

They Built Me



By Mary M.

I'm coming up on 40 years of sobriety in a few months. Every day of which I can never take for granted.

I was broken in every conceivable way when I arrived through the doors the old fashioned way. A call to the AA office in Toronto. Sober a whole day and knowing, with horror, that I couldn't possibly last another day. I had resisted the term "alcoholic" for years. Became enraged with my now ex, who had discussed my "condition" with our family doctor. I told the ex, in no uncertain terms I was "far too intelligent" to be an alcoholic. And fired the family doctor. Like any good alcoholic.

(And a PS: Within 6 months of coming through the doors, a crusty old timer told me I would do myself a big favour if I parked my intelligence along with my car before walking into an AA meeting.)

I dragged so much baggage into AA as to be, in my mind, insurmountable. I was unemployable, having lost my last job (I was sulking in bed for days with a damaged leg, having fallen on a sharp surround of a fireplace while drunk and not bothering to phone in or answer the phone). I was depressed, did not deal with all the blood everywhere and finally went to my (new) doctor who couldn't stitch my leg up as the wound had set and spread too much to enable stitches. I still bear the reminder scar. So I now had the time to drink all I wanted. Which I did. My kids avoided me as if I were a leper. There was very little food in the house which was on the verge of foreclosure as who paid a mortgage when there was only \$2 in the bank account? I arranged some job interviews on the phone before I had my first drink of the day. But when the time would show up I wouldn't bother going as there was so little gas in my car and they wouldn't hire me anyway. So we lived on credit cards.

In the cold light of day that long ago morning, I had an inkling, just a flash of a thought, that maybe my drinking was getting in the way of my life. So in the afternoon I made That Call and a woman showed up at my door within an hour and said she was going to drive me to my first meeting. I thought she was an employee of head office. And she laughed and said, No, I'm a drunk like you! I was gobsmacked. She had 2 years without a drink. Two. Whole Years.

It took me a while to settle in to AA as my plan was to kill myself within a few weeks. Sober, crashing my car into an abutment on the highway, which I had selected with care. At least my kids would be able to say at least I wasn't drunk. And probably sorry they weren't talking to me at the time of death which was the MO in their loving home.

So there I was, this wreck, a depressive, unemployable, just about bankrupt shell of a human.

And there they were. A group of drunks like me, mothering and fathering me. Pushing me upright. Taking me out after meetings for coffee and stringing the pieces of my life together. Making lists. Top of the list was get a job. Then talk to the mortgage company. Talk to the kids. Get a haircut. Clean myself up. A tiny step at a time. I was a child. I was to share the emotional turmoil of each day with a trusted one of them so they could help me sort myself out. I was beyond labelling feelings. I was numb. I was to attend a meeting every single day. No exceptions, no excuses. I didn't fight, I didn't argue. I just blindly followed. Did what I was told. All my intelligence had brought me to this point. And I wasn't to forget it.

Looking back, as I do now, just about all of these incredible members are gone to stardust. They built me, gave me a life that still takes my breath away for all that has been packed into it sober. I realized every single one of the dreams I had had as a child. A published writer, actor, playwright, an artist, my own business with employees, a workshop facilitator, an active AA member in service until recently. A move to a dream house beside the ocean, a sober grandmother entrusted with her grandchild.

All with a newfound belief in myself given to me so freely, so long ago, by a Group Of Drunks.

My G.O.D.

Mary M had her last drink on June 28th, 1986. She called Toronto AA the following day (then in the phone book!) and was taken to her first meeting. Raised a Catholic, she had long abandoned religions of all kinds. She struggled with the concept of both God and the religious undertones of AA. She subsequently connected with a few "difficult" AA atheist members (triple AAAs) who had defiant long-term recovery and immediately felt at home. She has sponsored many over the years, Jews, Muslims, Hindu, devout Christians, etc. And had a devout Christian sponsor for over thirty years – now deceased. She now lives in Newfoundland and has found tolerance in AA there for free-thinking members resulting in an influx of younger members.
