



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 Summer 2012

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. 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."*

WHAT IS THE BIG BOOK?

Most of the letters in this issue mention "The Big Book," but perhaps some readers are not familiar with it, so... The book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, referred to as the Big Book, is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous. Since the first edition, in 1939, it has helped millions of men and women recover from alcoholism. Chapters describing the A.A. recovery program remain unchanged. Now in its Fourth Edition (2001) new stories have been added to the personal histories.

STORIES PARALLEL WITH MINE

"I have suffered from alcoholic effects for quite some time now. This is actually my fourth alcohol-related offense in the past 15 years. Also, I've had a few open container 'mips' (minor in possession) and running from officers while intoxicated. But, I still believe in God, thinking He's the only one that kept my wreckage from being worse. I have an immense heart for the alcoholic that suffers. I also lost a brother four years ago due to an accidental overdose of alcohol and sedatives. I'm almost halfway through the Big Book and am very intrigued by how parallel the stories are with mine. Thank you for the spiritual and emotional support. It has given me hope for this time behind bars." — **Robert M., West Central Region**

"Recently, I've met some A.A. members who have introduced me to the program. I have committed myself to doing the work because I know that I will die if I don't! I don't want to die. I have been given a second-hand A.A. book and I love it. Just knowing others have experienced the same things I have helps to comfort me. I read the whole book and it seems that it was written about me and my life! This book makes me want to know more and other A.A. members told me that there are many more good, informative books just like that one! If it is possible, I'd like all the information I can get. I want to save my life and it seems your program is the only way." — **Robert B., Southwest Region**

"Dear A.A., I would just like to say how grateful I am for your program. Feels like I always have somewhere to turn when I feel like giving up. And every time I read the Big Book and my *Daily Reflections*, I feel inspiration and it gives me hope. I've pretty much lost it all because of my alcoholism and drug abuse. I'm 32

years old and have three kids. I lost both my parents at a young age. But I know it's only my actions that have brought me here. I know that I am powerless over my addictions. I know a Higher Power can pull me out of it, along with the Steps. They do not have an A.A. program here, so I look for the Grapevine magazine because I find a lot of hope in other people's stories." — **Michael K., Pacific Region**

'I CAN'T DO IT ALONE.'

"Thank you for providing me with the answer to a question I've had for the last 20 years: 'How do I make this all go away?' I've been sober for 63 days, thanks to the rooms and the Fellowship. I know now that I can't do it alone. God knows I've tried. Sixty-three days sober is a major accomplishment for me, but I'd really like to do all I can to keep this 'new' life going. I found a sponsor and want to start the Steps." — **Michael C., Southeast Region**

SURRENDER AND WIN!

"I have been attending A.A. meetings since I was 17 years old (I'm now 21), but I have never experienced more than 30 days of sobriety. I am currently housed in the county jail awaiting a bus to take me to prison. I earned my trip by consuming alcohol and the actions that go along with it. I've been to five residential treatment facilities in the last two years and have only completed one 28-day stay. I'm realizing that my lack of success is partly due to the fact that I've worked all my Steps except the Third Step. I never fully surrendered my will over to the care of my Higher Power. I have recently taken this Step and already feel a change. I believe that upon my release I will have a fighting chance at staying sober and working a successful program. I have hope. Thank you for giving me hope. Thank you for the incredible people you've helped to heal. Whenever I have a rough day in here, I can always find comfort on the pages of my Big Book. I look forward to living a sober, happy life. Thank you for your willingness to help. I don't know how prison life is going to be, but I know that once I get out, my home group will be waiting for me, and I can't wait to join them." — **Joe P., Pacific Region**

THE BIG BOOK — ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

"I am currently incarcerated in a county jail where I have been reading the Big Book and have come to face the fact that I have a disease called alcoholism! Facing a prison sentence of 14½ years, I am pretty sure I've hit my so-called rock bottom! Although it's very unlikely that I will go to prison, this experience has been a major wake-up call for me. I'm grateful for coming here, actually, because if I hadn't, I don't believe I would've found the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and for that I am very grateful. I feel the knowledge of A.A., as well as the Fellowship it has to offer, should be spread all over! Especially in a place such as this, which is crawling with alcoholics and addicts such as myself! I am so grateful that this chance has been given to me in a time of my life when I was praying for some type of 'miracle' to help me!" — **Charles T., East Central Region**

"I'm writing because of the invitation in the Big Book and because

of housing changes, I don't have access to A.A. meetings. I got discharged from rehab, but I really want to stay sober and recover. The Big Book has helped me a lot. What I need is someone to help me with Step work, as I no longer have a sponsor. I have come to rely on A.A. for emotional support. With God and this program, I am becoming the woman I always wanted to be. I would like to keep growing in the Fellowship." — **Cassandra P., Pacific Region**

"I am 20 years old and addicted to alcohol. It started when I was 11 years old. After being sent everywhere possible, to help me, I was on my own at 17. At 20, I found jail. During that time, I realized I needed to change. I was released and came back five times last year for alcohol-related crimes. I had to have alcohol to live. I had planned to fully overdose until I was arrested right before breaking the rules of probation. No doubt, this was an act of God. I now want to start my own business, go to college and live life to my fullest potential. I know now that my next step is to get myself into a half-way house and focus directly on sobriety and recovery. Your Big Book has been a main inspiration. Thank you so much." — **Randall B., Southwest Region**

"Since my arrest, I've been rotting in this cell thinking about how much of my life I've wasted and how much time there is to change. I started reading any book I could get my hands on to help pass the time. By some miracle, the first book I found lying around was the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. I'm not much of a reader on the streets, so the odds of me ever opening that book were very slim. I began reading the book and relating to many things. I often put it down when I disagreed or found something I didn't want to 'hear.' Still, I found myself picking it back up and reading more. I've finished reading it cover to cover, marking many pages along the way. I'm currently working the Twelve Steps from within jail, but I don't feel as confined as before. I understand that my path of sobriety and spiritual foundation will be harder to achieve on the outside of these walls. I'm working on Step Three as an agnostic with a belief in a power greater than myself." — **Toby M., Southeast Region**

"I have gotten ahold of an A.A. Big Book and have been reading it. I have never read any of it before and never realized it would open up a new world for me. I never knew that A.A. was a spiritual program. I am shocked that after 24 years of going in and out of A.A., I finally understand the Second and Third Steps. I am serving a life sentence for something that happened while I was high. And I've gotten to the point where if I've got to live high or drunk the rest of my life, I'm not sure I want to live. So having had a spiritual awakening as a result of reading A.A.'s Big Book, I'm going to try to live sober. In other words, I have finally taken Steps Two and Three." — **Richard E., Southeast Region**

HOPE

"I am a blackout drinker and this is not my first time being locked up behind my drinking. I almost killed a man three years ago after drinking two gallons of wine and a twelve pack of beer. I walked to the house where my wife was and was confronted by a man. I don't remember anything else after that. I was arrested. I'm so ashamed of myself that I just don't know what else to do. I want my family back, but I know I've done too much damage. I want help and want to be happy in life, living sober with peace of mind. I know A.A. can help me because I'm so willing to do anything and everything it takes to quit my drinking. I got your address from an A.A. book I found, which was missing 246 pages of the beginning. I had that spiritual awakening when I took the book back to my cell and read the men and women's stories of their struggles to stop drinking. Some of the stories I read made me cry because there's still hope for me and my family. I am writing A.A. for support." — **Aurelio A., Pacific Region**

STEP TWO

"This sobriety thing is still extremely new to me. I had hit rock bottom and was still trying to dig deeper when I was arrested. Even then I wasn't smart enough to realize my life had become unmanageable. It took two weeks in treatment, eight A.A. meetings, and meeting some great people before I accepted that I was right where I was supposed to be! I have turned my life over to the care of my Higher Power and He is already working in my life. Thanks to A.A. and some guys I look forward to calling my friends! We reside in one of the most selfish places there is—incarceration. Yet these men have shown an interest in me and my sobriety. I pray that with the examples these men have given me I can do the same and help a fellow alcoholic start on this road to sobriety!" — **Robert A., Southeast Region**

SOON TO BE PAROLED

"I would like to say how thankful I am for the love and help the Fellowship has given me during my 4½ years of incarceration. You have saved my life. I have been waiting for the day I can write this letter, because I am now six months from paroling. I have been attending A.A. for the whole time that I've been incarcerated and am very interested in hearing from someone where I will be paroling to. I would love to have someone to go to my first few meetings with from the day I get out and to continue on. I am very scared of getting out and I don't know what to say when I go to my first meetings on the outside or even where I might be able to find meetings. Please help me. I got a letter from your General Service Office saying that you could help and I am really counting on it! I want to say once again, thank you for all the help and love." — **Travis P., Pacific Region**

CCS

"Hi—I'm the former drug and alcohol counselor who relapsed, was arrested, and incarcerated for grand theft. I have drinking-related health issues and the six year sentence I received may be a little more than I can live through. I wrote last year asking for Correctional Correspondence Services. The first link proved unfortunate because he was only months sober. I wrote you again and another link contacted me, and after our initial sharing(s), I asked for his sponsorship. He has me working the Twelve Steps of recovery in a very clear, simple, and detailed way. Amazing! Today, I'm cleaning house and if I die before my 2015 release, I'll be able to rest in peace; sober and recovering thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous and the Corrections Correspondence Service. Thank you." — **Dean G., Pacific Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.