

RECOVERY IN THE SUN



Edition N° 4

November 2007

AN AA MEMBER'S POINT OF VIEW: AA IS FOR LIFE

WHEN I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, I had not had a drink for over a year. Somehow, I knew immediately that this programme was the solution to my problems and I knew it would meet all my needs.

The 15 years that have passed since that day have shown me that this is true. I have also learned that the more I put into it, the more I get out.

I have been fortunate to understand that this journey will never end. I will never be perfect. Sometimes, I hear this said in meetings, at times, followed immediately with: '...so I need not hurry.'

I interpret these words in a different way: I will never be perfect, so I can continue on and on with this work! Right now, I am working through the steps for the second time and I am currently at step 11. New dimensions open up and new rewards are constantly given to me.

I look at the programme in a practical way. How do I become a good pianist, golfer, driver etc? By practising, practising, practising. So it is with this programme. The more I practise, the better I can

handle my life in a way that is good for me and those around me.

And I know from experience, that it '...is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of [my] spiritual condition...'. When I stop

practising, I go backwards and the drink is there.

I am very grateful to this programme and to the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous in Spain, for helping me stay in touch with the solution.

AA member, Costa Blanca



The 'countless dividends' I receive when I practise the AA programme?

- ★ I know myself better, my patterns, defects of character, my thinking.
- ★ I understand myself better and how my thinking, patterns and character defects drive me.
- ★ I get to know and understand other people better. We are all created equal, I am not that special anymore.
- ★ Through this knowledge, I get better at handling 'situations that used to baffle' me.
- ★ My life becomes easier, and happier.
- ★ I have serenity and peace of mind especially in situations where I used to become upset.
- ★ I have opened up for my Higher Power to work in my life, and take care of what I cannot do for myself.
- ★ I get an improved understanding of what is given to me in this programme, from the Big Book and from those who have walked this path before me. This programme is HUGE!
- ★ I have a life that is far beyond my wildest dreams.

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Urban Symbolism



Not an AA meeting in sight, but a great photo nevertheless

UNWELCOME PATIENTS FIND FRIENDLY SISTER

@T SOME POINT in 1939, Dr Bob was told by an Akron hospital, where he had been working with alcoholics for some time, that he should take his jittering patients and go elsewhere.

Distressed and depressed that he had nowhere to turn he visited his friend Sister Ignatia at St Thomas Hospital in Akron.

Although for some time Dr Bob and Sister Ignatia had been talking about the possibility of treating alcoholics at St. Thomas, this was the first time Dr Bob had actually suggested that one should be admitted! Sister Ignatia was nervous at first, as she had recently admitted an alcoholic who had run riot through the hospital all night.

However, she was also extremely concerned for alcoholics and keen to help them, though at the same time felt wary because of the trouble they caused.

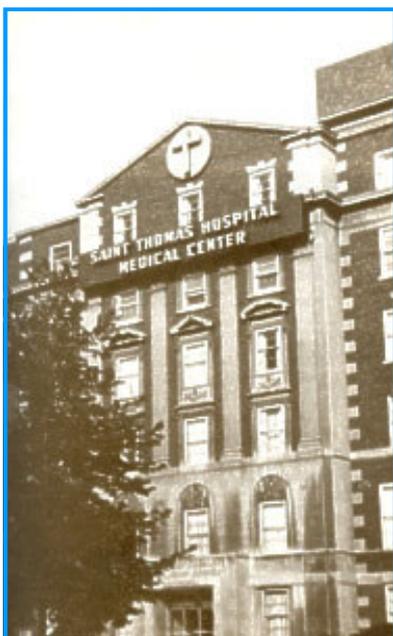
One day, Sister Ignatia commented to Dr Bob that it seemed terrible that people became so intoxicated as to cause dreadful and sometimes tragic accidents. She wished there was a way that something could be done before they got into that state.

Dr Bob answered: "Well, we've tried to do something for these fellows. We've been working on something. Haven't got very far, but we're trying."

When Sister Ignatia tried to recall years later what it was he said was the solution, she thinks that he talked about a combination of medical and spiritual treatment.

At some point, before Sister Ignatia admitted the first of Dr Bob's alcoholics, Bob had shared with her about his own alcoholism, what had happened and what he was trying to do now with his four years of sobriety.

Nobody could have been more shocked than Sister Ignatia to hear his story – she could hardly believe her ears!



Between 1939 and 1950: 4,800 alcoholics were treated at this hospital by Dr Bob

FRIENDLY SISTER

Sister Ignatia recalls: "I had never seen Doctor under the influence. He told me about his contact with the Oxford Group and how, after attending meetings, he found himself with the Bible in one hand and a glass in the other. He related his providential meeting with Bill W and told Sister Ignatia what had been accomplished between 1935 and 1938."

When Dr Bob eventually proposed admitting an alcoholic, Sister Ignatia remembers: "I was a little shaky inside, but he assured me he would see that the patient didn't cause any trouble, so I consented to try it.

I was rather proud of myself the next morning, because I hadn't heard any serious report from the night supervisor. The Doctor came down and said, 'Sister, would you mind putting my patient in a private room? There will be some men here to visit him, and they'd like to talk privately.'"

Sister Ignatia said: "Doctor, we do not have any beds, much less private rooms, but I will do what I can." Sister Ignatia first looked around to see if there was anyone going home and then had a brainwave when she thought of the room where the patients' flowers were arranged. She wasn't sure if a bed would get through the door, but it did and she thanked God.

The bed was pushed in and the patient lay there perfectly satisfied – especially as some men came and talked with him and made him forget himself.

Sister Ignatia said: "We were quite amazed at the men who came. I had an idea probably they'd all be rather..... well, I don't know what I was expecting. But they were a fine lot of men. I couldn't believe that they were alcoholics. I checked



SISTER IGNATIA: Once wary of alcoholics, she learned how they could be helped and she became a loving friend of AA

with them later, and they all said yes, they were alcoholics. There must have been four of five. They sort of timed their visits so they would not all be there at the same time."

Sister Ignatia remembers: "I was pretty well governed by whatever Doctor said as to the length of the stay and type of treatment."

It appears that Sister Ignatia and Bob worked side by side and in harmony for many years carrying out their mutual hopes and goals for the alcoholic patient.

It was August 1939 when the first alcoholic patient was admitted, Dr Bob could never remember just what the policy of St Thomas was at the time, nor did he recall ever having asked. But between the day Sister Ignatia admitted that first patient and the time Dr Bob died in November 1950, 4,800 alcoholics were admitted into St Thomas under his care.

Partly taken from Dr Bob and The Good Oldtimers: A biography, with recollections of early AA in the Midwest. (1980). pp.185-188.

FITTING INTO SPANISH AA



CBIC –Costa Blanca International Committee was created several years ago when it was felt there was a need for Costa Blanca English and non-Spanish speaking meetings to be represented and to communicate fully with the intergroup, area and conference meetings of their host nation.

It was also created in order that non-Spanish speaking meetings could unite and cooperate with each other – so that meetings were not operating in a vacuum.

AA's organic structure is habitually represented by an upside-down pyramid. At the top are AA meetings. Each meeting may elect a general service representative (GSR) to attend quarterly meetings of intergroup, in this case, CBIC.

The GSR's job is essential in order to link to AA as a whole. The GSR takes his/her meeting's conscience to CBIC, exchanges information and carries information and news back to the meeting.

The importance of holding regular group conscience meetings cannot be

stressed enough.

Conscience meetings are convened for members to discuss how the meeting fulfills its primary purpose; pass on information about all CBIC, area or conference business and to air worries or opinions members may have.

It is, therefore, essential that the elected GSR attends the four annual CBIC meetings and conveys effectively, back and forth, the views and consciences of both.

Additionally, there is no reason why any Costa Blanca GSR should not attend and vote at the Spanish-speaking asamblea (intergroup) in their area.

The Costa Blanca International Committee acts like any other intergroup. It elects its own rotating service officers, it is attended by some, but unfortunately, not all non-Spanish speaking, Costa Blanca GSRs, plus visitors are welcomed and encouraged.

To communicate with Spanish AA, CBIC elects a Spanish-speaking representative to attend and vote on its behalf at Alicante's Area 21, bi-

monthly intergroup – the asamblea. (See diagram).

Area 21 asamblea in turn elects a delegate whose job is to carry the asamblea's conscience directly to the General Service Conference held annually.

There are currently 24 areas which make up the four Spanish regions: north, south, east and central-west. Area 21, alongside several other areas belongs to east region. Each area therefore, sends one delegate to conference.

Additionally, area delegates elect one regional custodian from their own region to attend conference. They also elect custodians at conference from nominated candidates. The candidates/custodians are elected for a specific period to a post on the Junta de Custodios (Board of Trustees).

Custodians and regional custodians therefore, attend a Board of Trustees meeting every quarter in Avilés; and are involved in conference matters such as writing new pamphlets, redesigns and general conference service questions that may arise in Spain.

General Service Conference made up of two parts:

- SERVICE CONFERENCE.** The region representatives who present conference with questions and suggestions submitted at group, intergroup and region levels, and...
- THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD.** AA's General Service Board is the guardian of AA's twelve traditions and has a responsibility to ensure they are preserved intact and that the fellowship of AA acts in accordance with the traditions. When conference has received all the views from the top, that is from meetings, intergroup and region down to conference, at the bottom of the pyramid – then and only then – can conference make decisions for the fellowship as a whole and instruct the General Service Board and the General Service Office to do things to ultimately improve the way members stay sober and carry the message.



The process is slightly different in the UK. Meetings elect GSRs to go to intergroup. Intergroup elects a representative to go to region. Region elects delegates to go to conference. Each region is entitled to send six delegates to conference. By serving on committees, taking part in workshops and voting on proposals, the elected delegates carry the collective conscience forward and report their findings to conference.

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:

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Disclaimer: Articles in this publication represent the views of the authors which are not necessarily shared by other AA members or by the AA fellowship as a whole.



www.aa-europe.org

*“Seven days
without a
meeting makes
one weak”*



A Morning Prayer

Our Father, God of Infinite Power and Love.

*I kneel before You knowing that I am powerless ...
powerless over alcohol ... powerless over myself ...
powerless over people ... places and things.*

*Without Your help my life is unmanageable,
fearful, resentful, without hope.*

You are my Hope. You are the One who has all Power.

I ask You for a sober day.

*Grant me the willingness, honesty and humility to
work my programme today that I may stay firmly on the path
of recovery You have set before me.*

*I offer myself to You. I place this day in Your Hands
and ask for Your protection and care.*

*Relieve me of the baggage of unforgiveness.
Help me to forgive myself and others*

Open my mind that I may see the hidden things I need to know.

*Send Love into my heart like a flame of fire
that my life may be changed by the power of Your Spirit.*

*I ask this knowing that Your Love for me is
infinite and unconditional.*

Keep me out of Your way.

Let Your will not mine be done.

AA Member, Costa Blanca

HOW DRINKING FINALLY TOOK ITS TOLL

I WAS ONLY 15 when I first tasted alcohol. We were partying as it was Oslo-Fjorden Midsummer. That was to be the beginning of a long career of heavy alcohol abuse.

Before the end of the year, I moved out of my parent's house and began college. A year later, I met a girl who became pregnant within 2-3 months. I felt I had to take responsibility for what I had done and we were married.

Before reaching the age of 20, I had become the father of two children. I had to stop college and start working in a factory. I worked shifts so I could study at college too.

During this period, I was drinking very heavily. After the nightshift, a neighbour and I would often drink until 6 o'clock in the morning when I would pass out.

This carried on until 1980. I finished college and got a job as a manager for a firm dealing with cargo and offshore deliveries.

In the next 10 years, I travelled all over the world as a company representative. Along with that

position came an awful lot of wine and cocktails. I always kept a bottle of vodka in my hotel room in order to be able to sleep.

The company was sold in 1990 and I was offered a responsible job dealing with heavy marine offshore equipment.

I was now in a situation where I was in a loveless marriage and over the next 10 years I virtually drowned myself in work and alcohol. Once again, I was travelling worldwide for at least 160-200 days a year and working 15-hour days including weekends. The extraordinary thing was that I never got sick or depressed during this period.



Then it hit me! I had a massive stroke. I was paralysed and had to learn to walk and talk all over again. But I kept on drinking and now, I started having serious health problems and blackouts.

I visited AA in Drammen, Norway with the hope they would teach me to drink socially. Lots of the things began to happen to me then that alcoholics speak about in AA. But I just went right on drinking. I sold up in Norway and moved to Spain.

I woke up one morning sitting in my car in Torrevieja. I remembered nothing. I didn't know if I had killed someone driving or what I had done. I got out of the car and looked for blood. There was none – I had somehow been kept safe through another dangerous episode. I knew I was finished.

I have now been a member of the AA fellowship for over three years and I am happy and contented. I am divorced now too and still happy and I am finding that from day to day, life is just beautiful.

AA Member, Costa Blanca