

Here's *How*

Published in Fellowship by the Chicago Area Service Assembly

VOLUME LVII ISSUE NO 5

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER 2005

2005 International Conference

I Am Responsible

“I AM RESPONSIBLE,” was the theme of AA’s recent International Convention in Toronto July 1 through July 3. I personally feel more responsible since I attended. Many experienced attendees told me before I left not to miss the Flag Ceremony and Opening Big Meeting. I’ve learned to follow suggestions, so at 8pm on Friday, July 1, I was seated in Rogers Center Sky Dome Stadium along with about 45,000 other alcoholics from all over the world. The lights dimmed and there was a moment of silence, in which one could hear a pin drop – this gave me goose bumps. Then, a sole bagpiper, dressed in full kilt regalia, started playing center stage (bagpipers always make me cry) and within moments several other bagpipers joined him. After the wonderful music, the flag ceremony began ... one by one; delegates from each country represented at the convention came out with their flag. There were enthusiastic cheers for each country, particularly for China, represented for the first time at the International.

The first speaker, Angie, made me laugh and cry. I thought I had heard the best AA lead ever. A gentleman from India followed, who encouraged “American women to swarm India.” He explained AA is growing in India, but for women, it is not acceptable for them to attend meetings. He spoke of the psychiatrist in India who saved his life by telling him of AA and this psychiatrist was speaking tomorrow on a panel (a meeting I had already planned on attending). After the last speaker my gratitude was overflowing, when a voice came from behind the curtain, and Judy C. walked on stage singing “Amazing Grace.” The crowd sang together in unity, gratitude, and joy.

Saturday morning I attended the panel discussion entitled “AA and the Health-

care Professional.” The panel was led by Dr. Bill Clarke and included a social worker from Washington, DC, the psychiatrist from India who had treated the man who spoke the night before, and a psychiatrist from China – all “friends of AA.” The doctor from China shared her story of being invited to the International in Minnesota five years ago, feeling very sad China was not represented and making a commitment to herself to have China be part of the 2005 convention. Tears came to her eyes as she described her overwhelming joy at China’s participation. The panel talked about alcoholism being a deadly disease – cunning, baffling, and powerful; the treatment being one alcoholic helping another; and the reality that many doctors and other healthcare professionals are not aware of this.

On Saturday night the Old Timers meeting was excellent. I loved the way they had young people pick the name of an old timer (40-plus years). Each young person said their name, where they were from, and their sobriety date, and shouted, “I am responsible!” A couple young guys also shouted out “Wutang,” which I later learned from my sponsee is a rap group.

The 25-millionth printed copy of the Big Book was given to the warden of San Quentin prison. The panel named the people in the past who had been given copies of the Big Book and I reflected on the powerful symbolism in the choice of the recipients. I heard many speakers over the weekend, as I have throughout my sobriety, who have been to prison and come out to live sober, honest, and productive lives because they received the message while incarcerated. It made me think more about my own service work and the need to carry the message to those in prison. As a GSR for my home group of 60–70 people, I regularly announce that the Correctional Facilities

Committee is looking for volunteers to give leads at Cook County Prison. I myself have not yet carried the message to Cook County Prison. But I will.

Katie L.

Connecting with Chicago AA at the 2005 International Convention

MY FIRST international conference was back in 1990, in Seattle, and I drank soon after. I was disconnected, unwilling to practice the steps and ready for a cocktail. It was the era of grunge rock and I was about to get grunge....

The 2005 Conference was an entirely different experience because I am an entirely different AA member today.

While I loved the big meetings and the flag ceremony, the best part of the conference, for me, was spending time with members of my home group and the other groups I attend here in Chicago. Before every big meeting or event, there were groups of my fellow Windy City AA’s gathered in the lobby of our hotel, and together, we would walk to the convention center. We’d stop for coffee and look at the sights of downtown Toronto. We’d gather at meal times and go in a group to a restaurant. I roomed with one of my best AA friends and sister sponsee. It was idyllic.

I came away realizing how connected I was to AA, especially to the men and women of Chicago AA. I am fortunate to be a part of really active meetings that encourage their members to show up for family and friends, do service work, sponsor people, and pursue my dreams. Any step I’ve taken, any change I’ve made is a result of the support and example of the people in my AA groups. It is through them that I hear God. What I

(Continues on page 3)

Chicago Area Service Office

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60601

TELEPHONE: 312-346-1475

ALSO

800-371-1475

FACSIMILE: 312-346-5477

WEBSITE: <http://www.chicagoaa.org>

e-mail: Caso@ChicagoAA.org

Here's How Newsletter

Here's How is published six times a year by the Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA) of AA in the interest of greater unity of the 75,000+ members and 3,200+ groups in the Chicago/Suburban Area.

Address all communications to:
Here's How

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501
Chicago, IL 60601

OR

e-mail: HeresHow@ChicagoAA.org

- Opinions expressed herein are individual and do not necessarily reflect the thinking of AA or CASA as a whole.
- The mailing list of *Here's How* subscribers is not made available for sale to any outside entity.
- The suggested contribution to *Here's How* is only \$5.00 annually. A contribution form can be found on the back of this issue.

Alcoholics Anonymous and AA
are registered trademarks of
AA World Services, Inc

CASO CORNER, JULY 29, 2005

The Office has been reorganized! The new Assistant Office Manager is Laura G., who has been the Bookkeeper for the last two years. She is still the Bookkeeper, and she is adding the Bookstore to her responsibilities, as well as being in charge of the Office when the Manager is out. If this sounds like a lot of responsibility, it is!

Laura has been integrally involved in office and Bookstore operations since she arrived at CASO. Being in charge of accounting for money has a way of getting you into every aspect of an operation, and Laura has been exactly that. She has overseen and been responsible for full accountability at CASO. She has proposed and implemented a huge number of improvements in our operation. The reason that most of them aren't all that noticeable is that when things are going properly, we don't notice them. That's why Laura is being promoted: she makes things

go properly. As virtually anyone who has dealt with her knows, she does it with cheer and grace.

Most of this good news goes with a bit of a loss: Peter H., who has been Bookstore Maager for seven years, will be going to part-time. As everyone knows, Peter has been the mainstay of the Bookstore forever. His is the cheery face that greeted everyone on the phone and as they walked in. He got the mail orders out in a timely manner. He ordered the stock and made sure it was available. He worked with innumerable volunteers who helped out with everything from folding fliers and stuffing them into envelopes for Beginner's Kits to making barcode labels to getting orders together and working the cash register. Peter is one of those guys everyone knows and who knows everyone. He'll be spending more time going to school and getting into care-giving, a field he's been interested in for a long time. So Peter will still be with us, albeit with reduced hours. He has been a mainstay of the office for a long time.

Summer is a period when donations tend to fall off, so your donation at this time is especially important. CASO, of course, serves all groups regardless of whether they contribute or not. We are committed to providing the best service to the fellowship we can.

Volunteers change schedules quite a bit in the summer, so now is a good time to help us and yourself by doing some service work at CASO. If you have any questions about volunteering, call Mike M., the Operations Manager, Geoff C., the Group & Fellowship Services Coordinator, or Nellie P., the Receptionist.

Group and Fellowship Services Geoff C.

In the last issue of *Here's How* I was introduced to the Fellowship as your new Group & Fellowship Services Coordinator. The longer I stay sober, the more experiences I have as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. For this experience I am extremely grateful and I look forward to spending more time as one of those "special workers" who are talked about in the Traditions.

Although I am still getting acclimated to my position and have a while before I am completely familiar with all it entails, I do know that the 12-Step List update is finished. Over the past few months we have removed 1,957 people from the list who, for various reasons, can no longer be available. The bottom line is that just 797 people remain on the list. While this is a serviceable number, we would like many more people to be available for the volunteers to contact for 12-Step calls. If you are willing to be of service, feel free to fill out the on-line form available on the website or the paper form at the office.

I have begun a myriad of projects (and finished some), but one I want to mention is that I have started making rounds at district and committee meetings. I hope that in this

way I can serve as a familiar and useful resource to you DCMs, GSRs, and Committee Members out there. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you already. If we haven't crossed paths yet, I might pop up at your meeting.

And if you are ever at CASO, stop by my office. I'm back in the catacombs.

VOLUNTEERS FOR MAY 2005

Alan R.
Anna L.
Armensue
Audrey G.
Audrey O.
Barry L.
Beth S.
Between the Covers
Bill B.
Bill C.
Billy Mc.
Bob H.
Bob K.
Bob N.
Brent A.
Brian C.
Bruce A.
Byron S.
Buffy
Camille S
Caroline R.
Cathy R.
Charley J.
Christine C.
Christopher T.
Cindy P.
Courtney B.
Daryl L.
Dave L.
Dave M.
David N.
Deborah B.
Derek U.
Dillan S.
Dylan H.
Elizabeth B.
Erik M.
Ernestine W.
Frank M.
Gayle F.
Ginny F
Gratitude Mtg.
Gregory M.
Greg S.
Holly B.
ISCYPAA
Jason L.
James H
Jeffrey B.
Jenny P.

Jenny T.
Jim C.
Jim H.
Joanne Y.
Joe A.
Joe H.
Joe O.
John C.
Jonas S.
Joseph Mc.
Joy D.
Joyce T.
Judy D.
Jutta H.
Karyn M.
Kelly G.
Kevin Z.
Kim K.
Larry T.
Lee H.
Lorie G.
Lynn S.
Maggie B.
Mardi O.
Mari M.
Marilyn C.
Matthew W.
Men's Fireside
Meredith L.
Michael G.
Michael G.
Michalek
Mike Mc.
Mike R.
Mimi O.
Nancy T.
Patrick B.
Patrick C.
Pete B.
Phyllis M.
Rachel P.
Rhetta W.
Rick C.
Rita B.
Sam W.
Scott R.
Steve F.
Steve J.
Terry R.
Tim A.
Tom Z.
Young People's BB
Whitney B.

am not always able to do is JUST hang out with my AA friends because I have a full and busy life. This was my chance to walk and talk and listen in the meetings and share the experience with my fellows.

The theme of the conference was “I am responsible.” I came away knowing that I am responsible to share the love AA has given to me with the newcomer and with my family, and save a little for my AA buddies. They need my love too, and for that I am responsible.

Laura H.

Toronto: A Spiritual Experience

I DON'T KNOW HOW or why, but I had a spiritual experience in Toronto. It wasn't huge, but it did change my life by changing my attitude. I have come to think of experiences like that as the gifts we get along the way if we pay attention. A friend once told me that a spiritual awakening is simple. “Anytime, anywhere any alcoholic learns any part of the truth, that's a spiritual awakening.”

I suppose it started on the bus. I was with the Wanderers. I met or got to know better a lot of people I had either known a little or not at all. We had a great sharing on the way up and another on the way back. Once again, it worked. People had been told to bring – at minimum – certified birth certificates or passports. Sure enough, people showed up with photocopies and driver' licenses. We were flagged through customs without a problem, in either direction. God was with us.

I didn't go to a lot of daytime meetings. I went to the big party and a luncheon hosted by the local central office and GSO. I went to all three big meetings and to the dances after the evening meetings. I went AA shopping at the two “Sober Cities.” I did a lot of sightseeing of the lovely city we were in. That was very different behavior for me from most conventions and conferences I've attended. Usually I'm all about the agenda, the meetings, the events, and the “program” stuff. This time, I just did my thing.

And it was all I had to do. I saw literally hundreds of people I knew and was

glad to see them all. I met people from all over the world – Switzerland, Ireland, Scotland, India, South Africa, Mexico—and from all over the country. I saw people all over the city with their badges hanging around their neck. You couldn't get lost, there were too many of us. A half-dozen nonparticipants stopped me and asked me what we all were and I told them. I'm sure the bar owners weren't too excited, but everyone else in Toronto seemed to be.

And the big meetings were over the top. The Friday evening Flag Ceremony had 87 flags and was led by a Native American carrying a feathered staff of peace. After the speakers, Judy C. led the entire 44,000 of us in “Amazing Grace,” and it was: it was amazing and it was God's grace. My heart melted. The Old-Timers meeting on Saturday evening was just as moving. The “Count Up” led to the longest sobriety: 63 years! It was absolutely amazing. Then youngsters – the shortest time was one day, but some had six or seven years and not one of them was over 22 years old – picked speakers from the Old-Timers section (40 years or more) out of a hat. The speakers were great, but the heart of the meeting went out to the last speaker who, standing for the first time before such a crowd, could not speak. We were with him; it was the most supportive audience anyone ever had and we heartily cheered him for just being there.

Sunday morning was more of the power I felt the previous two evenings. Tom I., who has spoken on more than one occasion in Chicago, was the wrap-up speaker. He was wonderful and we closed with more music: the Good Brothers Band. There was music throughout the weekend. Each night we danced and sang along to great music and had warm, accepting fellowship of thousands dancing together and being happy, joyous, and free.

And perhaps that was my lesson, learned once more through AA experience: I could worry about everything—getting into Canada, getting back into the U.S., not doing what was “planned,” and all the rest. Instead I chose – and choose – to let go and let God.

Bruce P.

Grateful in Toronto

IT WAS A traffic-filled ride to the airport, the baby was crying in the backseat and my husband and I were arguing about which parking lot to park in and which spot would be the most convenient. Then as we dragged a baby, a stroller, a babysitter, four pieces of luggage (one with a broken wheel) and our egos, trudging the road to Gate H19, bickering the whole way, I thought to myself “What the heck do I think I am doing?” When I found out that my flight was delayed an hour and a half, we took turns strolling the airport terminal, praying the baby would fall asleep (which he never did). We boarded the plane at 9:00 p.m. with a fussy baby who could never get comfortable, too much luggage, pre-registered eighty-dollar badges sitting on the counter at home, short tempers and tired eyes, on our way to Toronto, Ontario, Canada, for the 70th International Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.

There were more than a few moments on our way that I thought I was crazy for making the trip. Wouldn't it have been easier, cheaper, smarter to stay home? Didn't we have other obligations to family, work, our house, ourselves? The air conditioning in our hotel room was on the blink and the baby didn't get to sleep that night until midnight and the thirteen-year-old I brought along was grumpy and my husband was irritated and I thought: This is not worth it. And, as with most things, I was very wrong.

Just like I cannot pinpoint the moment I became deeply grateful for the gift of sobriety, I am not sure when I became grateful we made the effort to go to Toronto. Maybe it was when I saw my two-week sober sponsee cry in gratitude after the Friday night speaker from India explained how difficult it is to find and get AA in his country. Maybe it was walking around the vast convention area, with wall-to-wall people crowding in at every corner. Maybe it was when my sponsees told me how they drove the 9-hour trip in a short 11 hours, and they planned to sleep in their van and hoped they had enough money to get back home. Maybe it was when I was standing in the middle of the stadium before the Saturday-night

speaker and to see nearly 60,000 alcoholics join together in gratitude. Maybe it was when I heard old timer after old timer share how they have had children, houses, jobs, love, laughter, service, and life because of Alcoholics Anonymous. Maybe it was when the 100th person held my baby with the love and affection of a grandparent. Or more than likely it was when those girls that were going to sleep in the van slept on my floor instead. Maybe it happened when I went from uncomfortable to weeping during the Friday night rendition of "Amazing Grace." Maybe it was in the middle of the dance on Friday night when 500 people danced their bums off, sweating, laughing, jumping . . . enjoying.

I wish I knew the exact moment that all the irritation, and frustration, and hurt feelings and bickering was worth it. But much like my sobriety, I wasn't fully aware of the presence of something much greater at work until I got home and back into my routine. It was then and now, that I look back and think . . . this is what they were talking about, it is this. This is one of the experiences they told me I must not miss. And I am so glad I didn't. Maybe it was the moment I looked at my husband, my baby, the precious commodities I call sponsees, my home group members and my friends, and I thought in awe and wonder, "Who then made all this?" I need no more proof, nor do I have any need to look any further. The great fact, for me, is just this and nothing less, a power greater than myself has entered into my heart and life in a way which is indeed miraculous. Thanks, Toronto.

Gabrielle S.

AA in Canada Now and Then

"OUR CONGRATULATIONS and thanks to Canada; no finer AA exists. When AA travelers return from Canada, they all report how much more they brought away than they took in. We are immeasurably grateful for our friends from Halifax to Vancouver; they are always the same: devoted workers upon that great fabric in AA today, and of tomorrow! Bill"

Bill wrote these words to introduce *Grapevine's* "Salute to Canada [Salut au Canada]" in May 1951. Since 1951 when the *Grapevine* reported 299 Canadian groups with 7,251 members, these numbers have grown to more than 5,000 groups with over 100,000 members. Canada has hosted two International Conventions, the 30th in Toronto, in 1965, and the gala 50th birthday in 1985 in Montreal. Now Toronto has hosted our 70th birthday party in 2005 in Toronto. Thanks again, Toronto AA.

The International AA Convention, Toronto, started Friday, July 1, and ran through Sunday, July 3, 2005. Friday, I finished getting registered, and the process flowed efficiently. Then I walked over to the Archives Display in the convention center and met a fellow Archives member and his spouse from Chicago—a coincidence. In the afternoon I visited Casa Loma House that resembled a castle on the hill, built by a turn-of-the-20th-century millionaire for his bride. July 1 being Canada Day, actors were strolling and performing in medieval attire.

That evening I attended the opening ceremony that had 90 flags from countries over the world where AA is represented. The American Indian's was the first flag displayed, followed by flags of the other countries.

The speakers consisted of an African-American lady who gave an explosive lead, pumping up the audience. An Asian Indian gave his lead and talked about the need for growth of AA in India. Then came an Irish-looking lady from Toronto, who spoke a message to the Chinese population in fluent Chinese, followed by her lead. All three speakers rocked the house. The evening concluded with a quiet time, 40,000 people from all over the world respecting the significance of the silence. The conclusion was the responsibility statement read aloud by everyone. The evening was moving and spiritual.

Saturday evening was the Old-Timers meeting, with 12 speakers having more than 40 years' recovery. Young people in AA gave their name, city of origin, and sobriety date, then chose a number of an old timer to speak and escorted the old timer onto the stage. What a tribute by

two longevity factions of AA! The longest sobriety time was 63 years, and there was a large contingency of people with over 40 years. This was impressive and humbling.

On Sunday, July 3, the final five speakers addressed the need to carry the AA message to prisons and correctional facilities.

Then all members were wished a sincere thank you for coming and a safe and speedy trip home. My heart was so filled with happiness, joy, and spirituality from attending this event. Thank you, Toronto, for being such a gracious host. The next AA International Conference will be in San Antonio, Texas, in 2010—yahoo!

Love and Service,
Jimmie A., "our man in the street"

That Sense of Ease and Comfort . . .

I USED TO GET a sense of ease and comfort by taking a few drinks, but today I get it from being in the middle of AA. I have participated in all kinds of service work in my home group and at the district and area levels. I work with others and share at meetings. I work the steps and go to picnics. I have attended local, state, and regional conferences. Some of my best AA memories have been made at the International Conventions I have been fortunate enough to attend.

I was barely two years sober when I went to Minneapolis in 2000 and those memories are pretty much limited to awe and inspiration—I could never have imagined seeing over 50,000 alcoholics in one room together! Going to Toronto in 2005 was a slightly different experience for me and just as rewarding. I was prepared for the crowds, the fellowship, and the intensity of spiritual energy that exists when we are together. I was able to be a little more present and a little more observant this time, and I am truly grateful for that.

I was moved by the presence of Cuba and China at the Flag Ceremony on Friday night, a testament to the fact that AA is still growing and spreading around the globe. I was touched by the speaker from

India who shared his experience, strength, and hope regarding the growth of AA in India and the desperate struggles that exist for female alcoholics in that country. I met a wonderful family from eastern Germany who shared their joy of recovery with me. I spoke to several AAs from Mexico City. The language we spoke was different, but we understood each other just the same.

Of the several individual sessions I attended, the one I loved the most was titled "Partners in AA." Three couples who were all AA members shared how they stayed sober and how they've kept their relationships strong. The message was clear – strong sponsorship and lots of service work. The couples had each been married over 20, 30, and 50 years respectively! I felt comforted in knowing I belong to a strong home group, am active in strong sponsorship, and have a partner who does the same.

The message of strong sponsorship and being active in service work was present throughout the weekend. I really listened to the speakers with many years of sobriety and that is what I heard them say over and over. I know that for me to drink is to die, so my prayer today is that I will continue to be willing to do the deal and practice the theme of the 2005 International Convention (I Am Responsible), so my God will continue to change me, one day at a time.

Respectfully submitted,
Derek T.,
Between the Covers

Are these extravagant promises?

"ARE THESE EXTRAVAGANT promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them." (Big Book, p. 84)

I caught a small glimpse of these promises at the International AA Convention in Toronto. My entire visit was another spiritual awakening. My friend Mary and I were surprised from the very start with a limousine ride to the airport. The next day we were off to Niagara Falls, justifiably one of the seven wonders of the world. We rode the *Maid of the Mist* boat into the blinding sprays and got drenched, or more suitably, christened by the most powerful element. To breathe the winds of its force and to witness such magnificence up close was humbling.

Finding our way from Mississauga by bus and trains to the Convention Center was easy – just ask "Where?" The people of Toronto and other AA's were quick to help. We talked to the local folks and AA's from all over the world as if we'd always been friends.

The meetings dealt with every topic and there were many going on at the same time. ALL the time. My favorite was the Opening Big Meeting Friday Night at the Skydome with about 50,000 in attendance. There was a flag ceremony with members from 70 countries out of 280 countries where AA is active, some I've never even heard of. After the three speakers, we joined hands, said the serenity prayer and took another very long, beautiful quiet time. I closed my eyes and

cherished the love. An angelic voice started singing "Amazing Grace." We all continued holding hands, swayed, cried tears of joy and sang along with Judy C., whom we could see on the giant screens. I wanted to feel this moment forever, with all the glory, grateful – and sad that I'd ever wanted to feel any other way. I felt the presence of all our higher powers, and as the song ended, I reached up with both hands, grabbed hold of it and embraced it. It was MINE.

"Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, Tis grace will lead me home."

Sue N.
GSR, Acorn Group

Working, Really Working, with Others

My first home group, Sunday Night Step, on the far South Side of Chicago, really worked with new people. Members informally rotated responsibility with newcomers, taking them to other meetings, discussing their Big Book reading assignments with them, and hammering home the importance of change. They weren't assigned these responsibilities; they just naturally took care of them. At the time I had never heard of the term "90 in 90", although I was encouraged to get to as many meetings as possible. With this encouragement I probably did come close to "90 in 90," anyway, but I honestly don't know if I did.

I was encouraged to get a sponsor, and I did, but the group also felt a great responsibility for moving me along

LIFE: UNMANAGEABLE



through the Big Book and, a result of moving me along through the Big Book, moving me along through the Steps. Not just my sponsor – the whole group.

My original sponsor remained my sponsor until his death after 19 years of sponsoring me. He had me read the first chapters of the Big Book the first day he met me. We discussed those chapters on the way to my first step meeting. After the people who would become my new home group members introduced themselves, they opened discussion and directed their comments to the first four chapters of the Big Book. When they felt I had a “grasp,” not necessarily a deep understanding, of steps 1 and 2 through reading those first four chapters, they started to discuss taking the third step with them formally.

Today, unfortunately, at many groups I hear a lot of slogans and don't see much willingness to working with newcomers. Shuffling a newcomer out the door with a Big Book and a remand to attend “90 in 90” is not “carrying this message.” We're great at giving newcomers a list of phone numbers to call. How about getting *their* number and follow up to discuss the reading of “The Doctor's Opinion,” “Bill's Story,” and “There Is a Solution”? Another call a couple of days later for “More About Alcoholism” and “We Agnostics”?

Many newcomers in the 1930s, outside of New York and Akron, had only a copy of the Big Book. How did they get sober? Meetings in many areas were only weekly affairs. How did those people get sober? Our founders had to invent illnesses (gastric inflammation was one) to get admitted to the hospital. There were no AA-oriented treatment centers. How did they get sober? The members worked with the new people. Sitting back in our “old-timers” easy chairs and pontificating about “Just don't drink and go to meetings” is an abdication of our responsibility and an insult to our heritage.

Through God's grace and the dedication of people like the guys from the old “Sunday Night Step,” I have had many “24 hours” of step-working experience to share with the newcomer. I also have a responsibility to do so.

Thanks, Bill H.

The Empty Chair

We looked for you in this room
of recovery
for you
for us,
but you weren't there...
All we saw was an empty chair,
We remembered,
the shattered dreams in your eyes,
the hope and fear in your voice,
our story in your words,
and the words we shared with you,
in the hope that you might find one small
thread of recovery,
just one small thread,
that you could use to begin to weave the
tapestry
of your recovery,
We remember your hope and relief
after we spoke,
and you told us you wanted to
“Keep coming back!”
too.
So we thought that tonight
We'd surely see you
but all we saw
was an empty chair,
that could be ours but for the grace of
God,
We wish we could put you there, but we
know we cannot,
So, we want you to know,
that your seat is still waiting for you,
and that we pray that one day,
we'll look at that empty chair,
And see you there,
And we will rejoice – for though you may
not know it now
You have come home.
Where the Grace of God patiently waits
and directs you to
Open the door
And enter these rooms
One more time...

Iris B.

One for the Road

A few loving members suggested that I write about one of the most powerful experiences in my recovery. A few years ago, I had come to a crossroad in my sobriety. I was four years sober, my dad had just died, my mom was drinking herself to death, and I was overwhelmed with loss and life. I had just left the burn unit at Michael Reese hospital, having visited a friend in there. Too much pain, too much effort, I thought. I left the hospital, went home, packed a bag, got in my truck, and left Chicago. I had no destination. All I knew was I had to get away, far away, and drink. I headed west. I wept, and I raged at God, as I drove. I listened to Joni Mitchell over and over, hoping to find solace in her lyrics. After driving nearly 500 miles, totally exhausted, I decided to pull into a Holiday Inn, outside of Omaha, Nebraska. Great, I thought, I can check in, shower, and get hammered. As I was pulling in, I noticed that the parking lot was packed with cars, and most of the cars had stickers on them. EASY DOES IT! LET GO, LET GOD! ONE DAY AT A TIME! Okay, I thought, this is interesting. I parked, got out, and walked in, only to be told that there was only one room left – and that because of a cancellation. There was an AA roundup in town that weekend, and the motel was booked solid. I took the room! When I closed the door behind me, I dropped to my knees, and wept again. This time out of gratitude, and awe, for placing me in a room, alone, miles from home, with thoughts of drinking a cipher by now. I left that Sunday, having experienced one of the many powerful miracles God has given me, in my sobriety. God is my muse, and he continually shows himself to me, in both small ways and dramatic ways, if I just let him. By the way, the speaker that weekend was the man who wrote, “Doctor, Alcoholic, Addict” in the Big Book. My dad was a doctor, and a recovering alcoholic and addict. He spoke to me, in spirit, that weekend.

Gratefully,
Tish K.

ALL CHICAGO OPEN

September 17, 2005

Doors Open: 6:00 PM
 Concession & Literature: 6:00-7:30PM
 Meeting: 8:00PM

Annual Celebration Of The First AA Meeting In Chicago

UIC Pavilion
 Racine & Harrison
 Non Smoking Facility



- Special seating for old timers 20+ years
- Simultaneous Spanish interpretation with an FM pocket radio and earphones
- Interpretations simultaneous espanol por radios portatiles FM con audifonos
- Meeting will be signed for the hearing impaired for those wearing hearing aids with a "T" switch an audio loop will amplify sound

Directions: From the NORTH, take the Kennedy to the Eisenhower, exiting immediately on Morgan St south to Harrison, then west to Racine. From the SOUTH, take the Dan Ryan to Taylor St west to Racine, then north to Harrison. From the WEST, exit the Eisenhower south on Racine. From the EAST, exit the Eisenhower south to Harrison then east to Racine.

CALENDAR

2nd Annual Illinois State Corrections Conference
 September 30–October 2, 2005
 Bolingbrook Holiday Inn, Bolingbrook

44th Annual All-Timers Dinner Meeting
 September 25, 2005
 The White Eagle Restaurant, Niles

RETIRED?

Retired and wanting to be of service?
 Call the Chicago Area Service Office (CASO).
 We are looking for reliable, long-term
 volunteers, with all kinds of skills, to work
 in our downtown Chicago office.
 Please call CASO at 312-346-1475 and say
 you want to volunteer!

BE OUR NEW DESIGN EDITOR

Here's How needs someone with DTP experience to be the new design editor for the newsletter. This volunteer would be responsible for the design and layout of *Here's How*, which is published bimonthly. The design editor works with and for the *Here's How* editorial board.

Required: one year of continuous sobriety; substantial experience in graphic design and desktop publishing; a commitment to the position for a significant period of time. Applicant may find it helpful to attend the next meeting of the *Here's How* board to become familiar with the process of the newsletter's publication.

Please send resume by mail, email, or fax to
 CASO
 Attn: Bruce
 200 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 501
 Chicago IL 60601
 CASO@ChicagoAA.org

Are newcomers shocked at your seeming
 worldliness and levity?

Not a part of a glum lot?

What's so funny about sobriety?

Share your experience, strength,

hope ... and humor

in the next issue of *Here's How*.

November–December's theme is

"We are not a glum lot."

Send submissions via e-mail or fax to
 CASO

Attn: Bruce
 200 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 501
 Chicago IL 60601

CASO@ChicagoAA.org
 FAX: 312-346-5477

BEGIN/RENEW MY SUBSCRIPTION.

I AM ENCLOSING A SELF-SUPPORT CONTRIBUTION

Name

Address

City

State Zip Country

If address changes, please indicate your old address

Name

Address

City

State Zip Country

- I am a new reader.
- \$5.00 suggested annual contribution enclosed.
- Here's an extra contribution of \$_____ to help keep *Here's How* self-supporting.
- Please remove my name from your mailing list.
- I can't contribute now, but please keep me on the mailing list.

Please mail to:

Here's How

200 N. Michigan Avenue, Suite 501

Chicago, IL 60601



Chicago Area Service Office, NFPC
200 N. Michigan Avenue, #501
Chicago, IL 60601

Dated Material, Do Not Delay

Non Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Chicago, IL Permit 9817
