

The Eye pener

Vol 23 No. 5 - May 2023

Your Experience, Strength, and Hope via the Written Word

Alcohol: The False Idol

I've heard it said in meetings

that we were alcoholics before we took our first drink. This became increasingly apparent the more time I spent in the program. I have the disease of "more," and my parents could likely corroborate that statement.

The first time I drank, I ended up in the passenger seat of a stranger's car recounting my past traumas. I was 14; he was a senior in high school. The second time I drank, I polished off two bottles of cheap vodka with two other people. The hangover was not nearly as painful as the humiliation of coming home in a blackout. As my teen years progressed, so did my drug use. It was only after a failed relationship at 19 due to my own proclivity for manipulation and self-loathing that alcohol became the "solution." By 22, I needed to drink my lunch to keep the withdrawals at bay.

My whole motivation in life became alcohol. It was not an elixir; it was a false idol. I hated drinking socially. My friends would go to the bars, and I would inevitably end up blacking out and needing to be brought home early. My nights were typically spent alongside cigarettes, whiskey, sad music and low lighting. I began to grapple with the fact that I was hardly legally allowed to drink, yet I had pickled my-

self quite severely.

My mother, who has always been an important part of my life, suggested I start seeing a substance abuse counselor. To this day, I credit that counselor with my introduction to recovery. One day, she handed me a pamphlet with a few meetings circled on it. (One of those meetings, There Is a Solution, is still my home group.) A few days after I had been given the AA pamphlet, I had to attend an all-day training class for my job. I was terrified. I knew I wouldn't be able to drink.

Afterwards, I made the decision to visit a young people's meeting. I recall walking up to the church and seeing three guys, likely in their late 20's to mid-30's and thinking I was in the wrong place. They looked happy, handsome, and well dressed. There was no way they were alcoholics. Low and behold, they were! I sat down somewhere in the middle row, (p. 2)



THE ARTICLES CONTAINED HEREIN ARE PERSONAL ACCOUNTS OF INDIVIDUALS' EXPERIENCES.

THEY DO NOT REFLECT THE OPINIONS OR POSITIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EYE OPENER COMMITTEE OR A.A. AS A WHOLE.

whiskey still fresh on my tongue, and for the first time, fully admitted I was an alcoholic. It was cathartic then and continues to be. I would have loved to sneak out after the meeting concluded, but I was immediately surrounded by smiling faces. A taller guy, who I still chat with from time to time, stated in a matter of fact way that he was now my temporary sponsor. I called him the next day, and again after that.

It's important to note that I did not get sober immediately. I drank on and off, with the genuine desire to stop. Every time I relapsed, I would go to a meeting and talk about it. The importance of doing so can't be highlighted enough. I was not failing, I was trying. In recovery, we work for progress, not perfection. Eventually, I was able to put some time together. The solution ended up being relatively straightforward. It's a recipe that's worked for countless addicts and alcoholics and likely always will.

It turns out everything they said in meetings was spot on: get a sponsor, work the steps, get a home group, get a service position, and take others through the steps. I continue to do just that, and it continues to keep me sober. In sobriety, I've found a new partner, who I genuinely communicate with. I received an associate's degree, and intend on furthering my education. I'm not depressed, anxious, or self-

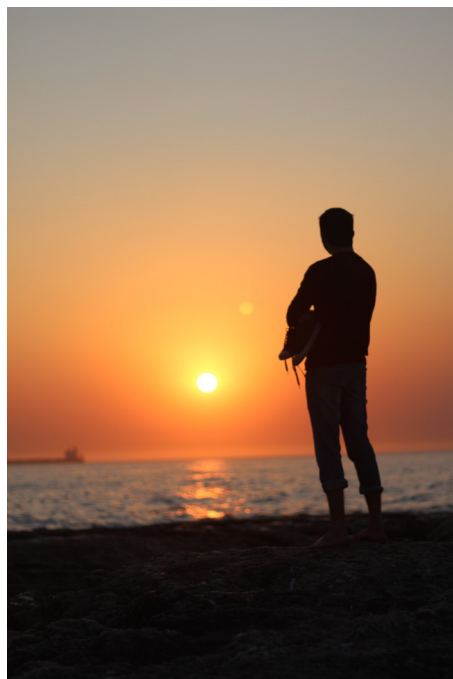
loathing anymore. I am happy, sober, ambitious, and spiritually fit enough to know I only have what I have because I gave myself over to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

~Anonymous

There Is a Solution

Close (But Not Too Close)

On Sundays, my local beach bar opened at 11:00. One Sunday while waiting for it to open, I noticed what I thought was a church group sitting in a circle in the sand. After a few beers, I went outside to smoke a cigarette and look at the women. When the meeting ended, a couple of women



my age were milling around in their bathing suits gathering up their things. I sauntered over with beer in hand to make a bit of small talk. I asked, "So, is this a church group?" One of the women said no, it was an AA group. My gawd, I just about dropped my beer and headed straight back into the bar where I belonged.

Months later, when the calamities and black-outs were bunching up back to back, I returned to the group because I knew I needed some sort of help. But I wasn't quite ready. I stopped the black-outs by putting down the drink, but I didn't stop drugs. For three Sundays in a row, I came to the meeting late, and nonchalantly, as though I were a stray dog, wandered up with dark glasses on and sat just outside the circle. I was just close enough to hear what was being said but not too close. And when the meeting started winding down, I wandered away before anyone could initiate me in conversation.

On the fourth Sunday, after a Saturday night of way too many drugs, I got closer and picked up a white chip and stayed when the meeting ended. A guy around my age offered to take me to a meeting that night, and I agreed. We went again the next night, too, and I picked up a *When and Where*. On the way home, I thanked him (p. 3)

for his help but said that I could do this on my own now. He was way too religious for me, and I knew that wasn't going to work. I really needed to stay sober. The next night I went to a meeting on the *When and Where* list. I pulled into the parking lot, then pulled out, went around the block, realized I couldn't do this alone, and pulled back in.

It was a small group. After the meeting I asked a guy who was sober for TWO YEARS how you do this thing. He said, "Go to a meeting tomorrow then call me." I agreed, and I did it. When I called him, he said, "Okay, now do it again." I did.

It's been 42 years without drugs or drinking. A few years ago, I went back for a visit to my hometown, and people are still meeting in the sand next to the bar. When I first went to that meeting on the beach, I was not ready to go inside a building and say I was an alcoholic. Thankfully, I was able to get close

enough to AA to hear what was being said. I'm sure this approach saved me from hitting a much harder bottom. A bottom I might not have recovered from.

~Lucky G.

Saturday Morning
Maintenance Group

The van started following me when I was only fifteen, barely able to hold any adult responsibilities or connections. The man told me that he could make being alive exhilarating and dangerous, two of my 15-year-old self's favorite things. Although I was warned about this man, my ego took over and I knew for certain that I wanted these offerings. My 15-year-old self, however, did not know that there was a price for these comforts, something far more expensive than money could ever buy.

The price was low at first, a few hangovers, a few dents in the car, nothing I couldn't handle and still show up for work the next day. Sure, the days dragged behind me like an anchor wrapped around me with a chain and padlocked over my shoulders. Of course the only way to unlock it and release the anchor was from a very special key that, you guessed it, was owned by the man in the van. (p.4)

The Cost of Comfort

There is a man

in a white van, but I can't see his face. He offers whispers of comfort, comfort he promises cannot be found anywhere outside his van. He is my addiction. He knows all my problems and knows exactly what to say to get me in that van. When I finally get out, he follows me closely, for he knows I can only find that comfort in him.

There Is a Solution Men's Meeting (Closed)

Limited to those with a desire to stop drinking.

First United Methodist Church | 21 Buell ST, Burlington

Sunday | 6:30 p.m. | Big Book

Thursday | 6:30 p.m. | Step Meeting

It wasn't before long that the van started following me to work, however. After all, who wouldn't want to be comfortable at work?

The next cost to my comfort was something I struggled with at first, losing jobs. Well, I wouldn't say 'lose' per se. For about ten years, from age 20 to 30, I had been hired at more jobs than I can remember. Working there only for the first paycheck and then ghosting them to quickly show the man in the van how good I was to have worked so hard for my comfort. The man was never the problem, for he was there to help me through my tumultuous life.

I thought that I knew how to drive and control the van, and I desperately wanted him to teach me how to have a fulfilling life with him by my side. I tried everything I could to keep him around as much as I could. I put all of my eggs in the proverbial van basket. That was until I drove the van off a cliff. And not by accident I might add.

I thought I was alone, for how could anybody possibly feel as bad and lost as I did? I didn't know how wrong I was until I left rehab and found more of my people. These people I met knew about the van, for he was following each and every one of them around, too! In addition to knowing about my struggles, they also knew that there was a solution to my problem about constantly craving and wishing for the van to come back. The people of AA reached out their hands and pulled me up by the scruff. They showed me how to set the van on fire and push it off a cliff while I wasn't inside. They showed me tactics and readings that were almost like they were written specifically for me.

After seven months of not thinking about the van (until now), I can finally say that I was never actually comfortable with the man and his comforts. All I was scared. I was scared to be a man, to be in a society of people, to exist without chemical help, to love, to belong.

~Beau

There Is a Solution

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

Please visit us at www.burlingtonaa.org for more local stories and meeting information.

Eye Opener Committee

Districts 2 & 11 Vermont

Founder	Erwin L.
Editor	Joanne B.
Art/Layout	Ali J.
Co-Chair for District 11	Joanne B.
Co-Chair for District 11	Ali J.
