

THE CLASSIFIED AD

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS!

This is a positive and permanent release without cost, inconvenience, or obligation. It is a free service, rendered in secret by other alcoholics who have found freedom through 'Alcoholics Anonymous.' Write Post Office Box 464, Vancouver, B.C.

This classified advertisement appeared in the Vancouver Province, the leading newspaper of the time, in the editions published Friday, November 16, 1944. It was paid for by Charlie Welch. It ran daily.

The first letter in response to the ad was from Victoria, dated November 17, 1944.

Charlie met with Charlie Welch and his small group to discuss how they should deal with the letter. All went to their knees and prayed for guidance. The letter was referred to the Victoria member, Charlie M.

Other letters arrived, and each was prayed over and then acted on.

On November 21, one arrived from H.M. (Hal) S., who was working at Rounds, a small logging settlement in the woods near Lake Cowichan. It was dated November 18, 1944. It read:

Dear Sir:

Your advertisement in the Daily Province interested me as I have become an alcoholic and suffered all the miseries attending excessive drinking. I have taken refuge in a logging camp where I hope to build up a resistance to overcome this weakness.

I am living in dread of Christmas as I know from years past the temptation to drink on this occasion. I hope I shall have the opportunity of meeting some of the Alcoholics Anonymous. I hope you will excuse the writing as I am nervous from a spell I have been on recently.

*Sincerely,
H.M.S.*

Charlie wrote him and sent him a pamphlet (Just For Today). He told the group about the letter and they agreed Charlie should phone him and see him, the decision being taken after they had prayed for guidance.

Charlie then telephoned him long distance and arranged to meet him at 2 p.m. November 27, at the Riverside Hotel in Lake Cowichan.

On November 23, Hal replied this way:

Dear Charlie B.:

Thank you for your letter and the booklet enclosed. I read it and feel encouraged. I had hopes to remain in camp for the Christmas season but I hear now that they close down for a week. In that event I would come to Vancouver.

I should very much like to meet you. Your advice to look forward I am starting to practice. My past is a gloomy night-

mare. I find certain salvation in work and in trying to plan a brighter future. I will let you know when I will be in Vancouver so we can arrange a meeting.

*Sincerely,
Harold S.
Rounds, B.C.*

After his meeting with Hal, Charlie noted in his record book: "November 27, 1944, met Mr. S. at Riverside Hotel, Cowichan Lake. I spent between one and two hours with him and left him in exceptional fine spirits. He was very grateful for the opportunity of personal contact and he made a firm resolve to carry through the entire program. I feel that Mr. S. is absolutely sincere and have great hopes for him."

"I left him a copy of the A.A. book."

A later, undated notation says the A.A. book was returned and on January 13, 1945, Mr. S. was listed as one of "our members."

Hal was most grateful for Charlie's venture and on December 10 wrote him:

Dear Charlie:

I wish to thank you for the trip you made over here to see me. I feel at the time I was rather feeble in my appreciation. It was a very generous and kind act which I feel did me a lot of good. It made me think, if a man will do that much for me, I should show that I am going to do my share. I read the book and it will arrive under separate cover as I mailed it today.

Thanks a lot. I wrote my mother a long letter telling of my experiences with A.A. I feel she will be pleased. I have made arrangements to stay in camp for Christmas. I prefer this as I have several debts to discharge to get my house in order. I have been laid up with a form of stomach flu which has been prevalent here, and am feeling quite recovered.

Best of luck.

*Your friend,
Hal M. S.*

Charlie's first Twelfth Step call succeeded. Hal stayed sober, joining the Vancouver chapter on his first visit to Vancouver in February, 1945.

Notes of the meeting, held in Charlie Welch's home with thirteen members present, state:

"Harold was asked to say a few words by the chairman. He stated that one thing which had given him confidence was the fact that an A.A. member had taken the time and trouble and expense to undertake a long motor trip to see him and for that reason it would be extremely difficult for him to disappoint such a member of the Fellowship for what he had done. Harold extended his thanks to Charlie for his aid and said that he was determined to carry out the program of A.A. to the best of his ability."

Harold continued his membership in several different groups in the interior of the province.

Charlie B. wasn't a man to waste opportunity.

His call on Hal took him through Victoria, and there he contacted Charlie M., and came home armed with the names of three potential members, two men and a woman. One was Charlie J. S., a lumberman, who played an important role in A.A. from the time he became sober until his death in Coos Bay, Oregon. His membership in Vancouver dated from April 1945, according to the records.

This activity was typical of the fervor that marked Charlie B.'s active life in A.A. It was so efflorescent that it penetrated the hearts of those whose lives he touched and his recruits were activated to do as he did. A dynamic person, he spoke with apostolic zeal that almost was evangelical. He was a top salesman, good organizer, and promoter.

He talked frequently about the day two letters arrived in early December.

One was from Gordon J. Undated, it said:

Dear Sirs:

Anything you can do for me on this subject; I will thank you from the bottom of my heart. My wife has left me because of drinking. My family is losing any respect they have for me on account of liquor. Please phone me any evening or write the above address. My age is 34.

Yours truly,

The other was from Everett G. Dated December 4, 1944, it stated:

In reference to your advertisement in the Daily Province concerning Alcoholics Anonymous; I would appreciate very much receiving particulars as I am in immediate need of help.

Yours very truly,

And on December 13, this from Fred H.:

I have recently spent three weeks at the Hollywood Sanitarium taking the cure and am interested in any further help which you may be able to give.

Your bureau interests me greatly and I am going to do my best not only to get help but also to give help to others.

I will anxiously await your reply so that we can get things under way as soon as possible.

Yours very sincerely,

The characters for the scene for the beginning of a vibrant A.A. had now been brought into play.