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VANCOUVER AREA INTERGROUP Primary Purpose

FOURTH EDITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PAGES 268-276

[Big Book - 2.12 \(9\) The Keys of the Kingdom](#)

The Keys Of The Kingdom

*This worldly lady helped to develop A.A. in Chicago
and thus passed her keys to many.*

A little more than fifteen years ago, through a long and calamitous series of shattering experiences, I found myself being helplessly propelled toward total destruction. I was without power to change the course my life had taken. How I had arrived at this tragic impasse, I could not have explained to anyone. I was thirty-three years old and my life was spent. I was caught in a cycle of alcohol and sedation that was proving inescapable, and consciousness had become intolerable.

I was a product of the post-war prohibition era of the Roaring '20s. That age of the flapper and the "It" girl, speakeasies and the hip flask, the boyish bob and the drugstore cowboy, John Held Jr. and F. Scott Fitzgerald, all generously sprinkled with a patent pseudosophistication. To be sure, this had been a dizzy and confused interval, but most everyone else I knew had emerged from it with both feet on the ground and a fair amount of adult maturity.



Inside this Issue:

The Keys Of The Kingdom.....	1-6
Step Ten & Tradition Ten.....	7
Concept Ten.....	8
Group Contributions.....	9
Upcoming Events.....	10
Archives Corner.....	11
Treatment & Facilities.....	12

Monthly Business Mtgs

- ◆ Steering Comm. Mtg. –
10/09/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ Archives Committee Mtg.-
10/11/2023 @ 5:30 PM
- ◆ District 27 Committee Mtg.
10/21/2023 @ 2pm-4pm
- ◆ Intergroup Rep Mtg. –
10/16/2023 @ 6:00 PM
- ◆ District 37 GSR Mtg. –
10/24/2023 @ 7:00 PM
- ◆ District 7 GSR Mtg. -
10/26/2023 @ 7:00 PM

Nor could I blame my dilemma on my childhood environment. I couldn't have chosen more loving and conscientious parents. I was given every advantage in a well-ordered home. I had the best schools, summer camps, resort vacations, and travel. Every reasonable desire was possible of attainment for me. I was strong and healthy and quite athletic strong and healthy and quite athletic.

I experienced some of the pleasure of social drinking when I was sixteen. I definitely liked everything about alcohol—the taste, the effects; and I realize now that a drink did something for me or to me that was different from the way it affected others. It wasn't long before any party without drinks was a dud for me.

I was married at twenty, had two children, and was divorced at twenty-three. My broken home and broken heart fanned my smoldering self-pity into a fair-sized bonfire, and this kept me well supplied with reasons for having another drink, and then another.

At twenty-five I had developed an alcoholic problem. I began making the rounds of the doctors in the hope that one of them might find some cure for my accumulating ailments, preferably something that could be removed surgically.

Of course the doctors found nothing. Just an unstable woman, undisciplined, poorly adjusted, and filled with nameless fears. Most of them prescribed sedatives and advised rest and moderation.

Between the ages of twenty-five and thirty, I tried everything. I moved a thousand miles away from home to Chicago and a new environment. I studied art; I desperately endeavored to create an interest in many things, in a new place among new people. Nothing worked. My drinking habits increased in spite of my struggle for control. I tried the beer diet, the wine diet, timing, measuring, and spacing of drinks. I tried them mixed, unmixed, drinking only when happy, only when depressed. And still, by the time I was thirty years old, I was being pushed around by a compulsion to drink that was completely beyond my control. I couldn't stop drinking. I would hang on to sobriety for short intervals, but always there would come the tide of an overpowering necessity to drink, and, as I was engulfed in it, I felt such a sense of panic that I really believed I would die if I didn't get that drink inside.

Needless to say, this was not pleasurable drinking. I had long since given up any pretense of the social cocktail hour. This was drinking in sheer desperation, alone and locked behind my own door. Alone in the relative safety of my home because I knew I dare not risk the danger of blacking out in some public place or at the wheel of a car. I could no longer gauge my capacity, and it might be the second or the tenth drink that would erase my consciousness.

The next three years saw me in sanitariums, once in a ten-day coma, from which I very nearly did not recover, in and out of hospitals or confined at home with day and night nurses. By now I wanted to die but had lost the courage even to take my life. I was trapped, and for the life of me I did not know how or why this had happened to me. And all the while my fear fed a growing conviction that before long it would be necessary for me to be put away in some institution. People didn't behave this way outside of an asylum. I had heartsickness, shame, and fear bordering on panic, and no complete escape any longer except in oblivion. Certainly, now, anyone would have agreed that only a miracle could prevent my final breakdown. But how does one get a prescription for a miracle?

For about one year prior to this time, there was one doctor who had continued to struggle with me. He had tried everything from having me attend daily mass at six a.m. to performing the most menial labor for his charity patients. Why he bothered with me as long as he did I shall never know, for he knew there was no answer for me in medicine, and he, like all doctors of his day, had been taught that the alcoholic was incurable and should be ignored. Doctors were advised to attend patients who could be benefited by medicine. With the alcoholic, they could only give temporary relief and in the last stages not even that. It was a waste of the doctors' time and the patients' money. Nevertheless, there were a few doctors who saw alcoholism as a disease and felt that the alcoholic was a victim of something over which he had no control. They had a hunch that there must be an answer for these apparently hopeless ones, somewhere. Fortunately for me, my doctor was one of the enlightened.

And then, in the spring of 1939, a very remarkable book was rolled off a New York press with the title *Alcoholics Anonymous*. However, due to financial difficulties, the whole printing was, for a while, held up and the book received no publicity nor, of course, was it available in the stores, even if one knew it existed. But somehow my good doctor heard of this book, and he also learned a little about the people responsible for its publication. He sent to New York for a copy, and after reading it, he tucked it under his arm and called on me. That call marked the turning point in my life.

Until now, I had never been told that I was an alcoholic. Few doctors will tell a hopeless patient that there is no answer for him or for her. But this day my doctor gave it to me straight and said, "People like you are pretty well known to the medical profession. Every doctor gets his quota of alcoholic patients. Some of us struggle with these people because we know that they are really very sick, but we also know that, short of some miracle, we are not going to help them except temporarily and that they will inevitably get worse and worse until one of two things happens. Either they die of acute alcoholism or they develop wet brains and have to be put away permanently."

He further explained that alcohol was no respecter of sex or background but that most of the alcoholics he had encountered had better-than-average minds and abilities. He said the alcoholics seemed to possess a native acuteness and usually excelled in their fields, regardless of environmental or educational advantages.

“We watch the alcoholic performing in a position of responsibility, and we know that because he is drinking heavily and daily, he has cut his capacities by 50 percent, and still he seems able to do a satisfactory job. And we wonder how much further this man could go if his alcoholic problem could be removed and he could throw 100 percent of his abilities into action.

“But, of course,” he continued, “eventually the alcoholic loses all of his capacities as his disease gets progressively worse, and this is a tragedy that is painful to watch: the disintegration of a sound mind and body.”

Then he told me there was a handful of people in Akron and New York who had worked out a technique for arresting their alcoholism. He asked me to read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and then he wanted me to talk with a man who was experiencing success with his own arrestment. This man could tell me more. I stayed up all night reading that book. For me it was a wonderful experience. It explained so much I had not understood about myself, and, best of all, it promised recovery if I would do a few simple things and be willing to have the desire to drink removed. Here was hope. Maybe I could find my way out of this agonizing existence. Perhaps I could find freedom and peace, and be able once again to call my soul my own.

The next day I received a visit from Mr. T., a re - covered alcoholic. I don't know what sort of person I was expecting, but I was very agreeably surprised to find Mr. T. a poised, intelligent, well-groomed, and mannered gentleman. I was immediately impressed with his graciousness and charm. He put me at ease with his first few words. Looking at him, I found it hard to believe he had ever been as I was then.

However, as he unfolded his story for me, I could not help but believe him. In describing his suffering, his fears, his many years of groping for some answer to that which always seemed to remain unanswerable, he could have been describing me, and nothing short of experience and knowledge could have afforded him that much insight! He had been dry for 21 1/2 years and had been maintaining his contact with a group of recovered alcoholics in Akron. Contact with this group was extremely important to him. He told me that eventually he hoped such a group would develop in the Chicago area but that so far this had not been started. He thought it would be helpful for me to visit the Akron group and meet many like himself.

By this time, with the doctor's explanation, the revelations contained in the book, and the hope-inspiring interview with Mr. T., I was ready and willing to go to the ends of the earth, if that was what it took, for me to find what these people had.

So I went to Akron, and also to Cleveland, and I met more recovered alcoholics. I saw in these people a quality of peace and serenity that I knew I must have for myself. Not only were they at peace with themselves, but they were getting a kick out of life such as one seldom encounters, except in the very young. They seemed to have all the ingredients for successful living: philosophy, faith, a sense of humor (they could laugh at themselves), clear-cut objectives, appreciation—and most especially appreciation and sympathetic understanding for their fellow man.

Nothing in their lives took precedence over their response to a call for help from some alcoholic in need. They would travel miles and stay up all night with someone they had never laid eyes on before and think nothing of it. Far from expecting praise for their deeds, they claimed the performance a privilege and insisted that they invariably received more than they gave. Extraordinary people!

I didn't dare hope I might find for myself all that these people had found, but if I could acquire some small part of their intriguing quality of living—and sobriety—that would be enough.

Shortly after I returned to Chicago, my doctor, encouraged by the results of my contact with A.A., sent us two more of his alcoholic patients. By the latter part of September 1939, we had a nucleus of six and held our first official group meeting.

I had a tough pull back to normal good health. It had been so many years since I had not relied on some artificial crutch, either alcohol or sedatives. Letting go of everything at once was both painful and terrifying. I could never have accomplished this alone. It took the help, understanding, and wonderful companionship that was given so freely to me by my ex-alkie friends—this and the program of recovery embodied in the Twelve Steps. In learning to practice these steps in my daily living, I began to acquire faith and a philosophy to live by. Whole new vistas were opened up for me, new avenues of experience to be explored, and life began to take on color and interest. In time, I found myself looking forward to each new day with pleasurable anticipation.

A.A. is not a plan for recovery that can be finished and done with. It is a way of life, and the challenge contained in its principles is great enough to keep any human being striving for as long as he lives. We do not, cannot, outgrow this plan. As arrested alcoholics, we must have a program for living that allows for limitless expansion. Keeping one foot in front of the other is essential for maintaining our arretment. Others may idle in a retrogressive groove without too much danger, but retrogression can spell death for us. However, this isn't as rough as it sounds, as we do become grateful for the necessity that makes us toe the line, and we find that we are compensated for a consistent effort by the countless dividends we receive.

A complete change takes place in our approach to life. Where we used to run from responsibility, we find ourselves accepting it with gratitude that we can successfully shoulder it. Instead of wanting to escape some perplexing problem, we experience the thrill of challenge in the opportunity it affords for another application of A.A. techniques, and we find ourselves tackling it with surprising vigor.

The last fifteen years of my life have been rich and meaningful. I have had my share of problems, heartaches, and disappointments because that is life, but also I have known a great deal of joy and a peace that is the handmaiden of an inner freedom. I have a wealth of friends and, with my A.A. friends, an unusual quality of fellowship. For, to these people, I am truly related. First, through mutual pain and despair, and later through mutual objectives and newfound faith and hope. And, as the years go by, working together, sharing our experiences with one another, and also sharing a mutual trust, understanding, and love—without strings, without obligation—we acquire relationships that are unique and priceless.

There is no more aloneness, with that awful ache, so deep in the heart of every alcoholic that nothing, before, could ever reach it. That ache is gone and never need return again.

Now there is a sense of belonging, of being wanted and needed and loved. In return for a bottle and a hangover, we have been given the Keys of the Kingdom.



AA GRAPEVINE TRADITIONS CHECKLIST

Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

1. Do I ever give the impression that there really is an “AA opinion” on doctors? Psychiatrists? Churches? Hospitals? Jails? Alcohol? Prescribed medications? Other drugs? Other 12-Step programs? Vitamins? Al-Anon? The federal or state government?
2. Can I honestly share my own personal experience concerning any of those without giving the impression that I’m stating the “AA opinion”?
3. What in AA history gave rise to our Tenth Tradition?
4. What would AA be without this Tradition? Where would I be?
5. Do I breach this or any of its supporting Traditions in subtle, perhaps unconscious, ways?
6. How can I manifest the spirit of this Tradition in my personal life outside AA? Inside AA?
7. Should the meeting secretary intervene to remind AA members about this Tradition if a member starts criticizing one political party compared to others or favoring a religion over others?

CONCEPT TEN:

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority—the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Clarity of Roles, Responsibility and Authority is Vital

I bet the company you work for believes this as well. No effective and successful business can run without it. A.A. has gone to great lengths to ensure there is final/ultimate authority and to define where it lies should any “course correction” ever be needed.

This Concept suggests that providing trusted servants with clearly defined jobs and the authority to do those jobs is equally important.

This is where the idea of the “group conscience” as ultimate authority and the “trusted servant” as delegated authority clearly cross paths and need each other to function.

“To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and to discharge their clear responsibilities.”

The text above is an excerpt from the A.A. conference approved pamphlet (P8) The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated.

GROUP CONTRIBUTIONS SEPTEMBER 2023

September 2023	Group Name	Contribution
09/01/2023	Early Birds	100.00
09/07/2023	Cathlamet Group	218.45
09/08/2023	Lighthouse	50.00
09/08/2023	Men's Eastside	250.00
09/08/2023	Men's Eastside	34.00
09/13/2023	Around Town Group	20.00
09/13/2023	Happy Joyous & Free	200.00
09/14/2023	Friday Night Happy Hour	100.00
09/14/2023	First Shot	191.96
09/14/2023	Camas Group	25.73
09/15/2023	Rock Bottom Recovery	25.00
09/18/2023	Grays River Grateful	75.00
09/21/2023	Sunday Solutions	153.60
09/21/2023	Miracles at Noon	171.00
09/24/2023	Anchor Point Counseling	10.00 pp
09/24/2023	Townhouse	50.00 pp
09/24/2023	Round Table AA	300.00 pp
09/25/2023	Fresh Start	90.00
Individual Contributions		75.00 pp

Upcoming Events

October 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 Steering Committee Mtg. 6pm	10	11 Archives 5:30 pm	12	13 Grapevine 4-5 pm	14 District #27 Business Mtg.
15	16 IG Rep Mtg. 6pm	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 District #37 Business Mtg. 7 pm	25	26 District #7 Business Mtg. 7 pm	27	28
29	30	31				

Archives Corner

June 2023



The First Annual Full Archives Display & Longtimer's Panel was a success! Our Vancouver Archivist, Penny D. and the Archives Committee, Paul J., Chair, along with the Committee members from Districts 7 & 37, loved this venue and had a lot of fun sharing our rich history along with local longtimers' presentations. We can't wait to see more of you next year!!

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!

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,

Vancouver AA Archives Committee

TREATMENT AND FACILITIES

Carry the Message VOL 2

There is no doubt in my mind that getting involved in treatment panels has helped me stay sober. I'm the type of alcoholic that needs both accountability and to get outside myself. Besides getting a sponsor, taking the twelve steps, and starting my road to recovery with ninety meetings in ninety days; getting involved in treatment panels has been key in my spiritual growth. At seven months sober my sponsor signed me up for a panel at a local detox facility. I was excited to try something new, but also uncomfortable and nervous. Prior to sharing on this panel my experience speaking in front of people was limited. I was unsure if I could carry a message with "depth and weight" (as Dr. Silkworth describes in the *Doctor's Opinion*), but my sponsor encouraged me to give it a try.

At this point in my recovery, I was working through the ninth step: direct amends to all persons I had harmed. I was living at a friend's house because my marriage was in its last days.

This transitional period of my life was the most emotional and revolutionary days I have experienced. Service work was exactly what I needed at that time. I am grateful that my sponsor pushed me to do something outside of my comfort zone.

After finishing that first detox panel I felt better about my abilities to share my experience, strength, and hope with others who suffer from the same condition. It also made me feel like I was giving back. The program as outlined in the Big Book of A.A. along with a higher power, and the fellowship had, at this point, pulled me back to some semblance of sanity. The next month I volunteered for the same panel. I realized that inspiring hope in others would only be a byproduct of keeping myself sober. Selfish altruism, that is the paradox of AA.

The next month the Treatment and Facilities Coordinator position at my home group became vacant and I volunteered to fill it. The group required at least 9 months of sobriety, and I was two weeks away from that requirement. The group made an exception and I have been serving in the role for nearly a year.

My home group now organizes two treatment panels every month and a third in months with five Wednesdays. It is by far the most fulfilling service work I have been involved with. There are so many still suffering in our local treatment facilities and beyond. You can spark change and inspire hope!

Getting involved with treatment panels is a great way to give back and keep what you have. We all have stories of hope to share. Your story may save someone's life. If you are afraid of sharing your story, ask God for the courage to change. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

If you are interested in volunteering, or just want more information on what we are doing for treatment centers, please contact the District Seven Committee Chair, Matt G. at

dis7treatment@area72aa.org.

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)

