

March 2008



Pass It On

Birmingham Intergroup Central Office

Saving Sylvia C

Anna B. Reisman, MD, Yale University School of Medicine

Sylvia C rolled up the sleeves of her starched white blouse to show me a few pale, blotchy bruises on her forearms. A soft-spoken forty-six-year-old secretary who wore a red A-line skirt and decorated her dark brown bob with rhinestone barrettes, she had come to my clinic at Bellevue Hospital with a sense, as she put it, that something was metabolically wrong. I reassured her that plenty of people bruise themselves without realizing it.

The results of her routine blood tests were puzzling. There was marked inflammation of the liver, possibly cirrhosis. To me, an inexperienced intern, it seemed unlikely that alcohol (one of the most common causes of cirrhosis) had anything to do with the bruises.

A week later, Ms. C was back for her blood test results. A few questions revealed that she'd been drinking at least a pint of scotch a day for more than ten years. It was hard to believe. She seemed so reasonable, so together. Perhaps, with my guidance, she could give up drinking.

I reminded myself what I'd learned in medical school lectures: alcoholism is a disease. I chose my words carefully. I didn't want to scare her away.

"The scotch," I said, "is damaging your liver. The bruises are a sign of this. You really need to think about resisting the urge to drink."

She nodded, rubbed her hands together. "I'll have to do it, then."

Going cold turkey could be dangerous; even a small change could trigger a withdrawal seizure. I asked her to consider the hospital's inpatient detox program.

"I'd rather do it myself," she said. "I can handle it."

I worried about her over the next few days and decided to give her a call. I'd find out if she was okay, and a few words of encouragement might help her stay on track. The first time I called, she reassured me that things were fine. She was cutting down without any problem. The second time, she told me not to worry and said she'd see me in a month. I picked up the phone several times during the next three weeks, but at the last minute I'd hang up before dialing.

I told my attending physician about my concern over Ms. C. Let the baby bird out of the nest, he said. The phrase seemed a little abrupt. It may have made sense for some patients, like the down-and-out alcoholics (the disheveled, smelly, ornery men who'd show up in the ER trembling and feverish after spending the last of their disability checks on booze days earlier.) With them, I'd go through the motions mechanically: the statement of the obvious ("You're an alcoholic, and you're destroying your liver."); the taper of Librium, a medication that mimicked the effects of alcohol in a safe, controllable way; the Alcoholics Anonymous recommendation; the clinic appointment for follow-up that was never kept. Other than easing their withdrawal symptoms, I couldn't help them. But for high-functioning addicts like Ms. C, didn't I need to do more?

A month later, we were both beaming. Ms. C had completely stopped drinking scotch.

Her secret, she confided, the flush in her cheeks matching the color of her cranberry jumper, was wine (she believed that it was less damaging to her liver.)

My smile froze. I pulled my chair closer to hers. To the liver, I explained, struggling to keep my tone even, alcohol is alcohol. Her healthy pink glow, I noticed, was actually a filigree of burst capillaries, another sign of liver disease. I asked her again to consider inpatient detox. She was as reluctant as before, but when I pointed out that the timing was good (she'd just left one job and had a few weeks before she planned to start temping) she agreed to give it a try.

I went up to the detox unit a few days later. She was a bit groggy from the Librium but appeared upbeat about the experience. The only woman there, she was enjoying the attention. "The guys are so polite," she whispered, smiling at a heavysset, grizzled man shuffling by. "They insist on carrying my meal tray."

She leaned down to pull up a ruffled sock, her face partially hidden, and told me that she was checking out early. She had lined up a job interview and couldn't miss it. I asked her to consider staying. She said she'd be fine.

She called a few weeks later to report that she was still sober. It wasn't easy, she said. For awhile, she couldn't find an AA group that she liked. One day, in a foul mood, she picked up a pile of Chinese restaurant menus that littered the floor of her lobby, marched down the street to the restaurant, and threw them inside. That same evening she found herself walking toward the liquor store but on the way decided to give AA one more try. I hadn't been aware of the variation: there were groups that catered to the elderly, teenagers, singles, agnostics. She giggled: the one she found that night was a gay men's group. She loved it.

Three months passed before Ms. C's January appointment. When I saw her in the waiting room, I was horrified. She looked as if she were in the late stages of pregnancy. Her ankles and feet bulged with so much fluid that, despite the frigid weather, she was wearing bedroom slippers. Her frilly blouse clung to the sides of her distended belly. In between moments of nodding off, Ms. C told me how she'd gone to a few more AA meetings, but when she'd lost the job a month earlier, she'd started drinking again.

Doctors today are just as powerless over an alcoholic as was Silkworth and his contemporaries.

Step of the Month - Step 3

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

Tradition of the Month - Tradition 3

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Concept for World Service of the Month - Concept III

To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. (the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives) with a traditional "Right of Decision."

To be concluded in next month's issue

Announcements

Roundups and Conferences

Area Assembly

April 11-13
Governor's House Hotel & Conf. Center
2705 E. South Boulevard, Montgomery, AL
AL/NW-FL 2008 Al-Anon/AlaTEEN
Area Convention
"Leap into Serenity with Lois"
February 29 - March 2, 2008
Holiday Inn Research Park
5903 University Drive
Huntsville, AL 35806
<http://www.aaarea1.org> (click "events")

Anniversaries and Gatherings

Huffman Group Anniversary

Saturday March 15th
Fellowship-4 pm
Alanon speaker-5 pm(TBA)
Dinner-6 pm
AA speaker-7 pm (Lisa W. Pensacola, FL)
The Centerpoint Courthouse
Five Points 69th Anniversary
Saturday March 8th
Fellowship and Coffee-5:00 pm
50/50 Raffle & Rec. Prize Bin-5:45 pm
BBQ Dinner-6:00 pm
Sobriety Countdown-6:45 pm
AA Speaker Andre A (5 Pts Grp)-7:00 pm
South Highland Presbyterian Church
2035 Highland Avenue

Hueytown 26th Anniversary

Saturday March 1st
Fellowship-4 pm
Alanon speaker-5 pm Corrie L
Dinner-6 pm
AA speaker-8 pm
Brookland Community Center

MEETING STUFF

*Treatment And Corrections Committee
needs your support! Please send your
group's representative. 3:45 pm, the 1st
Sunday of each month @Jafi.*

We are in the red folks. The BICO is the phone # listed in the yellow pages for AA, the local source for AA literature. The Walk in the Park is a result of this committee. The after hours answering service is coordinated by BICO. We receive no funding from the government or AA World Services. All contributions come from the groups and individual AAs. We need your support! In a fundraising effort Morris has agreed to visit your group's next business meeting to perform table dances. Contact Central Office @ 205-290-0060 for scheduling and fees. →

Sobriety Birthdays (Feb)

Riverchase

Glen A - 15 yrs

Prime Time

Joe C - 38 yrs
Charles A - 30 yrs
Squire G - 25 yrs
Raymond O - 11 yrs
Mark D - 5 yrs
Jane Ellen S - 4 yrs

Hueytown

Barney P - 9 yrs

Five Points

Jerry G - 18 yrs
Eddie G - 1 yr
Frank T - 22 yrs
David H - 1 yr
Tommie - 16 yrs
Shelly - 3 yrs

Staying Sober

Allison B - 2 yrs

Surrender

Marla F - 7 yrs



January Group Donations

Riverchase	234.00
Prime Time	60.00
Women's Acceptance	100.00
Metro Big Book	125.00
Intergroup Basket	16.00
Serenity Now	561.46
Bessemer	30.00
Primary Purpose	23.97
Warrior	125.00
Shelby County	50.00
Pell City	130.00
New Hope	102.50
Anonymous	80.00

Financial Report 2007

Revenue:	
Sales	67914.86
Contributions	15877.87
Interest	283.82
Newsletter	160.00
Special Events	4632.00
Total	88868.55
Expense:	
Answering Com.	60.00
Bank Charges	104.06
Insurance	525.00
Interest	14.26
Accounting	1125.00
Office Expense	1901.20
Rent	6444.50
Salaries	20700.24
Supplies	192.65
Special Events	1233.36
Taxes	6369.20
Telephone	2559.68
Utilities	953.55
Inventory Purchase	52006.70
Total	94189.39
Difference	(5320.84)

Financial Report December 2007

Revenue:	
Sales	3936.45
Contributions	1076.59
Newsletter	00.00
Total	5013.04
Expense:	
Rent	536.00
Accounting	75.00
Office Expense	234.99
Salaries	1725.02
Taxes	226.16
Utilities	76.67
Inventory Purchase	2173.05
Telephone	392.99
Total	5439.88
Difference	(426.84)
Checking Account:	
Balance 12/1/07	3663.00
Deposits	5013.04
Checks	5350.04
Balance 12/31/07	3326.00

YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME! A SUBSCRIPTION TO THIS NEWSLETTER IS \$10 PER YEAR. THIS MEANS ONLY 16 PEOPLE IN ALL OF 2007 BOUGHT A SUBSCRIPTION. ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WAS ME, AND I WRITE IT! PERHAPS WE SHOULD EMPLOY A DIFFERENT TACTIC. IN THE HOPE OF PERSUADING YOU TO SUPPORT THE NEWSLETTER, WE AT THE EDITORIAL STAFF HAVE ENLISTED THE SERVICES OF GUIDO S. AS OUR NEW PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR. HE WILL BE CONTACTING YOU SOON.



This Month in AA History

- March 1936 - At end of 1936 A.A. had 15 members.
- March 1938 - Bill begins writing the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Works Publishing Inc established to support writing and printing of the book.
- March 1940 - Mort J. came to LA from Denver; started custom of reading Chapter 5 from the Big Book at Cecil group.
- March 1941 - Second printing of Big Book.
- March 1941 - 1st Prison AA Group formed at San Quentin.
- March 1951 - American Weekly publishes memorial article for Dr. Bob.
- March 1, 1941 - Jack Alexander's Saturday Evening Post article published and membership jumped from 2,000 to 8,000 by years end.
- March 4, 1891 - Lois W is born.
- March 11, 1949 - The Calix Society, an association of Roman Catholic alcoholics who are maintaining their sobriety through participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, was formed in Minneapolis by five Catholic AA members.
- March 21, 1881 - Anne R, Dr Bobs wife, is born.
- March 21 1966 - Ebby dies.
- March 22, 1951 - Dr William Duncan Silkworth dies at Towns Hospital.
- March 22, 1984 - Clarence S, "Home Brewmeister", dies.
- March 31, 1947 - 1st AA group formed in London, England.

Cartoon of the Month



Have you got joke or cartoon to share with us? Email it to mrg184@aol.com. Just remember this is a G-rated program.

One reader's input on last month's cover article

I once asked my (late) sponsor Jack T. this question: "Jack, some AA's say that I shouldn't date outside of the program, and other AA's say I shouldn't date within the program. Who should I listen too?" He chuckled and said, "Well, I think you should take both their advice!" As always, Jack was right.

Website Spotlight

<http://hindsfoot.org>

In Western Christianity, Easter is always celebrated on the Sunday immediately following the Paschal Full Moon. (The full moon used to calculate the date of Easter. This full moon does not correspond to any astronomical event, but is a historical artifact determined from tables.) I had previously, and somewhat erroneously stated, "Easter is always celebrated on the Sunday immediately following the first full moon after the vernal (spring) equinox." This statement was true in 325 AD, when it was established by the Council of Nicea: When Constantine defeated Emperor Licinius in 323 AD he ended the persecutions against the Christian church. Shortly afterwards Christians faced a trouble from within: the Arian controversy began and threatened to divide the church. The problem began in Alexandria, it started as a debate between the bishop Alexander and the presbyter (pastor, or priest) Arius. Arius proposed that if the Father begat the Son, the latter must have had a beginning, that there was a time when he was not, and that his substance was from nothing like the rest of creation. The Council of Nicea, a gathering similar to the one described in Acts 15:4-22, condemned the beliefs of Arius and wrote the first version of the now famous creed proclaiming that the Son was "one in being with the Father" by use of the Greek word "homoousius."

AA Service Committee Meetings

<p>Literature/Grapevine Committee 4th Saturday of each month at 10:45 am at 2012 14th Ave South (JAFI) Leslie C (D6 chair) 356-2904 Joann C (D7 chair) 428-4283 (Falls on the 23rd this month)</p>	<p>Public Information Committee and CPC Fourth Saturday of each month at 10:30 am at The Fellowship House; 1625 12th Ave South Robert G 746-5217</p>
<p>Treatment & Corrections 3:45 pm 1st Sunday of each month 2012 14th Ave South (JAFI)</p>	<p>District Committee Meeting (Districts 6 and 7) Fourth Saturday of each month at 9:15 am at The Fellowship House; 1625 12th Ave South DCM 6, Doug Mc -849-5642 and DCM 7, Lawrence K - 335-4989 or 871-3894</p>
<p>Intergroup 1st Sunday of each month at 5:00 pm except Feb, May, Aug, and Nov meeting is at 6:00 pm as we have a speaker or workshop at 4:30 pm. JAFI 2012 14th Ave South (Falls on the 2nd this month)</p>	



Acronym for the month

STEPS = Solutions To Every Problem in Sobriety

Quote for the month

"Bisexuality immediately doubles your chances for a date on Saturday night."
Rodney Dangerfield

Other Stuff

Big Book Trivia

Page 159- "...had succeeded with seven more." Here is the list of the next 10 members. Note- Some of these had slips and came back right away. We are not certain who Bill counted or in what order.

Ernie G. (the 1st) Akron, 8/1935 or 9/1935 (the Seven Month Slip)

Phil S. Akron, 9/1935 (the 1st AA court case)

Tom L. Akron, 11/1935 or 12/1937 (My Wife and I)

Walter B. Akron, 9/1935 or 2/1936 (The Backslider)

Joe D. Akron, 4/1936 or 8/1936 (the European Drinker)

Paul S. Akron, 4/1936 or 7/1936 (Truth Freed Me)

Fitz M. New York, 11/1935 (Our Southern Friend)

Hank P. New York, 10/1935 (The Unbeliever)

William "Bill" R. New York, 11/1935 or 1/1937 (A Businessman's Recovery)

Myron "Jack" W. New York, 4/1936 (Hindsight)

Page 163 - "...A.A. member who was living in a large community." Hank P., Montclair, New Jersey

Page 163 - "...chief psychiatrist of a large public hospital..." Dr. Russell Blaisdell at Rockland State Hospital in upstate New York.

Grapevine Story of the Day

In the Light of a New Life

Among my most treasured possessions are the books my AA friends have given me. But there is a vast difference between the first gift of a book and the latest, given to me last night.

The first, a meditation book, was given to me after two weeks in the program. "It's an extra I just happened to have lying around," the AA said, placing the little volume in my hands. Through a fog of emotion and reason run amok, I wondered suspiciously what the angle was, the con. No one ever gives something without the idea of some repayment lurking in the back of the mind, I thought.



For the rest of this story and others visit:

<http://www.aagrapevine.org/da/storyoday.php>

Ask Dr. Serenity (A non-advice column)

Dear Dr. Serenity,

Now That I have ninety days in recovery, am I really supposed to get up in front of people and chair meetings? It's hard enough to make myself share at a meeting! Without alcohol, I'm really a shy, private person. I don't like it when people look at me. I don't know how to make people laugh. And I don't think I know enough about AA to chair a meeting.

Signed,
Reluctant

Dear Reluctant,

Leading a meeting is not the same as public speaking: it is a tool that we use to stay sober. We don't have to impress or save anyone when we lead a meeting. We don't have to spout principles or explain steps we haven't taken yet. We just have to be willing to share what we know to be true for each of us. We have to set aside the egos, and the baggage of fear and pride, so we can talk honestly about our own experiences.

The truth is always the thing that helps me the most in meetings.

Signed,
Dr. Serenity

**"I am responsible . . .
When anyone, anywhere, reaches
out for help,**

**I want the hand of A.A. always to
be there.
And for that: I am responsible."**



And I need your help

Email sobriety birthday lists and event announcements for your group to mrg184@aol.com or mail them to Morris at BICO 242 West Valley Ave, Suite 211 Homewood, AL 35209. Submissions must be received no later than the tenth of each month. Contact Morris at 205-290-0060 for a current set of group contact labels or lists.



Thanks,
Bill M.
Editor



The "Pass It On" newsletter is published monthly by the Birmingham Intergroup Central Office. It is mailed to all groups and is available to individuals for a \$10.00 annual donation.

To subscribe:
call (205) 290-0060 or
send a check to:
Birmingham Intergroup Central Office
242 West Valley Ave, Suite 211
Homewood, AL 35209

Email mrg184@aol.com for more information.

VISIT BIRMINGHAMAA.ORG

Meeting Schedules

View and print event flyers

Links to other AA websites