

Aotearoa New Zealand

April 2021 - May 2021

MAINSTAY

Carrying the message



The 12 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.*

Mainstay is the magazine of Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand. It's our 'meeting in print' reflecting a broad spectrum of current AA experience in recovery, unity, and service.

Mainstay only publishes letters and articles relating to AA and alcoholism and publication does not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or Mainstay. Mainstay aims to be self-supporting and is not affiliated to any outside groups or interests and does not accept paid advertising. There is no payment for contributions and they cannot be returned.

Anonymity will be protected, but contributions and correspondents are asked to include their first name, locality and a contact telephone number or email/physical address (not for publication).

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AA 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.

Responsibility declaration

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible.

Editorial

More and more of us are using online meetings and I'm happy we have included in this final issue an article, and a letter, about how to use online meetings. Remember, they are not 'zoom' meetings but merely online meetings that are using many different platforms. I attend one or two a week regularly, and I remember one Christchurch-based meeting that had in their online format a reminder to act as if we were at a regular meeting - i.e., being respectful, no smoking etc. Well done to them.

In AA's Legacy of Service Bill wrote (in 1951) Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A." S1, USA-Canada AA Service Manual 1999. Sadly, it seems members no longer think Mainstay is a service needed for us to carry the message and, as such, this is the final edition of Mainstay.

However, I know 'service' will always be required of me if I am to stay 'happy, joyous, and free' (BB p.133) as the Big Book promises - if I work the three sides of our AA triangle, not just staying away from alcohol by going to meetings. I also have to keep challenging myself something I heard at a group conscience workshop in the 2015 World Convention, Atlanta, Georgia: am I informed, uninformed, or misinformed?

Let me finish by challenging us, challenging me, to be the good leaders Bill W spoke about in his article Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need (1959 Grapevine. S51, USA-Canada AA Service Manual). Service in AA often reminds me it's not just a title (as in Group Service Representative/GSR) but a job description, i.e., 'to serve' so, 'let it begin with me'.

I can only change myself and serve AA the best I can, and I thank you for allowing me the role of editing Mainstay, and as I've said at times - please be patient with me, it's obvious God is not finished with me yet.

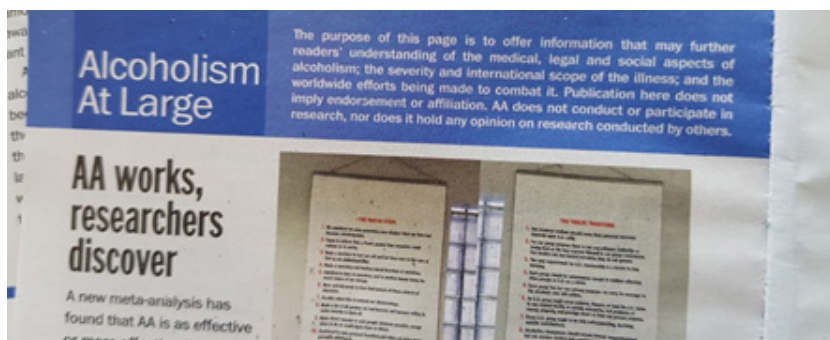
Warm regards in our fellowship,

Heather H. Editor

Editorial Apology

A few members were upset that a non-AA item (Marty M's book) was being 'advertised' in Mainstay – this was not our intention. Over the years, both Mainstay and the Grapevine have included non-Alcoholics Anonymous items. We slipped up on this occasion by not including the statement 'Publication here does not imply endorsement or affiliation.' Once again, we're sorry we didn't include that statement.

It was also remiss of us to include the actual cover of Marty M's biography. We didn't even think about the fact that her full name and photo was on the cover, and we unreservedly apologise for breaking her membership anonymity in that way. Again, we apologise to the Fellowship.



Thanks for Your Service

As Mainstay closes, I would like to acknowledge and thank the many people over the years who have worked on Mainstay and supported it.

There is a history of dedicated service and as a membership we are grateful. It was there when it was needed for many carrying the message when back in our history the only other option was a physical meeting.

Service helps keep us sober and your sobriety is well earned!

Russell B, Board Chair

My Mainstay Service

Around two years ago the Board Chair asked me to look at the Mainstay finances and costs as part of the General Service Board's responsibility to Conference which directed Mainstay should be self-supporting. Little did I realise this would lead me into the role of Chair of the Mainstay Sub Committee and getting deeply immersed in how Mainstay is produced.

The first thing I found was there has been a small group of very dedicated people who have kept Mainstay going over the years. Second thing I realised was these people struggled, often being under resourced in terms of numbers to do the roles and letters from the membership. Next thing was that common A.A. issue where there appears at times to be a lot of critics around what is being done but not so many prepared to do the work. It does not pay to be too sensitive, and I have learnt to put my ego aside and listen to all views as Mainstay does belong to our A.A. members.

The first issue was around declining membership and we worked hard to identify all the reasons and take action to fix them. Our inability to properly manage the subscription data base led to an annual subscription date to solve this. We stopped using overseas letters and worked hard to get more local contributions. We tried to modernise the look. We worked hard to get the issues out on time. Heather H and Toni have been incredible in these areas. Nic in GSO has been a true asset. Alas the subscription base kept dropping. In the end the Board put to the October Conference that Mainstay is struggling and the decision was made to set a figure of 500 subscribers or close. We were at 250 so Delegates went out to spread the word. By mid March 2021 we are at 270 and with a heavy heart I accept Mainstay has run its course.

I understand that since the original inception of Mainstay a lot has changed in terms of access to meetings and accessing the A.A. message. A.A. radio shows started, email came about, Podcasts started and now we have online meetings. It is a different world with many new methods of communication and the resources going into Mainstay can be better deployed where the membership has a requirement. The lesson for me is in service we do our best, but humility teaches I do not decide what the membership requires. The membership through support or in this case non-support makes the decision. It is exactly how it should be.

Yours in service,

Russell B

Mainstay and service

Hi everyone, I'm Toni and I am an alcoholic.

I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to do service in the form of editor of Mainstay in 2006. I remember taking a copy of Grapevine and some of the other international magazines and doing my best to create something similar.

I made a lot of mistakes. I included stuff that had nothing to do with AA and pasted in text as provided rather than edited. In those days it was a one-person job with support of June, our lovely Member in Nelson who did the printing. The longest task was deciphering and transcribing the handwritten letters.

June and I received a fair bit of feedback – most of it 'constructive' (i.e., what we did wrong) and some from each other. It sure was a learning curve, but a rewarding one. For one thing, I read every story from every participant – many of these providing those 'aha' moments that stick and lead to new understanding, acceptance, humility, and growth in the programme.

My two-year tenure stretched out to three years, then four as no one came along to take over. Finally, ten years later, our member Wendy put up her hand and it was both a relief, and sad to hand the role over.

As per the principle of rotation, Wendy completed her two years, and handed the job back to me in 2019. Soon after, as Russell explains, a board-initiated review of Mainstay led to the formation of a Mainstay committee and this led to the development of a group effort with specific roles, forward planning, and a review process. Despite this, and all our best efforts, some mistakes still leaked through. Mostly due, I think, by us all getting too caught up in trying to fill the pages, and thereby missing some critical traditions (aka anonymity) in the process. (Once in print, you can't go back!)

Now that Mainstay is ending, I am once again closing a chapter on this unique service with sadness but much gratitude for the honour. I hope that our subscribers can find their way to the online community that appears to have replaced this format, or perhaps, to Grapevine.

Yours in service,

Toni C.

12th Step Letters

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.

Dear Mainstay ...

Practicing Pause

The following is a writing of mine, written to myself after stuffing up without pause, ignoring my conscience to do so.

I was trying to control and solve an issue by my own thinking; 'going well in sobriety' can be quite a distraction from surrender. So after having to apologise and fixing (the best I could) for hurting, realising sitting in self pity is not good then telling myself this is an opportunity to grow and change.

Also not expecting sympathy for my woes from anyone, seeing my part was as simple as not practicing the steps, I had not listened to the quiet direction within my conscience to slow down, accept the situation was unmanageable by me and let higher power guide through.

I hope sharing this gives someone a chance to apply pause in a situation that could be beneficial to themselves and others in their lives.

"The pain of mistakes, not writing for sympathy or heat off but trying to be honest with me, how my dishonesty shows up as I ignore 'the quiet',

that was there – how easy it is to be distracted by excitement, dreams of better in the future from my quick thinking and control, instead of pause and consideration, asking for help with the answer instead of bulldozing ahead in self."

Donald

It's never too late to get a life!

My start in life wasn't the best. Both my parents were alcoholics and the very traumatic break up of their marriage and my mother running off when I was 12, left the terrible emotional scars which I carried well into adulthood.

I started drinking fairly seriously in my late teens and right from the very beginning of my drinking I found that when I drank the pain of what went on at home went away. I quickly found that I could use alcohol as 'bandages' to numb my feeling and it became my emotional response to all and everything that happened in my world - good or bad.

Deep down I was always uncomfortably aware that I drank more than anyone else around me

but I honestly thought that I was getting away with it. I often thought of nipping it in the bud but then I always told myself that I was way too young to stop; that there was a lot of fun and partying to be had and that life would be boring without booze! And I most definitely thought that I'd be boring and dull without it! Fact is (though I didn't realise it), I was far from boring and dull but well past the point of being funny once I had a few on board! Oblivious to all, including the reactions of the people around me, I drank on regardless until alcohol itself became the pain. It became the problem and it held me prisoner.

When I was drunk I did things that were totally out of character. Things that I would never have done sober. I never made the connection that all the bad things that happened to me always happened when I was drunk! I knew that I had a problem but I 'needed' my booze to cope and my denial ran deep. I thought that I was coping. I told myself that I had things under control. I thought no one knew. I thought that I'd be able to stop when I really 'needed' to.

But the reality was that once the morning drinking started, it was game over! There were nine or ten horrific years of hellish around the clock drinking. The 90s was my lost decade. There are no photos of me

from those years, no memories or anything else to show that I even existed in the 90s. So sad! That's how bad it got! I don't know how I survived this terrible onslaught of sustained alcohol abuse.

Miraculously I did!

When I take inventory of my life up to this point, I can only say that I squandered my entire life away. It was given over to the bottle. I never really used any of my God-given talents or capabilities, and this resulted in the sum total of a

burned out life of non-achievement. Plans and projects never came to fruition. Financial disasters followed one after the other leading to near ruin. Relationships with partners, family and friends failed and in spite of good intentions and trying hard, I was a very

poor mother to my son. I wasn't emotionally present for him or for my three grandchildren when they came along.

My relationship with myself was totally self-absorbed and I was completely and utterly morally and spiritually bankrupt. I ran high on ego, arrogance and self-centredness but low on personal integrity and self-esteem. Deep down I knew that I had a huge problem. I knew that I was



behaving badly and doing damage to myself and to those who I was supposed to love. I was a train wreck and my solution was to sink ever deeper into the ocean of alcohol that I was already drowning in.

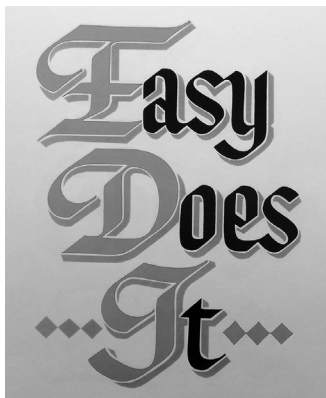
What I couldn't possibly know then, but do now, was that I was suffering from an illness which rendered me powerless over alcohol and that by my metabolic makeup, I was/am unable to drink like other people because I am afflicted by an allergy to alcohol that dictates that once I start to drink and the alcohol hits the blood stream, I absolutely can't stop because an intense craving for more kicks in. This is the abnormal reaction to alcohol which constitutes the allergy which marks me as an alcoholic. Normal people don't crave alcohol. Alcoholics do.

Normal people can stop drinking at any given moment. Even heavy drinkers can stop, given a strong enough reason to do so. Alcoholics can't. It's as simple as that! I tried everything under the sun to try to drink like normal people without getting drunk. Self-control, cutting back, tapering off, changing drinks, making promises and good resolutions etc etc. Nothing worked. Alcohol was too strong for me. The demon booze had me beat!

Finally, after decades of misery, with my life in tatters around me, I reached a painful point of desperation where I had no choice but to make a choice between life and death. I knew that I was dying. But how was I to stop? Miraculously, one dark and dreadful morning, when in my darkest hour, I felt that death was staring me in the face, I clearly heard a tiny voice that told me that I could do it and in that moment, I chose to live. To this day, I believe that the God that I

no longer believed in, intervened and saved my life.

I was somehow guided to AA and and I came away from my first meeting with two things. Hope and a copy of the Big Book tucked firmly under my arm. The rest is history!



Thanks to the A.A. program and the love and support of my fellow alcoholics, I've been sober now for just on 20 years. 'The Twelve Steps' have provided me with a powerful template for living that is simple, yet very profound. In A.A. they told me to find a Higher Power. It didn't matter 'what' or 'who' it was, as long as my Higher Power was more powerful than myself and the booze. I was told to get a sponsor to take me through 'The Steps'. And I was told to not drink one day

at a time and to get to plenty of meetings. I did all of this and also, very importantly, I got myself into A.A. service pretty well from week one by putting on the kettle, making tea and washing the cups. To this day I hold a service position in my home group and at a couple of the other meetings I still try to arrive early, put the kettle on, make tea and help to wash up afterwards.

I consider myself to be recovered from the physical and spiritual ravages of active alcoholism. But I also know that I can never be cured of this disease, which is why I make my life around A.A. and not the other way around. I still go to at least 4 or 5 meetings a week and I sponsor others. By putting AA first, everything else falls into place.

All the Promises have come true for me and today I am truly living a life beyond my wildest dreams. I am walking in the sunlight of the spirit. I am reborn and I believe that I am at long last the person who I was always meant to be. I can hold my head high, walk tall and take my rightful place in the human race. I am happy, joyous and free and for that I am truly grateful!

Thank you A.A.

Antonia G.

Auckland

My name is Bill and I am an alcoholic

When I first came to the AA programme many years ago, I wondered whether there would ever be a time that I was truly happy. Some times I thought that there was fleeting happiness, but I never had that feeling that all was right with the world or within me.

Over the past few years, I have come to the realisation that if I am to attain a good level of happiness, it is direct proportion to my acceptance that the world is exactly where it is meant to be at this time, and not as I would like it to be. This means that if I can accept this in my life, I am doing what is asked of me in the Serenity Prayer - without question. If I question any of the 3 parts of the Serenity Prayer, am I not questioning God's will? I remember an old timer many years ago trying to explain to me what this meant, but I was so focussed on self at the time that I completely missed the point!! It seemed too simple by far.

As it says in one of the stories in the Big Book - 'acceptance is the key' - for me it is the key which unlocks the door to the many riches and blessings that I have received over the years from the programme, even though I couldn't - or wouldn't - see them at some times. Blessings which give me intense gratitude to those people whom God has put in my path to show me the way. They will probably never know who they

are - but thanks, anyhow.

What makes me happy today?

Seeing a newcomer have a genuine smile when they realise that there might just be hope. The hug of a grandchild who is just pleased to see Grandad. Watching members grow with gratitude as they embrace the programme. Just being with in company with other alcoholics - with no hidden agendas or ulterior motives. Pretty simple, but very effective. At least for someone who used to be totally self centred and absorbed. AA and the God of my understanding have done this - not me - I just went along for the ride!!

Yours in sobriety

Bill C. Invercargill

Biography of Marty M.

I am very grateful that I read in a recent copy of Mainstay about 'A Biography' of Mrs Marty M.

I have been in the fellowship just over 10 years and had never heard about this incredible woman and all that she contributed to the founding of AA. In fact, Bill W was her sponsor. Her story tells of a life of wealth and privilege reduced to poverty and despair by her alcoholism, and her rise from this.

Marty M. was in fact, the first woman to achieve long standing sobriety in AA and paved the way for thousands of others, especially women, to do the same. She advocated that alcoholism was an

issue of public health not morality.

I seriously couldn't recommend this book more. Marty's story plays an important part in the history of AA.

Her story is in the Big Book: "Women Suffer Too" page 200.

M. S.

Hello my fellows in recovery

My last drink was Queens Birthday weekend 2016. I was 59.

The previous four months had been drinking everyday to blackout, still holding a job, by the skin of my teeth. I knew nothing about AA except that, the 0800 advertisements kept jumping out of the paper at me. "If you want to drink, that's your business, If you want to stop, we can help".

My head was telling me, if I did something really bad, I'd get locked up, and there won't be alcohol in there. Fortunately, my something bad did not end the way I planned.

I got honest with my trusted GP, who arranged help through our health centre. When a counselor and a psychiatrist suggested alcohol was my issue and advised trying a meeting, I denied it all the way.

I am forever grateful to fantastic fellowship of the AA program and the 12 steps. I took step 1.. "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become

unmanageable “. I've grown into a better version of myself, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.

I've not found the process easy but regular attendance at four local meetings weekly, working the steps has kept me sober, one day at a time, since my first meeting.

I sometimes say, a meeting is the best bar room I've ever been in, and they ask me back.

Thanks to God, my sponsor and my fellowship I gratuitously do service and follow the Toronto Declaration:

“I am responsible.
When
anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I
want the hand of AA
always to be there.
And for that:
I am responsible.”.

Monica, Hokitika

Pandemic Sobriety

After three days of lockdown in 2020 I wrote in my journal, “I don't know how I'm going to get through the next two weeks!”

Little did I know what the next year had in store for me. Living alone, having no family locally, and being at high risk for Co-Vid kept me isolated. For the first few months my thoughts ran like this: “I could get sick and have no one to take care

of me! I could get Co-Vid and die. My sponsor, who is also my best friend, is busy looking after her son and grandson. We no longer get together! I need the hugs and deep connections my morning meeting AA friends!” When I dwelled upon these circumstances, my fears became greater.

I heard my sponsor's voice in my head, “Poor me, poor me, pour me a drink.” I reflected on the countless shares I've heard in meetings about self-pity. Another

tip my sponsor gave me was to work all my problems like I worked the alcohol problem. Start with Step One. So, I admitted I was powerless over my self pity and asked my Higher Power to restore me to soundness of mind (sanity).

I then recalled my sponsor saying she

was writing a gratitude list every morning with her first cup of coffee. Because of her example, I put this antidote for self-pity into action. I made a gratitude list as many times a day as I had twinges of self-obsession.

It came to me after turning this over to my Higher Power that I didn't have to wait until the pandemic ended to resume the joy of living. I was going to make every moment count. I went for daily meditative



walks. I rode my bike around my neighborhood. I marveled at the quiet. I heard birds singing and observed spring wild flowers blooming. I pondered what was really important to me. I became more aware of my great need for human connection with my AA family. I felt the warmth of the love I feel for family and friends that I wasn't able to see in person. I became more proactive in creating the fellowship I craved. I set up regular online calls with loved ones. I initiated outdoor, socially distanced get-togethers with close friends. I attended online AA meetings.

During the pandemic – as in all 43 years of my sobriety – the program has never failed me. I don't get to control where my help comes from or which specific people are going to provide it. But I always get what I need when I lean into the steps of the program.

As a 75-year-old sober woman, I continue to grow and re-create

myself as I emerge into various stages of my life with acceptance. Now, fully vaccinated, I am hiking again with my other vaccinated friends. I'm swimming in the ocean with my swim club. I'm looking forward to being in the back room of the South Bay Alano Club, attending the 6:45 AM meetings with my home group.

I am not complacent about my primary purpose – to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. It is this focus that transformed my life in 1977 and continues to sustain me. I embrace the changes in my life – good and seemingly not so good – and am filled with gratitude for the life AA has granted me.

Judy S.

Redondo Beach

Online meetings - how I make use of them

As someone who has recently moved from one of New Zealand's largest cities to one of our smallest - and remote - villages, I am so appreciative of online meetings.

Yes, they're not the same as a face-to-face meeting but, thanks to the pandemic, there are hundreds of online meetings to choose from, every day of the week and time of the day. And we also have access to roundups, speaker marathons, conventions, young people conferences nearly every weekend



as most other countries are unable to host face-to-face events.

And just as I've experienced with face-to-face meetings, there are ones I enjoy attending and ones I wouldn't go back to. There are formats I like and formats I don't. There are pleasant rooms (platforms) and ones that aren't as nice to visit (use).

A surprise to me was liking the online voice-only platform. I thought I wouldn't like it as it's one more removed from a face-to-face meeting because I can't see expressions on the people talking, nor see the others in the room with me. However, for late evening meetings, I prefer it as it means I'm not staring at a screen then trying to go to bed. (So 'contempt prior to investigation' still exists in me today!)

My experience from serving at online meetings, where it has been a speaker meeting and I was the speaker; or a chairing meeting and I was the chair: know the platform beforehand. If it's a 'Zoom' meeting, attend a few 'Zoom' meetings on the same device you'll be using, preferably in the same room you'll be using it. If it's FreeConferenceCall, attend a few FCC meetings. If it's Skype, Webex, Teams, whatever - search online and find meetings that use that platform before you have to be serving. Find out how to use the device you're on to raise your hand, applaud, chat etc.

I had the (very dubious!) privilege to be a 45 minute speaker at an online meeting the Sunday BEFORE New Zealand went into lockdown as our group got less than 12 hours notice that our venue would shut that day. It was my fourth session, so I was 'on' Steps 10, 11 & 12. With so little notice, I had a super quick trial with the tech host and then, at the time, I 'acted as if' I was still in the room. I wore nice clothes and make up, put the laptop up high so I could stand rather than sit, and, instead of having the Brady Bunch view on screen, I 'pinned' one of the members I knew would stay on view the whole time and therefore I could speak to them, instead of to a bunch of panels that might just have photos or initials.

If you're going to a literature study meeting, log on a few minutes earlier and ask/write in the chat what the book is, and what chapter or page. It's also nice to have the service manual and other literature with me, at all meetings I go to, so I can read along with the person speaking rather than staring at a screen.

I also recommend using the biggest screen you have access to (monitor, then laptop, then tablet, and lastly mobile phone). This for me means I see more (and can be further away from it). In other words, I make it as close to 'real' as possible.

Many groups haven't established a way to 'pass the basket'. As online meetings, often overseas, are my

most common meetings now, I've set up an automatic payment each week to GSO. That way, I can personally be self-supporting, and our trusted servants are still getting some funds from me, even if I can't donate directly to the groups I'm regularly attending.

Arohanui, from someone who now lives a 3-hour round trip to their nearest meeting,

RS

Letter to Mainstay Take 2

This morning I discovered the article I had poured my heart into for the final edition of Mainstay was blank. No amount of searching and hoping would bring it to life again so here goes for the second time. I don't quite know what God was trying to tell me and reflection to date hasn't provided the answer. Probably "this is a programme of action" so just do it again and stop feeling sorry for yourself!!

Hi my name is Carolyn and as an AA member so succinctly put it at the Kohimarama meeting 23 and 2/3 years ago I'm a member of the CIA (Catholic Irish Alcoholic). It says a lot in a few words. To condense a lifetime in a couple of pages again is quite a challenge!

I come from a long line of Alcoholics, gamblers, and addicts. Great grandparents, grandparent, parent, siblings, cousins, and children. I feel blessed I was only

chosen for alcoholism plus I was a heavy smoker until a year after my sobriety date being 27th July 1997 at age 42.

I was born in Pukekohe and bought up in Manurewa for all of my childhood. It was a pretty ordinary life. Catholic primary and Manurewa High school. No big dramas, only the ones I chose to focus on. I left high school at 15. Got a lift from the Ice-cream truck driver off to seek my fortune.

The first time I had a decent swallow of alcohol was about 13 and it warmed the cockles of my heart. Unbeknown to me the "obsession" had begun. (We were a sociable family so drinking wasn't an issue at all).

I met and married my husband at 18 ½. Had children 8 years later. I was a work hard, drink hard kind of alcy. The drink being the reward. Had responsible admin positions in several industries. For me life was great for many years but as is with this disease eventually the deterioration set in and said husband would ask when going out if I was going to get drunk again!!

Then at about 37 the Self-help books, the visiting A & D lady to Coromandel, a visit to an AA meeting, stopping, starting, promising, guilt and remorse, panic attacks, agoraphobia, claustrophobia, fear of flying, in fact fear of everything grew.

An old alcy who was an Oyster

Picker whom I had helped long before I came to believe, gave me a Big Book and said 80% of my fears would go when I stopped drinking. I thought, what a load of rubbish. How wrong I was! I read some of the stories in the back and one day in the front (the important part) I read I had two choices "insanity or death". I knew for me it would be insanity as my "thinking box" never stopped, and it completely screwed my drinking.

Five years later (sober) I fell on my knees on the dining room floor and asked God to help me as I could no longer do it on my own. Damned if I did, damned if I didn't. I had lost nothing material, home, marriage etc but I had lost myself.

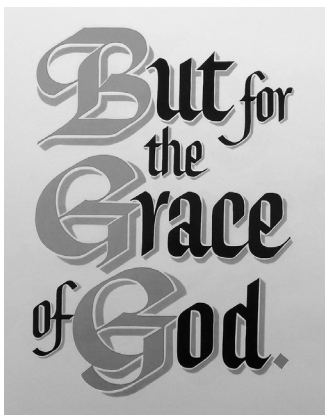
When I reflect, I don't actually remember how I got to Bridge programme of the Sally's in Ewington Ave, Mt Eden via a stopover at Federal St. My daughters gave me a bear who has the name Ewington who is much treasured and who knows me better than most humans.

It was August 1997. I was terrified I might be chosen to go to Rotorua Island to do the programme. That's where the Oyster Picker went. (Drank his compass alcohol). The day after my belly birthday Princess Di died and I got selected

to do programme at Ewington Ave. Another miracle to have the opportunity to focus on myself and get well. I could not have done it in my hometown of Coromandel.

I was 8 weeks there and the absolute joy was they took us to AA meetings all around Auckland and I listened to the "similarities" and realised I wasn't alone or mad for that matter.

They told us there was no blame in the game of life so I had to look at the "ism"



They told us some would die, some would relapse and some would make it. All of those things have happened.

They told us when one drinks heavily you don't grow emotionally (I thought I was pretty switched on). I still have the "15"year old Happy future card the

group gave me when I left. lol AA told me that miracles would happen. All I had to do was follow this simple programme of suggestions and I dived into it all like a dying woman hell bent on surviving. Yes, it DOES work.

Every morning I read Daily Reflections, Eye Opener and Reflections for Women. Couldn't tell you what I read 5 minutes after but it is my daily reminder that I am Carolyn an alcoholic. If on the

rarest of occasions, I don't read them, I have to ask myself what's happening with the "thinking" part of my disease.

Honesty, Openness, Surrender (continually not once), Acceptance, Willingness are the keys.

The Serenity Prayer and the passage on Acceptance plus the 10th Step have been my mantras. Always being available for the still suffering alcoholic and of course Service where possible.

I have two other friends from the Bridge with whom I have celebrated the last 23 years when we can. It will be 2 of us this year and a definite 3 for our 25th God willing.

There have been challenges.

My husband of 27 years left me after 4 years of sobriety for another. The pain and rejection of self, was worse than my "rock bottom". My biggest lesson on anger and resentment learnt in this phase of my life. I thought I had done my amends and didn't see it coming.

The truth is, all those years of my drinking and not being present, would have worn him down and the spark went.

I have the emotional maturity Now to take full responsibility for that.

My precious dad died in 2002.

My children chose vicarious paths. We have come out the other side better for the experiences I console myself. lol

On the bright side.

I have been in business with my daughters for five years and am now retiring.

I met and have been in love with Mike for 20 years and we have built a fabulous future together in Picton. I hope God will let us enjoy the fruits of our labours together for many years.

We have two Teenage and two younger grandchildren and the chapter goes on...!!!##!!!

Yours very gratefully in sobriety

Carolyn S

Picton Marina Group

Dear Mainstay,

I love Mainstay. One of my most precious possessions is a copy of Mainstay from March 1998. In it there is a share from Lloyd from Oamaru.

He wrote, "You Can't have Mountains without Valleys

After 18 years with the AA fellowship, I am getting old (elderly).

It is easy for me to stick to my sobriety. However, I often look at young members and think that as they may have so many years ahead, they may start thinking perhaps I wasn't so bad after all and I have changed now and could start on the slippery downhill again.

I get quite a kick from seeing people come to AA and become what I call 'winners'. I have seen the change in a lot of people. A change that we

usually can see before they are aware of it and people who achieve something through their sobriety that they would not have achieved before.

Life has not been perfect since I stopped drinking and I still have ups and downs. You can't have mountains without valleys. I believe it is part of life to have to strive to improve and to keep what I have won. I must keep going up hill, but never reach the top of the hill or I will fall down the other side and be back on the bash. I am so grateful to the fellowship of AA. That is you people. We did together what I could not do alone.

Lloyd, Oamaru"

Lloyd was my Dad. His example showed me AA works. I saw the changes and was blessed with the realization that it was because of AA. Never for a second since the day I had that realization have I doubted AA.

Thank you for the opportunity to share.

Kate, Richmond Sunday Morning ABSI

Dear Mainstay readers,

Today I am 16 years sober. It seems so surreal. Today has been amazing for me personally. Things which wouldn't mean much to others looking in, yet I know - it's an inside job.

I have 3 children. The wee boy I

had when I was drinking wished me a Happy Sobriety Birthday with a gentle wee emoticon via txt. This means so much. The two children I had sober were with me all day today and I appreciate so much how our day has been. It's all because of sobriety within AA.

I say these things knowing 16 years ago those close to me were not happy. I went to AA and didn't understand, yet through attending meetings, sponsorship, and staying away from the first drink no matter what, I began to have a new understanding and new freedoms.

Although I did stash 4 miniature bottles in my top cupboard in the top back right-hand corner and forgot about them, I knew I wouldn't drink them because I couldn't get drunk from them alone. Just over a year later I remembered they were there. My sponsor who took me under her wing prior to attending my first meeting, who I met in outpatient treatment, suggested I get all alcohol out of my house. I recall having a bout of chronic anxiety just over a year sober. I had such strong emotion which contained aggression under which there was sadness for being an alcoholic having a little drink of liquid which made me feel so grande, like nothing or no one else could do for me. Alcohol was my best friend.

I recall waking to a meeting saying the serenity prayer knowing if I felt better afterwards there really was something in this AA and the

universe. Sure enough I shared, cried, which wasn't unusual. In fact, 3 men joked about placing bets on whether I'd cry at the meetings. It gave me some humour, just, and I was able to call them gamblers, and most of all I felt better yet again.

I developed some faith that this too shall pass. What occurred through this phase was acceptance. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. I broke a wee glass bottle in my sink and tipped the wee plastics out. I did this in front of my son. 4 years old. Not the greatest yet that's what I did. I pray. I entered AA 2 days before my 22nd birthday. I had a gift of desperation and I didn't know this then.

I heard so much. Thank you Ashburton fellowship. I got sober. I am staying sober 1 day at a time. Principals before personalities. I am responsible to do the work. I want to live, Sober. I'm learning. It's ongoing. No longer do I have alcohol to answer mine and others problems. Cause it was. Into the hub of AA. Doing the opposite of what I had always done.

Follow directions even when it doesn't make sense. Stay away from the first drink no matter what.

Anonymous.

Dear Mainstay Readers,

Some of you will not be alcoholics, and others will be alcoholic readers of the wonderful NZ Mainstay Magazine. I wish all of you touched by alcoholism, peace and recovery and your loved ones.

I entered AA and had my last as I was turning 22. My sobriety is 2 days before my day of birth. July 22nd 2001. There were so many things I didn't know about myself, and I am still learning. Staying away from the first drink on a daily basis

gives me a chance to have a life, an amazing life and yes beyond my wildest dreams. The ongoing internal freedom is the best for me!!!

I didn't know I was living in ways that were dishonest. I was never sober enough to process. I justified and blamed others

and past conditions and told myself what I was doing was ok because of whatever I told myself and that sat well enough at the time. I entered AA after having an affair. I had an affair while I lived a life of regular active desperately needed drinking.

Dishonest before I got sober, I told my-self I was ok cause others around me were into drugs. I was allowed my free time, so I said often. So, I left my child and fiancé at home - lies - I wanted

**KEEP
IT
SIMPLE**

to drink, feed my ego in whatever way was on the go at the time. Human instincts to the extreme, on rampage, roaring through the lives of others. I hid the bottle in the garage and kept you out, then justified and laughed when a parent went in, not my parents, I wouldn't let them. Maggot infested rubbish bags, splitting. Only to feel mature as a young adult because I towed a hired trailer, smoking in my car with my child and another child feeling like a tidy queen, freeing us from the rubbish. My glass in the shower, wine sipping away, only god knows what, justifying always at that time. Memories of eating supplements telling myself and others I'd eaten x y z for lunch and almost believing it. Sneaking out my window as a teen, till early hours, thank you my higher power I made it home, I'm so grateful. It could have been disastrous. The drunken over confidence of youth, smitten by the insane urge to do what I liked in regard to many things. I broke my own boundaries in the end, drinking anytime, hiding it in the fridge, not hiding it in the fridge. Shame entering my beautiful little son's creche. The list goes on. Adjusting and tweaking the food budget to get to the guy my dad didn't like. The one where we were both alcoholically hooked if you can't beat em join em sort of thing. Sweet lives effected. I stood on the toes of my fellows and they retaliated. Of course, I said, 'others harmed

me.' Yet I did too. Hurt people hurt people. It became time to heal. I need to drink to relieve anxiety, and that has been a blessing in disguise. I was a broken mess. It's often darkest before the dawn.

This too shall pass. I heard and got told once in AA. All the help I can get. A sponsor, outside help, and more than one, lots of meetings. Daily calls with my sponsor. A daily reading, AA mediation for the day book. Stay away from the first drink no matter what. It's worked and it's still working I can't get by on yesterday's grace. I got to do the things today that look after my sobriety today and start again tomorrow. The 12 Steps The 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts are our guides. Sobriety and a way of life that demands rigorous honesty and scrape the bottom of the barrel. God has shown more to me and to you. I see to it that my relationship with him is right. My need is gods opportunity. Go shows me and is showing me how to create the fellowship I-WE crave. Recovery - Service and Unity. Trust god clean house and help others. "We" Thank you for reading. May god bless you and keep you and your loved ones as you and they trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. Faith. Fear isn't the absence of faith yet an opportunity to develop faith. Thy will be done. Sobriety no matter what today, I pray. We gotta need it want it and do it. My bottom was enough for me. I will keep coming, learning

seeking and aligning myself with spiritual principals. Be still and know that I am god. Be still and know. Be still. I thank my HP daily for this gift of a sober day.

Anonymous.

Hi my name is Pete D.

My sobriety birthday 6th March 1984.

I had been travelling the country for nearly 5 years, working full time on the railways, married with two children. By the time I stopped long distance travelling at 35 years I was burnt out. I managed to transfer to Christchurch railways, and just before Christmas, we bought our first house. It wasn't plain sailing, as the problems came with me. I found I was at the jumping off place and ended up in treatment at Hanmer Springs in Group 7 where I found people like me - sober but struggling. I was a mess. In the four weeks there I did two 4th and 5th Steps with Father Ray, plus family week, plus other groups. I found my higher power on my knees one night saying, "if there is a God up there, please help me". This was my first honest connection.

Since that moment I've been tested many times. I was asked to leave the family home at 10 years sober, and that was how I ended up living in a recovery house. This was another hard moment in my life. Getting along with others

was very difficult for me. It took quite a few weeks. There were set routines; cooking, cleaning house, house meetings plus going to AA meetings.

I got into a relationship while living there, which once again ended in total disaster. This cost me everything again: - the house, money, and I was broken again. I made a decision, no more relationships! Just me and God.

I bought a two-bedroom flat and felt happy at last. By this time, I had a copy of a Big Book and was working the steps with a sponsor. I was working part time jobs – gardening, home care, taxi driving. After two years, I fell in love.

This time things were different for me. We had a lot in common from our pasts and could relate to the fellowship. I sold my 2-bedroom flat, and we moved in together. Later, we sold up (before the 1st earthquake!) and went south for 6 years before returning to Christchurch. Our last move was to Rangiora where we have been for 2 years.

During this time, we got married on a rainy day with our friends, most of whom are in recovery. Together we have built a strong relationship. I've learnt that if one puts in the work, you do get the rewards but in God's time, not my time.

It's not quite a fairy tale ending. My wife was diagnosed with cancer 1 and a 1/2 years ago.

I have found this extremely hard to

deal with at times, coping by ringing AA friends, getting professional help, plus truckloads of praying. We have had several serious talks about our future and my wife is in her 2nd year of cancer treatment. This seems to be working and there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Everything we have been through has brought us closer. Two months into our relationship her dad died. My daughter got married 7 months later. I lost my niece - life taken. That was a huge emotional roller coaster, which tore the family apart. I started my own gardening business. My wife went back to study.

Now we are both retired but there is still plenty to do. Life has not become boring. I am now a Granddad of seven children. Life gets interesting. We have created our own home. Removed lots of trees for the sun. Planted flowers, shrubs, roses. We also have our 6-year-old dog Scotty.

It's been the little things that give us the biggest rewards, family, meals out, trips to the beach. Those quiet times just talking are all precious. This is all in God's hands. True friends, specialists, doctors.

So, all is not lost. God first Don't pick up that first drink. Regular meetings. Big Book. Sponsor.

I'm a great believer in writing down what's happening at the moment, so it does not build up. This has helped me through dark times.

I hope my story helps everyone who reads it, in some way.

Yours in the fellowship,

Pete D. Aka Cheviot Pete.

Another amazing experience in the life of an alcoholic in Alcoholics Anonymous.

That is a statement I never expected as an active drinker to ever make in my lifetime. How life has changed and what gratitude I feel today as the result of a spiritual awakening from taking the steps of recovery as suggested by members who had found a way to live, a day at a time without the need to drink.

I so vividly remember the chaos I called my life with so many fantasies that wouldn't come true. How frustrated I felt in not getting what I honestly thought was owed to me, whatever it may be. Wants that were never satisfied and demands ignored or rejected. How a drink would quiet the ever-thinking mind in its plans for success, despite the creation of many new problems in the process.

It seemed that there was just one struggle after another and my plan's *in life would be great if everyone* would change, and if I was given what I felt I deserved.

It never occurred to me that it would be me that would have to change in order to see the truth. If I can stop

drinking long enough to see the gift on offer.

I was to have many painful experiences before becoming defeated, bewildered, and confused then surrendering to the program and in my case, not quickly. I was to be a slow learner but the rewards were to come when I became willing to go to any lengths.

To admit, to believe, to seek help, to look within, to open up to another, to be willing to change, to surrender my old ways, to consider others, to make restitution, to look within daily, to talk to God, listen to God and to help others.

Who would have thought that those simple steps could lead to an amazing experience followed by another amazing experience and then multiple amazing experiences?

To recover, to help others to recover, to give and expect nothing in return but another sober day.

To quote the St Francis of Assisi prayer, *It is in the giving that we receive and oh how I have received, far more than I ever expected.*

Anonymous

My name is Frances and I am an alcoholic.

It took me several weeks after my first meeting to be able to say that, and only said as a way to tick the boxes, of what I felt was expected, to be able to graduate from AA

and onto freedom. I did not think I could be an alcoholic as I still had my husband and my children, and I lived in a house I purchased, and I paid all my bills.

My introduction into AA was via an ultimatum from my husband, "You go to AA or I'm taking the children and leaving". He is a man who does what he says, and I believed he most definitely would.

My plan was to do a few meetings, prove I was not an alcoholic and re-enter my usual lifestyle vindicated. I stopped drinking only as I didn't have the money nor the gumption to drink without permission. I considered my life to be a very normal one and the way I drank was acceptable to me and all those people I drank with. It's interesting to learn that you only know what you know and if you have an open mind, you can consider there may be another way to live. However, my mind initially was not open, and I was not willing and most surely not the, I'm happy to share my problems, kind of gal. Problems were kept inside our four walls and trusting others to help, was not an option, particularly when you can't see the problem begins with yourself.

I am very grateful that the members of our local groups were patient, understanding and considerate enough to give me the time necessary to realise my powerlessness and unmanageability.

I became loyal to those people who showed me love and kindness and who had an acceptance of my defects with great understanding, defects which were ultimately to become unacceptable to me.

I was to find a power greater than myself, a God of my understanding which assisted in taking the load that I use to think I had to carry all on my own. I found a fellowship of love, amidst a life of chaos, confusion, and insanity. The initial loyalty I felt towards the members of AA would be enough to keep me coming back, despite my underlying desire to drink.

The more meetings I attended, the more I heard and the more I heard, the more I identified. I discovered the way I drank was as the result of a disease, and my inability to control my life or my drinking, resulted in utter conflict within myself and with others. I could justify the problems by blaming other people and thus pre-empting the next drink. At last, the problem had a name and here was a fellowship offering me a solution, multiple solutions. AA experience was to become something I welcomed and the offers of love and support, unsurmountable, a gift from God through the members of a fellowship, a fellowship who knew they had to give it away to keep it.

A new life was to open to me, if I was to be honest with others, open to a way of life within the realms of hope and imagination

and willingness to do what was suggested. I began to trust, I asked to be sponsored, I found a willingness to work the steps, read the literature, pray, listen, love unconditionally, accept, let go, all became my new way of living. No longer was I to take for granted that all would be gifted to me as a matter of right. I had been sitting on a very high perch, a perch of fear, and gently walked step by step to solid ground. Today I have hope, faith, trust, a love and understanding for my fellow man, defects of character which I am aware of, some which are at the root of an ongoing practice of learning about me, of what is helpful and what is not. I am me and I am loved and cared for and forgiven, imperfect and that's ok by me. I have been supported in seeing where the barriers and walls are between me and my higher power and others, who make up my life. Life for me is those relationships with others, my family, my friends, and all of Gods children, who I am so blessed to consider today.

I owe my life to AA and I continue to repay that debt by staying sober a day at a time, by helping others and by being a part of and not apart from. No longer alone but with a host of friends in a fellowship called Alcoholics Anonymous.

If you have managed to get to the end of this story then I ask for your service, I ask on behalf of the person who will read it and say

“WOW, maybe I could have a life like that” We write this for them, for those people who God offers a seed of hope to.

I value my subscription to Mainstay and I believe many others do also and it is that value that has inspired me to write this letter.

Today I can give instead of take, I can write a letter to Mainstay, I can subscribe to Mainstay, very simple positives, and ones I am grateful to have been introduced too.

Thank you for this opportunity to serve.

Frances

My name is Raylene and I am an alcoholic.

I am writing to Mainstay for the first time in my 25 year sobriety. I love Mainstay and I want to see it kept going. My Mainstays go all over the world to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Isn't that our primary purpose? AA gave me hope when I was new and Mainstay was a big part of that Hope. I loved reading members' stories, especially if I recognised that story.

I wanted to mention Maureen from Canada here too as a great many of you will know her and she loves the Mainstay and has a subscription which has kept her going during Covid. She has been to New Zealand 14 times and to more assemblies and Conventions than I have. She hasn't been to a meeting

in over a year, has no technology so cannot do on-line meetings. Mainstay was still there for her.

Another part of my Hope is Service. I truly believe I must do service with no thought of a payback and the paradox is the more I think of and help others, the more my sobriety and life improve. I truly have to give it away to keep it. I have to do my bit for AA as a whole like others did service so AA was there for me when I came in. I do the dishes, help pack up the room, no matter how many years sober I am. Every little bit goes to making the whole work for the still suffering alcoholic still to come through the doors of AA. I encourage others to do service and love seeing the change in newcomers as they take on service. I have taken the Steps of the programme as well as the steps of Service. I have taken on service positions full of fear and self-doubt but I have learnt so much about the programme, about others but most of all about myself and I truly know that God has been with me no matter what happens. I have seen and heard miracles in the rooms of AA and some that I cannot even put into words but I feel it. I have read of miracles in Mainstay and for that I am truly grateful. I am still getting Hope. Thank you to all who have kept Mainstay going since its inception. I have appreciated your service.

***Raylene P. Living Sober,
Christchurch***

Special feature - 12 Steps

The Steps

In response to the Mainstay request, I felt obliged to share how I have worked the Steps.

Prior to going to my first meeting I was battling the craving to drink, take a pill or eat every waking moment. I totally identified with what was shared at my first meeting and I wanted what members had as it was very different to how I felt. I asked a woman to sponsor me and she shared her experience which basically was all about surrender and finding a higher power to enable her to stop drinking. I trusted her and tried to follow her example in how she was living her life and practising the Steps. I started going to meetings almost every day, brought the Big Book and realised that if I wanted to get well that I needed to do exactly what Bill and Bob had done in trying to carry the message. Getting sober was not easy. I was diligently trying to work the first three steps when I reached a point that I realised in my innermost self that nothing I could do was enough to myself stop drinking and using other substances. I remember praying that if I could have one hour of sobriety I would be grateful.

I also believed that I needed to do the 4th and 5th steps as I had many guilty secrets of which I was

ashamed. This I did within a few days and I found it very difficult to admit my faults and to see any positive aspects of myself at that time. So for me the first five steps were the key to my surrender. I have not had to pick up a drink since that time.

Steps 6 and 7 were a mystery to me at the time as they seemed too simple so I pretty much put them on the shelf for many years.

I made a list of harms I had caused and immediately made the amends as suggested in Steps 8 and 9.

In Step 10 I try to clear up things I have done wrong on a daily basis as I feel bad until I have cleared up any wrongs I have done.

Step 11 is very important to me in that I have always had a very strong spiritual hunger which has been met through the 12 Steps but I continue to feel the need to improve my connection to my higher power. So this is very much an ongoing practise and development for me. Particularly through reading, sharing with others and prayer and meditation.

Finally Step 12 is trying to practise this way of life and sharing what I have found with others who are as desperate as I was.

The Steps are a way of life for me and my connection with my higher

power and carrying the message are the top priority in my life. As it says in the Big Book we do not regret the past and do not wish to shut the door on it. This is our greatest strength.

I have a completely new life as the result of being led to AA and the 12 Steps and for this I am so very grateful.

Leonie. Chch



Book reviews

By Randal P.

Came to Believe: A review

The spiritual adventures of AA, as experienced by AA members

B6 \$18.00

In this fifth review of a series of small but comprehensive contributions from AA members, the title explores the central theme of spirituality of the AA programme.

Came to believe taps into a rich source of what spirituality means for a diverse range of contributors, seeking to differentiate the religious from the spiritual, based on inclusion and that each persons' concept of God is equal, relevant, personal, and real for those who seek that vital connection enabling us to access our new way of life.

Doctor Bob was observed in understanding how this works amidst a diverse people who populate meeting rooms, "*we are not bound by theological doctrine..... we are many minds in our organsiation*"

The theme too is one of tolerance, goodwill and willingness, underpinned by unity of purpose, acknowledging the existence of a power greater than ourselves, which had formerly been absent.

Into Action, How AA members practice the Programme in their daily lives

GV 28 \$25.00

Extract from the Forward-Welcome...(paraphrased by this reviewer in italics)

This volume could perhaps be volume 2 of a series of letters contributed to The AAs' US publication Grapevine. Following on from a previous review, "Beginners Book" and following an obvious theme, and suggested action plan for the newcomer of "what to do next".

This volume is filled with fresh original stories (and therefore experience strength and hope) from AA members amply demonstrating just how contributors apply this "simple programme for complicated people" in their own lives, which is Alcoholics Anonymous in action. Though it is known, honoured, and imitated throughout the world as a Twelve Step Programme, the steps are merely one element in a well-rounded AA programme. Lasting recovery from our "rapacious creditor" occurs within, rendering a richly varied programme of action, *true for those who have contributed their accounts, what it was like, what they have done, and how it is now.*

The Twelves steps are a corner stone and a guaranteed guide to lead us safely along a path into the

sunlight of sobriety. In conjunction with this are the Traditions which call upon the rich history of The Fellowship ensuring AA healthy stability and growth *both on both a collective and individual basis, which is unity of purpose. Our literature draws on the experience strength and hope of all alcoholics who have come before. At its' heart the programme is found being practised and in action in every AA room and meeting globally, where mutual support and unity is the keyword.*

The slogans found in all AA rooms are a portable toolkit which we can take with us and apply daily.

AA service is varied and allows recovering AAs' to be a "part of" through sponsorship, chairing meetings, acting as trusted servants for mutual advantage to the meeting, group district committees, area assemblies and conferences.

This volume amply demonstrates that continuous action in applying the AA programme will work for everyone, regardless of age, gender social status or ethnicity, underpinning our primary purpose.

Each section is sequential covering and encompassing themes - the Steps, Service, AA literature, sponsorship, the slogans, meetings, summarised in the end section-a programme that works in all our affairs.

No matter What: Dealing with Adversity in Sobriety: A review

GV 31 \$25.00

An extract from the Forward (*italics Reviewers added comments and paraphrasing*)

We have seen AAs suffer lingering and fatal illness with little complaint, often with good cheer...some members never seem to get on their feet financially, and still others who encounter heavy financial reverses. Ordinarily we see these situations being met with fortitude and faith.

Essay on Step Twelve, Twelve Steps and Traditions.

All recovering alcoholics have had to deal with adversity at a multitude of points in sobriety. Defined as a state of hardship, *affliction comes in many forms and degrees, guises and indeed disguises.*

Despite attendant pain when these calamities and upheavals occur, drinking is not an option. To drink again would merely add to our woes. In this essay, Bill wrote... How shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success? Can we adjust to either without despair or pride? Can we NOW accept poverty, sickness, bereavement with courage and serenity? Are we *willing to* and steadfastly accept and content ourselves with the humbler, yet often more durable (*and perhaps ultimately endurable as more often plays out*) satisfactions denied us when the brighter more glittering

achievements are denied us?

"We sought to wrest our satisfactions from the world".

The AA answer to all of these vexing questions about living is "Yes all these things are possible. We know this because we witness and observe monotony, pain and all forms of calamity turned to good use by those who practice the principles of the Twelve Steps.

Bill goes on to suggest that our troubles are often of the alcoholics own making... We set the ball rolling... how often through our own perverse thinking and actions- having painted ourselves into a corner, are we finally required to swallow our pride and seek help? Yes frequently.

"We are forced back to that that unflattering position of acceptance".

By working a specific step, prayer and meditation, talking with old timers and or a sponsor, each member finally reckons with his or her adversity.

The volume, as with each companion is laid out in specific parts and chapters dealing sequentially and thematically with the gamut of adversities AAs frequently encounter in their sobriety journeys. As Plato astutely observed two millenia ago...and the point is perennial and as pertinent to AAs' as anyone...

"It is not so much the nature of a mans' problem, but merely his estimate of it".

Items of interest

Henry G. .P. (1899-1954)

Hank P. was a businessman who was the first alcoholic to recover in New York, following Bill W. Hank was New York's AA#2. His was a vital contribution to AA: without him, the Big Book might never have been published.

Hank was born March 13, 1895, in Marion, Iowa into a family that had lived in that area for several generations. He had been a Standard Oil of New Jersey executive who was fired because of his drinking. Hank sought treatment at Charles B. Towns Hospital in Manhattan. He met Bill Wilson there during the autumn of 1935. Hank was the first New York alcoholic other than Bill to stay sober for any substantial amount of time. Hank was sober approximately four years, before he drank again.

He is mentioned in "The Doctor's Opinion" (page XXIX of the Big Book). Doctor Silkworth describes him as "--a case of pathological mental deterioration." But, Silkworth added, "He adopted the plan outlined in this book." And, the doctor admitted he hardly recognized Hank when he saw him a year later. But, perhaps more importantly, Hank is credited with contributing the major interview around which Bill wrote the chapter, "To Employers." (Some historians believe that Hank himself actually wrote this entire chapter except the

first two paragraphs.)

After Bill and Lois Wilson lost their home at 182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn Heights, they moved to Montclair, New Jersey on April 26, 1939, and lived with Hank and his wife, Kathleen N. Hank and Kathleen had moved to Montclair from Teaneck, after Hank got sober. (He's noted, again, in the Big Book, on page 136, as "--a man who was living in a large community." That reference is to Montclair.)

Hank was an agnostic when he came to AA. But he evolved spiritually into a belief in a "universal power." He and Jim B. led the fight against any mention of God in the Big Book, to make it a psychological book and refer only to the spiritual nature of recovery, produced by the practice of the principles of the Twelve Steps. The verbal war over the mention of God produced the compromise "*as we understood Him*" in thy book.

Despite the pain and trouble he caused during the final years of his life, Alcoholics Anonymous would appear to owe a huge debt to Henry G. P. Ruth H., who was there for the entire adventure, said the Big Book definitely would not have been written without Bill and surely could not have been published without Hank. His story, "The Unbeliever" appeared in the first edition of the book that he was so instrumental in publishing.

Things I learnt - or was told - in my early years of recovery Christchurch 1980/90s

- Join a home group, attend business meetings, do service.
- Work all sides of the AA triangle: steps, traditions, concepts.
- Attend assemblies and conventions.
- Vote for the best person to do a task or role (the good is the enemy of the best).
- Remember tradition five - don't use a person to chair because 'it's good for them'.
- Contribute letters to mainstay annually.
- Stick with the winners - the winners are the ones working the steps.
- Give your phone number to new women - get theirs too. Call them.
- Action is the magic word.
- When chairing a meeting, open the meeting by sharing about the topic, then shut-up. Ask God to help you choose the next the speaker, don't make comments between speakers, try and balance men and women, start and close with a strong speaker - often this will be an old-timer.
- When AA asks something of you, the answer is 'yes', whenever possible.
- Have non-negotiable meetings every week.
- Do service: set up meetings, chair, take a service position, share, go with your sponsor to do 12th step work, be the secretary of a group after 12 months, be a GSR after two years. Keep a written record of your AA service.
- Attend a big book study, steps and traditions study, and a woman's meeting weekly.
- Don't have a conditional sobriety i.e. 'I'll stay sober if ...'
- Have an attitude of gratitude.
- Let it begin with me.
- Be familiar with all AA literature.
- Present written reports to your group after attending assemblies or conference.
- When voting for something in the fellowship remember - only vote yes if you will put your hand in your pocket to pay for it, or do the work. Be self-supporting in all your affairs, don't vote to spend other people's money or work.

221st Southern Area Assembly

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS BUSINESS MEETING

"The key is willingness" pg 35

SATURDAY, 26th June 2021

**Redwoodtown Community Hall
Cnr. Cleghorn and Weld Streets**

**Registration 8am
Business Meeting start 9am**

**Followed by Zoom speaker
meeting with Al-Anon
participation from 8pm to 9pm**

**Meeting ID 851-7436-3317
Passcode 618007**

**Zoom meeting will be open
from 7:30pm and will
close at 9:30pm
for a before and after chat**



Events

Bulls & Bears 40th Birthday – Wellington

When: 19th April 2021

Time: 7.30pm

Where: 192 Tinakori Road, Thorndon, Wellington (ACE Aotearoa Building, entrance off Poplar Grove)

Foxton Beach AA Camp

When: 23 April 2021 - 25 April 2021

Time: 4.00pm - 2.00pm

Where: 17 Te Awa Street, Foxton Beach 4815, Horowhenua

221st SAA Business Meeting – Blenheim

See flyer on previous page.

Service Positions

A reminder that we are looking to fill the service positions below. Further information on the roles and application forms can be found [here](#)

Board Treasurer: 3 years term

Class A Board Member: 3 year term

Class B Conference Experienced Board Member: 3 year term

To find out more information on the events and the service positions, go to the website, www.aa.org.nz.

The 12 Traditions

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. 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 A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*
4. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.*
5. *Each group has but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*
6. *An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
7. *Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
8. *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
9. *A.A., 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 A.A. 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.*

I am responsible. When anyone,
anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA always
to be there. And for that I am
responsible.

