



# SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

Spring 2014

Dear A. A. Friends,

My name is Clement C. and I'm an alcoholic who recovered in Alcoholics Anonymous in St. Louis Missouri. I'm excited to be assigned to the Corrections desk and look forward to being involved with this exciting newsletter and assignment.

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."\*

## 'IT CHANGED MY MIND & HEART'

"I am finding my sobriety, with the power of A.A. and my Higher Power, here in prison. Because of me and my daily blackouts for months, the rock bottom hit. It changed my mind and then my heart; and then the rest of daily prison life got easier. My A.A. Big Book is the most read book. I can say without much of a wink or blink, I'm a drunk who wants to change and be sober for years to come. I enjoy reading and re-reading the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, plus Doctor Bob's nightmare. I find it so amazing that what was written and built back in the '30s and '40s works for all ages and types of people. I'm sober and it changed my mind and heart. Stay well you all, many blessings and good wishes." — **Dan S., East Central Region**

## A NEW HAPPINESS A NEW FREEDOM

"Hello, my name is Kim. I believe it took all I had to get me to where I am today. I am now capable of being a loving and caring mother to my children. I no longer run, I walk through life 'one day at a time.' My one belief and experience I want to share with you is that being a part of A.A., having a sponsor and not taking that first drink is what keeps me sober—one day at a time. The company that I keep will determine the activity that I participate in! I have to surround myself with people who are like me and want what I want. I found those people in Alcoholics Anonymous. There is a new happiness and a new freedom behind these walls, I had to find it within! Being an alcoholic is a life-long process, a lot of hurts, pain, regrets, guilt, shame and losses. The most important part is I didn't lose my life in the process! I made the decision to live and you can too!" — **Kimberly S., Southeast Region**

## QUITE SIMPLY — 'THANK YOU'

"I'm writing to express my appreciation for the A.A. information you recently sent me. I don't have any family outside of my new recovery family here inside this facility, so the information was a godsend. You'll never know what it's meant to me to receive this; I've been up all night reading my new material. Before they lock us down, I give out half of the pamphlets to different people so they could get a blessing as well. God was really good to me today." — **Anthony M., Southeast Region**

"Alcohol played a big role in my life. With it came many character defects that I would carry around for a long time. Today, I am thankful for the program of A.A., its founders Bill W. and Doctor Bob, and the millions of others who kept A.A. alive. I'm thankful to my Higher Power who has placed the people in my life to help restore me. I have been incarcerated over 30 years now and have been sober for the past 23. I had my last drink in 1990, but I do recognize that I'm still an alcoholic. I know that Alcoholics Anonymous will remain a constant in my life." — **Louis B., Pacific Region**

## LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

"I've been going to A.A. for over a year; this wasn't the first time I had gone to A.A. — but the first time I wanted a change in my life. I was in trouble with the law again, my fourth D.W.I. in 20 years; I was looking at some serious time in prison. So I got a sponsor and my sponsor gave me four rules to go by. 1. Call him every day. 2. Go to three to four meetings a week. 3. Don't drink. 4. Read the Big Book. So this went on for six to eight months not drinking — going to meetings when I could and really never getting too close to anyone in the meetings, not that they, the group, didn't offer, they were always more than friendly. But the Big Book meeting for men seemed to be the best for me to keep from drinking. How can you not learn something from all the people who have so many experiences and years at being sober? How they manage the ups and downs — to me that was the greatest gift that anyone could give me and for that I'm truly grateful. It helps me fight the urges to try it again, for that is the real struggle in my life every day." — **Winford M., West Central Region**

## ONE COMMON GOAL

"My name is Travis S., and I'm a recovering alcoholic. I'm blessed with sobriety, but haunted by the path I took to reach it. I lost a lot of friends, and people I knew as family. Nothing will ever give me back the relationships I once had. There is no pencil to erase the devastation I caused. But I, we, all, hold the pencil to permanently erase it from our future. I'm far from found, but, when I go to A.A. groups I know I'm not lost anymore. I'm letting A.A. help me to find myself. I owe it to far more than myself, and I'm with great hope that I can help others by opening up about how and why I got

to the points in my life before and after being sober. We all can relate in that one common goal, no matter how close or far apart the story. I'm doing a lot of good things to bring the sober living puzzle together in my life." — **Travis S., Northeast Region**

### **'DON'T GIVE UP'**

"Hello, my name is Robert and I am a recovering alcoholic. I believed that I was doomed from the start of my drinking 30 years ago and saw my life surely coming to the end by alcohol. I haven't had a drink since my arrest and I believe that had it not been for A.A.'s program of recovery being available in this facility, I am afraid to think of what my outcome might have been. Each day I awake to is better than the day before, taking this 'one day at a time' nice and easy. I am currently working the Twelve Steps and am at Step Three. I am looking forward to attending A.A. meetings when released, but I am in no rush just yet. I don't want to come back here, so I want to be prepared as much as possible. My kids are grown up and are single so I am waiting on the outcome of my cases and am safe here for now. To anyone who may possibly read this I say to you, don't give up! Our Higher Power puts us in situations and also places people in our path for good reason. To A.A. and all it's members around the world, keep doing what you all do best, and that is to carry the A.A. message to help anyone who would like to have their sanity back." — **Robert L.G., Southwest Region**

### **'A.A. IS THE WAY'**

"My name is Jesse and I am a recovering alcoholic, currently serving a sentence. Prison was the result of an eight year alcohol run that came about after I relapsed. My relapse was the result of not getting a sponsor and not going to meetings. I did it Jesse's way and it did not work out too well. Those eight years were the most miserable time of my life. When I came to county jail I was broken — physically, emotionally and most definitely spiritually. I volunteered for the A.A. program in hopes it would help me out of doing time, but I ended up getting a relationship with my Higher Power and made my decision to turn my will and my life over to God as I understand him. My plan to avoid time did not work out so well, but the acceptance I learned through A.A. has helped me push through the time. Come April or July I will be free and I am completely ready to start my new life. On the other hand, I am also terrified. Currently I am working my Fourth Step. I am willing to do whatever it takes to remain sober." — **Jesse D., Southeast Region**

### **WORKING THE STEPS**

"My name is Jenny and I am an alcoholic. I am currently incarcerated because of an alcohol related crime I committed. Here I have found treatment; I am in A.A. and learning so much about my disease and myself. I have worked Steps One, Two and Three and now I am on Step Four and I am ready. This is my second go at it and this time it makes so much more sense. I am more aware of myself and I am much more honest. It wasn't until I gave up my control, doing things my way, that I could find a sense of peace by accepting things and people for what and who they are and allow my Higher Power to help me along. As long as I take baby steps in good orderly direction, with an open honest and willing frame of mind, change will happen and it will be good. I am working on myself in here everyday. It is a battle between my alcoholic self and my deeper self, but I know with help and my desire for change I can succeed." — **Jennifer C., — East Central Region**

"I have been trying all my life to control others, until I recently discovered that no one cares how much I know, until they know how much I care. I'm able to stand tall for what I know to be facts, and also be open-minded and willing to listen to others. But, for me I've just recently grown-up this time around. I've done thorough Fourth and Fifth Steps. In my past I did not have my Higher Power. I didn't have God! Now I do. Now, I've successfully moved on and have grown so much by letting go of all my past fears." — **Dennis W., Southeast Region**

### **THE BIG BOOK**

"My name is Karyn A. and I am an alcoholic. This is not my first prison term. My first time down was short and I did not take it seriously. This time they tripled my sentence and I am taking it *very seriously*. I know I am a severe alcoholic. I know that not only will drinking have a domino effect on me, but it will kill me. I have other addictions, too, but alcohol is my true demon. That first drink for me leads to more, to jail time, to prison time, to hospital visits, etc. Alcohol is my best friend and my worst enemy. My friend's dad sent me the Big Book. I scoffed initially because it was written in the 1930s, by men, no less. But, I read it because I know I have to change. I have to stay sober if I want my life back. I read the entire book and I was impressed. I was a little hesitant about writing to the address on the back page because my problems seemed a lot more extreme than the stories I read. But isn't that all the more reason to write? Certainly there are thousands who were worse off and can offer guidance. A.A. responded very quickly and I was given this *Sharing From Behind the Walls*. Thank you!" — **Karyn A., Pacific Region**

### **CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE**

"Thank you for your Corrections Correspondence Service. It is amazing how much help it has provided me. About two years ago I wrote to you expressing my desire to have an A.A. member on the outside with whom I can share A.A. experience, strength and hope. You answered my request and notified me that it was forwarded to an outside A.A. member. I received a letter from the outside member, and since then we started a good communication. Today I feel blessed! Not just because you have made this possible, but, also because my outside correspondent and I are building a friendship that motivates me, inspires me and helps me in my day-by-day recovery. Your labor in helping inmates find an A.A. on the outside to communicate and share A.A. experiences with is most worthy!" — **Felipe E., Pacific 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 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 date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, 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 A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.