

Sobriety Sentinel

MAY/JUNE 2022 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

In a popular treatment center exercise, the newly sober write goodbye letters to their drug of choice. But what if, when we got sober, alcohol started writing letters to us? And kept writing them? It might go a little something like this...

Letters From Booze

John Barleycorn doesn't want us to leave him

by ANDREW H
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DAY ONE

Dear Andrew,
Let's get real here. I've heard this before. So many times before. You're done with me. I'm ruining your life. You peed the bed last night, and it's all my fault.

But we're just taking a break. You know and I know, we'll get back together. Maybe it'll be a couple weeks. Maybe tonight. But I'll see you soon.

Cheers,
John Barleycorn

TWO MONTHS LATER

Andrew,
Hey buddy. Miss ya. Just wanted to make sure you know I am still available. Widely. Every-freaking-where. They just restocked the Jeremiah Weed Sweet Tea shooters at that Schnucks over by your house. 99 cents, bro! Better bring at least nine bucks, though.

Wet sloppy kisses,
John Barleycorn

TWO YEARS LATER

Hey Andrew,
I saw you at that carnival where you always used to go smash

me. I was there, in the beer garden. You were there. I caught your eye, but you looked away, and this is the crazy part—you looked like you were having fun without me.

I feel like I don't know you anymore, but I do know this: We can't be apart forever. We make too much sense together.

Your old, dear friend,
John Barleycorn

FIVE YEARS LATER

Andrew,
I saw you on the way to that 7 am meeting you're always going to. I know you saw me—I pulled out in front of your ass. It's hard

to ignore a giant Bud Light truck.

What's that they're always saying at that meeting? Well... you'll have to tell me. I don't know what they say in there. They don't allow me in.

Ah well. I'll try to catch you on your way to work. It's cool and stuff, how you work at a treatment center and get to hang out with a bunch of newly sober people all the time. I talk to them too. Some of them listen. Some of them come see me again.

I'll wait for you, as patiently as I have to. You may think you're getting stronger, but guess what bitch, so am I.

Yours forever,
John Barleycorn

Spot it, you got it: the value of being self-aware

by MISSY R
Group 632

Lately, I've been thinking about the phrase *You spot it, you got it*. Alcoholics Anonymous and my sponsor both have liberally used those words to help right-size my ego. At first, I absolutely did not like being told that I'm just like people who annoy me. In fact, I pretty much hated it.

As a kid, I remember frequently saying, "It takes one to know one." It was my standard reply when one of my siblings would call me a poopie-head. There was no way to snap back at that. The original insult-hurler had to just walk away in shame.

There's one major difference in how this phrase applies in my life now. It took awhile for me to understand, but now I believe it's true and I doesn't offend me.

Let me explain. If I notice something about another person, certain traits that don't appeal to me, that I'm critical of, it's probably because those are the same things I dislike about myself.

Wait! What? I know. Sounds wrong, doesn't it? I'm not going to pretend this is the only lesson I've learned in AA that I vigorously questioned. This one was a big pill to swallow.

Are you telling me that the distasteful, unlovable, ugly, rude and hateful personality defects I recognize in Ms. Perfect Pants are also true about myself? That sounds highly illogical. I like me, and everything I do is great, so I'm not anything like Ms. Perfect Pants.

My first instinct with any new concept is to reject it outright. I put this aside and moved on with my AA journey. While working the Twelve Steps, especially Step Four, I found myself face to face with my character defects. Guess what I discov-

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Tap into God, and learn how to 'Be more'

by TIM M
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Life is such a beautiful thing. Through all the ups and downs, good days and challenging days, I am able to see the beauty more and more with each passing day of sobriety. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is how to Be more. Not have more or do more but to Be more.

In active addiction, I always wanted more. The first thing I wanted was more alcohol. That was always the first thing on my mind when I woke up and the last thing on my mind as I entered into another day of blacking out and passing out. My whole life centered on getting more

booze: How was I going to get the money? How was I going to get to the store without a driver's license? Which store was I going to go to so the clerk wouldn't judge me for buying two more handles of vodka after I had just purchased two the day before or even earlier that day?

It was a constant battle in my head and in my life to get more alcohol and figure out how I was going to hide it.

Fun fact—the best place to hide alcohol is in your body; at least that was my take on it. My loved ones couldn't take my alcohol from me if I had already ingested it. It was miserable.

In addition to always wanting and need-

ing more alcohol—although there is not enough booze on this earth to quench my thirst—I always wanted the next thing.

I hated my job and always thought I would be happier if I found a bigger, better *real* job. I wanted a nicer car; if I could get rid of my dying old minivan I would be happy. I wanted a new house; if I could just move out of the trailer, I would be happy.

If I could just go on some adventure, go to the next big experience, I would be happy.

I was never satisfied. The more I looked at external materialistic shit, the greater my unhappiness and discontentment became. I was constantly restless, irritable

and discontent.

I thought if I just did more, obtained more crap, some void inside me would be fulfilled. But all it ever got me was more and more drunk.

Today, through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and maintaining conscious contact with God as I understand him, I have learned how to Be. We are all human-Beings, not human *doings* or human *wantings*. We are Human Beings.

Recovery has taught me that I no longer need to pursue happiness or sanity, I can choose to Be happy, to Be sane, to Be more. More loving, more patient, more tolerant, more kind.

The Big Book states that, inside every

man, woman and child is the fundamental idea of God. We are all God's children. We all have God-like qualities. We just have to tap into them.

I know for me the tapping into God and finding that happiness within has been much like tapping into a maple tree. It takes time, it's slow and it's a long process that takes considerable work, but by God the end product is delicious.

The end product is a life of Being. Being sober. Being of maximum service to God and my fellows, of being content with all that I have. I have the same job and the same car. I live in the same town—in my in-laws' basement now, not a trailer. And my life is so full.

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	AGE	MEMBERSHIP
GROUP 4094	Corey H	Apr	28 years	Andrew H 4/27 5 years
	John J	Apr	17 years	Angela G 4/28 5 years
	Steve H	Apr	11 years	Sandy S 4/20 12 years
	Ken K	May	27 years	Cheri Z 4/10 7 years
	Patrick B	May	12 years	
GROUP 164	Alan B	5/2	18 years	GROUP 1023
				Mary S 4/4 14 years
GROUP 968	Sue S	5/7	4 years	Theresa B 4/21 6 years
GROUP 124	Jim H	5/2	16 years	GROUP 484
	Harold G	4/26	19 years	Tony C 4/1 1 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.

Too busy...

Running errands. Paying the bills. Walking the dog. Cleaning the house. Cutting the grass. Walking the dog again. Gardening. Kids are in school. Kids are out of school. Sports. Get a speeding ticket. Pharmacy. Pay speeding ticket. Work. Cooking. Grocery store. Family pictures.
I can go on and on about

the things I have to do today. There aren't enough hours. There's not enough time to even sleep. As I sit here and write this, I have exactly 40 minutes to get to the meeting. Rush. Rush some more. As I approach the room, I hear reassuring voices. I hear encouragement. I hear wisdom. I hear joyous laughter. I walk in and sit down.

There are a million reasons not to come. But only one reason to show. And it's the only reason that matters. I take a deep breath, and as I exhale, I say aloud, "Hi, I'm Jennifer, and I'm an alcoholic." That one reason is enough.

Jennifer F
Group 968

AA Odds & Ends

This is one of the *Sobriety Sentinel's* favorite times of the year. You can count on longer days, bright yellow-green grass, and Greg K faithfully making the rounds of nearby meetings to chime in during the announcements portion:

"I'm Greg, I'm an alcoholic," he says, "and I absolutely *have* to tell you about *the premiere* annual sobriety event in St Charles County that you positively *cannot miss!*"

For years, we've been watching Greg sell this event as if it's the second coming of Bill Wilson himself, and he's not wrong—you will fully enjoy yourself if you attend the **AA Group 124/Al Anon Hope For Today Potluck & Speaker Meeting** on Thursday, June 23 in the Dardenne Presbyterian Church gym.

If you think the name of the event is a mouthful, that's nothing compared to the mouthfuls of complimentary fried chicken, mostaccioli and drinks you're sure to consume that night. Bring a side, bring a dessert, bring a few friends and stay for AA speaker Kim S and Al Anon speaker Mike B. Dinner at 6:30, speakers at 7.

The *Sobriety Sentinel* recently visited **Group 484, the Saturday 8 am meeting at 212 Club**, for the first time in nearly two years. Attendance has exploded at this open mixed Big Book study since 2020—there were at least 50 happy sober alcoholics in the room.

We know it's going to be a good meeting at 212 when we have to park at that top lot because the bottom lot is full, but homegroup member (and longtime friend of the *Sentinel*) Christine C told us that several weeks prior, the meeting was so busy that even the top lot was full and she had to park across the street. Nothing like watching a favorite meeting grow!

One of the most enjoyable features of Group 484's meeting is the "seven-minute" (if you've been, you know why we put that in quotes) fellowship break between the reading and the shares. During the break when the *Sentinel* visited, a conversation with Robert C and Luke P theorized that perhaps the 8 am meeting is flourishing due to a shutdown of **Group 1096, the Saturday 10 am women's meeting at 212 Club**.

Well, the *Sentinel* was just nosy-reporter enough to stick around until just before the 10 am meeting started, and we're happy to report that Group 1096, too, is alive and well and has also experienced a growth spurt of late.

While we're on the subject of valuable morning meetings, the *Sobriety Sentinel* would like to give a shoutout to **Group 383: Daybreakers, weekdays at 7 am at St. John's United Church of Christ on Wolfrum**. Our buddy Wayne W, who we ran into at Group 484, reminded us that Group 383 is still running a hybrid meeting over Zoom, and now we've started popping in after our kids get on the bus at 7:23. Happy May/June, everyone!

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Surviving the Worst | Four-month prison term tests courage, serenity

by CASSY K
Group 979

Last year, on June 16, I was sent to prison for 120 days, for my accumulation of DWIs. It was by far one of the worst days of my life. The emotions running through my body were indescribable.

Three days in, my grandma passed away. Not being able to go to her funeral—not getting the chance to say goodbye—definitely made me think about where my mistakes have led me.

I sat in county jail for a week before they transferred me. Once I got to Vandalia Correctional Center, I was nervous. Scared. Fear of the unknown. Fear. So much fear. This was my first time going away.

Due to Covid, I spent half of my time in the Receiving & Orientation area. We were quarantined for what felt like forever. By and large, the

Correctional Officers treated us like dirt, like dogs. We were nobody to them. A select few COs were actually super cool, though, and actually cared. A rare breed.

It was a rough experience. I got in a fight during my time there. And the food was awful. My roommates would give me their sides, so I'd just eat that. Some of the offenders helped in the kitchen—they told me the bags of food literally said "not for human consumption." It was like horse feed.

After almost two months, I finally made it over to the shock treatment portion of the program. They're pretty strict over there, but I was able to get canteen to supplement the awful food from chow. I tried to just keep to myself and focus on getting out.

Everything in treatment was peer-driven, which to me was kind of a joke. Offenders teaching other offenders. I

was fortunate to have sobriety under my belt and AA on my side throughout my time there.

We had "jobs" in there. I worked for the self-help group, so I ran the AA meetings and other meetings. I eventually became department head of the self-help crew. Other offenders came to me for help with their step work. I almost felt like a sponsor in a way.

The Serenity Prayer was my go-to every single day in there, multiple times a day. Time went by slow towards the end, but I made it through to completion.

I'd be lying if I said it didn't mess me up physically and mentally. My head still hasn't been the same since before I went in, but I'm learning to accept and work through it.

I'm not happy with the weight I've gained since being in there and getting out. They put lots of filler in the food,

which makes you gain weight like crazy, plus you don't have much of an option besides unhealthy foods on canteen.

It's been rough since getting out. Life isn't the same since before I went away, but I'm trying my best to work past that day by day.

Do I miss who I was before I went away? Sure. Absolutely. But am I totally different today, worse off? No. I'm still the same me but with more experience. More strength. More hope. On May 11, I'll have 18 months, and this go has been better than any other years I had prior.

I attend meetings regularly. My desire to drink is nonexistent. It's never a thought in my mind, not even when I'm going through something. I just simply work through it, sometimes with help from others.

I kept telling myself, I can't do this, but I did it. I'm still here. I'm still me.

let go

let go so you can smile again.

let go so you can be a good friend.

let go so you can feel good about yourself.

let go and remember you can ask for help.

let go so you can finally live.

let go and remember not to constantly give.

let go so you can find your way.

let go so you can live for today.

let go and hold onto positive thoughts.

let go and remember the battles you've fought.

let go so you can finally be free.

let go so you can live and let be.

let go so you can settle your mind.

..when you're overwhelmed and struggling, breathe in and just know,

we're all only human and it's okay to let go.

--

EDITOR'S NOTE:
Cassy K wrote this poem during her period of incarceration.

Got it: Work on self, accept others

From Page 1

ered? I have a lot of the same behaviors, traits and defects that I enjoy criticizing other people for having.

I don't remember thinking I wanted to be a hypocrite when I grew up. Then again, I wasn't planning on becoming an alcoholic either. Life is funny that way.

Despite the antipathy I originally felt about *You spot it, you got it*, I have come to like it.

It has helped me to think before I speak. I've learned to be less judgmental, more empathetic and more understand-

ing. It's helped me to do a self-appraisal and make changes—or at least work toward change—in areas that I'm not proud of.

It's not easy to look at yourself under bright light and a microscope. I think that's why I've been truly unaware of my imperfections. Even calling them imperfections is a bit of sugar-coating on my part. But if I don't recognize my flaws, how can I do anything about them?

Now when I get irritated by something someone does or says, I ask myself, *Why does that bother me?* If I'm honest with myself, often I will find that it's because that person embodies my own shortcom-

ings I've worked so hard trying to blot out.

Most people do such a good job at subconsciously denying the existence of the things they don't like about themselves that they might not believe they have such traits. Guess what that's called? Denial! Another problem many alcoholics must face.

Getting and staying sober is not always a walk in the park. If you want to make things a little easier on yourself, don't be like me and waste too much time believing the phrase *You spot it, you got it* is a bunch of foolish hogwash. It's a true and valuable statement that will help you live

in a state of serenity, or at least something closer to serenity.

If it's too much to accept, you can also use the phrase *He who smelt it, dealt it*, because this is also true, and the concept is the same.

If you don't like the way Mrs. Perfect Pants walks around, creating an unpleasant environment for everyone else, then—first and foremost—don't walk around mimicking her.

If you catch me doing that or judging others, please call me out on it. I will only feel offended and resentful for the few minutes it takes for me to realize you are right and it is for my own good.

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