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VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP

Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

PAGES 200-207

WOMEN SUFFER TOO

Despite great opportunities, alcohol nearly ended her life. An early member, she spread the word among women in our pioneering period.

What was I saying . . . from far away, as if in a delirium, I heard my own voice—calling someone “Dorothy,” talking of dress shops, of jobs . . . the words came clearer . . . this sound of my own voice frightened me as it came closer . . . and suddenly, there I was, talking of I knew not what, to someone I’d never seen before that very moment. Abruptly I stopped speaking. Where was I?

I’d waked up in strange rooms before, fully dressed on a bed or a couch; I’d waked up in my own room, in or on my own bed, not knowing what hour or day it was, afraid to ask . . . but this was different. This time I seemed to be already awake, sitting upright in a big easy chair, in the middle of an animated conversation with a perfectly strange young woman who didn’t appear to think it strange. She was chatting on, pleasantly and comfortably.

Terrified, I looked around. I was in a large, dark, rather poorly furnished room—the living room of a basement flat. Cold chills started chasing up and down my spine; my teeth were chattering; my hands were shaking, so I tucked them under me to keep them from flying away. My fright was real enough, but it didn’t account for these violent reactions. I knew what they were, all right—a drink would fix them.. It must have been a long time since I had my last drink—but I didn’t dare ask this stranger for one. I must get out of here. In any case I must get out of here before I let slip my abysmal ignorance of how I came to be here and she realized that I was stark, staring mad—I must be.



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Monthly Business Mtgs

- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. –
04/10/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg.-
04/12/2023 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.
04/15/2023 @ 10 AM&12PM
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. –
04/17/2023 @ 6:30 PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. -
04/27/2023 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. –
04/25/2023@7:00 PM

The shakes grew worse, and I looked at my watch— six o'clock. It had been one o'clock when I last remembered looking. I'd been sitting comfortably in a restaurant with Rita, drinking my sixth martini and hoping the waiter would forget about the lunch order—at least long enough for me to have a couple more. I'd only had two with her, but I'd managed four in the fifteen minutes I'd waited for her, and of course I'd had the usual uncounted swigs from the bottle as I painfully got up and did my slow spasmodic dressing. In fact, I had been in very good shape at one o'clock—feeling no pain. What could have happened? That had been in the center of New York, on noisy 42nd Street . . . this was obviously a quiet residential section. Why had "Dorothy" brought me here? Who was she? How had I met her? I had no answers, and I dared not ask. She gave no sign of recognizing anything wrong, but what had I been doing for those lost five hours? My brain whirled. I might have done terrible things, and I wouldn't even know it!

Somehow I got out of there and walked five blocks past brownstone houses. There wasn't a bar in sight, but I found the subway station. The name on it was unfamiliar, and I had to ask the way to Grand Central. It took three-quarters of an hour and two changes to get there—back to my starting point. I had been in the remote reaches of Brooklyn.

That night I got very drunk, which was usual, but I remembered everything, which was very unusual. I remembered going through what my sister assured me was my nightly procedure of trying to find Willie Sea - brook's name in the telephone book. I remembered my loud resolution to find him and ask him to help me get into that "Asylum" he had written about. I remembered asserting that I was going to do something about this, that I couldn't go on . . . I remembered looking longingly at the window as an easier solution and shuddering at the memory of that other window, three years before, and the six agonizing months in a London hospital ward. I remembered filling the peroxide bottle in my medicine chest with gin, in case my sister found the bottle I hid under the mattress. And I remembered the creeping horror of the interminable night, in which I slept for short spells and woke dripping with cold sweat and shaken with utter despair, to drink hastily from my bottle and mercifully pass out again. "You're mad, you're mad, you're mad!" pounded through my brain with each returning ray of consciousness, and I drowned the refrain with drink.

That went on for two more months before I landed in a hospital and started my slow fight back to normalcy. It had been going on like that for over a year. I was thirty-two years old.

When I look back on that last horrible year of constant drinking, I wonder how I survived it, either physically or mentally. For there were, of course, periods of clear realization of what I had become, attended by memories of what I had been, what I had expected to be. And the contrast was pretty shattering. Sitting in a Second Avenue bar, accepting drinks from anyone who offered, after my small stake was gone, or sitting at home alone, with the inevitable glass in my hand, I would remember, and, remembering, I would drink faster, seeking speedy oblivion. It was hard to reconcile this ghastly present with the simple facts of the past.

My family had money—I had never known denial of any material desire. The best boarding schools and a finishing school in Europe had fitted me for the conventional role of debutante and young matron. The times in which I grew up (the Prohibition era immortalized by Scott Fitzgerald and John Held Jr.) had taught me to be gay with the gayest; my own inner urges led me to outdo them all. The year after coming out, I married. So far, so good—all according to plan, like thousands of others. But then the story became my own. My husband was an alcoholic, and since I had only contempt for those without my own amazing capacity, the outcome was inevitable. My divorce coincided with my father's bankruptcy, and I went to work, casting off all allegiances and responsibilities to anyone other than myself.

For me, work was only a different means to the same end, to be able to do exactly what I wanted to do.

For the next ten years I did just that. For greater freedom and excitement I went abroad to live. I had my own business, successful enough for me to indulge most of my desires. I met all the people I wanted to meet; I saw all the places I wanted to see; I did all the things I wanted to do—I was increasingly miserable.

Headstrong and willful, I rushed from pleasure to pleasure and found the returns diminishing to the vanishing point. Hangovers began to assume monstrous proportions, and the morning drink became an urgent necessity. “Blanks” were more frequent, and I seldom knew how I’d got home. When my friends suggested that I was drinking too much, they were no longer my friends. I moved from group to group— then from place to place—and went on drinking. With a creeping insidiousness, drink had become more important than anything else. It no longer gave me pleasure—it merely dulled the pain—but I had to have it. I was bitterly unhappy. No doubt I had been an exile too long—I should go home to America. I did. And to my surprise, my drinking grew worse.

When I entered a sanitarium for prolonged and intensive psychiatric treatment, I was convinced that I was having a serious mental breakdown. I wanted help, and I tried to cooperate. As the treatment progressed, I began to get a picture of myself, of the temperament that had caused me so much trouble. I had been hypersensitive, shy, idealistic. My inability to accept the harsh realities of life had resulted in a disillusioned cynic, clothed in a protective armor against the world’s misunderstanding. That armor had turned into prison walls, locking me in loneliness—and fear. All I had left was an iron determination to live my own life in spite of the alien world—and here I was, an inwardly frightened, outwardly defiant woman, who desperately needed a prop to keep going.

Alcohol was that prop, and I didn’t see how I could live without it. When my doctor told me I should never touch a drink again, I couldn’t afford to believe him. I had to persist in my attempts to get straightened out enough to be able to use the drinks I needed, without their turning on me. Besides, how could he understand? He wasn’t a drinking man; he didn’t know what it was to need a drink, nor what a drink could do for one in a pinch. I wanted to live, not in a desert, but in a normal world; and my idea of a normal world was being among people who drank—teetotalers were not included. And I was sure that I couldn’t be with people who drank, without drinking. In that I was correct: I couldn’t be comfortable with any kind of people without drinking. I never had been.

Naturally, in spite of my good intentions, in spite of my protected life behind sanitarium walls, I several times got drunk and was astounded . . . and badly shaken.

That was the point at which my doctor gave me the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* to read. The first chapters were a revelation to me. I wasn’t the only person in the world who felt and behaved like this! I wasn’t mad or vicious—I was a sick person. I was suffering from an actual disease that had a name and symptoms like diabetes or cancer or TB—and a disease was respectable, not a moral stigma! But then I hit a snag. I couldn’t stomach religion, and I didn’t like the mention of God or any of the other capital letters. If that was the way out, it wasn’t for me. I was an intellectual and I needed an intellectual answer, not an emotional one. I told my doctor so in no uncertain terms. I wanted to learn to stand on my own feet, not to change one prop for another, and an intangible and dubious one at that. And so on and on, for several weeks, while I grudgingly plowed through some more of the offending book and felt more and more hopeless about myself.

Then the miracle happened—to me! It isn't always so sudden with everyone, but I ran into a personal crisis that filled me with a raging and righteous anger. And as I fumed helplessly and planned to get good and drunk and show them, my eye caught a sentence in the book lying open on my bed: "We cannot live with anger." The walls crumpled—and the light streamed in. I wasn't trapped. I wasn't helpless. I was free, and I didn't have to drink to "show them." This wasn't "religion"—this was freedom! Freedom from anger and fear, freedom to know happiness, and freedom to know love.

I went to a meeting to see for myself this group of freaks or bums who had done this thing. To go into a gathering of people was the sort of thing that all my life, from the time I left my private world of books and dreams to meet the real world of people and parties and jobs, had left me feeling an uncomfortable outsider, needing the warming stimulus of drinks to join in. I went trembling into a house in Brooklyn filled with strangers . . . and I found I had come home at last, to my own kind. There is another meaning for the Hebrew word that in the King James version of the Bible is translated "salvation." It is: "to come home." I had found my salvation. I wasn't alone any more.

That was the beginning of a new life, a fuller life, a happier life than I had ever known or believed possible. I had found friends—understanding friends who often knew what I was thinking and feeling better than I knew myself—and who didn't allow me to retreat into my prison of loneliness and fear over a fancied slight or hurt. Talking things over with them, great floods of enlightenment showed me myself as I really was—and I was like them. We all had hundreds of character traits, fears and phobias, likes and dislikes, in common. Suddenly I could accept myself, faults and all, as I was—for weren't we all like that? And, accepting, I felt a new inner comfort and the willingness and strength to do something about the traits I couldn't live with.

It didn't stop there. They knew what to do about those black abysses that yawned, ready to swallow me, when I felt depressed or nervous. There was a concrete program, designed to secure the greatest possible inner security for us long-time escapist. The feeling of impending disaster that had haunted me for years began to dissolve as I put into practice more and more of the Twelve Steps. It worked!

An active member of A.A. since 1939, I feel myself a useful member of the human race at last. I have something to contribute to humanity, since I am peculiarly qualified, as a fellow-sufferer, to give aid and comfort to those who have stumbled and fallen over this business of meeting life. I get my greatest thrill of accomplishment from the knowledge that I have played a part in the new happiness achieved by countless others like myself. The fact that I can work again and earn my living is important but secondary. I believe that my once overweening self-will has finally found its proper place, for I can say many times daily, "Thy will be done, not mine" . . . and mean it.



AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Four: Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

1. Do I insist that there are only a few right ways of doing things in AA?
2. Does my group consider the welfare of nearby groups in its actions and decisions? Of AA "as a whole"?
3. Do I judge or criticize other members' behavior when it is different from mine, or do I learn from it?
4. Do I always bear in mind that, to those outsiders who know I am in AA, I may to some extent represent our entire beloved Fellowship?
5. Am I willing to help a newcomer go to any lengths—their lengths, not mine—to stay sober?
6. Do I ever criticize certain groups because I think they don't do things how I believe AA should be done?

CONCEPT FOUR:

“Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional “Right of Participation,” taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When we touched on the Third Concept last month, we spoke frequently of the “Right of Decision,” the right for AA groups and their members to act as delegates rather than servants. Embedded in Concept IV is the “Right of Participation,” which is similar in some ways yet still carries its own meaning and importance within the constructs of AA. If we see the Right of Decision as the right for AA members to choose *how* they will participate, the Right of Participation may be seen as the basic freedom to choose whether or not they will exercise their right of representation within the General Service Conference.

The above paragraph may be a little wordy, so we’ll put it in simpler terms. Basically, anyone given the opportunity to represent their group or service board at the General Service Conference should also have a right to vote on AA matters. And to some extent, we have this same Right of Participation within our home groups. To state this as an analogy, one might say that the Conference is to service delegates as business meetings are to group members. In this way, Concept IV is essentially a broader take on the Second Tradition. Granted, the Second Tradition is alive in all of the Twelve Concepts. Not just Concept III as referenced above, but Concept I and Concept II as well. All of these ideas exist for the sake of giving AA groups and their members a say in the program’s governance. In this way, no *one* group or individual may stake a tyrannical claim over the program and its maintenance. We are all a part of the same group conscience. Below, we will examine how this group conscience is ingrained into Concept IV.

The above section should provide a decent outline regarding how Concept IV is enacted within the General Service Conference, but its meaning to the program may still be elusive to some. However, to co-founder Bill Wilson, Concept IV was incredibly meaningful to the principles for which AA stands. He did not wish to see Concept IV diminished, altered, or disregarded in any way. There were some who did not want to extend the Right of Participation to certain members (particularly office personnel and trustees), but Bill’s response was quite straightforward:

“Certainly, our trustees and service workers are not less conscientious, experienced and wise than the delegates.”

Some may believe that the participation of office personnel is a violation of the tenet that ultimate authority should rely in the shared consciousness of the individual groups. But the General Service Office and its contributions to the program should not be overlooked. More importantly, those who wish to have a voice in AA should not back any argument in favor of stripping rights from the program’s members. As Bill said on the matter:

“It is vital to preserve the traditional ‘Right of Participation’ in the face of every tendency to whittle it down.”

Upcoming Events

APRIL 2023

						1
2	3 Picnic Planning	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Steering Committee 6:00 pm	11	12 ARCHIVES 5:30 PM	13	14 Grapevine Study 4pm	15 #27 District Meeting
16 Concept Study 3:00 pm	17 Intergroup Rep Meeting 6:30 pm	18	19	20	24	25
23 Concept Study 3:00 pm	24	25 #37 District Meeting 7:00 pm	26	27 #7 District Meeting 7:00 pm	28	29
30 Concept Study 3:00 pm						

ARCHIVES CORNER



Welcome to Vancouver Archives, which currently serving Districts 7 and 37.

The Archives Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Intergroup Office . All are welcome!

SAVE THE DATE:

JUNE 2023

FOUNDER'S DAY EVENT!

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1

What: Long Timer Panel & Full Archives Display – Sponsored by Vancouver Archives (District 7 & District 37)

When: Saturday, June 10, 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (panels 1-3 p.m.)

Location: The Matson Building (formerly The Saddle Club)
10713 NE 117th Ave, Vancouver, WA 98662

PLEASE donate your group documents to Archives. Don't throw anything out! We will digitize your records and physically store and preserve your documents, photos, etc.

Feel free to e-mail with any questions or comments:

dist7archives@area72aa.org

In Service,

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS MARCH 2023

March 2023	Group Name	Contribution
02/06/2023	Men's Fireside	100.00
03/01/2023	Early Birds	100.00
03/06/2023	East County Women's Group	150.00
03/06/2023	The Lighthouse	50.00
03/06/2023	LaCenter AA Group	27.59
03/10/2023	Friday Night Happy Hour	100.00
03/10/2023	District 37	321.26
03/13/2023	A New Morning	300.79
03/13/2023	Camas Group	36.37
03/16/2023	First Shot	148.47
03/20/2023	Noon timers	283.00
03/22/2023	Camas Group	54.86
03/24/2023	Woodland AA	149.00
03/25/2023	Anchor Point Counseling	10.00
03/29/2023	District 27	1,000.00
03/29/2023	Miracles At Noon	422.50
03/30/2023	As We Recovered	50.00
03/30/2023	Women's Emotional Sobriety	200.00
Individual Contributions		90.00

SHARED BY MEMBERS

“I was unable to stay sober because I wasn’t ready to be honest.”

I first came to A.A. 22 years ago, when I was 19. I was a scared young woman, at war with herself and the world. The anger fed the war and covered my fears. When I tried to get sober, the anger made it hard as I fought the suggestions given me — sometimes outright and sometimes with subtlety. I knew my life was unmanageable yet still couldn’t see the powerlessness. I couldn’t give up my will. My relationship with the God of my understanding was strained. I had tried the way of religion before coming to A.A., but I continued to drink. While in A.A. I listened to others’ concepts of a higher power. I struggled to believe that God cared and loved me. I had been angry at God for a long time and all the shame I felt further blocked me from God. In the early days of my recovery, I kept a lot inside and wore a mask. I was in denial and unable to see things about myself. One of the easiest ways for me to avoid looking at myself was to get into a relationship. I dated and married a recovering alcoholic. When I had about five years sober, I drank again. I was unable to stay sober because I wasn’t ready to be honest. I had replaced my obsession with alcohol with a relationship. I’ve come to learn in sobriety that relationships involve communication, honesty, love, giving and receiving. They aren’t meant to be a distraction to life. The backdrop to all of this was my chronic depression. Since coming into A.A., I’ve had many psychiatric hospital stays, disability leaves and ECT treatments. As a depressant, alcohol had only worsened my already severe depression. It took me many years to be honest about this. I have had to accept that I will always have to take medication. Acceptance of this and other aspects of my life was critical in sobriety. I needed to get honest about the depression and also my sexual orientation. At some point, I told my husband that I thought I was gay. I knew I was, but I was trying to soft-pedal it. The truth was that we were both miserable. I became suicidal and had homicidal thoughts. As a result, I had another stay at a psychiatric hospital. My husband and I separated and divorced. I’ve had to grow up in this program. At one point, I told someone that I was “constitutionally incapable of being honest.” She flat-out told me I wasn’t. Each week she would ask me how I was and I would go into a long list of woes. She would respond, “Did you drink today?” I would say “No.” And she’d remind me, “Then it’s a good day.” Acceptance of my powerlessness over alcohol, my depression and my sexual orientation remains. But today, I can be comfortable in my own skin. I’ve realized that God was always there and continues to be there to guide my way. God loves me no matter what I’ve done, and today I try to do His will. The God of my understanding loves me as a lesbian. I’m not that alone, unique, scared woman I used to be. Today, with nine years of continuous sobriety, I can share my experience, strength and hope with others. I can be an example that recovery is possible no matter what life throws in our way.

Women in AA

Vancouver Area Intergroup 2023 Newsletter will be distributed in the first week of each month instead of the middle of the month.

If you would like to share your :

- AA Birthday on the Calendar
- Experience Strength & Hope
- AA related content or topics
- AA Flyers

In the Upcoming Newsletters please feel free to email :

vanintgrp@gmail.com

You Are Wanted Needed & Loved!

****** The Primary Purpose will no longer include the Financial Reports or the Meeting Minutes from either the Steering Committee Meeting or the Intergroups Rep Meeting. Reports and Minutes can now be found on the website under the documents tab.******

[Documents | Vancouver Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous \(vancouveraa.org\)](http://vancouveraa.org)

