

THE MIXER

THE AUSTRALIAN MAGAZINE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

IS ALCOHOL COSTING YOU MORE THAN JUST MONEY?

I migrated to Australia in 2003 from the UK, 39 years of age, looking for a better life, and randomly met a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who invited me to my first AA meeting. I suspected my drinking had become problematic. I had lost the ability to control how much I drank once I started, and was also unable to guarantee my behaviour when I drank. I rarely sobered up, as I'd become a daily drinker. Drinking and driving was common practice with my children in the car, as well as drinking before going to work as an intensive care nurse. I remember drinking beer in my garage with the roller door open, sitting in a camping chair Australian style, and thought that I'd arrived! I drank essentially for the effect and to change how I felt; living life without alcohol, I struggled to "cope" with feelings and circumstances. It didn't matter if I was happy or sad, I drank, and drinking had become a way of life that seemed normal. Eventually my drinking ceased being a luxury and fun, and became a necessity and extremely sad; I was largely drinking alone at home, and often to oblivion.

My delusion surrounding my drinking had hindered me from learning what alcoholism is. An alcoholic doesn't have to be a park bench drunk. I was a working mother, with a profession and a career, a nice home, a driver's license, and from the outside looked like I had things together - yet inside I was dying. Life had become an existence, and I arrived at AA with a multitude of problems. I was prey to misery and had problems with personal relationships. I had no clue how to be a decent partner, mother, daughter, friend or employee. I couldn't control my emotional nature, and I was full of fear, and often very angry and resentful. Today I understand that alcoholism is a disorder and that I am mentally and physically different from normal, moderate or heavy drinkers, and I suffer a malady of a spiritual nature. AA has offered me a solution to my alcoholism. AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement is a desire to stop drinking.

After 22 months of abstaining from alcohol and just "not drinking", it all got too hard and I picked up a drink. After 6 weeks of attempting to control my drinking unsuccessfully, desperation took me back to AA. I rarely had one or two drinks, what was the point? [Continued on p. 2]

Note: if you are reading this in a black and white paper version, *The Mixer* can be accessed online in colour PDF form at the website, www.aamixer.com. If you would like to receive *The Mixer* by email, please send an email to editor@aamixer.com to go on our mailing list.

1-3	IS ALCOHOL COSTING YOU MORE THAN JUST MONEY?
2	CONTENTS; STATEMENT OF PURPOSE
3-4	IT WORKS, IT REALLY DOES
4	GOING TO ANY LENGTH...
5	JUSTIN'S STORY
6-7	THE CYCLE ENDS
7	AROUND THE TRAPS
8-11	END OF THE LINE
12	GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE; AA PREAMBLE

I now identify with the allergy/phenomenon of craving as described in the Doctor's Opinion of our Big Book, and that I am Powerless over alcohol, both before I start drinking due to a mental obsession, and after I pick up a drink due to a physical phenomenon of craving. I could stop drinking for short periods of time, I just couldn't stay stopped. I would usually return to drinking as a reward or if in emotional pain, fear, anger or resentment. I know today that I cannot drink safely, but I didn't know how to live without alcohol. That desperation has been my greatest gift, as painful as it was; it propelled me to do the suggested things in AA.

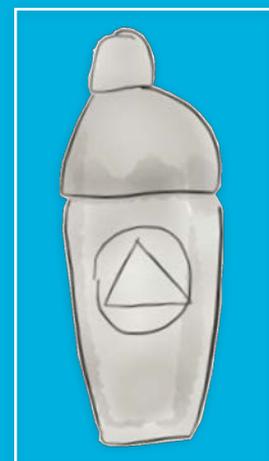
The 12 step programme of AA is a practical programme for living; it requires total abstinence from alcohol, and is based on spiritual principles and living and growing along spiritual lines. I have been awakened by the process of taking the twelve steps, and introduced to a concept of a power that keeps me sober. I accepted that if I'm personally powerless over alcohol (which the evidence of my drinking career confirmed), I needed a power in my life. I arrived in AA a militant atheist, and today my relationship with my Higher Power is the most significant relationship I have in my life; it gives me a life.

Living the programme has required honesty and willingness to examine my past and huge changes that help me to live sober. It involves going to AA meetings, working the 12 steps with a sponsor, being involved, and of service and helping others. AA gave me hope, when

The Mixer Statement of Purpose

The Mixer, for "people who normally would not mix" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 17), is a forum for AA members in Australia to share their experience, strength and hope with each other, that they may stay sober and help others to recover from alcoholism.

Stories are collected by a volunteer Editor in each Area, thus ensuring a voice for all AA members around Australia; and these Area Editors form an editorial group conscience for the magazine, together with the General Editor and technical and design team. We, the editors and other volunteers contributing service to *The Mixer*, try to practice the AA principles in our work, being guided by the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. All contributions present the views of the contributors, and do not represent the AA Fellowship as a whole.



my situation felt totally hopeless. My experience is that, because I gave AA a go, today I have a life indescribably wonderful. I swapped the calamity and dramas for a life filled with joy, fun, laughter and freedom, as I am no longer controlled by my alcoholism. AA saved my life, changed my life, and gave me a whole new life; and for that I am truly grateful. If it can work for me, it may work for you.

There are 20 AA meetings a week in the Byron shire. My home group is 'The Joys of Recovery', Pottsville Thursday night 7pm, all welcome. Our local helpline is 1800423431 or 0401945671. The national 24hrs AA helpline is 1300222222. AA also has a national website - www.aa.org.au.

(Anonymous, Pottsville, NSW)

IT WORKS, IT REALLY DOES

Born and reared in the bush, with a love for nature, in a period covering the big depression, the second world war, the dropping of the Atom Bomb, a victim of bullies which continued until, thanks to AA, it is no longer. A shy introvert with a hatred of Physical Violence, which I later perpetrated, but no longer thanks to the 12 steps of AA. I know now I was born a rebel; but life for the eldest of four, with Dad a 3by8 hour shift worker building a house, Mum with 4 kids, 3 cows to milk, 24 chooks, washing by hand, no electricity until I was 16, was no boundaries set except, "you will get it when your father gets home". So no boundaries. Add to this, I believe born an alcoholic, and my first drunk, smoke, and first love affair (my priorities in that order until AA).

My surrender happened before I got to my first meeting; but that night in a small room in a wee village on the Clarence River NSW, I now know I SURRENDERED to this rotten disease and received that which is stated in Appendix II, page 567 line 3 of the 4th Edition of my textbook, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from Alcoholism). Also, I was introduced to Hughie H., a special person who stood up front and said, "stand up to be seen, speak up to be heard, and sit down to be appreciated"; then, "it's ok Jim, this is a Dis-ease not a Moral issue"; and later that night the group conscience offered him to me as a temporary Sponsor, suggesting I could sack him now. He remained my Sponsor and Special friend until he died recently; my second Sponsor Dave D. (dec.) was also a very Special friend, as was a Sponsee Nick S. (dec.).

And so 33 years later, with the devoted help of my Home Group Maclean (now Port Fairy Topic Group) and the many members I know, without doubt I too believe I must give it away in order to keep it. Maclean had me in Area Service in my second year of recovery, thus introducing me to an essential element of recovery, showing me how to 'practice these principles in all my affairs' as with all 3 of our Legacies, Recovery Unity, Service, handed down to us in Perpetuity by our Elders. So at 87, some of that Endless Spiritual Journey allows me to continue to give in many different ways. I can still drive my own car to open a meeting 70km away, where 3 dedicated members provide the only Topic meeting between Geelong, Vic. and Victor Harbour, S.A. (see

AATimes.org.au), which provides a different meeting of unconditional love for all, especially newcomers. I do some PI work, a radio program, and have become proficient at sequence dancing, have a good garden, still have a sister, 4 children (1 dec.), 11 grandys (1 dec.) and 12 Great-grandys, and look forward, one day at a time, to Great-great-grandys. Each morning I get up with a smile on my dial.

(Jim S, Port Fairy Topic Group)

GOING TO ANY LENGTH...

We are a wife and husband team in AA, and our lives in AA have led us to a special relationship with AA Australia. A couple of years ago, we were at the National Convention in Adelaide, where we met up with AA friends. We had a wonderful time at the convention, and on top of that we got the chance to feed Kangaroos and hug Koala bears. The following year we met up with our Australian friends in Fiji at the convention there, and made new AA friends. After the convention, an AA friend, let us call him, Jason, took us to the beach, where we had a chance to swim in the Pacific Ocean. It was a poignant experience, as we came to Fiji to say good bye to an AA friend who had very little time left to live. He managed to make it to Fiji.

A few months later, Jason came to visit us in our small village in the north of Sweden, after accomplishing an impressive hike in the Swedish Alps. He introduced us to meetings in Nundah that are opened to Skype participation. Hence our contact to this far away land was reinforced. Curiosity took the better of us and we managed to find a way to make it to Queensland. Jason picked us up at Brisbane Airport and we stayed at his place a few days. He took us to Nundah, which was a real homecoming. We then went on a road trip to Toowoomba, where we met up with other AA friends from online. We also went to the Coomera Big Book Meeting to meet another friend we met in Fiji. We met up with friends from LIM (Loner's International Meeting) in Cairns for the National Convention. We partied hard with Jason as AAers do. Before the convention, we saw a bit of the Great Barrier Reef, visited the Rainforest, and learned more about the Aboriginal culture. We took our flight home via Brisbane, where Jason made sure we caught our connecting flight.

Before AA, we barely existed; today, we can experience the joys of travelling with AA. Our daily program fits well with travelling. We have no problem doing our morning and evening practices on planes, trains and airports. We continue to do service and put the principles of the program in action using all the steps, traditions and concepts. How fortunate and fun to be part of our worldwide fellowship!

(Signed, a couple in AA)

"Nothing matters more to AA's future welfare than the manner in which we use the colossus of modern communication. Used unselfishly and well, it can produce results surpassing our present imagination." - Bill Wilson, *Grapevine*, November,

JUSTIN'S STORY

Ever since I could remember, I wanted to be someone else. If I could be taller, smarter, stronger, richer or happier, then everything would be alright. To account for my presumed deficiencies, I would pretend to have all of these attributes. I thought that if other people thought I was smart, happy and confident, then I would be at peace with myself. Alcohol was an excellent propellant for my fantasies. After the first drink, my fears and insecurities would diminish. After the third a warm glow of contentment would swell in my stomach. After the tenth drink, I felt like I had finally reached a place where I could be comfortable with myself around other people. But after the twentieth drink, I became violent, dark, and a danger to myself and those around me.

If only I could control my drinking.... If only I could maintain the feeling I had after the tenth drink without descending toward the gates of insanity and death. It took many vain attempts for me to do so, before a sense of defeat entered my being. I couldn't articulate it, but I was powerless over alcohol.

When I came through the doors of AA, I identified immediately with the powerlessness and unmanageability described in the first step. I listened to people talk about how they felt when they were drunk, and how they felt when they were sober. I got a sponsor, a home group, and a service position. I started going through the steps in the Big Book word for word. I learnt about the disease of alcoholism, and became convinced that a life run on self-will could hardly be a success. I learnt that my problem was within my thinking before picking up the first drink. But how was I to achieve this, when all of my sincerest efforts to remain sober had failed?

I had to find God. At first I prayed to a God I didn't believe in. I attended regular meetings I didn't feel like going to, and talked honestly with other alcoholics when I didn't want to. I progressed through the steps, and took actions to reconcile with the past when all of my thoughts were telling me to run away. And then the miracle happened: I actually became less interested in myself and more interested in my fellows. I began to notice that I was less afraid of what other people thought of me. I began to hear the silence and peace that is present in this world in every moment. I felt like I was reborn.

But I am not over the hedge yet. When I am complacent about my program, I pay the consequences. Self-will takes over, and I am the last person to find out that this has happened. But I do have a program and kind people around me who help to guide me in the right direction.

Service work has become the result of my membership in AA. I am just as responsible as any other member for ensuring the future of AA. For me, gratitude is giving my time and my skills back to the fellowship. Everyone has a skill and some time that they can give back. This work, whilst challenging, is fruitful for everyone involved. Service work and the traditions and concepts represent the beauty of how God has operated in the group conscience of AA over the last 80 years.

(Yours in loving service, Justin D., Brisbane)

THE CYCLE ENDS

Before I had an understanding of how this disease works, I can remember I was so easily fooled by it and I didn't know anything about the cycle that was happening. For 3 months I decided I wasn't going to drink anymore. I exercised, I ate well, and I downloaded 20 spiritual apps on my phone and read them religiously every day. Below is a story of how powerless I had truly become over alcohol.

Life was good, and I decided to take my 2 year old son on a road trip to see my grandparents. Once we arrived, I continued my routine for about a week. My son was pretty out of control back then. My Nan started picking at him, she even spat back at him after he had done it to her, so I started thinking how dare she, she never sees us and this is how she treats my son, doesn't she know who I am! I decided I'd go to the pub for dinner just to get my son out of the house 'for her'. There were many restaurants I could have gone to, but I decided the pub will do. I sat there obsessing about my grandmother, I thought, I'll get one glass of red wine to go with our dinner. I remember after that glass that a switch flipped and, with my son asleep in the pram, I started scanning the pub for more people to drink with. Within minutes I found a guy and he bought me more drinks and said he could also get me drugs. He said his mother loved kids and has a car at home with a car seat, so I thought, great, we can go get drugs and my son would be safe. His mother came and took my sleeping son back to her place and we left to go to the bottle shop and to score. Two hours later I thought I should get my son now - he might not be safe. I collected my son and then put him in the car in a back seat that had been basically ripped out. In the back seat sat my 2 year old son (not in a child's car seat), while me and this guy sat in the front with alcohol bottles everywhere. I remember I was reaching back from the front seat to put my right hand on his little leg "to keep him safe" while my left hand clutched a drink. At the same time I was leaning over feeding the driver with a drink continuously. I drank so much in that car that night and could not get drunk, but the driver blacked out and swerved off the road and crashed the car. I remember diving in the back seat to my son. Thank God he was okay. Thank God! The driver was passed out completely and I grabbed his phone to call his mother. I then sat in the back with my son who had not even cried and I opened another drink. When the mother arrived it was 3am, and we were dropped off in the main street. I then walked back to my grandparents, where I crept into the house with my son. The following day I was so ashamed and full of guilt - I could barely stand. I was shocked and couldn't understand how I could do something like that, especially after 3 months of being a spiritual 'guru'. I wouldn't even think twice of giving my son a soft serve ice cream because of the pig fat; and yet I placed him in such a dangerous situation.

Before doing the steps, these are the things that kept me up at night with haunting memories, along with the guilt, shame and remorse. My father would tell me I am not an alcoholic - I have all my teeth and I'm not living on the streets, that I was just

selfish and only thinking of myself. These criticisms spiraled me more out of control because of the hate of myself.

That led me into AA. Thank God for my sponsor giving me the information, because I have been able to take a step back and see exactly what went on there. I was sober on self-will and distractions. I got a resentment that night at my grandparents, and my disease led me to the pub. I then had the obsession of the mind brought about by the resentment. I had to do something to be rid of the irritability and discontented feelings, and with no defence against this, I picked up a drink which then triggered the allergy to alcohol. The switch flipped, and I had an abnormal reaction and a personality change. That night at the pub showed me just how far down the rabbit hole it took me and how much the disease had progressed in just 3 months. It took me a long time, with overwhelming days and nights of guilt, to then understand it isn't a moral issue, it wasn't the true person I was. This is where this disease takes me, and the delusion I suffer from is evident in parts of this story. I can see clearly now how the obsession of the mind and the allergy of the body ensures I repeat the cycle over and over for many years. It has only been through the steps and accepting something of a spiritual nature into my life that I have been able to create a new start and a better life and outcome for my son and I. I have a defence against that first drink, and a better understanding of myself, and the chance to be able to give this gift to another alcoholic.

(Anonymous, Byron Bay)

AROUND THE TRAPS

'Sometimes the choices I make are not as important as the fact that I make them.'

'5 paradoxes: 1) We suffer to get well; 2) We surrender to win; 3) We serve to be free; 4) We die to live; 5) We give, to keep.'

'My program is not unrealistic, my expectations are.'

'There is nothing can happen in my life that's worth one lousy drink.' (Dave D., dec. 2012)

'Keep going to AA and expose yourself to the danger of getting well.' (Dave D.)

'Regrets are poison to the soul and take up useful head space. Deal with them one at a time and move on.'

'I must learn to put thought between impulse and action.'

'There is no greater freedom than to be who you are'

(Thanks to Jim S., Port Fairy Topic Group, for supplying the above quotes)

'FEAR: Frustration, ego, anxiety, remorse. But FEAR backwards is REAF: Relief Everlasting And Freedom.' - Laurie, Box Hill Sunday night.

"If merely 'feeling good' could decide, drunkenness would be the supremely valid human experience" - William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* - <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/j/james/william/varieties/chapter1.html>

THE END OF THE LINE

“You mongrel bastard, you have really done it this time, the kids and I have had enough, we are out of here”, screamed the lipstick-written message on my lounge room wall, as I awoke from another drunken stupor. Full of remorse and pain, I put my head in my hands and cried to myself, softly at first, and then as the realization of what was happening struck home it became a torrent. The promises I had made on more than one occasion just kept getting broken, I could not stop drinking, and my life was a shambles.

We had married in 1977 after a whirlwind romance; I would go to her house in the middle of the night after a skinful and sit outside her window singing love songs. She could not believe her luck and “how romantic” I was - she fell for me because I wooed her and she could overlook my shortcomings. “He must be a very lonely man”, she would comment to her friends: “That is why he drinks so much”. “He will change after we are married”, she told her family.

I had been in trouble with the booze for years; mind you, it was never my fault: I always blamed everything and anything. My first wife had run off with my best mate in 1974 to make a new life for herself, a great excuse for a drink, and I used and abused that excuse for all it was worth. I had bulldusted my way into some fantastic jobs over the years and was smart enough to know when to pull the pin, usually just before the enforced resignation. However, one’s luck only lasts a short time and mine had just about run out.

I moved towns: I did what I now know to be ‘an alcoholic geographical’, where I was going to make a new start and I was going to show the world what a legend in my own lunchtime I was. That I was an absolute movie star. I would be sought after by the best and I would make my mark on the world. Business took off like a rocket, I got my name and photo in the local paper on a regular basis, I rubbed shoulders with the local gentry, I was feted and fawned on by all who did not know the ‘real me’.

I got myself into a spot of bother and I needed the services of a good lawyer. I spoke with his secretary and found out she was single, and I pursued her until we married 4 months later.

At the wedding I refused to leave the reception: there was an 18 gallon keg in the cold room that I had paid for and as yet had not been tapped; there was no way that I would leave that place till I had had my fill of my beer that I had paid for. My new father-in-law had other ideas: he promised that if I went on our honeymoon quietly he would look after my keg till I got back. I believed him and off we went as newlyweds, the groom unfit to drive and the bride not much better.

We arrived at our destination, the Gold Coast, to a beautiful Hotel/Motel that someone had paid for as a wedding present. We registered and were taken to our very plush room where some forward-thinking person had arranged a Magnum of the best Champagne to be left by the newlywed’s bedside to toast each other’s good Health and Happiness, a suggestion I thought was absolutely wonderful – by a person after my own

heart. My new wife did not share the same view and promptly said, "You have had enough to drink, you are now a married man and things are going to change". "That is what you think lady", I visualised saying in my mind; but I just walked over and opened the magnum and told her that if she would not join me then I would have more for myself.

After finishing the champagne and in fact just topping up my already alcohol saturated body, I proceeded to finish all that was in the fridge (which was in fact a considerable amount of booze) and I began to call room service. Alcoholic amnesia took over and I remember little of the next 4 days. I came to out of my haze, to a furious and out of control wife. My first reaction was to think that she just does not understand and that I am a man – surely I am entitled to a little drink on my wedding day. I actually believed it.

No passionate lovemaking for me, no consummation or conversation, and dinner consisted only of 'hot tongue and cold shoulder' for a week to follow. With absolute contrition I promised never ever again. That promise lasted for 3 weeks until we had a BBQ for her family and she told me I could have a couple of drinks just to be courteous to our guests and my new family. Well dear reader, I found to my horror that one was too many for me and a keg would never be enough, for once I started, something went alight in my body and mind and I lost all control over when, where and how I was going to stop.

The marriage was a complete disaster and we had many many separations, and we had many more promises from myself to do something about my drinking, all to no avail. My business went belly up and the creditors came knocking on our door. They didn't understand that I would pay when I got some money in - a story so stale that no one would listen to anymore, not even my wife. I took to staying out all night as it was better than facing the wrath at home. I found 'friends' from all walks of life who were in much the same boat as me, men and women who were just having a bit of a hard trot. I would soon get myself together and get back on my feet – but I picked up a drink again and again and again; until that fateful morning when I woke up to the message in lipstick on my lounge room wall. This was the end of the line for us. We separated, and I went to live in a shack on 8 acres in Morayfield where we were planning to start a new life. It was never to be.

I was to continue my downward spiral for a few months more, as we do, until I had my last binge in August of 1981, where I started my weekend drinking cocktails for two and finishing days later having polished off everything in the shack, including a litre bottle of Worcestershire sauce. I was so sick, I just wanted to die. I walked into the bathroom where I had hung a mirror on the wall in my drunken stupor – the mirror was only just hanging off the nail head. There I was confronted by the image of a man hell bent on self-destruction, and I remember breaking down crying and saying to myself, "I never want to do this again – I do not want to continue living like this". It was like a switch had been turned on in my head and a light went on.

I rang a friend who had stopped drinking with some help from an organisation called AA, and I asked him if he could help. His only comment to me was, "I was wondering how long it would take, Jimmy boy", for he had spoken to me on numerous occasions at 5am on the job as I was having my first social drink of the day. I would tell him I was a social drinker and that I just happen to be a very sociable bloke. He would just walk away shaking his head. "Jimmy, I will pick you up tonight and take you to a meeting at Nundah, try and stay sober. I will see you at 6:30pm".

6:30pm arrived and I had not taken a drink, and my hands and body shook like they had never shaken before. Fear started to set in: "Maybe I had been too hasty, what if there is someone there that knows me". What if, what if, what if. There came a knock on my door - I hesitated to answer it; another knock – I gingerly peeked out the window to see my friend who was well dressed and not in his work Ute. He appeared bright eyed and bushy-tailed. I opened the door and he put his arms around me and said, "Mate where we are going, you will meet a lot of people including myself who felt just as you do right at this moment, going to their first meeting". Strange, but he described to me how I felt and what was happening in head: my fears, my trepidation, my dread that I might be making a big mistake. He knew, for he had been down that well-trodden path of that very first step to recovery.

We arrived at a big old building at Nundah: it was a Church that I had never noticed. I was too petrified to know exactly where I was, and my instincts told me that the Prince of Wales hotel was just down the road. A small OP rum would calm me down, my head told me. The few marbles I had left told me different, however. I knew that this was where I needed to be. I walked in with my mate. I sat on my hands to stop them from shaking. He leaned over and whispered, "Listen for the similarities and not the differences Jimmy"; and "take the cotton wool out of your ears and put it in your mouth tonight mate, listen like you never listened before, you might just hear something that will make a difference to you and your life from here on in", he said.

The meeting finished and I was filled with hope, for I was not alone. I had just made a whole lot of new friends who were all sober and all clean, neat and tidy. I left there and I wanted what they had with every fibre of my being. I got home, I thanked my friend for all his help. From his pocket he produced a meetings list, and he told me that if I really wanted what he and those I had met that night had, then I would find my way to meetings myself, as he was not going to molly-coddle me. That was Tuesday 11th August 1981; on Wednesday 12th August 1981, I attended my first AA meeting at Caboolture. I was made to feel so welcome, so I took a seat and the meeting began. The chairman said, "Would like to share your experience with us Jim?". Shaking like a leaf, I stood up and said, "*My name is Jim and I am an **Alcoholic***". I fell to pieces and cried my eyes out. No one took pity and no one made a comment, but I could see that everyone in that room knew where I was coming from; it was like releasing the pressure from a pressure cooker.

I spent nearly 31 years as a continuous member of the Caboolture Group until I moved to Mount Coolum in 2012.

Today is the 6th July 2017, this morning I will attend one of my regular meetings of the Coolum Groups of AA, and when I am asked to share I shall say, “My name is Jim and I am an **Alcoholic** I have been **clean and sober** thanks to this fellowship and my God as I understand him for nearly 36 years. Today I have a life I only ever dreamed of.”

NB: The years from August 12th 1981 till today is another story for another day.

(Jim T., Coolum Groups of AA)

“The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. Few indeed were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in singlehanded combat. It was a statistical fact that alcoholics almost never recovered on their own resources. And this had been true, apparently, ever since man had first crushed grapes.” - (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, page 22).



Adriaen Brouwer - Inn with drunken peasants (c. 1625) ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adriaen Brouwer - Inn with drunken peasants.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Adriaen_Brouwer_-_Inn_with_drunken_peasants.jpg))

Valē, Dan K. (26.8.2017); formerly of Ringwood East breakfast group, Drouin Wed Group, co-founder of *The Mixer*:

“*And who by fire, who by water....and who shall I say is calling?*” L. Cohen.

GENERAL EDITOR'S NOTE

Whether the drunken peasants in Brouwer's portrait are 'real alcoholics' or just 'hard drinkers' (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, pages 20-21), this scene would be a familiar one to many of us in AA, in spite of the intervening centuries - it certainly arouses (murky) memories for this writer. If drinking had continued to be all "conviviality, companionship and colourful imagination... joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good" (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, page 151), no doubt most of us would still be out there. "But not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone". How grateful then we are to be sober today ...without the peasants' inevitable hangover!

We put our gratitude into practice by trying to carry our AA message to others, and giving back to the world at large by practising the principles of the 12 Steps in all our affairs. From the late 1930s onwards, one important way for us to do this has been through sharing our stories in print. Writing is a way for each of us to reflect on, distill and share our own experience, strength and hope, of being drunk and achieving and maintaining sobriety, with other alcoholics who still suffer both inside and outside of the rooms of AA. As one older sober AA member says, it is in the diversity of our experiences that we see the common threads of the disease of alcoholism. Hence, our old saying, 'look for the similarities rather than the differences'. We hope you will find identification in the stories in *The Mixer*, which identification binds us together and leads us on the path to belonging and sobriety. We also look forward to reading your story!

AA PREAMBLE ©

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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