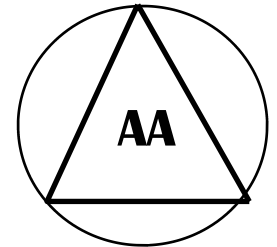


# ArenA

## The newsletter of Continental European Region

CER is one of the 16 Regions in the Service Structure of Great Britain

### Spring ,07



## New Year`s Eve – sober

New Year`s Eve – sober. How it works...

A relative newcomer reminded me today, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006, that New Year's Eve could be a particularly difficult challenge in sobriety. Ah yes, New Year's Eve. When all the amateur drinkers are out - the really sad people who need an excuse to have a drink, and a legitimate day off after to recover. Can't recall either of those featuring much in my drinking career. Maybe I was doing it wrong?

For me, New Year's Eve was always a huge anti-climax when I was drinking, and I can extend that as a metaphor for the way I felt about life in general before I got sober. Despite the big build up everything was ultimately so unsatisfying. When I was drinking it was always the next one that would make me feel better. The next drink, the next guy, that dress that was going to make me look perfect, that expensive restaurant setting, in fact anything, *anything* to fill that black hole inside. Mostly the next drink. I can still remember the crushing disappointment I used to feel as twelve-o'clock struck and I still felt *exactly* the same. Only now it was next year and so what was there left to hope for? Maybe if I had another drink tomorrow would be better...

I haven't felt like that for a while, because for a long time it hasn't been next year, or even tomorrow, but just today. Sobriety in the fellowship of AA has given me enough to fill the black hole. In fact, more than enough. A wonderful phrase from another Big Book describes exactly the abundance of riches I have received - "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be given to you". So it has been with my sobriety.

And so, tonight, on New Year's Eve, I can

freely choose what I wish to do because I am no longer enslaved to alcohol. Sobriety, so we truly say, is an inside job. AA has given me the ability to sit with myself for long periods and not feel I'm climbing out of my skin. It has also given me the ability to go out in crowds and feel secure enough not to drink. It has given me the freedom to choose and to trust that my Higher Power will be with me whatever I choose.

These days, although taking a drink or not taking a drink it is a lot more about my spiritual condition than it is about how available the alcohol is, I generally avoid situations with a lot of alcohol and people drinking to excess. My sobriety is the most precious thing in my life and I refuse to trade it to pay the price of passing social conformity. I see more and more just how alcohol can cut us off from our spiritual state - where exactly *does* a soul go during a blackout?

But when I go out these days I know that I can dress up, because at the end of the evening I won't be kneeling in the gutter vomiting over my little black dress; wear killer heels because I won't have to calculate whether I can make it to the ladies room without falling over; wake up without having to worry about where the bruises had come from or what I did and, most importantly, enjoy each moment as it comes without a feeling of crushing anti-climax.

So New Year's Eve 2006 for me? Staying at home quietly, comfortable with myself, full of gratitude and trying to put together a few lines to tell you all about it. Because you'll understand and I'll feel even better. Isn't that how it works?

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### Next Region Meeting

- When: Feb 17/18th
- Where: Saalbau Bornheim, Arnsburgerstrasse 24, 60385 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
- For further details contact the region secretary via Email [aa-secretary@aa-europe.net](mailto:aa-secretary@aa-europe.net) or your Region Rep.
- All observers welcome

# YEAR'S END

Don't let's be fooled by the insane whisperings of Mister Booze: the year that is past (and particularly the last 24 hours) has brought me a big step away from the first fatal glass. I don't mind admitting it's a relief to have got those words down on paper, because I'm alone in the kitchen in the middle of the night with a half-drunk bottle of New Year wine left by my wife and family. The first thing I do on waking up is to drink a cool glass of water.

In Mister Booze's world Murphy's law is constantly in operation: everything that can possibly go wrong does so. My mind doesn't stop setting traps for me. In the Brave New World I discovered at last night's meeting practically everything goes according to the well laid plans of a Power greater than myself. My mind is a trustworthy tool.

Alcohol, dear reader of this page, is no longer my best friend, in fact it is now my worst enemy. On New Year's Eve, in pleasant company, I was offered an

innocuous little glass of "something nice the hostess had made herself": I knew damn well what it was, and refused. It was a few minutes before it occurred to her to offer me "something instead". Such is the misunderstanding of our most well-wishing non-alcoholic friends!

Since this day a year ago I have achieved some "progress not perfection" although I claim it myself and God knows I am the last person who ought to be saying it. I realize it most of all in the people I keep company with, because to some extent their radiant serenity reflects the quality of my own sobriety. And this is nowhere truer than in the behaviour and speech of the joyous little band I sat with at last night's meeting.

Within limits, this last year, I have practiced biting off no more than I could chew, which in simple terms amounts to segments of 24 hours, with a lot of help from a desk agenda. I now

pick up my new one and, in the middle of today's page, enter in capital letters: DO AT LEAST 2 ENJOYABLE THINGS. I know that if I enjoy this God-given life and observe a few simple principles, the chances of picking up a drink in 2007 will be greatly reduced. We are not a glum lot.

Many years ago, when I was drinking heavily, I attended a public lecture by an Indian swami who stated that "fear is the great disease of our time". I left my seat, went straight out and drank: fearlessly, I thought. Now I have just pulled the Big Book down off my shelf and read on page 67 (Step Four) that *Fear is an evil and corroding thread ... that touches almost every aspect of our lives*. At last I know where I can turn for help when the common symptoms of my disease manifest themselves. I have a healthy fear of what my alcoholism will do to me in 2007 if I don't keep coming back or take all the necessary steps on a daily, hourly basis.

M.C.

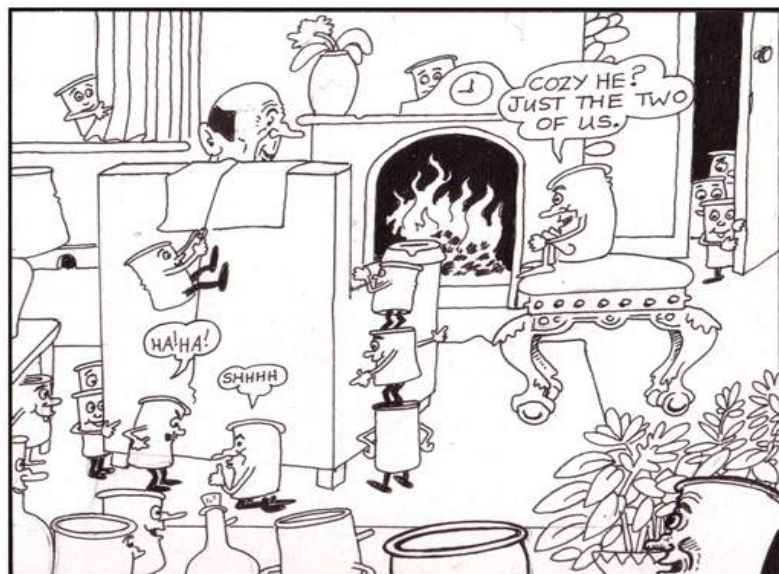
## The Road to Happy Destiny

That was the theme of the International Convention of AA in the Netherlands 2006 and for me the point was brought home. It reminded me: This program is a journey; I'm not doing it alone; it's well worth taking – better than anything I could ever come up with. Taking the time out that weekend, listening to the speakers, and talking with old and new friends reinvigorated me and warmed my heart. (And I actually came home relaxed and rested. What a difference to many Conventions in the past)

The set-up was good – I sensed dedication, creativity and hard-work was put into it (THANK YOU): a beautiful hotel with lots of space without the convention seeming scattered; novelties in the program giving people something to talk about; a great DJ getting lots of people on the dance

floor; room for meetings of other fellowships; display of the 12 Concepts of World Service and a time-line for input on Conference Questions. And last not least: good speakers, reminding me that's not all about me but about passing it on, and giving me new ideas how to work the program. But there was one thing I really missed: sharing meetings and most of all the legendary Women's Meeting.

I am grateful I could go and look forward to my next Convention on the road: North Sea Convention first weekend in February. See you there! i.s.



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## Early AAs - Henry (Hank) P., New Jersey

### The Unbeliever

Hank was the first man Bill Wilson sobered up after returning to New York from his trip to Akron where he met Dr. Bob. That was in either October or November of 1935. Thus Hank was A.A. #2 in New York until he resumed drinking about four years later.

Hank was a salesman, and an agnostic, who had lost his job because of drinking. He wound up at Towns Hospital, where Bill found him in the fall of 1935. The first mention of Hank in the Big Book is on page xxix of The Doctor's Opinion. He is believed to be the man Dr. Silkworth described as being a case of pathological mental deterioration and he did apparently become quite paranoiac later.

He and Jim B. ("The Vicious Cycle"), led the fight against too much talk of God in the 12 Steps, which resulted in the compromise *God as we understood Him*.

Hank had a small business in Newark, N. J. It is the little company mentioned on page 149. Bill W. and Jim B. worked there for a time and Bill dictated most of the Big Book to Ruth Hock in this office.

Ruth Hock said the Big Book would not have been writ-

ten without Bill, and it would not have been published without Hank. However, with the exception of the opening paragraph, Hank did write the chapter "To Employers." and his story "The Unbeliever" was included in the 1st Edition of the Big Book. It was dropped from the 2nd Edition.

Problems developed between Bill & Hank over Hank setting up Works Publishing as a for profit corporation with himself as President. Other group members were unhappy about this and persuaded Bill to list himself as the sole author of the Big Book as a means of counterbalancing this. Hank became very hostile toward Bill.

It is not known exactly when Hank started drinking again, but Lois Wilson noted in her diary in September 1939 that Hank was drunk. He did get back on the program again briefly but it didn't last.

He died in January 1954 at the age of 57 in Trenton, New Jersey. In her diary Lois Wilson ascribed his death to drinking. A.A. owes Hank a debt of gratitude for his many contributions during his all too short period of sobriety.

(Thanks to Nancy O. for the information.)

## Just for Today

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will try to live through this day only and not tackle my whole life problem at once. I can do something for twelve hours that would appal me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will be happy. Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will adjust to what is, and not try to adjust everything to my own desires. I will take my 'luck' as it comes and fit myself to it.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will try to strengthen my mind. I will study. I will learn something useful. I will not be a mental loafer. I will read something that requires mental effort and concentration.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will exercise my soul in three ways. I will do somebody a good turn and not get found out. If anybody knows of it, it will not count. I will do at least two things I do not

want to do - just for exercise. I will not show anyone that my feelings are hurt; they may be hurt, but today I will not show it.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will be agreeable, will look as well as I can, dress becomingly, talk low, act courteously, criticise not one bit, not find fault with anything and not try to improve or regulate anybody except myself.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will have a programme - I may not be able to follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two pests; hurry and indecision.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will have a quiet half hour all by myself, and relax. During this half hour, some time, I will try to get a better perspective of my life.

**JUST FOR TODAY** I will be unafraid, especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

(This text is available as a card from GSO)

## GSO is Moving!

GSO is moving to larger premises in January. The new address is:

P.O. Box 1,  
10 Toft Green,  
York YO1 7NJ.  
England

Tel: +44 (0)1904 644026

Fax: +44 (0)1904 629091

Email: [lemongsoyork@btconnect.com](mailto:lemongsoyork@btconnect.com)

By the way, the 60th anniversary of the foundation of AA in the UK is in March 2007 .

## Interesting links

There is a lot of AA historical information to be found under

<http://silkworth.net/>

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/aahistorylovers/>

Some of the contributors have fairly radical viewpoints however.

### Useful Facts:

**Region Bank Account:** Account Name: Steven Blake

Bank: Kreissparkasse Bitburg-Prüm, BLZ 586 500 30 Account No. 559781

Swift / BIC: MALADE51BIT I.B.A.N.: DE97 5865 0030 0000 5597 81

Newsletter Contributions: [arenaguys@gmx.de](mailto:arenaguys@gmx.de)

## Future Events (full details on Website)

- May 10th – 15th **"Working the 12 Steps"**  
7th Int. Croatia Convention, Split, Croatia
- May 17th – 20th **"A New Freedom"**  
13<sup>th</sup> International Convention  
Ermioni-Thermissia, Peloponnese, Greece
- July 06th – 08th **Spiritual Camping Weekend**  
Spichererweg 10, 66119 Saarbrücken  
Registration: [camping@aa.dehemm.de](mailto:camping@aa.dehemm.de)
- July 13th – 15th **"A Vision for You"**  
16<sup>th</sup> Annual Franconia RoundUp,  
Pfronten-Weißbach, Germany
- Sept 7th – 9th **"Primary Purpose"**  
4th Annual Convention, Berlin

### Watch out for

- July Baumholder Campathon  
August Netherlands Roundup  
Oct Costa Brava ([www.aaspain.org](http://www.aaspain.org) from March. Books out)  
Dec Costa del Sol ([www.aaspain.org](http://www.aaspain.org))

Service Positions available!!!  
Region will be voting on a new Chair and delegates at the next Region meeting.  
Make a difference!  
Volunteer!

## Trustee's Report

The number of groups in Region has doubled since 1997 and contributions have increased commensurately. 356 of the local groups in Region have registered with GSO in York. GSO now prints only a small number at a time of "Where to Find AA in Great Britain and on the Continent" because GSO maintains a constantly-updated computerized data base and uses only the latest meeting information for each publication. GSO in New York is taking similar steps to upgrade the International AA Directory which is published only every other year, takes six months to prepare, and consequently contains meeting information which is often out-of-date. Both GSO in York and the International Desk in New York require a paper application from a local group to be listed. This to ensure accuracy and quality control of the information. Request group registration forms from: GSO in York at [lemongsoyork@btconnect.com](mailto:lemongsoyork@btconnect.com) and from the AA International Desk in New York at [international@aa.org](mailto:international@aa.org). Jerry C.

Region Website:  
[www.aa-europe.net](http://www.aa-europe.net)

## Conference Questions

It is that time of year again. The Conference questions have been issued and can be obtained from the UK website <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/> by downloading the Winter copy of the AA Service News.

Our secretary has also forwarded copies to his email list, so someone in your area should have them.

There are some good questions this year – maybe the influence of the (CER) Chair of Committee 2 :- ) was effective.

Take a look and if you think you have something to say, you can email the delegates from the website or contact your local region representative.

## Winter Issue?

Due to lack of contributions there was no winter issue. My grateful thanks to those that contributed to this issue.

I can edit but it's bad for my ego if I am the only contributor.

This is your newsletter. And it will be as interesting as you can make it.