

RECOVERY IN THE SUN



Edition N° 7
December 2008

www.aa-costablanca.com

MEMOIRS OF A CONVENTION

WHAT a wonderful weekend we AA's had in Torre Vieja between 5-7 September – our first convention, celebrating 20 years of English speaking meetings in the town, with its theme taken from this newsletter's title "Recovery in the Sun".

More than 250 members registered at our reception desk in the Cabo Cervera Hotel, many bringing guests and others from Al-Anon, who participated in the event.

By far the greatest number of visitors were from the Emerald Isle – how the Irish love these AA get-togethers – but there were many from the UK and from the distant shores of New Zealand and the USA.

The collective "higher

powers" of those organising the convention had certainly conspired to ensure that the planning and arrangements went smoothly and remained



with us throughout the weekend to make it a memorable event.

The weather was sublime and guests were able to

enjoy clement late summer sunshine between meetings and to sit outside with their beverages and soft drinks into the early hours. The poor staff

in the poolside bar were overwhelmed by the demand for "café con leche" - they had been warned!

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CB North: **648 16 90 45**

CB South: **625 912 078**

Costa Calida East

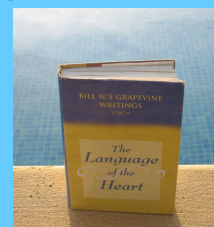
679 385 195

Costa Calida South West

646 290 420

☀ **PI Team Meeting 'Extraordinaire'** on 5 Dec at 4.30pm in Torre Vieja.
CBIC meeting on 7 Dec 2008 at noon in Benidorm. ☀

AA's Costa Blanca Special Book Offer



Due to excess stock, *The Language of The Heart* is being offered at the special CB price of €6.50. Hurry and place your order now! (see back)

ONE OF THOSE 'LIFE GETS BETTER' MOMENTS

UNTIL I got sober through the fellowship of AA and the grace of my higher power, I had never had a holiday away from the UK.

Not only did many aspects of my life change through working the steps, one day at a time, but so did the fact that in sobriety, I began to take holidays.

My latest trip is yet one more of those "...life gets better..." experiences.

I had the honour of being on holiday in Spain with my lovely partner, a wonderful woman who I met in the fellowship and with whom our life together gets better

and better. Also with us, were my sponsor, my sponsor's husband and two other long-standing friends from the fellowships of AA and Al-Anon.

Together, over the past few years, we have enjoyed staying in a villa in a little village called Orba in Alicante and while there we attend AA meetings in Calpe.

At these meetings we have met many local AA members and during this time, we have become firm friends.

On our most recent trip, we found out through one of those members that an AA convention was being held to celebrate 20 years of English-

speaking AA meetings in the village of Torre Vieja, further down the Costa Blanca coast.

I had the pleasure of attending the opening meeting of the convention on the Friday evening and the honour of hearing two local members of the fellowship share and a member from Ireland who's 20th AA birthday happened to be on that very day.

The meeting left me with a sense of peace that I had tried for years to find at the bottom of a bottle.

Thank you AA and thank you God for a life beyond my wildest dreams.

AA member, UK

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Meetings were held from sunrise to the early hours of the morning for the duration of the convention. Speakers had been chosen from among members living sober on the Costa Blanca and those who visit the town throughout the year. There was laughter, as always, and a few tears as memories of those dark days of the past and of the new, enlightened days of the present were shared with other members.

There were mistakes – thankfully few – mostly unnoticed, but we are only a bunch of sober drunks trying to put on an event for the benefit of those in recovery. We nearly didn't have a disco, a late substitute hurriedly being found by the original provider, who was blissfully unaware of his double booking until half an hour before he was due to start.

The sobriety candle almost failed us but it can be adapted to burn throughout a few more conventions in the future.

There were few disappointments. We would have liked to have seen more members from the Costa Blanca and elsewhere in Spain and to have welcomed our Spanish speaking friends in the area, but they were evidently unable to take advantage of the invitation to join us.

By the time of closure, with the sobriety countdown and serenity prayer



The Sobriety Candle: Lit by the longest sober member on Friday; blown out by the most recent newcomer on Sunday

concluding the event, the six members of the committee and other helpers were exhausted but absolutely thrilled with the turnout and the favourable comments received from attendees and staff at the hotel. What else could we do or say than to start to think about

2009 and to thank everyone for making it such a special weekend for us.

Torreveija Convention Committee Member

A SAMARITAN CALL

IN OCTOBER, the new branch of English-speaking Samaritans on the Costa Blanca contacted AA and invited us to speak at their 1st regional meeting in Alicante. Three members shared their experience, strength and hope, followed by questions and answers.

We hope The Samaritans enjoyed it as much as we did. It is a great privilege to be asked to share with non-AAs and often very moving. We hope it was a productive and enlightening afternoon and that we can maintain an ongoing and cooperative relationship with those good people, our friends, who provide such an excellent and vital service.

PI NEWS

ON SUNDAY, 26th October a successful PI Team Meeting was held in Benidorm. Those present discussed various ways to expand and further fulfill AA's primary purpose on the Costa Blanca and beyond.

There was a great deal of enthusiastic input and it is hoped this will spread throughout the coast via the new position of each meeting's PI Contact(s).

PI Contacts will encourage and guide their group's members in informing the non-AA and professional community about our life-saving fellowship.

The next PI Team meeting will be on Sunday 1st February 2009. Venue tbc.

BEING A REGULAR

TORREVEIJA continues to hold its quarterly Open Meeting on a Friday between 1pm and 2.15 at Calle San Miguel de Salinas 2, on the corner of Calle Santomera, Acequion, Torreveija.

An Open Meeting is one in which non-members (partners, friends and other interested people e.g. doctors, spiritual leaders, social workers, etc.) may attend. At this Open Meeting the platform is restricted to AA speakers only.

The next Open Meeting is Friday, 5 December 2008 at 1pm. Everyone is welcome.

12 TIPS TO STAY SOBER AND JOYOUS IN 2009

1. Call a newcomer, arrange to take them to a meeting. Share at meetings, help with clearing up afterwards and visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.
2. Be host to AA friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place to throw a party, take someone to a cafeteria and buy them coffee.
3. Keep your AA telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes - postpone everything else until you have called an AA member.
4. Find out all about the meetings in your area, go to as many as possible, break out of the rut if you only go to the same meetings all the time. If you are timid, take someone newer than you are.
5. Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.
6. If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an AA with you, keep some candy handy.
7. Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.
8. Worship in your own way.
9. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, beach walks and letters.
10. Don't get worked up about future occasions and temptations. Remember – "one day at a time".
11. Enjoy the true beauty of life and the joy it brings. Maybe you cannot give material gifts to people – but you can give love.
12. "Having had a....." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.



STRUCTURE?—WHO GIVES A DAMN?

RECENTLY, some AA members have been heard to say: "Why do we need structure?" It is a good question. Members may see AA structure as a nightmarish, bureaucratic obstruction run by people seeking nothing but power and control.

The reason for structure at meetings is various and complex. Bill wrote about the importance of meeting structure and rotating service positions in the traditions and in his opinions and letters to *The Grapevine*. He also spoke about the need for able leadership throughout the fellowship.

Members involved in service in AA are accepting responsibility rather than assuming authority. It provides an opportunity for us to demonstrate our gratitude in action. For many members involvement in service is also a form of insurance against the possibility of picking up that first drink.

Running a structured meeting may help the newcomer rather than confuse. The last thing surely we want to do in AA is to confuse the already befuddled.

Each meeting, to run effectively, needs a number of services to be carried out. These tasks need to be filled by and rotated regularly among AA members.

Firstly, but not foremost as there is no hierarchy, is a secretary. The secretary of a meeting makes sure the meeting starts and ends on time and runs as smoothly as possible. Depending on the format of the meeting, the secretary may have organised a speaker.

If there is no greeter, then it is the secretary's role to look out for newcomers or visitors and welcome them. The secretary may, at times, need to keep the meeting in order, making sure meetings are not disrupted. The secretary liaises with other members who hold service positions at the meeting and obtains their phone numbers should it be necessary to contact them or vice versa.

Although all committee members do their best to attend every meeting, urgent and unforeseen circumstances will at times keep them away and they let the secretary or another committee member know if they cannot attend.

The meeting needs a treasurer who collects the money, counts and co-signs for it, taking it away and keeping accurate books. The treasurer pays the rent for the meeting room, plus expenses such as,

literature, tea & coffee, GSR expenses, etc. The treasurer reports often to the group—letting them know their financial position.

Some meetings, but not all on the Costa Blanca (CB), as many are held in back rooms of bars and restaurants, need someone to make tea & coffee. Another essential service is literature secretary. The literature secretary arrives early, sets up the literature table and hangs the steps' & traditions' scrolls.

When necessary, they order new literature so there is a constant stock of whatever the meeting needs, e.g. books, pamphlets, Share, Service News, where-to-finds, newcomer packs, CDs, DVDs, information about AA events, PI literature, the list is endless.

The literature secretary, alongside the GSR, is an excellent source for informing members about future events – such as, conventions; workshops; open or public information meetings, etc.

The importance of the role of the Group Service Representative (GSR) has often been undervalued and misunderstood within the fellowship. The GSR is the first

vital link in the chain of communication between the group and AA as a whole. Bill W said, "The strength of our whole structure starts with the group and with the GSR that the group elects. By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR a group helps it own future and the future of AA as a whole."

The GSR is responsible for reflecting the conscience of the group to intergroup. Without this crucial link with intergroup, the group is not connected to the overall structure of the fellowship.

It is important for the GSR to have an established period of continuous sobriety and be a regular attendee at their group meeting. With ideas and shared experience going from the group to intergroup and vice versa, it is very much a two-way communication link, with the common welfare of AA (Tradition One) being at the heart of the process.

Meetings, via their GSR can also ask their intergroup for any help or support needed or any views that the meeting has about AA or intergroup issues.

Filling all these service posts may seem a tall order especially for small meetings

such as those on the CB, however, some of the smallest meetings are currently filling and rotating all their committee positions. Even the new post that has been recently formed, the PI Contact is being filled in several CB meetings.

Common excuses heard for not filling and rotating service positions are: 'We just can't do it!', 'Don't you see how small our meetings are?', or '...one week there are lots of people and the next – no one turns up.'

That can happen anywhere. On the CB we have a holiday population as well as permanent residents. Additionally, AA meetings on this coast have grown considerably in the past six years.

Another view is: 'No one is willing to do service. It is always the same few that do the majority.' My experience is that if a secretary persists in asking regularly, eventually a volunteer will appear.

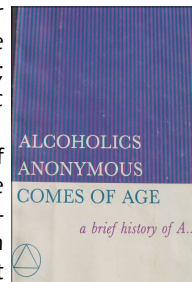
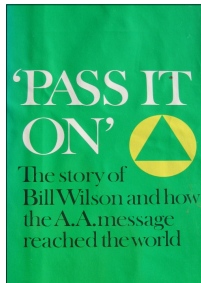
Sponsoring members into service roles and supporting them in their positions is another option, rather than waiting for members to volunteer. Maybe a proactive approach could help. A service position may not seem too daunting if the offer of support is made. All changes, of course, to be endorsed by the group conscience.

There should no need for members to remain in service positions for longer than their term of office. If we become more proactive, we can identify members who are able and willing to do service but just need some encouragement and backing to make the commitment.

I have been to meetings on this coast, week after week, and although there have been service posts available at the meeting, no vacant positions were mentioned or announced. How is that possible? What is going wrong? No one can take on a post if they don't know about it.

I can only explain it either by suspecting that Costa Blanca AA members are unaware that vacant positions can be raised during AA announcements, that is, meetings don't have to wait for a group conscience or business meeting to discuss availability of service posts, or that CB members are unwilling to participate in this wonderful structure and the intelligent and well thought-out idea of AA's rotating service tradition, even if that means taking a risk and letting go.

AA member, The Costa Blanca & AA member, UK



ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

If you want to be on the Recovery In The Sun mailing list, or you have news, AA events, meeting changes, suggestions, views, personal stories, etc., please send email to:

ourprimarypurpose@gmail.com

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Fax items to: (+34) 96 648 1169



THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

DIVING into The Language of The Heart is as welcoming as a cool, Mediterranean garden pool on a hot summer's day. It is both refreshing and satisfying. If you like As Bill Sees It — you will love this book. For it is Bill W. at his best.

Bill's writings are expansive and numerous, full and in depth enough to want to bathe in the streams of his mind for a good, long while. This is Bill writing history, capturing AA's evolution during its first thirty years. Straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak.

Language of The Heart is an insight into Bill's life, sobriety, experience, strength and hope, issues and beliefs. It is impossible to fish out any few particular pieces from this plethora of essays as so many other important and fascinating chapters will slip through the net. Just looking at the index is mind-boggling.

Bill glides through themes such as democracy, criticism of AA, dry benders, low bottom cases, the Carl Jung letters, medicine, meditation, memorials, Narcotics Anonymous, prayer, politickers and pills, resentment and rest farms, rotating leadership, special purpose groups, stigma, success, wealth and will power. This book is loaded.

With a foreword by Bill's wife, Lois, it brings together virtually every article written for The Grapevine by Bill. The book contains much of Bill's well-documented repetition and some of the ideas and language are outdated. His prolific writings have not been edited and hence maintain their integrity, Bill's personality and an historical accuracy.

A Christmas Message

December 1970

Gratitude is just about the finest attribute we can have, and how deeply we of AA realize this at Christmastime. Together, we count and ponder our blessings of life, of service, of love.

In these distraught times, we have been enabled to find an always increasing measure of peace within ourselves. Together with all here at AA's General Service Office, Lois joins me in warmest greetings to each and all of you, and we share our confident faith that the year to come will be counted among the best that our Fellowship has ever known.

1970s Christmas message from Bill, Lois & all at GSO to every AA member, *The Language of The Heart*, p.351.

Reading The Language of The Heart is like painting the Severn Bridge. By the time I have read 116 bite-size chapters, I can start at the beginning again. Never to be finished. How delightful!

The special offer price is €6.50 compared to its usual price of €14 (£12) from the UK.

To order your copy, contact your group literature secretary or call Ron on: 96 678 6573 or email: roncharris@gmail.com. Offer open while stocks last.

'Twas the Night before Christmas



*'Twas the night before Christmas,
we were all in the club,*

*Enjoying the meeting, instead of the pub;
The ashtrays were clean and the coffee was made,
The Big Books were out, and we had all prayed.*

*When out in the lot, there arose such a clatter,
We jumped up from the table to see what was the
matter.*

*The Chair with his Big Book, and I with my smokes,
Headed outside and found these two blokes.*

*They came on inside, and sat at the table;
Said that they'd chair, as soon as they're able.*

*To start with, they said,
"It's more than not drinking.*

It's doing your best to fix your wrong thinking."

*"Think, Think, Think!" and those slogans we used,
Help keep the newcomer from getting confused.*

*Step 1 is a start, they said we should know,
But after Step 2, we'll be all aglow.*

*We make a decision when we get to Step 3;
Step 4 is real tough, we all could agree.
Step 5 is the one where we let it all out,
After Steps 6 and 7, we're left with no doubt.*

*We get to Step 8, and we make our list;
And then with Step 9, we have to persist.
After Step 9, our promises ring true;
We didn't just get that, out of the blue.*

*After that, it's on with the rest;
We must do each day, to be our best.
They put on their coats and got ready to leave;
A pretty good end, for this Christmas Eve.*

*As to their names, we only could guess;
I'm pretty sure it was Bill W. and Bob S.
The two men hopped into a '35 Ford,
And as they pulled out, one of them roared:*

*"We leave this message, for you our brothers:
Trust God, clean house, be of service to others."*

