

THE NIGHT CAP

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N I N T H A N N U A L
T E X A S S T A T E C O N F E R E N C E O F
A L C O H O L I C S A N O N Y M O U S

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Fort Worth, Texas - Hotel Texas

June 11, 12, 13

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Bill G. "W"
New York City
Founder of Alcoholics Anonymous

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AN INTERPRETATION OF THE TWELVE STEPS.
Step 4: Made a Searching and Fearless
Moral Inventory of Ourselves

(Concluded from Last Month's issue)

More often than we like to admit we run into individuals in AA who just simply rub us the wrong way. Instead of saying to ourselves, "Well here's a person whose whole personality seems to clash with mine, and accepting that fact, we fret and fume trying to gain control of the situation, or maneuver ourselves into a position where we can "tell this blot off." Having accomplished this petty ambition, we are still dissatisfied and unhappy because he is still around and we still have to face him, and ourselves. Acceptance of the simple basic fact that there is a personality clash, and that a small show of tolerance would resolve the situation much easier and also prepare us for bigger and better battles would help considerably on the

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SOLILOQUY BY AUDREY

The following was presented in the form of a talk at a meeting during Lent. The speaker is a woman who has almost two years of sobriety:

At this time of year it seems especially appropriate to take stock of oneself and one's present attitude toward life. So, with the beginning of Lent I began a bit of thinking along these lines, comparing my present attitude with that of three years ago. When I was asked to talk to-night, I thought I'd better ask myself what AA means to me now in terms of my recent stocktaking.

If I had to choose but one word to best describe what AA means to me, I would choose Freedom.

To each of us Freedom holds a little different meaning. To me, it is a state of security wherein I have freedom from worries and fears that beset me and wherein I have freedom to be my natural self and make my decisions as best I can, according to God's will.

The dictionary definition of freedom is: "A state of exemption from the power or control of another; exemption from slavery, servitude, confinement or constraint." No unorganized freedom can bring happiness; we must have certain controls to maintain order in freedom, be it in government or in private lives.

For many years I had my mind made up for me by a power then stronger than myself -- the bottle. Whatever task I set up for myself, bottle stepped in and I accepted the decision it imposed. I remember a trip I'd planned to a city 300 miles distant to visit an old schoolmate, but with my ticket bought and my suitcase packed, bottle changed my plans. So my

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PRAYER

In the morning prayer is the key that opens to us the treasures of God's mercies and blessing; in the evening, it is the key that shuts us up under His protection and safeguard.

(Continued - Interpretation...)

inventory. Each such obstacle or hurdle that we overcome makes the succeeding ones easier.

Comparing ourselves to the other fellow is poor practice and a trap easily fallen into for the reason that we do not use the same yardstick in measuring the other fellow that we use on ourselves. There is a great variance in it. We allow ourselves the benefit of doubt, and we make allowances for ourselves because we know what we think and how we feel, and what our intentions are. About that there can be no mistake, - BUT - we measure the other fellow with suspicion, doubt and mistrust. Very often the traits in him that we so despise are the characteristics in ourselves we are not yet willing to give up, or sometimes even admit we have. We may suspect it but we are not ready to turn the fluoroscope on our mind to take a good look. We just want to despise the traits in someone else. On the other hand, our own may be unrecognizable because they may manifest themselves in an entirely different way.

By way of illustration, we are all familiar with the so-called "Glory Grabber" - the guy who wants to talk on any and all occasions, who can be called on at a moment's notice because he is always there, ever ready and willing. His complete lack of humility is so obvious that everyone can see it. Alongside him is the "Control Guy" or "The Arranger" - the guy who controls the man behind the man behind the scenes. He feels that nothing is complete or right without his sanction and approval. He's self-appointed to see that things go right. He flatters, politics, uses diplomacy, coerces, bribes and connives to see that his plans are carried out, but usually manages to sort of stay under cover. If detected, he might modestly admit he is just interested and wants to help - he wants no special mention or praise, and sincerely he doesn't; but he lacks humility. He wants to control just as forcefully as the "Glory Grabber" who is constantly seeking and striving for recognition. Both are the same trait, only manifested in two different ways. Merely because we do not act in the identical way as the other fellow does not mean we are different.

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It is not the intent of the writer to sermonize but rather to emphasize the importance of the inventory. A truly honest self-appraisal is necessary. No one wants to begin on a false premise. If the individual beginning his inventory feels he is capable of facing himself literally he will not find it difficult to get help with his self analysis. Friend and foe alike will oblige him. In fact, he may find it impossible to prevent their taking it, but not in his presence. As we grow in stature we soon learn that it is not always our friends who give us the greatest insight into ourselves. More often it is some casual acquaintance who sees us so objectively that he is not bound by friendship nor does he actively dislike us. He is unbiased. If we have confidence in the judgment of such an individual and feel he is neither partial nor prejudiced he can be of great assistance in helping us see ourselves.

Fortunately for us, we never grow too old to change. Habit patterns, attitudes of mind and opinions held over a period of years may seem more embedded and we may be reluctant to give them up because it leaves us feeling naked and exposed - but - no one will gainsay the wisdom of years and experience even if it has been partially misdirected. Logic and reason are on the side of the older person. He is less governed by emotion and impetuosity. Alcoholics are unusually contradictory individuals. They are paradoxes. They may be young or old in actual years, but regardless of their age they are emotionally immature, so the older individual actually has an advantage over the younger person (if he has an open mind), because of his experience.

AA offers us the opportunity to change. It furnishes us the route, the therapy, and the guides, both human and Divine. The rest is up to us.

One can readily see that the Inventory Step should mark the beginning of our new way of life. From this point on things should begin to happen, and will, if we have earnestly and sincerely tried to see ourselves in a new light. Acceptance of the possibility that we have some defects should afford a measure of relief. Perfection is

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(Continued - Soliloquy...)

mother had to phone my friend that I had a dreadful sinus attack. Had you ever realized how convenient sinus attacks are? That is but one small incident. Multiply that one by practically every undertaking every day for years and the complete enslavement to bottle's habitual domination formed a pattern that pointed up my mode of living.

Any worries or fears I had were always magnified by bottle so that I had to turn to bottle repeatedly either to evade facing some problem or lessen the pain of looking something unpleasant in the face. In gay times, bottle dominated my scene. Happy -- I'd be happier still with a drink or two -- or three; tired, I'd be rested with a drink or two -- or how many? Confused, bottle could unravel my thoughts and change my thinking to crystal clarity. If I feared to meet a situation, bottle was always there to put its bonds of courage around me. And during this time of servitude, did I give a thought to any will except my own which was servant to the bottle?

Then, when that really higher power gave me a chance to escape this bondage, I was so fed up with not being able to do anything about my self and my drinking, I remember well the feeling of relief I had when I was sent to AA and I found that through AA there was a way to freedom.

That was in May, 1951 and two weeks later I left on a trip to Alaska. I took with me that fine new feeling of freedom and during the entire trip wasn't interested in drinking, though my shipboard acquaintances assured me I'd never have such a chance for good Canadian and Scotch whiskey. I even walked the deck one Sunday morning with a very hungover blonde -- the ship was pitching and so was she!

But I had not yet learned my way very well for I found that when I returned home toward the end of July nothing had changed and I see now: The problems remained the same and are to this day the same. I had done nothing for myself but take a trip. Bottle didn't fail me this time but it had lost its power because I had been introduced to something I found I wanted more than anything in this world -- A life free to find serenity and security.

CHARITY THE MIGHTIEST THING ON EARTH

There are ten strong things in the world:-
The rock is strong, but iron can melt it;
The fire is strong, water can quench it;
Water is strong, the clouds can absorb it;
The clouds are strong, the winds disperse them;

The wind is strong, a man withstands it;
A man is strong, but fear unmans him;
Man's fear is strong, but wine removes it;
And wine is strong, but sleep dispels it;
But stronger than all these is -- death!
Yet charity can save from death!

- The Talmud

(SOLILOQUY - Continued from Column 1)

To me AA provides both serenity and security to anyone who will consciously and consistently attempt to follow the 12 steps of AA.

This is not a reward reserved only for the good. It is ready and waiting for anyone of us when we have grown so weary of working for ourselves in our own poor and misguided strength that we decide to work for Him and in His strength.

- AUDREY B.

(INTERPRETATION - continued from Page 2)

so hard to live up to...the strain is terrific and we fall under our own weight... too, the air is so rarefied in that sphere and it's lonely.

Admitting that we have defects that need a major operation, or at least an adjustment, has compensations if we are humble about it. We can feel human and noble. It relieves tension. We can change into our house shoes, so to speak, and get comfortable. We don't have to put on a front any more. We are just like everyone else.

There is one pitfall, however, about which I feel it expedient to warn all newcomers. Don't just make your inventory and then do nothing but talk about it. You will lose more friends that way, because they expect you to work on it. Alcoholics are like that. They are ever ready and willing -- Yes! anxious, to help the other fellow with his inventory -- in fact, they are so enthusiastic about, if he has any trouble, they'll make it for him.

- NEDRA M.

HUMILITY

One of the greatest assets to continued sobriety is humility. We all have our favorite definitions of humility but I would like to give my definition of it and kick it around a little.

Humility is the willingness to learn. In part the AA program is an educational program on how to live with yourself and others. It becomes apparent that humility should have a part in this wonderful program of learning to live.

Basically AA is a program of continuation and if we attend meetings, participate in AA activities, and do not change our attitude to everchanging external situations, we are not growing. Our armor plate becomes vulnerable to intolerance, restlessness and resentments. We grow away from the desire to engage in Twelfth Step work because of the constant reiteration of our own philosophy. We are dormant to the needs of a group and become a decided liability to its growth.

On the other hand, if we accept the ideas, opinions and philosophies of others with an open mind, particularly new members, we come out of our shell and start to grow anew. AA was founded upon the collective opinions of all its members. If I or any other member of AA could stay sober by merely admitting that we could not handle alcohol, there would be no need for AA because we would have all the ammunition we need to maintain sobriety. It is a much more complex situation than that and requires all of the techniques that are available. If I become stagnated in my thinking and will not accept the opinions of others, I am not exercising any desire to learn and therefore have no humility.

It is ridiculous to assume that we have all the answers. Professional men spend years on one aspect of an illness to specialize in that field. How then can we become authorities by participation in AA activities in a few hours each week. Collectively we can amass much information about AA and its ways of working, but

(Concluded on Column 2 above)

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK . . .

Four things we must learn to do,
If we would keep our record true:
To Think, without confusion, clearly,
To Love our fellowmen sincerely,
To Act from honest motives purely,
To Trust in God and Heaven securely.

- Anon.

Essential Information

Scientists have discovered what they think is an error in their former estimate of the speed of light. Instead of 186,000 miles a second, they now think it travels 186,000 miles and 7 inches a second. Somehow we felt that you may need to know this.

- Ed.

(Concluded from Column 1)

individually we are but a small segment of this wonderful program. It is even amusing that one person could have all the answers.

Let's make it a point to talk with one new member a week to get his opinions on this drinking problem. When we talk with a new member just coming off a prolonged binge, we realize just how much we owe to AA. Too, you would be surprised what he knows and how he can help you. Older members, WORKING TOGETHER, can guide the less experienced to sobriety, and in turn, help themselves. This AA is a program of constant desire and growth. When one loses sight of the fact that humility is a necessity in AA he might become so inflated with his own ego he will fall apart at the seams. Ego can be as combustible as gasoline if accumulated in sufficient amounts.

- S. SGT. S.

We have the highest standard of living of any people in the world.

It is a great pity we can't afford it.

- Olin Miller

A Drunkard's Lot:

"Warden Dear Sir:

For some 37 years on and off, apart from three years five months in the trenches serving my country, I have been a guest of His Majesty in 7 different prisons and never, Sir, in all my long experience, have I come across such appalling conditions as obtained here at present. It is not, Sir, that I object to the food, which by the way is poisonous and below standard, or to the hard work and long hours which are certainly not in keeping with regulations and ought to be looked into, but what I do object to, Sir, is being in the same cell with a drunkard and false pretender. I don't object to three in a cell, Sir, nor to ten in a cell, come to that, but I demand to be put with men of my class. To put a self-respecting burglar alongside drunkards and false pretenders, Sir, is not right and proper. And my request to you, Sir, is to get me moved out of here. I want to be able to mix with men of my station. The degradation of being closed in with a drunkard, Sir, is very appalling; the false pretender is not quite as bad but, then he has the characteristics of a drunkard. Living in close proximity with these two is making my life a misery.

I remain, Sir, Your Humble Servant, James Peteman"

(From Lilliput -- London, England.)

ANCIENT PRACTICE VINDICATED

AA has a program which is called "Twelve Steps." Following these steps has been responsible for the rescue of thousands of people from the bondage of a dire evil.

The Twelfth Step is "having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." When a member of the AA group has spent hours counseling with an alcoholic over his troubles, he generally refers to such activity as "Twelfth Step Work."

This of course is what the New Testament refers to as witnessing -- telling people of one's own experience and trying to lead them to enter pathways which will lead to a similar experience.

The church today has largely forsaken its ministry of witnessing. "Don't I belong to church? Attend the services? Pay my church dues? What more can you expect of me?" Important as these things are, none of them is mentioned in the so-called Great Commission found in the last verse of the Gospel of Matthew. Here Christian believers are instructed by the Lord to go into all the world and make disciples of every nation.

AA is teaching the church anew a great lesson in what it refers to as "Twelfth Step Work."

- Earl L. Douglass in Lexington Herald

ALWAYS A RAINBOW

When all the sunlight disappears and there is only rain ... Maybe somewhat lonely but the time is not in vain ... Because my thoughts are with me and I contemplate the past...And I remember that no rain was ever known to last...And I remember that no wound has ever failed to heal...However deep the agony that I have tried to feel... There is no storm or hurricane that does not spend its force...There are no tears of bitterness that do not run their courseAnd always somewhere in the midst of moments passing by...The lamp of faith is lighted by a rainbow in the sky.

If you find that your work is too difficult for you, you should take a more demanding job. A man who is working to the limit of his capacity has no time for dissatisfaction.

- Rim

Mubby went out with the boys one night and before he realized it, the morning of the next day had arrived. He hesitated to call home and tell his wife. Finally, he hit upon an idea. He phoned his wife and when she answered, he shouted: "I'm back. Don't pay the ransom."

- AA -

