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Big Book Stories — Updated

The Wonder Still Lives

B.G. still looks upon the benefits of sobriety with the fresh approach of a newcomer. It works!

A LITTLE bit at a time, that's the way we take the program. We (my wife and I) have made AA part of our life—not all of it, you understand—part of it. We have found that living is giving, giving is loving, and loving is God. Seems we are never too busy to stop and say hello. I am afraid that I make a lousy elder statesman.

Fellow said to me last night, "Bill, why do you continue to speak and go to meetings after all these years? Surely your sobriety is never in jeopardy, and you must certainly get tired of hearing your same old story over and over again." I said that a bricklayer must continue to lay brick if he wants to maintain his skills and an alcoholic must continue to speak and take part in the meetings if he too wants to keep his memory green and remember the humble earth from whence he sprang. It is very easy to forget the trials and tribulations after a few years of good living the AA way.

The meetings are truly the meat on which the creature feeds, the creature being me and all of the other so-called old fellows of the movement. We still find nourishment in making new friends and meeting old ones; in seeing people whose names we have forgotten but whom we somehow know; in the wondrous world of the newcomer and the knowledge that we can be a part of his recovery through the grace of our blessed *Lord* and just the fact that we took the time to join, the meeting on any given night.

At the start, we knew the feeling of belonging; associating with people who care just because you're you and have the same problem they have. We realized that we were not Things from outer space, idiots, or anything else apart from the rest of the world; we had an illness and now we had someone other than our immediate families to share needs and recovery with. There was a solution to our problem if we cared to apply ourselves. (And apply yourself you must, with all the honesty and sincerity in your shivering, quivering carcass.)

For the needs of tomorrow I need

not pray; help me, keep me, Lord, just for today.

The first anniversary—oh, what memories! They forgot the cake! My child bride said to me, "Don't worry about little things like that. Be grateful for your sobriety."

"Little things!" I howled. "My first anniversary and no cake!"

Yes, it seems to me that the first formative years in AA—developing an awareness of God, beginning to believe and have faith once again in the power of prayer—were truly the glory years of our young AA life, when everyone, so it seems to me, was running, running all the time. A house full of drunks, in and out, all the time. We spent our days trying to sober up the whole world.

Meeting Bill and Lois for the first time was a thrill, and then came the greatest thrill of my entire lifetime: a letter from Bill asking if they might use my story in the new edition of the Big Book. I felt so good I cried, and the sight of this Irishman crying—well, it is a memory and surely a happening.

After a few years the running stopped, and we began to enjoy the world around us, perhaps for the

*The author's
story appears on
page 499 of
Alcoholics
Anonymous
published in 1955*

first time in many years: the sights, smells, and sounds that booze had closed off completely many years before.

A modest success permitted us to indulge our loved ones and to travel the length and breadth of this old globe telling of the wondrous things that God and AA wrought, meeting the same people with the same sickness regardless of color or creed, and learning the story of AA over and over again.

If all I had gained were sobriety, I would be a poor man indeed. The length is unimportant; the quality, most important.

I could go on forever about the wonderful world of AA: the people

who inhabit it; the living that AA has made possible; the hundreds of Christmas cards from folks we have met through the years and sometimes from folks whom we don't know, but who just want to say hello. These are some other dividends of the AA way of living: the growing up of our families around us; the delight we take in doing things for our grandchildren—things denied our children because of our drinking.

Does AA work? I'll say it does! My child bride and I will be eternally grateful to you boys and girls for the best third of a lifetime one Irishman ever had.

B.G., Nutley, N.J.