



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

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

THE STRONGEST TWELFTH STEP —THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

"I'd almost given up hope thinking my letter was lost or something. Wow! Thanks so much for writing me back. Yesterday another man came up to me and said he heard me talking about A.A. We were in yard one hour two times a week and I talked for a while. I've been totally sober for 11 months and have read the 4th Edition of the Big Book and am at Step 10 right now. Anyway guess what... *he asked me to be his sponsor*. I got excited and said yes (the first time this ever happened to me in A.A.), but then I got scared, not being sure how to proceed? Well, yard was called over. I got mail and it was the book A.A. sent... perfect timing! I said a thank you prayer to God." — **Gary T., Pacific Region**

'THERE IS A SOLUTION'

"Today I was able to go to my first A.A. meeting (12 Step, Big Book). Our outside volunteer that guides us through the Steps was ill and couldn't make it, but we had a good meeting anyway. It was good to be around people that talked about the betterment of ourselves instead of the negativity of being locked up and what crimes they are going to do when they get out. Also, whenever I go to an A.A. meeting, whether it's here or on the outside, it's nice to feel the fellowship that is A.A. and to be around other people that understand what it is that I or we go through trying to discover ourselves. I know that in order for me to change I have to want the change, and I do. I don't want to keep coming back to prison. This is no way to live, but while I'm here it doesn't have to be a negative experience. I guess the most important part of all is not to drink, and even better is I don't ever have to drink again." — **Vaughn S., Northeast Region**

"I am incarcerated as a direct result of my alcoholism. I am responsible for a D.U.I. accident in which two people were killed. I was sentenced to 21 years and I will serve 18 of them. I believe everything happens for a reason, but I struggle to find meaning in this. While I feel this is a lengthy sentence, I realize I committed a terrible crime and ultimately I must be held accountable. I have been incarcerated (and sober) for eight years now. I can honestly say I have no desire to drink. There are times when my disease

speaks to me. When it asks me, 'wouldn't it be fun to go out with your friends for a drink like old times?' 'Wouldn't it be nice to have a glass of wine with the family?' For me the answer has to be 'NO.' I know I cannot have even one drink. For me one drink leads to two and two leads to ten. I have no desire to become the person I was before, ever again. I have no desire to be separated from my two daughters for 18 years ever again. I have no desire to live with endless guilt and eternal shame ever again. I do not want to drink, ever again. My reasons for contacting A.A. and wanting to be involved in the program are so I can learn ways to *stay* sober, so I can build a support network, so I can meet people that understand alcoholism and the daily challenges that face each one of us, so I'll have a place to go when I'm feeling good, confident and strong about my sobriety and share that with others or help others if possible." — **Douglas F., East Central Region**

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

"I am pleased to say I am able to attend our weekly Lost and Found Group every Monday night. We have anywhere from 3-6 great 'outside sponsors' as they call them here. Without it I don't know where I would be right now. I found A.A. in prison and I am glad I did. I had a bad alcohol problem. My A.A. anniversary date is June 6, 2006. That is one date I will never forget. That day I was led to God, my Higher Power, and entered the world of sobriety. I study and read the Big Book on a daily basis. I thank everyone involved in A.A., for without them I don't know where I would be. I am an alcoholic and an A.A. member. Thanks to God and A.A. for bringing me out of the darkness into the light." — **Phillip S., Southeast Region**

IT'S ALL IN THE SERENITY PRAYER

"Greetings from the inside! Life here is so insane that I cling to whatever sanity I can find. Part of that is accepting the things I can't change, but absolutely changing the things I can. Since we've started corresponding tremendous changes have taken place, in me and in the A.A. program here! We'll soon have two meetings on a regular basis and more and more inmates are coming and sharing their experience, strength and hope! I celebrated my 17th anniversary/birthday in here and it truly is the tools of the program that I use on a daily basis that get me through this time in my life! What's really interesting now is that people are being drawn to me and my room. It's like an island of sanity and serenity in all this insanity! The guys even call it the 'clubhouse!' I thank you and my HP for the help, support and direction. I had never been locked up before and I went through a very dark and dangerous few weeks. Then, sure enough, A.A. came through once again! I turned to the program to save me once again and as usual, being honest, helping others and cleaning house has worked its magic! No, not magic—has worked its miracle!"

In his next letter Gene reports:

"You'll be pleased to know that as of our last communication we now have two meetings going, with a third soon to follow. I am so happy, proud and grateful. Right after I wrote to you a 'guard'

basically came up to me and another alcoholic and asked if we wanted to start the meeting on a more formal basis. She put up a sign-up sheet and it went from about 5 names to 25 in two weeks! Now she is so pleased that she is going to be ordering Big Books and Twelve & Twelves to give out. 'It starts with 2!' We've decided that the last Tuesday of the month will be a Big Book meeting, and we'll see what happens." — **Gene C., Northeast Region**

"My name is Lacey. This is my second trip to a correctional facility, and my problem my entire life is a result of being an alcoholic. I am working hard to figure out my life and all the mistakes I have made. I finally received an A.A. book in here. And every Monday there is usually a meeting. I need all the support and help I can get. I'm hoping I can come home and begin to get in a program with others like me. I love the program and the A.A. book has already helped me sleep better each night. I have learned the first Step and that is one day at a time. I am 27 years old and have been an alcoholic since the age of 16. It is time to change. I thank God that he's put me in jail instead of a grave. I have a long road to recovery, but I know that as long as I believe in myself and A.A. all things are possible." — **Lacey I., East Central Region**

SHARING FROM A GENERAL SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE (G.S.R.)

"My name is Randy and I am an alcoholic. I am also proud to say that I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. As an active member, I am currently corresponding (since 2003) with another A.A. member through the Corrections Correspondence Service. I would also like to add that I will be going out into the community to attend the area committee meetings, as I will be the GSR for the group here at the facility. This will allow me to learn more about the A.A. service structure. I have held multiple positions in the A.A. groups in the four facilities I have been in for the past 6 1/2 years, and find that this is a great way for me to build a foundation and to learn more about service and the structure. I also sponsor and assist a few inmates with the Twelve Steps, which is also a great way to give back. I am grateful to God, A.A. and those involved for allowing the opportunity to be alive and to have the willingness to help and assist." — **Randy H., Northeast Region**

MEETINGS, MEETINGS, MEETINGS

"My name is Tom and I am an alcoholic. Thanks, so much to A.A. for sending all the information regarding starting a meeting in our facility. I do believe that with patience and persistence, and faith in God we will have meetings here shortly. I also have tremendous support from outside A.A. in the area, which is about 8 1/2 hours from here. They are trying to help from a distance and keeping me and the other inmates in their prayers. Fortunately, there is a great spiritual atmosphere here, although the practical application of spiritual principles through A.A. would be incredible! Thank you once again for all your help and service. God Bless you always." — **Tomas K., Southeast Region**

"When I was in prison back home, I was taking a 'Women with Addiction' class, and also going to A.A. meetings every week. I was there for six weeks and received a lot of valuable information that has helped me with my alcohol abuse; it has also helped me to help my 21-year-old son. What I have learned and passed on to my son has kept him clean and sober for about 18 weeks and it is because I went to a few A.A. meetings in prison. I am grateful for the volunteers that take the time to help the men and women in prisons. I look forward to continuing my sobriety on the outside, as well as becoming a grandmother for the first time." — **Kimberly D., Southeast Region**

"Alcohol has ruined my life. I've been incarcerated more times

than I can count or remember. From prison to county jails, rehabs, and all, and I'm totally ashamed of all of it and I've lost the closest friends a guy could ask for. Family also doesn't want to be around me when I'm drinking. I'm not allowed to see my kids when drinking. I've never been able to keep a steady job for more than a couple of weeks. Now I'm going to meetings and at 28 years old I am finally serious about stopping drinking. I've done this all before, time and time again, because I had to—either to get out of jail or off probation or to keep from going to jail. These were the only reasons I went to meetings or rehab, never for me. I was never serious. I always knew I would not quit and did not want to quit drinking. But now I'm not doing this for any reason but myself; I have no one telling me I have to go or else. It's not getting me out or helping me get out or any other reason. I don't even think anybody else knows except you right now and the people I go with. I'm so serious about this. I love my meetings and my Grapevine magazines and all my fellow members. I really look forward to the meetings as often as possible, sometimes they have two a week here, sometimes only one, but I live for each one, and love to talk about A.A. and what its done for me. I want to work my Steps every day and would love to have someone to write and share with." — **Shane J., Northeast Region**

"Thanks very much to A.A. for the book and pamphlet pack. I am here as a direct result of a relapse, so I look forward to trying once again to stay sober. There are several of us in this pod, and we stick by each other with the hope and faith of living without alcohol. You had mentioned that you'd contact the Corrections Facilities Committee. We could really use help! We have no formal meetings here. We cannot start having them without an 'outside' volunteer. I hope you can help us to help ourselves!" — **Mark G., Southeast Region**

THE BIG BOOK

"I am writing for multiple reasons; first of all I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the true help and guidance that I have gained from the A.A. book and program in my life. Also for the comfort and inspiration I have found through the stories. For so long I felt as if I was alone in my alcoholism and now thanks to A.A., the Big Book, and some members, I can now feel complete without the alcohol. I am 23 years old and I am currently serving a 6-year sentence due to a crime I committed while under the influence of alcohol. I am really wanting to grow deeper in the program upon my release. Through the fellowship of A.A., which I found in a prison camp, I have turned my life around. I never dreamed that happiness like this could be found, especially in a place like this." — **Brian C., Southeast 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 release date and 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.