

# Sober Times

December 2017

## Anonymous Opinion – The Gratitude Dinner

I've been in and out of AA for years. Long ago I would come to meetings hoping for some sustenance to help quell the craving to drink and consume any and every intoxicant. And for a long time, whether drunk or sober, I felt apart from the fellowship, much as I felt apart from people in every other social setting. I didn't mind. I still got a lot out of meetings. The second time I got sober for any length of time I got a sponsor and really tried to work the steps. I began to make friends in AA, in a different town. I cared for the people in the meetings. But still I felt apart.

The first time I came to the gratitude dinner was two years ago, in 2015. I was newly returned to the rooms of AA- and to living in Williamsburg. I hadn't had a drink in some time, but another vice bedeviled me and, after a long absence, I came back into the rooms I had been avoiding for years and again did my best to work the program. I came alone. My wife was in school in Richmond and unable to come. I had a few friends in AA but most of you were still just faces of strangers to me. And I hesitated to drag her to what I feared would be an awkward, preachy, gathering that might seem to her a tad ... odd.

I walked in, trepidatious as I usually am in such a large crowd. If I will know no one, I feel free and easy in a crowd. If it is a small gathering of close friends I have no concerns. But when there are people I know a little and am not sure where I stand- and the risk I may forget someone's name- I feel anxious and alone.

Listening and sharing in meetings, I've discovered, in my middle age, that many, many of the people around me feel just the same. But I digress.

I'm not sure what I expected; maybe something like a big meeting with food, with thirty or forty people; and a buffet table, where old-timers in suits and scruffy, glazed-eyed newcomers in dirty hand-me downs would line up for plates and prayers.

I look around the hall and instead there was a giant crowd - more than 150. Multiple turkeys, hams, casseroles, coffee, tea, rolls, stuffing, mashed potatoes and a whole table of pies, some from stores bought at the last minute in a well-appreciated desire to contribute; some lovingly baked at home with hours and days aforethought.

Anxiety set in as I looked around for faces that I knew- and was comfortable with. Though my hair is gray, I still felt that familiar junior high school fear:

Would they want me at their table? Would they grudgingly tolerate me when I invited myself? What can I say, I have issues.

Then I saw some folks I knew a little better than others. Jim S. was there. I waved and said hi and we grabbed a table at a back corner, soon to be joined by a bunch more. We talked and ate and ate and talked, laughing, talking snarky- but not unkind - crap we found hilarious about our fellows and AA and society. At least that's how I remember it. It was glorious. It was fun. It was very filling. I had four different types of corn pudding and as many different pumpkin pies. It was like being with family. But in a crowd.

Two years later, I came back, with two more years clean and sober and a lot more meetings, sharing at meetings and meeting fellow alcoholics under my belt. I'm as socially awkward as ever, but I knew it would not matter. These were my people. It would be great to see them. And it was. I brought my wife and sister-in-law. I brought two sides: my asian asparagus salad (from a Saveur Magazine recipe years ago) with sesame seeds, soy and sesame oil; and collard greens with okra. People gobbled up the asparagus. I took home a third of the collards. Meh. I understand. Mushy greens aren't for everyone.

I knew people would be welcoming and friendly. But it was more than that. Or at least it was to me. Helping a tiny bit with the set up before the dinner, people I knew from meetings but hadn't necessarily had long conversations with came up and said hi to me. I saw dozens of folks I felt I should spend a minute with and chat- and did my mediocre best to do so. Folks kept coming into the kitchen with prize dishes to share- from bean salads to fresh venison (thanks Pat!) to cooked turkeys.

It was like a gigantic family dinner, except everyone was happy to see everyone. My wife and sister had a good time. I had a great time. I eschew maudlin emotion and schmaltz as a rule. I tend to make fun of it. But there's no other words for this. It was heart warming and grand and joyous. Seeing a huge gathering of folks happy and eager in service and fellowship to one another, feasting and sharing and chatting. It seems I've been driven by the lash of alcohol and the demons of my addictions to reluctantly join a mutual-help group- and along with a respite from my insanity, I've found a warm and welcoming home, crowded with love and fellowship. It's funny; it sounds like a blurb in the Grapevine. I'm living a cliché!. And for that I am grateful.

Thanks everyone! Happy Holidays! - Bill K.

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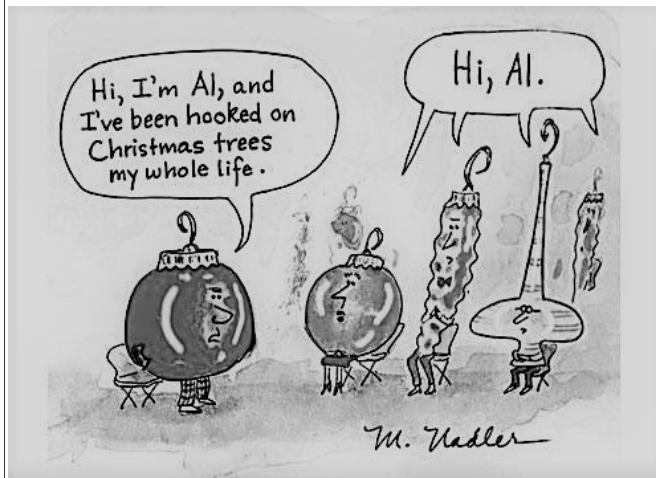
## Gratitude -

### A Young And Sober AA Speaks Up

I would like to report that Williamsburg Young and Sober is going extremely well; we meet on Friday nights at 9:30 pm at the Triangle Stepping Stones Clubhouse. As a currently transitioning transplant from Hampton; I must say the excitement surrounding this group drew me in and was a natural leap for me to make it my homegroup. The tight knit community and wonderful people in young people's Alcoholics Anonymous in Williamsburg is simply amazing. Please note that this has no age limits; it is for the young AND the young at heart. We have a variety of ages, genders, orientations, etc., who attend; EVERYONE is welcome!

My homegroup in Hampton was Hampton Young and Sober; we all worked together beautifully. We would send texts and emails expressing our love and appreciation for each other, each member pulled their own weight happily, and the newcomer was the primary focus; not money or egos. I am extraordinarily happy to find the EXACT same thing amongst my homegroup members in Williamsburg Young and Sober. Everyone works together beautifully and I have yet to experience a major disagreement. We are here for the newcomer; many of our homegroup members and attendees have less than a year, but their excitement for this way of life and willingness to work this program is wonderful to see!

Please make everyone aware (especially young people) there IS a place for them and they absolutely don't have to be alone on a Friday night. And to anyone, regardless of age, please join us; you are all welcome! Friday 9:30 pm at Triangle Stepping Stones.



## Chips And Medallions - Expressing Gratitude Publicly?

Our newsletter has not previously, to my knowledge, published the people in our Williamsburg area who are celebrating their recovery by picking up a chip or medallion on their anniversary. But the Richmond Area Intergroup newsletter has a page where they do exactly that, and the idea of incorporating that into our quarterly newsletter was suggested recently, and so I, your anonymous editor, am going to suggest that we copy our brethren in Richmond.

The way it works in the Richmond Winner's Circle is this:

Each group is responsible for listing those names who wish to be included as home group members picking up a chip or medallion. Submissions are made prior to each newsletter publication date of the members who have recently picked up an anniversary token, with the name of the group, the members first name and last initial, the anniversary date, and the number of years the member is celebrating.

So the submission page would look something like this:

Middleton Group:

Bob S. 6/10 – 5 years  
Lois W. 7/4 – 11 years

Big Book Thumpers:

Mary C. 7/11 – 1 year  
Angelica H. 8/15 – 2 years  
Joe E. 9/1 – 20 years

Support for this idea would need to come from the groups themselves, and participation in the list would be done by the group's secretary or Intergroup representative sending the information to the newsletter at least one week prior to publication, which for us would be one week before the March, June, September, and December Intergroup meetings. So basically, the day of the District 38 meeting is the deadline for the newsletter, with the next publication date currently set for the second Wednesday of March.

Speak to your Intergroup Representative at your next home group meeting, and let them know to carry your home group's decision to participate, or not, in a public expression of our gratitude for recovery by allowing our information to be shared with others in our community.

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Sober Times is a publication made possible by the Williamsburg Area Intergroup in District 38. Opinions expressed are strictly those of the authors and do not reflect those of AA as a whole. Contributions, suggestions, and comments are welcomed.

So is help. Write to [newsletter@aawilliamsburg.org](mailto:newsletter@aawilliamsburg.org)

Intergroup meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month, 630PM at 4925 Centerville Rd. For more info go to [www.aawilliamsburg.org](http://www.aawilliamsburg.org) or call (757) 253-1234

## Gratitude At The Alcathons!

Why participate an alcathon? Isn't our holiday calendar full enough with shopping, family gatherings, pageants, plays, and such? Sure, this is a stressful time of year, and lots of people celebrate the season with various libations and concoctions, which means that we, as recovering alcoholics, have to be careful. But, unless we feel we need extra support to get us through the end of the year, do we really need to set aside time to go to a meeting marathon?

Of course, it's important to reach out to the newcomer, and some of us, when newly sober, needed to stick close to the rooms of AA in order to maintain our equilibrium. And back then, we were glad that those members with a few 24-hours under their belt lent hope to those who were wavering or shaky. But is that mission of outreach reason enough to go, now that we have time away from the last drink, and have a semblance of sanity and coherence in our lives?

Well, what about the fellowship amongst our friends and fellow AA members, the food, the conversation, the laughter, the 'meeting between meetings' that happens when the formal sharing period or speaker is done? Is visiting with people we know and love, and with folks with whom we share the strength of a common bond, reason enough to attend? I mean, is there really such a thing as too much friendship, turkey, cake, and coffee?

And, what about the idea of participation in different meeting formats, and getting out of our familiar groove of doing certain things at certain times, and hearing different

voices in recovery, rather than the familiar reassurances we are used to at our regular meetings? Is the cross-fertilization of approaching the idea of sobriety and recovery in novel ways, by listening to experiences from previously-unheard AA's, a good reason to go to an alcathon?

No, none of these reasons are sufficient, although each of them may be attractive to us, in turn. The real reason for the alcathons is the chance to express our gratitude for the gift of recovery. Each day sober that we have has been given to us; it is neither earned nor owned. The simple act of showing up, and participating in our own individual way, great or small, in something bigger than us, is a testament to the Power Greater Than Ourselves that got and keeps us sober. As we gather, each one of us are reminded that we accomplish together what we could not do alone, and that gratitude is an action, to be carried forward in our lives so that it grows and multiplies. Gratitude is not solitary. It must be shared to become manifest in our lives and the world about us.

So come and share the gratitude you have for your sobriety, and come prepared to take away much more than you brought. That is how it works. Gratitude in action means that, together, we get to multiply our blessings of sobriety in ways we never thought possible.

## Christmas Day

Monday, December 25, Alcathon from 8am to 8pm. Wesley Foundation at 526 Jamestown Road. Meetings on the even hours, food and fellowship.

## New Years Day

Monday, January 1, 2018, Alcathon from 8am to 8pm. Wesley Foundation at 526 Jamestown Road. Meetings on the even hours, food and fellowship.



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## The Twelve Cat Days of Christmas



*There are several cat versions of The Twelve Days of Christmas with all sorts of present ideas for the spoiled feline. Will you be able to finish this kitty puzzle before you get through the song?*

B J L R R W G T X V N N H H Q N T  
E E R T T A C L L A T T H J N W V  
P O U N D S O F C A T N I P E T Q  
N P G A V E T O M E N L M L H N P  
S O I C M F G T K E Q N V L I K N  
Q O W L R Z Y W E G R E L N S S R  
W L D T E N R R N P H R E T K T M  
B A R N Y S H W K E H M S R B A S  
F M R H O T O Z X L V O H O L E V  
U N F M L C Z F X K P E W L X R A  
R K O Y L H Y Q L G E L L O J T N  
R H U H X A R T N A S I B E L T U  
Y C R U M R P I T O U R G G V A T  
M R Q M F M H S F I E N L H M C F  
O E D A H C J M N T K Z D T T F O  
U P C N T G I X T K N B D R J O S  
S T H A K L I I V C E K N L Y S N  
E N R H K S L M Z L T R Z R B G A  
S C B Z W Y P X S E V E N F W A C  
S T W B G N R A Y F O S L L A B X  
G G N Y X D E V I F R D K R Y M K

MY HUMAN  
GAVE TO ME  
PERCH  
TALL CAT TREE  
TWO  
SCRATCHING POSTS  
THREE  
WARM LAPS  
FOUR  
BOWLS OF MILK  
FIVE  
BALLS OF YARN  
SIX  
KITTY CONDOS  
SEVEN  
BAGS OF CAT TREATS  
EIGHT  
CANS OF TUNA  
NINE  
FURRY MICE  
TEN  
LITTER BOXES  
ELEVEN  
PIES OF LAUNDRY  
TWELVE  
POUNDS OF CATnip



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