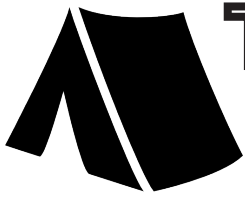


MAY 1, 2017
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Outside
The
Bottle





THOUGHTS ON A THEME:

FELLOWSHIP RETREATS



This summer, our men's Sunday morning AA group, will have the its sixth annual canoe and kayak camping trip. A couple of group members came up with the idea during their first year of recovery. That goes to show you, we don't have to be part of AA for many years before we can be of service. Anything fun you've done in your life, while using, can be more fun sober. We have to do those things with people of like mind and motivation to get and stay sober.

That first canoe trip was a great time, so we decided to have one every year. Spending time with the fellowship by the bonfire, out on a beautiful river and generally enjoying the company of my fellows has left me with memories I wish everyone has the opportunity to experience.

I enjoyed the event so much, I decided to help set it up this time around. We needed to keep the momentum going. I start promoting the trip at the meeting immediately following the trip. And it has become a running joke within our meeting during the announcements: Each week I stand and sarcastically announce that next year's trip will be the second week of August. I think everyone knows by now!

The anticipation of a great trip each year starts with planning car pools and getting our gear together. And the best part is, for those who are without a license, there are others willing to give a ride up. There is no other place or group of people on Earth who are willing to go the extra mile to help their fellows. And, like the steps, once the true work has begun, it's hard to halt that momentum. Pretty soon, bags are packed and camping gear is loaded up.

The ride up north with a car full of AAs discussing sobriety with each other is really enlightening. It's the way we get to know people better. There is a type of camaraderie that develops in each vehicle that bring the occupants closer. I always hear someone mention, how the ride up, was full of great conversations; stories that are both funny and heartfelt of how guys have found experience, strength and hope during recovery!

Upon arrival at the campsite, I always know the next few days will lift my spiritual condition. You see, retreats are like a vacation. But instead of relaxing, you're working; working to forge new relationships with other alcoholics, working to maintain the relationships you already got and working to be of service. It sounds like a lot of work, but

it's all NATURAL because unlike "actual work," I want to be among those whom I understand. And there is nothing, within my power, I would not do for this group of guys.

And so the work begins ... tents are pitched and coolers fill with LeCroix, Coke and iced tea topped off with ice. Wood is gathered, and grills are set up. By near nightfall, all the colorful tents stand as one — a sight as beautiful as a sky full of hot air balloons.

No doubt, a bonfire has been started without the collective knowledge of all participants. And as everyone huddles around the fire, a meeting is called to order. Now, there are certain types of meetings and then there are these meetings. Sitting underneath the stars in an experienced lawn chair listening to the gratitude that permeates from those sharing is something I would not trade for this world or the next. I speak for myself that when I leave a meeting, I feel pretty good about myself. When these "bonfire" meetings conclude, there is no high or low that eclipses the feeling I have.

And then there's the actual "canoe" part of the trip. After making our way to the top of the river, kayaks and canoes are manned, and we are off—some slowly and some more quickly. Generally, I kayak down the river with a group "in the middle of the herd." We relax, talk, enjoy nature's beauty and occasionally help out someone who has capsized.

The river is not without its exciting landmarks. Somewhere along the way, there is a 300 foot vertical climb up a sand dune. And, of course, most of us have to climb it. It's so steep, we have to literally crawl to the top. The view from the top is mouth dropping, and the feeling of achievement is inspirational. It is a living metaphor of our recovery. To round out the trip down the river, the group congregates at the riverbed, and a meeting is held on the water. Again, there are just some things you're never going to forget.

After a few more meetings under the stars, it seems time has flown by — time to head back to our busy lives. For a brief moment, we have relaxed and thrown aside the daily struggles, worries, successes and failures. And those times are the best of my life. Besides, I get to do it again next year.

 **PM and DY**

THIS PUBLICATION IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT WWW.AA-SEMI.ORG

FELLOWSHIP FLASHBACKS:

FOR THOSE TO SHARE THEIR STRENGTH, HOPE AND EXPERIENCE

“THERE ARE THOSE TOO WHO SUFFER FROM GRAVE EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL DISORDERS BUT MANY OF THEM DO RECOVER IF THEY HAVE THE CAPACITY TO BE HONEST.” (BB PG. 58)



When I got into AA I knew I was acting crazy. I was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. I didn't understand why, after many times of trying, I could not stay sober for long.

But crazy is not the same as mental illness. When I was sober for a little over a year, my depression, which has haunted me since I was an adolescent, returned with a vengeance. Depression can manifest itself differently in each person. Depression, for me, was an absence of feeling.

It's a step beyond sad, when the pain you feel is so astronomical it numbs your soul. I no longer felt sadness or joy. I just existed and everything I did took a thousand percent of my effort, and I was exhausted all the time. On top of that, an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) threatened my every waking thought. My anxiety levels were through the roof. It was the one break-through emotion.

My OCD behaviors include checking and counting, doing things twice, fear of contamination and horrifying intrusive thoughts. I thought when I quit drinking that part of me would go away. Instead its presence was made clearer with the absence of alcohol.

Sobriety alone wasn't enough to correct the physical abnormalities in my mind. I ended up in a partial hospitalization program to help me learn to deal with my mental disorder. That part of my sobriety was very difficult. I felt as though the bottom had fallen out from underneath me.

I didn't understand why this could happen, where were the promises? Why were other alcoholics judging me? Why were these other alcoholics that I barely knew stand-

ing by my side in the hospital? I had no answers.

I was put on medication to help create and keep serotonin in my brain. It was not an immediate solution as the medication itself took months to go into full effect. My own personal choice was to tell my doctors about my alcoholism and to only take non-addictive medication.

The teams of professionals I have worked with have come up with creative solutions to meet my needs. I know the intent of my heart, and medication helped to save my life. Without it, I would have been dead a few times over from suicide.

The fellowship pamphlet AA Member — Medications and Other Drugs states the following: “It becomes clear that just as it is wrong to enable or support any alcoholic to become re-addicted to any drug, it's equally wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication, which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems.”

When I was drinking my higher power couldn't help me recover from my mental disorder. I self-medicated, and I tried to do it all on my own. I just wanted a band-aid; not a solution. When I went through the steps and finally surrendered, my life changed.

The Great Spirit doesn't just put a band-aid on problems. She cleans out the wound, stitches you up and dresses the wound until it heals completely. Don't get me wrong, healing can be painful, but I was never alone. The women at the tables and, in my life, constantly reminded me of the Great Spirit's love.

I am still on the path to learning how to coexist with my mental disorder and my sobriety, but it's better today. I don't feel hopeless anymore. I know that I am loved and I also know that I can give back in letting others know that they don't have to be afraid. All you need is the capacity to be honest. Your higher power can handle the rest. I am blessed to be sober and on this journey of great healing.

△BP

Big Book Bits

“I HAD ALWAYS BELIEVED IN A POWER GREATER THAN MYSELF. I HAD OFTEN PONDERED THESE THINGS. I WAS NOT AN ATHEIST. FEW PEOPLE REALLY ARE, FOR THAT MEANS BLIND FAITH IN A STRANGE PROPOSITION THAT THIS UNIVERSE ORIGINATED IN A CIPHER AND AIMLESSLY RUSHES NOWHERE.” (BB PG. 10)

What's Happening.....

MAY 13

The SOUTHFIELD group will host their anniversary at the St. David Episcopal Church located at 16200 West 12 Mile Road in Southfield. Doors open at 6:00 pm, food served at 7:00 pm. Speakers, including Jim and Mary B., will begin at 8:00 pm.

MAY 25

DISTRICT 16 will hold its 7:00 pm monthly meeting at United Methodist Church located at 246 East 11 Mile Road in Madison Heights. The meeting is open to all, and GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES are encouraged to attend to represent their groups.

MAY 29

The LIVE AND LET LIVE group will host the MEMORIAL DAY ALCATHON from 10 am until 5 pm at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church located at 814 North Campbell Road in Royal Oak. Feel free to bring a dish to pass. Also, the group is asking for volunteers to be of service for the 8 am event setup. Please email district16news@gmail.com for more information on this service opportunity.

JULY 15

District 16 will be coordinating an open fellowship event for Blue Jays @ Tigers on Saturday, July 15th 6pm with an optional gratitude table meeting at 5pm. Upper Infield Section 323 row 7-10 seats are \$36 and wheelchair accessible or row four Upper Grandstand Section 343 seats are \$24 both while supplies last. For more information please contact Tom Y @ 313.522.0859, Mark B @ 248.890.0765, or d16sports@aol.com

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

GO AFTER YOUR SOBRIETY group changed location: This group now meets at 2119 Catalpa Drive in Berkley at 7:30 pm. In the past, this group met at Drayton Avenue Presbyterian Church located at 2441 Pinecrest Drive in Ferndale at 8:00 pm

Joe and Charlie meeting to start: The WARM (We are Recovery Motivated) group will be starting a "Joe and Charlie" meeting on April 22, 2017. The meeting is scheduled for Saturdays at 8:00 pm located at 315 East Nine Mile Road.

New Meeting Started - The 12 AT 12 group, just opened its doors on 03/13/2017, and meets at 12 noon on Mondays at the Foundations Detroit building located at 117 West Third Street in Royal Oak.



Local Hotlines

AA of Detroit Wayne County: (313) 831-5550

AA of Greater Detroit: (877) 337-0611

AA of Oakland County: (248) 332-3521

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS MONTHLY PUBLICATION? HAVE NEWS FROM YOUR GROUP OR ANOTHER? INTERESTED IN DESIGNING THE FRONT PAGE OR ADDING YOUR OWN ARTISTIC TOUCH?

LET US KNOW AT ... DISTRICT16NEWS@GMAIL.COM