

# Speakeasy



Alcoholics Anonymous All South Bay Central Office Newsletter

Winter Issue 2020

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*The Speakeasy is published by the All South Bay Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous. Opinions expressed are those of the writers/contributors and not of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole or of Central Office. We welcome and need your input, opinions, humor and comments. Send them today.*

## “Gratitude as the Antidote to Despair”

One day, I walked into a women’s group meeting at a private home in Torrance, CA. I was holding back tears. Everything was falling apart. Or so it seemed. And when I shared, the tears flowed. My worst fear was coming to life, or rather, my worst fear was being brought to life by my very sick brain because I didn’t want to face reality as it is/was. I shared with this group of women how I was preparing for the fight of my life. A custody battle with my ex-husband after it was clear (in my mind) my daughter was being hurt. I was afraid and every word that came out of my mouth spoke my fears into existence. After I shared, the hostess of the meeting shared something about gratitude. I do not recall her exact words, but she revealed one major lesson apparently, every AA could benefit from: gratitude is the antidote to despair. As soon as she said it, something in my brain shifted.

In November 2020 I started a gratitude challenge: everyday, I text a couple of my sobriety sisters three things I’m grateful for. And the ladies text something back that they are each grateful for. Perhaps it was this practice that allowed me to face this battle. I returned to the scene of the crime in the middle of Winter.

Each day, I ask myself: “What is good in my life?” Today, I am grateful for my daughter who is my best teacher. I am grateful to have arrived safely to face my family afterward. I am grateful for all the people who loved me back to life—who shared their time, shared their stories, their money, their access to resources, and are still doing so. I am grateful that my regular meetings are just a Zoom call away. I am grateful that I am able to keep my service commitment, hosting a Zoom AA meeting. I am grateful for my new family, the members and non-members who call to check on me. They care, they really care! There are really good people in the world!

The good doctor wrote: “Here and there,

once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me these occurrences are phenomena. They

*“A complete change takes place in our approach to life. Where we used to run from responsibility, we find ourselves accepting it with gratitude...”*

“Keys to the Kingdom” Alcoholics Anonymous

appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them” (Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 28).

When Sponsors suggested I move back to the Midwest in 2018 and 2019, I balked. Something had to shift in me to make me willing to do something I once dreaded. My sobriety date is May 21, 2016. I recall an old-timer once stating plainly: “Alcoholism is a disease of perception.” It took 4.5 years but with the support of my tribe and the tools of recovery, I’m showing up.

I am grateful for the opportunity to edit and prepare the Speakeasy newsletter. That service work has helped me to grow immeasurably. Gratitude. Gratitude. Use it. It works!

—El P., Torrance, CA to Dayton, OH

In my first 90 days of sobriety, I heard a speaker say, “I stay in gratitude because grateful alcoholics don’t get drunk.” And I remember thinking, “I wonder what that means. Am I grateful?” I knew I didn’t want

to get drunk again, but I wasn’t entirely sure what he meant. It then occurred to me, “I could ask him.”

Jim was his name. He was a plumber in the Verde Valley in AZ. He asked me, “Are you glad you didn’t get up with a hangover today? Are you glad that you didn’t ruin something (or worse) somebody last night? Are you glad you’re here and not in jail, hospital, or dead?” I had to admit that yes, I was glad for all of those things, but I didn’t think about being grateful for them. He then said, “Not everybody gets to stay here, but those who do are usually pretty grateful to be here and that makes it a lot easier to stick around. Take action (meeting commitment) be grateful (thank those in service), and help (listen to) somebody else.”

Today when I struggle, writing a gratitude list is always a great start. I put sobriety at the top, because without that, all bets are off. When I’m done I move around and do some sort of exercise. If I don’t get relief, I reverse the order and then if nothing is changing, I ask for help. Move first, write second, call third. Sometimes I’ll even pray and meditate!

Some days I don’t want recovery, I want relief. That’s when I have to remember that recovery will take me to relief. I just need to work at it a little bit, use the tools, and Rule #62!

—Jim H., Redondo Beach

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<b>Step, Tradition &amp; Concept</b>		
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Step</b> “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”</p> <p><b>Tradition</b> “Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”</p> <p><b>Concept</b> “The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.”</p>	<p><b>All South Bay Central Office</b> 1411 Marcelina Ave Torrance, CA 90501 Open 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., M-F 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Sat &amp; Sun Web site: www.southbayaa.org Email: info@southbayaa.org Phone: (310) 618-1180</p>
		<p><b>Board of Directors</b> 4th Tuesday of the month 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>Currently meeting via ZOOM Meeting ID: 949 9677 6629 Password: 254568 Phone: (310) 618-1180</p>
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Step</b> “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.”</p> <p><b>Tradition</b> “Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.”</p> <p><b>Concept</b> “The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.”</p>	<p><b>Intergroup</b> 4th Tuesday of the month 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Currently meeting via ZOOM Meeting ID: 949 9677 6629 Password: 254568 Phone: (310) 618-1180</p>
		<p><b>District 1</b> 2nd Tuesday of the month 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>Currently meeting via ZOOM Meeting ID: 929 014 8764 Password: panel70 (all lowercase) Phone: (310) 740-2963</p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Step</b> “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”</p> <p><b>Tradition</b> “A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”</p> <p><b>Concept</b> “Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.”</p>	<p><b>District 3</b> 2nd Tuesday of the month 7:30 p.m.</p> <p>District 3 participants are currently being invited to attend District 1 Meetings Phone: (310) 971-8847</p>
		<p><b>Hospitals &amp; Institutions</b> 3rd Tuesday of the month 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>Currently meeting via ZOOM Meeting ID: 845 7790 5484 Password: service Phone: (310) 707-5606</p>
<p><b>“We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed, has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us, or if you prefer, ‘a design for living’ that really works.” (p. 28)</b></p> <p><b>“We want to leave you with the feeling that no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.” (p. 113)</b></p> <p>—Alcoholics Anonymous</p>		<p><b>The General Service Office</b> P.O. Box 459 Grand Central Station, NY 10163 Phone: (212) 870-3400</p>

# A Grateful Journey Into The Light

The topic of my gratitude is Dr. Dorothy Grum, the doctor that helped bring me into the world. Not only was she there when I was born, she was there when I got sober. She was my Eskimo. My first attempt at getting sober lasted 18 months. The second lasted 3.5 years. It was after the second attempt that I called her office at 6AM.

I was actually hoping she would prescribe something to take the edge off a 28-hour binge. What she did suggest was that I go to A.A. I replied, "Not those people again; they tell these sad stories and then laugh." I still hadn't been able to see any similarities, just differences. Then she said something I will never forget as long as I have a mind to remember. She told me, "I have the same problem you do, and I know people that have been sober for thirty and forty years. Won't you please give it a try for me."

I don't know about anybody else's doctor, but she always made one feel like they were the most important person in the world when she spoke with you. That for me was the program in action for the first time. It was that attraction to A.A. by her warmth, sincerity, and just the kindness of who she had become after many years of sobriety. She was smart too because she prescribed a placebo, knowing anything else would be abused. I remember being at home waiting for this placebo to take effect when an earthquake hit. The thought entered my mind "I hope this is the big one and the house just crashes in on me." I haven't felt that way since.

I would visit Dr. Grum in the early years of my sobriety, just to let her know I was doing well. She would say things like how proud she was of me and how nice it was that I would come by her office to visit. It could not have been any easier to look in on someone who genuinely cared about others so much.

When Dr. Grum passed, my mother asked if I could take her to the services, which was about a 3-hour drive from her home. After all, Dr. Grum had delivered 3 of my mother's 4 sons. It was standing room only. We were told she had delivered over 2,500 babies in her career. That was her job. But it was the fact she saw these births as God's gifts; she certainly treated people that way.

After the services I spoke to Dr. Grum's husband and her son about what she had done for me, and that now it was my turn to carry the message to others. After all, shouldn't gratitude move you into action for what was so freely given? When we speak of those who passed on who have meant so very

much to us, I believe it honors their lives and efforts. What a wonderful legacy Dr. Dorothy Grum passed onto me, and I now have the privilege to carry the message to others with gratitude for what was done for me.

—Tim T., Redondo Beach, CA

Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us. One day my sponsor said to me, "You praise me all the time. Thank God for using me to help you. Don't thank me. Thank God." One alcoholic talking to another. I am glad I placed my hand in the hand of another alcoholic. My sponsor then made a few suggestions:

First, read the book, go to your meetings, and pray. Walk with God and talk with God. Second, she said, "you have been a taker in AA. It's now time for you to give back to AA. Give back to God, others, and AA. Get involved with the district. Ask your meeting if you can be the General Service Rep for your meeting." Through God's grace and the gift of willingness I followed these simple suggestions.

I became a District Commitment Member and the Public Information Chair. I had the opportunity to travel for AA to attend the Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA). Thousands of Alcoholics from the Pacific region all there for a common purpose. It was all about service in AA. What a gift! A simple suggestion to get involved with AA, God and others. I fell in love with service and AA.

After many years in AA on my recovery journey, my sponsor then suggested that I attend a Big Book Workshop. I did not want to do it; it was a year commitment. My sponsor said, "It is only a suggestion. I love you either way." One of my greatest fears was the fear of losing my mind and one day a friend placed a prayer on my seat at a meeting. The prayer read, "God I don't want it. God, I do not like it. God has a plan for my life. Thank you, God." I kept the prayer in my Big Book. Wow, what a gift. I was blown away. I did not know; I did not see. Cancer of the soul.

The outcome of the workshop showed me that I did it to myself. Something good and my pride and ego and dis-ease made it worse with time. I kept busy with the Big Book workshop. What a miracle in the Steps! God gave me the inspiration to finally face the issues in my sober life. A simple suggestion to do the workshop directly from the book. I am Free from the bondage of self. The chain has

been broken. The program, the Steps, the Big Book—it works! God did answer my prayers. Thank you, God!

A final suggestion: "Go out there and help a newcomer." You cannot keep it unless you give it away. Love of life, people, God and the AA way of life is the message that is deep inside of my wonderful sponsor, Susan B. She is such a great example of unconditional love and is more than willing to share the joy, love and hope with anyone she meets on the road of recovery. Thank you, God! Thank you Sponsor, and Thank you AA! How sweet it is!

—Donna C., Torrance, CA

I learned about gratitude from things going wrong. In early sobriety, there were so many things, in my perspective, going wrong. Things that were difficult to handle in my overly sensitive state at that time. And the problems begat problems. In other words, one problem set my head spinning in a downward spiral with a list of everything that appeared impossible to solve. With luck and divine wisdom, I had a sponsor who gently and lovingly guided me out of my self-imposed misery. It felt like punishment at first with all the demanding tasks of daily life in addition to staying sober. After hearing my woe-is-me tales, she would strongly suggest making a gratitude list. I wanted to be sober, and she knew how to stay sober, so I did what she suggested. I would reluctantly break out the thousand-pound pen and notebook and start my list.

At first, my list included things that alluded to other problems. For example, I listed Tylenol. I was grateful for Tylenol because I had a headache all the time. I would take my list to her, and she would say, "great job!" Then we would talk about the list. I discovered that my headaches were from too much sugar and lack of sleep. A self-imposed problem. She would tell me to keep my list and refer to it when things would go sideways. Over time, I made many lists like this. The items on my gratitude lists changed from pain relievers and material things to milestones, and blessings, the Twelve Steps, and for the people who helped me every step of the way. I don't live in a state of gratitude all the time, but I also don't stay in the dark for as long either. Without gratitude, I would not be able to stay sober. Having gratitude calibrates my spiritual condition and allows me to be useful in this business of recovery, and for that, I am super grateful.

—Nancy W-S., Sobriety Date 10/08/1993

# Ashley's Story

I grew up in a household of seven, my parents, four siblings and me. Early on I always saw my Dad drinking downstairs and my Mother crying in the closet upstairs. At the time I wasn't aware of whether she was crying, hiding, or just cleaning her walk-in closet because the door was always shut. My dad worked all day. My Mom worked some of the day, and for the most part my older siblings oversaw my well-being.

When we started to have more dinners going out, my Dad would order these colorful drinks that I later found out were margaritas. At a very young age he would always sneak me some and say don't let anyone see. The moment I tasted the sweetness of a strawberry martini I fell in love with it. I also knew early I was doing something that I shouldn't. The taste was very enticing—the mischievousness was like a rush and I yearned for every time we went out to eat when my Dad would sneak to the side to give me a taste of alcohol. I was Daddy's little girl and I felt bonded to him.

One day my life was turned completely upside down. My Mom left my Dad when I was in 7th Grade. Things went downhill from there. The night she decided to leave I had no warning. I remember being ripped from his arms holding on as we both were in tears crying. The next day all the furniture was packed and sent from our two-story house to a two-bedroom apartment. To put it clearly, my Dad is and was a heavy alcohol drinker and my Mother was suffering through depression and deep sadness everyday trying to hide it from me and my siblings. Her way of giving us a chance in life to thrive was to leave her husband of over 25 years. So how did this impact my future to become who I am today? From what I have gathered from my memories, my Dad and I became distant since my mother left and I constantly sought his love and validation. And when my need for his love and validation went unmet, I was lost at the age of 13 and I became a challenging kid to deal with, for my whole family, until adulthood.

I started drinking heavily during freshman year of college. I was sexually abused at the age of 18 by my boyfriend at the time. I tried leaving him multiple times and he made it clear one night why I couldn't leave him, but eventually I did, and after that I attracted more complex intimate relationships where I had the desire to just be loved and consciously and unconsciously gave my body

freely, partied all the time and got blacked out drunk countless times. What really made me feel concerned I may have a problem was a situation I only heard stories about, but never thought it would happen to me. I woke up in an a hotel with my clothes off and I couldn't remember a thing that happened. The information I found out had me back to feeling that same violation I felt when I was raped at 18. I was so upset that I allowed my drinking the night before to get so out of hand I lost control and was unconscious leaving my body and well-being at the hands of a man I would have never entertained in my consciousness. Am I like my Dad? Do I have an alcohol problem? I was going to test it out more, because I was so traumatized. For two years I did not drink. I didn't work a program or know much about AA either. What I did come to believe is: "See I'm not an alcoholic. I stopped on my own I must be able to drink now and control it."

At 25 years old, I decided to start drinking again. After all, it was my big 25th Birthday and I'm on a cruise. That was when my alcoholism really started to show itself. Once I start I cant stop; once I stop I cant stay stopped, as I later learned after I read it in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had no idea how rapidly the disease had progressed. I became involved in more toxic abusive relationships and alcohol and sex was our foundation. I sought therapy after realizing that the child who grew up in chaos was making a chaotic mess of her own life, encountering more risky situations and enduring a deep emotional pain. I sought comfort in men, women, food, working out to the point of extreme competing. The biggest perpetrator was, alcohol.

I started realizing the help of therapy. I wanted to be fixed, to feel good, but nothing was working and I was losing myself in everything and everyone. That little girl who wanted to feel loved, developed this hero-syndrome where I wanted to save people, and I couldn't even save myself. I developed this people-pleasing mentality where no one was really pleased with my behavior. Then I tried AA. What could I lose since I was already losing. I walked into the rooms, but I would still go here and there drinking, thinking I had everything under control. I tried not mixing dark with light. I tried switching from hard alcohol to beer. I tried counting alcohol percentages. Then it happened: I got a DUI, went to jail and the light turned on for a bit. Already having AA in my

head from the meetings I went to, I decided to slow down. I just Ubered instead of driving on my own, so I could drink as much I wanted.

One day, I Ubered to a bar and woke up not remembering how I Ubered home, and that was because I didn't. Later a friend told me that I had taken advantage of him and he had to take me home because I was too drunk and aggressive. I was mortified! Had I become my abusers—the one doing the abusing?

Fast-forward to my last drink. I was in, yet again, another toxic relationship where I wanted out. Then my grandma passed and my life changed. On December 8th, she transitioned and I binged to the point of attempting to harm myself. I felt such deep pain, I wanted to jump in front of a car. Something stopped me. I called my sister and was able to get back to the house, sleep off the alcohol and decided on December 20, 2017 after my grandmas funeral, she would not want me to go out like that. On that day, I decided to dive into the program of AA and I have been sober ever since.

One day at a time, doing what is suggested, but most importantly keeping an open mind and heart to allow myself to be changed. It is a daily reprieve and some days are harder than others but I have tools today and I know the solution that works if I actually do what is necessary to allow it to work for me. It is not an easy journey but looking back I can say: "I grew up with a dad who drank, but I am not my Dad. And my mother who I thought always needed saving, I don't have to have the responsibility of saving." I am a vessel that is being used by my Higher Power and I no longer have to try to run my own life. I have so many more moments of freedom I get to experience today thanks to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and me being willing to seek help.

—Ashley P., Carson



# Gene E., A.A. # 28: “The Booze Fighter”

Good evening friends, I'm Gene, I'm powerless over alcohol, an alcoholic. I'm very glad to be here and I appreciate your asking me to come down. I've been interested in quite a few of the attendees of this Group, and I used to see them over at the homes where they hold their meetings. We old-timers have been here a while, but it is certainly wonderful to see the new people coming in and getting to understand what the program is and working it. Recently at the Hawthorne Speakers Meeting, the leader called on those who had 30 days or less, to stand up. Twenty-seven arose, twenty-seven new people in AA for the first month. That brought back memories of me when I reached AA on July 4th weekend of 1939. I was the 28th AA member, according to Bill Wilson, in AA.

In the Big Book, it says the first “hundred” had recovered, but the book also told you later, that was erroneous. The reason they did that is, they were anticipating they would reach one hundred members. Well, don't laugh, that stuff was written to sell, and Bill had no idea it would become what it did. Bill and a fellow named Hank Parkhurst wrote it, it belonged to them, until we got the national Alcoholic Foundation. The Foundation demanded the book and Bill and Hank let them have it.

When I reached AA, there were only three people in New York including Bill Wilson, that had better than two years sobriety. Bill had four, Parkhurst had three, and Fizzie Mayo had two. There were less than ten of us around New York. So our meetings for nearly a year, weren't meetings. It was just gatherings. We'd get together, Bill would lead, and we'd talk back and forth to Bill.

I'll tell you how they got away from the Oxford Group, if you don't mind. See, for the first four years, it was religion, strictly. These boys took me in, and they talked about an occasion when they had made a call on a certain fellow, and then one of them had to leave. The other one asked, “Would you pray for this Brother?”—just like Methodists, Baptists, or anyone else steeped in religion might say.

Well, it happened a few of them were attending the Oxford Group in New York, including Bill, because they weren't affiliated with a church. But some of the other boys were going to Protestant Churches, the Catholic Church, and others, two or three of them. I went to the Oxford Group with those boys; wouldn't be over two or three of us at a time. The ladies, wives, would go in and sit down, out the men would come, smoke cigarettes, talk about baseball, everything. But they were not stressing their experience of drinking. They weren't getting religion there, it was spiritual. They were studying the Lord's Prayer, and “Sermon on the Mount” by Emmett Fox. We used

“Sermon on the Mount” for a couple of years after we got our Big Book. That's where they got the idea for the formation of our Program. And the reason they didn't bring Jesus Christ into the Program is, they wanted it to be spiritual. Practically all religions practice the principles that we are practicing in AA. But we don't say “Christ” in it. They wanted everyone who came in here, not be offended from a religious standpoint. Now if a person of the Jewish faith would come in, and hear Jesus Christ discussed, he wouldn't feel comfortable, don't you see? And they got that idea out of “Sermon on the Mount.”

What I want to get back to now, is myself. I did not learn in AA, or since I got to AA, that I should give up the use of alcohol. I didn't learn it. It was my drinking record and experience in the using of alcohol. I was ready to give up the use of it because I couldn't handle it, knew I couldn't, and I was missing the better things in life, when I was 22 years old. I'd already gone through that “Gene, you oughta quit, you're making a mess out of yourself, you can't handle it,” from my brother or someone close to myself. And then they began to say, “Gene, you should quit, you're getting a reputation, getting an image here.” I was a black sheep against the family, all that stuff. People wouldn't leave me alone.

Well, I began then to quit, because that woke me up. By George, I am missing some things. My friends and contemporaries, people I went through school with, was raised with, one of them introduced me to AA later. He and I were the drunks of the city. They'd be playing poker with the crowd, the next thing you know I'd hear they had another game, but they wouldn't invite me. That is all they would do. They drank, too, but chances are I was so drunk they couldn't have the game. Then things like parties; I was being left out. I'm missing some of the better things. That hurts. I was getting the image that I will never do well, a boy you can't depend on, and those things hurt me. I didn't feel I deserved that. But I did have sense enough to know that because of my drinking, I was missing things.

By the time I was 22, I wanted to quit drinking, not for that weekend, or that night, but forever. I'd had enough and saw that I was going to have to, to get along. I had no one to talk to, like you do. Now, people come to AA, we share our experiences. Lots of time I would contemplate asking the people I worked for, “Would you pay me on Monday, rather than on Saturday noon?” I didn't want to go through all that trouble. Then they would say, “Well, why don't you just quit drinking? You don't need to wait 'till Monday.” Nobody understood us.

So I tried. And then the old Underwood Act, many of the older people will remember, the Nation was going dry. I was 24 years of age and I was

one of the happiest young men in America. A problem of mine was gonna be solved. After July the Fourth, there will be no booze. I believed it; I drank right up to it. My friend bought booze, he got a supply for use after Prohibition. I didn't want any. I will never forget coming down the steps of the hotel there in Owensboro, KY. My friend was in the lobby and said, “Gene, how 'bout one?” I said sure, I thought it was from his reserve liquor. Instead of that, he walked across the floor of the hotel, right into the bar, which was open as usual. My heart sank, I'm not kidding you a bit. For the first time, I lost confidence in my government. And I knew that there was nothing in front of me now but to continue the drunken, hard life I was living. I had a lot of pride, unwarranted, but because of my conduct, the way I was acting, I didn't deserve it. So I had to drink on until I reached the age of 44, in 1939.

I used to quit drinking, I'd want to quit, this is the last time. A fellow would offer me a drink and I'd tell him, “No, I'm on the wagon.” They would ask me, “How long have you been on the wagon?” My stock reply was, “If I can make this until day after tomorrow, it'll be three days.” I never once got by the next drink. And I've never in my life taken a drink of liquor I didn't want, drunk or sober. But I turned drinks down long before I ever heard of AA. I would happen to run into a friend, “Gene, how 'bout one, I'll split it with you?” I hadn't had anything to drink, I'd say, “No, you take it.” Why? Because there wasn't any liquor to back that up. That's why I believe we are born alcoholic. I believe we are physically different from the others, because of this physical allergy. I believe that, and that helps keep me sober.

The first memory I had of alcohol, I was too young to know what it was. I was about 7 or 8 years old, going to school in Shawnee, OK—grade school. It used to be the custom for parents to invite other children, to come home with their children, to play after school. I was invited to go over with a little boy and his brother and sister. And of course mothers always had some food for the young ones. Well, I went in and I had something, I didn't know what it was, but brother, I liked it. Came out of a big fifth. But I was too young to know what it was. Now I had to be a con-artist. I did every damn thing I could, hoping these kids would invite me to go back and play with them.

Then a little later, I was around 10 or 12 years old, a little friend of mine's family had a party the night before, had the old punch bowl of egg-nog. Well, the family were all sleeping, we kids were up early, and we got in this punch bowl. Brother, that's the same stuff I had before. That kick and that glow, you know? Boy I liked it, and I remember how I used to, every New Years or

(continued on the next page...)

# Gene E., A.A. # 28: "The Booze Fighter" cont'd...

any time of the year they were going to have that punch bowl, I'd highball it down there, hoping I might get in on that. So, those things make me believe and know, and believe in myself, that you are born with it. I've known people that had hay fever from a certain pollen. The stuff would get into their bodies, they would breathe it in, might be pollen from a plant or a flower, and until they came in contact with it, they had no trouble. But once they do, their eyes begin watering, their faces swell. And they have no choice except to suffer until they find what the cause is, and then leave it alone. Well, that's physical. I don't believe anyone becomes an alcoholic from the excessive use of alcohol. And I don't believe anyone becomes a diabetic from eating a hell of a lot of sugar and candy. You have to develop it, if you know what I mean. These are just my opinions.

My brother used to tell me, "Gene, why don't you determine your capacity, and just drink to it, and then leave it alone?" I said, "Nat, I always get drunk before I reach my capacity." And that's the truth. I was nothing but walking misery during those years. I got to be unemployable. Then I reached AA through this friend of mine. We went through school together. We had known each other since we were 9 years of age. Well now, anything was going on, Paul and I was usually the drunks, I thought I had missed Paul. I was in Hoboken, New Jersey and Paul was in New York, and we had been drinking together two or three years.

All of a sudden, I wondered what happened to him. I was dead drunk and I called him up. He talked, and next thing you know, his wife is on the phone, Gussie. And Gussie wanted to know where I was. I said, "I'm at the plant in Hoboken." She asked if Paul could meet me and if I could come out and spend the weekend. I said, "But Gussie, I'm drunk." She said, "That's alright." I never heard that before in my life, it was alright to be drunk. Usually when Paul was in the doghouse with her, from drinking, she was blaming me, "Paul, if you'd just stay away from that Edmiston boy, you'd be all right." And now she says it's all right for me to be drunk.

My sister used to blame my association with Paul for my downfall. I resented that because I felt I had sense enough to know what I wanted to do, not just to do something because of Paul. So I finally asked, "Gussie, are Paul's daughters at home?" Paul had two daughters in High School, they knew I was Paul's life-long friend, and I didn't want them to see me in the condition I was in. I preferred to be there when I was sober.

It wasn't too long after that I got a phone call at the plant where I was working. They were giving me enough to live on, they gave me a broom and cut me loose in the plant. I wasn't doing anything, just standing around. The fel-

low who hired me was another friend of mine. If he had gotten rid of me, I don't know what I would have done. I was unemployable, I had lost all, I couldn't stay sober.

When I was 44 years old and reached AA, I didn't have next week's room rent. That was about \$3.00 per week. This was in the 30's during the Depression. One day they called me to the phone, and there was Gussie. She and Paul invited me out for July the 4th weekend, 1939. I accepted, this must have been early in the week. As soon as I put the phone down, I did as I'd usually do anytime I'd accepted something I knew I couldn't fulfill, I'd fight with myself. And I had a problem. I had to be sober this next weekend. I was to meet Paul in New York at the RKO Building. We were going out to the ball game. So that Friday morning, I got up, I didn't drink anything, stayed there all day, didn't take a drink, walked the street, afraid I was going to lay awake all night. I had to have a drink to sleep on. Then a little bit after that, I was toying with the idea, but I had to stay off of it, keep sober tomorrow. Then I thought, uh-oh, the bars are going to close. So now I had two problems. Boy that's fighting it; I wanted that drink, yet I wanted to be sober. Finally I gave in and went across the street to have a drink or two, to sleep on. That was around midnight, and the bars in Hoboken closed at 2. By the time the bar closed, I was as usual helping the bartender put up the chairs, drunk as I'd ever been.

The next morning I wake up, my eyeballs on my cheeks, and I had this appointment to get over there by 10:30 or 11:00. On my mantelpiece were some cans of beer. I don't usually drink beer, but had some just in case I needed a night cap. There had been six or seven, but there weren't but two of them left. So of course I went, but I kept drinking. I had lived in New York, and in New York in those subways, you could quickly get off, get a drink, get back and catch the next train. By the time I arrived in New York I was quite loaded.

When I got there, there was my friend Paul. He had two guys with him. Seedy-looking, britches worn out and all, and they were talking, smiling, going to the ball game, yet I'm drunk. "...Easy does it, first things first", a lot of stuff they were saying. I wondered, "What the hell goes here?" Anyway, I managed to get to the ball park and Paul finally said, "Gene, how about not drinking until we get home, and I'll go out and get a bottle?" I took him up on that. I didn't drink and after the game, we got on the Lackawanna train and off we set.

Well, Gussie met us at the end of the line. She drove us I don't know where, but I knew I was out in the country. I was talking to Paul a while and Gussie came in and she told me, "Gene, you know Paul hasn't had a drink in over a year?" I said, "Gussie, that's wonderful! And Gussie,

I want you to know this; you need never fear when Paul is with me, I'll not encourage him to take a drink." And I meant that. I had no idea.

The next morning, Paul took me across the way to a little park and told me what had happened. He said he was meeting with some fellows over there, they were not drinking, and he had over a year. I said, "Why didn't you tell me?" And he said he was afraid I'd misunderstand. He said, "you can go over there, maybe there's something for you, maybe not." But he also asked, "Do you want to quit drinking? . . . Why do you want to quit drinking?" When I told him I really wanted to, that I'd been wanting to for years, he said I might come over and we'll see how it worked, and if I wanted it I could come back. So I went over there and I met these fellows. They didn't tell me a darn thing that I had to do. They told me what they had to do. They told me that they had to change their entire way of living.

After explaining the disease; physical allergy coupled with the obsession of the mind. And then they told me they had to give up the old ideas. And they told me how they were able to do it, explained the inventory to me. They told me what they were doing, they left me with a choice. Maybe if I do what they do, I could have what they have. No one told me a thing. And that's the way they left me. The guy that most encouraged me to stop drinking, that I might be able to do it, this fellow didn't have a drink for a week. I came back, "Well how am I going to sleep?" He said, "I have been awake all night long, all week long. I haven't had a drink. You got to be willing to hurt, to get it. You danced, now you're paying the fiddler. One drink is not going to help you." I was afraid of the shakes, I said, "A drink is the only thing that will stop it." And they said, "If you want what we have, you've got to be willing to hurt, and a drink is liable to reduce the desire."

So, thanks to them, they didn't tell me what I had to do. I stayed with them, kept calling them back, they simply shared their experience. They told me their situation and what they were doing, and I knew they were sober. I believed in them and they believed in me. I found understanding, something I never had before, because I understood them and I felt they understood me. There's nobody I ever met, who comes here, sincerely means it, and wants it, and just did his part, who failed in AA. Keep an open mind, know yourself, and take that inventory. Eliminate your bad habits, defects of character. If you'll do that, you won't have to take another drink in all your life, and you are going to experience a life you never dreamed you could have enjoyed. Thank you.

—Adapted from a transcription by John M., from the Anniversary 'Old-Timers' Meeting South Bay Survivors Group Redondo Beach, CA., circa 1977.

# ASBCO Bulletin Board



**IMPORTANT:** Central Office is in desperate need of updated meeting information and group contacts. If your group is still hosting Zoom meetings please call Central Office at (310) 618-1180 to offer updated Zoom Meeting IDs and Passwords. If your group has face to face meetings following COVID protocols, please update Central Office stating the meeting place, time, and expectations for safety.



Phone Volunteers! We need you! There are still lots of open slots for permanent phone volunteers and back-up phone volunteers at Central Office. We will teach you how to work the phones and learn to listen and direct calls appropriately. Please call us or visit our website at southbayaa.org to sign up.



The Central Office Board of Directors will be conducting Service Outreach by visiting your meetings. You can help by asking about whether or not your meeting has a current CSR or GSR and volunteer to be one.

South Bay H&I is currently hosting panels through Shawl House, Thelma McMillan, and House of Hope both physically and via Zoom. As long as the current situation persists there are opportunities to be a panel leader.

Central Office and H&I need your attention and participation!



The holidays are here! Thank you to all who helped keep the Central Office afloat during hard times. We need your continued support and financial contributions. What are you grateful for today? How can you give back? Don't forget you can purchase literature and gifts from Central Office.

## 05 WAYS TO PRACTICE GRATITUDE



**01** Start a gratitude journal



**02** Call, visit or send notes to those you are grateful for



**03** Anticipate the unexpected blessings that are already on their way



**04** Hold a monthly gratitude circle



**05** Remember times of hardship and be grateful to have moved on



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## Got a story to tell?

We are looking for 250 to 500-word articles (1-2 pages typed, single-spaced). Share your experience, strength and hope. Tell us how your journey got started, where you are today, what you are grateful for in recovery, or send stories about your personal triumphs/struggles in sobriety.

We welcome your contributions via  
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