



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Winter 2009

Dear A.A. Friends,

Many faiths observe a holiday practice of gift giving. For our common purpose, A.A. members extend the precious gift of sobriety. Everyone at the General Service Office sends best wishes for peace, joy and the miracle of healing that may be found in the Fellowship of A.A. We hope you will extend the same to others.

Now, let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."\*

## FROM STEP ELEVEN

*Self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action, and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures.*

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 98

## FROM AN OUTSIDE A.A., WRITING TO AN INSIDE MEMBER

"I am 47 years old and recently divorced. I lost my job and my beautiful wife to alcohol. I got sober on April Fools Day of this year and A.A. has changed my life. I am grateful for my new life and I am glad for the chance to carry the message to you. I'm pretty new in A.A.

and still learning about it myself. One thing A.A. teaches me is that by helping you, I help myself. We are not alone in this. I will do whatever I can to help you. I will give you my support, share my story of sobriety, and help you to work the Steps. The Steps may be difficult at times, but the rewards will be great."—**Rusty C., Southwest**

## THE BIG BOOK (Alcoholics Anonymous)

"God works in ways that I will never understand. I truly thank and love him for his ways. For so long I fought a fight in and out and back in the rooms of A.A. I went, wanting what you had and have. Well, I'm locked up now facing a lot of time, all because I didn't want to stop drinking. God really opened my eyes when I read the first 164 pages of the Big Book, slowly, for the first time in my life. I finally see the light at the end of my once seemingly endless tunnel. I come from a long line of alcoholics, but I had to go my course to finally come to this time in my life. I am very grateful—even though I'm locked up—that God has saved my life. After all the resentments, past failures, and people I have hurt, now I can finally let go and let God! I now have a new look on life and I don't fear it anymore.

I know what the true meaning of life is—to give back what was so freely given to me! Oh man, I can't express the true joy I have right now in this jail cell."—**Kevin H., Northeast Region**

"My name is Roberto and I am an alcoholic. This is just to say thank you for sending me the Big Book. I found a Higher Power here in prison and experienced the 'spiritual awakening' to say *No* to alcohol. For the first time in my life, I was able to say *No* to booze. Thanks to my Higher Power I was introduced to A.A. and have twelve years of sobriety. I don't ever want to touch alcohol again. Alcohol made me insane. I lost my family and everything and,



because of alcohol, I am here in prison. When I received the A.A. book, I felt that that is what I was lacking in my spiritual walk. After reading the first two chapters, I was absolutely right. Remaining sober, one day at a time..."—**Roberto C., Southwest Region**

### 'MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE'

"I am currently an inmate in a prison for women. I have been in this facility two years, but I have been incarcerated 4½ years. I have been involved in the A.A. program in the past. The most wonderful times of my life have been when I was sober. I felt so close to God. It was during a relapse that I committed my crime. I never dreamed I could be capable of such a thing, nor that I would ever find myself in prison. Those things happened to other people, not to me. I knew the dangers to myself and the mental and emotional harm to my family, but I never thought I could cause physical harm to others. It can be really hard at times to maintain a positive attitude. I need all the help I can get. It is rare to find positive influences in prison. The counselor who left had a very positive influence on me. I also have a sponsor by mail. I am fearful of ever drinking again. It is my greatest fear. I stay away from the people here who are involved in such things. I choose life today. I do not want to be a member of the walking dead. I want to be a mother, daughter, aunt, niece and a sober member of A.A."—**Cynthia C., Southeast Region**

"My name is Shaun and I'm an alcoholic. I am currently serving a life sentence. I'm writing you because, to put it straight up, I need help. I need the Fellowship and love of the group in my life. I need someone I can talk to who understands another alcoholic and will give it to me straight. Alcohol has ruined my free life and only by my loving Higher Power, whom I call God, have I pulled my head out of my rear end and got my head half-way straight. Still, taking things one day at a time is a struggle that I refuse to give up. I could really use someone to talk to so I can vent some of this frustration and emotion that comes along with every-day living. I'm at a bottom mentally, but I'm trying my hardest to climb back up the ladder. I'm reaching out right now because I don't know what else to do. I'm not a quitter and even though I have a life sentence, I do my best every day to stay positive and see the good in every situation. Please—can you help me get my name and situation out there so maybe, if anyone feels up to it, we could correspond and tell each other our story? There is no access to meetings where I am. Thank you for your time."—**Shaun W., Pacific Region**

"Guys in here live on their pride. I know I had to smash my pride in order to find sobriety and begin my path down a spiritual road. How do I reach the guys without offending or angering them or ever condemning them? I try to use my own story as an example, as I have been taught, but they still get defensive. Advice would be so very much appreciated. Well, thank you for your time. Also, in your return letter could you wish my fellow A.A.s in here well? The contact with the

outside may lift the morale in our meetings. Thanks again."—**Sean W., Southwest Region**

### '...MOTIVATION IN NUMBERS'

"I *am* a happy recovering alcoholic and I've been sober since June 12, 2009. I had more fifths and gallons of cognac in my freezer than food. I woke with a drink, went to sleep with a drink, and through the day, if *you* pissed me off, I'd take a drink so *you* would leave me alone. (Figure of speech.) My whole work, church, baking pies, all was based around a drink and I liked it cold – so if my freezer was low and I had to choose between ground beef and alcohol, I would make tuna casserole and buy more alcohol. It was terrible, I was terrible. I don't ever want to live like that again. I am already sharing with those who are interested. I think some may have been a bit discouraged as I, but we find motivation in numbers and as long as there's more than one. Hey, it's a great day to be sober! Thanks again."—**Priscilla J., Southwest Region**

### GRATITUDE FOR CCS

"Most respectfully, grace and peace to you all. I write to say 'Thank You' and 'Thank You Very Much!' for linking me with someone in your Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS). He has written to me and I have written back. My outside link is a blessing I am most grateful for. Whatever I can do to help A.A., please let me know. You are the only family I have left and I love A.A. I need and want A.A. in my life always. I'm up for parole after fourteen years, next year. I pray and hope to join A.A. to volunteer in every way possible wherever I can. You are in my prayers. God bless! Love and respect."—**Brian P., Northeast Region**

### CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months (but not in a jail), and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

### PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release and give us your release date and destination (city and state), we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to "outside" A.A.

We look forward to hearing from you.