

of my head back to reality and to real, basic AA meetings and people who share "one alcoholic with another."

Thank you for O.P.P.F. I haven't been around AA for a long time, but it sounds to me like a way of prog ress ... to save lives and maintain sobriety. ...

I see love and concern for another alcoholic, hope for the future for basic AA meetings as motives for O.P.P.F. I was saddened when I first heard of a controversy going on in AA which is saving my life. I hope people opposed to O.P.P.F. don't feel threatened.

Because -- think of the newcomer who needs strong direction. I guess we can leave a meeting if it's not giving us what we need, or start a new one, but how does a newcomer know what he needs?

He is told, "Go to an AA meeting." well, if he hasn't found a good sponsor yet, or if his head is still clogged, how does he know if the meeting he goes to is really an AA meeting?

Solutions -- how you stopped drinking, what is the Big Book, what are the principles, where is the hope in life if you don't have a drink? If he wanders into a meeting that has as its main focus drugs, sex, or just feelings, chances are he's going to freak out and go drink and die.

where are the "old timers" at these meetings to provide guidance on Primary Purpose?

I am grateful for the O.P.P.F. letter. It has stimulated my think ing about how grateful I am to be sober and what helped me in the beginning a year ago, what is helping now and hope for the future.

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Judy D.

Judy raises a very important point here. Too many "meetings" have little or no substantial sobriety to guide them. Too many meetings, too few people with time-tested sobriety. We need solid groups, not a welter of "meetings" teaching irresponsible self-centeredness!
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ALCOHOLICS IN THE MINORITY?!?

To Anyone who's Listening!

Clarence Snyder ("The Home Brew meister", page 297) said in 1977 at the opening of Palm Springs Central Office that we had better remember who we are and what we are. That this is Alcoholics Anonymous, not dopes anonymous, fatsos anonymous, gamblers anonymous, or nose-pickers anonymous. Clarence Snyder, who began the meetings in Cleveland, Ohio, actually known as A.A. meetings and not the Oxford Group, and who, upon his death, was the longest living sober member of AA, WAS RIGHT! He was right in 1977 and his talk from that day is just as real and true today.

The acting Executive Secretary of the L.A. Central Office, A. W., told me that as a "Real Alcoholic" I spoke for a "very vocal minority." B. K., the interim Office Trustee, told me that my views on AA's Singleness of Purpose were "antiquated and short- sighted."

well, while the non-profit, corporate bureaucracy of L.A.C.O. sits [idly by], "Real Alcoholics" view with alarm what's going on within alleged A.A. meetings, the price of literature goes up, meeting directories, which should be free, are now over \$1.00. well, I could just go on and on.

It is not just a matter of semantics. words mean things. The A.A. Big Book

was written by drunks, about drunks and for drunks. Page 92 tells me that I am to be satisfied that the person I am carrying the message to is a "Real Alcoholic."

Since I am considered part of the "Minority Voice" by the trusted servants at L.A.C.O., there must be a duality of purpose and allegiance there as well.

As an experienced member of Alcoholics Anonymous with 15 years and four month of sobriety, I will certainly remain vigilant and willing to stand up for Alcoholics Anonymous and the alcoholic who still suffers. Are you?

Angel S.
Sober Date: 3/28/79

People often say, "It just isn't the way it was in the old days." We are interested in the ways in which long-term members see the differences from years back. One of our readers tells it like it was:

THE WAY IT WAS

In the early 50's, we were fortunate to have two newspaper editors in Chicago who were active members of AA! They usually ran a five day full page series on alcoholism and AA once every year. The articles carried stories and "before" and "after" pictures. It was through these articles that I first approached AA.

When I called the Central Office, the lady spent perhaps a half hour giving me a run-down on the organization. She then offered to send someone to my home that evening. I accepted.

All 12th step work then was done by two people. Men would call on men, women (whenever possible) would call on women. This was the day of the low-bottom drunks, so no chances were taken.

Two men came to see me that night and talked for about three hours. They each told of their problems with the bottle. The similarities to my behavior were quite convincing. One of the men became my sponsor, and I eventually became an unsuccessful sponsor of the second. The following night they took me to their "closed" meeting.

There were a great many small, neighborhood groups, situated for the sake of maximum convenience. We held meetings in our homes on a rotating basis. These were "closed" meetings, open only to alcoholics. Anonymity was not practiced in these groups. I left my first closed meeting with a list of members' names, addresses, and phone numbers.

We started each meeting with a "quiet time" a time for a short silent prayer. The chairman (selected at the previous meeting) then began his/her talk. Everyone participated, cross talk was permitted, even encouraged. There was no reading from the Big Book nor any formal rites observed. The talk was usually about one of the steps, or even a part of a step. I still remember a talk once on "Come to believe...." No subject was taboo. We discussed some highly personal beliefs and feelings and problems with complete candor. The meeting ended with the Lord's Prayer and then we were served coffee and cake. We rehashed the meeting, and sometimes, the after meeting meeting took as long as the first.

We also had open meetings once a month, usually in a local hotel ballroom or other public place. Anonymity was strictly observed here at all times. The meeting opened with "AA is a fellowship...." The speaker for the evening was introduced by first name and initial and he was on his own. There was no reading or rituals, just someone trying to help someone. These meetings were well attended and we did a lot of "fishing" each time.

Sponsorship, in Southern California, seems to have acquired a mystique, requiring a special quality that only a chosen few have and can be considered worthy. Thus we have "sponsors" who act like drill sergeants or parole officers. Some also brag about the number of people they are "sponsoring".

There is nothing mystical about sponsoring a newcomer. They should be treated with kindness and respect. One only needs to know something of the program and be willing to share it, along with devoting many hours on the telephone, attending meetings with the new person. The old saying about learning by teaching is true.

Many of these new-comers are entering a new, foreign and intimi dating society. Their "friends" are usually people who drink and whose social life is centered around taverns. To break the chain of habit they have acquired over the years, they need to see that there is another world out there waiting. The term "baby" is a very appropriate description.

... AA has changed. It has become much more aloof and impersonal. There does not seem to be the commit ment "to the alcoholic who is still suffering" that once existed. Perhaps this is the result of having large meetings with more ritual than substance.

AA is at its best in small groups. The members come to know and trust each other. Each has something to offer. In a group of six or eight people, an absence becomes a matter of importance. A missing person in a group of a hundred or so is seldom noted.

The essence of AA was the caring and concern for each other. Each of us felt some responsibility for the other group members. We were in contact daily with one or more members. We became a close-knit family.

....

I hope we can again become a group of friends and not a lot of strangers at whom we smile -- and pass by.

G. C.

While our Eleventh Tradition of anonymity seems not to have been so rigorously maintained in those days, the spirit of caring, one drunk for another was clear! Without strong home groups, our Fellowship runs the risk of fostering non-commitment at meetings which require only casual commitments (I call it "CC" instead of "AA")
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Let me thank all of you who have written, phoned, and contributed to our efforts here. The initial response to the newsletter has been heartening. A good many people have discovered that they are not alone!

So keep up the correspondence. I would love to see us maintain four pages like this every month. Without my having to express my own views over and over.
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NEXT WORKSHOP IN ATWATER

A SINGLENESS OF PURPOSE WORKSHOP has been planned for Sunday, October 30, at the Pathfinders, ATWATER, from 1 to 3 pm. For details contact Doug Bingham at (818) 780-5542.
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One of our readers, sober for over 20 years, wants to share his concerns, too.

Some of the non-A.A. stuff heard from A.A. podiums these days is absurd. For example, a recent meeting's speaker said he wasn't even an alcoholic, but that A.A. is his favorite "co-dependency program." My protest afterwards to the secretary met with indifference.

... [It] disturbs me so to see and hear people coming into A.A. without any consideration for our primary purpose (or sole purpose), carrying A.A.'s message to alcoholics.

Being an alcoholic, a drunk, if you will, is the one and only re quirement for membership in this outfit!

Of course some alcoholics are addicted to other things. So what? So, A.A. is where they come to deal with their drinking problem. Period. Getting sober and staying sober is what A.A.'s all about. Anything else is a bonus.

For a long time, alcohol was my elixir, but in time I couldn't function with it or without it. The solution for me was major doses of A.A. honesty and love and direction, as described and exhibited by others in the program.

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... The oldtimers I've [known] over the years wouldn't stand for the con games being played now. Where are they? I know some of them are still around -- why are they so silent about what's going on in A.A. today?

Maybe it's up to not-so-oldtimers to step up and try to keep the focus on our primary/sole purpose. That is, if we really care. I do; how about you?
Alfred M.

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Please write, send contributions, and make checks payable to:

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Thanks for your support!