

August 2021



MYNAH BIRD

HAWAII AREA #17 NEWSLETTER



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Upcoming	Send Seventh Tradition Contributions
October 9 Committee Meeting (Virtual) Co-hosted by: District 8 West Hawaii	Hawaii Area Committee P.O. Box 1413 Honolulu, HI 96806
November 20, Assembly (Virtual) Co-hosted by District 13 Tri-Island 3-hour Assembly 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.	General Service Board P.O. Box 459 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163
January 22 –23, 2022 Inventory Assembly Waianae District 17	

Who should attend:

Committee meetings – Officers, Standing Committee Chairs, District Committee Members. Any AA member may attend.

Budget Assembly – Officers, Standing Committee Chairs, District Committee Members, General Service Representatives, Intergroup Chairs and anyone who is interested. All are welcome.

\$\$\$ Tradition 7 \$\$\$

"Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

Before I was rocketed into a new dimension of recovery, I knew nothing of self-support. I was a drunk and a drop-out, a liar and a grifter. I occupations that paid little, but what little I made was quickly spent on booze and smokes. But mostly I "charmed" drinks number 2, 3, 4 and beyond and traded 'favors' in blackouts. No accountability, no responsibility and, after the first drink, no self-control!

In A.A., "I came, came to, and came to believe". I watched the basket pass around my small home group not realizing I was still bumming off others. When I whined to my sponsor about being broke, the response was, "Are you still willing to go to any length to get well? Chain smoking is pretty expensive, no? Why not wash trays and make coffee to contribute something to this group, and give up a few smokes a day? I'll bet you'll come up with a dollar for a meeting in no time."

Because I had 'the gift of desperation' and knew that fear of relapse had never kept me from relapsing, I took her suggestions. I showed up a little early and stayed a little late, and soon began to feel like I honestly added something of value to the group that was saving my life. I easily found cash to put in the basket. My group helped me gain self-respect, perspective and sobriety.

I used the steps to give up smoking a few years later. I studied Traditions and applied them to my own life and behavior with great results. I am amazed at how accountable I have become with the help of this life-saving program and the Fellowship. The money I put in the basket takes in inflation, helps to spread a message of hope in West Hawaii, and represents a complete make-over of this shifty drunk! What a miracle!



Step 7 - "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

So there I was, at the place of whether I was going to ask God, my Higher Power, to remove my defects of character. My defects are selfish, self-centered neediness and false-pride. I asked myself whether there was any reason to hold on to these and if I did, was I reserving a reason to pick up a drink.

What happens to me when I drink is everything becomes all about me. I have a propensity to want & need more _____. Just fill in the blank. I begin to grasp and grab onto people and things as if my life and happiness depended on it. I make unreasonable demands on you. I am never wrong or mistaken about anything. If there is blame, it is going to be on you. I would rather dump a friend than to apologize for an irresponsible act. I become suspicious and fearful and then I hide.

Wouldn't it be easier to humbly ask my Creator to take those things that create hell on earth for me? Wouldn't I rather have a life beyond my wildest dreams than to have a life of loneliness, isolated both physically and spiritually from you and God?

My answer was YES! I was ready to say exactly what is written in the Big Book:

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen." -

Anonymous (borrowed from the July Maui Serenity Gazette)

Step 8: “Made a list....” Members’ thoughts on step 8

Aloha! I am an alcoholic in recovery & my name is Donna. I pray that my Higher Power graces me with the words that someone needs to “hear.” My sobriety date is Dec 17, 2003. I have a sponsor who has a sponsor, etc., etc. And we have all worked the steps as outlined in the Big Book and further explained in the 12x12. We’ve done this work many times and I’m still learning.

I remember the first time I made an eighth step list: my sponsor had me break it down into three sections:

- those I was willing to make amends to right now;
- those I was willing to make amends to sometime in the future—not right now;
- and those I was not willing to make amends to—I called it “over my dead body.”

For the longest time I thought that was all there was to it. A lot is written in the Big Book on steps 1 (50 pages from The Doctor’s Opinion through chapter 3) and 2 (the 14 pages of Chapter 4). There’s 5 pages on step 3 (pp 58-63), 8 pages on step 4 (pp 63-71), and 3 pages on step 5 (pp 72-75).

Then we get to page 76, which I think is one of the most important pages in the BB: We see instructions for step 6 (6.5 lines) and step 7 (next 7 lines), and then we read

“Now we need more action, without which we find that, *‘Faith without works is dead.’ Let’s look at steps 8 and 9.* We made a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our efforts to live on self will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. **Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.”**

That’s pretty much it. Steps 6 & 7 are integral to my ability to do step 8. I need to be willing, or at least willing to become willing, to change and to be changed so that I don’t continue to create chaos in the world around me. My sponsor said that’s why we have to wait to do the ninth step—to make sure I am not that sick person anymore who hurts others.

If I had really done a fearless and thorough step 4, I already have everything I need to do steps 5 through 9. Piece of cake. If not, Step 8 provides opportunity to make “an accurate and really exhaustive survey of our past life as it has affected other people...” (12x12, p 79) We survey the whole area of human relations; and “having decided exactly which personality traits in us injured and disturbed others, we...ransack (our) memory for people to whom we have given offense.”(p 81) Again and again, the steps give us the gift to uncover, discover and discard that which does not serve us.

The principle behind step 8 is brotherly love and an essential element for that is forgiveness. Often overlooked in step 4 is what I call the Anger Prayer. We’re asked to consider that perhaps the people behind our resentments were perhaps spiritually sick. And remember that in the Big Book, to ask is to pray:

“Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick, too. We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity & patience that we would grant a sick friend. When a person offended, we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? **God please save me from being angry.** Thy will be done.’ We avoid retaliation or argument.” (BB p 67)

This is all about **me** being able to give up **my** anger so that **I** can let go of the past and move on with living **my** life, at peace and content—remember, we’re meant to be Happy, Joyous, and Free! I recently read an article from the August 2019 Grapevine Magazine that defined forgiveness as being able **to remember without anger.** He says in the article:

“I knew that I wanted to be a better person. Instead of hurting people, I wanted to heal people. Instead of being angry, I wanted to be happy. And the key to that was to remember without anger; to feel compassion instead of annoyance;

love instead of hate. To set aside those resentments, it takes practice; and for me, a near constant vigilance and self-censoring. It's not always easy, but the patience and effort have been rewarding." (*To Remember Without Anger*)

God bless those people who can do the steps once and be done. For me it's a process. I learn as I go along, evolve, so to speak, until I am living the steps—this new way of living.

So back to using steps 6 & 7 to help me with step 8. Page 77 of the BB tells me, "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." The 12x12 further tells us how important it is for us to examine our personal relations and extract as much information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties as we can, "since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism.... We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives." (12x12 p 80)

This is all about my character defects or shortcomings. So I need to be aware of what specific behaviors in me need to be changed. I do this again within the focus of step 8 by naming and accepting the truth of my actions on those around me.

There's an essay in *Living Sober* that helped me understand this a little better—Chapter 15, *Watching Out For Anger and Resentments*. This article has a list of the "shapes and colors" anger takes on, including cynicism, sarcasm, distrust, anxiety and suspicion. I never thought I was an angry person—I try so hard to be a positive—but add frustration to that list and that's me! I had a sponsee say to me once, "Please don't be mad at me!" I told her I wasn't mad, just frustrated. Guess what? Anger is the basis of frustration. My delusions and denials run deep. And I don't know what I don't know. But I am forever grateful for this process—that it is a process—that I am now aware and willing to learn and change.

My eighth step list wasn't overly long. While in this instance I remembered the specific individual I had hurt, I realize that there are many people out there who have suffered as a consequence of my frustrations or anger. I can be sarcastic and have taken pride in that fact, calling it a wry sense of humor. Then there's my dry sense of humor which is, in fact, a condescending behavior. So I have groups of people on my amends list that I can't name individually who have been affected by my behaviors. Sometimes it seems like almost everyone I have been in contact with at any point in my life should be on this list—they could so easily have been a victim of my mouth! Or eye rolls! Sometimes there's not any real anger behind it, just a reflexive wish to show my superiority. The things we learn about ourselves! And I always thought I was a "nice" person.

So you may have guessed at this point that my 8th step list is much more than a list of names. I was taught to use index cards. For each name, I also list my actions that created the harms, what I thought/felt, and the specific harm done for each. It's important for me to look at this from the recipient's point of view—to understand the negative impact of my behavior. I diminished the quality of their lives! I want to stress that it's not about "my part"—that implies that the other person has a part. It's about looking at my mistakes and becoming accountable.

Next I consider whether this will be a direct amends—in person, over the phone, or in writing—or indirect. Is there a reason that the amends should not be made, or at least not at this time? Do I need guidance from a counselor, attorney or other professional expert?

What is the appropriate amends? I write it out. Have other people been harmed by this? Am I really willing? Somewhat willing? Not willing at all?

Once my eighth step list is complete, I think it's important to review it with my sponsor. I read somewhere that the amends process is sacred work. It brings emotional and spiritual healing to both parties. But I have to remember that I am doing this for me, to clean MY side of the street. I have no control over how the other person will react nor do I even consider that. This is about me—I need rigorous honesty, a spirit of humility, and a compassionate attitude. Loving others as I would have them love me.

On page 82 of the 12x12 it tells us that step 8 is the beginning of the end of isolation from our fellows and God. If I have done this work well, I am now ready to make the actual amends called for in step 9.

Donna K
Kailua Kona, HI

Another perspective:

“Borrowed” from August Maui Serenity Gazette

Thank God for patient, loving, AA members who taught me about unconditional love. In my early sobriety they allowed me to share (often off topic) about my angry feelings towards my dad. He was a pathetic drunk who ruined my life! As time went by my sponsor had me work the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. During Steps 4 and 5 I learned some truth about myself. I was a very angry person who knew nothing about forgiveness. I held grudges for years, especially against my dad. My mom divorced him because of his drinking when I was in first grade. He NEVER got me a birthday card growing up.

Eventually I read Step 8 from our book 12 Steps and 12 Twelve traditions, it encourages quiet reflection on our personal relationships. As I looked back over the years at how I treated my dad it was very eye opening. I was 25 years old and had absolutely no respect for the man. I had always wished he was dead. I would even get angry when other people showed him kind-ness. As I reflected some more a thought came to mind: ***You never got him a birthday card.*** Immediately forgiveness entered my heart and I wrote “DAD” on my eighth step list.

One last tip from Joe & Charlie Big Book studies:

Create four columns for the step 8 list and label them Now / Later / Maybe / NEVER.

Thank you for my sobriety!

Troy

Some words of wisdom heard at meetings:



"My sponsor suggested that I take step 8 as if step 9 did not exist!"
- heard at a KKAA Women's Meeting

"Willingness without action is fantasy"
- heard at a meeting in Kihei

Sharing from our members

I was blessed to be able to interview a person with longtime sobriety who celebrates 32 years Aug.29th and a relative newcomer, who had 1 year this June. Both share a deep love of our AA program, both keep it simple and are great examples of being willing, honest, and open. They're a sponsor and a sponsee who both claim the other is a great gift in their lives. Beth S., District 8 Mynah Bird Rep.

To the Sponsor: How have you found the the experience of living sober during a worldwide pandemic?

"Well, it hasn't really changed much for me, because my program is to take life one day at a time. I have managed to make it to at least one meeting a week, because a week without a meeting leaves this alcoholic weak. I have really enjoyed the virtual meetings. I love seeing all the women's faces and hearing their shares. I have gotten to know people I may never get to see face to face."

How has God as you understand God helped you in times of change and stress?

"I understand that so many people have been depressed. So many sustained losses, had changes to work, to family, to lifestyle. My mom had deep depression. But I believe my Higher Power just wants me to be happy, joyous, and free. That power helps me keep a smile on my face for others, even with a mask on, in hopes that my eyes can communicate love, joy and happiness."

How has working the Steps as a program of recovery been for you during this time?

I received a true gift in June 2020. I got a new sponsee and she has been a gift and a blessing to me as we work each step together. She had the gift of desperation which gave her the willingness to follow suggestions. Everything I suggest, she does whole heartedly. She reads the AA literature, listens to circuit speakers on her way to and from work, and she is staying sober and happy, even during this challenging time. As friends we often share our love of literature and music."

To the Sponsee: How did you decide you needed help to quit drinking just as the pandemic was really spreading?

For a long time, I knew I needed help, but I was pretty driven in my career and managed to maintain my employment. I did drink every day, but I did not drink during my work hours unless my boss was providing alcohol for an occasion at work. But as soon as I got to my car after work I would be pouring or opening something to drink on the way home. I did for the most part drink all day long on my days off. I could stay dry one day at most.

I have 2 fabulous kids with a large capacity for forgiveness. They pretty much were raising themselves. I kept trying to put more than a day together. I came to as my youngest tried to wake mom and get her off the floor and cleaned up.

I grew up with a parent who could never admit he needed help, was always in denial. But I myself had not opened up to my kids about my deep issues over his alcoholic death or about my deep need to drink. My kids were distraught and needed help. I realized that ok, it's now or never, I need to be PRESENT in their lives. And that means staying sober.

I told them, 'I am going to quit drinking. If I can't, I will get professional help.' I made it three days without a drink. Then woke up from a final black-out drunk. I wondered how I could support my family and go to treatment and still keep my job. Then I went online and found a meeting at Hapuna Beach. My kids encouraged me to go. "You'll be alright mom, just don't stop on the way for a bottle of wine to pass around."

As I walked down toward the meeting I thought, "Oh my gosh, I am about to join with the dregs of society, smelly lowlife drinkers, I really have hit my bottom."

As I got to the meeting area, I saw one lovely well-dressed older lady sitting there, looking unlike anyone I had been imagining. She asked sweetly, "Are you looking for an AA meeting?"

I have been staying close to her ever since. I found out we both raised our children while still drinking. I learned she also got sober at 50, and that we are more alike than I thought possible.

I am now a grateful recovering alcoholic, one day at a time."

Mahalo to this District 8 Sponsor and Sponsee

The Difference

I used to turn off the meeting. For more than a month, when the chairperson for an online meeting said that it was time to say the Serenity Prayer in unison, I'd turn off the meeting. The jumble of the words, the lack of synchronization were too much for me. It made me sad and frustrated to hear this disjointed mess that was supposed to speak serenity to us all. It was easier to log off.

In mid-April, one of our groups that meets by UH Manoa opened its doors. Masks firmly in place, thermometers at the door, hand sanitizer everywhere, contract tracing in place, and electronic 7th Tradition donations enabled, they braved into our shut spaces and opened a meeting. I sat there for the hour, looking at the rows of people facing front. I watched the screen with the online participants arranged so neatly in boxes, as we'd all seen for so long. And it was a feeling like I'd never known before: entirely familiar and ordinary in the most extraordinary way.

As the meeting drew to a close, we went through announcements and some safety protocols. "Leave the chairs where they are so we can disinfect them." And then the chairperson said it, "Let's close with the Serenity Prayer." What would happen? I couldn't leave. I couldn't turn it off now.

And the unison chorus of voices rose from behind so many masks. And the words I said so many times, the words I took for granted for so long, and the words that I couldn't bear for more than a year filled my chest and then they filled the room. There had been so much none of us could change for so long. And perhaps the courage waned that we needed to change what we should in the face of unspeakable odds. There was no turning it off. In that moment, with the voices of my fellows united

around me, I heard more clearly, glimpsed more brightly, perhaps truly for the first time, the wisdom to know the difference.

In service, T.J. F.

With many AA groups all over the planet having disassembled when the pandemic hit and many moving online, I, like many who have shared with me, have experienced a continued growth in my recovery as I personally have navigated my sobriety during Covid. I have participated in a variety of Zoom AA meetings and face-to-face meetings, including my home group. I have continued to serve through this pandemic in different AA service positions, like so many. I have been taught, tolerated, helped, forgiven and loved by other AA members. I have been reminded I am not unique, I am not perfect, and I am not the AA police. I was taught by AA members we live by progress not perfection and we welcome mistakes so we can grow in patience, tolerance, courage and in understanding and forgiveness.

This pandemic and this time of growth in AA has directed me to continue to use my connection with other members of AA, my higher power, and my on-going education of the steps, traditions, legacies and concepts to find my way. AA members, our recovery tools and suggestions have been a light for me in a sometimes dark time of witnessing brothers and sisters in AA divide and seemingly turn on one another. I have wondered if this will transform, in time, to Unity again and then I remember, if I am willing and open-minded for this unity in my heart, then it is already here. And it is encouraging that AA has been through rough patches through history and, using the suggestions of those who went before, survived, grown and thrived.

When I apply the litmus test of Unity, Service and Recovery, I practice suspending judgement of myself, and my brothers and sisters in AA. If I remember that fear can be a catalyst for courage and unity then I can embrace the unknown and continue to show up for our higher powers to, in time, provide a way for everyone's needs to be heard and fears to be lessened and provide possibilities for people to imperfectly move forward, maybe remembering that things can always be changed.

I have learned in my own recovery that uncovering what is really going on, seeing the pain and fear in myself and others, takes time. On the other hand, impulsively taking actions or retaliating can happen instantly. And this too can be corrected, amended or eventually work itself out.

I learned from an old timer at a PRAASA event in L.A. that, after serving in every capacity one can in AA, she learned, for herself, there really are no crises. She shared for her, there are just moments where we can extend ourselves to our higher power or sometimes our higher power just extends itself to us, sometimes through a group of drunks. She shared that life can be a series of these small moments and that a crisis moment can disappear when our higher power in some way, shape or form reveals itself.

I have heard over the years that love and tolerance is our code. If there is no crisis, maybe if I take time, over and over again, connect with my higher power, slow down and try to be kind to and tolerant of others, and cultivate a desire to be true to myself, one day at a time, like it says on our AA chips, maybe I will experience more peace about Covid and how it has affected meetings. Maybe the unknown future of some meetings will slowly unfold and more will be revealed. And I wonder if there is always time to change our minds, reason things out and change our minds again.

Thanks for letting me share & I wish you another 24,

Selvy D. Kailua-Kona, Hawai'i