

# **Outside the Bottle**

## **District 16 Newsletter**

**April, 2022**



# Hopeless and spiritually bankrupt.

I had my first drink at 12 years old. Rum and coke and could barely taste any rum. It was magical as and changed the course of my entire life. Just two sips out of a cup and 36 years later. Insane. Beaten, Hopeless, spiritually bankrupt and a complete slave to alcohol. I became a part of Alcoholics Anonymous when I was 48 years old. There were a lot of good, crazy and near-death experiences between 12 and 48.

By age 20, first DUI. A life-changing experience because it also changed the course of my life. I was enlisted to join the Army infantry, passed the physical and was signed and ready to go to Fort Benning, GA within a month after it happened. My plan was to join the Army, get away from alcohol and pot, get in shape and see some of the world. That first DUI stopped that. It was the worst tragedy in my life at the time. I was told to go to AA and did. Once. I entered a smoke-filled room in 1986 and couldn't even see across it and it was filled with a bunch of much older and what seemed like grumpy men. Not feeling it was for me and bought a 40 right after the meeting. I could not relate and definitely not willing. I was not an alcoholic. I just drank too much after one of my many going-away parties.

By age 22 I suffered a severe closed head injury when crashing into a wall on 696. My friend, the driver was paralyzed from chest down. He lived that way until he departed this world in his mid 30's. Another life-changing experience. We were both drunk and I don't remember the accident. I was either passed out or just too drunk. Although a lot of pain associated with the accident. Being an alcoholic was not a consideration. It was just an accident. They happen. Within a couple years after the accident. My 2nd DUI. I hit a guy on a bike in a bad part of town and was scared to stop. I did go around a few blocks and came back and that's when I was pulled over. They said something about hit and run, but was not charged with one. By this time I had a really good reason to drink. I blamed it on depression from the accident. It's not easy having your head smashed in and having one of your best friends paralyzed. I could easily justify it.

Although, not an alcoholic. My ideal of an alcoholic was a loser. A deadbeat. Someone who could not hold a job and lived under the viaduct. The word alcoholic seems degrading. I'm not that bad and no way I'm asking for help. I got this. I'm strong and smart enough. My willpower will get me through.

So now let's fast forward to 36. By this time my path had me working in broadcast TV for a few years, married and having a baby. The day my daughter was born was the day I swore off alcohol for good. Having a child was the greatest blessing ever. A complete miracle and all that was needed to be inspired and to quit drinking. I had no doubt that I would ever drink again. I was done with it and pot too. After a few days, I forgot about my dedication to quit and it took 12 more painful years for me to walk into AA. I felt beaten. Alone. Completely hopeless. Divorced. No longer working in TV after a 23-year career. Self-esteem was shit. Some how, somehow. I ended up in church in Madison Heights. The same church I went to 28 years prior. Only this time. No smoking and no one told me to go. I went because feeling very insane. I kept wanting different results, but kept doing the same things over and over again. Drinking. I was there early. Helped set up and still had a half hour to kill. So instead of sitting there and talking with people I didn't know. Admitted alcoholics. I went and bought a half pint for after the meeting and I'll quit after that.

For the next few months. I found myself struggling more and more. Getting beat up more and more. Still, not an alcoholic. I already felt pretty shitty and weak about myself so why would I admit that and feel even worse. I'm not that bad. Over the next few months, I listened and heard little things that made me feel more like I belonged. It was at this Madison Heights meeting that an amazing feeling came over me when they said let's pray for the still sick and suffering. Tears were in my eyes, an incredible sensation came over me as if every molecule in my body was changing. I realized this group of complete strangers. Were praying for me. Someone they didn't even know. I was touched, moved and inspired. It was my first real feeling of belonging.

Unwilling to admit I was an alcoholic and not willing to ask for help. I continued to drink for the next few months. There were a lot of days that I swore off drinking for good. Again, only to end up buying another bottle. I would tell myself. "Just don't pull into the store. Just don't go in. Just don't buy liquor", but did it anyways. Over and over again. It was like the movie Groundhog Day. AA was great for these other people, but I was having problems with people telling me all this stuff I had to do. Very overwhelming. They were telling me I never had to drink again. Get a sponsor, work the steps, do service work, do 90 in 90, get a big book and other stuff. I had no intention of never drinking again. Don't these people know that I only

need a few months away from alcohol. I don't need a lifetime. In a few months I will be happy and healthy again and can go on my merry way.

About 6 months later I decided that I found another way. I don't have to do the steps and get a sponsor. A childhood friend quit with the help of God. I'll just do that. I've always had God in my life. So I prayed and gave my life and alcohol problem to God. It worked.... For 16 days. On the 17th day I drank. At that time. I felt more beaten. Realized with what I had in my life. Knowledge, strength, willpower and God. It wasn't working. I needed more. My path again changed on that 17th day.

At that time I became willing. I ask someone to be my sponsor. It was the first person I saw at my first meeting. I said those three little magic words necessary to start on the right path. "I need help".

So now I have a sponsor and I'm ready to work the steps. In order. At this point I felt I already worked steps 2 and 3. By myself. Although was never ready to do step 1 and admit admit I was an alcoholic. We spent about a month meeting and going to lunch working steps 1,2, and 3. Before I worked step 4 I let him know that I still smoked pot.

I could tell he was very disappointed, but he never ask. And of course I never told him. Anyways, he just said that to continue. I would have to quit smoking pot. Unwilling to let my old friend go. I met with him one more time and thanked him for his help, but it was time for me to move on. I immediately ask another person at Royal Oak noontimers. I put a lot more thought into it this time. I've sat with this guy a lot over the past 6 months and he had some peace that I wanted. He accepted. It was brought up early that I was not willing to quit smoking pot to work the steps. He simply told me he wouldn't work the steps until I did. I was unwilling. I still needed my one or two hits a night too take the edge off. So I found another sponsor. This time I told him before I ask him that I can't quit pot right now. He simply said, ' You do realize eventually you will have to quit if you want to reach a spiritual life". I agreed and forward we went.

We met for an hour to go through the steps and it turned into 6 or 7 hours. We made it to step 8. It was a life changing experience. A few months later we went through back to basics and went through the steps again. This time when it came to step 4 or 5. I realized the only thing holding me back was that one or two hits at night. It was keeping me from a true spiritual experience. I flushed what pot I had left down the toilet and haven't looked back. Yes, it is true. To reach a true spiritual experience. I must not rely on any mind altering substances.

I remember in my early days of sobriety. One day I was feeling full of stress and worry. I was thinking about all I needed in life. As I was standing and full of worry, doubt, fear and confusion. I fell to my knees to pray. By the time I hit the ground. All I could do is Thank God for all he had given me. I did not ask for anything. My life was starting to change for the better. Gratitude for what I already had was starting to get clearer. In early sobriety. The grass and trees looked greener. The air smelled fresher. I was definitely amazed and I wasn't even a quarter of the way there.

So here I am. 6 plus years later. Onto my 4th sponsor and I've worked the steps once again and feel firmly planted in Aa and my roots are growing. All the people I ask to be my sponsor helped me incredibly and am forever grateful for that. When a person agrees to be your sponsor. They are trying and willing to help. I've seen many get angry and mad because it didn't work out. I can only be grateful because they all helped me on this journey and all helped me get closer to where I need to be.

Today. There is not any shame, guilt or remorse to admitting I'm an alcoholic. Finally doing so has brought me a life I've never Imagined. Many gifts. Not only the gifts of not needing pot or alcohol. I've learned how to be my authentic self and just be who I am. One day at a time. Growing. Learning. Loving. Growing more in effectiveness, understanding and with more patience, love and kindness. Everything in this program teaches me how to be a better person. To be an effective member of society and spread my gifts to the world.

I know what it's like to say without reservation or doubt."I'm not going to drink today and do it anyways. Over, over and over again. Just like the flick of a light switch. My mind would go from 100% sure I would not drink to sitting home isolating and drinking. A complete slave to alcohol. I felt great pain from it, but could forget that pain just a few days later. I know what its like to feel alcoholic poisoning and swear off alcohol. Just to drink again. To get double vision while driving so the solution is just to close one eye so you can make it home. To drink thousands of beers and never liking the taste of beer. To be completely insane. Doing the exact same thing over and over again expecting different results. Alcohol controlled so

much of my life and I lived in denial. To think you are not a bad person and you care and love yourself, but to keep poisoning yourself daily. That's not love. It's torture. I used to convince myself I was happy. If I was truly happy. Why did I always have to escape how I felt.? Today I don't have to live that life because ask for help and didn't give up on a better life for myself. The last few years of my drinking. I pretty much isolated so it was easy to convince myself that I wasn't hurting anyone else. Truth is. Everyone around me suffered as I was suffering. I did not have a clue who I really was. Today. I am not suffering. I'm finally living life. The promises have come true. I used to fight alcohol on a daily basis and if it didn't win one day. It would soon and today. I don't fight it or anything else.

My roots are growing deeper by the day. I've surrounded myself with kind, loving caring people. It did not happen because I am smart or strong enough or could use my willpower to overcome it. It started with surrendering and listening to what others say who came before me. It involved taking advantage of the service opportunity (the gateway to the WE). Getting a sponsor and listening to him. Working the steps. All of them in order. Getting a home group or 2 or 3. Ok, had 3, but pretty much kept the one that I can be actively involved in. A home group is like an anchor. It can and will help you roots grow. Having a higher power that works for me. I have always had a God and Christian values and that is great. Although now the God of my understanding keeps evolving and growing as I do. I do not have to totally define it. It even includes, Good orderly direction and group of drunks. I do not put limitations on it or life. It's great to get to know God, just not know of God. Helping others in anyway I can. I do sponsor others and also keep an eye out for newcomers or anyone that may need help. Prayer and meditation are also a big part of my daily living. Trust God, Clean house and help others.

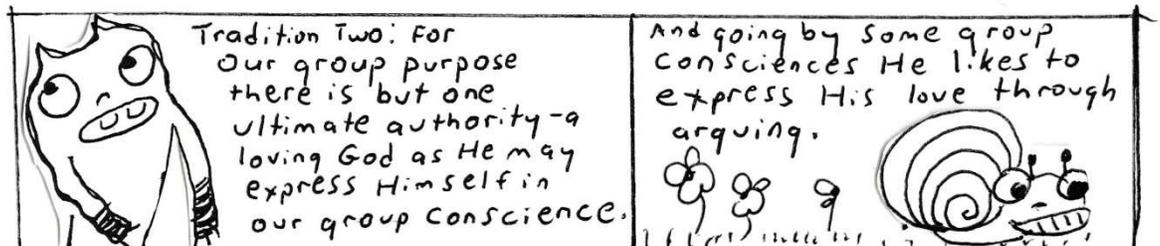
Up until Age 48. I really didn't know how to live life. I only thought I did and was wrong. Life flies by whether we're drinking or not. It's just so much better when it can remember be remembered and not filled with guilt and sorrow. Today I embrace life and feel freedom. Each day is a gift and today it's free from alcohol and pot. I've always been told, "when the student is ready. The teacher will appear" I just had no idea it would be small army of alcoholics. I feel AA is kind of like the land of misfit toys on Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. We are all totally different, but all fit in perfectly here.

All my life I've been told. "God acts in mysterious ways" Today, there's nothing mysterious about it. It's all exactly how it's supposed to be. Living this life. One day at a time. I could keep coming back until the day I die and never give back what has been given so freely to me. By this group of people that were once strangers. They are now my friends and new family. The recovering alcoholics are some of the kindest most love caring people that I know. I'm going to keep coming back. This journey is now full of wonder and gifts. I have seen many miracles happen here in my own life and others. A room once filled with question and doubt is now filled with love. If you doubt that miracles happen. The next time you're at a meeting. Look around. Every single person that was once hopeless and could not quit drinking and that has now quit. Is a miracle. The fact that I had over 100 reasons to drink and today. I don't have one. The fact that I didn't think I would like anyone here and now am surrounded by love and many friends. Truth is. Every day I open my eyes and am given another chance to enjoy this beautiful thing called life. Is a miracle. In my world. Life is now full of them.

Since the beginning of time. Man has tried to figure out the purpose of life. Well I now have a clue to what my purpose is. To Help my fellow humans and to live one day at a time and try to appreciate all the moments in between. I can't wait to see what happens next. The sunlight of the spirit shines brightly on the other side of the darkness. Thank you all for being a part of this new found life, recovery and this spiritual journey.

With enormous gratitude and love,

## Keep on trudgin' by Phil R.



## Announcements

**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](mailto:clevebro@yahoo.com)