

RECOVERY IN THE SUN



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A VERY SPECIAL LETTER



Dear Dad,

I want you to know that I am so very proud of what you are doing. I have wanted and wished for you to be able to stop drinking all my life.

I believe that you, like I, have been given a gift, for it is a miracle for any alcoholic not to drink and have a desire to get well.

In my mind I fought AA and the programme for quite a while. I found it hard to trust in something that could be so simple.

But it was when I gave up that struggle my life made sense. I have found what I had been searching for all my life.

Our stories may differ but each member in that room carries the same message of hope for a better future.

Trust in the members and give the programme a chance. That is the only suggestion I can give to you.

I love you dearly and it has taken great strength and courage for you to walk into those rooms and finally come to terms with who you are.

Hold your head high and
enjoy the journey. One day
at a time.

All my love,
Your daughter



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IN LOVING MEMORY OF CALPE COL

It was with great sadness
that we learned that Colin
McM (Calpe Tuesday &
Sunday) passed away on
February 13, 2008.

Colin was one of our best-known AA members on the Costa Blanca.

Colin carried out a huge amount of fellowship work including turning up regularly for Calpe's Sunday and Tuesday meetings, year after year, holding the door open in case someone

needed an AA meeting.

Calpe Col was often the voice at the end of the telephone. He allowed his home phone number to be published extensively, so as to guide recovering alcoholics to their nearest meeting or arrange to meet a newcomer recently out of hospital.

A Costa Blanca AA member said that Colin took him to his first meeting.

Over coffee, Colin told the newcomer how he had

discovered a way to deal with his drinking problem. The new man was all ears, desperate to hear this golden secret, this nugget of wisdom. When he had the fellow's full attention, Colin simply said: 'Don't drink and go to meetings.'

Many in AA will remember Colin with love and gratitude in their hearts for all the hours and energy he spent carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic.

Thank you Colin!

THE PROMISE OF THE OAK

The most beautiful thing about the oak tree is its deciduous growing cycle. In the winter, it stands bare, withstanding the elements and ferocity of extreme weather. In the spring, a tiny blossom appears – barely visible to the eye – and then, as if by magic, it is covered with a green cloak of shiny new leaves, every branch standing proudly as if to say 'I have achieved another year of freedom, another year of hope, I am feeling strong and once again, a promise has been fulfilled'.

I AWOKE one morning to find a young man carving his initials with a bright red, Swiss-army knife into my strong healthy bark. Inwardly, I chuckled and thought to myself that he would be there for a very long time as my bark was strong and extremely hard.

For fourteen years, I had cultivated my way. I had grown healthy, free and independent. My branches proudly spanned many metres.

In the summer, a carpet of individually-shaped leaves would adorn my arm-like branches like fine woven cloth and in my heart I knew life could not get much better.

During warm summer evenings with the sun glistening on my leaves and those of my fellow oaks, we spent hours talking of our hopes and dreams and more importantly, how to cultivate them.

On other occasions, young new saplings would ask my advice and I would feel honoured – the promises were being fulfilled.

In September 2004, I could feel a change. Some of my new roots had spanned to an adjoining field. I had been growing in clean, organic, healthy soil, needing no chemical or fertilizer, but the new roots whispered softly: "It is better over here, this is where we need to grow."

With all my resources, I quickly challenged the voices – life is good here, love has entered my life, education too and God is in my heart.

However, the voices persisted.

Sometimes in the middle of the night they would keep me awake. I would obsess and obsess – asking: "Was the neighbouring field a better place to grow?" As time went by, the roots dug deeper and my thinking started to change.

In retrospect, the first thing that went was God, and He was replaced with anger. Secondly, love was replaced by what the roots told me the adjoining field could offer. Thirdly, reason was replaced with self-will.

In the winter of 2005, I lay dormant and waited patiently for 'The Promise'. Spring arrived and my blossom did not appear and therefore my leaves did not materialize in summer.

I was left bare, disillusioned, bitter and resentful that my growing cycle had stopped and that 'The Promises' were no longer being fulfilled.

Over the next few months, I stood rooted to the ground but no longer able to understand the voice of reason. I reentered unhealthy debates with my inner demons. Their voices grew increasingly stronger. Finally, death became something I no longer feared.

The only thing I'd ever been good at was growing in Recovery. Every year, a new set of branches would bring me a new set of challenges; with the sun (God) and water (AA) I flourished.

When I turned away from them, my branches began to fall, my bark peeled and I began to rot internally. It was then I knew that my heart was broken.

There are many oak trees on the Costa Blanca coast who are strong and have great knowledge. In my

hours of desperation I have leaned on them and been sheltered by their strong branches. Their green leaves have given me hope and their knowledge passed on freely.

As for me, I needed to be pruned – in horticultural terms 'cut back hard'.

Today, I am once again a sapling and sit under the branches of other oaks. I have embarked on a new voyage of Recovery.

This has been the most difficult transformation – from a 14-year old, maturing oak tree, to a 6-month old sapling.

The answers I once had are no longer relevant and the purity of our programme has a deeper meaning. I have a sense of the suffering of others and a very healthy feeling around dishonesty.

I feel my new Recovery has a solid foundation – my roots are embedded once again within AA and I am beginning to grow.

This year in Spain, spring has come early, so I hope that with the almond and olive blossoms, the promises of AA will once again enter my life.

Contributed by a Costa Blanca AA member



ALCOHOLISM & IMPRISONMENT

ONE OF OUR talented Costa Blanca AA members wrote this article which was published in several CB newspapers during February and March, 2008. The image appeared, helpline numbers too. The following disclaimer was printed before the article.

This article represents the view of the author, which is not necessarily shared by other Alcoholics Anonymous members or by the AA fellowship as a whole.

Not that I have been in jail, although it has been close on occasions, this is about imprisonment, and as I write I am stuck, trapped, physically confined at the airport, as I wait to get on a delayed flight. I am



trapped, which I don't like, but I am no longer imprisoned by the anxiety, anger and blame that this minor delay would have caused just a few years ago.

Imprisonment is, of course, a metaphysical state as well as confinement of the body and there are many states of imprisonment.

Let me describe my own, in a few simple words; but first the caveat, this is my own view, I do not represent a school of thought, and I am not a spokesperson.

I have recovered from alcoholism, and to maintain that state I don't drink a day at a time; just for today.

All I can do is tell you my experience as I know it. I know better than anyone what I have done, how I have felt and what I have done to change.

I can know nothing of you, but you may identify a little with the pain and suffering that I know.

And if so, you may call on the number below, and speak to someone with a shared understanding, and a belief that it is possible to escape the imprisonment of alcoholism.

I want to try very hard not to labour the metaphor, but it fits so aptly with the life of an active alcoholic.

This is a life where all the decisions have been removed. There is no longer freedom to choose.

I place myself in dangerous situations and places, and I blame others for my actions; I attack before I am attacked. I justify lying, cheating and anger as a normal response to those who treat me badly.

This is a prison I didn't enter freely; I did not want to be here — I didn't plan it — but now I don't want to leave!

My state of mind incarcerates my body, and maintains it in a condition of fear. I talk of being trapped in an airport. Imagine if you can, being trapped inside your own worst nightmare.

A nightmare in which, as an escape route appears, you create hideous creatures to block its way.

There is no visible escape because, although it is a nightmare inside, it is unknown outside. And the unknown is the thing to be feared above all else.

So, after a while I accept the prisoner status, the wounded victim of circumstance; the greatest miscarriage of natural law and justice.

No one wants to listen to how bad it is, so I spiral inside my nightmarish self. And, of course this is a downward spiral.

I have arrived in a hell of my own creation. Abandoned, without hope,

full of despair I became devoid of emotion and rational thought. What was killing me demanded I took more. I was defenceless.

I hope by now you may be feeling some empathy at least, with sufferers of this disease. And I think it is important to recognise it as such. First suggested in 1784 as one, and currently described by the World Health Organisation as one. This is a fact, and an indication of hope, all in one. I hope to expand on this at a later date.

Even though this happened and even though I was there and even though I did it all, I still claimed my innocence, but I failed my last, clear line of defence; I was mad at the time.

So my denial was my prison guard. My lack of responsibility for my own predicament kept me under; my, and only my addiction, was to nearly be my killer. And yet, now I am free.

And freedom is a curious thing, for while I wait at the airport I am free. Free to choose what I do in this, and only this, situation. I

am free to choose how I behave to the check-in staff, whose fault I may once have sought for the delay.

I am free to let my fellow passengers deal with their own frustration, instead of engaging them in mine.

I am free to live as normal and as happy a day as I can reasonably expect.

That freedom, which I can describe as pure joy, is available to me now.

And what do I have to do to have peace, freedom and an unburdening of my worlds fears?

I just don't drink today.

Not tomorrow, I don't frankly even know if I'll be alive tomorrow, so why should I care to plan a drink tomorrow.

No, just for today. For this little 24-hour space.

And because I have faced all my woes of the past, I no longer have to have a drink because of what I have done.

Now just imagine that!

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Please send meeting news and changes, comments, views, articles, suggestions, personal stories, or anything else you would like to see published in Recovery In The Sun to:
ourprimarypurpose@gmail.com

Or call:
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www.aa-europe.net

SOME HOME GROUP TRUTHS...

Most things can be preserved in alcohol. Dignity, however, is not one of them!



⊗ International News ⊗

MUSLIMS & AA

AA members who attended Easton Mosque as part of an intergroup initiative were pleased with the response. The meeting was arranged following 'cold-calling and perseverance' by the PILO — Derek B. Here is a brief extract from the report:

"Imam Shah was very open to the idea of AA as a spiritual response to the need to recover from alcoholism. The disease concept, and the need for surrender was explained as an individual's story was told.

The need to recover within a group of people was described, as was the need to surrender before AA can help. The Imam responded most positively. He asked for a poster to display on the mosque's noticeboard. So much for denial of a drink problem within the Muslim community!

"The Imam was thanked for the meeting and was sent posters, literature and external where-to-finds."

WALES DEVASTATED BY ALCOHOL MISUSE

Alcohol was recently branded the most "devastating" drug in Wales as the nation's drink problem was placed at the heart of the assembly government's substance misuse strategy.

The alarming scale of misuse was highlighted as ministers and health experts concluded that dangerous levels of drinking are far more widespread in Wales than illicit drug use. An extra £12m was announced to help tackle the problem of excessive drinking.

The 10-year strategy was launched by Social Justice Minister Brian Gibbons. Programmes to tackle drug

FINLAND CELEBRATES 60

The "AA 60 Years in Finland" anniversary will be held in Tampere in August 2008. For further information email: aa@suomenaa.fi or telephone: 00 358 (9) 838 70 40.

Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict

'And Acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation — some fact of my life — unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.'

Alcoholics Anonymous, p449

MONGOLIA IS 10

A worldwide invitation has gone out to recovering alcoholics to celebrate Mongolia's 10th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous on 9-11 June, 2008.

The convention will be held at the Children's Palace in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of this huge, landlocked country. The Mongolians would appreciate and welcome all visitors bringing experience, strength and hope to the convention.

If you want more information, please email: gso_aa@chinggis.com or tumee_b2000@yahoo.com