



Sobriety in Stumptown

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

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January Stories and Art

Step One and Tradition One

by Amy B., Sobriety in Stumptown Editor

Welcome to 2018! The first issue of the year will feature discussion on the first step, first tradition and a poetry submission.

Step One

by Jacob R. from Portland, Oregon

For me, Step One wasn't a process, it was a moment. It happened to me as I sat in a meeting in the summer heat of Lubbock, Texas, three months into my sobriety. I read the red words staining that same white canvas that we have all seen hung at countless meetings; "Admitted to ourselves that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable."

It wasn't the first time that I had seen it, far from it. I had rushed to volunteer to read "How It Works" at any meeting I could, I loved being the center of attention as I read out loud. AA was much like a popularity contest to me at first—I would win and be the most afflicted, the most tortured, and then, through the flames, the most redeemed addict. AA was nothing but the third act in my life. First I was the pious son of a preacher, until the drink corroded that. Next I was the rebel without a cause, embracing the failure of my last incarnation, weaving it into my creative process in inventing the next. When, alas, that decades-long ride finally ended, so began my life as an admitted "alcoholic."

But what did that really mean? If you had asked me then, sweating in the sun as I helped set up chairs and fans in that church years ago, I would have told you that I came to AA because I had spent the last year or so on a bad bender. I had come to this place to get myself away from the vodka and refocus my attention. This disease had blinded me, as it is famous for doing. I had neglected to see that this drink problem wasn't a trend or recently phenomenon at all, but a lifetime issue. It had followed me, a darkness lurking behind my eyes for my entire life,

sabotaging from within, and it wasn't until that moment, looking at those steps, that it was fully unmasked.

I felt a great wave of what I would later identify as humility—the great antidote to our problem—wash over me. It would be the first of many. On that day I worked the first step as I admitted, finally, begrudgingly, that I was an alcoholic just like every other alcoholic, and I have never managed to let that realization slip away.

Tradition One

by Barbara E. from Portland, Oregon

“Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.”

The core of the long form of Tradition 1 in the 12x12 (p. 189) says each of us “...is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die...” When I came into my first meeting in Maryland, I was sure it would be just like the thousands of other gatherings in my life: Scouts, choir, PTA, politics, etc. Sit in the back. Check out who's there. Listen to what the leader says. Don't volunteer for anything. Nod and smile if spoken to. Leave as soon as it's over. The topic was “Live and let live,” but the leader strayed from the topic into the husband's anger—in their drinking days—over their separate beer caches in the refrigerator. The next to speak didn't stick to the topic either. And so it went. What disorganization! Midway, I began to sob (quietly). I got called on at the end and for 10 minutes talked about not being able to stop drinking, terrible unhappiness at home, etc., After some kind of unified prayer, a dozen rushed over waving slips with phone numbers and insisting I come to lunch at a nearby café.

There, the topic was unified: “Don't drink today no matter what!” Their kindness was unified. So was the unified concern for this round-the-clock drinker. I was so overwhelmed and grateful that I volunteered to do the coffee for next week's meeting.

Unlike any other meeting of my life in the subsequent daily meetings I made, A.A. had no elected leaders, members were unified about booze as their No. 1 past concern in the past, but sobriety was their No. 1 priority just for that day. It came before family, job, friends—anything—and I've been around enough years to see what happens when members begin to let other things come first. As Jean from the Who Me group put it in her “Four I's” reminder: “First comes Intolerance at the tables. Then, Indifference about fellow A.A.s and meetings. Then comes the too familiar Isolation. Then, inevitably with this progressive disease: Intoxication and death.

The use of water as an analogy in both the Big Book and 12x12 underscores that priority of A.A.'s unity through our common welfare and purpose. We're told that if we want to be sober rather than drunk, lay "hold of A.A. principles with all the fervor with which the drowning seize life preservers" and we can escape going to the bottom we came from. And, once we come to the tables, we're like lifeboat survivors drawn from captain's table to steerage, but "still floating upon a perilous sea." That is why for nearly 90 years A.A.s have dropped everything to help our fellow alcoholics "in and outside this program." We know that others—like those people at my first meeting—would do the same for us if we were in "deep waters" as we face sobriety's sometimes terrible events or heartbreaks.

We come from totally different backgrounds and viewpoints, but our common welfare rests on "don't drink today" and carrying that message to others. One 12-step story that illustrates that point I heard about in Maryland involved a pair of 12-steppers who detested each other sent to bring a drunken judge to a meeting. When they pried the front door open, the judge was lying on the floor just inside his mansion. The two exchanged a significant and unified glance, pulled him to his feet, and as they headed for the car, heard him gurgle, "When I called AA., I told them I wanted someone from the Bar [association]. The two exchanged a "common-welfare" chuckle and said: "We were! We were!"

In closing with the "lifeboat" analogy, our common welfare is dependent upon picking up A.A.'s "oars" and rowing with a common spirit linked to that common goal of not drinking just for today. Too, there's nothing like a little harmony on that journey, say, in singing that age-old round of "Row, Row, Row Our Boat" while we're at it.

Poetry Submission

by Ruby W. from Portland, Oregon

It is fascinating to experience the well known feeling of fading away without acting on it.

My bodily sensations try to drag me down, my brain screams at me that my life is in vain, but I rise up and the sinking feeling is left behind like a snakeskin.

I can cry, I can drink coffee at any hour and eat candy whenever I want; that can be the extent of active addiction in my life.

The world is still screaming after my higher power has picked up my own and my brain is lit back up with laughter. I am shortly able to hear the screams of others again.

They have not been transferred, there just is suffering going on every minute.

Our generation "does more" than the other, one generation has an increasing diagnosis
All generations don't feel enough.

In every building, folks forget what they're saying. Mouths run and the suffering of one is passed on subconsciously. Those who are aware become hyper-aware, dissecting their own sentences.

It's okay. Breathe. Balance.

Awareness is what I love. When you know what you're saying to me. I listen to you, listen to your predecessors, and see a sliver of truth.

Your truth is passed on to me.

It looks brighter than the drab, dull pain I got sick from beating and fighting with.
Keep listening, keep breathing, and the pinpoint of your truth sliver touches me. It becomes part of me, too.

It becomes not such a burden to dissect sentences. I do it enough that sometimes I trust my words.

Awareness lessens the prejudices.

The speech with care, the soft actions from all genders, they are lovely.
Sensitivity is not something I fight anymore, rather something to invite.
Once I feel enough, I will have more strength to stand up
Be truth aggressive or soft, it is light.

I am done putting sunglasses on in the morning.

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, The Alano Club, NW 24th & Kearney.

Dist 9: 1st Wed, 6:30 PM, 24th and Kearney, Portland

Dist 10: Last Mon, 7:00 PM, 12945 Beaverdam Rd., West Side Service Cntr, Beaverton

Dist 11: Last Thu, 7:00 PM, "URS" Club, Portland

Dist 12: 1st Tue, 6:30 PM, 12x12 Club, 7035 NE Glisan, Portland

Dist 15: 1st Wed, 6:45 PM, 710 6th St., Oregon City

Dist 18: 1st Sat, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6th St., St. Helens

Dist 23: 1st Tue, 6:00 PM, Emmanuel Presbyterian, 19200 SW Willamette Dr., West Linn

Dist 24: 1st Thu, 6:00 PM, 5441 SE Belmont St., Portland

Dist 25: 4th Tue, 5:30 PM, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 39901 Pleasant Street, Sandy, OR

Dist 26: 2nd Sun, 5:00 PM, St Charles Church, 5310 NE 42nd Ave., Portland

Dist 27: 1st Mon, 7:00 PM, 11631 SE Linwood Ave., St. Paul's Methodist, Milwaukie

Dist 31: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd., Hillsboro

Dist 34: 3rd Sat, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave., Gladstone

Dist 35: 2nd & 4th Sat, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St., Suite A, Beaverton

Dist 36: 2nd Thu, 6:00 PM, St. Barnabas Episcopal Church, 2201 SW Vermont St, Portland

Dist 37: 2nd Tue, 7:00 PM, Sherwood Community Center, 21907 SW Sherwood Blvd., Sherwood

Committee News

Portland Area Intergroup is a committee of volunteers that encourages mutual support and cooperation between Portland A.A. groups and provides services that would be too much for the individual groups to handle by themselves. PAI provides services for the AA community and the general public.

We have several committee positions available. Portland Area Intergroup needs your help. 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. Sign up. Thank you.

Bridging the Gap (BTG): Provides a one-time, temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to A.A. 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 A.A." Please contact the PAI office via phone, 503-223-8569, or email btg@pdxaa.org, if you are interested.

A.A. Hotline: The A.A. Hotline keeps the Portland phone number for A.A. active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The way this is accomplished is by volunteer support. Calls to the A.A. 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.

Corrections Committee Information: Take meetings into correctional facilities & carries the A.A. message to the alcoholic who suffers. The Corrections team is looking for A.A. volunteers, both men and women, to bring A.A. meetings into the jails in Multnomah County, specifically Inverness Jail, the Courthouse and the Justice Center. If you have questions on becoming a volunteer, or if you would like to be on the PAI Corrections Committee, please email: corrections@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office for more information at 503-223-8569.

Cooperation with Treatment Centers: The Treatment Centers needs your help to share your experience, strength, and hope with the alcoholic who still suffers by taking meeting into treatment facilities. The Treatment Center committee needs volunteers to help coordinate and facilitate meetings at treatment centers. We need your help to contact treatment centers that have reached out to Portland Area Intergroup for A.A. support. We also speak with treatment centers to find out if A.A. is currently bringing in meetings, or if they would like to arrange an appointment to speak with a representative from A.A. that could explain what we can offer them and their patients. We also coordinate with A.A. groups to find out about the service opportunity, and how their group members can participate in this important 12th Step work. The committee meets monthly at 6pm, before the Portland Area Intergroup meeting. If you have questions, please email treatment@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office at 503-223-8569.

Public Information Committee: Panels meet with the media, schools, clubs, and the general public and show videos (produced by the General Service Office), provide literature, contact information and answer questions about A.A. For more information, email pi@pdxaa.org, or call the Central Office 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 A.A. 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 February issue: February 2nd

Step One

"Admitted to ourselves that we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable."

Tradition One

"Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."

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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