid to do it. There are times people who denigrate people working for A.A. I am embarrassed and sad to say that I was one of those people early in my sobriety. I let my first sponsor Don N. know what I thought of people taking money from A.A. for work, even if it was their full-time job! I waxed and waned more than once to him about that topic. I never once considered why it was necessary to have people on staff that would show up, rain or shine, to keep the office running.

Working as a paid “special worker” in A.A. has rewards and challenges that are hard to fully share. I would like to say that best part is when we get to witness God at work through the volunteers. When a person comes into the office to buy something for their group and then leaves to go on a 12th step call because they were just the right person at just the right time is beautiful! Or when we get a call from outside of the country because the person calling googled Alcoholics Anonymous and got the number of Portland Area Intergroup instead of an A.A number of the country they are in. Then it turns out that one more time they are speaking with just the right person for them to get the help they need. There is nothing like getting a call from a group thanking us so much for the help received when their group was getting torn apart by opposing opinions; but when they were given gentle guidance and a pamphlet they might use for helping them solve a problem, their group became whole and well again.

There are so many things that I am grateful for in my life; my family and friends, my health and the health of loved ones, the opportunity to do and become anything imaginable in life. For free will and room to experience it. I must say that I am most grateful and humbled in my life to serve Alcoholics Anonymous in a way that is most indescribable but so full of love! I guess really all I can say is...my sponsor Don N. who heard my complaining about paid staff told me years later, “I guess God really does have a sense of humor!”

Poetry

by Dawn M, Portland, OR

Walking Home

I believe I am strong.

I believe I am weak.

I believe I am separate.

I believe I am connected.

I believe I had a rough childhood.

I believe I am a blessed woman.

I believe that if I love people they will love me back.

I believe no one really loves me, they just say they do.

I believe I am great at what I do.

I believe I am imperfect and therefore messed up.

I believe I want peace.

I believe I hurt others.

I believe there is a reason for everything.

I don't believe a thing.

I believe my heart will break if he leaves.

I believe we should part and it's the best thing for both of us.

I believe nothing is working out.

I believe everything will be okay.

Monthly Business Meetings

For details about monthly business meetings, contact the PAI Office at 503-223-8569. Or send your questions or concerns to: 1212@pdxaa.org

- **Portland Area Intergroup (PAI):** Business Meeting, 2nd Monday of every month, 7:00 PM, 4524 SE Stark St. (Unity of Portland), Portland.
- **Portland Deaf Access Committee:** Monthly, 2nd Sunday of every month, 6:30 PM, The Alano Club, NW 24th & Kearney.
- **District 9:** 1st Wed, 6:30 PM, The Alano Club 24th and Kearney, Portland
- **District 10:** Last Mon, 7:00 PM, 12945 Beaverdam Rd., West Side Service Center, Beaverton
- **District 11:** Last Thu, 7:00 PM, "URS" Club, Portland
- **District 12:** 1st Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland
- **District 15:** 1st Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6th St., Oregon City
- **District 18:** 1st Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6th St., St. Helens
- **District 23:** 1st Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn
- **District 24:** 1st Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland

- **District 25:** 4th Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR
- **District 26:** 2nd Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42nd Ave., Portland
- **District 27:** 1st Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie
- **District 31:** 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro
- **District 34:** 3rd Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone
- **District 35:** 2nd & 4th Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton
- **District 36:** 2nd Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland
- **District 37:** 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Center, 21907 SW Sherwood Blvd., Sherwood

Committee News

Portland Area Intergroup needs your help! We have several committee positions available, and working on a committee is excellent 12th Step service work. If you are interested in being on any Portland Area Intergroup committee, send an email to: pdxaa.org, with "COMMITTEE INTEREST" in the subject field. Or, just click on [Service](#) on the Intergroup website. **Intergroup committees carry the message of recovery to the still-suffering alcoholic.** Please help yourself and others, and sign up! Thank you!

Bridging the Gap (BTG): Provides a one-time temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to AA meetings. BTG meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Portland Intergroup Office basement, located at 825 NE 20th Ave, Suite 200, Portland. "We Bridge the Gap so alcoholics leaving treatment don't have to walk alone across that scary gap between the beginning of recovery in treatment and the continued recovery in AA." Please contact the PAI office via phone, 503-223-8569, or email 1212@pdxaa.org, if you are interested.

AA Hotline: The AA Hotline keeps the Portland phone number for AA active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The way this is accomplished is by volunteer support. Calls to the AA number placed after Central Office hours and redirected to volunteers' phones, keeping the volunteer's number anonymous. A volunteer can elect to go on a 12th Step call or just provide the information the caller needs about meetings. Commitments are generally two times a month. In particular, if you're a night-owl, we'd really appreciate your help. Call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

Newsletter (*Sobriety in Stumptown*): The committee for the very publication you are now reading is looking for members. Send an email of interest to: newsletter@pdxaa.org

Events: The Events Committee needs committee members. Send an email to Events@pdxaa.org for more information.

Get Published!

If you have AA news, a meeting change, a big event, a story, a painting, a poem, or just a rant, Sobriety in Stumptown wants to hear it! Send articles of 1000 words or fewer to:

newsletter@pdxaa.org

Deadline for the August issue: August 1st.

Step Eight

"Made a list of those people I've harmed and became willing to make amends to them all."

Tradition Eight

"Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers."

Serenity Prayer

"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."

-Reprinted with permission of AA World Services, Inc.