

# The Wagon Wheel

Idaho Area 18's Newsletter

Editor, Karen F.

May 2006

FROM THE EDITOR—  
KAREN F.

## WE NEED A FEW GOOD LAUGHS



We are looking for a few good stories and laughs. The Wagon Wheel welcomes original illustrations and articles on every aspect of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. If you're unsure what to write, you could use the topic "Being in Service." Or write on a Concept or talk about the Traditions. Ideas for subjects are as open as your imagination, but why not consider: the first 90 days, living life on life's terms, growing up (at any age), nurturing resentments, learning about relationships, the ups and downs of sponsorship, your first sober date – or even those hazy, crazy drinking days. I will also publish poems, small illustrations with pictures – whatever inspires you.

To submit your story, you can either send by mail to

Idaho Area 18  
Newsletter, 10007 W.  
Lancelot Ave., Boise, ID  
83704 or  
[www.Idahoarea18aa.org](http://www.Idahoarea18aa.org).

There will be a link to the newsletter and you can see all the newsletters published so far. We print quarterly, and I will be asking for articles until I have run out of people to ask. Thanks in advance for taking the time to share a part of you. Thanks again for my sobriety.

Yours in Service,

**Karen F.**

## DIARY OF AN ALCOHOLIC WIFE



Would you believe, a *Ladies Home Journal* article dated 1971 and my mother, who mailed it to me, is what brought me to AA? I read the article, "Diary of An Alcoholic Wife" (it was me), on a Saturday in August. I then called Central Office in L.A.

and said, "I think I have a drinking problem." The person gave me an address in Whittier, CA for a Sunday morning meeting at 11 a.m. After my husband returned from golfing, I found the place (but was late). I stood out front and asked myself, "What am I doing coming to these people for help?" Little did I know, my life would totally change. I did not have enough money with me to buy a Big Book; however, at my next meeting, I did. I was so grateful to learn that what I had was a disease and that there was an answer.

A lovely older woman, Edna, took me under her wing and she became my sponsor until she went to "AA Heaven." It seems one never forgets that first sponsor. Yes, sponsorship is important. What I found in AA: A God of Love (not one with a big stick and big pencil), Hope, Friends, Happiness, and Gratefulness in learning a new way of life by living One Day at a Time. Moreover, I am especially grateful that I

have never had to take that first drink in 34+ years. Of course, there are many, many great lessons learned over the years for which again I am grateful! I love the saying, "Try It You Might Like It" and that is true: "Try It, You Will Like It!"

**Savito, Boise 8-21-71**

## THE BOOZY '70s



Sometime in the bleary, boozy '70s, I went with a boyfriend on a cruise (aka "Floating Bar"). When we docked, we decided to go bodysurfing off the coast of Mazatlan. How hard could it be? Fortified with a boatload of tequila, I took off and swam far out into the surf. As the current pulled me farther out, every now and then I'd turn around to wave (show off) to my friend, who had become a dot back toward the shore, and paddle out farther. I saw a good-looking swell coming my way that I thought I would try, but as waves (apparently) do, it changed shape. I watched the swell become the size of a mountain in a matter of a few seconds, and became aware that I was in serious trouble. The wave slammed and drove me down, tumbling me repeatedly; it felt like I was inside a giant

clothes dryer. I could not see what direction was up or down. I swam left to what I thought was "up", then tried right, down, up – I could not find my way out. I felt with my hands to find ANY shelf of land I could push off from, but – nothing. I felt my lungs straining and ready to collapse, and a sick panic told me I had mere seconds left to find air. If I could just feel or see some type of light, I'd swim toward that. In desperation, I swam any direction at this point for air, and my hand shot out into beautiful oxygen followed by an urgent gasp. I'd make it! I came so close to being pulled under and buried by enormous forces that I didn't know anything about. I was literally "in over my head".

I remembered that experience a few years ago, near my 20<sup>th</sup> AA birthday, and I shared it. It paralleled my "hitting bottom" story; not knowing what direction was up, "losing my compass", exhaustion, confusion, and panic. I did not know what I was up against. The immense power of the ocean, and the enormous and seductive power of alcohol. In both cases, I was in dark and dangerous places, in way over my head, and literally dying to see the "Sunlight". It feels so great to be daily blessed by the Sunlight of the Spirit.

I love AA!

**Jan F., Boise 4-7-85**

## PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE SHOWS NOTHING



Hi, my name is Brian, and I am an alcoholic.

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with alcoholics." (BB p. 89) The longer I am sober the more this statement resonates with me. I must admit with a little embarrassment, though, this was not always so.

About five years ago, I had one of those moments of clarity. It started slowly with my agreeing to sponsor a young man who had hardly any commonality with me except for our alcoholism (which is all that is needed). Although I had sponsored several men in the past, this sponsorship started out differently. Rather than simply offering him my telephone number and leaving it up to him to call me whenever he felt like it, I started scheduling weekly one hour meetings with him just before my home group met. During this hour we would chat a bit about his new life of sobriety and then he would

read aloud from the Big Book.

While this required him to attend meetings on a routine basis, read the Big Book and work through the Steps, it forced me to get back into the Big Book so that I could help him understand what he was reading. Starting with the Preface, I began correlating specific sections of the Big Book with the Twelve Steps for him. This is how I had him work through the Steps. Although I have since lost track of that young man, I continue to sponsor this way. Now I am not sure how to help someone progress through the Steps without going through the Big Book!

Although some of the men I have sponsored have yet to find long-term sobriety, I am grateful to have worked with them, as well as those who are still sober. Despite being their sponsor, I find in some ways that my relationship with them is like a reverse ministry, for I learn so much from them. Without fail, they all have that same look of bewilderment on their face after the first time they hear me say, "You have helped me more than I have helped you – thank you." I then explain to them that if they stay sober long enough and if they too sponsor other men, they will understand the meaning of what I said.

**Brian M, Idaho Falls**  
**5-6-1984**

## **ESCAPE WAS MY ONLY MEANS**

That horse took me to hell,

I never could ride that well.

In life or in dreams,  
Escape was my only means.

Damaged emotions in  
disguise –

Was this my spirit in demise?

I got off that horse many a time,

Just a twisted reprieve in my mind.

Never to ride again, I would swear.

However, that alluring ride took me away from here.

Until the lonely silence I could not take,

The numbing pain I could no longer fake.

To fall off that horse and never return,

Was the teacher of humility that I learned?

My body ached, and sleep was not mine,

Running like paint in a bad design.

I would be willing for anything good.

GOD only knows that my life had been misunderstood.

I did not know about me but for lest.

How can I face someone I cannot attest?

To get off that horse and walk in light,

Now to make every wrong to right.

I let that horse go to be free,

And getting to know about serenity and me.

**Shannon C, Boise**  
**12-19-2002**

## **PEOPLE SAY IF YOU DO NOT WORK THE STEPS, THE STEPS WILL WORK YOU.**



### **Resentments**

almost killed me. I have been sober for almost 19 years. In my early sobriety, I had worked the steps. I had even revisited steps 4 through 7 on occasion to put out small fires. However, in the past two years, it seems like "self will run riot" has overtaken any sense of balance or semblance of reality I may have had.

I was living a perfect life. I had money, a great house, and a promising career. I had a wife who adored me and thought I was in the relationship for the long haul.

Every day my resentments grew a little bigger just by small, almost imperceptible increments. I resented Larry for being a gossip. I resented Jim for looking at my wife, even though I was caring less and less for her. I resented my wife for not being perfect. I

was focusing on the negative. Everywhere I looked, I saw spoiled, evil people. On the surface, everything appeared to be successful, sparkling, and wealthy. I was unhappy. I felt trapped.

Then one day about a year ago, a trigger to leave my wife appeared. I left her high and dry. She got the house and most of the money. However, I hooked up with another woman. This woman was not the reason to leave; she was the trigger. My marriage until that point had been eaten away by niggling resentments and by seeing everything and everyone in a negative light. This was the result of wrong thinking run wild.

It has taken me many years to have all of my resentments and sick thinking shake me to my foundations. Those foundations as it turns out are the 12 steps of AA. My ego, pride, and desire for control have reduced my life to a heap of disasters, both spiritually and financially. My ass was in flames and I was going down (and flare up on occasion still). I was forced to my knees. I was being crushed under the weight of my own bullshit.

I had recently asked a fellow to sponsor me. My life was in trouble and I knew it, so as insurance against serious disaster, I

asked him. We had chatted lightly on occasion. When I first asked him to be my sponsor, he laid down two very solid rules. He asked me to sit down and write about any issues I might want to bring to him. He said writing is a good way to clarify issues and bring them to the forefront so we can talk about them. He also asked me to not make any of my problems his problems. These two rules I completely respect as a solid basis for a sponsor – pigeon relationship.

When my ass lit on fire recently, I sat down and wrote out a page of issues and garbage that were really bugging me. I brought these to my sponsor. He asked me to do a real four-column 4<sup>th</sup> step. I went home and began to write. I wrote for three days, praying, digging, and praying some more. I was asking God to help me see clearly. Why I was in flames, who I resented, what my role was, and what part of my ego and pride it affected. What did I fear from this resentment? I discovered I had to reduce my ego. I was afraid of many things, mostly losing ego-based things. My ego got me into trouble. Resentments caused me to see life through a sick, negative lens.

Where was my gratitude? I shared my 4<sup>th</sup> step with my sponsor. He noticed

some trends that were easily identifiable as character defects. These were anger, fear, fear of abandonment and regret for abandoning others. I asked God to remove some other defects, too awful to mention here.

I worked my 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> steps with deep prayer and quiet gratitude. I asked God to remove these defects of character.

My life has changed completely because of this activity. I have been lifted out and away from an-ever present sense of impending doom. Sure, I have some money issues, but today I see quiet resolution to those things instead an immovable wall of fear.

Thanks to working these steps, I see a future full of love from AA friends, and I look forward to healthy relationships on all fronts.

**Chuck M., Boise**

## **EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE**

It is not easy to stay clean and sober. We may suffer mentally or physically, but now we can learn from our experiences. In our using days, we could go through the same suffering many times and never learn a thing. If we take that first drink, our chances of growing are dead. Now we are facing life for the first time, and we have a chance

to grow through our experiences. We can gain strength and understanding from the fellowship, from the steps and from our sponsors. The cycles can be broken by uncovering the old ideas and habits that initiate the recurrent bad things. If we have hope and desire and we follow the simple suggestions of AA, we are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. The program of AA promises that God will do for us that we could not do for ourselves.

**J.C., Boise 10-21-05**

## FROM BEHIND BARS

After years of being in prison, I was finally released. I felt I would succeed because I had attended a ton of classes and I had not had a drink for years. After three years, I found myself back in jail because I had once again been arrested due to my addictions. About a year later as I was waiting to be sentenced, I once again started reading the Big Book. I wanted desperately to find out why I had drunk again knowing what it would eventually lead to again. One day as I read, there it was – the last paragraph on page 43 of the Big Book. I know now I must always keep my Higher Power as my first priority in my entire life. Without that, I have

absolutely no defense against that first drink.

**Frank J., Boise 9-17-05**

## SURRENDER TO WIN



If I took 10 years of fighting to understand that I could only win by surrendering. I started going to AA when I was still a teenager. I knew I did not want to be an alcoholic any more, and I was sure I could give up my drinking, but I always knew that I was the only one who really knew what was best for me. I did not mind going to meetings. In fact, they always reminded me that I was not alone. After the meetings, though, I was always the first one out the door and down the road. I never wanted to get a sponsor, because I was sure he would tell me to do things that I did not want to do. I knew he would tell me to do some step work and stay out of relationships for a while. That stuff was not for me. I never managed to stay sober for very long and I ended up in prison. However, today, I have found more freedom in my life than I ever had outside these walls. My higher power handed me some heavy lessons that finally allowed me to let go and quit driving my life and the lives of those around me into the ground. I cannot tell you that I do not wish I had

listened and followed directions when I first came into the program. Today, however, all those lessons from the people who walked down the path of sobriety are still in my heart. It took me a while, but I finally know I have freedom – in surrender.

**Taylor H., Boise**

## ARRESTED AGAIN

On June 26, 2004, I had been arrested for grand theft and a parole violation. I had relapsed April 20, 2004, and three months later I had hit bottom and the judge sent me to prison for the second time. It was recommended by the parole board that I do a therapeutic community program. I was removed the first time and got another chance at the program by the grace of God. I did really well in the program. It is based on cognitive self-change, relapse prevention and Alcoholics Anonymous. I was the assistant senior coordinator and senior coordinator, the highest positions held. After eight hard months, I was removed for having another inmate's prescription. **This is insanity.** It is very easy as an addict/alcoholic to justify and minimize my actions. However, this is where the small behaviors/defects of character lead me to criminal behaviors and



eventually to prison. As an alcoholic, it is what I do afterwards that will keep me in sobriety. Now, back at the yard, with 13 months to top, I attend AA meetings three nights a week and share/fellowship with other inmates that are taking life one day at a time. Thank God, for Alcoholics Anonymous. With rigorous honesty and willingness, I will soon be back into society and working this simple program on a daily basis.

**Sonny P., Boise 4-21-04**

## EMANCIPATION DAY



The most important part of my lovely life of drinking was my first day of emancipation. I let my three children go to stay with their father; he was a wonderful man and father. As soon as that door closed, I was out it! This was going

to be great. I did what I wanted – when I wanted. I drank every single day. If you had asked me my name, I would probably not know it. I was always extremely lonely so I was what regular people would call promiscuous. Oh, I thought was a free spirit – no, I was in a prison of my own making. Then I got three DUIs, and actually did go to prison.

This, my friend, was my second day of emancipation. Yes, I went to prison and to this day, it was the best thing that could have happened. I always wanted to be a free spirit. In addition, thanks to AA, I am SPIRITUAL and I feel it inside my soul. I am Free, and my God has taken me out of my prison and delivered me into the world of spirituality. This alcoholic is truly grateful

**Trina M, Boise  
10-11-04**

## BUILD A BETTER WORLD

“Build a better world,” said God.

And I answered, “How? The world is such a vast place, and so complicated now, and I am small and helpless; there’s nothing I can do.” But God in all His wisdom said, “Just build a better you.”

**Author Unknown**

## DISTRICT DONATIONS TO AREA

District 1	\$488.73
District 2	20.00
District 3	712.25
District 4	303.00
District 5	29.36
District 6	135.45
District 7	40.00
District 8	293.11
District 9	266.00
District 10	95.00
District 11	125.00

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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## *3<sup>rd</sup> Annual H & I BBQ, Speaker Meeting & Dance*

Saturday, June 3, 2006  
Veterans Memorial Park  
Fun for all ages, 1:30 to 7:30 pm.  
Speaker, 5:45 to 7:15 p.m.  
Dance, 7:30 to 9 p.m.  
AUCTION & RAFFLE

\$5 meal tickets available now and at event  
(kids 12 & under eat free)  
Raffle tickets, \$1 each or 6 for \$5  
For more information  
Contact Pete 412-7031 or Kerry 573-0679

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## *6<sup>th</sup> Annual Founders Day Celebration, June 10 Owyhee Plaza Hotel Gallery Room*

4 to 5:30 p.m. Archives Display and Tour  
with Berry W.  
6 p.m. Buffet Style Dinner  
7:30 p.m. Speaker Joe W., Memphis TN  
(31 years sobriety)  
9 p.m. Raffle and Auction, Dance to follow  
Call Mindy K 344-6611 or 888-4447

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## *The Big Book Workshop*

Saturday, June 17  
Blaine County Community Campus  
1050 Fox Acre Road, Hailey

### *Festivities*

10 to 4 p.m. BIG BOOK Workshop  
Hosted by Bob D. of Las Vegas  
5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Speaker Meeting  
7 to 8:30 p.m. Buffet Dinner  
Dance to the sounds of  
Disc spinning by our Playa Craig C.  
50-50 Raffle  
Wood River to Handle Sobriety Group  
and District 2, hosts  
RSVP  
Jed S. 720-4633 \* Steve D. 727-1396 \*  
David F. 720-1205

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## *Pacific Region Forum*

June 23, 24, and 25, Doubletree Hotel  
Near the Seattle Airport  
Room rates, \$89 per night  
Registration is free for the Forum.

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## *PNC 2006*

June 30 to July 2  
Hermiston Community Center.  
415 S. Hwy 395 Hermiston, OR  
Contact Michael G. 541-571-5656  
Chase 541-601-8045  
Mail Reservations to PNC 2006, PO Box  
1520, Hermiston, OR 97838  
[pnc2006@hotmail.com](mailto:pnc2006@hotmail.com)

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## *Lefty Callahan Raft Race*

### *Sponsored by Intergroup*

Saturday, July 22, from Noon until 4 p.m.  
Floaters Depart Barber Park 11 a.m.

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## *1<sup>st</sup> Annual Friends of Bill W. & Dr. Bob*

### *Treasure Valley Rendezvous*

Come join us for a weekend of Arm  
Flapping, Good Time Recovery  
Families Welcome

August 4, 5, & 6, Snake River Oasis Resort  
Huntington OR 541-262-3504

For more information  
Contact Dennis L. 208-695-7454

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## *First Annual Gem State Roundup*

August 11, 12, & 13, Doubletree Riverside  
Inn

For more information,  
Contact Sue K 208-286-0764 or Richard or  
Patty M. 208-938-0497  
[www.gemstateroundup.org](http://www.gemstateroundup.org)

Franny S., Gardena, CA, 36 yrs, Speaker  
Friday

Larcine G., Hawthorne, CA, Al-Anon  
Speaker Saturday

Ken D., La Mesa, CA, 36 yrs, Speaker  
Saturday

Sister B., Brea CA, 27 yrs, Speaker Sunday

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## *16<sup>th</sup> Annual Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend*

September 8-10, 2006 Hosted by Utah  
Area 69

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## *Idaho Area 18 Fall Assembly Convention October 6, 7, 8, 2006*

“Passing It On To Others in a Changing  
World” Held at the

**Doubletree Hotel Boise-Riverside**

2900 Chinden Blvd, Boise, ID  
Phone (208) 343-1871  
Toll Free 1-800-222-TREE

For Registration information  
Call Lisa or Ken at (208) 385-7437

Forms are also available at  
[www.idahoarea18aa.org](http://www.idahoarea18aa.org)