

Season's Greetings from the "Arid Zone"

I am most grateful for the opportunity to share the miracle of recovery with you during this past year, whether in person or via e-mail, telephone, cards or letters.

I thank you for your part in reintroducing the A.A. Beginners' Meetings to the Twelve-Step community. More than five hundred thousand lives have been positively affected as the result of your efforts. It is amazing how the Indwelling Spirit has been guiding us "in a way which is indeed miraculous."

In 2011, I experienced many "firsts." Some of them are:

1. The PBS studios in Tucson, AZ produced my first recovery DVD (Back to Basics-101). In 74 minutes, I took everyone through all Twelve Steps. The PBS staff and crew recorded the event using HD cameras, flat screen graphics, and PowerPoint overlays.

Members of the recovery community financed this project. I thank all who contributed to this monumental effort to carry our life-saving message to others using the latest, state-of-the-art technology. As is the case with other Back to Basics materials, I receive no income from the sale of this DVD.

2. I assisted with the start-up (in Pacific Palisades, CA) of the first "present-day" Beginners' Meetings to use the 1940's "Detroit Tables" format. All four sessions are conducted simultaneously. Attendees move from table to table as they take the Twelve Steps in four, one-hour sessions.
3. For the first time, I made a PowerPoint history presentation titled, "The Four Founding Moments of Alcoholics Anonymous from the Akron Perspective." Throughout the year, I modified and added new material as I "walked where they walked" in Winchendon, MA, Ft Myers, FL, and Akron, OH. This new piece of AA history was recorded twice, once in Fort Myers, FL (3/4/11) and again in Alliance, OH (11/11/11).
4. I made my first visit to the Sam Shoemaker Archives in Austin, TX. There I found much additional material on "The Four Founding Moments." Although no one is allowed to photograph or copy any of the information in this rarest or rare collections, one of the "keepers of the records" scanned and sent me, via USB drive, the letters, photographs, pamphlets and articles I requested.
5. In April, I conducted my first two weekend retreats in Canada. I was hosted by the Franciscan friars at the 500 acre Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center outside Calgary, Alberta.
6. in December, I led my first weekend retreat at a Benedictine monastery. The Subiaco Abbey, where the 27th Annual Dan Egan Retreat was held, is located on 1,600 acres in the Arkansas River Valley about two hours northwest of Little Rock.

7. In Alliance Ohio, I received my first “Wally P. Farewell Tour T-shirt.” The host committee did a remarkable job designing and printing this original keepsake.

This was just one of the many tokens of appreciation I received during the year. All gifts, plaques, signs, certificates, and other memorabilia are prominently displayed in the Southwest Archives in Tucson, AZ.

8. I made history presentations, for the first time, at the Gopher State Roundup (Minneapolis, MN), the International Doctors in Alcoholics Anonymous (Tucson, AZ), and The Recovery Summit (Los Angeles, CA). The titles were, “AA’s Unsung Heroes-Anne Smith and Lois Wilson,” “AA in the 1940’s-Why it Worked” and “Back to the Basics of Sponsorship.” These are just three of the many history presentations I have made throughout the years.

I want to thank everyone involved in the numerous stops along the “Wally P. Farewell Tour,” whether booking flights, supplying accommodations, providing behind-the-scenes support, setting up and breaking down meeting rooms, or getting me to Whole Foods so I could continue the dietary portion of my cancer treatment program.

Based on your input, the “Wally P. Farewell Tour” has evolved into the “Wally P. Pre-Sabbatical Tour.” I am staying close to home for the next year in order to finish several writing projects and to digitize and catalog the hundreds of thousands of pages of archival materials I have accumulated during the past two decades. Once these projects are completed, I will consider going “on the road again.”

My health is 100%, and I continue to follow, to the best of my ability, the suggestions of my Integrative Medicine “team” in Tucson. I am coming up on nine years since the “terminal and incurable” diagnosis. In 2012, I will keep everyone posted on my physical well-being and archival projects through the Back to Basics website and e-mail.

I thank everyone who donated to Back to Basics this past year. Like so many other Twelve-Step service entities, we are struggling to “keep the lights on and the doors open.” It is this struggle that keeps us humble, and continually renews our faith that “When God guides, God provides.”

On behalf of myself, Mickie J., and Shawn S., I wish you the very best during this holiday season.

Wally