

# Sober Times

June 2018

## Summertime Sobriety

Recently questions were posed to two Williamsburg AA members; one who started his sobriety journey in 2017, the other in 1982. Both of these members have sobriety dates in the spring and are well aware of their beginnings and what belies themselves and others during summer months. They are true examples of the fact that one can absolutely stay sober during the summer months. The first, a member who became sober in 2017, says ( with questions included):

What was your bottom / what made you get sober?

I was in the Air Force and had already been to treatment once. Shortly after returning home I picked up right where I left off in my drinking and using. I had been unable to stop my substance use and eventually I got caught when I accidentally sent a very suspicious message to my Staff Sergeant. That was God doing for me what I couldn't do for myself. I am now so grateful for that happy accident. I was in so much pain and I had no idea that there was any hope for the future. AA gave me that spark of hope, and the people in the rooms taught me how to keep that flame lit.

Was was it like getting sober in the spring?

Getting sober in the spring didn't mean much to me at the time. I was so wrapped up in the delusion of self that I was barely aware what season it was. However, this year I was able to reflect on what it meant to have my anniversary in the springtime. Spring is a time of renewal and rebirth in nature. I found it a fitting parallel to my journey in sobriety. Like the changing of the season, just when everything looks dead, the trees begin to bud and flowers are giving hope and color to an otherwise bleak and depressing state. These sprouting signs of hope receive the nourishment and sunlight that they need from Nature, eventually giving way to a breathtaking landscape of abundance and life. In this same way I opened myself to the sunlight of my higher power, who provided what I needed to grow spiritually.

Was it difficult the first summer?

The summertime was greatly appreciated. Getting sober during any season is difficult enough, but the sunshine and long hours of summer definitely helped with my mood swings. The difficulty for me didn't last long though, after three months of sobriety I lost the desire to drink. I did 90+ meetings in 90 days and worked the third step with my sponsor. After internalizing and practicing the third step in my daily life I felt as if a weight had been lifted off my

shoulders. I will never forget the importance of that moment.

You all have 35 yrs sobriety apart. What did early sobriety in summer look like for each of you in 2017 and 1982, respectively?

I'd imagine it wouldn't have been all that different. I made a close friend while in treatment and we stuck together. We went to meetings together and would hang out almost everyday. It was very codependent you could say, and we got sick of each other a lot, but in the end it kept us both sober.

What advice do you have for sobriety during the summer?

Get outside! My best sober buddy and I would do lots of outdoor activities. Neither of us had jobs and so we spent most of our time fishing, exploring, and longboarding. Physical activity is really good for a brain in early recovery and I recommend it as a natural high. Being outside in the beauty of nature helped me connect with my higher power and find a state of serenity for the first time in my life.

- Ryan W

The second member has been sober since May of 1982, and says the following:

### Spring- A Time of Renewal

After two decades watching the timing and amount of my drinking inexorably increase, I was drinking virtually every day – all day – until I passed out wherever I ended up. I prided myself on ALWAYS going to work – no matter how bad I felt from the previous day's drinking. On May 6, 1982, I couldn't get out of bed and I had a moment of clarity where I could see what I had become. I checked into treatment that day, I was running away from the intolerable mess my life had become – without a clue where I was headed.

While in treatment, AA members brought in meetings and openly talked about drinking the way I had; doing many of the things I had done; and feeling the profound emptiness that I had felt for a long time. They shared intimate details of their exploits without embarrassment or shame and I identified with them. Just as important for me, they reported that AA's 12 Steps made it possible for them to stop drinking and to lead decent, sober lives. **THEY GAVE ME HOPE!** Checking into treatment was Step One for me, and, lacking a higher power at the time, the members of AA provided the essential hope on which Step Two rests.

# Sober Times

June 2018

Summertime Sobriety – continued -

Everything was new in early recovery because for many years all I had done was drink and work. Without drinking, my early sober reality was out of focus – something was missing. I was incredibly anxious much of the time, but the anxiety eased as I picked up new life skills from the literature and members of the fellowship. Learning that I was especially vulnerable when I was hungry, angry, lonely, or tired (HALT), the Serenity & Third Step Prayers, lots of meetings, frequent naps, reading AA literature daily, embracing the attitudes of acceptance and gratitude, and the genuine fellowship (before and after) the meetings became – and remain—the foundations of my new life.

I informed people at work that I was an alcoholic because I wanted to close off any chance of dodging the consequences of relapse. I would consciously redirect my thoughts (changing the channel in my mind) when I saw beer or liquor commercials or passed the beer or wine aisles in a grocery store or 7-11.

At a cellular level, I understood then, as I understand today, that I am an alcoholic and I cannot drink safely. I tried controlling my drinking countless times but did not understand my demoralizing failures until I read about the allergic reaction characterized by the phenomenon of craving outlined in the *Doctor's Opinion* of the Big Book.

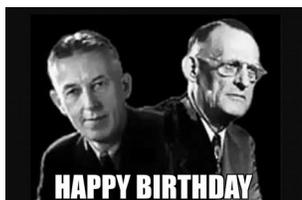
Little did I know that AA would not only save my life, but that our fellowship – and its recovery program – would give me a life worth living light years beyond anything that I ever imagined.

For that, I remain forever grateful.

- Doug B.

These stories, while 35 years apart, are very similar. It is important that we look for similarities rather than differences and absolutely ask for help when required, as these two men did. They were able to stay sober during the summer with barely any time sober. I am confident that anyone can if they choose such.

- Arlyn S.



Summer is upon us; perfect drinking weather. It is indeed tempting to crack open a cold beer or throw back liquor to feel more a part of your surroundings. If you're an alcoholic like me, *any* season was a perfect excuse to drink. If you're an alcoholic, there is *no* good reason to drink! Absolutely not a season; if you find yourself on the fence, realize this is merely your alcoholism speaking to you, not reality. It is cunning and insidious ; before you succumb... think of the end result. A drink may seem attractive in the moment, but will *never* yield positive results for the alcoholic. DUIs, health problems, loss of relationships, and shame can result from a simple choice to enjoy a drink on a summer day. Not exactly summer fun! Never forget your alcoholism.

## Service Work – Vital to All

Service work is a vital and important part of AA membership; AA as a whole would indeed fall apart if members did not contribute their time and effort. Whether it's as simple as setting up a meeting, making coffee, or whatnot, holding a chair position or having a role on a committee, I encourage each of you to contribute. AA and sobriety have given us our lives; it is the least we can do to be of service to something so life changing.

Small positions often require little effort; often individuals fail to take on service positions because they do not want the responsibility and think they do not have the time. An entity that has saved your life deserves a bit of your time. Without setup and committees, etc. AA as a whole would fail to function. Be a member, not simply a taker. If you honestly cannot and have a good reason, please do not feel guilty. If you have the time and ability, I strongly challenge you to give back that which has been so freely given to you.

I recently posed some questions to two Williamsburg AA members regarding service work and was extremely pleased at their responses. The first is fairly new to AA, the second has more time; they were both my first choice when I thought of writing this article, as they are both heavily involved in service work and I felt them to be superior sources to impart their ideas to the reader. The first; somewhat new to the program writes:

“Being in early recovery, I was told by my sponsor man that coffee makers make it, so I make coffee for as many meetings as I can. It helps me for a few reasons. First of all, it keeps me busy and responsible for something that I said I would do. Second, you almost act as a greeter (assuming the meeting doesn't have an actual greeter) and

# Sober Times

June 2018

## Service Work – Vital to All – continued

I'm forced to talk to people or sit in uncomfortable awkward silence. And lastly it just feels good to get out of one's self and do something good for those who are helping me save my life. I am eternally grateful for it. I also chair meetings or help clean up for the same basic reasons. I look forward to doing things involving more responsibilities like a treasurer or GSR. I'm also looking forward to being involved in intergroup, district, or state level service work."

As seen; this type of work is possible even in early recovery!

The second Williamsburg AA member has longer term sobriety and says, regarding his current service roles

District Committee Member (DCM) - District 38  
Treasurer - Room to Grow Group  
Chairperson - monthly Monday evening speaker meeting at Eastern State Hospital.

I do not think of sponsoring guys as a service position. Nor do I think that I am doing service just by going to a meeting. I got sober in Kent, Washington. These took place there.

GSR – new meeting  
Answer phones at Intergroup in Seattle weekends.  
Seattle AA phone forwarded to my home phone for 4-hour shifts at night  
Corrections Correspondence  
Carry meeting into a mental health care facility  
Carry meeting into Kent city jail.  
Coffee maker.

Thoughts on whether he thinks service in AA is important:

Yes, I do. There was a woman with 50 years of sobriety at the time who would say "If you come to AA, get sober and leave, you are a thief." I am self-righteous about service work in AA. I was from the moment I picked up a coffee pot.

I feel like if all I do is go to meetings, drink their coffee, eat their food and tell them how to stay sober, then all I am doing is taking. I am not talking about money in the basket. I am talking about "meeting makers make it." To me, this means the person getting to the meeting early and setting up the coffee and the chairs, has the most sobriety.

I think sometimes it is easier to let other people do the work. That's how I knew it was my turn to be DCM. I had always

avoided it and let others do it. Then at the same time I graduated from college, the position opened up. I knew it would be selfish of me not to do it. But I know that it is also difficult to serve others selflessly... hence my self-righteousness.

When asked how this impacts his sobriety: "Service work helps me grow. My latest personal discovery at the Spring Assembly was that service work helps me be myself and see myself. These are heavy concepts perhaps not for the faint of heart, because when I found myself, there was nowhere left to hide, except in the service I was performing.

I got my first memorable spiritual experience making coffee at an AA meeting. Service work in AA was the first thing that gave me some esteem back. And it kept me sober while I was getting through the steps. I hope I always have a job in AA.

Service is one third of the equal parts of my sobriety - Recovery, Unity, Service. I would not be sober without it. Service is an opportunity to express my gratitude to AA. Service can help ensure AA will be there when someone needs it. Even future generations."

No matter how long you have in the program, there are always myriad of ways to serve local, nationwide, and worldwide AA. I even know people with families and full-time jobs that hold service positions. You can give back what has been so freely given you. I personally hold many service positions and find it an honor and privilege to do so. Do not let fear stop you; jump in. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. I guarantee you'll find this work rewarding!



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

# Sober Times

June 2018

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## summertime

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



SUMMER  
POOL  
ICECREAM  
FRIENDS  
HOTDOGS  
VACATION

HOT  
SWIMMING  
SUNSHINE  
WATERMELON  
POPSICLE  
OUTSIDE

SWEAT  
SPRINKLER  
BIKE  
PICNIC  
SWIMSUIT  
CAMPING

### Mark Your Calendar: Upcoming Events

#### **July 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Annual Picnic – Food and Fun!  
11am to 2pm  
Chickahominy Riverfront Park  
1350 John Tyler Hwy

#### **July 14:**

Delegate Report and Pot Luck  
5pm to 7pm  
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
612 Jamestown Rd.

#### **September 22:**

Fall Workshop – Service  
4pm to 6pm  
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church  
612 Jamestown Rd.

### Upcoming committee meetings:

#### **July 5:**

District 38 monthly meeting 6:30pm  
(delayed one day due to holiday)  
Intergroup Office 4925 Centerville Rd.

CPC/PI Committee meeting: 6pm,  
4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday each month  
Intergroup Office 4925 Centerville Rd.

Treatment & Corrections Committee: 4pm  
dates: 6/16, 7/21, 8/18, 9/15  
Intergroup Office 4925 Centerville Rd.

## ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP ME?



I'm ready to get sober the AA Twelve Step way.

Sometimes I can't get to meetings here, or some prisons don't have them. I want to learn more about the AA program. Would you write to share your experience, strength and hope with me?

What can I do now to begin my program of recovery?

How can I prepare for the transition to the outside world?

If you're interested contact:

Corrections Desk  
General Service Office  
Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163  
[corrections@aa.org](mailto:corrections@aa.org)  
(212) 870-3085