

Outside the Bottle

District 16 Newsletter

July, 2021



The Seeds

As a child I was raised with religion. I attended weekly religious services and classes throughout my childhood. But I never made a connection. I was never able to wrap my hands around the concept of God to which I was assigned at birth. It never “took”.

I always had an interest in science and scientific theories regarding the world around me, and once I left home to pursue an education and career in the sciences and engineering, I quickly concluded there was no need for God, and therefore, no God. I had become an obnoxiously devout atheist. Looking back, I now understand this conclusion was also nurtured by my self-centered, egomaniacal, know-it-all smugness that was at the heart of my alcoholism.

And I frequently enjoyed debating people about God and religion in an attempt to point out how silly and foolish their beliefs were. Looking back, though, I realize this was really about my futile self-centered struggle to prop up my ego to feel less “less”. But there were occasionally some with whom I felt I could have an actual respectful discussion about my thoughts on God and religion. My uncle—let’s call him Uncle Joe—was one such person. Uncle Joe was not only an educated man, very accomplished in his profession, and a dedicated family man, he was also devoutly passionate about his God and religion. He was both active in attendance at and service to his church. He often taught religious classes, gave lectures, and led theological discussions. He had conducted extensive research and was deeply knowledgeable about his God and religion. And considering he had been such a positive influence on me through my childhood, I couldn’t have anything but the utmost respect for Uncle Joe.

Uncle Joe would sometimes tell me during our discussions that he worried about my soul and considered it his mission to help me come to an understanding of God. I, of course, resented this. But I often left these discussions with Uncle Joe thinking how nice it would be to have someone or something backing me, someone or something from which I could seek guidance and support. And I remember asking myself if I were missing something, if somehow there could be a God. But I just could not come to an understanding of God that fit with my understanding of the world. I couldn’t wrap my hands around a concept of God that worked for me. I didn’t realize it at the time, but the slightest inklings of willingness and openness had taken root. The seeds had been planted.

During my years of drinking and the realization life was unmanageable, I used my non-belief to defend my insistence that Alcoholics Anonymous was not the solution to my problems. So, when I finally got desperate enough to seek help and give Alcoholics Anonymous a try, I had no idea how I was going to come to believe in a Higher Power. I was told not to worry about it. That many successfully recovered AAs had come in with similar non-beliefs. And sure enough, after hearing enough people share their experiences of coming to believe in a Higher Power and reading enough similar stories in our literature, I came to accept that I, too, could and would come to believe in a Higher Power. I didn’t know how yet exactly, but I was willing and open to the idea that I would... somehow.

And that was enough. The door was now cracked open. Shortly after, and by no coincidence, I was reading the chapter, *We Agnostics*, in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I read the section that explained how part of our dilemma was a lack of sufficient personal power to solve our drinking problem by ourselves. We simply needed additional power. Some Higher Power that was greater than ourselves. That made sense. Then I read the most mind-blowing suggestion, that I could make my Higher Power make sense to me. Boom!! It popped right then and there. A concept of a Higher Power that worked for me, that fit with my understanding of the world. I had never been given permission to make God make sense to me. It was a very powerful and emotional experience. And I wept. And it was all I needed to begin my journey of sobriety and recovery. It turned out that all that was required was the slightest bit of willingness and openness. Willingness and openness that had taken root and grown from those seeds planted so long ago by Uncle Joe.

MY STORY

Hello, I'm an alcoholic, my name isn't as important as the message I've learned through the process of trial and error in Alcoholics anonymous. I'm from a lower middle-class family that lived in Michigan. My parents were divorced when I was about five or so, and I don't remember much before that but I do remember one of my first experiences with alcohol, I was a toddler sitting on the floor drinking grape soda and beer. To this day I remember the exhilaration and the taste, I also have a picture someone took of that critical moment in my life.

I was an extremely sensitive and crying was really easy at the drop of a hat for whatever reason. I didn't have an unusually large number of traumatic events but enough that crying was my go-to answer for whatever pained me. Whether it was getting a shot from the Dr., not being able to answer questions on a test when I went to my new school, losing something, or being caught in a lie.

Sports became a big part of my life after my mom married her second husband, whom I call dad. He was an exceptional hockey player and helped me become involved healthy living and in sports. He was the parent that always spent time paying various sports with my friends and I, baseball, football, basketball, hockey, whatever the season you would find us in the yard, street, or the park. Him and my mother also impressed upon me education and a great work ethic, they also gave me certain responsibilities like cleaning, yard work, and baby-sitting.

The next experience I had with alcohol was when I was babysitting my sister, who went to sleep. I had to impress the girl that I had a crush on and was watching my friends across the street. Long story short the pot I brought to impress her wasn't pot and she went back to her sitting duty. I had to impress her so I found an unopened fifth of Old Grand Dad in my parents' liquor cabinet, I took a guzzle and called her, she wasn't impressed and hung up. I'D IMPRESSSS HER I KNOW HOW, I'll guzzle again. I called her again and she asked me if I was drunk as I proceeded to vomit while I was telling her I loved her. Somehow, I made it to bed as I heard my parents' car rounding the corner. The next day I looked at the bottle and half of it was gone. That wasn't enough, I was 12 and I'd chase that exhilaration for the next 16 years.

My parents divorced after 7 years but dad continued to be a part of my life. I had an issue that put me in the hospital for a couple months the summer before high school that caused a lot of physical and emotional pain and helped me become the alcoholic I am today. When I was in the hospital my friends brought me a 6 pack of quality beer and mom thought it was fine seeing what I was going through, little did she know that was going to help catapult my alcoholism, I mean who knew what problems alcohol and pain pills would cause a 15-year-old back then?

That was the summer of 1976. I kept communication with my grandparents from my biological father and knew that my father quit drinking for 7 years up until this point. Low and behold I received a call from him one night and he was drunk. I wanted to help him so I went to do what I could. I was able to spend his last drunk with him and see what a very low bottom drunk does. After a night of drinking beer, Rhine wine, and passing out we got up shortly after sunrise. We started with the Rhine wine because that was all that was left. As soon as the bars opened, we made the rounds to his local bars, the first one cut him off after several shots of blackberry brandy and we hit another where he was cut off before he had a drink. Somehow God gave him the strength to ask me to take him to the hospital. When he got out a week later, he invited me to my first A.A. meeting,

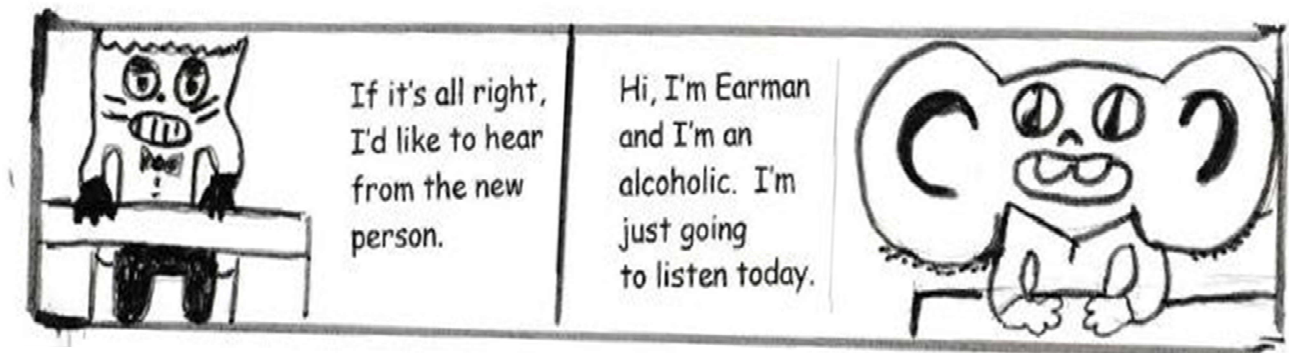
I made a couple and before the third one I decided it was more important to drink a 6 pack with my buddy then to hit another meeting. A month later I received my first drunk driving. A few years later I received my second and was mandated to a different 12 step program but my result was the same, I stayed dry for a whole year doing the 1,2,3, step shuffle. One meeting a week and get my sheet signed for the court, but no sponsor, no home group, and heaven forbid I'd work all 12 steps in the chronological order under the guidance of anyone. The mental blank spot Bill describes in the big book where nothing is going to prevent the next drink other than a higher power is very apparent to me now, because after that dry year I was at an event and the thought of a drink came to mind, I completely forgot about the drunk driving's, attempted suicides, depression, lack of education, problems with my marriage, and at work. That was December of 1990 and I didn't make it back to A.A. until April 19th 1991.

After a morning of drinking, it was suggested to me to by my wife to call mom who suggested I call my biological father that took me to my first meeting after that long and painful road trip-Sterling Serenity, Fridays at 8P.M. He picked me up with a couple friends and made sure I sat at a first step table. I could relate to something everyone shared. I wanted to stop drinking but I couldn't stop and stay stopped. One thing they kept impressing on me was to get on my knees in the morning and ask my higher power for a day of sobriety and get on my knees at night and thank God for that day of sobriety. I was also given my first big book.

In a short time, I asked Mark T. to be my sponsor, the first question he asked me was "are you willing to go to any length to stay sober?" I wasn't sure what to expect but I knew I had to do things differently. He constantly reminded me of talking to God and asking him for a day of sobriety in the morning and thanking him at night. One of the first things he did was help me find a homegroup. The first job I got at this homegroup was assistant coffee maker for a month then coffee maker for a month and then chairperson for a month. After a year I was elected the temporary sponsor for a year. My next service position was alternate G.S.R. for two years. I've had various positions at my homegroup through this incredible journey that have taught me how the program gets from New York's Central Office to my kitchen table and the many roads available to deliver that message to the sick and suffering alcoholic.

This is a program of action and when I need help, I've learned to ask for it, whether it's my program and doing some inventory work that still needs to be done, asking somebody to be my sponsor or service sponsor, my finances, my education, my spiritual development, or seeking help from a professional therapist or psychiatrist. I've found developing these relationships is imperative early on in sobriety especially with other newcomers so I get an idea of what works and what doesn't. It's simple, not easy and it starts with getting honest with myself, picking up that thousand-pound telephone and asking for some direction. SO DON'T DRINK, GO TO MEETINGS, GET A HOMEGROUP, GET A SPONSOR, WORK ALL 12 STEPS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A SPONSOR THAT WORKED THEM UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THEIR SPONSOR, AND INVITE A HIGHER POWER INTO YOUR LIFE. IT WORKS IT REALLY DOES. These are just suggestions that have worked for me and a lot of others.

Keep On Trudgin' by Phil R.



Announcements & Anniversaries

If your group is hosting an event, or if you or someone you know is celebrating an anniversary, please contact the newsletter and we will announce it on this page.

EVENTS

Area 33 meeting, July 18th Noon

This is a virtual event

New GSR Orientation 11:00 AM

District 16 Meeting, July 22th 7:00 PM

Current information regarding in person and virtual meetings can be found on the area 33 website: [Alcoholics Anonymous \(aa-semi.org\)](http://Alcoholics Anonymous (aa-semi.org))

Outside the Bottle is the newsletter of District 16.

The newsletter contains announcements, meeting changes, events, news and information around the district, short articles on sobriety and recovery, and even some humor. All AA members are invited to submit material to the newsletter.

Please send correspondence or contributions to: clevebro@yahoo.com

Remember this is your newsletter help us make it better- all suggestions or comments are gladly welcome



A Sincere thank you to
all newsletter
contributors!

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

AA of Oakland County:
248-332-3521

AA of Greater Detroit:
877-337-0611