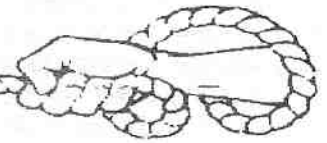


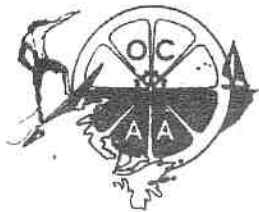
Lifeline



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Orange
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Intergroup
Association

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The Intergroup Meeting has found a temporary home for October –January. We have been meeting at Church of the Foothills @19211 Dodge Avenue @Newport Blvd. in Tustin. (Thomas Guide p800-E7.) We will let you know where we will be after January. Watch this space for information.

MY NAME IS UVALDO, AND I AM AN ALCOHOLIC

When I had my first taste of beer at the age of 16, I would have never thought in a million years that I would become an alcoholic. But I did. I remember the day of my first drink very clearly. I can't say the same for the rest of my drinking days because I was a chronic blackout drinker, but that day I do remember. It was an evening with the family and my grandparents who had come over for dinner. My grandpa, my dad, my brother and I were playing dominos as we usually did when we got together. My grandpa and I were paired up against my dad and brother and we were kicking their butts all night, when all of sudden my grandpa shouted to my dad get the boys a beer. Now my grandpa and dad had been drinking from about the time my grandparents had arrived at our house about 2PM, so they were both feeling pretty good. Without any hesitation my dad got up, went to the fridge and came back with 4 beers and set one each in front of my brother and me. My brother and I looked at each other in shock and then we stared at the ice-cold beer in front of us. As for me I was curious at the age of 16 and always wondered why my dad would come home from work and immediately go to the fridge, crack open a beer, and after that first drink make a sigh of relief. It was as if the problems of his hectic workday were no longer an issue and it was time to unwind. So, here I am looking at this beer and my dad's voice saying "you only get one beer "and my grandpa saying "drink up boys because now you are men". My brother and I drank the beer and as for me, I liked the taste of it. That one beer was all it took for me to start a long 15 year run of alcoholism. I don't think my grandpa or dad knew where that one drink was going to take me and it's grip on me that wouldn't let go. Only time would tell and it did. This was my first drink and it wouldn't be my last.

I continued on this path of self-destruction all through high school and it was easy to find the crowd that enjoyed the same things I did. My freshman year I drank as often as I could, and I searched and experimented with other things besides alcohol. By my sophomore year alcohol and drugs caught up with me and I dropped out of high school. I moved out of dad's house and moved in with my mom who lived in another city. So, I did the geographic and my thinking at that time was that I needed to get away from my friends because it was their fault. I was always drunk or loaded and it wasn't my fault. I was able to go to a new school my junior year and make up my sophomore year at the same time. It was a lot of work and extra credit, but I did it. Eventually I started to find that crowd again who liked doing what I liked doing and picked up my drinking right

where I left off. I finished my junior year and decided to go back to my old school for my senior year. I did move back with my dad and finished high school.

This is only the beginning of my story – for the next 12 years after high school my drinking got worse. I have many drinking stories I could share with you about those years, but if you are an alcoholic like me you probably have the same stories. I would venture to say that some of you probably know me better than I know myself. I had finally hit my bottom. All the years of drinking and lying to myself that I didn't have a problem finally did catch up with me. I found myself checking into a 7-day detox center and only making it 5 days before being sent to the emergency room at the local hospital with delirium tremens. My mind and body were out of control for the next 72 hours. I had hallucinations, voices in my head, the shakes, hot and cold sweats and mild seizures. All the doctors could do for me was to give me tranquilizers and an IV in my arm, but not even that would stop what was going to happen to me in those three days. I never thought that the 15 years of drinking alcohol would come out of me so violently, so strong, and so unforgettable as it did in those life-changing days. This for me was the start of a new life in recovery. After that experience I knew I needed help or I was going to drink again. I then checked myself into a 6 month adult rehabilitation center and surrendered myself to this program where I realized God is doing for me what I could not do for myself. Through the 6 month program I found Alcoholics Anonymous, and this 12 step program has shown me a new way of living and a new way of thinking.

When I was introduced to A.A. I had no idea what it was or what it could do for me. I came into A.A. thinking everyone drinks like me, acts like me and gets arrested just like me. This was my normal thinking, and little did I know that I wasn't like other people, because once I started to drink I couldn't stop even if I wanted to. I also didn't realize that I had a disease and needed help or I would die from it. The people in A.A. told me that I suffered from a disease of a two-fold nature, an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind. I wasn't really sure what they meant by this, but they told me to "keep coming back" and eventually I would find out. This aroused my curiosity and I went to a lot of meetings searching for an answer. In my first 30 days I had that brilliant newcomer idea that "all I need to control my drinking problem is will power and self control, yeah this will keep me sober". I had no clue that it would take a lot more than that along with a miracle that would come from a power greater than myself.

I thank God each and every day for guiding me toward the rooms of A.A. I have finally found a group of people who are just like me and who understand me for who I really am. I found a fellowship with the outpouring of love toward a drunk like me that is indescribable and comforting. Alcoholics Anonymous made me feel a part of something and that I had a purpose. The hope in the eyes of people who got this wonderful gift of sobriety and were willing to show me what they did to stay sober was liberating. I love the big smiles, the handshakes, the hugs and most of all the laughter we share together. I

have found a way out of my misery and I know that A.A. and the 12 steps work if you really work them honestly. Today it is my obligation to carry this message to any alcoholic who is still suffering in and out of these rooms. My name is Uvaldo and I am an alcoholic...

Uvaldo R. — Santa Ana, CA

EDITORIAL ON STEP ONE

The first of the 12 steps in the creed or philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous is, "*We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable.*" By such an admission any alcoholic, provided he is sincere, has achieved his first success on the road to well-being.

Some are fortunate enough to gain conviction on the 1st Step as soon as they acquire a definition of alcoholism that fits them. They immediately feel the relief that comes with the finding of an explanation for behavior which up to then has shamed and worried them to despair.

For many, however, the admission of alcoholism is a fearful step. It is as though they were being asked to go down to the public square and confess all of the crimes of mankind. They feel a great stigma is about to be attached to them and that they will have to go about branded forever after.

Egotism and stubborn pride combine to generate an acute aversion to admitting helplessness over anything. Social custom and false values, mixed with pleasant memories, perhaps, of earlier drinking days act as additional prods to an attitude of resistance.

Over the years the alcoholic develops a three-dimensional ability at picture building, which is a kind way of saying that alcoholics are adept liars. All of this is quite understandable. So that by really taking the first step – admitting freely and without reservation that he is an alcoholic – a person starts to build a new pattern of thought. The whole, at last, is fabricated from truth rather than wishful thinking or fantasy.

The difficulty of taking the 1st Step is very real to the person experiencing it. Once taken, of course, it brings a blessed release. Strangely enough, too, when one admits that he is an alcoholic, the heavens do not fall. Nor does his soul shrivel. Life goes on.

For the alcoholic, who has traveled his twisting, rocky road of unhappiness for years, this is where life really begins. Having come to the conclusion that he is powerless over alcohol and having admitted it, the conviction that he must do certain things to recover grows within. He then, and only then, has really begun his Program of Recovery.

From editorials by John B., November 1944, and T.Y., Manhattan, November 1945 Reprinted from The Grapevine

STAYING UNITED IS NO EASY TASK

Tradition One -- Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on A.A. unity.

I was sober about three years when Margaret A., who worked in the ad department at the newspaper, came to me and said that it was a shame that there was nothing that even looked like a daytime A.A. meeting in downtown Long Beach. I agreed with her.

"Why doesn't someone start one??" I remember asking her.

"Why don't you and me start one?" she shot back.

After a lot of anguish and self-doubt and many recriminations, we opened at the Long Beach Mall in a conference room. We couldn't pay the rent so we landed in a conference room at the newspaper. But the newspaper needed the room for conferences of their own so we went back to looking again. The Los Angeles Newspaper Guild said yes to our inquiry and for the next eight years we held A.A. meetings in that dinky union hall. And that's a roundabout way of getting at what this Tradition One piece is supposed to be saying.

A meeting at noon at 6th and Pine in Long Beach is not exactly going to attract the cream of the A.A. crop. We had a lot of alcoholics but we also had heroin addicts, coke users, an occasional Alanon and a cross-section of other afflictions. No problem. Our opening used the "Open Meeting" intro provided by General Service and we rarely had to caution people to talk only of our difficulties with alcohol.

There was another problem, however. We did Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 at the start of the meeting but waited until 12:30 to read the Traditions and pass the hat. When 12:29 rolled around, the leader was confronted with an exodus of about half of the room, headed for the sidewalk to smoke. A smoker myself, I understood the need but found myself wondering why these alkies couldn't at least wait until the Traditions had been read. Finally, we inserted a paragraph for the leader to read that said we would take a break immediately after the Traditions were read. They still left early.

Finally, I asked the secretary if I could lead the meeting the next Monday. She said yes and I did so. The Traditions were read to a half-empty hall. When the smokers returned the meeting resumed.

"Welcome back everyone," I remember saying. "For all of you who missed them, we'll read the Traditions again." I handed the page to a member who read the Traditions a second time.

"What was that all about?" a member we called Bicycle Bob asked.

"They need to hear the Traditions," I answered. "They're the reason there is an Alcoholics Anonymous today."

"They don't come for the Traditions," Bob said. "They come for the fellowship. That's their common welfare." Strangely, a lot of them got sober and stayed sober.

George L. -- Westminster

A.A. SERVICE – THE ROAD TRIP

This begins a 12-part series on Service, concentrating on A.A. service in Southern California. So why should you care about A.A. Service in Southern California when Orange County A.A. Service is the only service in which you might be interested in participating? Because Southern California A.A. Service brings into play the best kept secret for a happy destiny in all of A.A. – the road trip!! Yes, the road trip – getting in the car with a bunch of other A.A. members and taking a trip where A.A. Service on the other end of the trip is the goal. Nothing like it! On a trip that lasts 2 hours one way, all of the crap and lies are out of the way after the first 25-30 miles, depending upon how fast the maniac driving the car is going. It also brings into play the axiom from the Big Book, "*We talk about each other often, but it is inevitably tempered by a spirit of love and tolerance*". Can I possibly take a 4 hour round-trip with a bunch of A.A. members and practice love and tolerance in my words and actions? You bet you can – if I can, anybody can!

So, what road trip for A.A. Service lasts over a half hour each way? Well, a trip to one of the three Area Assemblies a year often takes more than an hour each way, and sometimes 2 -3 hours one way. When we in Orange County drive to Apple Valley for an Area Assembly or Area Service Committee meeting, we try to carpool and the magic of the road trip happens. In March, the drive will be to Riverside – a shorter road trip, but nonetheless, a road trip. In March 2006, the Pacific Region Alcoholics Service Assembly, (PRAASA) will be in Woodland Hills, another short, but great road trip. It was in Tucson this year, and three of us drove to Tucson, the outer limits of a road trip at my age. In 2007, PRAASA will be in Portland, and we may stretch the outer limits to 18-20 hours one way – this remains to be seen. Under the auspices of the Orange County Hospitals and Institutions Committee, many Orange County A.A. members have traveled 4 ½ hours one way to the Atascadero State Hospital to take a 45-minute A.A. meeting into the facility for the A.A. members who are confined there. Just recently, several Orange County A.A. members, both in Orange County H & I and South Orange County H & I, have started to take a three hour road trip to Delano, California in order to take A.A. meetings into the Kern Valley State Prison which opened on June 1st. So far we have been only going into the Level I, (Minimum Security) yard, but in early 2006 we will begin to take A.A. meetings into the Level IV, (Maximum Security) yards. There will be 4500 Level IV inmates in this new prison, and most of them have transferred in from other prisons where they did not have the privilege of participating in A.A. meetings. Having taken A.A. meetings into Maximum Security prisons, I can guarantee you that the topic of discussion on the drive back home will not be about the people who went in and left the same day.

There are also Group road trips that some Orange County A.A. Groups take to retreats and conventions. The Service on these types of road trips often involves planning and driving – still A.A. service. The length and

purpose of an A.A. road trip is limited only by the imagination and pocket book of the members going on the road trip.

In the immortal words of some young boy in a cereal commercial several years ago, "Try it, you'll like it!"

A member of A.A. in Orange County

IDENTIFICATION – OUR COMMON BOND

There is a point I wish to make concerning the way we introduce ourselves in our A.A. meetings. A point which, I believe, puts a serious strain on our unity and our singleness of purpose. When I say "I'm a drug addict and an alcoholic", or "I'm a cross addicted alcoholic", I'm telling you I'm different from you. I'm a special kind of alcoholic. My disease of alcoholism is different from yours. I add an extra dimension to my disease, which because of our singleness of purpose should not be addressed in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have just cut our bond in half. And more importantly, diluted my own chances of receiving help for my drinking problem.

I'm not saying that the destructive forces are within those who introduce themselves by any of the popular "Cross - Addicted titles. The destructiveness is in the attitudes of us members who sit back and often cloak ourselves in the deceit of "Live and Let Live", and respond, if at all, "So what?" By our passiveness, we are really giving our silent approval to their misguided conduct.

I need to know, and believe that they need to know, what we have in common. For our big book says, "The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action". Not likely if we emphasize that our problems are not common.

I need always be reminded that Alcoholics Anonymous is "Our" Fellowship. No one else runs it, no one else can make it work, and no one else can destroy it. But if A.A. does not work, I'll have no one but myself to blame.

Written by Les E., June 8, 1994

WILLING TO GO TO ANY LENGTHS

The impetus for writing this piece did not come from within; rather it came from Nick M., a man I have great respect for. I take no credit or authority for any 12 step work I accomplish as I'm only an instrument recently utilized after a long, dark, painful hiatus. If my experience seems to be self-serving, I agree. This is why it has taken me several months to write after making a commitment to Nick, something I do not take lightly.

When I got sober, I was 41 years old. I was a broken, underweight, out of shape man accustomed to company cars as a mode of transportation. I began joining H & I panels early in sobriety, even though I had to wait 5 years to regain the privilege to drive. I noted that many in our fellowship do not keep their

commitments; fewer still even make any. If I was to have any panels of my own, they would have to be within biking distance from my home in Huntington Beach, so I chose accordingly.

My first three panels were Huntington Beach jail, College Hospital in Costa Mesa and Charle St. Nothing could be further than 5 or 6 miles. When I could not get a ride, I could leave my home 45 minutes prior to any panel (1 hour in the rain), and be there on time. Let me now acknowledge the many kind people who did drive and attend many of my panels before I was allowed to drive. Thank you. From the bottom of my heart — Thank you. I never knew how very much I needed all of you and the joy and peace inherent in connecting with the fellowship of the spirit.

On the 2nd Friday of June, 2001, I shared my experience, strength and hope at Charle Street. A man, newly sober, approached me after the meeting. He said I was the first man he could relate to and asked me for my phone number and for help. The basis of our work — one alcoholic sharing with another alcoholic. I agreed and told him that if ever he needed to call he could do so anytime, day or night, collect. I also told him if need be I would pedal my sorry body to visit him, hoping this would not occur. Be careful what you ask for.

His name is Jack O. (permission to use his name was obtained), and today he is a committee man at Charle Street. The day he was to leave detox was a very hot still day. I had just ridden my old beach cruiser home from a noon meeting at HOW Hall, when he called me. A lady friend was picking him up in a car and he was full of anxiety and fear. He asked if I could come and see him before he left, and I agreed.

I showered and rode like hell to Charle Street from my home at Magnolia and Adams in Huntington Beach. I almost got hit by a truck at Victoria and Brookhurst, and cursed continuously as I pedaled up the hill. I met with him and her, sweaty and out of breath. Before departing, he came back in the office to share his friend's thoughts with me. She wanted to know why he wanted a guy 4½ years sober that rode an old bicycle as a sponsor, implicitly noting, "What a loser". I told Jack he was free to choose any one he felt was a good example. He chose me and worked all 12 steps with me — God bless him.

I got on my bike and pedaled to School Ten in Fountain Valley, cursing continually with my bruised ego and full of self. We're both still sober today by God's grace!

If this experience holds any merit for the reader, you can thank Nick M., for I would not have written this if anyone else had made the request. He also requested that I sign this as

Brian W.
Huntington Beach, CA

