

Outside the Bottle

District 16 Newsletter

April 2022



“His roots grasped a new soil.” – Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 12

A Life

Tracey T.

My story doesn't begin much differently than other alcoholics. I started drinking at an early age and I got drunk the very first time I took a drink. It tasted awful, but the feeling was unlike anything I had ever experienced before. Like a warm blanket of comfort and courage. I knew at that moment I'd be back for more. Once I was in college and away from the peering eyes of my parents, my drinking escalated quickly. I had a fake ID, and I was ready to start living! Parties, bars, and alcohol began to take precedence over classes, grades, and goals. Somehow, I graduated and took a job in another state. It made sense to put more distance between myself and my family. My parents seldom drank so they would never be able to wrap their heads around my love of drinking and the importance it had come to play in my life.

My 20's, 30's and 40's were mostly a complete blur. I continued to drink, a lot and often, changing brands and types of alcohol when they began to bore me, and finally settled into a long and passionate love affair with vodka. Don't get me wrong – I would drink anything if what I preferred wasn't available. That's where the careful planning of each week, each day, each event came into play. I was like the girl scout of the drinking world – always prepared! Many waking hours were put into making sure there was going to be enough alcohol (cigarettes, drugs) for whatever the event. If rent, a car payment, or the electric bill got in the way of a good time, they were cast aside with reckless abandon. What I wanted...when I wanted it...and how I wanted it came first. Life was too short, and I had no time to waste on petty things like responsibility and adulting.

There were a few hiccups along the way. An eviction, a car repossession, a divorce, a DUI (which wasn't my fault of course!), alienation of family and friends, and a plethora of financial problems that I always seemed to find a way to lie and manipulate my way out of. Somehow, I was always able to land on my feet. I had my shit together, more than most in my humble opinion. I had a good job, was engaged to be married and had too many friends to count. What could possibly be wrong with my life?

Then the other shoe dropped. My father was diagnosed with a large brain tumor and was given no more than a year to live. He made it 10 months. Instead of being by his side to hold his hand when he passed, I was at the bar getting drunk to numb my pain. The guilt, shame and remorse were more than I could bear. My drinking spiraled out of control as I stuffed all that emotion as far down as I could possibly push it. There didn't seem to be enough vodka. I began to drink every day. I began to blackout every day. I began to regret every day. Friends would move, get married, have children and I would just ...drink. It's as if I was resigned to continue my current lifestyle all the way to my grave. At this point, I didn't think anyone would miss me anyway.

God. He has an interesting way of intervening. My 50th birthday came and went. A friend that I had done a lot of drinking with in my past had started going to AA meetings and had managed to stay sober for several months. He needed a ride to a meeting, and I agreed to take him even though I was about 10 shots in. He got out of the car and as I began to drive away, I had an overwhelming feeling that landed on me like a heavy, weighted blanket. I stopped the car and began to cry. It was at that moment I knew - I belonged at that meeting. That I had a drinking problem. That I might be an alcoholic. That same friend asked me if I wanted to go to a meeting with him the next day and even though I was terrified, I agreed to go. I'm still going. Almost daily. I finally surrendered. I was willing to get a Big Book, a sponsor and begin working the steps. I was willing to do what the people that came to AA before me suggested. I was willing to be rigorously honest. I was willing to see my part in all the broken relationships I had left in my wake. I found humility. I found serenity. I found peace. I found a life.

Shanghai Scott Crashes in Cleveland

Scott W.

My name is Scott, and I am an alcoholic. I am not certain whether I was born this way, was predestined, coming from a long lineage of alcoholics, or developed over time, but know I am not unique and am like the others in this fellowship. The solution to life's pressures and problems, alcoholic oblivion, no longer worked and was often accompanied by undesirable consequences! I was born in Akron, Ohio to professional and loving parents and had a normal childhood. My father's family was Irish, large, and enjoyed getting together often, playing cards, celebrating holidays and remember alcohol was always present and important. My mother's family was German, rather stoic and reserved and lived closer to Columbus, Ohio and thus did not see as frequently. Mom was the rock of the family, even keeled and the visionary. Dad was the disciplinary, had an incredible work ethic, provided well, and followed mom's lead. Right or wrong, their relationship worked - we felt love and safety in the home. My childhood normalcy changed at the age of 13 when stomach cancer abruptly took my mother from the world creating a huge gap in the family and my father the responsibility to raise three teenage children.

The death of my mother was a turning point in my life, the start of unhealthy behavior and a period of sadness and darkness. I was incredibly sad and angry and wanted nothing to do with the God of my Catholic upbringing. On my 13th birthday, not long after my mother's death, I convinced an off-balanced father to allow me a beer to celebrate. Something magical happened after that first beer! I felt okay for the first time in a long time. I wasn't as sad or alone or awkward anymore. I had found the magical elixir that freed me – that buried my feelings. I began to sneak my father's whiskey, enjoy nabbing drinks during parties from drunken family members until I found someone to help me obtain a fake ID. High school and college were weekend drunk fests; fun and with little to no consequences. It's no surprise I carried this magic remedy into my adult life – why not? It was the solution to everything.

Alcohol was the solution until it didn't work anymore. The negative consequences outweighed the mental escape, needing to drink became more frequent and the new feelings of guilt and shame grew daily. I found myself living abroad in Shanghai, China, in a high stress job and a strained bi-cultural marriage trying to juggle supply and maintain a buzz. I would not admit my life was unmanageable. My last binge started in Shanghai's French Concession, lasted 3 weeks and I came out of the fog 3 weeks later in a psychiatric ward on the east side of Cleveland, Ohio. It was here, at this time in my life's journey, I admitted complete defeat, felt incomprehensible demoralization, guilt and shame AND that my life was unmanageable.

I had no idea whether I still had a job on the other side of the globe, a marriage, or friends. I grabbed hold of AA and the 12 steps, followed instructions and my prayer & daily life improved, my daily and most importantly my childhood concept of God underwent a complete overhaul. God provided two wonderful sponsors, local men's groups, and service activities to fill the time. I can only explain my first year of sobriety as a period of uncertainty, vacillating between the faith that all would be okay and the fear that accompanied living in the wreckage of the future. The promises, as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, continue to manifest themselves through improved and repaired relationships, the absence of living in fear, confidence with humility, an ability to quiet my EGO more and more and a place of contentment. The miracles continue to happen, I simply need to watch for them. The program continues to teach me the right way to live, in honesty and acceptance. I still bump into the consequences of past alcoholic choices but have the tools and support of those in the program to walk through each of them and grow. What has changed? Everything. Several parts of my life including people and relationships changed dramatically after getting sober and a sponsor suggested these wise words. "Some people will never let go of your past because their life is still there. They only see you for who you were then, because they can't benefit from who you are now." Acceptance is the key. Acceptance of others as well as my own shortcomings with a continued focus to live life on life's terms. The great news, I no longer must do this alone! In sobriety I have experienced the death of my father, the dissolving of a marriage and constant life changes. I have been surrounded and supported by love from this fellowship and have had no desire to go back to the insane life I once lived.

STEPS, TRADITIONS & CONCEPTS

Step Four: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Tradition Four: With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighboring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might affect A.A. as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Concept Four: Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation," taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

Upcoming Events

Back to Basics, sponsored by the Southfield Group

Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. sharp! April 5, 12,19,26

St. David's Episcopal Church
16200 W. 12 Mile Road, Southfield

Area 33 Pre-Conference Assembly

Saturday, April 16th from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

VFW Hall – Post 2645
24222 W. 9 Mile Road
Southfield, 48033

Tri-County Conference – September 9, 10, 11

Pre-register now for just \$20

Please visit www.tricountyconference.org for details and service opportunities!

SAVE THE DATE!!

2022 Michigan State Convention – hosted by Area 33

December 16th – 18th, 2022

District 16 meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of every month at:

1st United Methodist of Madison Heights

246 E. 11 Mile Road

Madison Heights, MI 48071

We are self-supporting through our own contributions. The District, representing the overall conscience of 77 groups, is greatly appreciative for any and all donations. May we all be united together in spreading the message across this geographic area. If groups would like to donate funds to District 16, please mail a check or money order - *Payable to:*

District 16 of Area 33 AA

PO Box 725362, Berkley, MI 48072

Outside the Bottle is the newsletter of District 16. The newsletter contains announcements, meeting changes, events, news & information around the district, and stories about sobriety and recovery.

Any AA member is invited to submit material to the newsletter. Please send questions/comments/contributions to: district16news@gmail.com



Thank you to all newsletter contributors and to the many people that distribute the newsletter throughout our district. We are truly grateful for your service!

Editor: Tracey T.
Cover: Jeff P.
Distribution Chair: Kelly L.

AA of Greater Detroit:
877-337-0611

AA of Oakland County:
248-332-3521

AA of Detroit (Wayne County):
313-831-5500

"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny."

-Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164