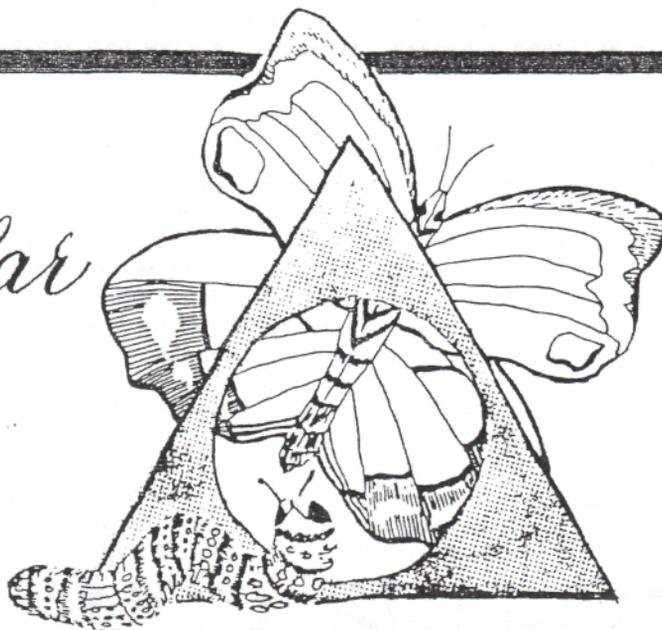


Caterpillar



ARRIL 1988

4884 Constitution Suite 1-C Baton Rouge, La. 70808

924-0029 (24 hours)

THE HISTORY OF TGIM AFG

The TGIM Al-Anon Family Group (yes, that means Thank God It's Monday) has come a long way since a few members got together and decided there was a need for a meeting in that area of Baton Rouge. A couple of these people had been attending the Monday night meeting at University Methodist Church on Dalrymple Drive and, with the advent of Baton Rouge's first inpatient treatment center, that meeting was growing so fast that people were frequently being seated outside in the hallway.

St. George Catholic Church on Siegen Lane was contacted and offered us space. There were times when we met in school library, which at that time was just an unused extra classroom and there were a few meetings in the teacher's lounge before the church finally settled us into a T-building known as the music room. When our humanness and imperfection surfaced and we began to complain about something concerning our facilities, we can always get into gratitude when we consider those early days in that location. The reality was that when it was a hot night, it was always at least ten degrees hotter in that building and when it was cold, at least ten degrees colder. There was a window air-conditioning unit but it seldom did much to change the temperature in the room and, besides, we had to choose between trying to cool or heat us and hearing what was being said because it put out more noise than air. Also, we would have to shoo the roaches out when we first entered and hope that they would concede us the space for the hour or so that we were there.

Because of our location, we had begun as the St. George AFG and maintained that identity for several years. In the summer of 1982, after the church had moved its office into a new administration building, we asked for space in the old office which was converted into a youth center. We really felt like we had made a step up in our facilities because there we had a kitchen, running water and a bathroom plus much improved temperature control. Shortly after that a motion was made and we voted to change our name to TGIM. The youth center was our home for over four years and when the church wanted our space for boy scout meetings on Monday night, they asked us if we would move into the lovely school library where we are currently meeting every Monday night at 7:30.

Getting a new group going frequently is difficult. It takes at least a couple of very dedicated, patient and understanding members to keep things glued together until it finally "takes". TGIM has always met without an AA group meeting simultaneously in another room (except for about a three month period back in our early history) and there were many nights when there were only 2-4 people at our meetings. But, somewhere

History of TGIM AFC cont.

along the line, we voted to become a step meeting and the membership and the recovery both blossomed. Because of what we at the time felt was redundancy a few years ago, we changed our format for about nine months. One night a member spoke up and said she had become stagnant without the benefit of studying the steps on a weekly basis. Another vote brought us back to what we are today, a step meeting every Monday, except the first Monday of the month. From those small beginnings, we now have anywhere from 20-35 people at all our meetings.

Our membership knows the growth that comes from sharing and "giving back" in service work. We are represented well at local and assembly meetings and many have served on the AIS and/or Area Assembly levels. Along with our study of the steps, we read both the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions at all our meetings and have a treasurer's report given weekly so that the group can stay aware of our finances and channel the monies collected to where it can do the most good through the AIS, Area Assembly and the WSO on a regular basis. Occasionally, we take up a second collection to help with special events like DSAC or the annual Louisiana Conference.

Many People have attended our meetings and did not come back, some have moved on to meetings that were more convenient for them either time-wise or geographically (or maybe they did not like us like we loved them) and then there was one who was with us, in her loving, giving and wonderful self, until God called her home. Those of us who knew her will be eternally grateful for her presence in our lives and at our meetings.

Last fall we decided to have the first celebration of our birthday. We do not know the exact date of our first meeting but reserved the first Monday in November to have our annual eating meeting and will celebrate our 10th birthday this year.

We have come to love our meetings, each other and our God through this beautiful fellowship and we invite you to come visit us or join with us and experience for yourself the "Al-Anon Spirit" that is alive and well at TGIM.

AL-ANON SHARINGS

Whenever I start thinking about the benefits of this program on sharing them with a newcomer, I know that I start sounding evangelicall! I want so much for others to reach out, grab hold and receive all of the wonderful bonuses with which I am blessed.

Over the past 7½ yrs. I have (very slowly & with much stubbornness) become willing to stop blaming an unhappy childhood in an alcoholic home for all of my faults. I have made a decision to accept responsibility for my behavior and know that I can change only my own behavior. I have wasted so much time & energy in the past immobilized by fear, consumed by anger & resentments full of "what if's & if only's". Today I know that God & I can handle anything that happens in this 24 hr. period & that is all I need bother with!

I have found freedom to be me and to be o.k. "just being me". I have found choices & options. I now choose how to live my life. I have become an actor the star in my own play, rather than a puppet being pulled around by all of the strings attached to my loved ones and to my old faulty beliefs. I also choose to release my family members to be the stars in their own plays and I do not direct.

I have found a family that loves me unconditionally. When I am happy, sad, lazy, crazy, etc., my Alanons just keep on loving me, accepting me as I am sharing their strength, hope, & experience. And last & most importantly I have found a Higher Power that is with me 24 hrs. a day. A loving caring gentle Higher Power from whom I don't have to hide when I make a mistake. It's o.k. now to be vulnerable, to be wrong, to be sacred to say "I can't handle this so I am giving it to you" and to know it will come out just as its supposed to. My prayer is that all of the people in pain from this disease will find the courage to reach out and accept the gift of recovery that caome thru the working of the 12 steps of Al-Anon.

Diana C.

After over a decade in this program, I was reminded the other night at a meeting that no matter how long you have been around, willingness is still the key to working our program. Am I willing to go to any length to have the serenity the program offers? Am I willing to try the suggestions I hear at meetings? Am I willing to have a sponsor and use her the way the

program suggest? Am I willing to trust God to work out my problems and do for me what I can not do for myself? Am I willing to commit to attending meetings on a regular basis and to working the steps in all my affairs? If I am willing to do all these things, the rewards I receive are immeasurable. It doesn't mean I won't ever have problems or heartache, but it does mean that with God's help and the help of this program and friends in the program I can better deal with what ever life offers me.

Betty F.

It's 2:30 p.m. and I am working in the AIS office today. My home group (TGIM) had been asked to write for the "Caterpillar" & the deadline was last Monday night at our meeting to turn in our "writings". When I got to the meeting it suddenly dawned on me what I had been asked to do & I had forgotten.

On the desk lies a folder with "TGIM" on it. I opened it & there were the articles that so many of my friends had written and also a history of our meeting. After reading these I just had to write & express my gratitude for the friends I have made at TGIM. It was over 7 years ago that I attended my first meeting at that location. My husband & I were here temporarily & my life was miserable & lonely in the midst of active alcoholism I went to a few meetings & one Tuesday morning after a Monday night meeting that I missed, the phone rang & it was one of the members (Pat) telling me she missed me at the meeting. I was so unbelievably happy that someone in this strange town cared enough to call me. We went back to Houston for a few months & then came back to B.R. for good. Needless to say I went back to TGIM & it has been my home group ever since. The love, understanding, empathy & yes - even being told what I haven't wanted to hear about myself will stay with me forever.

P.S. My friend gave me her husband's card and I gave it to my husband. One day he called him & went to his first Baton Rouge AA meeting with him things don't happen by accident in this fellowship. Thank You, God!

Edie D.

I've learned when I'm asked to share, I must first start with how I'm feeling. Today my overwhelming feeling is gratitude. Gratitude for the program, the steps that are my roadway to serenity and my sponsor and friends in the program who are there to show me the path they took. My home groups-(I have two-one is a step meeting and the other is an ACOA) are essential to recovery. At meetings I get and give experience, strength, hope and unconditional love. Group members are like the family I always wanted-they love me when I'm incapable of loving myself.

My earliest memory while growing up in an alcoholic family was "this too shall pass". I put my energy into getting out and creating a different life for myself and "I would be fine". None of this would ever happen to me.

In my quest for this perfect life, I put on a mask and let it be known that I was "fine, thank you". When things went wrong, I worked harder, tried new relationships, jobs, friends and self help books. I was always "tap dancing", buzzing around, going, doing and achieving. When I stopped, my mind raced about what I should be doing to solve the world's problems. I rarely rested, was never content and was exhausted.

The world saw me as a success. In spite of the alcoholic father, my mother dying when I was 9, being raised in an orphanage, I worked my way thru college, received many honors, married well, had two healthy beautiful children, and received all of the social and professional rewards, I ever dreamed of.

None of this was the answer. When these things and people failed to make me happy, I would try harder. How restless I was, how unpredictable, nothing and no one could make me happy.

I came into Al Anon because of my daughter's alcoholism. I was doing it for her. It wasn't until ACOA that I reached my real bottom and saw, I was suffering from the effects of alcoholism long before she was born. Today I know I can have serenity regardless of the problems that surround me. THANK YOU AL ANON.

Faye G. TGIM

When I first came to Al Anon, quite a few years ago, I was woefully ignorant about alcoholism. I didn't even know that it is a disease. One of the first and greatest gifts that I received was this knowledge. I read the wonderful pamphlets avidly and things begin to make sense which formerly were only cause for despair and frustration.

It was only a short time after my introduction to Al Anon that I enjoyed the great blessing of my husband becoming sober. We celebrate our 37th wedding anniversary this month and for this I am truly grateful.

Not all problems went away however, when he got sober. We have had many years of serious problems concerning our youngest son. Al Anon has helped me immeasurably in dealing with this situation.

The second great gift which came at the start, and which goes on indefinitely, is that of

SHARINGS CONT.

being in a fellowship of people who really understand. No matter how dear our other friends might be, there is nothing to compare with that sense of identification and empathy which we experience in Al Anon.

Lastly, let me put in a little plug for service work which I have found fulfilling. For anyone who hasn't gotten into it yet, I hope you'll try it. You'll like it.

Janet

I have been in Al Anon about 6 years. I learn something from every meeting. At first, I learned about the disease and how other people dealt with active alcoholism. It was a shock to find out that I was sick also and that I needed to change. Slowly, I learned to mind my own business and to have a much more positive attitude. Simple to say, but so hard to do! I was delighted to have to learn about how to live with sobriety and yet I learned also that sobriety is not the magic solution to all of life's problems.

Some days are good and some are bad, but the good far outnumber the bad and I have learned to appreciate them thanks to Al Anon.

Janie

The gifts I have received since I became a member of Alanon are changing my life. Today, I have a growing relationship with God, who accepts and loves me just the way I am and only wants me to love and trust Him. I have a happy and loving relationship with my children. I have a circle of friends that I care about and who care about me. I have a program of twelve steps to follow that are teaching me how to live and function in all areas of my life. I am learning to know who I am, the good and bad of me, and am willing to have God remove my shortcomings as He sees fit. And, I have a fellowship of men and women who share both my joys and sorrows at meetings that are available on a daily basis.

It hasn't always been like this. When I first started attending Alanon, I was so full of absolute despair, hopelessness and loneliness that I was barely functional. I remember little of my first year--I cried most of the way through most meetings. Though I didn't learn a quick fix to the problem of alcoholism, I kept going back because I knew those people really understood and it felt so good when someone put their arms around me and urged me to come back.

At that time I believed all alcoholics were derelicts lying on street corners and that alcoholism was hopeless and fatal. My husband had committed suicide in 1972 and I know that drinking had played a major part in his death. I knew that my children and I were in constant pain and confusion, but I believed it was because I was such a bad person and mother and just couldn't make things right. Our situation seemed absolutely hopeless.

After the intervention and treatment of my youngest son, one by one my other three children confronted their pain and dependency on alcohol and went through treatment and joined A.A. and I went through co-dependency treatment. I had heard people talk about recovery and I finally started believing that our family was not hopeless after all. I started believing that it was possible for contentment and even happiness for us.

With the gift of hope, I really went to work with the program. I use every available tool, read everything I can find, attend as many meetings as possible, talk with people, listen and learn. I watch people laughing and talking and see a serenity about them that I know I want. I've been fortunate to find lots of quality role-models. I've often heard that when the pupil is ready, God will send the teacher. Four years ago, by accident, I attended my first Alanon Adult Children of Alcoholics meeting. Today I know that was no Accident - I was right where I needed to be!

By that time, I had been Alanon for three years and I could see the recovery in my life and in the lives of my family. The outside was looking good, but my insides were still full of fears and anxieties that I couldn't identify. At that meeting, I heard someone sharing and it was as if she were expressing what I was feeling. The relief I felt was enormous. I had thought I was an "Alanon failure"! Gradually, I've been able to make progress in freeing myself of free-floating responsibility, guilt and years of shame. I'm learning how to love and appreciate myself and to accept love from others as a gift.

With support, I'm learning to take responsibility for my feelings and make changes in my attitude and actions. I'm even learning to laugh at myself a little bit. I'm not well yet, but I sure am better.

I think of the members of Alanon and A.A. as my extended family and feel so fortunate to be blessed so profoundly. Thanks, fellowship, for loving both my family and me back to life.

Barbara W.

PLEASE COME BACK

The December issue of the Forum contains an article entitled "Back To Basics" written by a long time Al Anon member. Reading this article helped me to feel less alone. I am so tired of hearing terms such as co-dependent, co-alcoholic, chemically dependent and dysfunctional family, that I sometimes want to run from the meeting. When I speak to others who came to Al Anon prior

to the addition of psychological terms and talk of treatment, we are almost all in accord with our feelings. Most of the "Oldtimers" that I have met (usually not at Al Anon) have stopped attending meetings. They continue to work their individual programs at home but tend to feel useless at meetings.

My most frustrating experience at an Al Anon meeting was the time that there was so much talk about intervention and "when we were in treatment" that a relative newcomer questioned whether she belonged at the Al Anon meeting since she had not been to treatment. If that is the message that is being sent, we have drifted a long way from the twelve step recovery program, and the simple sharing of strength, hope and experience that is Al Anon.

In 1977 when I became a member of Al Anon, it was a simple program. If my life was unmanageable as the result of living with an alcoholic, there was hope for recovery. By attending meetings, getting a sponsor and working the 12 steps I could be restored to sanity. My original home group had members who had come to Al Anon more than 20 years before me. There was much laughter and happiness and recovery whether the alcoholic was drinking or sober. The lady who chaired the very first meeting that I attended had been in the fellowship for 13 years. She had a look of serenity on her face and her blue eyes had a starlike twinkle. She was truly at peace and recovering from the effects of this dread disease. She also was living with an active alcoholic and had been for the past 28 years. Her husband Frank was well on his way to an ugly alcoholic death. None of this hampered her recovery, she had learned to detach with love and that impressed me. I could find recovery in spite of my surroundings. It kept me coming back and still does.

I have received so many benefits from the Al Anon 12 step program and from sharing the experience of those who came before me, that I feel an obligation to those who follow to pass on what was given to me so freely. I would like to make a plea for the "Oldtimers" to come back to meetings and for the meetings to return to the basics.

Unsigned

Thank you T.G.I.M.

We appreciate these sharings from this growing in Al-Anon group. If your group wants to be included in one issue of the "Caterpillar", please let us know.

Slogans

Let Go and Let God

Everyday there are decisions to be made and problems to be solved. When you notice irritations growing into tensions, tensions into near-panic, and old fears returning, this is time to stop and turn to God. You can do nothing anyway, and you will find that if you supply the willingness He will supply the power.

First Things First

Many of our confusions and frustrations are due to our failure to deal with tasks and problems in the order of their importance. It does take discipline to put aside the things we'd rather do, and attend to those of first importance FIRST. But the rewards are great: we get things done, we enjoy a sense of accomplishment, and we learn to face issues with a real sense of value and purpose.

Taken from

Alcoholism the Family Disease

Bulletin

D - S A C 88

Will soon be here...

Deep South Alateen Conference

Date: April 29, 1988 - May 1, 1988
Starts: 3:00 P.M.
At: Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center
Forest Hills, Louisiana (Map to follow)
Cost: Appx. \$38.00 - registration before 4/15
after 43.00 - until deadline.....

Where Alateens, Al-Anons and A A's come together for a love filled weekend - if you've never been you're missing a great experience; and if you've attended I know you'll be back.....

Registration forms will be out soon, if you need further information, contact:

