

Background Notes



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DISTRICT 0490
Central New York
Area 47

Table of Contents

From the Newsletter Chair	1
Christmas Past	2
New Commitments	2
"...In All Our Affairs"	3
They Will Know Us By or Actions	3
On the lighter side	3
District News And Events	4
Anniversaries	4
AA District, Area, and World Services contact information	\$

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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FROM the Newsletter Chair:

Christmas is an interesting time for Alcoholics. Just like all people that celebrate the holiday in any way it is a time of much happiness, joy, conviviality, community, and acknowledging of love for those we care for. It is also a time for stress. Our lives seem to be sent into overdrive. Not only do we deal with the everyday things; we have to arrange for presents, plan for time with family, and worry about finances. That's for those of us who are blessed and have been restored to a sense of family. There are many alcoholics in early recovery who have the additional burden of loss in area's of family and relationships. We often come in to the program with those critical area's of our life extremely damaged. There are old timers as well who have either lost family or were never able to restore those relationships to good standing for a variety of reasons. Stress, loneliness, sadness, ad regret at a time of joy can be devastating. All around us people are celebrating with Christmas cheer and libation. To an alcoholic that is feeling stressed, lonely, sad, or regretful joining the party might seem a restoration to happiness. We know better! I have always found meetings to be critical around any holiday and in particular Christmas. They help me stay centered, offer a chance to rejoice with my AA friends, maybe lift the spirit of the newcomer, an old timer or any alcoholic struggling through this time of year. Love is what Christmas is about. Attending meetings at this time is a great expression of love for other alcoholics.—Bob K.



Christmas Past

I was laying on my parents couch at their home for 3 days prior to Christmas 1994. Awaiting a call from a rehab for an available bed. I finally agreed to get some help for my alcoholism and other addictions. I was devastated. Not only had the truth of the matter of my alcoholism hit me like a wrecking ball, I had no money for presents, and I was afraid to get off the couch knowing that if I did, I would get drunk. My family though nervous about me being able to stay sober still wanted me to go to the family Christmas celebration, assured me to not worry about presents, just come and enjoy yourself. I couldn't do it. They understood and to be honest it may have been a relief to them, I still don't know.

I had several friends I grew up with who were as close to family as you can get. We often would stop by each others houses and on Christmas to enjoy not only each others company, but our families as well. Shortly after my family left for the party one particular friend showed up. He was a little shocked at the sight of me. I told him my plans and he was happy for me. We had a few drinks (yep I got off the couch) and talked of life changes and our commitment and support as friends. He left. That was my last drink, Christmas 1994. I have since spent many a sober Christmas with my family. I even stopped at his family gatherings since, although not every year, and I didn't stay long or drink. I always surrounded these on Christmas eve and day with AA meetings. My family has seemed to take a view of AA that it is a miracle (it is) and my friends from AA Saints (they aren't). They have seen their loved one risen from a hopeless state of mind and body and restored to them.

My friend had the same view of my sobriety, he was happy for the changes and successes in my life. A month ago my friend lost a two generation family business to this disease. It was remarkable that he was as successful as he was for as long as he was. I spoke to him on the phone immediately after the closing. It is time I visit and remind him of changes in life and a commitment and support as friends. I will talk of that long ago Christmas and how hopeless I was. He has seen the solution work in my life. I will remind him there is always hope. I will remind him on that Christmas of 1994 I was unsure and afraid, and that was replaced with a new and happy life. I will go see him in the morning, it will be safer.

New Commitments

New Years is a time of reflection on the past year and new resolutions for the new. Old Lessons. New commitments. We as alcoholics are used to reviewing our actions, it is a necessity for us not only to grow but often to stay sober. The steps teach us this in the Fourth and Eight Step. My reflection at the New Year is quite different from the step work. I look back in gratitude for the blessings, challenges, and opportunities God has given me in the previous year. I review area's that I wish to improve on in my life both in and out of the program. I take a much lighter approach than my inventories in the steps. I quietly reflect after a period of prayer and meditation. First, I look back for blessings and miracles and humbly thank God for those he has afforded me with. Secondly, I look at my AA program. Have I been praying and meditating on a regular basis, can I do better? Have I been attending meetings to hear the message and perhaps help others? Have I been working the steps in all my affairs? Do I have a sponsor, make myself available to sponsee's, am I building relationships with sober people(as friends). Have I been a good AA fellow, helping people in general that are staying sober to expand my network. Am I working the principles in all of my affairs and willing to help people outside the program just like those in the program? It is as I do this reflection I put pen to paper and list area's that I can and should improve. Then I review the list and commit to making changes that will improve the area's deficient and enhance those area's in which I do well.

Then I move to area's of my life which the program has blessed me with success that are not directly program. Life itself. I review my job performance, goals, and ambitions. I look to see if I am happy with the direction, any changes I can make to improve, or even take other opportunities and plan those. I consider my health. Have I been making my health and body a priority. Do I work out enough, need more motivation, or simply start to do some exercise regimen. Can I change my diet, quite smoking, or add a hobby? I review my relationships that are close and loving. Have I consistently been loving, supportive, patient and tolerant with those I love? Do I show and tell those that are important to me that I love them? Do I have an opportunity to mend any damaged relationships (If that is the case I do a formal 8, 10, and then 9th step). I review my prayer life and make some changes. These are the things I learned in AA. They make my life better. They bring me peace, happiness, and make me a better human being! Happy New Year!!

“...In All Our Affairs”

“The chief purpose of A.A. is sobriety. We all realize that without sobriety we have nothing.

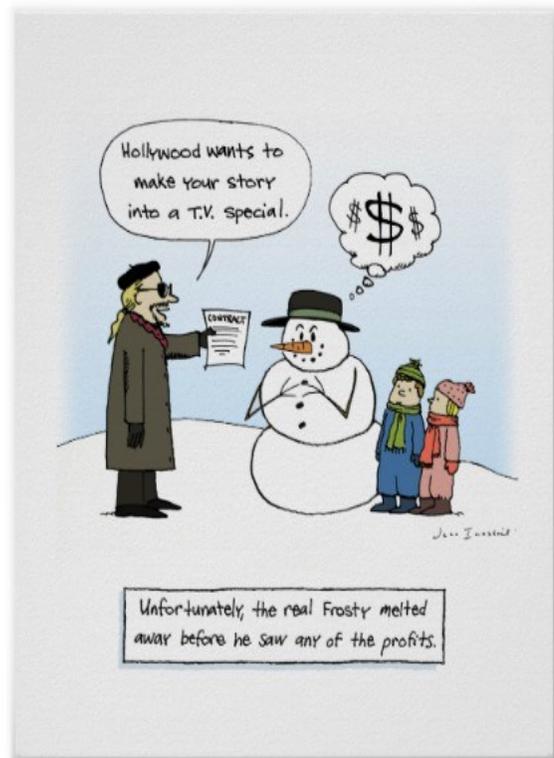
“However, it is possible to expand this simple deal into a great deal of nonsense, so far as the individual member is concerned. Sometimes we hear him say, in effect, ‘Sobriety is my sole responsibility. After all, I am a pretty fine chap, except for my drinking. Give me sobriety and I’ve got it made!’

“As long as our friend clings to this comfortable alibi, he will make little progress with his real life problems and responsibilities that he stands in a fair way to get drunk again. This is why A.A.’s Twelfth Step urges that we ‘practice these principles in all our affairs.’ We are not living just to be sober; we are living to learn, to serve, and to love.” - Letter 1966 *As Bill See’s It*, pg. 94

They Will Know Us By Our Actions

Please enjoy family, friends, and loved ones this holiday season. If you are alone and do not have immediate family stay close to the program, volunteer to keep the rooms open on Christmas and New Years. Attend the New Years Eve Party and find companionship there. Remember those still sick and suffering alcoholics that will spend the holidays in despair even though some may not yet realize it. If you pray, pray for those people. Make yourself available to newcomers who come in as a result of the Holiday drinking season. There is always an uptick in newcomers around the holidays. Find gratitude in your sobriety, there are many that have not been given that miracle as of yet. Tell your family you love them, tell your friends they are cherished. Give plenty of hugs to those that are important to you! Most important Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!

On the lighter side



District News and Events

Speaker Meeting	Candlelight Group	Methodist Church Main and Grove St.
December 18th	8pm	Mary K.—Speaker/Anniversaries
AA Pot Luck Dinner	MHV Alano Club	12 Cottage Pl.—Utica, NY
December 21st	6pm meal/8pm Speaker	
15th Annual New Years Eve Party		Methodist Church Main and Grove St.
December 31st	6pm—7pm	Dinner (Bring a Dish if possible)
	8pm	Speaker: Rob D.
	9pm	Silent auction and Dance

Anniversaries					
Name	## Years	Home Group	Name	## Years	Home Group
Ric H.	33	OCS-Canastota	Dennis R.	26	Stockbridge
Brian L.	5	OCS-Canastota	Annette C.	1	Nooners

District 0490		HOTLINE NUMBERS	
PO Box 481 Oneida, NY 13421 Email: district0490@yahoo.com Website: www.aadistrict0490.org	Next District Meeting: December 4, 2:00pm Oneida Rec. Center 217 Cedar St, Oneida, NY	Oneida Rome Utica Syracuse	315-533-1227 315-201-6644 315-732-6880 315-463-5011

Area 47		Alcoholic Anonymous World Svc.	
CNY Area Committee Registrar PO Box 18063 Rochester, NY 14615 Website: www.aacny.org	Next Area Assembly: December 11, 1:00 TBA visit website for details	Grand Central Station Box 459, New York 10163 Website: www.aa.org	

This newsletter is a service of and publication of District 0490, Central New York, Area 47 of Alcoholics Anonymous. Background Notes is not endorsed nor approved by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. or Central New York Area 47. The purpose of this newsletter is to reach out to the alcoholic who still suffers, provide information to the AA Community, and general information to the public about AA's program of recovery. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc, CNY Area 47, or District 0490.