

SOBRIETY IN STUMPTOWN

www.pdxaa.com
newsletter@pdxaa.com

Portland Area Intergroup
1212 SE Division, Portland, OR
503-223-8569

May, 2009
Volume 2 Number 5

Monthly Business
Meetings

The Message

Portland Area Intergroup: 2nd Monday, 7:00 PM, 1212 SE Division St, Portland
PAI CPC: 1st Saturday, 11 AM, 1212 SE Division, Portland
PAI Public Information: 1st Saturday, 11 AM, 1212 SE Division, Portland
PAI Treatment Facilities: 1st Friday, 6 PM, 1212 SE Division, Portland
PAI Bridging the Gap: ?
PAI Corrections: ?
PAI Outreach: ?
PAC: 1st Saturday, 6:00 PM, 1111 SW Country Club, L O
Dist 9: 1st Wednesday, 6:30 PM, 24th and Kearney, Portland
Dist 10: last Monday, 7:00 PM, 12555 SW 4th St., Beaverton
Dist 11: last Thursday, 6:00 PM, 186th and Division, Portland
Dist 12: 1st Tuesday, 6:30 PM, 235 SE 80th, Portland
Dist 15: 1st Wednesday, 6:45 PM, 710 6th St, Oregon City
Dist 18: 1st Saturday, 9:30 AM, 215 N 6th St, St. Helens
Dist 23: 1st Tuesday, 6:00 PM, Lake Grove Fire House
Dist 24: 1st Thursday, 6:00 PM, SE 16th and Division, Portland
Dist 26: 2nd Thursday, 7:00 PM, 8926-A N Lombard, Portland
Dist 27: 1st Monday, 6:30 PM, 1212 SE Division St, Portland
Dist 31: 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 PM, 937 NE Jackson School Rd, Hillsboro
Dist 34: 3rd Saturday, 5:00 PM, 485 Portland Ave, Gladstone
Dist 35: 2nd and 4th Saturday, 7:00 PM, 18926 SW Shaw St, Suite A, Beaverton
Dist 36: 2nd Thursday, 6:00 PM, 2025 SW Vermont St, Portland
Dist 37: 2nd Tuesday, 29775 SW Town Center Loop East, Wilsonville
DCM Portland Area: 3rd Monday, 6:30 PM, 1212 SE Division St, Portland

I had been sober for five years when I went to my first AA meeting overseas. I mean REALLY overseas. Not “overseas” in some place like London, Paris, or Madrid where at least you recognize the alphabet, the people dress like you (except for some places in London) and you can make some sense out of road signs—I left the ABCs far behind and was in the Middle East—spending several days in Bahrain. Of course, in the airport and hotel, all the signs were in both English and Arabic. One didn’t have to wander too far off the main drag to end up in a totally alien world of exotic people, wearing exotic clothes, people I couldn’t understand when they spoke; surrounded by signs I could not begin to decipher.

My world became at once visual, and confusing. I didn’t know what was really going on. That guy over there watching me—is that hostility or curiosity? Are those people arguing or just passionately discussing? Is something wrong, or are people just bustling in the market? I’d like to go into that shop, but I’m worried about how to communicate—would I be welcome or a bother?

This environment, coupled with the knowledge that I was 8,000 miles away from home, from comfort zone, from people I knew I could communicate with—slammed me pretty hard. Brother, this was Isolation with a capitol “I.” I felt alone and separated. I needed a meeting, surly there wasn’t one here—not in the Middle East, surely not in a Muslim country. But I needed a meeting. So I took a chance.

I asked the hotel concierge. He looked stumped. I thought, “Crap.” Then he said, “Oh, here it is—give this to the cab driver,” and he wrote something in Arabic on a slip of paper. I jumped in the cab, gave the note to the driver and we lurched off into the chaos and traffic of the city. After several close encounters with death on the highway, we were suddenly on the outskirts of town and just entering the surrounding desert. There, about 200 yards off the road, with no discernable driveway to the door, in the middle of a rock strewn wasteland, was a single story domed building, made from the earth, the same tan light brown color as the ground on which it was sitting. The driver dropped me off and sped away.

Inside, a dusty tile floor set off an adobe interior of the 30 x 30 room. Benches, wooden chairs arranged in a sort of “U” around a rough wood table. I was in a suit and tie; most everyone else was dressed in eastern garb. There were mostly men, two women, Pakistanis, Arabs, Asians, Philippinoes, Africans—about 20 in all. The chairperson was from China.

The meeting was in English—the only language we all had in common. That night the message, the wonder of AA stood out before me in 3D, a message familiar, comforting, warm, a message that felt like home—resolved itself to me in stark contrast against a backdrop of exotic and foreign looking places and people. Yet in an instant, in that meeting, we were the same.

Continued on the next page.

The Message, cont.

All the differences of appearance, culture, accent, dress, religion—everything melted away into insignificance at the familiar words “Rarely have we seen a person fail...” were spoken by an old Chinaman with a thick accent that I could hardly understand. I was moved to tears as I am now recalling that moment.

I have never forgotten that meeting and the powerful clarity of the AA message amidst such a foreign environment. I have always remembered the profound feeling of isolation—of not being able to communicate, to understand, to read the language—believing I was all alone in a foreign place, and finally, the gush of relief in finding my people so far away, people who understood me and who I understood—we had a common language-English.

Years went by and I never again encountered that feeling of hopeless isolation—the kind imposed from the outside, from not being able to communicate—until I moved to Portland and stumbled into the Saturday night LO Action-Participation Speakers meeting, with the American Sign Language interpreter and deaf alcoholics reaching out for the message, for sobriety. They were group of alcoholics boldly attending a meeting not in their language.

I thought it took courage when, years earlier, I went up to the hotel concierge and asked if he know where I could find an AA meeting. I wonder now, what I would have done if he had said yes, but the meeting is in Arabic, as is the Big Book. I wonder if I would have the courage and drive to punch through the profound obstacle of attending a meeting in a foreign language. And I wonder what it must be like to have to reach so hard to obtain what, in comparison, seems so available to those of us who speak English.

The deaf community in Portland and Vancouver is very small. Of that total number, the number of deaf alcoholics and addicts is a larger percentage that it is in the hearing community, only because there happens to be a deaf treatment center here. That means the overwhelming number of deaf in recovery are newcomers. Because of this numbers game, there are few long-term sober deaf members. The language barrier interferes with a deaf member seeking a broader exposure to long-term sobriety, sponsorship, and many of the tools available in the hearing community that hearing drunks take for granted. If you are deaf, “90 in 90” is impossible.

The 12th Step is pretty clear in its suggestion: Carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. It doesn't say, “if it's convenient” or “ unless it's too much trouble” or “if they speak your language.”

Lou C.
Sobriety and Beyond, Wilsonville

Notes From My Desk

Our Central Office is Moving

Wow, it seems like we just got settled in here at Division Street but we are moving again! I must say, this location has served us well for the last five years but the time has come to relocate Portland Area Intergroup central office.

To bring you up to speed on the whys of it all is fairly simple. Toward the end of last summer, we sent

word to our landlord that we would like to initiate discussion on extending our lease for another five years. Certainly they must have been busy because it took three attempts before I was able to speak with them. **Notes From My Desk, cont.**

They said they would need until the first of the year before they would have time to discuss it. By the time they agreed to meet with us the economy had turned down and the overall financial outlook looked somewhat grim for Portland—let alone the country. The board of directors agreed that we should price other equivalent space for rent to be sure we were not paying much more than the going rate for office space. In so doing we discovered we could save quite a bit of money if we were willing to down size our square footage.

We did ask to stay here at 12th and Division St. but our landlord has a minimum they want to receive for this property and that amount is too much for our future budgeting plans. Our financial goal for the last few years has been to increase our prudent reserve to at least a minimum of three months prudent reserve. Unfortunately re-signing this lease would more than likely prevent us from reaching our goal. Having said all that, we are very pleased to say that our new lease at our new location will certainly expedite our savings plan! Our current monthly expense at 12th and Division is about \$3,700.00; our new cost will be about \$1,750.00. The savings of nearly \$2,000.00 a month will be just what we need to reach our goal of re-establishing our prudent reserve.

I would like to encourage everyone to read the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix.” This is a free pamphlet that tells us all about our 7th Tradition and describes how we can best serve AA financially. All in all, I would like to thank and congratulate all AA’s in the Portland Area for the outstanding support you bring to Intergroup and your central office. We have a fantastic hotline phone service, a fully stocked AA book store and hundreds of volunteers that carry the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic. Our new 12th Step program that involves home groups directly is gaining momentum. We have successfully matched several newcomers to groups in their area this month. We still encourage individuals to register for 12 Step calls and ask you all to ask your group to participate in this new format of linking new people with groups. If you need a sign-up sheet call central office at 503-223-8569 and give us your address so we can mail you a copy.

Thank you for your service,
Garry B
Office Manager

Meeting Updates:

To find information about new meetings or meetings that have changed since the last meeting schedule was printed, click on [Updates](#) on the Intergroup website, www.pdxaa.com.

Coming Events:

To find information about coming events, click on [Events](#) on the Intergroup website.

Rebuilding Our Prudent Reserve

As of the end of the April, we are 23.1% of the way toward rebuilding our prudent reserve with \$6,927.61 toward the goal of \$30,000.

Committee News

Intergroup committees carry the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic. Please help with this Twelfth Step work. Sign up by clicking on [Service](#) on the Intergroup website.

Hotline: openings for Hotline shifts and for 12th Step volunteers. 12th Step Volunteers talk to newcomers who have questions.

Cooperating with the Professional Community and Public Information: The two committees are working together to put the message of recovery to the public and to the professional community—health care, clergy, legal, educators, social workers and others.

Bridging the Gap: BTG is a one-time temporary contact for people transitioning from a treatment center to meetings.

Corrections: Currently our focus is to carry the AA message to youths in the Multnomah County Detention Center (JDH). We need many volunteers to help bring AA meetings to the facility on a regular basis. Call the intergroup office.

Portland Access Committee

The Portland Access Committee meets on the first Saturday of every month at the United Church of Christ, 1111 SW Country Club Road, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. The meeting starts at 6 pm (ish) and usually lasts 1.5 hours. We welcome people just interested in finding out more about what we do. You don't need to know sign language to help. Email us at pdxaccess@gmail.com with questions.

District 10 New Meeting Location

District 10 now meets the last Monday of the month at 7:00 PM at the Beaverton First Methodist Church, 12555 SW 4th Street, Beaverton, 97006.

April 2009 Financial Summary

Beginning Cash on Hand: \$5,243.40

Income: \$24,813.67

Expenses: \$29,569.99

Ending Cash on Hand: (\$12.92)

Become a Published Writer

Deadline for articles in Stumptown Sobriety is the 20th of each month.
Portland Area Intergroup, 1212 SE Division, is open Monday through Friday, 9 to 5.