

the Westword



april issue/2008

The 4th Step

G. N. G.
Queens, NY
AA Grapevine
May 1970

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

The idea of "morals" scared hell out of me for years – the years before my drinking became unmanageable, then the alcoholic years, and even the first three or four years after I had found the shelter of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Nothing could dull the edge of what I realize now was simply cold fear. I was frightened at the very mention of "morality," because it posed too big a problem for me – big because it was simple. If I accepted the challenge that the consideration of morality hurled at me, I would have to begin dividing my life – and the things I did every day – into two long columns headed "right" and "wrong."

Try this simple experiment, and you'll discover exactly why I was scared. Pop into your neighborhood gin mill or a local cocktail party. Find the drunk-est lush around and start a discussion about "right and wrong" with him (or her). What you will hear will be roughly equivalent to the confusion in which I lived for nearly a quarter of a century. Or turn back your own psychic clock to those boozy meditations, crazy distortions, and amoeboid transformations of "rights" and "wrongs" by which you lived – or tried to live – while you were on the sauce.

Like most enlightened moderns, I had come under the wing of Uncle Sigmund Freud. (My analyst's analyst had been analyzed by Freud in person, so I drunkenly thought of myself as a legitimate great-grandson of the great man himself.) Years of probing into the sexual enigmas of individual and collective living left me, like many of my generation, believing the vague dictum that bore the imprimatur of the Vienna school of psychology: "Everything has to do with sex." I knew, therefore, that I was somehow liberated from the repellent, antique morality of Queen Victoria. I was free, morally speaking, to pursue the truth of my own nature and to rise above the tyrannies of repressed (and therefore "wrong") sex.

Accordingly, again like many of my generation, I was literally obsessed by sex, an obsession (but not, thank God, a compulsion) only second in importance to alcohol in my life. Drinking, for at least a dozen alcoholic years, was not a moral matter at all; that is, it seemed to have nothing to do with right or wrong. Alcohol meant survival; anything that kept me alive, I assumed, was necessary and hence, in the philosopher's words, "beyond good and evil." So I did not see alcohol as a problem, except at the moments when I dimly noticed (with frequent amusement) that the stuff was killing me. But this subtle

observation appeared almost totally irrelevant to the clear truth that booze was also keeping me alive. Such a state of affairs is too much of a puzzle (a moral puzzle, when you get right down to it) for any man's gin-soaked brain, including mine.

What I am getting to (slowly) is that morality for me centered, I thought, on matters having to do mostly with sex. Drinking unleashed a panorama of sexual fantasies within me. (These fantasies, let me add, were rarely implemented in life. The business of living was just too jammed up with wide-screen and stereophonic hangovers, the logistics of getting the next drink while battling for social survival, and the exhausting labor of achieving the maximum possible intoxication. There was just no time or energy left to turn those sex dreams into reality.)

Imagine, then, how I felt after a dry year in our Fellowship when I first bruised my sensitivities upon Step Four. A moral inventory! "Rights" and "wrongs"! Sex! More than this, it was suggested that I commit my inventory (one way or another) to writing. I made a few scratches on a yellow pad, thought a bit about the antipornography legislation being proposed in those days, and retired in a sulk to a closed AA meeting where questions could be submitted anonymously on slips of paper.

Before the meeting even began, I wrote, "Why does the Fourth Step ask us to take a moral inventory? Why not just an inventory?" I folded the paper discreetly and slid it under an ashtray on the speaker's table at the front of the room.

I had never seen the leader of that meeting before, and I have not run into him since. In his qualification, he explained that he was a professional gambler, whose usual beat was in Nevada, and that "business" (having to do, I gather, with the sport of kings) had brought him to the East for the current season. His story was nothing short of inspirational. His ten years of sobriety – in the midst of the uncertainty of his particular occupation – were clearly a triumph of living a day at a time. He seemed to have absolute confidence that his higher power cared as much about decks of cards, dice, roulette wheels, and pari-mutuel machines as it did about more sacred and cultural artifacts. To me, that was both astounding and comforting.

Eventually, he unfolded my question and looked at it as if it were a hopeless poker hand. He read it aloud and repeated, "Why do we take a moral inventory?" He paused and examined the ceiling. Then a weary look overcame him, a look indicating that he had indeed thought about this before. His voice was so low I could hardly hear it, as if he were reluctantly sharing a sure thing on tomorrow's daily double.

"The reason we take a moral inventory," he said carefully, "is because the word 'moral' forces us to divide into rights and wrongs the things we do – and have done – to ourselves and others. This forces us to make decisions – personal decisions – and asks us, in effect, where we stand as human beings, what we hold to be right and wrong, whether we're alone in the dark of night or

continued on pg 2: see "4th Step"

I am responsible.
When anyone, anywhere, reaches
out for help, I want the
hand of AA to always be there.
For that, *I am responsible.*

Calgary AA Central Service Office

#2, 4015 1st Street S.E.

Calgary, Alberta – T2G 4X7

Phone: (403) 777-1212 Fax: (403) 287-6540

Email: centraloffice@telus.net

Office Hours:

Mon to Thr: 8:30am – 1:00pm, 2:00pm – 5:00pm

Fri: 8:30am – 5:30pm, Sat: 9:00am – 1:00pm

Closed Sundays and Stat Holiday Weekends

CLOSED: Saturday, May. 17 & Monday, May. 19.

NEW MEETINGS

Beacon's Refugees (Open, Mixed)

Saturday, 8:00pm
Highland Park Community Centre
3716 - 2 St. NW

Life Recovery Group (Additional Meeting)

Sunday, 4:00pm
Central United Church
Around the Back - Mtg. Room 1

Daily Reflections (Open)

Thursday, 8:30pm
Scarborough United Church
134 Scarborough Ave. S.W.

Hussar Group (Open, Mixed)

Friday, 8:00pm
Hussar School (downstairs)
More Info: Gail G. 934-9819

Ladies Living Sober (Closed, Ladies, 12 x 12, Discussion)

Thursday, 7:00pm
Lutheran Church
13811 Deer Ridge Dr. SE

New Beginnings: Open Ladies Big Book (Open, Big Book)

Wednesday, 10:30am
7620 Elbow Drive SW

**Knocking on Heaven's Door Group
(Open, Mixed, Discussion)**
2nd & 4th Sundays of the Month @ 2:30pm
4620A - Bowness Rd. N.W.
Music Jam follows meeting...

tion that what was moral was what felt good, and I tried to think about, not only what felt good now, but what could be counted upon to feel good tomorrow and the day after.

I thought about sex. Certainly, the wake of joy and sorrow we leave behind us in our pursuit of instinctual pleasure is a moral matter (and a measure of character), as Bill wrote. So are the numerous choices that the pursuit forces us to make in daily life. We must consider, not only whether we are adhering to a certain social concept of what is "right," but how we feel if we do not adhere to it, when (as sometimes happens) the spirit is willing, but the flesh commands otherwise. Certainly, I thought then (and still do), the implication of a willingness to "stand up and be counted," the real moral imperative of life, takes us far beyond the simple roster of "rights" and "wrongs" concerning "genital commotion" (as psychologists often call it) and into the entire realm of human relationships.

In my solitude, I asked myself, "What do I believe in? What would I stand up and be counted for? What do I really consider right and wrong?" And immediately I understood that I had now begun to take a meaningful "searching and fearless moral inventory!"

That evening passed nearly five years ago. I am still trying to answer, to my own satisfaction, those three simple questions. How sorry I am to say that I do not yet know the final answers, even for myself – and certainly not for you. But I think I am on the track in pursuing them within our AA program, and I think I am pursuing them well, because I am sober. I think the answers have something to do with love, a word I do not use freely. And they cleave close to Bill's observation that, when we were drinking, "Of true brotherhood we had small comprehension." Without love and brotherhood, I think, we might each turn into the sort of walking moral-disaster area that I was before I first met the Fourth Step. ☺

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MEETING CHANGES

9th Tradition Group Thursday, 8:00pm

Meeting time changed from
Thurs. 8:30pm TO Thurs. 8:00pm

Sunset Discussion Group Monday, 8:00pm

New Meeting location!!!
Hope Community Covenant Church
245 Brent Blvd.
Strathmore, AB

Action Group Wednesday, 8:00pm

New Meeting location!!!
First Mennonite Church
2600 Richmond Rd. S.W.

Get To The Point Group Thursday, 7:45pm

Meeting time changed from
Thurs. 5:00pm TO Thurs. 7:45pm

"Beginners Take 12"

(formerly "Back to Basics")
Monday, 8:00pm meeting ONLY.
Early meeting time cancelled.

continued from page 1: "4th Step"

with other people."

Quite suddenly, I realized that I was in the company of an extremely wise man, and I listened closely to the ensuing discussion. Nobody even brought up the topic of sex! Our gambling man had set the tone for the discussion; it centered mostly upon the maintenance of sobriety and upon the clear thinking and strength required to stand up as a man or a woman, ready to be counted, ready to affirm, "This I believe to be right – this I believe to be wrong," and ready to try to live just that way.

I spent the rest of that evening with my copy of Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. I came to see, first, that on the analyst's couch I was able to do a lot of things, but never to take (even with the help of a skilled therapist) a true moral inventory; then, that until I did I would be adrift in the contemporary relativism of wishy-washy, vaguely "scientific" amorality. I thought of the words "right" and "wrong" as they applied to the brilliant men who invented bacteriological warfare and nuclear warheads. I thought of Ernest Hemingway's "emancipated" no-

Participation: A Gift to Pass On

Dave B.

Area 78 Delegate to New York

Calgary, AB

April 2008

As many of you know, the theme for the upcoming 58th General Service Conference will be Communication & Participation – Key to Unity & Self-Support.

As the theme suggests, Participation is of vital importance to the continued success of Alcoholics Anonymous, but it is also essential to our own future - living as sober people. Not too many of us come into AA and immediately begin washing ashtrays and gratefully slipping large bills into the basket. Most of us arrive sick, bewildered, and lost. And we will remain sick, bewildered and lost unless someone reaches out to us and welcomes us into this strange land of Alcoholics Anonymous and shows us how to belong, how to become 'part of'. To participate means to share in an experience or activity with others, something we are not familiar with as isolated, two fistful drinkers.

My own early encounters with AA were purely as a spectator; I showed up, watched what was going on, listened half-heartedly and, with the words "keep coming back" burning in my ears, went home to have a drink... and wonder to myself how do these smiley faced, happy sounding people get through a day without drinking? The thing I remember most from those meetings is all the people lined up to tell me, "don't drink and go to meetings!" So I went to the meetings and watched... and drank. I went to other meetings and watched... and drank. Attending meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous was not having the same miraculous effect on me that it seemed to have for others! So, naturally,

I stopped going.

I was eventually reintroduced to AA by a fellow I met while drying out in a treatment centre. I was a few days sober; sick, bewildered and lost, when a guy with bright white sneakers (at that time I looked everyone square in the feet) asked me to come along with him to a 'meeting'. It was in that little group of sober drunks I came to realize that Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women in ACTION - not a spectator sport; that there is no AA without the members making it happen and that self support has much more to do with participation than with dollars. I developed a great pride and sense of ownership and belonging in that group - this was my meeting and I would do whatever was needed to make sure it was there for me, my friends, and the next hopeless drunk who needed help.

I believe that it is our responsibility, as guardians of the fellowship, to ensure that the sick, bewildered and lost are lovingly guided towards participating in the miracle so that they do not become spectators - looking in from the outside with no connection to the group. When every member of Alcoholics Anonymous feels that special connection and sense of pride and ownership in their own home group - the question of self support will be moot. Alcoholics will gratefully take on the responsibility of ownership once we feel 'part of' our Group, when we feel 'part of' our District, when we feel 'part of' our Area and 'part of' the larger world of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is vital that we give the newcomer more than slogans and a fist full of pamphlets when they arrive; we must welcome them in and help them to become 'part of' our fellowship, so that they may experience the gifts that come through participation.

It is our responsibility - it is MY responsibility to give all newcomers the whole of AA - Recovery, Unity and Service. ☺

Dave B. is the Area 78 Delegate to New York, serving Alberta/NWT

VALUABLE 12 STEP OPPORTUNITIES

“ Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. ”

- *Big Book, Pg. 89*

Members needed to carry the message to **Bowden Institution**.

(Please note: Security clearance is required)

More Information: email: corrections@area78.org

Members needed to carry the message to the **Remand Centre, Spy Hill Jail and Calgary Youth Offenders Centre**.

(Please note: ALL THREE require security clearance & min. 1 yr. sobriety)

More Information: Mellissa R. (403) 264-5268

Members needed at Central Service Office as **Telephone Monitors**.

One shift per week, Monday to Friday

9:00am to 1:00pm or 2:00pm to 5:00pm

More Information: Axel (403) 355-5600 or Mathew (403) 777-1212

Calgary AA would like members for the **12 Step List**.

More Information: Axel (403) 355-5660 or Mathew (403) 777-1212

or email: centraloffice@telus.net

Bridging the Gap is looking for members willing to work in **NE Calgary** as well **Centres Outside of Calgary**.

More Information: Mathew (403) 777-1212 or email: centraloffice@telus.net

Calgary & Area 78 Corrections Committees:

We are always in need of **any and all, current or old Grapevines**, for use in the jails of Southern Alberta. Drop them off in the special box at CSO and they will get read several more times & help inmates to find sobriety. You can also give them to your GSR to take to the CGSC meeting or Area Assembly.

Women Needed to Chair Meetings Once a Month

Women are needed to chair a Beginners Meeting once a month at women's treatment facilities.

The commitment is either Saturday morning or Sunday evening.

The experience is very rewarding to those who have been involved.

If you are interested, please contact Colleen C. at 667-2780.

Join the Gratitude Round Up Committee!:

If you are new to service there are experienced members of the committee available to mentor you.

Next meeting: Central Office - Always the THIRD Wednesday of the month. Contact Jim C. at 264-0712 or kalgarian@hotmail.com for more information.

Join the Public Information Committee!:

There are many service opportunities available on this fun and exciting committee. The public information committee is dedicated to spreading word to the public about the **“solution on which we can absolutely agree and join in brotherly and harmonious action!”** (BB pg. 17)

Next meeting: Central Office - Always the LAST Wednesday of the month.

COMC: 2 Vacancies!:

Effective immediately, there are two vacancies on the Central Office Management Committee. Two of our distinguished members have had to resign. For more information on these positions, the criteria for consideration and the COMC itself, please contact **Central Office @ 777-1212**

All submissions to be included in any upcoming editions of the Westword newsletter should be sent to westwordeditor@gmail.com no later than the first Monday of each month. Anything sent past this deadline MAY NOT be received in time to be included in the edition.

Thank you - Westword Editor

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dalhousie Mens Group 9th Anniversary

Pot Luck

Friday, April 25th, 2008

Dalhousie Community Church
5511 - Baroc Rd. NW
Calgary, AB

New Beginnings Anniversary Party

Pot Luck

May 3rd, 2008

Kingsland Community Church
505 - 78th Ave. SW
Calgary, AB

Tickets: Marron (403) 225-1344

27th Annual Gratitude Roundup

June 6th - June 8th, 2008

The Glenmore Inn

Calgary, AB

More Information: CSO 777-1212

Rocky Recovery Roundup

June 13th - June 16th, 2008

Buster Creek Hall

(near) Rocky Mountain House, AB

See poster @ CSO for more information or call

More Information: (403) 845-2784

District 86 Roundup

June 20th - June 21st, 2008

180 Brent Blvd.

Strathmore, AB

Cost is a 7th Tradition donation

More Information: Nick (403) 888-5185

Joke of the Month

AA Grapevine

March 1990

“ There's only one thing two alcoholics can agree on – what the third alcoholic should put in the basket. ☺ ”

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Price Reduced

Big Books reduced by \$2.00!

Due to the most excellent contributions by the groups, your Central Service Office is **temporarily** lowering prices.

All Big Books are **reduced by \$2.00!!!**
The new price of the basic hard cover Big Book is **now \$9.00**. If group contributions continue at the same rate, this will become permanent.

Congratulations!!!

CSO is proud to announce the appointment of **Sharon S.** (of the Garnett Block) to the vacant part-time position on Saturday's and Sundays.

Drop by and say “Hello!”

HAPPY AA BIRTHDAY!

March

ABC Group:

Laura H. 24 yrs.
Garry M. 27 yrs.

Crossroads Group:

Linda D. 3 yrs.
Yvonne O. 16 yrs.

Dalhousie Mens:

Harry P. 27 yrs.

Drawing Board:

Albert 11 yrs.

Edgemont Group:

Ann J. 18 yrs.
Don H. 27 yrs.

Garnett Group:

Randy S. 1 yr.
Blake B. 1 yr.
Jennifer 3 yrs.
Ray W. 13 yrs.
Charlie M. 15 yrs.
Richard 16 yrs.
Gene A. 18 yrs.
Gene H. 18 yrs.
Al F. 19 yrs.
Jim K. 30 yrs.

Highland Park:

MaryAnn R. 1 yr.
Peter J. 4 yrs.

Inglewood:

Paul K. 2 yrs.
Laura S. 3 yrs.
Leslie A. 23 yrs.

Irricana:

Sheri T. 1 yr.

McKenzie Group:

Sean D. 1 yr.
Brad L. 1 yr.
AJ S. 1 yr.
Shari G. 4 yrs.
Catherine M. 4 yrs.
Mac W. 30 yrs.

New Beginnings:

Susan N. 1 yr.
Crytof L. 1 yr.
Paulo M. 1 yr.
Glenn E. 1 yr.
Jean S. 2 yrs.
Jaunita A. 2 yrs.
George L. 3 yrs.
Sheila W. 3 yrs.

Lynn C. 5 yrs.
Ann H. 7 yrs.
Wendy S. 11 yrs.
Joe H. 20 yrs.
Nancy J. 22 yrs.
Greg P. 22 yrs.

Ogden Group:

Rob M. 3 yrs.
Julius R. 15 yrs.

Recovery:

Adrian M. 4 yrs.
Dean J. 5 yrs.
Carla T. 18 yrs.
Tom Mc. 20 yrs.
Jim D. 20 yrs.
Wally P. 21 yrs.
Frank Mc. 23 yrs.

Sun. Morn. 11am Group:

Ava B. 5 yrs.
Crawford 11 yrs.
Tom M. 15 yrs.
John H. 36 yrs.

Tues. Morn. Ladies Group:

Karen R. 10 yrs.

Untiy Group:

Adam R. 3 yrs.
Dave S. 4 yrs.

Wed. Eye Opener:

Ann J. 18 yrs.
Don H. 27 yrs.

April

272 Group:

Ellen D. 23 yrs.

Dalhousie Mens:

Eric P. 1 yr.

Edgemont Group:

Leslie C. 2 yrs.

Highland Park:

Murray L. 19 yrs.

Irricana:

Lance S. 1 yr.
Gary O'K. 20 yrs.

Link Group:

Craig S. 5 yrs.

MAAT:

Susan Q. 1 yr.
Rita U. 2 yrs.
Ron D. 14 yrs.
Glen B. 40 yrs.

Marlborough Park:

Jack B. 52 yrs.

McKenzie Group:

Patti 1 yr.
Linda S. 1 yr.
Mike R. 4 yrs.
Margie M. 7 yrs.

Jason M. 8 yrs.
Derrick M. 9 yrs.
James B. 10 yrs.
Doug M. 14 yrs.
David W. 15 yrs.
Judy H. 20 yrs.
Kevin 29 yrs.
Melody 30 yrs.

Ogden Group:

Bill M. 10 yrs.

Recovery:

James P. 1 yr.
Billie S. 3 yrs.
Melissa C. 3 yrs.
Leslie R. 3 yrs.
Les M. 8 yrs.

Natalie I. 12 yrs.
Keith H. 17 yrs.
Sandy M. 18 yrs.
Terry W. 18 yrs.
Tom Mc. 20 yrs.
Jim P. 21 yrs.
Stan K. 33 yrs.

Sun. Morn. 11am Group:

Doug H. 11 yrs.
Eunice A. 17 yrs.

Wed. Eye Opener:

Leslie C. 2 yrs.

NOTE:

Please remember, if you would like your groups monthly birthday's listed, please be sure to submit them to Central Office, or email westwordeditor@gmail.com, no later than the first Monday of each month.



SUNDAY MORNING BREAKFAST

Downtown Ramada Inn

708 - 8th Ave. SW

Breakfast - 9:00am

Speaker - 10:00am

Come and join us for breakfast:

Buffet Breakfast \$12.00

Healthy Start Breakfast . . . \$9.00

Toast & Coffee \$4.00

Coffee \$2.00

To inquire about speaking opportunities in the future, call Jacques at 714-5101.



DOWNTOWN SATURDAY NIGHT SPEAKER MTG.

Fortis Building

North Tower

801 - 7th Ave. SW

Speaker - 8:00pm

If you would like to contribute a recovery related story to be published in the Westword, simply drop it off at Central Office or email it to:

westwordeditor@gmail.com



TELEPHONE MONITORING

This is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

- Big Book, Pg. 89

Thank you to all who signed up as late night monitors!

If you would like to serve in this capacity, please phone Axel at:

355-5600

axel.koenig@shaw.ca

12 Step List Application & Renewal Form

(Suggested 1 year of sobriety)

New application

Change of information

Sex M

F

Home Group: _____

First Name: _____ Last Initial _____

Phone Number: _____ Cell Number: _____

Do you want to monitor the phones on the midnight shift (11:00 pm - 8:30 am)?

Or fill in the following to have your name on the 12 Step List.

When are you available?

Weekdays AM only (9:00 am - noon) Weekdays PM only (noon - 5:00 pm)

Weekday daytime (9 am - 5 pm) Weekday evenings (5 pm - 11 pm)

Weekends (9 am-11 pm) **Anytime** (7 days a week, 9 am - 11 pm)

Weekdays @ Central Office 9am - 1 pm OR: 2 pm - 5 pm

Where are you available to make 12 step calls?

(REMEMBER - TAKE A FRIEND)

Any where in Calgary NE NW SW SE

Town(s) around Calgary: _____

Do you have transportation for calls? Yes No

What language(s) other than English do you Speak? _____

Are you able to be listed on the foreign language list? Yes No

Please give this application to your Intergroup Rep. or mail, phone, fax or email to

Central Service Office #2, 4015 - 1 St. SE, Calgary AB, T2G 4X7

Phone: 777-1212

Fax: (403) 287-6540

Email address: aaoffice@telusplanet.net

What is the 12 Step List?

This list contains the AA members who are willing to have their names and phone numbers listed for 12 Step calls.

Listings are by area of the city and home group.

The list is used by phone monitors when a caller needs to talk with another alcoholic.

You may talk with them a short time or for a long time. Or, with another AA friend*, you may meet them for a coffee, take them to a meeting, or visit them in their home.

You list your available times and what parts of the city you are willing to travel to.

A car is helpful but not necessary.

How to sign up

Return this application form to Central Service Office or to your Intergroup Representative.

Once you are on the list, any changes you want to make just call Central Service Office and ask for Mathew.

*** Never go on a 12 Step Call on your own.**

What are Midnight Monitors?

These are people willing to take calls between 11:00 at night and 8:30 in the morning.

Their phone numbers are given to the answering service who forwards calls, on rotation, directly to them during that time.

It usually involves only talking & listening, and occasionally getting someone on the 12 Step list to call them back the next day.