

Sobriety Sentinel

APRIL 2022 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

It's time again for the Spring Fling!

by **ANDREW H**
Group 968

It's hard to say what the best part of this year's Spring Fling convention will be.

Could be the opening night barbecue and ice cream social, with inspiring words from heavy-hitting AA circuit speaker Chris R, who also leads the Saturday afternoon workshop on the topic of being "Willing to Go to Any Lengths."

Could be the Saturday night banquet dinner, featuring speaker Karl M of California, followed by late-night dancing while a DJ spins tunes.

Could be the assemblage of hundreds of sober alcoholics and Al-Anons, many local but some making their annual trip from surrounding areas both relatively near and surprisingly far.

Could be the weekend- getaway aspect, leaving the mundane and the stressful at home while wearing plush robes late- night, watching premium cable, ordering room service, whatever it is you people do when you unwind.

Could be the Al-Anon luncheon, the marathon meeting room, the activities and game room, the archives room, the hospitality room, the Saturday morning speaker panel, the table trivia, the Young Person's speaker, the washers, bingo and other games, the spiritual speaker, or any number of things.

But in my opinion, the best part will be seeing you there after you not only decide to come but also to visit your regular AA meetings before the event, and some meetings you've never been to, and announce to those gathered that you are going and that they should too, and that all any of you will have to do to get registered is visit SpringFlingSTL.com.

Pre-registration is only \$15 for the Spring Fling convention at the Airport Hilton, April 22-24.

Visit SpringFlingSTL.com now to reserve your spot!



The Dark Past

**Don't dwell on it
Don't forget it**

by **JOHN A**
Group 164

When I was drinking and drugging, I kept a journal. I found that old journal again a few weeks ago, buried in a low-traffic desk. I couldn't help but read its insane, horrible accounts, and my first thought was, *I wouldn't want my children to find this.* Each daily entry was more awful than the one before it. Descriptions of immoral, insane, and depraved actions.

My denial would tell me, decades ago, that if I just wrote stuff down each day, I would magically come to my senses and stop my self-destruction. I was dark, out of control, spiritually dead and despondent, void of any hope.

Reading those entries now, I'm frightened to confront the insanity not only of the addiction but of the accompanying daily behavior designed both to hide my alcohol and drug addiction from the

people who loved me and simply to survive. It was sometimes difficult and painful for current me to recognize the past me who had written those words.

In one day's entry, my desperation was expressed in the poem below.

*To stop
I flopped
I tried
I cried
It's not fun
There's only crumbs
I feel so dumb
If this was a run
I only got numb
Not able to laugh
I lost my class
I am on my ass
On life I pass*

It happened so fast...

After revisiting my journal, and after a quick residual dose of shame, I had renewed gratitude for AA, where people doing God's work embraced me and gave me hope for a better way of living, and continue to do so.

At one of my first AA meetings, I heard people talking about two things: the steps and going to Denny's after the meeting. At the time, I thought maybe I could go to Denny's and work the steps to completion there, that evening. I soon learned the work can't be completed during the length of time it takes to order and consume a burger.

Thank goodness we have a lifelong roadmap designed to help us become the people we deserve, free of alcohol and drugs. Not everyone gets the miracle.

I'm thankful I no longer have to be that person in the old journal.

45 years of working steps, knocking on doors

by **DON C**
Group 50

My sober date is February 26, 1977, but my story in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous begins about 24 hours prior.

I'd been walking the streets of St. Charles for about 60 days, in the snow, in the cold. I ended up at the river, in Frontier Park, sitting on a park bench. The Missouri River was freezing over, and I was trying to decide if I could walk across it.

I left and walked to a bar called Jim's Place to use the bathroom and warm up, hiding my booze out back. Inside, a crowd of workers came in, there was noise all

around me, and absolutely everything went black. I couldn't see anything, couldn't hear anything. I looked up, and there was a gray rectangle above me. I could hear a rustle. Dirt, rocks and sand started hitting me in the face, and I screamed, "You're burying me alive!" Another shoveful hit me in the face, and I screamed, "Can't you tell I'm down here? Can't you see I need help?!"

Next thing I knew, I was on a telephone to a nuclear physicist friend of mine from Louisville. I asked him, "If I got on an airplane at Lambert Field and opened the door at 30,000 feet, would anybody else get hurt?" He kept me on the phone while his wife went next door to a neighbor's

and called the airlines, giving them my full name and instructing them to refuse me a ticket sale were I to show up.

Next thing I knew after that, I was at my mother's, and a gentleman had shown up. How he knew I was there, I don't know. He tried to sober me up, realized that I could go into DTs, and took me to Christian Northwest. I found that out afterwards when I received the bill. I found out I was there for six days, then was transferred to another hospital and came to three days after that, not knowing where I was. They told me that, in order to release me, I had to leave with someone in AA. They asked if I knew anybody. I said, "You gotta be kiddin'!"

They got ahold of a man from Group 5, and the next day, Pennsylvania John showed up. He said, "They asked me to come in and talk to you about Alcoholics Anonymous. Boy, do you have a problem with alcohol?"

I said, "John, I don't know where I am or how I got here. I lost everything, I'm out of work, and nobody will hire me."

He said, "Do you believe in God?" And I stuttered for a moment and said, "Well, yes, I do." He said, "Well, boy, you better! Because without God, you'll never stay sober!"

He immediately then said, "You know, for you to ever drink again would be insanity." Little did I realize, he was talking

about the first three steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I got out of the hospital and met John at Group 5. He told the room, "I have a new man, and his name is Don." Everybody said, "Hi, Don." Bill B was going to chair the meeting that night and talk about the Twelfth Step. I didn't know there was a Twelfth Step. He said, "But now we'll talk about what it was like, what happened, and what it's like now." Everybody went around the room, and for the first time in my life, I felt safe, felt that nobody was ever gonna harm me again.

**For more, please see
45 YEARS, Page 2**

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

BIRTHDAYS

GROUP	Name	Date	Years
GROUP 1023	Chris C	30 days	
	Cara B	3/2	2 years
	Gina S	3/27	3 years
GROUP 164	Victoria	3/25	7 years
	Keith C	2/24	7 years
GROUP 5	John K	3/8	37 years
	Dan S	3/15	5 years
GROUP 77	Jackie E	3/8	39 years
	Mike D	3/6	40 years
	Dave C	3/3	7 years
GROUP 484	Amy S	3/5	38 years
	Mike T	2/16	7 years
	Dan S	2/7	2 years
GROUP 484	Kim	3/10	10 years
	Bob W	3/28	38 years

DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.

Origin of the Serenity Prayer explained

If you've ever wondered where the Serenity Prayer came from and how it was adopted into widespread AA use despite not appearing in the first edition of the Big Book, a January 1950 Grapevine explains the following:
The Serenity Prayer was written in 1932 by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr of the Union Theological Seminary as follows: "God give me the serenity to accept things which cannot be changed;

Give me courage to change things which must be changed; And the wisdom to know the difference."

The prayer found its way into Dr. Howard Robbins' book of prayers in 1934, then came to the attention of an early AA member in 1941, after having been reprinted in a New York Times obituary. This member then brought it to Bill W himself, at AA's office on Vesey Street. Bill and the Manhattan office

staff felt the prayer fit the philosophy of AA and the Twelve Steps. They printed cards, got them into circulation among early AA membership, and within a decade, the prayer had been given its name, had been slightly modified with "a comma, a preposition, even several verbs" into the version we recite today, and had become so widespread that it was included on the back cover of every issue of *Grapevine*.

Music then, music now

by LISA S
Group 762

EDITOR'S NOTE: We loved what Lisa wrote for last month's group-contributor article about the changing role music plays in our lives once we have achieved sobriety. But we didn't have space to run it in March, so we held it for April's issue.

Music played a huge part in my drinking and drugging career. I was afraid to listen to any of my favorite music when I was new to sobriety. I thought it may cause cravings for the old life and possibly for relapse. I literally had to "stop the music" for a period of time, until I could learn how to separate the two.

Slowly, due to the steps creating growth and change, I started seeing these bands in a new light. I was cautiously ready to listen with new ears, and I began incorporating the old music back into new playlists.

These days, I feel a profound sense of gratitude toward Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains - and the like - for allowing me to feel "a part of" during a very dark time in my life when nothing seemed to make sense. For saying, through lyrics and guitar, everything I wanted to say but couldn't or wouldn't. Thanks to them, I was not alone.

When I play "Come As You Are," for example, loud in the car, present-day, I relate differently but also the same. Back then, "Come As You Are" meant - all the freaks, the people who didn't fit in, no matter what, whether it be doused in mud or soaked in bleach - just come as you are. You belong.

Now, as I listen to the haunting bass of the instrumental intro, I get that feeling that comes in waves, that I belong now too. In a different way. In AA, with nature, with like-minded people, with the human race in general. The basic requirement remains the same: show up as I am, and it will be alright.

That, mind you, is just one of the many ways music has changed for me in sobriety.

Newcomers, please remember this - the music comes back, as long as you show up as you are, willing to do the work. It will be broadened and deepened to a level that you can't imagine, and it only gets better!



Searching and Fearless

Four AAs give perspective on Step Four

We at the *Sobriety Sentinel* can't recommend strongly enough the practice of working a thorough, honest Fourth Step with a sponsor. But don't just take our word for it. Here's a collection of thoughts from several of our friends - some have done Step Four once, some multiple times, and one is facing it for the first time right now:

DAN F: It's been difficult for me to get any work done on Step Four. My disease keeps rearing its ugly head and letting me know that I'm not in charge anymore. And the fact is, I don't want to face the roiling stew of emotions accumulated over a half-century. I'd rather play room mother to the other degenerates and feel like that's my purpose. I'm good at that. People like me when I do that.

What I don't want to do is face

myself in the dark lonesome. I have no way to deflect in that environment. But I will move to the next phase of this process. I know I have to do this, so I'm going to dust myself off and do my damn Step Four like I should. It's about time.

BECCA H: My first Fourth Step scared me, and I was a mess. During that time, though, I developed a routine where I would write in the same room every time I worked on it, and when I was done I would close my notebook and ask God to help me leave my words in the notebook in that room so I could go about my day. One time, during that prayer, I felt someone holding my hand, and I assure you I was the only person in the room.

I am so grateful that God did that for me, because from that point

on, I knew I could get through this.

SEAN W: My sponsor gave me plenty of time to work Step Four, but I was having trouble getting started. I reached out to other men during meetings. An awesome old-timer said, "If you are having trouble with the step you are working on, you should go back to the step before it." Another suggested just working on it for 15 minutes at a time.

So, I renewed my commitment to Step Three and worked in 15-minute segments, hiding the papers between sessions in a shoebox inside another shoebox.

One night, after saying my Third Step prayer, I started my stopwatch rather than set an alarm for 15 minutes. More than an hour passed as I filled my pages and finally finished the step.

ANGELA G: One of the most amazing benefits I noticed very quickly after doing Step Four was the weight that I was finally able to put down. I'd had no clue how much weight I'd been carrying around with me. My anger and my resentments had caused me to believe that the way I acted and treated people was justified.

After starting to write down my Fourth Step, I remember thinking, *Am I really this angry?* The connection between anger and fear had been beyond my understanding at that time. It took me a very long time to really understand what that truly meant, but it has been one of the most important revelations I've ever had. And it continues to unfold, with a new understanding every day that I am in an amazing program. Now I think *love* instead of *fear* and *hate*.

45 years: Taken through steps in 3 weeks

From Page 1

That first day, John said to me, "I'm gonna take complete control of your life. You're not going to do anything without talking to me first. You're not gonna get a job, buy a car, go on a date, you're not even gonna get your eyes checked for six months to a year." And I let him take control.

John would get off work, pick me up, and take me to Carrolton. We'd stop and get ice cream, sit on the street corner, on the curb, and John would talk about the character defects mentioned in the Big Book. I didn't know what he was talking about, but I knew I had most of the defects he mentioned. We would end up at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. This happened every night except Sunday.

On Saturday mornings, John would take me to breakfast. On the way home, we'd stop by somebody's house that he knew was drinking. He would raise heck and chew 'em out: "You're not worth anything the way you are to your family, or to your workers!" I didn't realize until some time later that he was showing me what I had been like and what I would be like if I went back out again.

After about seven or eight days, he said on a Monday, "It's time for you to do an inventory." I reminded him that I wasn't working. He said, "No, it's not that kind of an inventory. You're going to write about all

those character defects that we've been talking about for the past week. And we're going to talk about it Thursday morning at 8:00."

I wrote for two days, Monday and Tuesday, and I paced the floor Wednesday. Thursday we met at eight, I started talking, and we finished up around one that afternoon, crying all the while. I was at a complete breakthrough. Everything seemed to have been lifted off my shoulders.

From that point, he said, "Now you've gotta go out and start making amends. Do you have an idea of who will be your first one?" I said, "Yes, my uncle."

He then went into Step 6 and Step 7, but he didn't call them that. He told me it was time now to consider that I might want to have God remove my character defects: "Are you ready?" I said, "Aren't some of them fun? And when somebody gets in your face, you've got to defend yourself!" That's when he looked at me and said, "Boy, if you react to an attack, you're wrong." That, I understood.

While doing amends, John told me then that from that point on, at the end of every day, I'd need to continue to take an inventory, and if I found a spot where I'd gotten uneasy, I would need to make an apology immediately.

And he said that I'd need to continue to pray and talk to God and meditate. He said, "See if you can go 30 seconds without thought." I said, "John, I can't go

10 seconds without thought." He said, "Well, monks do. Why can't you?"

After three and a half weeks, he turned me loose, but we kept going out on Saturday mornings, and I kept getting rides to meetings because I didn't have a car and wasn't working.

Finally, at the end of August, I had five job interviews. All five said to me, "You're overqualified." All those people I interviewed with, I had hired people for positions like theirs in years past.

That night - it was a Wednesday night - I was so upset that I headed to The Billy Goat tavern. I pulled up to the front door, ran inside, and a little girl was standing in the way: "Sir, I need your ID." I kept walking, and she said again, "Sir! I need your ID!" I turned around and said, "You have no idea who I am, do you?" God, again, had interfered. He put somebody in front of me. And I turned around and walked out the door.

The next day, at the meeting of Group 5, John said, "It's time for you to get a job, boy. I don't care if you become a ditch digger." Idell, sitting in the back of the room, said, "Don, I'll pray for you."

The next morning, Hussman Refrigerator called. I got the job and kept going out with John on Saturday mornings, and we would still stop by somebody's house.

Finally, then, at a meeting, Bill B was still chairing,

and he said, "We're going to talk about the Twelfth Step." I didn't know what it was. And they went around the room talking about Twelfth Step calls. I raised my hand, like I'd always been doing, and I said, "When you get one of those, can I go with you?"

The next night, Jean B said, "Don, we got one. Meet me at 8:00," at such-and-such address in St. Charles. We went and did the thing and I said, You've got to be kidding me. That's what John had been doing with me every Saturday for six months. I'd been going on Twelfth Step calls and didn't know it.

For the rest of my time in Alcoholics Anonymous, I've continued to knock on doors and go out on calls, sometimes at two and three in the morning.

One guy died in the Missouri River. Some of the people, though, I've helped, and they've stayed sober for 41 years, for 36 years, 26 years. I ran the answering service for six years.

I look back on my life in Alcoholics Anonymous, and God has continued to put people in my life to lead me through all kinds of situations that befuddle me. They taught me to love God, to love my fellow man. John taught me right away, when anyone anywhere reaches out for help, for the hand of AA to be there. Anybody. Anywhere. It doesn't have to be an alcoholic. I am there for them.

God bless AA and everybody in it.

All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole. To give feedback or report Tri-County AA news or events, please email sentinel@tricityaa.org

PRODUCED FOR ST. CHARLES COUNTY, LINCOLN COUNTY AND WARREN COUNTY IN EASTERN MISSOURI