



# Sobriety in Stumptown

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Portland Area Intergroup  
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## *July Stories and Art*

*by Eric K., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor*

This month's newsletter submissions are focused on the Seventh Step, as well as a recovering alcoholic providing a travelogue from SE Asia, and a section for art, inspired by the Big Book and the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

P.S. In light of Tradition Seven, consider digging a little deeper this month at your meetings when the tradition is observed to help ensure we continue to have access to so many amazing meetings here in the Portland area!

## **Step Seven**

*by Terry M. from Portland, OR*

Step 7 is the step that allows me to grow with limitless expansion. I am challenged every day with a flood of shortcomings. When I am in the moment and pay attention to the shortcomings as they arrive, I can then ask for Gods help to have them removed for that moment. I recently was on the phone with a person disputing a charge on my account and had to have Gods help to keep me centered and not put my frustrations onto the customer service person on the phone. I noticed that I was feeling less agitated, with God as a partner in my thinking. I was able to not participate in adding chaos to the situation. I stayed on my side of the street and the problem got resolved. I used to believe that shortcomings can be magically removed from me, but as I get more practice with step 7 it is all about knowing that I will have shortcomings as long as I'm alive. With a God of my understanding I will have a chance to be a better person as well as become a more gracious human being.

Humility to me means viewing myself with an honest and realistic perspective. It's NOT thinking I'm bigger than.

## Step Seven

*by George D. from Portland, OR*

I would like to think that when I started sobriety and finally came in, my prayers were more a plea of desperation than humility. My life had become a huge pile of dung; stripped of any form of decency, hell bent on oblivion. I wanted to drink myself to death and was too wasted to know I was doing just that. It took all that AA had to offer: The Big Book, meetings, the fellowship, my sponsor and a god of my own understanding to bring me through steps 1-3.

There, as my soul began to awaken from its state of incomprehensible demoralization, grace, willingness, forgiveness and acceptance had become the pillars of my hope. These attributes became my guiding light to this new way of life. These emotions and humbling admissions brought me to my knees. I had found my God, the very same God I knew in my youth. He had never changed, but I had. He had never ran, but I had. It was at this stage of my sobriety that I learned to fully grasp and understand humility, forgiveness, willingness, and acceptance. These were the big words as they like to say "The Big-Boy Pants". Yes, I had to do step 7. For I had come to believe, rather, know that there was a new life for me; that life was mine to grab and hold on to, and finally mine to keep.

## Step Seven

*by Mike B. from Portland, OR*

Pondering the seventh step... "Humbly asked him to remove all our shortcomings." Getting humbled was a big help that was done for me, big time. Waking up in jail will get you humble real fast, and then when I was introduced to this program, I latched onto it like a life preserver. Through the earlier steps I had discovered what those shortcomings were, (and some still linger) and through time and meetings and listening to the wisdom of others in this program, I was able to grapple with my ego, the beneficiary of these shortcomings and character defects. I came to recognize "God" as a higher power, a force in the universe that gives and takes, and being grateful for the gifts I had been given, asked him to please remove the character flaws, the weaknesses that were disguised as strengths, helping me to continue growing in the spirit. My understanding and perception of god has grown and changed, but for the better I think, because of the life changes that happened to me in sobriety and the wisdom I learn from others in the program. Continuing growth, that's it for me.

## July

*by Riley S, Portland, OR*

I'm writing this during my second full day in Indonesia, after spending about two and a half weeks in Vietnam. I'm in SE Asia for the summer, doing an internship for a Taiwanese footwear manufacturer with plants throughout China, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Five classmates and I flew to Ho Chi Minh City—formally Saigon—and then took the company shuttle another hour outside of the city. Driving from Ho Chi Minh City to the factory campus is a bit like driving from Portland to Hillsboro, if Highway 26 were two lanes, jammed with trucks, bicycles, and countless motor bikes weaving in and out of each other. Both Vietnam and Indonesia are notorious for their traffic, though for different reasons; Vietnam because of their reckless abandon, and Indonesia because of the sheer volume of cars. Riding in a shuttle in Vietnam I was

sure on several occasions that our driver would kill someone, as we passed another truck on a two lane road while half a dozen motorbikes were scattered around us. Things tend to just work out while you're on the road, and although in the two weeks I was there I still had trouble crossing the street, it was a good lesson in letting go.

Traffic aside, I want to talk about staying sober in a different country. It's been up and down, and I'm thankful for my sobriety thus far. I travelled a bit over the winter with my cohort, to Germany and the East Coast, and I found it relatively easy to make it to a meeting in those locales, since we were in western metropolises. Being in rural Asia has proved more difficult. When I showed up to Vietnam's Hillsboro, I had every intention of making it to a meeting within a couple days, but it physically wasn't possible. I found myself tethered to our orientation schedule, and to the schedule of the shuttle bus which was my only way into the city. Before I could go to a meeting I endured two nights with my classmates while they drank. It was an interesting experience sitting around a bunch of people drinking while I hadn't been to a meeting in longer than I've gone my entire sobriety without going to one, and with the stresses of being in a new country, with a new job. A drink did sound good, but I used Mark S.'s Sonicare prayer to get through the meal. I ended up having a pretty good time.

One smart move I made was to call a couple local expats who live in Ho Chi Minh City. My friend spent two months working in Thailand, and had visited Vietnam, so he had a couple sober contacts there. He gave me their business cards and I was able to get a hold of them, first via email, and then via phone once I got to Vietnam. Having that initial contact when I landed was crucial for my sobriety, at least my emotional wellbeing. Before my first meeting I had coffee with one of the guys my friend put me in contact with, and it was great to connect with someone who had experienced what I had experienced arriving in Vietnam. Things are a bit different out there. It's sort of like being in New York City if people drove on the sidewalk, ignored traffic signals, purposefully went the wrong way on the road, and for every car there were 15 motorbikes—and that's just the traffic. But the meeting was great, it was a "12 and 12" study with a handful of Americans, a Canadian, and some unidentified Europeans all speaking English. I went to that meeting the following weekend, and again got to spend some time with one of the sober contacts my friend back home had set me up with.

That got me through one country, and now I find myself in Indonesia, outside of an even bigger city with a whole new set of circumstances to navigate. I'm currently in Tangerang, which in all practicality is a suburb of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. To put it in perspective, imagine if Los Angeles were a suburb of New York City, that starts to get the amount of space and people that inhabit this part of the island of West Java. Now add that together and subtract all infrastructures and put in its place what you might find on a country road in Pendleton, OR. That's where I'm living. Here are some details: 13 million people live here, there are six meetings a week, and I've got to find a way to get to one, while possibly leaving myself up to three hours just to travel 30 miles, but that's only if the traffic is bad. If the traffic is okay, it could only take a little over an hour; but I don't really know, because I haven't tried it yet. Like I said earlier, this is my second full day, and as I sit here with some free time at work, I'm not sure whether I'll be able to make it into the city or not, because we have to reserve a car and a driver, but my classmate and I got our request in a bit late.

So that's what I know. As it sorts itself out I know I'm going to be alright. I've got an online meeting set up for Saturday morning with my friends back in Portland. That will be my one piece of stability moving forward, as I spend the next two months in Indonesia. Here's the other good

news, while it's difficult to reserve a driver on the weekend, because of company demand, it is much easier to reserve a driver during the weekdays. I found myself putting all this energy and thought into making a weekend meeting, because that's the only thing that worked in Vietnam. I went so far as telling my classmate that I'm a member of AA, so that she would know why I ditched her in Jakarta for a couple hours. Then it hit me, with the decreased demand, I can just request a driver to take me to a meeting during the week. He'll drive me to the meeting's front door, and even wait for me for an hour plus while I increase my chances of staying sober via hearing the message of AA and engaging in a bit of fellowship. It sounds simple but there are still a few things I'm worried about, such as people in the company catching word that I requested a driver to go to a small café in the middle of a gigantic city; but I won't worry about that for now. All I have to do is turn it over, just like when I was crossing the street in Vietnam.

By the way, I wrote that on Friday and it is now Saturday evening. I spent the day in Jakarta which is an unreal city. It's as if the entire city is connected via freeways and they neglected to put sidewalks in. You almost have to take a taxi just to get to the coffee shop down the street. Anyways, the online meeting was awesome, it did a lot for my emotional and physical sobriety. The line in the big book about alcoholics connecting modem to modem seemed dated when I read it, but it is now relevant in my life today. More next month...

## **What is A.A.'s Singleness of Purpose?**

*by Luke F. from Portland, OR*

This issue has almost torn A.A. apart over the decades that I have been sober. Even to this day, people have been "run off" from various groups around the country because they could not identify as an "alcoholic."

Early A.A. experiences are often like walking blindfolded through a minefield. Danger and confusion are everywhere and Sponsorship is critical to success, or even sanity. **THIS CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT BE DONE ALONE.** Most groups have men and women who are more than willing to get new folk acclimated and help them to avoid pitfalls – or often just to make them understand that their situation may not be exactly as they think it is.

Most people in early recovery look at their last battle as the problem. Often it is with an illegal or illegally obtained substance, or using prescribed medications addictively. It's easy for an addict to overlook the role alcohol played in his/her life, and, again, sponsorship can be very helpful here. Occasionally, however, there are people who cannot or will not see alcohol as an issue and perhaps in those cases, N.A. is the solution for them

In A.A. meetings it's usually OK to identify as an Alcoholic/Addict. Even if a person didn't drink alcoholically in his/her opinion, they can never use alcohol again because sobriety is total abstinence from all mind-altering substances. And N.A. leaves no room to play with alcohol, and identifies alcohol as "the oldest drug." Addiction therapy also includes the concept of "cycling" – using one substance which gets you high with the erroneous belief that you never had a problem with it, and therefore can use it successfully. **WRONG.** Always remember this: When you cycle drugs/alcohol, whatever drug got you into serious trouble will always be the one you eventually return to, no matter how long you try and avoid it.

While it isn't necessary to tell everyone in A.A. everything about yourself, you do need to find someone in the program you can open up to. Therapists are fine but they do not constitute the

kind of relationship of which I am speaking. In A.A. parlance, you need to get down and dirty with ONE PERSON (Sponsor, perhaps) who knows that deep dark secret you told yourself you would never tell anyone. Why? That's the 5th Step of the A.A. Program. This will be someone who is at least as guilty as you of all those "secrets", but someone who has survived alcoholism and is now in recovery and will always understand what you are going through because they have been there too. Can't you think of times in your life you wished you had that?

FROM A NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE IN 1988: "...In a few communities, A.A. members have formed groups billed for those 'over 30.' The message is clear: No druggies wanted. This development infuriates John T. Schwarzlose, executive director of the Betty Ford Center for substance abusers in Rancho Mirage, Calif.: 'A.A. is the epitome of tolerance, flexibility and inclusiveness, but some drug addicts have told me about being turned away from A.A. meetings in the Midwest and South when they said they were just addicted to drugs. Now I tell them to say they are both alcoholics and drug abusers.' In the big cities and at A.A. headquarters, attitudes toward the dually addicted are much more welcoming..."

In '88 I was sober 16 years and witnessed firsthand how unkind the A.A. folk at that time could be to people who were addicted to drugs as well as alcohol. Many meetings refused to sign court papers, since for the first time in the 70's judges started sending people to A.A. in large numbers. The year I got sober – 72 – few addicts existed in our society. But ten years later the percentage of people in A.A. who had drug problems was almost triple in that short time. Today, it is RARE for someone coming into A.A. to be a "pure alcoholic."

Each individual, with help from groups of A.A. people, will find his/her own space and where they belong. I often marvel on how this one issue, which almost tore A.A. apart, has settled down and only stirs discontent when people within a group forget that love and tolerance is our code, we are a spiritual program, and that ultimately, God will reveal answers to us when we are ready to hear them.

## Art

*by Kari F, Portland, OR*



## ***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](mailto:1212@pdxaa.org)

- **Portland Area Intergroup (PAI):** Business Meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of every month, 7:00 PM, 4524 SE Stark St. (Unity of Portland), Portland.
- **Portland Deaf Access Committee:** Monthly, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of every month, 6:30 PM, The Alano Club, NW 24<sup>th</sup> & Kearney.
- **District 9:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wed, 6:30 PM, The Alano Club 24<sup>th</sup> 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:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland
- **District 15:** 1<sup>st</sup> Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6<sup>th</sup> St., Oregon City
- **District 18:** 1<sup>st</sup> Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6<sup>th</sup> St., St. Helens
- **District 23:** 1<sup>st</sup> Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn
- **District 24:** 1<sup>st</sup> Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland
- **District 25:** 4<sup>th</sup> Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR
- **District 26:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Portland
- **District 27:** 1<sup>st</sup> Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie
- **District 31:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro
- **District 34:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone
- **District 35:** 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton
- **District 36:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland
- **District 37:** 2<sup>nd</sup> 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:newsletter@pdxaa.org)

**Events:** The Events Committee needs committee members. Send an email to [Events@pdxaa.org](mailto: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](mailto:newsletter@pdxaa.org)

Deadline for the August issue: August 1st.

### **Step Seven**

*"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

### **Tradition Seven**

*"Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."*

### **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."*

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