



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 Spring 2008

Dear A.A. Friends,

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 AN 'INSIDE' A.A. GROUP

"I am writing for the A.A. group in this prison. I would like to inform you that our group is very much alive and doing well. We have about 35 members and 30 active, Step-working members. We are so thankful for our A.A. volunteers, who drive about a hundred mile from their homes. Also, the administration is very supportive. When our group was formed and we had our first business meeting I was elected the G.S.R. for the group. Then a year later we re-elected officers and other members were elected. Now another year has passed and I was re-elected G.S.R. Please use my name, number and address as a contact. Our previous G.S.R. has gone home and positive reports are that he is doing well and has a home group."—**Byron L., Southwest Region**

'THE WALLS OF MY OWN PRISON'

"I have been struggling with alcoholism for the past 15 years and alcohol is a big part of the reason I am here. I am serving a ten-year sentence, and I am looking to see if I can find a postal sponsor to help me work the Twelve Steps of A.A. I have been in and out of the program when I had my freedom. Although I believe it wasn't freedom at all. Somehow I managed to build the walls of my own prison while I was in the world. I have been attending A.A. here at the facility, and the more I read the Big Book, I see myself in almost every page. I would greatly appreciate a helping hand through these Steps."—**Jose M., Pacific Region**

'ACCEPTANCE IS THE ANSWER...'

"I am recently incarcerated. I have become very interested in the Big Book, which I have read, and I know now that 'acceptance is the answer to all my problems' today—page 417. I also read on this page that 'absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.' So by me coming to this program, I found what I was looking for. In the Big Book, page 336 says 'I used to thank God for putting A.A. in my life, now I thank A.A. for putting God in my life.' I have found the solution in the Big Book to help me stay sober. I also know that A.A. groups and the Big Book are the solution."—**Victor G., Southwest Region**

SHARING FROM THE 'OUTSIDE'

"Please send me forms to be a correspondence person. I myself served time and was part of this great program. I also received books from G.S.O., which I still have and which were so instrumental in my prison recovery. I've glued these books together and they bear the stamp from the prison mailroom—it is a reminder to me that no matter where one is the hand of A.A. reaches out and one can 'practice these principles,' no matter if there is a prison wall. Thank you for being there for me and others!"—**Glen N., Pacific Region**

'...MY WAY DIDN'T WORK'

"I'm very serious about working the program for the first time since I began drinking. I have been in and out of A.A. since the age of 12, and I'm 28 now. That's 16 years, and out of those 16 years, I never once sought a sponsor without a motive. I've had a couple of sponsors to pacify my family, or treatment centers, but today I'm doing this all on my own. I'm just finally ready to do the suggestions I've been given from the program. I know I can't do this on my own anymore. I've tried everything in every way and I'm sitting behind locked doors again; so obviously my way didn't work."—**Nancy V.H., Southwest Region**

"I was sent to A.A. through the courts; I hated myself and sure didn't want anything to do with a bunch of quitters. I plugged my ears, and one of you quitters found a way I couldn't plug my ears or hold a cup of coffee! I started to hear things about myself and how I was feeling inside, but I was not done torturing myself. I never did the Steps and I got away from A.A.! I relapsed and here I sit again as a lost soul, wishing I wasn't such a tough guy. I'm trying even harder now to carry the message that A.A. works if we let it and if we're not too proud to ask for help. I need the hope and the love of this program to show me there's a way—even for tough guys who're really not so tough. Those of you who stay sober, are the tough ones. God bless you."—**Mark C., Pacific Region**

THE BIG BOOK

"I've been in and out of A.A. since 1990. My longest sobriety was 18 months. I've read this A.A. book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, several times, but this time I've read it a little slower, and for the first time I've underlined the things I can relate to. My book looks all lined and marked up now, but that's okay. I can't ever remember seeing the address to A.A. in N.Y. at the bottom of page 164 until now. It's been on my mind for about a week to write you. I am off that elevator now and thank God it hasn't gone any lower. I am working the Steps, and read the Big Book daily. I am truly thankful for A.A. and God and would like to thank you for all you do."—**Todd J., Southeast Region**

"I have something that I would like to share about my Christmas in jail. I was first sitting in my rack thinking, bored, tired, lonely—wondering what everyone outside was doing (drinking). Got my mind on the wrong track. Jail people in here come up with all

kinds of things, like homemade wine on Christmas day, when you know that it's no mail. Watching other inmates drink you know H-A-L-T and that was me. I was just about fixing to take a drink when the inmates said out loud, 'police!' When he came into the dorm, the guard called my name and he had some mail on Christmas day. And the officer said 'I have a Christmas present for you.' And it was the Big Book from you guys. Thanks for not letting me take that first drink."—**Jobbie P., Southeast Region**

"I was awed upon receiving, sent by A.A. members, via G.S.O., the package of books and literature and was excited to share it with other inmates. All I had to do was lay in my bunk in the dorm reading and they would come up to me and say, 'hey can I read that next?' That certainly solved my problem of how to share what I had. After all, isn't it attraction rather than promotion."—**Shawn T., Southeast Region**

"Alcohol has been in my life since I was 7 years old; I am now 43 years old. I never thought in a million years that something that started out as a relaxant would end up practically ruining my life. Since I've been in jail I've been attending A.A. meetings, and I received a copy of the Big Book. A lot of the stories really hit me. It's like someone was following me my whole life, keeping track of my every move, and wrote a biography about me. Out of every part of the Big Book there is at least one or more statements or situations that fit my life exactly. (That's just too strange and scary.) I've just started to realize how insane I really was. You don't see it for what it is until you dry out for a while and get a lot of time on your hands, without being around or near the booze at all. The Twelve Steps and the reading from other books have really helped me quite a bit. My life at this point is a 100% positive turn around thanks to just reading about A.A. and the meetings I go to. The outside A.A. members who bring in the meetings are excellent. My mental and emotional status has improved. A spiritual experience in here has been a blessing as well. I don't want to lose what I have received from all these good happenings."—**Anthony S., Northeast Region**

‘...CUNNING, BAFFLING AND POWERFUL’

"I am a prisoner serving a life sentence and have been incarcerated for the past 28 years. One night, when I was 19 years old, I killed someone while I was drunk. I actually started drinking earlier that morning and continued to do so all the way up to the killing. In a drunken rage I killed someone over \$63.00. I didn't want to face the reality of my situation. My sober date is March 1, 1997. I started going to meetings every week (2), got a sponsor, and started working the Steps. Today, I work a pretty good program, but I'm lacking a sponsor because I was transferred to a new prison. We started two meetings here and both are great. One is a discussion meeting called Life or Death and the other is a Big Book study. Your help would be greatly appreciated. If you would ever need me or our groups to be of service too, please don't hesitate to ask. Take care and God bless."—**George B., Northeast Region**

‘THERE IS A SOLUTION’

"A day like today I had the bad luck to meet the first drink, without imagining that on a day not too far away I would start to drink with negative consequences. The sensation of the alcohol was so pleasant and the more I drank, the better I felt. The alcohol would change my personality, I would turn very rebellious, stubborn and insensitive and all that would make me feel very good. The damages I caused are irreparable and I have no right to ask for forgiveness. To know A.A. for me was an awakening. I have a new hope. For me drink was everything. Now that I am sober I cannot think of living without A.A., without the literature. The benefits that I have received are a lot and I do not have words to thank A.A. for so much. For now I am not thinking of drinking for these 24 hours." (Translated from the Spanish original)
—**Wilfredo G., Pacific Region**

"My name is José and I'm attending an A.A. group here in prison. I'd like to continue attending meetings because, when I listen to members speak I realize, little by little, that I have the same problems with alcohol and drinking as they do. A friend loaned me an A.A. book, and I liked it a lot. I'd appreciate it if you would send me more information about alcoholism. I have a friend who talks to me a lot about how much he has been helped by A.A. literature and A.A. meetings, but he's about to be released and I'd like to continue receiving the kind of help that he received from the A.A. group. I still don't understand much about all of this, but I've begun the journey. Thanks for listening and reading my letter."—**Jose S., Southeast Region**

"I was on probation and I knew I was going to get revoked, so when they let me out of jail I started going to A.A. meetings and it worked. Now, almost one year after my arrest I am still going to be revoked, but I know everything is going to be okay. I am facing 10 years, but I have been sober almost one year, and I feel wonderful."—**Bobby R., Southeast Region**

"I have just completed my first year of an eleven-year sentence. I was introduced to the A.A. Fellowship back in 1985. For the next 20 years I did what I wanted of the A.A. program. I followed my rules, always wondering why the program of A.A. didn't work for me. Last year a miracle happened. I let God into my life. Since then the program and the Steps have taken on a whole different meaning. This has been a wonderful experience; the prison that I am in does not offer any type of support groups or meetings right now. A few of us are doing the best we can to hold our own meetings out on the recreation yard when we can. Every day sober has been a blessing."—**Eric S., Southeast Region**

"I am a 25-year-old alcoholic from south Louisiana. I am incarcerated, and am writing to say how grateful I am for A.A. I've been in and out of the rooms for a number of years, and I do good when I work the program. When I stop working the program I end up back in jail. On Father's Day 2007 I started to drink. I blacked out, did a number of crimes, and woke up in jail with two simple burglary charges. I am doing 3 years and go to A.A. meetings every chance I get. I am trying to get my mind together in here so I'll leave a better person."—**Michael M., Southeast Region**

"My entry into the program of Alcoholics Anonymous was entirely voluntary, not because a judge ordered me into a program, but because a beautiful twelve-year-old granddaughter informed me I wasn't welcome in her home until I received the help I so desperately needed. It was a wonderful loving child who convinced this drunk that although he was better than the person he had become, he had still become a person who she wouldn't tolerate any longer. I write to thank A.A.; although I am sitting in jail—I am sober."—**Patrick C., East Central Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, 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 G.S.O. to request the Corrections Correspondence Service. 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 date and give us your 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.