



▲ Don't We All

By Unknown Author

I was parked in front of the mall wiping off my car. I had just come from the car wash and was waiting for my wife to get out of work. Coming my way from across the parking lot was what society would consider a bum.

From the looks of him, he had no car, no home, no clean clothes, and no money. There are times when you feel generous but there are other times that you just don't want to be bothered.

This was one of those "don't want to be bothered times." "I hope he doesn't ask me for any money," I thought. He didn't.

He came and sat on the curb in front of the bus stop but he didn't look like he could have enough money to even ride the bus. After a few minutes he spoke. "That's a very pretty car," he said.

He was ragged but he had an air of dignity around him. His scraggly blond beard kept more than his face warm. I said, "thanks," and continued wiping off my car.

He sat there quietly as I worked. The expected plea for money never came.

As the silence between us widened something inside said, "ask him if he needs any

The Plain Dealer AA Series

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Elrick B. Davis wrote a series of articles just five months after the first Alcoholics Anonymous group was formed in Akron.

This resulted in hundreds of calls for help from suffering alcoholics.



Celebrating 81 Years of AA Stories, News and Events!

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help.” I was sure that he would say “yes” but I held true to the inner voice. “Do you need any help?” I asked. He answered in three simple but profound words that I shall never forget.

We often look for wisdom in great men and women. We expect it from those of higher learning and accomplishments. I expected nothing but an outstretched grimy hand. He spoke the three words that shook me. “Don’t we all?” he said.

I was feeling high and mighty, successful and important, above a bum in the street, until those three words hit me like a twelve gauge shotgun. Don’t we all?

I needed help. Maybe not for bus fare or a place to sleep, but I needed help. I reached in my wallet and gave him not only enough for bus fare, but enough to get a warm meal and shelter for the day.

Those three little words still ring true. No matter how much you have, no matter how much you have accomplished, you need help too. No matter how little you have, no matter how loaded you are with problems, even without money or a place to sleep, you can give help.

Even if it’s just a compliment, you can give that. You never know when you may see someone that appears to have it all. They are waiting on you to give them what they don’t have. A different perspective on life, a glimpse at something beautiful, a respite from daily chaos, that only you through a torn world can see.

Maybe the man was just a homeless stranger wandering the streets. Maybe he was more than that. Maybe he was sent by a power that is great and wise, to minister to a soul too comfortable in themselves.

Maybe God looked down, called an Angel, dressed him like a bum, then said, “go minister to that man cleaning the car, that man needs help.” Don’t we all?

▲ That Little Boy Was Not a Jerk

What Went Wrong Between Then and Now

I was deeply touched by what I heard a young man at a meeting share about planning a party for his mother. He started to search through some old pictures and came up with photos of himself when he was 3 years old. Looking at them, he saw the innocence

in his face at that young age and he said to himself: “That little boy was not a jerk.” His next question to himself was: “What went wrong between then and now?” I believe that everyone in the room could identify with him.

Most of us were perfect when we were born but something influences us in those formative years that set the tone for the direction that our thinking would take. The childlike innocence gave way to the neediness and insecurity that alcoholics seem to have in common.

The unworthiness tapes run rampant in our heads telling us that we couldn’t make it without cutting corners and doing things that brought on guilt and shame, then we were plagued by our conscience.

That little child was damaged and scared on the inside in a way that nothing could bring him peace, until he discovered the elixir in a bottle. When that failed him, he showed up in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous trying to make sense of it all.

When I look around the room at an AA meeting, it seems like we all look about the same on the surface, with a few minor differences due to age and generational things. We’re all made up of hair, eyeballs, elbows, and feet, and things like that. Most of us follow dress codes and courtesy standards. We’re not that much different on the surface.

Our real problems consume us on the inside and we spend years trying to convince the world around us that we are as good as they are while, inside, loathing what we had become. It’s hard to convince a drunk that the child that he was at 3 years old is still inside of him and can resurface if he desperately wants it.

Suppose for a moment, that we all woke up this morning with amnesia. We would all be the same. The only thing that makes us different is what is going on between our ears and we drag that with us everywhere we go. I discovered years ago that my brain, with the aid of my ego, was lying to me, and that I wasn’t that hopeless looser that I thought I was.

I also discovered that most of that damage could be reversed, and that I could, over a period of time; develop an approach to a life far superior to anything I could have imagined.

The hardest thing that stands in the way of this is my inability to surrender, and to trust the process. With the help of the group, slowly letting go of some of the old ideas, you can start seeing the

results in a short period of time, and it will be exhilarating, however, we didn't get this way overnight, and it will be a slow journey, but a very exciting and happy experience.

An old, departed friend used to say, "Your hair will be a different color before you know who you are." To me that means, with the help of the AA program, patiently changing some of those old habits that cause us grief and replacing them with unselfish deeds that start to heal our conscience.

I've heard it said, "Try it for 90 days and if you don't like what we have to offer, we will gladly refund your misery." What have you got to lose? Now, let's go find that kid and give him a second chance.

By Rick R.

▲ A Good Memory of a Good Friend

I attended an incredible rustic retreat one time in the north of Lower Michigan, near Charlevoix. How did I find out about this small event? From daily contact with other AAs, that is part of my program of recovery.

From attending meetings regularly and engaging with people there, by staying late or going early and taking names and telephone numbers. Through having the willingness and open-mindedness to travel some distance and to try new things for enhancing my sobriety.

I had incredible adventures that summer, including time to help others and ongoing amends. The AA retreat/campout was on Beaver Island and entailed taking the ferry for an hour; but one of the boats transported our gear, luggage and us all so we could leave our cars on the mainland.

I had relatives in the area, so I parked some distance from the ferry and rode a bicycle to it, but missed a turn and missed the first boat. Which turned out to be for the best as everyone else took the second ferry and I was right where I was supposed to be.

Besides the meeting, we toured the island. A man took us out on his sailboat. There were bonfires, meeting new people, swimming in incredibly clear and fresh water, and oh, smoked white fish; not to be missed if you travel there!

On Saturday night, a visitor was selected to give a full lead. I always loved this guy's story of how he got to AA, and how he em-

phasized giving back what was so freely given to us all. Which reminds me of "First the man takes a drink. Then the drink takes a drink. Then the drink takes the man."

The speaker was David G. from Cleveland. In his life, he journeyed to many conferences and other AA events and I always knew right where to find him; stage right, up front, in the arena during Founder's Day. He had enthusiasm and... "The God within" ...and shared that willingly. David was a fantastic friend to very many people and he will be missed.

A Higher Power certainly put him in my life to make it better.

Love, Charlie P.

▲ The Day I Unmuted

Tracy L. from Ontario has an article in the October Grapevine giving a shout-out to the Lakewood Free Thinkers AA Group that meets every day at noon and 9:00 p.m. EST online.

While still drinking she attended this meeting every day and finally through the welcoming, sharing and non-judgmental attitude of this Lakewood, Ohio Group finally unmuted herself, started doing service for the group and now has 8 months of sobriety.

For the full article, go to the October 2022 Grapevine.

▲ In Memoriam of David G. CDO Staff Member

It is with sorrow that we announce the passing, on August 22, 2022, of David G., a long-time member with 25 years of sobriety.

David was a valued and well-loved member of the Cleveland District Office staff for 22 years. He was the true embodiment of Promises 7 and 8":

Promise 7: We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Promise 8: Self-seeking will slip away.

Cleveland District Office Staff

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For details or to add an event, call us at (216) 241-7387 or go online aacle.org/events. Deadline is the 15th of each month for next issue.