When I wanted to stop drinking and found that I couldn’t no matter what I did, I sobbed a desperate drunken prayer from the bathroom floor. “GOD HELP ME!!” The very next day I had an epiphany. Suddenly, I knew to my core that I was an alcoholic and I was doomed unless I got help. Thus began my tour in Alcoholics Anonymous.

I was told at my first meeting that I needed to find a power greater than myself if I was to recover. This I did not know how to do nor did I really want to but I was desperate enough so I was willing. I kept coming to meetings, got a sponsor, did the steps, and practiced the principles.

I have been continuously sober for almost 17 years and yet sometimes I feel that I don’t believe in God! Perhaps it is because my conception of God doesn’t seem to match what I hear others share in meetings. Because I struggle with my non belief I am constantly seeking to enlarge my spiritual life. For me there is evidence that God exists since I am sober and when I sincerely ask for help I receive it. Work and self sacrifice for others is the most effective way that I have found to enlarge my spiritual life. I have discovered that what I do is more important than how I feel. Through this I get to be sober, happy, joyous, and free despite my perceived imperfect belief in a higher power.

~Leslie Mc

**Circle and Triangle**

As you may or may not know, we are accepting submissions of art in the shape of the circle and triangle symbol. They can be paintings or photos or drawings or ?. One is chosen for publication each issue. There were 1 entries this round. This issue’s winner is David S. He wins a pizza party which comes out of the Newsletter Committee Budget. Just kidding, he wins a speaker CD. Thanks to all those who participated.
Sober Search
Try to find all the words before taking the next drink. Then call someone.

Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

When I first read this, I dreaded remembering, or trying to remember all the things I had done. Trying to remember the people I hurt by offering “constructive criticisms”, ignoring obligations, and embarrassing myself or others, became a challenge. I started my first list and would say to myself, “Well, that’s not so bad, others have done/said worse.” It didn’t take long before I realized I wasn’t being honest with myself and that this wasn’t going to do any good if I honestly wanted to change. As I forced myself to look at my past escapades, my list grew. Events came pouring back to me as I had “helpful” friends to remind me. At the same time, my sponsor advised me to look back at my lists of character defects and the positive attributes. This helped me find a balance in myself.

Then months later I attended a Step meeting where the discussion was Step 8. Listening to others share, a light bulb finally went off in my head. How naïve I was. How stupid I felt. It finally dawned on me that the people I had harmed, the people I needed to make amends to, included events and times when I was sober and/or drunk. This was a part of my character, my personality that helped lead me to alcoholism. The focus, for me, wasn’t just things I did when I was drunk; it included my whole life, drunk or sober. I truly realized for the first time, that the changes I needed to make in my life were not just the behavior results from alcohol, but my personality.

Each meeting I attend, I learn something new about myself. I find the more meetings I attend and listen, the more I am able to practice the 12 steps. They have become part of my life and I know how much I have changed over the years. I continue to listen and discover new ways to deal with life on life’s terms. I have found a serenity I never believe could exist for me. I have found love and tolerance with others and myself. I thank God everyday that I found the fellowship of AA.

~Anonymous
**Interview with Gene M. March 2012**

**What is your sobriety date?**
My sobriety date is 05 Nov. ’78.

**Describe your first drunk.**
My college friends and I were coming home one late spring afternoon. We had been at a job training session and were hungry and tired. We stopped in a local bar and I had my first, second, third and fourth Tom Collins in rapid order. Since we couldn’t leave after the “house bought” a round, we had to have a few more. I was “fine” until I got up from the bar stool. The room spun, my speech slurred and my stomach rose to my throat, but the “good feelings” outweighed the bad.

**Describe your first AA meeting.**
I entered a smoke-filled basement room in a priest’s house. It was the last place I wanted to be. I found hope in that room among caring, supportive people who remarkably shared experiences and feelings that I had. They told me, “Don’t drink, go to meetings, join a group and get a sponsor” as well as to make a commitment to a form of service work.

**What advice would you give to a newcomer?**
I would suggest a newcomer follow the advice I described above. I would add, read *Alcoholics Anonymous*, decide who the winners are (people who have a sobriety you want), ask questions of your sponsor and act upon the answers you receive. Finally, reach out to others.

**What led you to believe you were an alcoholic?**
A group of men worked on a “home” project at an acquaintance’s house. We had been drinking all day. Three of us remained to start on “shots and beer.” When one man asked, “Why are we still here drinking like this when everyone else has gone home?” I answered “Because we are alcoholics.” That was the first time I articulated and acknowledged the truth.

**What is your favorite AA quote?**
I find hope in “you don’t ever have to feel that way again.”

**How did you get your first sponsor?**
At my second meeting a man looked me in the eye and said, “If you don’t get a sponsor, you are bound to drink again. At the end of my first week in AA, I asked Arthur to be my sponsor. He asked, “What are you willing to do to get sober?” I answered, “Anything.” He said, “That’s a good start.” He became my sponsor, my guide in the Twelve Steps and my dear friend until his passing seven years later.

**What are your current service positions in AA?**
I participate in the Wednesday AA meeting at Eastern State Hospital. I attend meetings at an area jail.

**What is your favorite AA prayer?**
My favorite is the Third Step prayer on page 63 of the “Big Book.”

**What is your favorite AA slogan and how does it apply to your life?**
I find “Easy does it” with the addition of “and just do it” is very helpful. It can cause some stress when I “don’t do it,” but it forces me to be rigorously honest and can point me back in the right direction.

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**Interview with the Alcoholic**

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*(Voluntary Commitment cont.)*

begun to be willing and step into changing myself. You might think jail but I think a building where lives are lost in confusion from the disease called alcoholism. Lives uprooted and confused just like anywhere else. No matter the place we can all be alone and scared, unsure of what to do or where to go but as long as there is an AA meeting and an inner willingness to work the program, there is hope. The women in jail cannot leave to run to the fellowship for the love and support we on the "outside" receive each day. They must wait till we bring a meeting to them, bring that love and support. There are many women in jails and not even half come to the meetings; most can’t. I remember when I was lost and alone. I remember when I reached out for help and it was there, free daily if I wished. So I ask myself "How can I not give back what was so freely given me"? How can I not share this gift called sanity? How can I expect to keep this joy of living if I do not follow the program and share it? From my experience I share with you that going into the jails and bringing the meeting to women that are waiting for us has helped me grow more than I could have ever imagined. When I walk through those doors now there is no feeling of nervousness only joy and gratitude that I can help another suffering alcoholic. You may see a jail but I see hope.

~Anonymous
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Announcements
~ When attending the Wednesday 8pm, 12&12 Group at St. Stephens Lutheran Church on Jamestown Road, be sure to check with chairman for William & Mary parking pass for lot across the street from church.

~ A Blast from the Past! - District 38 ArchivesRosemary H., who so excellently guided the work of the District 38 Archives Committee for the past two years, rotated out of office in December, and in January, I became the new Archivist. We are all grateful for Rosemary's organizational skills, hard work and dedication!

The District 38 Archives is excited to announce that several oral histories and workshops are now available on CD for loan to the A.A. Community. The Archives Committee has an ongoing project to interview and record members of the Fellowship with 20 or more years of sobriety. Four recent workshops have also been recorded including the workshop on alcoholism, “Cunning, Baffling, Powerful.” See the Archives page on the Williamsburg AA web site for more information and for borrowing procedures, or contact me at archivist@aawilliamsburg.com. Information and applications were also distributed at the February District and Intergroup meetings.

In addition to recording oral histories and workshops, The Archives Committee is updating group histories and collecting and organizing documents and other materials related to A.A. and its members in the Williamsburg area. We welcome materials in any format including handwritten. We also welcome volunteers for a variety of projects and tasks. More information is posted on the web site.

Finally, the Virginia Area Archives is in the planning stages for a second edition of the history of AA in Virginia. District 38 is looking forward to participating in this effort. ~In love and service, Jean Marie T.

If you want good self esteem, do esteemable acts.
Give up hope of a better past.
Worry is just a form of control.
Change you must or die you will.
If I’m depressed I’m thinking about yesterday; if I’m anxious I’m thinking about tomorrow; serenity is about thinking about now.
It’s not the caboose that kills you when you get hit by a train.
Fur lined pity pot.
I can’t think my way into right acting, I have to act my way into right thinking.
Didn’t know how to have relationships, I took hostages.
Develop the habit of being transparent with people.
You can take the rum out of the fruit cake but you’re still left with the fruit cake.
If you’re sober and miserable, one of those things is going to change.
What’s wrong with right now?
I am either working on getting sober or working on getting drunk.
Thinking is working on not doing.
Quit complaining about what you have to do and appreciate what you get to do.
Seeking approval of others is like making them my higher power.
It is my responsibility to maintain my spiritual condition.
Paradoxical ambiguity.
Insanity is doing different things over and over again expecting the same results.