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THE AA MOVEMENT GAINS PUBLIC RECOGNITION

(Third in a series giving a condensed history of A.A.)

THE Rockefeller dinner in March, 1940, not only yielded desperately needed funds for the new movement during a critical period, but it also provided another missing element—favorable public recognition.

News about the banquet traveled over the country on all of the press wire services and almost immediately inquiries began to pour into the office in Newark. The articles published previously in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* had begun a growth of membership in the Cleveland and Akron areas which reached about 2,000 in a few months. Now the growth spread out through the country, to Chicago and Detroit in the mid-west, Philadelphia, and Baltimore in the east, and Los Angeles, Houston, San Francisco and Little Rock in the west.

The new movement was catching fire in 1940 and with publication of Jack Alexander's article in the *Saturday Evening Post* the following year,

that first "little handful of drunks" watched in amazement, and joy, as thousands flocked to the new way to sobriety. The growth of A.A. has been accelerating ever since and the membership now numbers about 75,000 with hundreds more coming in every week.

AS the movement evolved from a tiny group of hopefuls to an expanding army of successful ex-drunks, so did A.A. service agencies begin to take more definite shape. One of these was the Alcoholic Foundation which had held its first meeting on Aug. 11, 1938, but which even in the midst of the great growth taking place in 1941 still had no money except the Rockefeller "dinner fund" of about \$3,000 a year. The flood of inquiries coming in were clamoring for attention; some plan for handling them and spreading the word to more alcoholics was needed, and this would inevitably require some financing.

At this point the plan of voluntary contributions from the groups at a

rate of one dollar per member per year was devised and became the practice of A.A. self-support which has prevailed since. The Foundation became the repository of funds, with all contributions from the groups ear-marked for central office expense only, and funds from the sale of the book set aside for other expenses, such as printing, and for the accumulation of a prudent reserve.

The Foundation also became the custodian of A.A. tradition and policy. In 1942, the original trust was changed to a corporation to assure continuity. All assets and liabilities were transferred to the new corporation, The Alcoholic Foundation, Inc., and the former trustees became the directors, although they are still referred to more commonly as "trustees" than as "directors."

THE trustees, five non-alcoholics and four alcoholics, serve without compensation and nominate their own successors. Although there is no fixed term of office, the prevailing opinion among the trustees is that new nominations should be made every four to five years in rotation.

A statement on record, defining the policies and activities of the Foundation, emphasizes the distinction "between the A.A. movement which is not an organized body and the activities of the Foundation which is an incorporated body dedicated to serving the members of A.A. individually and collectively through its subsidiary facilities," such as the General

Service Office, *The A.A. Grapevine* and the Works Publishing Co.

"The movement is exclusively a spiritual endeavor," the statement points out, "whose only aim is to attain personal recovery and to carry the message of the way to recovery to others. The movement is the all-important thing. It is in no sense governed by the Foundation. . . ."

"The Movement is a spiritual entity," the statement continues, "comprising in substance the individual members of A.A. and the Groups, in the local activities of which most, but not all, members participate. The precepts of A.A. grew out of experience, the experience of individuals and the experience of Groups. So far, the basic principles of A.A. are reflected, as to personal rehabilitation, in the Twelve Steps to Recovery; as to relations, in the Twelve Points to Secure Our Future, sometimes called the Twelve Points of Tradition."

"THE Movement represents a spiritual ideal in process of growth. It can be imperilled by secular problems of money, property and authority. These problems are involved with organization.... Organization, therefore, has been and should continue to be kept to a minimum...."

"The Twelve Points of Tradition developed out of concern for the common welfare of A.A. They are applicable at all levels: Individuals, group, regional and central. Among other things the Twelve Points re-

affirm out of experience that God alone is our ultimate authority; that we have but one primary purpose—to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers; that the principle of Anonymity has primarily a spiritual significance—to practice a truly humble modesty; that A.A. should remain forever non-professional and that only special services in extraordinary circumstances should be paid for; that the least possible organization is required; that all contributions are to be purely voluntary and the accumulation of excess funds discouraged; and that matters of business, policy, money and property should be separated from the spiritual concern of A.A. to the extent of delegating such affairs to appropriate instrumentalities.

"The Alcoholic Foundation is such an instrumentality at the national level. Its Trustees (Directors) . . . have jurisdiction over matters of large contract and important policy and in all matters they constitute a tribunal of final decision.

"The Trustees are primarily custodians of money, policy and tradition. More concretely, they have custody of funds contributed by Groups and derived from the sale of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the monthly publication *The A.A. Grapevine*, although the latter is not yet self-supporting; they maintain a general headquarters office to deal with

inquiries from individuals and Groups; they conduct certain necessary business and legal affairs; they endeavor to protect the Movement from objectionable publicity where the problem cannot feasibly be handled at a local level; in general, they strive to safeguard the established tradition and policies derived from the thought and experience of members everywhere.

"**A** GAIN, more concretely, the Trustees feel that they will best safeguard the established traditions of A.A. by seeing to the application of the Twelve Points of Tradition to A.A. activities at their central point, insofar as practicable, in the following respect: Compliance in spirit and letter with the principle of Anonymity; rotation in office or position; observance of appropriate standards in compensation of paid workers; limitation of volume and scope of activities at the general headquarters office; . . .

"It is the considered judgment of your Trustees that if the A.A. Movement remains unshackled by the fetters of organization and is kept free from the corroding effect of political procedures which stem from over-organization, it will grow in vast numbers and beneficent influence among those who are open to its message."

