

◆ Carry The Message ◆

The Monthly Newsletter of the Live & Let Live

February 1998

An Effective Defense Against the First Drink

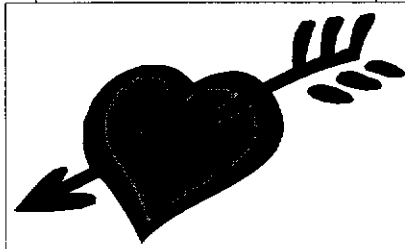
by Jerry

I was sitting here yesterday writing an article for the newsletter. Basically, it was an account of my early days in sobriety at the Alano Club. About the time I was in the middle of page two, the phone rang. It was one of my sponsees (who, for reasons of anonymity, we'll call Paul) and he was very upset. At first, I couldn't understand what he was saying other than that what was going on with him was really f---g with his head. Being the dramatic alcoholic that I am, I had already nailed it down to either someone committing suicide, or he had gone out and drank. Well, someone had gone out and drank but it wasn't him. One of the guy (let's call him Ralph) in our step study group decided he could drink again. Ralph was one year and two months sober. I asked Paul what had happened and he said that Ralph had had a beer at one of our local gay bars and then went to watch the Super Bowl at another bar where he had a few more drinks. Ralph had decided that all of his problems with alcohol had stemmed from the people, places and situations where he used to live, but that now that he was living in San Diego away from those problems, he felt he could drink again.

My first concern was for Paul because he and Ralph had become very good friends and Ralph had offered Paul some very good suggestions early on in Paul's recovery. Paul was feeling lonely, sad and going

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Membership Report

By Jack S.

January 1998. Every January we make resolutions hoping that the New Year will be better than the old one. Certainly we on the Board of Directors hope the New Year will be better for all of us in recovery. And we also hope the New Year will be better for the club.

Well, last year was not a bad year, but for a while it looked really ugly. The club was losing money and the membership was declining.

Then something wonderful happened. The membership proved that it was the life and the soul of the club, and that it cared.

Last spring we did not sponsor enough fund raising events. By the time May rolled around we were deeply worried that we had created a major financial crisis. In mid summer we saw that membership was down a bunch. Funds were low. Crisis time at the LLLAC.

Now how did we respond to this? Well on the Board there was a lot of debate.

Some wanted to raise the membership fees or strictly limit the disabled fees. It was suggested that each board member pick a holiday and actively promote a fundraiser on that holiday. Other suggestions were floated. So many others that I can't remember them all. However we only acted on the best. The discussion of fee changes ended (I think) with the acknowledgement that changes in the fee

(Continued on page 5)

Carry The Message

The Monthly Newsletter of
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A decade and a half of of Service
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The Newsletter Committee:

Jere H.; Jim L.; Tim G.

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Publication Deadline:

Advertisements and other submissions must be received no later than the **21st of the month** for inclusion in the next month's issue (but call Jere if you'll be late and we can work something out).

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Please contact Jere H. by telephone at (619) 291-7118 or by email at jkhalligan@aol.com. Material may also be left in the Newsletter Box at the Live & Let Live Alano Club. For information in general, about the Club or the newsletter, you may also call the Club at (619) 298-8008.

WE REALLY DO NEED YOUR HELP!

Please support the Club and the newsletter by writing something (a 12 step story, some poetry, thoughts about recovery or anything which you feel is fit for print. As this is YOUR club, this is also YOUR newsletter. Help us to be sure to meet YOUR newsletter needs. Know of a business or a friend in business who can use some cost-effective advertising? Give them a copy of the newsletter and suggest that you'd love to see them advertised here, where recovery is our way of life!

thank you!



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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Tim G., Jere H., Jim L., Carleen H., Jimm C., Scott J., Vicky, Patty (cake) G.

EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Carleen H., Kris F., *The Valentine Dance Committee*, Rainbow Jack, Doug S., Helen S., Michealle & Coy, Larry L. and our wonderful DJ Glenn R.

LLLAC wish list

Here are just a few things which the Live & Let Live Alano Club needs... If you can help, please do!

- Photocopies
- Canon Color Printer Toner
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An Effective Defense Against the First Drink

(Continued from page 1)

through an extreme sense of loss. Ralph was one of the few people Paul socialized with outside the program and now there seemed to be this huge void. My heart goes out to Paul because I remember all too well the first time one of my close AA friends decided to go out and do a little more research.

"The Big Book says that the time will come when we have no effective defense against the first drink"

Through the years I've seen many, many people relapse and I thank God that I've never had to. I've sort of become used to seeing people in their first 30, 60 or 90 days go out. I figure they're just not done drinking or using and the time will come, hopefully, that they'll hit the bottom they need to hit and join us back in the rooms.

However, I'm still not used to seeing people with some time under their belt going out. Especially when they appear to be doing well.

It was important for me to know what Ralph was and wasn't doing to set him up for a relapse. Not to judge, because I firmly believe that you're not done until you're done, but rather to learn so I don't end up in the same position. Since he had moved here, he talked about getting a sponsor but never did. He wasn't a big fan of meetings, so he didn't go to many, and when he did he seldom shared. He said that his boyfriend was a drinker and everybody in his complex liked to party. Other than the few of us in the step study, he hadn't reached out to many other people around the program. After talking to him he said that the triggers that caused him to drink alcoholically were left behind when he moved to San Diego. He had thought about drinking again quite a bit and felt he would never know if he was or wasn't an alcoholic unless he tried it one more time. On his scale, the allure of that beer far outweighed what AA had to offer. The Big Book says that the time will come when

we have no effective defense against the first drink.

I looked at what Ralph had gone through and then I put myself in the picture. I went through several years where I went to very few meetings. I moved to the suburbs and went on with life. I never had the urge to drink, but I'm certain at some point I would have. What did happen, though, was my life became very off balance. Small things that at one time would have never bothered me were driving me crazy. Things started "my husband's fault" or "my boss' fault" or anybody's fault by my own. My side of the street was filthy because I wasn't taking responsibility for anything. I wanted things my way because that was obviously the best way. I was thinking that way and I wasn't even drinking. I can't imagine what I would have been like had I picked up that drink. It also tells me in the Big Book that, alcohol is only a symptom of our disease. Left to my own devices, my thinking will really screw me up. And it was that thinking that got me back into

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An Effective Defense Against the First Drink

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meetings.

In that period of time, I also noticed the type of people I was associating with on a regular basis: a lot of heavy drinkers, a lot of living in the problem, a lot of taking other peoples' inventories, a lot of time watching people get drunk. It was just like when I was drinking, only I wasn't. During that time I remember very conversations of any substance, the type of conversations a couple of recovering alcoholics will have over coffee on a regular basis.

I look back on that period when I wasn't doing many meetings and I am baffled as to why I never went back out. "But for the Grace of God, there go I." I always would say that if I ever felt like drinking again, I would be back in a meeting so fast it would make your head spin. What I found was the balance and serenity I once enjoyed in my life was missing and the only way I knew how to regain it was in the rooms of AA.

I shared in a meeting that, after 13 years of sobriety, if I did go out I don't know if I would ever make it back. Would I be able to find the humility it takes to walk back in, sit there and raise my hand for thirty days identifying myself as a newcomer? I continually remind myself of the HOW of this program: Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness. If I don't continually clean my side of the street, if I don't go to meetings and share when I need to share, if I don't have a sponsor, if I don't give back to the program in the form of service and sponsoring other, the day may come when I, too, will justify drinking as cleanly and rationally as Ralph.

The watchword for me today is complacency. When I think I've got it I don't. When I think I can do it my way and my way only I can't. When I think it's all your fault, I'm not looking at my responsibility in the matter. When I think the

accumulation of time is all it takes, I better think again because like everyone else in these rooms I am just one drink away from a drunk.

I always learn something when I hear of someone relapsing and I pray I always do. I sit back and reflect on my life and the direction I'm going. I ask myself, "Am I doing what's suggested? Am I participating in my own recovery?" In my first year of sobriety, I knew and heard of many people that went back out and continued their private little research projects. I really thought it was inevitable that I

too would end up back out there. During that time I went to a meeting and saw a woman receive her 25-year cake. The woman talked about relapsing and those who have to go back out until they're finished. She said that she came here 25 years ago and she stayed. And then, as though she were just talking to me, she added, "If this is your first time in AA, just because you hear of people going out doesn't mean that you have to go out."

I've seen a lot of people come into these rooms and I've seen a lot of people go back out. Sometimes they come back and sometimes they don't. I've known and heard of people ending up in jail, on the streets and dead. As for me, I think I'll just not drink today. My life has continually gotten better since I've been in AA, and if I continue doing what's suggested I have no reason to believe that life won't get even better yet.

I always learn something when I hear of someone relapsing and I pray I always do. I sit back and reflect on my life and the direction I'm going. I ask myself, "Am I doing what's suggested? Am I participating in my own recovery?"

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Membership Report

(Continued from page 1)

ure would not get us back in the black. No, what was clear was the ongoing, ever present, eternally boring but very real need for fundraising activities. The club stays open because you help us find the funds somehow. So each board member has picked a major holiday and signed up to put on a fundraiser.

You are the success we are investing in. This is your club. We (the Board) are but trusted servants. Be proud of your club, it is indeed an accomplishment.

The Pride coffee booth was a major shot in the arm in the end of July. Without the volunteer staff and the support crew we could not have had the success we had. All of the volunteers were wonderful and did their jobs with great enthusiasm. Thank you, Thank You, THANK YOU!!!

And although it is not a fundraiser as such, let us not forget the Recovery Contingent who marched in the parade. There is no better advertising available to us than to have a group of happy and proud people marching down the street showing that they are survivors of the highest caliber. The Club won the Stonewall Award mainly through the efforts of every person who has not been afraid to say, "Yes I am a Recovering Alcoholic/Addict and I am Proud to be Sober & Clean Today!". Indeed we share that award with every recovery group in the Lesbian/Gay community.

The Halloween Dance smoothed out more than a few fiscal frown lines as well as being a genuinely great time with some very interesting costumes.

Carla's Birthday Bash. How can I say enough how wonderful it is to have a person like Carla who donates the proceeds from her own birthday party to the LLLAC? We can not honor Carla enough!!!

The New Year's Eve Dance. This func-

tion closed the year with a big success. The planning crew succeeded in organizing an outstanding function. The speaker meeting before the Dance was great, including that wonderful rendition of How It Works.

During the spring and early summer we observed a downturn in club membership. I said above that we can't depend on membership dues to keep us in the black and that is true. However the size of the membership is a very accurate measure of the health of the club. Last summer we were down under 130 members. To go from 170 (more or less) down to 130 was a problem that needed fixing. Once again, you the membership came through. We don't know why people dropped their membership, and I guess we never really know why they rejoin, but rejoin you did. We are back up to the level we had this time last year.

So in the New Year I hope we can continue the successes of 1997 and generate a few new ones. You are the success we are investing in. This is your club. We (the Board) are but trusted servants. We have to do our part and create the events and do the planning, but without you the membership, we are simply spouting hot air. So our success is really YOUR success. Be proud of your club, it is indeed an accomplishment to be proud of.

And speaking of fundraisers, I happen to be the Board Member for the Valentines Dance, so I couldn't pass up the opportunity to toot a horn here.

We are looking forward to a great dance. We lowered the cost of tickets to \$5.00 so more people could attend. Drinks are \$0.75 (coffee and sodas) and we will be selling baked goods (cookies, fudge, that kind of stuff) for \$.75 ea. We have a DJ (Glenn R.) who volunteered to give Carlos, Drew & Dee a night off. I was kind of worried, until Glenn pointed out that he

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Mail Bag

Although any abuse is an uncomfortable topic, it still happens. Various members of my family sexually abused me at a very early age, until I was ten years old. I was also mentally, emotionally and verbally abused by my other. I started compulsively overeating when I was in my pre-teens. I didn't start drinking until I was about nineteen years old, and I continued to drink on and off until a month and a half after I came to San Diego in March of 1988.

I relapsed in September 1989 and stayed out for about a month but made my way back into the program in October 1989. I was a very pissed puppy at myself, because I did relapse and I blamed nobody but myself for it because I chose to pick up. I've been sober since.

Although there are ISA meetings and other support groups for incest, I think that no matter what abuse we suffered as children, including incest, is a by-product of AA, NA and OA: I feel that a lot of us abused alcohol, drugs and food because of abuse.
- Anonymous

Correspondence may be submitted for publication in the LLLAC Newsletter. Place letters in the box near the coffee bar. Please include a phone number with your letter. Letters will be printed if space permits, and may be edited for length and/or clarity.

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Membership Update

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would provide an all vinyl evening. Vinyl? Friends we are in the hands of truly dedicated professional. Wow!

Now I must 'fess up that I have vetoed (on behalf of the board, of course) one of the ideas being floated around. No way are we going to have a pie fight with Board Members as prime targets. Wait till SUMMER PLEASE!!! This is Valentines Day Remember? Peace Love and Romance, not pie fights. So if you want to see how persuasive Doug R has been, come to the Valentines Dance, get your picture taken by the ever-lovely Tracy, dance the night away and don't expect to see any pies anywhere. (I hope....)

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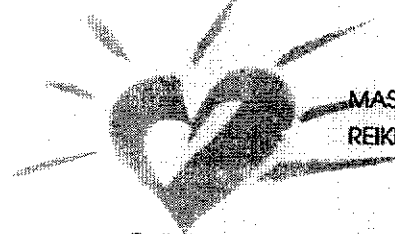
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Meeting List The Live and Let Live Alano Club 1730 Monroe Avenue San Diego, CA 92116 619/298-8008

MONDAY

- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Free to Be **AA** Discussion
- 7:00 PM **Alanon** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Narcotics Anonymous **NA** Discussion

TUESDAY

- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Free to Be **AA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Sex and Sobriety **AA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Sober Sisters (Women only) **AA** Discussion

WEDNESDAY

- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Free to Be **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Overeaters Anonymous **OA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Hope Without Dope **NA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM There Are Those Too Sanctuary **NA/AA/Psych.**

THURSDAY

- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Free to Be **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Nicotine Anonymous **NA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Butts Out **AA** Discussion

FRIDAY

- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 5:45 PM Free to Be **AA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Sobriety and Miracles(Leather/Fetish Meeting) **AA** Discussion


SATURDAY

- 9:00 AM Nicotine Anonymous **NA** Discussion
- 10:00 AM Women's Meeting **AA** Discussion
- 11:45 AM Sober Nooners **AA** Discussion
- 2:00 PM How and Why **NA** Discussion
- 6:00 PM As Bill Sees It **AA** Discussion
- 8:00 PM Two Bit Speakers **AA** Speaker
- 8:15 PM Intimacy and Sobriety (Men) **AA** Discussion

SUNDAY

- 9:00 AM Women's Meeting **AA** Discussion
- 11:00 AM Straight Shooters **AA** Discussion
- 5:00 PM We Agnostics **AA** Discussion
- 6:00 PM Beautiful Beginnings **AA** Speaker & Discussion
- 8:00 PM Principles Before Personalities **NA** Speaker & Discussion

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