

The Amazing Grace of the Bobbing Heads

When I was a kid, going to confession was a regular part of my spiritual routine. If I went on Saturday morning, the church would be mostly empty, quiet, shadowy. I'd slip in,



scrunch down in a corner away from the handful of other sinners, and figure out exactly how I wanted to count and say my sins before sliding through the murk into the confessional. A second after I knelt down inside the dark, telephone booth-sized room, a small panel would slide back and a dim, still silhouetted head would appear on the other side of a screen. I'd whisper my sins. The confessor would murmur his comments, absolve me, give me my penance, and encourage me to go and sin no more. I'd skulk out of the confessional, slide back into a dark corner, kneel, say my penance, and slink out of the church with about as much guilt and shame as when I slunk in.

Going to confession or reconciliation has worked for billions of people, but it didn't work for me.

About fifteen years after the last confessing of my sins, I was back in a church getting ready to do the same thing. With some minor differences. Rather than on the sanctuary floor, I was in the basement. Rather than the dark telephone booth, the room was big

and well-lighted. Rather than murmurs and whispers, there was raucous laughter and booming hellos. Rather than one confessor sitting in shadows, there were rows of people sitting in folding chairs slugging down coffee and smoking cigarettes (ancient days). Rather than kneeling, I was standing behind a rickety podium. Rather than confessing my sins, I was preparing to tell my story, which was:

I was afraid to be vulnerable so I tried to control and manipulate people. Heads bobbed. I was too addicted to drugs and alcohol to be around when my mother was dying. Heads bobbed. I tried to destroy my ex-wife's self-esteem so she would be emotionally dependent upon me. Heads bobbed. And then this happened and then that. Heads bobbed. Blah blah. Heads bobbed.

There are lots of bobbing heads in AA. I can remember sitting in a young peoples' meeting and someone mentioned wetting the bed as a teenager. Heads bobbed. Having sex in a cemetery? More bobbing heads. I have the feeling that if someone shared how he pillaged and plundered a rural Vermont hamlet, heads would bob.

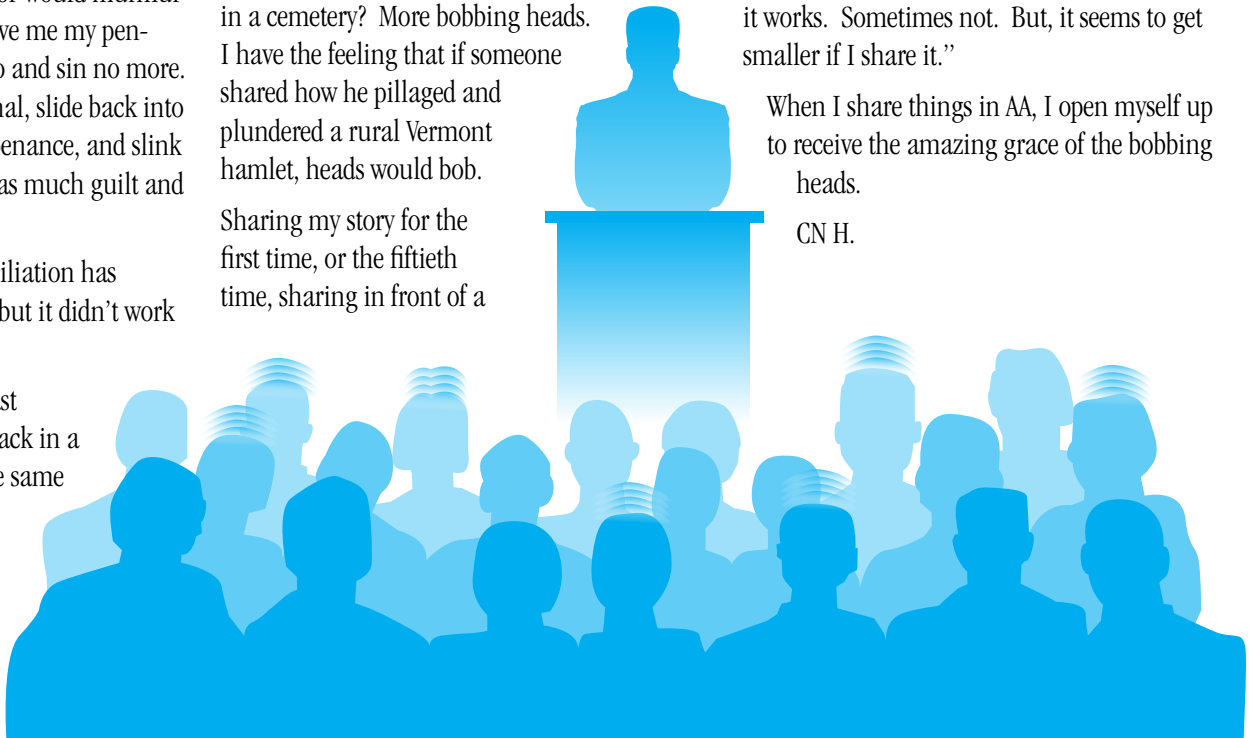
Sharing my story for the first time, or the fiftieth time, sharing in front of a

crowd or while having coffee with someone in AA, I've been blessed with bobbing heads. They bob and, often, they identify. 'Hey, I pillaged and plundered a hamlet, too. New Hampshire, not Vermont. Did you use marauders on horseback? What about flaming arrows shot onto the thatched roofs? Did you do that? Did you scatter the chickens or feast on them?'

Looking back on why sharing from the podium has done a better job of releasing me from the shame and guilt of past acts than my times spent in a confessional, a couple of things come to mind. Dark confessional, shadowy confessor, whispers and murmurs gave the young me the impression that even with absolution everything was still a secret. Blurting out something in a church basement before a crowd takes away the burden of my secrets. In my memories of those long-ago days in the confessional, I don't ever recall the person on the other side eagerly pushing the screen aside and bobbing his head as he said, "Yeah, I did that, sometimes still do that, have a hard time with that. When that temptation comes, I try to do this. Sometimes it works. Sometimes not. But, it seems to get smaller if I share it."

When I share things in AA, I open myself up to receive the amazing grace of the bobbing heads.

CN H.



THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

Can there be or is there something that is common to everybody's thinking that unites us? Is there a need or belief within mankind's psyche that we all feel?

Shelter, food, sex, are all thought to be necessary to life. The air we breathe provides oxygen which triggers our metabolic function. Unfortunately, these needs can divide as well as unite us.

Studying different cultures and creeds I have discovered, in one form or another, The Golden Rule (treat others as you would want to be treated) is common to all.

However, as many supposed adherents there are to the Golden Rule, we often find a world suffering from strife and conflict.

I have always wanted to find a concrete solution or belief upon which we could all agree and

build a peaceful life. However, these obvious needs: shelter, food, sex, and the acceptance of the need for man to treat man well, have not provided a foundation for peace within our lives.

Reluctantly, I have come to the conclusion that the answer for me lies in the often unfathomable and individual

spiritual practice. What we all possess is our individuality and the ability, if we want, to search within ourselves to find balance or peace. This can be shared with others creating a common bond.

My practice, seeking balance within, involves simple meditation and prayer. It is often said that prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening to God.

Through prayer: it can be Christian, Muslim, Hindi, or any other creed, I talk to God asking what is the right thing to do. During meditation, basically listening to and following my breath as it travels throughout my body, I listen to the quiet.

Consistently: daily often throughout the day, I employ these practices. I find the wherewithal to

step forward and do the right thing, one step at a time.

As an individual I find this leads me on the right path. We all have and share the fact of our individuality. I advocate that each of us, searching within, can provide the common thread to support a common way to peace.

— Guy A.



SAVE THE RI CONVENTION DATE: March 20th - March 22nd, 2020

Register before Feb. 18th. Cost: \$25
Register on or after Feb. 19th. Cost: \$30
Register online (preferred) or download the printable registration form at www.aainri.com.
Registration forms are also available at your favorite meeting place.



Area Officers

Delegate Steve L.

AreaDelegate@aainri.com

Alternate Alison H.

AreaAltDelegate@aainri.com

Area Chair Tricia I.

AreaChairperson@aainri.com

Secretary Anne M.

AreaSecretary@aainri.com

Treasurer Joe H.

Treasurer@aainri.com

Archivist Ted D.

Archivist@aainri.com

Registrar Ted D.

Registrar@aainri.com

Committee Chairs

Archives Nancy R.

ArchivesChair@aainri.com

Convention 2020 Chair Ken D.

ConventionChair@aainri.com

Cooperation with the Professional Community/ Public Information Bob H.

CPCPIChair@aainri.com

Corrections Greg M.

CorrectionsChair@aainri.com

Grapevine Rober P. (temporary)

GrapeVineChair@aainri.com

Information Services Andy L.

InformationServices@aainri.com

NECYPAA Host Chair - Jose P.

Treatment/Accessibilities Jason D.

TreatmentChair@aainri.com