



SHOELACES

While talking to a brand new baby who had wholeheartedly accepted the program at the outset, she was busily telling me how now she would be able to work harder, pay off her bills, move to a better place, get money for a car of her own to use in going to meetings, etc., etc. I repeated to her our God-given slogan, "take it easy," several times, but the onrush of "Now I can do this, that, the other thing" continued. Then I heard myself saying to her, "Don't forget, you can't brush your teeth and tie your shoelaces at the same time."

She fell silent. Then, after a few moments, she said, "Thanks, that straightened that out. As you said, do one thing at a time, and take twenty-four hours at a time." The somewhat ludicrous mental image of a person crouching over a wash bowl with a tooth brush at a jaunty angle in the mouth, while fumbling blindly with both hands groping for unseen shoe laces had a sobering effect on us, a pair of alcoholics who had spent a life running madly off in all directions to do all things at once-with, of course, no real accomplishment. The phrase reduced our inner turmoil and anxiety to its simplest terms in a comical manner that made it stick.

"Take it easy" — "Twenty-four hours at a time"— "Accept the things I cannot change"—"Change things I can"— all are simple statements. Yet, to us, with our susceptibility to "stinking thinking," how difficult sometimes to comprehend. How easy it is for us to be thrown by some temporary problem, or setback, that requires a cool, calm, immediate handling, without the handicap of a liquored-up mind. The image of the fool with his head in a washbowl, fumbling blindly for unseen shoelaces, has served me well. The face in the wash bowl can quickly become the face at the bar. And "You can't brush your teeth and tie your shoelaces at the same time" has helped me handle these daily problems with a smile, at least for the series of twenty-four hours I have been blessed with.- Jim L. *Here's How*

GOD MEANS GOOD

If we sincerely, conscientiously try to do the right thing, the decent thing, the honest thing in all of our everyday acts we are on the right track. If spiritual attainment seems hard for us and we are disappointed because we don't see visions or hear voices, we need only remember that God means Good. By building up the better sides of our natures by doing the right thing at all times we gain strength of character and add insurance that will keep us sober.-Anonymous.

BLEATING OR BLEEDING

There is an old German proverb: "The bleating sheep gives little wool!"

What an indictment! Especially when we reflect and consider that a minority of any group's membership, whether in AA or not in AA are the devoted leaders who bleed silently for what they believe in and for the endeavor put forth with no expectation of personal reward or return.

It has been our privilege to Twelfth Step numerous areas of service to mankind and to other organizations, and we have observed a similar unproportionate ratio between "bleaters" and "bleeders."

Long ago we were told the price of leadership is the hurts and blood letting inflicted, more often than not, by the bleaters.

If this is not so, why is it so comparatively few are willing and do assume the mantle of responsibility for needed and devoted leadership.

Leadership need not be of the kind that is always in front of the pack (and- many times these are the bleaters and do-littlers), for over the years we have observed the strongest leaders have been those who have not fronted a cause or issue, but have been in the wings, so to speak, ready, willing and able.

There is a LACK in all of society today, and it is a factor in AA as well, when we consider the letters in the word and what some of them stand for.

L is for LAXITY — oftentimes practiced in taking the easy way out. Or taking the old AA axiom of "Easy Does It" too literally.

A is for APATHY — an often incurable disease resulting from laxity going untreated. This state not infrequently occurs when we become too comfortable in our sobriety and become willing "to let the other fellow take over 'cause I served my time."

C for COMPLACENCY — another form of laxity — more succinctly described as laziness. Complacency sets in when we fail to look for opportunities to serve, thus denying that we are responsible.

K is for KINSHIP — for we are all in this together, and if the fellowship is to survive there has to be a unity of spirit, a unity of action, a unity of responsibility, a unity of purpose and the facing up to opportunities to SERVE with love, understanding and compassion, so that we may be privileged to practice these principles in all of our affairs.

Like old soldiers — bleeders (leaders) don't die, they just fade away, but bleaters go on forever.

What'll it be bleeders or bleaters (with little wool)?

CENTRAL BULLETIN



Published monthly by the Cleveland Central Committee of A.A., a non-profit fellowship dedicated to service Address all letters to Central Bulletin, 940 Rockefeller Bldg. 614 Superior Ave N W Cleveland, Ohio 44113 Subscription price \$3 50 per Year

Harry D., Founder and Editor 1922-1966

Vol. 43 January 1985 No. 4

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH, 1985 • 8:00 P.M.
OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE
CLEVELAND, OHIO-ONTARIO ENTRANCE
REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH GROUP
WELCOME-BE INFORMED

G.S.R. THIRD LEGACY MEETING
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH 1985 • 2:00 P.M.
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ONE MILE SOUTH OF ROUTE 82

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL
INTERGROUP DINNER DANCE
SATURDAY, APRIL 27TH, 1985
Swingo's at the Statler • Cleveland, Ohio
Speaker: Clancy I. Los Angeles, CA.
\$13.00 per person

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

WAYNE ROBERTSON, active member of the Angle
 W inan groups
PAUL OLIVER, member of Nuts & Bolts group and
 former member of Berea Thursday.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Grateful AA'ers know that we must give away the priceless gift of sobriety if we are to keep it. The experience of the paradox of giving to receive occurs whenever we involve ourselves, at any level, in AA service. Some of us may have special talents to offer as expressions of our gratitude, but we can all lovingly give away our sobriety in the simple act of sharing. We can also give our attention to others who would (and sometimes desperately need to) share with us.

And finally, grateful alcoholics thank their Higher Power. Many AA members develop a systematic, daily spiritual program. They discipline themselves to seek God through prayer and meditation, to achieve a conscious contact, and thus achieve an understanding of God. But, if adequate thanks sometimes seem beyond our capabilities, one can simply say: *"Thank You for what You have given, for what You have taken away, and for what You have left me."*

THE TWELVE STEPS: A SERIES

At one point in my sobriety, not long ago, I was trying to, help a fellow member take the Steps. We went back to the beginning and soon discovered that, although sober for quite a period of time, he had progressed no further in the Steps than the first half of the First Step. This is not an uncommon situation for people with years of sobriety. As my new found friend and I started through the Steps, I was positive that progress was being made, but I had some difficulty in convincing Art of this. Each new insight and each new accomplishment was followed by a severe emotional let down on his part. Art was expecting something to happen that was going to propel him into some never-before-experienced emotional orbit, from which there is no down side. As many of us know, for Art, it simply did not happen to his expectations.

I regret that Art did not stick to doing the Steps, because there is such a Step, I am happy to report, which will rocket you into orbit and a new sense of freedom, even before you are half-way through it. It is, of course, the Ninth Step.

Nothing will guarantee total freedom as much as being in complete harmony with other people. It is an experience that we in A.A. are privileged to enjoy on a daily basis.

In the actual doing of the Ninth Step, in my opinion, if you have become willing to forgive each person on your Eighth Step list, and if you have asked God to forgive you for the harm you have caused, then you are ready to meet those people face to face • but only after forgiveness has been accomplished. Trying to smooth over a bad relationship with someone that you still deeply resent is apt to cause a deeper rift than existed before. The big reason is that it is a totally dishonest experience.

I think it is wise to see the person to whom the amend is to be made at the first opportunity after the completion of the Eight Step. An honest explanation of past behavior is an excellent starting point. I personally thought it was a good idea to simply tell the people that I was now in A.A. and in order for me to make progress in straightening out my life I needed to clean up my side of the street. The wording is optional, but I am convinced that the right words will come if the motives are in proper order.

Many of us had to deal with creditors, and it is wise to be prepared; under no conditions should you give your word on a payment schedule that you cannot meet. I created for myself a lot of unnecessary misery by trying to impress some bankers with some promises that were far from being true. But when I went back and told them I had made still another mistake by lying to them, they were extremely helpful in arranging payments I could afford. Almost without exception, creditors want the account to be paid and they are willing to go along with any reasonable effort honestly made.

The immediate reward in the labors of Step Nine, is the ability to look every human being straight in the eye, including ourselves. What a joy!! If there is any such thing in this wonderful program of ours as a lump-sum spiritual payment, The Ninth Step is it.

-Ed C.

A WEALTH OF WISDOM

If you find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if mistakes could be sold for as much as they cost?

Tact is the ability not to say what you really think.

It's too bad that the people who really know how to run the country are busy attending AA meetings.

If you are urged to drink a good answer is "I never drink when I'm sober."

Ideas are strange things. They never work unless you do.

A sense of humor and a sense of patience can take us a long way.

A miracle is a happening that causes FAITH.

Stay in the FLOW.

Act yourself into a new way of thinking, instead of thinking yourself into a new way of acting.

Washington Area Intergroup,
Betty L., Interviews Phil.,
and NOT GOD, PP 185.

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SORE POINTS

In any society there are differences of opinion and viewpoint. In the light of understanding and frank discussion this is good. In the darkness of misunderstanding and resentment it can be disastrous. In our fellowship these differences are minimized because of the kindly tolerance for which we strive. Yet often, to the newcomer, especially, these opposing views must be confusing. Cradled in the interpretations of his sponsor and those who mean the most to him in his beginning, he may find it upsetting when he gets into the deeper waters of a broader fellowship, to hear things which seem irreconcilable.

The Bulletin thinks its readers might enjoy discussion of these conflicts. Let's take an example or two. Most of us contend that sobriety is a precious gift that we did deserve and can never earn. But someone will say it can't be a gift, because we have to ask for it each day; because this way of life is hard, and in living-it to the best of our ability we earn sobriety at least in part. Who is right?

Then some say pride is absolutely taboo for us. Others say perhaps false pride is taboo, but surely some pride is necessary if we are going to regain our self respect. Who is right?

Then there is the fellow who says that he finds it necessary or at least advisable to stay strictly away from alcohol, those who use it and those places where it is sold. He recommends this for all to follow. Others say our sobriety is not too well founded if we must hide from the stuff, that we should work toward the ability to be comfortable in the company of all kinds of people and all atmospheres. Who is right?

And so we propose a little column each month called "Sore Points." If you know of one, or if you are confused by what seem to be diametrically opposed beliefs on some subject, please tell us about it and see if we can help you find the answer. Simply address—Sore Points, c/o Central Bulletin, 940 Rockefeller Bldg. 614 Superior Ave. Cleveland, Ohio 44113.

-Anonymity

Why I Swear

- 1) It pleases my mother (wife, children, etc.).
- 2) It is a fine mark of manliness.
- 3) It proves I have self-control.
- 4) It indicates how clearly my mind operates.
- 5) It makes conversation so pleasing to everyone.
- 6) It leaves no doubt in anyone's mind of my good breeding.
- 7) It impresses everyone that I have more than an ordinary education.
- 8) It is an unmistakable sign of culture and refinement.
- 9) It makes me a desirable personality among women, children and respectable society.
- 10) It is my way of honoring God.

THAT GROUP OF OURS

Ever hear this one?

"If that old goat tells his story once more in meeting I'm going to walk him off right then and there. I just can't take it again. Why doesn't he turn the platter? or — Our group is getting stupid lately. I can hardly drag myself to meetings. Everyone says the same thing he's been saying for years. He only has to start talking and I can fill in the rest. Guess I do the same thing too. Maybe I'd better stay away from a few meetings and get in out of my system."

If you've been in our fellowship for more than a year you've probably heard both of these, and maybe you've said these words or at least thought them. We all do at one time or another. It's normal. After we've experienced this feeling once it doesn't bother us so much, for then we know what to do.

When these thoughts occur, it is time to look alive, and maybe take a little personal stock. True, we do bore each other after a time. Also, some people really are bores. You'll find them in all societies. But even if every other member of our neighborhood group were a bore, ourselves excluded of course, we easily could afford to be downright bored for an hour or an hour and a half a week for the price of sobriety. And it isn't that bad either, as well we know. Everybody isn't boring. Maybe we're at fault.

It just isn't possible to retain the exhilaration and love for humanity — that honeymoon period — that sweeps over us when first we bite into the program. That first flush of enthusiasm tends to fade and few of us ever recapture it. But as we lose it we find it replaced with knowledge and a broader vision, a deeper sense of values, a more sober attitude and a host of other character improvements that more than compensate.

None-the-less, occasionally we all get fed up with things as they are. It is just normal living, normal existence. If everything ran smoothly, that too, would prove monotonous for we'd have nothing with which to compare it.

When this writer runs into these depressions, he finds a little honest inventory works wonders. Usually the fault isn't with the group. It is usually the individual who is wrong. We find that contrary to our first opinion, all the world is not out of step but us.

Another very good cure for this feeling is to visit other groups. When we find our own palling on us, we get around... and it broadens our perspective. We visit a new group and the same things are said that are said at our own. But maybe they're said just a little differently. Or maybe the emphasis is shifted slightly.

Then, too, we frequently find that the other group doesn't stackup anywhere near as well as our own. And we're glad to get back home.

Early in our AA an older member advised us to "get around." Don't think that all AA is wrapped up in this little neighborhood, he said. Visit other groups, frequently, and you'll learn a lot, and you'll learn more quickly.

We've done just that and it has helped immeasurably. We've learned a lot, although how quickly we absorbed our AA is a debatable question.

Get around, see other people when you're bored. And when you've done it we'll wager you'll say a little ashamedly to yourself, "Guess I belong to a pretty darned nice group. Certainly a solid bunch compared with such and such and so and so."

And it is a whole lot nicer than nursing your feelings in silence, staying away from meetings altogether, and ending up drunk.

Reprinted from Here's How August, 1951

A GOOD FRIEND

To have a good friend is one of the highest delights of life; to be a good friend is one of the noblest and most difficult undertakings. Friendship depends not upon fancy, imagination or sentiment, but upon character.

There is no man so poor that is not rich if he has a friend; there is no man so rich that he is not poor without a friend. But friendship is a word made to cover many kindly, impermanent relationships. Real friendship is abiding. Like charity, it suffereth long and is kind. Like love, it exulteth not itself, but pursues the even tenor of its way, unaffrighted by ill-report, loyal in adversity, the solvent of infelicity, the shining jewel of happy days.

Friendship has not the iridescent joys of love. Its heights are ever serene, its valleys know few clouds. To aspire to friendship one must cultivate a capacity for faithful affection, a beautiful disinterestedness, a clear discernment. Friendship is a gift, but it is also an acquirement, it is like the rope with which climbers in the high mountains bind themselves for safety, and only a coward cuts the rope when a comrade is in danger.

From Cicero to Emerson, and long before Cicero, and forever after Emerson, the praises of friendship have been set forth. Even fragments of friendship are precious and to be treasured. But to have a whole, real friend is worth high endeavor, for faith, truth, courage and loyalty bring one close to the Kingdom of Heaven.

- B y Atmos

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FINDING THE PROMISES

I enjoyed Decembers Bulletin, especially the story on the traditions, and if I may ad amusing to.

Amusing because I like to study the Big Book also, and I am always amazed at the new things I learn whenever I pick the book up again. Which leads into my story.

After almost a year of sobriety I began to stop paying close attention to the reading of the steps traditions ETC. at the beginning of meetings.

One night however. I heard something read which because of my ignorance never had heard before. That something was the twelve promises.

I began checking off each promise in my head and found that all twelve had come true in my life. My heart was filled with joy until I began thinking where did these promises come from? Were they just recently made up or borrowed as our serenity prayer was. Instead of asking my sponsor or somebody about these questions I began a search which took six months to end.

As I have often done in the past I have started to study my Big Book on and off and after six months of looking the promises popped up on pages 83 & 84 inbetween steps nine and ten.

Our twelve promises were not just made up or borrowed, Bill wrote them along with the rest of the Big Book, the promises are ours but only if we work the twelve steps and continue working them.

I also learned three important things out of this growing experience. Always pay attention to everything read or said at a meeting.

Never put the Big Book down for good, always pick it up again.

Working the steps has given me a better simpler way of life which pays off with the twelve promises.

TO CLEVELAND DISTRICT OFFICE

Hi! I am LeRoy. I am a member of A.A. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and since 1970 I have been living in Baltimore Maryland. I have been sober for over 5 years. I come down to Cleveland once a year to visit my sister. Whenever I come to Cleveland I go to A.A. meeting here. I like your meeting here very much. Living the A.A. on a daily basis is a life savor for me. I like to have the Central Bulletin sent to me in Baltimore.

Thank you
very much
In the fellowship
Forever yours
LeRoy

WHEREVER TWO OR MORE ARE GATHERED

This seems like a proper title to the little story I am about to relate - your District Office Secretary, Imogene and her husband, Art took their usual cold weather vacation to seek some sun and this year we did it aboard the T.S.S. Fair-wind cruising the Carribean, stopping at various islands with the anticipated visit to the Panama Canal as the objective. Anyone who has ever taken a cruise know that we meet a lot of new and interesting people and the thought is always with me as to just how many of "us" are on board. We found out, partially anyway. Our cruise ship left Port Everglades, Florida on Saturday the 8th of December and on the following Tuesday night as we returned to our cabin our newspaper showing the next days activities had been placed under our door. Lo and behold when I looked it over I saw the words "Friends of Bill W." meeting in the Mistral lounge at 2:30 PM the next day - I showed it to Art and we both looked forward to being there. We walked in to find five people sitting there - one a grateful Alanon whose husband had eight and one-half years of sobriety when he passed away. Art and I joined them and then one more came in and, there making our way from Montego Bay on our way to the Canal we had our meeting. It was beautiful - looking out of the window at the beautiful sea with no land in sight sat our little AA group. Jerry and Tom, brother and sister from Chicago, Mel from Los Angeles, Norma from Alanon, California, Dave from Winterhaven, Fla. - then Rod D. from Buffalo, Wyo. who had the bright idea of calling us together - and last Art and I. I really could feel the magic. Our topic was what it was like taking a trip like this and not drinking and then everyone told a little about themselves.. . it was a short meeting but we had met AND planned another meeting to be held on Sunday. When we returned on Sunday, one of "us" was missing (but not drinking) and the Alanon lady but we had one more - a lady, Dottie, from California who had not attended an A.A. meeting for three and one-half years. After coming out of treatment, she had attended for awhile but just stopped going BUT had not drank. We were told that, since she wasn't sure when she came up if we were A.A. that she was certainly glad she came and would be making meetings when she returned home. This was even a shorter meeting than the first because it was held just one-half hour before lunch... BUT WE MET AND SHARED.. . that is the important thing. We have thought about all of those we met and also some that were perhaps on board who could not bring themselves to join us-it was one of the most important highlights of our trip - I really do not have adequate words to express my gratitude that one day I learned and accepted the fact that I did not have to drink today that I am an Alcoholic.

Imogene Z.



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1692.1966

Vol. 43 February, 1985 No: 5.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 1985 — 8:00 P.M.
OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE
CLEVELAND, OHIO-ONTARIO ENTRANCE
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MARCH 28, 1985—8:00 PM.
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THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL
INTERGROUP DINNER DANCE
SATURDAY, APRIL 27TH, 1985
Swingo's at the Statler - Cleveland, Ohio
Speaker: Clancy I. Los Angeles, CA.
\$13.00 per person

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

MICKEY McPODDEN, 38 years of sobriety
BOB MARTIN, active member of Sheffield lake group.
HERMAN WADE (FOXIE) active member of the language of the heart group.

THE THRILL OF CHALLENGE

"A complete change takes place in our approach to life. Where we used to run from responsibility, we find ourselves accepting it with gratitude that we can successfully shoulder it. Instead of wanting to escape some perplexing problem, we experience a thrill of challenge in the opportunity it affords for another application of A.A. techniques, and we find ourselves tackling it with it with surprising vigor"

"Alcoholics Anonymous"
 Pages 311-312.

ALWAYS • CAREFUL • To • INVESTIGATE • OTHERS • NEEDS

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER

Happy February everyone! its here already . . . and we wondered what we would be doing with our time when we no longer drank!

It has been awhile since you have heard from your office but, with vacations and all we were kept pretty busy. As usual the post-holiday rush was really something this year on the calls for help.

A lot has been going on with your trusted servants in trying to get more of our duties at the office on a less time consuming basis. We have added a small computer and word processor to our equipment which will enable us to get at least one more secretaries list out to you during the year. Again, we are asking that any new secretary for a group or any new group get their new information in to us so that we can be as current as possible. By furnishing us with the correct information about your group, we can better take care of the calls for help. If the new secretary or alternate do not have anyone at home who can take messages on a 12 step call, perhaps another group member who is home all day will consent to taking the messages and then referring them to the secretary when they return from work. This is the reason many groups are complaining that they get no twelve step calls. . . we can't reach you! The calls that come into the office between 9 and 5 are usually given out to a group before we leave the office.

The time for the new Fund Drive campaign is once again upon us and all groups will be called upon to get their pledges. . . as is always stated.. . the Fund Drive is most important to us so that we can keep our doors open and offer the services we are supposed to and, as in all else, expenses seem to be going up . . . we have had to increase the cost of literature because of the increases we have had to pay to have the literature available to you. The 25% discount still stands as long as your bill is paid within thirty days. We need the payments so that we will have enough to keep sending our orders out to stock our shelves.

Please try to make plans to attend the Intergroup Dinner this year as it will be held on the last Saturday of April, the 27th and should not interfere with anything else going on (conferences, etc.). You will be impressed by our speaker, Clancy I. who carries a beautiful message and lives the program just the way it is meant to be lived. All of the newer, younger members if you have never attended before should try to make it. The music we have should be very satisfactory for all ages . . . all others who we used to see at the affair should also try to attend.

A local church was offering five Sunday meetings on "The New Morality," and among the topics listed on the bulletin board were abortion, homosexuality, and pre-marital sexual experience. A woman standing by the notice was overheard murmuring to herself, "Oh, dear. I guess I'll have to go to all of them, so that nobody will know which one I'm really interested in."

A secret is what you tell someone else not to tell because you can't keep it to yourself.

PATTERNS CAST FROM SAME MOLD

Every alcoholic's story follows the same pattern. The details may differ but the same basic fact underlies them all—we are powerless over alcohol; our lives have become unmanageable. My story is one of HOSPITALIZATION-six or seven times.

ABSENCE FROM WORK-colds, sinus trouble, earaches, toothaches, stomach flu.

BLACKOUTS-loss of memory three or four days at a time, with reawakening in a room full of empty bottles.

This is the same story thousands of others have told, differing only in location, or day of week, or other minor details. It is a story of broken promises, pledges and broken hearts.

AA CHANGES PICTURE

Then came AA, but I was a failure for 10 months because of my unwillingness to take step one. I pretended to accept it through fear of my wife, family and boss. But down in my heart I didn't want it. I wasn't embracing AA because I wanted sobriety. I pretended to accept because I had to.

Since then I have learned, the first step must be taken for one's self and only because in our hearts we want sobriety. If we act for someone else it won't work because sooner or later the outside influence that forced our action won't be there. With the pressure removed a slip follows.

To have sobriety we must want it. That there is a power greater than ourselves leaves no room for argument. The sun, moon, stars, tides all are living proof that there is a greater power, a higher power.

Now the question is this: "How does that higher power apply to us and what bearing does it have on our alcoholic problem?" All races, all people, all ages have believed in a higher power, whether they called it Christianity, Islam; Buddhism, or a host of other names. All have one common belief: that the higher power is synonymous for good.

— Be a Bulletin Booster —

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CARRYING THE MESSAGE.

Recently, an article in an out-of-town AA newsletter caught my eye. The title was "IF I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE . WHO THE HELL IS?" The writer, a Central Office volunteer in Wichita, Kansas, detailed the many excuses and put-downs he received in one Saturday afternoon, while attempting to locate a member to make a 12th-Step call. Fortunately, a person was reached who was willing to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic who called the desk.

The article caused me to review and reappraise my attitude toward our statement that "Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

First, and most obviously, the "I" of this declaration can't refer only to me. As Bill W. Advised us, "one individual must never assume or assert total responsibility for our Fellowship. Our Legacy of Unity expresses the thought that many such "I's" become "We," who strive for personal recovery and carry our message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Well then, how can I best use the gifts that my Higher Power has been so generous with, to contribute to our common welfare? My personal checklist is developing as:

1. BE AVAILABLE • attend meetings and lead meetings, when asked. Volunteer for duties in the Central Office. Make AA contacts as often as possible in person and by telephone. Place my name on 12th-Step and Exchange Committee lists and make sure that my phone number and address are kept current on both. Join the H & I Committee. (In short, seek out and never refuse an opportunity.)

2. DEMONSTRATE LOVE • greet newcomers and old friends with equal warmth and cheerfulness. Give without any expectation of receiving. Increase my financial contributions as I prosper. Share my happiness and gratitude for the many positive changes that AA has made in my life. Look and listen for the good in others. Let. my face, my actions and my words be witness to the fact that this program works, if I let it.

3. BE OF SERVICE. respect my meeting places and leave them cleaner and neater than when I came to them. Strive to increase my usefulness to each alcoholic, to my groups, to Intergroup and to GSA. As my progress in sobriety continues, let me advance in 12th-Step work and in performing offices at all levels as I am asked. Let me use to the fullest the talents that have been given to me, but always let me realize my limitations. Most important to my recovery and our Unity, let me do my best to walk absolutely as I talk.

The thoughts above are based on self-awareness that occurred as a result of several searching inventories. No one of us as individuals has all of the capabilities needed to achieve the Unity and Service that our Fellowship deserves. However, standing together and each lending his own unique talents, we can effectively answer the question, "Who the hell is responsible?" • WE ARE.

Love & Service,
Dick P.
NEW REPORTER

DAILY INSURANCE

He came in our office a short time ago to unburden himself on the difficulty he was having in absorbing the complete AA program. He was a member of a group which carried a substantial number of old-timers on its roster with 10 to 18 years of sobriety to their credit.

He, with only seven months of continued sobriety, achieved in spite of ridicule and sarcasm directed toward him by his former still drinking companions was beginning to feel out of step in such association. He was developing an inferiority complex!

Oh, he was treated kindly enough by his adopted group by the well-seasoned veterans They were tolerant when he sought their advice on AA philosophy and procedure. Often times his feelings were hurt by being brushed off with "Don't bother yourself with why or how, just keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut!"

Now this young fellow had an inquisitive mind. He had read the Book several times. He devoured all AA literature available, was eager to show his gratitude for his sobriety by working with others, but seldom was asked to go out on a call. He felt frustrated.

Would changing to another group be the solution? He could prefer to remain with his adopted group because it was located near his home. The meeting night was ideal for him too. But he felt he just didn't belong.

He assured us, when we asked him, that he hadn't taken a drink since he came out of the hospital. But he admitted, on further questioning, that the memory of the hell he had gone through was becoming more and more dim and that it was getting harder and harder to shrug off the "razzberries" of his former drinking companions

"What do you do," he asked "when you find yourself after a particularly trying day, pausing in front of one of your favorite haunts, having a compelling urge to chuck everything overboard and go on a binge? Others do it, I hear, and they are forgiven and taken back into the group That happened several times to me during the past month, but I didn't go in. What do you do?"

Maybe following the daily plan as faithfully as we could during all these years has become a habit, so we had to think what we did do When faced with any temptation, we quickly offered a sincere prayer. Our sponsor, a long time ago, suggested a quick, sincere "God help me" or the Lord's prayer.

When we finally threw in the sponge and accepted the first three Steps of the program, sincerely trying each day to obey His will so that we could face Him each night with a report of our success with His ever ready help

We offered our visitor these thoughts We even thanked him for reminding us of the need to come closer to the newcomer in AA. Many of us tend to forget that the tools we suggested they use for sustained sobriety need clearer directions for successful use.

The older we get in this league of ours, the greater is our-responsibility on sharing what we have learned.

Central Bulletin, Nov. 1967

THE 'GOOD TIMES' IN A.A. ARE . . .

What are the Good Times in A.A.? In my drinking days there was laughter, but it had to be triggered by a stinger or a double shot of something, so it was forced and unreal laughter.

For me, the Good Times in A.A. seem to hinge on: A) true friendship, B) real fellowship, C) sane living, D) real laughter and E) gut-sharing experiences.

Compared to my drinking days, those Good Time things win hands down. In fact, now that I have been sober a while, watching someone else drink bores me to tears. Thank God! The so-called "glamour" of drinking is dead for me.

At times, meetings bore me too. I now know that means something is bothering me that, left unresolved, could be a "red flag" time for my sobriety.

In 17 years in A.A., I find the program (that is, the 12 Steps) usually still exciting, and the fellowship that way too. I once thought the fellowship, the meetings, were the program. In meetings, I picked up pointers on how to act sober and think sober and how to get rid of bad habits.

Once, when I was about nine months sober, I went with my newfound A.A. friends to a coffee shop after a meeting.

I recognized the waitress as one I had puked on about nine months earlier. She remembered me too! Anyway, she would serve my friends, but not me. My friends suggested I might owe her amends.

So, every day for two weeks I went back to that restaurant — and every day she refused to serve me. Once she said "Get out of herem you lush!" After 15 straight days of this, she said loudly, "My God, I guess you really are sober. That A.A. must really work. So, what would you like to order, SIR?"

That, of course, was the work of God and the program'; I just did the footwork. And as long as we have a conscious contact with God and the 12 Steps and the Fellowship of A.A., the Good Times will just keep on rolling.

Bill R.
Los Angeles
Hello Central

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



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Vol. XLIII.—No. 6

IT TAKES A CERTAIN BREED OF CAT

It takes a certain breed of cat that lets a drunk crawl out of an alley, with a desire to stop drinking and join the happy and sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous. And it makes no difference out of what alley they crawled.

It is obvious who these cats are for they now know a certain, uninhibited sort of sobriety, grateful to be alive and sober. It is a status that many with a drinking problem would like to attain.

Speaking for myself, I am taking advantage of all the sobriety I can muster, to now do the things I want to do and not do that which I once had to do. I do not eat, sleep, or drink A.A. twenty-four hours a day, but I surely try to follow the suggestions as set forth to keep me sober. Proper A.A. conduct becomes foremost in my mind whenever a problem or situation arises.

I don't within reason, mostly as I like now, keeping A.A., family, and friends in mind. And life is not a bed of roses simply because I am sober, but I can now withstand the 'horns and the daily disappointments. Disappointments may hurt a little and the scratches may bleed a bit, but they soon heal when positive thinking and a little prayer are applied.

I truly believe that in a sense, we alcoholics are a fortunate lot because we have been taught well how to cope. Many non-alcoholics are not aware and have never been versed or taught the principles which we practice. One can observe almost daily, cases and outbursts, a lack of control, that the recovered alcoholic could readily deal with. When incidents and problems develop, repeating the Serenity Prayer helps to set me straight. I know of no more effective and easier way to put myself at ease during such periods.

The ability to accept new challenges and interests without the fear of incompetence or failure can round out our days more fully, that often prove to be too short. Recall when they were too long? The desire to live soberly, more forward, never overextending ourselves, helps instill a confidence, never to be diluted by cockiness.

I feel now that I have a greater determination, better able to express my ability, allowing me a fuller life, a more satisfying one with reachable goals, a drive I never possessed before I became addicted to alcohol.

Though on occasion, I may roar like a lion, snarl like a cougar, run like a cheetah and climb like a chimp. I must always remain that pussy cat, now humble, that crawled out of an alley.

Frank J.D.
Akron Intergroup

IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship" — designed and administrated by a bunch of ex-drunks whose only qualification for membership is that they can't hold their likker and don't want to learn how. It has no rules, dues or fees — no **nothin'** that any sensible organization seems to require. At meetings, the speakers start on one subject and end up talking about something entirely different concluding by saying "I don't really know anything about the program except that it works."

The groups are always broke but always seem to have money; they are always losing members, but always seem to grow; they claim A.A. is a selfish program but **always** seem to be doing things for others. Every group passes laws, rules, edicts and pronouncements which everyone blithely ignores. Members who disagree with anything are privileged to walk out in a huff — only to return **as** if nothing had happened, and to be greeted accordingly.

Nothing is planned more than 24 hours ahead — yet great projects are born and survive magnificently. Nothing in A.A. is according to Hoyle — how can it survive? Perhaps it is because we have learned to laugh at ourselves; God made man — He made laughter **too**. Perhaps He is pleased with our efforts and makes everything right no matter who pushes the wrong buttons. Maybe He is pleased not with our perfections but with our sincerity; maybe He is pleased because we are trying to be nobody but ourselves.

We don't know how, but it works; and members keep receiving their dividend checks from the A.A. investment. IT'S SMART TO STAY SOBER.

AWARENESS

A person completely wrapped up in himself makes a small package. The great day comes when a person begins to get himself off his hands. He has lived in a room surrounded by mirrors. Every way he turned he saw himself. Now, however, some of the mirrors have changed to windows. He can see through them to objective outlooks that challenge his interest. He begins to get out of himself • no longer the prisoner of self-reflections but a free man in a world where persons, causes, and truths exist, worthful for their own sakes. Thus to pass from a mirror-mind to a mind with windows is an essential element in the development of a real personality. Without that experience no one ever achieves a meaningful life.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

CENTRAL BULLETIN



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1892.1966

Vol. 43 March 1985 No. 6

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY APRIL 2, 1985 - 8:00 PM.
OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE
CLEVELAND, OHIO-ONTARIO ENTRANCE
REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH GROUP
WELCOME-BE INFORMED

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL
INTERGROUP DINNER DANCE
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Swingo's at the Statler - Cleveland, Ohio
Speaker: Clancy 1. Los Angeles, CA.
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IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

GRIMMET WALKER, ACTIVE MEMBER OF J&L GROUP
BRUCE MANSFIELD, OLD TIMER AND ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE KING SCHOOL GROUP AKRON.

The driver of a car with an ice-covered windshield had several near-collisions before being stopped by a police car.

"Wouldn't it help if you cleaned off the windshield" the officer asked.

"I don't think so," was the reply, "I left my glasses home."

Two drunks were making their way along a railroad track. Finally, one said, "Won't these stairs ever end?"

Said the other, "I hope so. These low hand rails are killing me."

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER

Fellow members - things are looking up - two columns in a row!

Since time is running short, I am going to spring right into action and remind you once again of our 34th Intergroup Dinner being held on April 27th. Tickets are going pretty fast this year so if you are trying to make up your mind, please don't wait too long. The Intergroup Dinner Committee is quite pleased with your interest this year as we were getting concerned that we might not have the crowds again that we once had. We miss some of the members who, at one time, would not think of missing the affair - so, if you have not retired and moved out of state, why not try to join the newer members again this year?

Our reponse has been great with the Secretary list changes and now, any time after the March 28th Advisory Committee meeting when we will have new members on the committee - we will be sending your new lists out. The March 28th date is important too! This is the meeting where you will decide who will be serving on our Operating Committee for the next three years.

We have had a lot of our long-time members on the sick list lately, we are sorry to report. We hope that all of them are home again and on the road to recovery . . . you are needed and missed.

By the way, our Central Committee meetings are being very well attended and we wish to thank the representatives of the various groups for their interest.

Along the ONE DAY AT A TIME THEME, remember that each new day comes with its prizes unassembled. Be handy with your tools. THINK ABOUT IT

'OUR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION'

Sobriety and peace of mind are the most important things in my life, without exception. You may believe your job, your home, your family, or one of many other things comes first.

But consider, if you do not get sober and stay sober, chances are you won't have a job, a home, a family, sanity, or even life.

If you are serious, and are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety you have must so much more the better chance of getting sober and staying sober. Every day, every hour of the day, even every minute of the hour, at times you may have to convincing yourself that sobriety is your most precious possession, and that when sobriety is lost, all is lost, or slipping fast.

If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances of staying sober. Life is easier than you think; all that is necessary is to accept the impossible, do without the indispensable, and bear the intolerable.

Don't louse it up; keep it simple.

Unsigned
"A.A. Circles. . ."
Pontiac, MI A.A.

Try praying; God likes to hear from strangers.

ALWAYS . CAREFUL . TO . INVESTIGATE . OTHERS . NEEDS

PROMISES ABOUND IN A.A.'s BIG BOOK

Virtually everyone who has been in A.A. a decent length of time has heard the "Promises" discussed at meetings. It is understood without question that the "Promises" are the declarative sentences at the bottom of Page 84 in the Big Book.

There may be some discussion as to how many promises there are; who cares?

Then there is the introductory statement that precedes these promises. It promises that we will be amazed if we are painstaking about this phase of our development.

When will we be amazed? Before we are halfway through. Someone will raise the questions: "What phase of our development? The Ninth Step? Halfway through what! It says before we are halfway through; that includes when I was on the First Step; it even includes when I was drinking."

And so it goes; A.A. run amuck!

The next time you are at a meeting at which the Promises are being discussed and discussion gets off course, as described above, try to guide the group into a discussion of promises outlined on Pages 152 and 153 of the Big Book. Here are some of them:

- There (in A.A.) you will find release from care, boredom and worry.
- Your imagination will be fired.
- Life will mean something at last.
- The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead.
- Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.
- You are going to meet these new friends in your community.
- Among them you will make lifelong friends.
- You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties.
- Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life.
- You will learn the full meaning of "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

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- Since these things happened to us, they can happen to you.
- Should you wish them above all else and be willing to make use of our experience, we are sure they will come

- The age of miracles is still with us.
- Those are just a few of the additional promises in the Big Book. Others are:

"... We can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do."

"... We have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit in us. . . But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him."

-"You will surely meet some of us as you trudge the road of happy destiny."

There are hundreds of promises in the Big Book, each worthy of being the topic at a discussion meeting. Perhaps the promise I hold closest to my heart is on Page 88 — "It works • It really does."

Bill D.
Fellowship Group
Beaumont, TX

"If a man who cannot count finds a four-leaf clover, is he lucky?"

— S.J. Lec

What A.A. isn't is Also Important

A.A. does not:

1. Furnish initial motivation for alcoholics to recover
2. Solicit members
3. Engage in or sponsor research
4. Join "councils" of social agencies
5. Follow-up or try to control its members
6. Make medical or psychological diagnosis or prognosis
7. Provide drying-out or nursing services, hospitalization, drugs, or any medical or psychiatric treatment
8. Offer religious services
9. Engage in education about alcohol
10. Provide housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services
11. Provide domestic or vocational counseling.
12. Accept any money for its services, or any contributions from non-A.A. sources
13. Provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers, court officials.

The primary purpose of A.A. is to carry our message of recovery to the alcoholic seeking help. Almost every alcoholism treatment tries to help the alcoholic maintain sobriety. Regardless of the road we follow, we all head for the same **destination**—rehabilitation of the alcoholic person. Together, we can do what none of us could accomplish alone.

There was a drunk talking to a bartender. The lush said, "Frank, you see that guy that just left?"

"Yeah" What about him?"

"He's an alcoholic!"

"How do you know?"

"Simple. I see him every time I come in here."

WHEN IT'S TIME TO HEAR.. .

No matter what kinds of A.A. meetings we attend, we constantly hear members say joyfully something like, "I've read the Big Book a hundred times and still, whenever I open it, I see something that is new to me," or "I'm amazed at how often I hear something that hits me for the first time at just about every meeting I attend."

All of us become more aware every day that, as A.A. members, we are enrolled in a school of learning about living. We are grateful that the school A.A. provides never gives out graduation diplomas. We have seen, with horror, what happens to those who think they have "completed" their lessons and are already to try "controlled drinking."

One of our favorite quotes in A.A. is, "When the pupil is ready, the teacher will appear." The succession of teachers in A.A. is never-ending, and the more we see of them the more we agree with the old adage "Find yourself a teacher and you find a friend."

As newcomers to A.A. we were often told, "The reason we urge you to keep coming back is so you can see for yourself what happens to those who get complacent and stop coming back."

Actually, the best reason for "meetings, meetings, meetings" is that when it is the right time for us to hear something vital to our sobriety — when our minds are open to accept and understand — we will be there to hear it.

The Twelfth Step sets the pattern for learning by noting that "we tried to carry the message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

Following the listing of the Steps in Chapter 5, we are told that these principles are guides to progress and that we reach for spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. That is a real invitation to more learning.

Bill W. wrote on several occasions that even in spiritual growth, A.A. is but a kindergarten of the spirit. We are meant to always have more revealed to us.

At the end of the Big Book proper, 'A Vision for You' addresses us as students to whom God will constantly disclose more. We are assured that answers will come to those whose own house is in order. We are reminded that before we can teach others, we must first learn something worth giving.

To learn about life is a privilege. History records that when Peter the Great, as a young Tsar, assumed the rule of Russia, he had a great seal made. On it were the words, "I am a pupil. I must be taught."

We in A.A. are taught constantly. What we learn is pretty much up to us.

Teet C.
N. Hollywood
Hello Central

Respect should be earned
by actions, and not
acquired by years.

G.B. WRIGHT

A NEW BEGINNING

Now that we are making a new beginning, we are confronted with a new word. It is not a new word in reality but to us it suddenly must take on a new meaning for us. That word is truth. In our lives, the word truth had become very, very rusty.

The truth is that we did not fail! We really never tried to live correctly or honestly or even half-way normally. We were plain drunks, and drunks do not really care about too much of anything except themselves, and where the next drink is coming from. The truth stares us in the face and tells us we really didn't care too much about self when we drank ourselves to destruction or nearly to death or insanity.

So, it seems rather ludicrous to ask "where did we fail," when we never really began. It's rather like the man in AA who says he "slipped", and drank again. One wonders how he could have begun drinking again when it seems he never actually wanted to be sober in the first place. If he had, his relapse would likely not have occurred.

To sum it all up, we drank our way down to oblivion, to "Nowheresville". We arrived there in many cases, broke, destitute, friendless, unwanted by loved ones, family, associates and society in general. Our death at this point would not have made much difference to a world which did not need us. The world needs productive people, and we were useless to ourselves much less to our Creator and our fellow men.

Through the merciful grace of this Creator we were permitted to see ourselves, and to suddenly receive His Gift to us: an honest desire to be sober and stay sober. He has told us: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

For those of us who knocked, it did open, and we were permitted to make a new beginning. We were useless! We were permitted to begin anew, and today we live each day happily, with eagerness, secure in the knowledge that by asking each morning for His Help we can stay sober another 24 hours. What better way to begin a New Year?

ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?

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Vol. XLIII-No. 7

WHO IS 'MOST IMPORTANT' TO AA?

We often hear it said at A.A. meetings that the new members are the most important persons in A.A. It is true that without the new members A.A. would surely quit growing.

But the most important person is the member who is responsible to his Home Group and A.A. as a whole. For without the groups, the new member **has** no chance of recovery.

Therefore, the older member knows that as the Twelve Steps will hold him together as an individual, the Twelve Traditions will hold his group and A.A. together. He knows that his efforts and the efforts of others of his group in working the Twelve Traditions will create the Group Conscience.

This Group Conscience in turn assures us that the A.A. Group will survive and our own sobriety as alcoholics will continue. For it is in the Fellowship at meetings that we often find the much needed help to stay sober.

Unfortunately, some members have the attitude that they are just "average members" and have no need of working the Traditions. They believe that the Traditions are just for the group's officers.

But, if we are honest with ourselves we will see that there can be no group without everyone doing his and her part.

It is our responsibility to attend the business meetings and help to elect our group officers. We should also express our ideas and opinions on issues that will affect A.A. It is here that we shall see the group conscience in action.

If we went a step further and attended our Intergroup meetings, we would see how each group's representative helps to form an even greater group conscience. This is the way that policies are set for the local area of A.A.

It is the Intergroup that pays to have an answering **service** for the sick and suffering alcoholics to call and get help.

The General Serviced Representative (GSR) takes our group ideas to the Area Committee meetings. They are given to our Delegate, who in turn takes them to the General Service Conference in New York. It is there that they help to set the policies that A.A. will follow.

So, the next time we hear the Traditions read, let's pay close attention.

For, whether we like it or not, it is we, the individual members, that make A.A. a whole.

THE WINNER'S CIRCLE
Fort Knox, KY A.A.

IN THE BEGINNING, WISDOM PREVAILED

We can all be grateful today that Bill W.'s first draft of the the "How It Works" portion of A.A.'s Big Book was revised before printing: Here are some excerpts from it:

"rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our **directions** . . . naturally incapable of grasping and developing a **way of life** . . .

" . . . then you are ready to **follow directions** . . .

" . . . you **may** balk. You **may think** you **can** find an easier, softer way. **We doubt if you can** . . .

" . . . **you are dealing** with alcohol — . . . too much for you . . . That One is God. You **must** find Him now!

"Half measures **will avail** you nothing. You **stand at the turning point**. **Throw yourself under** His protection and care with complete abandon.

"**Now we think you can make it!** . . . **your** Program of Recovery.

"3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to to the care **and direction** of God as we understood Him.

"6. Were willing **that God** remove all these defects of character.

"7. Humbly, **on our knees**, asked Him to remove our shortcomings - **holding nothing back**.

"12. Having had spiritual **experience as the result of this course of action**, we tried to carry this message to **others, especially alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs**.

" . . . **Our description of the alcoholic, and our personal adventures before and after, have been designed to sell you three pertinent ideas** . . .

" . . . **If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to re-read the book to this point or else throw it away!**"

The review of this first draft resulting in revising it led to such things as the "singleness of purpose" and "God as you understand Him" aspects of the A.A. program that are still its strengths.

LIFE IS SHORT

Be Grateful, For What we Have.

Think . . . of the Hardship, that we Had.

Think . . . of a better way of Life, We'll Have.

With the help of GOD, We're United as One.

For we cannot make it on our own.

We need each other, as a Hold

With GOD, on one Side,

And A.A. on the other Side.

We'll each make it,

Butt. . NOT ALONE.

By Milly



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1892.1988

vo. 43 April 1985 No. 7

**CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1985 • 8:00 P.M.**

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MANTUA, OHIO

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

- BILL AERNI**, member of various groups.
- J. C. COAKLEY**, member of our fellowship.
- JERRY GUNAR**, active member of Lakeshore Men's Disc. Group.
- JOE JANIESZEWSKI**, an active member of the Newburgh Group.
- LARRY McNEELEY**, active member of Thursday Closed Men's Group.
- WALTER SHERMAN**, active member of Doan Men's and Sister Ignatia Group.

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER:

We would like to begin this column by thanking all those who participated in our Annual Fund Drive Campaign — The Chairmen, Captains, Collectors and MOST OF ALL -those who contributed. We are a long way off of having any complete records and totals to report, these things take a good long time to post, tabulate and acknowledge. We do know, according to our Victory Dinner figures, is that with nine areas not reporting it looks like we have made our goal and topped it once again. This means that the figures are there as the amounts pledged NOT that we ever get 100% paid due to many different factors. Our requested goal for the year 1985 was \$1 00,000.00 which seems like a lot of money but as our personal expenses go up so do those of your District Office.

We try to keep a one year prudent reserve on hand so that we can assure that we are here when the call for help is received . . . if things ever get to the point where we can no longer realized anything from a Fund Drive that would be efficient. . . there would be cut-backs in all areas so that no matter what • the DOORS ARE KEPT OPEN! The question most often asked during our Drive is how much we have on hand and why we need as much as we do . . . it would seem that it should be fairly self-explanatory but since it isn't — we always try to provide an answer that is acceptable. We have taken many cost cutting measures and are always aware that we are spending YOUR and you want it handled properly.

This issue leaves us right at the Intergroup Dinner date but we are expecting a full house for the first time in a few years . . . a more thorough report will be available next issue.

Go cautiously into the summer season which is just around the corner and enjoy, relax and live in sobriety — summer is a beautiful time of year!



TRADITIONS AT WORK

Any AA group — probably because it is composed of human beings — has problems from time to time. Most of them could be solved or, better still, prevented, if all concerned would look for the appropriate Tradition and apply it. For example, take the case of what we'll call the Forthright Group.

Its members were roaring mad at the central office. How dare that sneaky outfit hire an answering service for AA without asking the local groups or even telling them? Well, the Forthright Group wouldn't hold still for it. They'd get a telephone listing of their own. They'd put ads in the paper. They'd . . .

About that time, a member of another group known to be on the committee that had arranged for the answering service, came to speak at the Forthright Group. In introducing this fortunately unflappable member, the leader, sharply criticized the central office, announced his group's plan to boycott the new project, and said they had a perfect right to do so, because "every group is autonomous."

"I believe I can explain all the things that are troubling you," the speaker said mildly. "But first, let me ask two questions. You mentioned the first part of our Fourth Tradition, group autonomy. Does this group follow the Traditions?"

"Always! Absolutely!" the leader replied.

"Do you get a report from your intergroup representative on every monthly meeting?"

"No, we aren't interested in that stuff and don't want to waste meeting time on it."

"Then I am forced to conclude that your group is violating the First and Fourth Traditions, those concerned with your relations with AA and other groups. The First Tradition says: 'our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.' If an individual becomes angry and separates himself from AA, or a group refuses to cooperate with other groups in a common cause, that isn't putting our common welfare first. Unity is lost.

— Be a Bulletin Booster —

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"Many of us use 'group autonomy' as justification for anything a group wants to do, but that is only the first part of the Fourth Tradition. The entire Tradition says: 'Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.'

"You believe the central office engaged an answering service without informing the groups. In fact, the matter was thoroughly discussed at the regular meeting four months ago, and a committee was appointed to investigate.

"At last month's meeting, we had a detailed report, and the Reps voted to start using the answering service. Every group in the Intergroup association - except yours - knew all about it, from the Reps. But you won't let your Rep report. On the basis of group autonomy alone, yours would have that right. But Intergroup actions often affect all the groups, or AA as a whole.

"Therefore, I suggest that refusing to be informed on such matters violates the Fourth Tradition and leads to violation of the First."

This affair had a happy ending. The Great Forthright Rebellion collapsed, and the group joined the others in using the answering service. Now, the members even let their Rep report on Intergroup meeting — sometimes, if he pounds on the table and demands to be heard . . .

NEWSLETTER

San Fernando Valley,
California

ALONE

I was told when I was newly sober that it was not good to be alone. I had alot of anger, fear, and resentments that grew to huge proportions when I was alone. I was told to stay with sober people in sober places. Go to AA meetings nightly if possible. When I was in AA groups I forgot my troubles I forgot that my family kicked me out, divorced me, and my business career seemed over.

I wanted to drink but I didn't want to drink. I was "sick and tired" of being "sick and tired." I did as I was told and slowly things got better. I was told we have to be directed by our AA sponsors to do the things others do naturally. Alone in bed I found my hate and resentments grew. Then I discovered prayer. Prayers clean the mind of negatives and give us hope for a sober future.

Ralph W.
Sister Ignatia

IT MAKES ME LAUGH

On a flight home from California, two passengers were discussing their visits. One had just completed a course at an international bartenders school. He was enthusiastically describing the making and sampling of such concoctions as a "silver bullet", made with vodka, scotch and vermouth, or a "Caribbean breeze", which blended rum with cognac.

"How wonderful!!" exclaimed the other traveller. "And after you return home, what will be your specialty?"

His seatmate's response was quick. "Alcoholic counseling," he said.

GOD IS ALIVE & WELL *f*

It is said, that the alcoholic seeks God. I assure you that seemed to be the last object I sought when I was drinking. But I did seek. Seek an answer to loneliness and aloneness. I sought my answers in the bottle. It is said that God is perfect and complete. He made man. And since there can be but one God, man is incomplete and imperfect. Man can only be complete after he returns to God.

Now what returns to God? Religion calls it the soul. Keep it simple. Let's call it the mind. Centuries ago man thought his heart was the center of thought and emotions. Now we know the heart is just a pump. The brain is just an electro chemical computer. But what the brain gives out is the mind: the person, the personality, the interests and intelligence. My mind is me. This is what seeks God-in a sober way.

Ralph W.
Sister Ignatia

ON VACATIONS

It's vacation time again, which brings forth the oft repeated suggestion to fortify ourselves against trouble during the period when we may be away from regular haunts. The best insurance possible is to put our copy of the Big Book beside our traveling bag when we pack. Leave just enough room for it. Then, when everything is in, place the book on top. Every time we open the case there will be a reminder of what we've achieved since we came on the program, a warning to keep our sobriety, and quick answer to our problem in case we are fearful of trouble. We get so accustomed to the help we get from association with other AAs, that when we find ourselves alone we sometimes become frightened. But if our membership in AA is solid, we should be able to keep sober with aid of the book alone. If we want AA associations while away the names of secretaries in other towns are available in the downtown office. In many cities AA is listed in the phone book. But the book is the important thing and above everything, let us keep our cherished sobriety. Happy vacations to all!

Reprinted from *Here's How* July 1950



"Ho ward is very good with new members."

COMPLACENCY IS OUR ENEMY

One of the most baffling and insidious barriers to recovery from alcoholism is complacency. When we have been sufficiently beaten (in one way or another) through our use of alcohol, we become motivated to get into treatment or go directly to AA and vigorously pursue the 12-Step Program of recovery.

We may begin by attending several meetings a week and *thinking* AA almost constantly throughout the day. We are amazed at how profoundly our life has changed in such a short period of time. Now the boss and the spouse smile at us and all seems well.

We continue our active AA involvement for a time, we continue working and thinking about the Steps and other AA principles, and things continue to go well.

And then one day, almost imperceptibly at first, the half-conscious thought passes through the mind that maybe we've been making too much of a simple thing.

Now, after several months or perhaps several years in the program, we forget that our recovery is only given to us on a 24-hour basis. We may even begin to feel quite certain that we'll *never* take another *drink*.

Our AA involvement is curtailed or perhaps even dropped entirely and our thoughts seldom wander to the Steps of our program. The last thought to enter our confused minds is of the alcoholic who still suffers, of the "new" man or woman who might need our experience and strength — and whose hope we certainly need.

We have forgotten entirely many of the things we've learned. The *we are just one drink away from a drunk*, that *in order to keep it we've got to give it away*; and that complacency is our deadly enemy.

If we continue in this attitude, we are in danger of getting drunk — a serious matter for people who have realized the truth of the First Step in their lives. As with many things in life, *an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure*.

We need to rekindle our gratitude and start anew — **ONE DAY AT A TIME** -to put the Steps of the Program back into our lives. How do we go about this? Simple. *We remember our last drunk.*

John G., AA Lifeline
St. Paul, Minnesota

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



THE WOLF AND THE SHADOW

This is a story of a wolf and his shadow. Have you ever noticed your shadow? In the morning it is on one side of you. Then it seems to shrink away until it is right under your feet and in the evening it stretches longer and longer as the sun goes down.

It happened that one evening a wolf walking by himself in a flat, lonely part of the country, with the sun very low in the sky, saw his shadow growing taller and taller by the moment. The wolf looked at it in surprise. "Is that really me?" he thought. "I must be at least thirty feet long. To think that yesterday I ran away from a lion. If I am as big as this, I should be king of the beasts myself."

The wolf strutted along proudly, feeling very big and strong. Soon the sun went down and the night animals began to stir about. He could hear roars and rustles about him but he walked boldly on, confident that no one would attack him.

He was still telling himself how big and strong he was when a hungry lion leaped on him. "You can't touch me, I am thirty feet long," the wolf boasted.

"You look like an ordinary wolf-sized wolf to me," said the lion as he devoured him.

Moral: You may overestimate your importance but you cannot fool other people.

By Aesop

Those long and dark shadows we cast over the family life and friends were indeed real and depressing ones.

During our foolish years of aimless wandering, our fancies too wreaked havoc upon us and others, and an uncontrolled ego kept our lives in constant turmoil and disarray.

Under the influence we were irresponsible, ever demanding, never yielding, unconcerned about the welfare of others, indifferent toward our duties to family, friends, community and the will of God, which are responsibilities that most men accept.

Gullible and vulnerable we were, becoming easy prey for those seeking an advantage, an inclination we put into practice.

And life so remained until an honest evaluation of ourselves was made. Sad to admit, some like the foolish wolf, never took this opportunity.

Once ego is seeded within the mind,
Vanity prevails and a man will find
His actions controlled in eerie ways,
And fools are born during those days.

Frank I.D., Akron Intergroup

IMPROVEMENT

It is necessary to try to surpass one's self always; this work ought to last as long as life. *Queen Christina*

SELF SUPPORTING

Have I got the price of a drink in my pocket? *Absolutely not!* Neither right now nor for the rest of today. What I would have spent for a drink in times past, I now consider to be a very small part of the cost of sobriety that has given me back my life. Bartenders don't constantly give drinks on the house, and there's no "free ride" to sobriety.

Our literature tells us that we are entirely self-supporting through our own contributions. "They" don't finance AA services-WE do. I am responsible to give to my group according to my ability, and my group is responsible to contribute to AA services according to the Traditions. A large group bank account will never carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

To support AA's essential services, our General Service Conference recommends that groups follow the "60-30-10" plan. This plan suggests that after the usual expenses of the group are paid, the balance of contributions are to be distributed as follows:

60%—to our Cleveland District Office. To pay for phone services for 12th-Step calls and other inquiries, coordination of group activities, AA literature sales, and local committee work.

30%—to our General Service Office. To support group services of almost 25,000 groups in the United States and Canada; of over 7,500 overseas groups; of over 1,600 groups in hospitals and institutions; and well over 1,000 loners in all corners of the world.

10%—to our Area Committee. To support area assemblies, delegates expenses, and area public information and institution work.

A worrisome statistic is that about 50% of all groups don't contribute on a regular basis according to this plan—or any other plan.

My personal conviction is that if I don't make my own small deposit to AA services, the money in my pocket may turn out to be the price of a drink!

Who's responsible? We are.

Fifty years ago on June 10th a miracle happened. Alcoholics Anonymous was born. Is it possible that any of us living today can fully express the gratitude we feel at being sober because of that miracle.

Many A.A. Groups around the world on June 10th will light a candle at the start of their meeting to commemorate our fellowship's birth. Would this be a good idea for your group to fellow?



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Harry D.. Founder and Editor 1892-1968

Vol. 43 May 1985 No.8

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

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INVOLVEMENT

From the beginning, Alcoholics Anonymous has been a movement of involvement. It began not as an institution, not as a club, not as any kind of organization.

It began on a one to one basis. One person had found a path to sobriety and communicated this to another person.

This is involvement in its truest meaning—the willingness to give of what we have found to someone else. The desire to see someone else freed from the compulsion to drink as we have been freed. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is the powerful element which binds us.

This, then, is the capacity for love that shows itself in the wording of the Twelve Steps. They always read “We” and never “I”. This is AA’s involvement. This should be the involvement of every individual in our Fellowship.

It is common today to say of a great many things, “I don’t want to get involved.” We cannot afford to say that about AA.

There are too many still-suffering alcoholics to reach out to. There are too many jobs to be done. And then, there is the most telling reason of all for our involvement: OUR SOBRIETY DEPENDS ON IT. *The Hummer*

IMPRESSIONS

We were talking with a comparatively new member at a meeting recently who stated that he had made this trip across town to hear the speaker scheduled to speak. He informed us that he had known this man for many years and considered him one of the lowest of the low, a man without any decent principles or impulses and absolutely devoid of any morals or character.

Soon after he had embraced the Fellowship, he heard this man being extolled by several as being one of the most outstanding AAs in the Cleveland area. He couldn’t believe his ears. It couldn’t be the same man . . . and if it was, then very evidently this cookie had certainly pulled the wool over the eyes of “the guys who ran AA” and let him come in. And if it was indeed the same fellow whom he knew, inside and out, he would expose this fourflusher to all and sundry.

He searched the Group News column of the Central Bulletin and learned that this man was to speak at this particular meeting. We sat with the visitor and as the speaker rose to make his talk, the visitor hissed an aside to us: “That’s the faker!” We quieted him and urged him to listen with an open mind.

For fifteen minutes, the speaker qualified, describing himself as having been morally and spiritually bankrupt. He had been disloyal to his wife and family, his employer and all of his friends. His word was worth nothing and his promises false. None could have sunk lower, he admitted.

“God must have listened to the prayers of my family,” he went on, “for I hadn’t been in contact with Him for many years.” A complete stranger took him in, had hospitalized him, reconciled him with his family and former employer and gave him the keys to the AA way of life.

His words rang with sincerity and his humility was impressive, as he described the battle he had with downing his old wrong impulses and changing his thinking habits so that he could face “The Man Upstairs” (his conception of the Power Greater Than Himself) each night.

It hadn’t been easy for him, but he dutifully followed his sponsor’s example and advice. His sponsor had impressed him with his need for a mental and moral catharsis, and emphasized the importance of the Four Absolutes which he had found as a solution for his own moral regeneration.

He found it most difficult to be ABSOLUTELY honest, pure, unselfish, and to practice love . . . but he persisted and found to his amazement that life was FUN—real, honest, care-free fun, and life was good.

The man at our right sat spellbound and when the meeting closed, he jumped to his feet and was the first to greet the man whom he had intended to “expose.” We did not listen to their conversation, but we did notice that afterwards they sat to one side, talking intimately as we left the meeting.

We met the newcomer the other day at one of our nursing homes, where he had taken his first “baby.”

We noticed a decided change in his attitude. He seemed "to belong."

We asked him how he was getting along and he informed us that his life had completely changed since the meeting we had attended together when he was going to show up the "faker."

The "faker" and he became inseparable companions and the "Daily Plan and the Four Absolutes" have completely changed his life.

He also has found that sober living with a plan and purpose can be fun-real fun.

Central Bulletin
June 1960

WILLINGNESS

A few weeks back, I was at a discussion meeting when the topic of willingness was talked about. As we went around the room, I started to think just how much this word meant to me, and how it affects our lives.

I had to realize that when I hit my bottom, I was willing to do something about this mess I had made over the past years. That had me to the decision that I had a drinking problem, and needed AA.

After arriving here, I still had to have a willingness to see what it was that AA and the fellowship had for me. I didn't fall right in with everything at first. I had to see just how hard I could make myself miserable while not drinking.

After about a year and a half, I had to muster up my willingness to start living this way of life the right way, and start growing and living the AA way, if I was to get better at accepting the things that were happening in my life. The good as well as the bad.

today my willingness is a very important part of my program, for without willingness to grow in AA is the first sign of sliding back to the old way of life.

I am now ready and willing to do whatever anyone asks me to do within the confines of AA.

Be a Bulletin Booster

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MY SOBRIETY

My sobriety has given me affection, faith, beauty, wisdom, contentment, courage, freedom, gentleness, friendship, happiness, hope, kindness, self-knowledge, peace, tears and laughter, truth, security, warmth, honesty, and love. My sobriety has given me a desire to live, and for this I am forever grateful.

AArea News, Toledo, OH

GETTING DOWN TO A.A. BASICS — AGAIN

After some years of sober living, I still must get down to the very basics of our program. When things just don't seem to be going my way, I have a tendency to start fixing blame on others or circumstances and not where it belongs, on myself. One of my biggest stumbling blocks to growth early in the program, was trying to blame someone or something else for my problems.

The other evening, I heard a person just starting in the program blaming all kinds of other people for his drinking beyond control. I thought how like myself when I first came into the program. It was not until I placed the blame on myself and took the responsibility for my own actions that I began to show some progress and find a new freedom from self-deception.

I was freat at blaming my drinking on family, not having the things I thought I should have, the depression, my friends, I didn't realize at the time that I chose most of my friends-they didn't choose me-and I chose them because they drank. I was not willing to admit I was wrong.

What a relief it was for me when I could finally admit with honesty that I was wrong and had a problem that I could do something about, with the help of you people in A.A. and my Higher Power, and a faith in both. I am now able to be honest and admit that I am wrong when I am wrong. I am willing to try to change the things I can, and accept the things I cannot change.

I find that if I am willing to render some help to those who still suffer, with what I know about the program and telling my own story, I am reminded how powerless I am over alcohol, and it serves to combat my self-centeredness. Thus, I am the winner.

I know that I had continued on with the attitude I had in the beginning, of worrying about the reasons why I drank, I would be drunk, or worse, today.

I must contantly remind myself to work steps 10 and 11, to square away my distorted thinking, to remember how quick I was to blame others for my drinking problem.

"Silver Dollar"
 Fargo, ND, AA

TOLERANCE

The most loveable quality anyone can possess is tolerance. It is the vision that enables one to see things from another's viewpoint. It is the generosity that concedes to others the right to their own opinion and their own peculiarities. It is the bigness that enables us to let people be happy in their own way instead of **our way**.

Office Kansas City, MO. Via Area Central

PROCRASTINATION DESTROYS USEFULNESS

Of all the character defects that abound with man, procrastination seems to be the one "most likely to find success" with a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Soon after we enter A.A. we are made aware of the fact that we must control our emotions and those character defects which influence them. We are advised to try to avoid anger, jealousy and self-pity. We are cautioned to avoid fear and hate. The reason we are told, is because excessive emotional strain can weaken our resistance to drinking. Furthermore, if we cannot learn to face reality, we most certainly could not meet a crisis without danger of resorting to drink to avoid the issue.

All of these things are told us and we listen. In time, we find ourselves making an effort to do something about these defects so that we avoid this kind of strain to our sobriety. We even reach the point where we can openly discuss our weaknesses and are not afraid to admit that we are somewhat less than what we choose to be with respect to our defects.

But, alas! What about procrastination? This could be called a character defect. Or perhaps it could be described as a "non-action" defect of character since the application of meaning of the word is actually to do nothing.

When we are drinking, procrastination becomes a part of our life, simply and easily. It is understandable if we realize that for the alcoholic life gradually ceases to have meaning or purpose. Why strain ourselves to do anything except the simplest of actions. we are going no place; to accomplish anything required more effort than we wish to expend. What a waste of everything in the image of man that God created! The highest type of life on earth and the one which is ruler over all other types of life chooses to delay — and delay doing that which he should or must eventually do.

Is it possible that we take advantage of our slogan, "live one day at a time", or "what you can't do today approach tomorrow"? It is conceivable that in our anxiety to avoid emotional disturbances we procrastinate without meaning to do so? Perhaps we have become such creatures of habit that this is really the character defect we should work to eliminate.

Procrastination can destroy one's usefulness. A.A. cannot live if we lose our desire to help others and procrastination IS the first step in that direction. Let's work hard to eliminate it from our life.

A.A. Newsletter, Kansas, MO
via Hello Central

LOOK

Look up, and not down; look forward, not back; look out, not in; and lend a hand. *E.E. Hale*

The most completely lost of all days is one void of laughter.

STONE WALLS DO NOT PRISONS MAKE

In each of these small cells there is a window. Although they are 3 feet in height, they are only 6 inches in width, thus restricting one's view of the world outside to a very narrow observance.

As I lay there some 6 feet from this narrow slit, I'm barely able to make out the roof of the building across from me. But when I draw closer to the window my view expands and at the closest view through the same window, I'm able to see the grounds below the trees in the distance, and an occasional squirrel. From a distance one night I watched the rain form beads on the window but as I drew closer, I could see the storm and all its powerful beauty to entertain me.

I was struck by a simple analogy of how often my mind is like that narrow window. How often have I looked through that small enclosure to find the nothingness I thought existed? It was upon entering A.A. that I began to approach that narrow window and looking out on a greater expanse, my mind began to open up to hope, faith, and a Higher Power.

It is because of the mind-expanding experience of A.A. that I don't sit here wailing my sad song, beating my chest and crying to the God of my understanding "Why me!" The program of A.A. opened my mind and gave me a worthy purpose in life. It taught me to be responsible for my actions, to forgive myself and to love my fellowman.

Today when I find myself looking through a narrow mind, I hear a quiet voice saying: "Dan, draw closer and look again at the green expanse, the trees and the squirrels, draw close to the storm and see the powerful orchestration of the heavens."

I have a choice today, to sit and stagnate or to grow and be happy. My friends, I miss you all very much. My thoughts and prayers are always with you.

P.S. This morning (April 16) as I read the Twenty-Four Hours a Day Book, I was reminded how much your love and prayers have helped me, and it is with great humility I prayed its prayer for the day.

Dan C. Sanford, via Intergrouper

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



GROUP INVENTORY

Recently? ??

FOLLOWING IS FROM A.A. PAMPHLET
"THE A.A. GROUP"

WITH PERMISSION A.A. WORLD SERVICES, INC.

26. *How* is a group *inventory* taken?

Many groups periodically take a "group inventory," using one meeting for an honest and fearless discussion of the group's weaknesses-and strengths.

Many groups have written G.S.O. that a group inventory perked up their A.A. activity and made sobriety more exciting and enjoyable-besides getting the message to more and more alcoholics.

The most popular form for taking a group inventory has been the set of questions which the Three Legacies Group, Spokane,, Wash., used effectively.

1. What is the basic purpose of the group?
2. What *more* can the group do to carry the message?
3. Considering the number of alcoholics in our community, are we reaching enough people?
4. What has the group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of physicians, judges, members of the clergy, and others who can be helpful in reaching those who need A.A.?
5. Is the group attracting only a certain kind of alcoholic, or are we getting a good cross section of our community?
6. Do new members stick with us, or does turnover seem excessive?
7. How effective is our sponsorship? How can it be improved?
8. Has everything practical been done to provide an attractive meeting place?
9. Has enough effort been made to explain to all members the need and value of kitchen and housekeeping work and other services to the group?
10. Is adequate opportunity given to all members to speak and participate in other group activities?
11. Are group officers picked with care and consideration on the basis that officership is a great responsibility and opportunity for Twelfth Step work?
12. Does the group carry its fair share of the job of helping intergroup? The Grapevine? G.S.O.? Groups in institutions?
13. Do we give all members their fair chance of keeping informed about the *whole* of A.A.-Recovery, Unity, and Service?

You'll probably want to add questions of your own. (If your group tries an inventory, please let G.S.O. know of the results.)

WARNING

C.T.M. is an unauthorized publication of the reproduction of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous 1939 issue).

SPRING CLEANING

Trust in God and clean house. How many times have we heard these words? We find that there is a lot more to the AA program than stopping drinking and attending meetings.

We found, after a while, that we had to do a thorough housecleaning. We had to take a look at ourselves from the basement to the attic and clean up all the old ideas and sick secrets from our pasts.

Through the 4th and 5th Steps, we were able to expose all of this to the light of reason. We were able to face life clean and sober and free. Our house was clean. We could look the world in the eye! We could forgive ourselves and others.

But, houses don't stay clean forever. An occasional dusting is needed as well as a thorough job once in a while. Sometimes, vague feelings of dissatisfaction creep in again. We become restless, irritable; perhaps not getting along with our loved ones and friends. We start getting our wants mixed up with our needs. Our defects really start rearing their ugly heads again. *We need to clean house* again.

Perhaps we only need to step up on our meetings. Maybe we need to have another inventory session with our sponsor. There is no freedom like the freedom that comes from honest disclosure of what is really happening in our lives to another human being.

Maybe we're not showing our gratitude by giving this program away. Maybe we've become selfish about our time again -forgetting about all the time that was so freely given to us. Maybe we've been stalling about a particular Step.

Stop and think about your life, your sobriety, your gratitude. *Clean your house*, not someone else's.

In this Spring season of renewal and new life, get your house in order and everyone else's will seem better too.

From the Southern Maryland *LIFELINE*

CHANCE IT

PROGRESS always involves risks. You can't steal second base and keep your foot on first.



Published monthly by the Cleveland Central Committee of A.A., a non-profit fellowship dedicated to service. Address all letters to Central Bulletin, 940 Rockefeller Bldg., 614 Superior Ave., NW Cleveland, Ohio 44113. Subscription price \$3.50 per Year.

Harry D., Founder and Editor 1892-1968

Vol. 43

June 1985

No. 9

CENTRALCO-MEETING

TUESDAY, JULY 2, 1985 -8:00 P.M.
 OLD STONE CHURCH • PUBLIC SQUARE
 CLEVELAND, OHIO
 ALL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME
 BE INFORMED

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

Jerry West-Active 40 year member of the Brooklyn and West Side Morning Groups.

Joe Farranici-Active member of the former Hilltop Group.

Dave Ernst-Passed away May 29, 1985

Charlie Sykes-Active member of The Brooklyn Group.

Robert Rodgers-Secretary of Sobriety Sunday Group

*The search is over-the journey's been long,
 But now I know where I truly belong;
 For I came to a fork in the road of life—
 One headed toward peace-one headed toward strife.*

*By the Grace of God I chose the right way
 And that, my dear friends, keeps me sober today.*

*He's given me hope and the will to be strong—
 With understanding and love He's forgiven each
 wrong.*

*I'm indebted to Him for leading the way
 As I know in my heart He gave me "A.A."
 "A.A." is my home, my salvation, my peace—
 I pray that my faith shalt ever increase.
 For the "sickness" we share's not a sin nor a crime.*

And our problem we'll solve-one day at a time. . .

The Big Book Says!

We families of Alcoholics Anonymous keep few skeletons in the closet. Everyone knows about the other's alcoholic troubles. This is a condition, which, in ordinary life, would produce unto/d grief; there might be scandalous gossip, laughter at the expense of other people, and a tendency to take advantage of intimate information. Among us, these are rare occurrences. We do talk about each other a great deal but almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance.

ALWAYS . CAREFUL . TO . INVESTIGATE . OTHERS . NEEDS

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER:

The last time we met was in April issue-time did not permit anything in the May issue because your Trusted Servants here have been very busy with the 1985 Fund Drive "after the campaign" work-but at last we can see the light at the end of the tunnel! As predicted, our grateful A.A. members did come through for us and we can assure you that the phones, literature, etc. will go along for another year.

This month is HAPPY BIRTHDAY A.A. month! Just imagine if those two dear men had not met back in the 1930's—we would not even be in touch as we are today and then, on June 10, 1935, when Dr. Bob took his last drink-A.A. was born. We are very pleased that so many-all news media, etc.-believe so much in us that they took our 50 years very seriously and did what they could to give A.A. the proper recognition for the work that is done through "one person helping another". We pray that we don't get so selfish with our program that it will no longer be as respected. . . that our good work will only keep alive the faith in our Fellowship for all time.

Clancy I. was the speaker at our Intergroup Dinner this year and, once again, we can say-we really had a full house and a wonderful time from the very beginning to the end. There were quite a few of the newer members in A.A. with us that night as well. . . enjoying the evening . . . this is good to see as they will be the "old-timers" one day at a time and our Intergroup Dinner will always be an event that we look forward to.

We are all anxiously waiting the end of our rainy season which chose to appear this year in June-we are getting a little anxious for some good old summer days and some of that lazy, enjoyable feeling you get when the sun is out and the breezes blow and we have a summer vacation . . . nothing much to add for this time so "till we meet again".

TREAT IT AS A FLOWER

One also finds the only reference to Ambition in the 12th Step; for me it must be "to live usefully and to walk humbly under God." So then — back to BASICS! "Take comfort in the fact that your dark Past, placed in God's hands, become your proudest possession — it will bring life and happiness to others, and prevent misery and death for them."

So I wonder. . . What price do I set on the Rose of Sobriety?

*Ban Muire Mac C. N. Ireland
 The Road Back*

ALMOST UP TO PAR

A heavy drinker says that his golf game is looking up, he played a full round of 18 holes without falling off his cart.

Just a few stools down, another inebriated customer was claiming that he and his wife were trying a new approach:

"We sleep in separate rooms, we have dinner apart, we take separate vacations-we're doing everything we can to keep our marriage together."

A BANK CALLED TIME

If you had a bank account that credited your account each morning with \$86,400, that carried over no balance from day to day — allowed you to keep no cash in your account—and every evening cancelled whatever part of the amount you had failed to use during the day — what would you do? Draw out every cent of course and use it to your advantage.

“Well, you have a bank — and its name is time.

Every morning it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it rules off as lost whatever of this you have failed to invest to good use.

It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day, it opens a new account for you. Each night, it burns the records of the day. If you fail to use th day’s deposits, the loss is yours.

There is no going back. There is no drawing against tomorrow. It is up to each of us to invest this precious fund of hours, minutes and seconds in order to get from it the utmost in happiness, sobriety and serenity.

via THE HUMMER, Calistoga, Cal.

PUTTING PRIORITIES IN ORDER

Men who cry for money and shelter as a condition of their sobriety are on the wrong track. Yet, we sometimes do provide a new prospect with these very things-when it becomes clear that he is willing to place his recovery first.

It is not whether we shall give that is the question, but when an dhow to give. Whenever we put our work on a material plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon alms rather than upon a Higher Power and the A.A. group. He continues to insist that he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for.

Nonsense! Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: that, job or no job, wife or no wife, we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place material dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.

Fred K. Chicago A.A. World Services, Inc.

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SOME QUOTABLE A.A. “LEGACIES”

Of course, I can’t remember just who said what and where during my 15 years in A.A. on most occasions — I just know that it was what I needed to hear at the time I heard it. Here are a few that do come quickly to mind:

“I came to A.A. to get sober, not to get somber.” -Jim R.

“I didn’t come here to tell you how great I am, but to thank you for saving my life.” — Matt C.

“If you play A.A. sobriety as a game, play to win and by the rules. Our only rule is the same as the name of the game — we don’t drink.” — Jack P.

“Live in my heart and pay no rent.” — Walter O’K.

“You can’t be hateful and grateful at the same time.” — Flo D.

“An alcoholic is a person who stops bragging about his drinking and starts lying about it.” — Don G.

“There’s all the difference in the world between accepting alcoholism and being resigned to it.” — Pauline B.

“Aging is a necessity, but maturing is a choice.”

-Gene W.

“The things I’m most grateful for today, I’ll take for granted tomorrow.” -Shelby L.

“Keep coming back. We don’t have many failures, just some quitters.” — Maury S.

“The surest way to get to A.A. is to go all the way to hell and make a U-turn.” — Dick W.

“If you haven’t had your last drink sooner or later you will.” — Larry B.

“Anything worth doing at all must never be done alone.” — Bea I.

“Adversity doesn’t remove our defects; it merely exposes them.” — Pret B.

“Love without truth is sentimentality, but truth without love is cruelty!! — Mac St. J.

“There are no associate members in A.A.” —

Phil G.

“It takes charity to forgive others, wisdom to forgive ourselves.” — Charlie T.

“Everyone eventually takes his or her last drink. We in A.A. have lived to tell about ours.” — Pikey B.

“God’s delay is not necessarily God’s denial.” —

Bob P.

“An A.A. meeting is where losers come together to talk about their winnings.” — David H.

“The most pain from resentment comes through everlasting rehearsal of retribution.” — Al M.

“The things that count most can’t be held in the hand but in the heart.” — Jean H.

The A.A. world is full of far more such legacies. I am grateful for each and all of them.

Teet C. — N. Hollywood

TRADITIONS 'DREW THE LINE' LONG AGO

In more and more A.A. meetings today, people announce themselves as being an alcoholic and then add whatever their second affliction may be, i.e.: I'm an alcoholic and a drug addict; I'm an alcoholic cross-addicted; or I'm chemically addicted and alcoholic.

This identification process, which originates in treatment centers, has slowly crept into common usage at our meetings. While there is nothing basically wrong with the ideal here, is it really necessary that we announce our secondary afflictions? And maybe more to the point, should we continue to allow it?

Thank God for the treatment centers that are sending so many newcomers to A.A., as we surely want and need these people. However, we do not necessarily need the treatment center practices that they bring with them. Treatment centers generally consider alcohol to be only another drug, and their treatment is for all types of addiction. In A.A. we should only be concerned with alcohol and the more we assimilate treatment center practices, jargon, and ideas into our A.A. meetings, the further we are moving away from our primary purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

There are many people today that would like to change the name of A.A. to stand for Addicts Anonymous. In fact, the way membership is going in some groups, that is not too far from actuality. If this practice of announcing one's secondary problem continues to grow, it won't be long before we will be hearing announcements like: I'm alcoholic and food addicted; I'm alcoholic and gambling addicted; I'm alcoholic and homosexual; or I'm alcoholic and a bad housekeeper.

There is a treatment facility group in the Fourth District that has affiliated itself with Emotions Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and, judging from what went on at one particular meeting, Masturbators Anonymous.

Just imagine the problems that a newcomer must have trying to figure out what type of meeting he is attending there!

When and where will we draw the line? If we go back to basics and abide by the Traditions-the line was drawn for us a long time ago. The only topic of discussion that we are supposed to deal with at A.A. meetings is our alcoholism. However, if we continue to allow people to announce their Secondary problems at meetings, then we are tacitly acknowledging that they can bring their other problems up for discussion or include them in their drunkalog.

How do we reverse this trend without scaring off the newcomer and maybe offending some that are not so new? First off, if they are truly alcoholic and ready for the program, they will not be scared off by an explanation of what A.A. can and cannot help them with. Probably the best way to reverse the trend is to generally explain the purpose and the limitations of A.A. as often as possible at meetings on the Third Tradition could be of help. Also, whenever an appropriate opening arises at meetings

we can make a general objection to the announcement of secondary problems at A.A. Sponsors and older members can explain the sole purpose of A.A. on a one on-one basis when an opportunity arises with someone they are working with.

We should be careful though, not to point fingers or embarrass anyone during a meeting by telling them that they are out of order. After all, it is the announcement of secondary problems that we are objecting to, not the person or the problem itself.

THE ONLY REQUIREMENT FOR A.A. MEMBERSHIP IS A DESIRE TO STOP DRINKING. The only problem that should be brought into A.A. meetings is our alcoholism or problems caused by our alcoholism. The only announcement should be "I'm an alcoholic!" After all, that says everything that we need to know.

D.B.
"Kentuckiana News"
Danville, KY A.A.

AN A.A. MEETING

I know there is a place for me, I must attend quite regularly, This place is also good for you, good for old timers and the new. "Tell me Joe, look me in the eye, if you can't go the reason why? Have you no time to save a life, your very own from hell and strife?"

"Bring your wallet like you should, you've got a job and doing good? There was a time we couldn't give, we existed then, we didn't live. No, you don't need a tie or shirt, we're not going to eye a skirt. The bottle Joe, is our bugaboo, now lock the door and let's skidoo."

We sat and listened to the lead, it did us both much good indeed. And when the basket was being passed, Joe dropped a bill in fast. I didn't let him know I'd seen but he seemed content and serene. We sat and ate in silent seating, both better off for this A.A. meeting.

With chairs stacked, ashtrays clean, it was time to leave the scene. I said, "Joe, all set to go?" "No," he replied, "I'll walk home Flo." As they walked out side by side, I felt a soothing warmth inside, Three sober people, happy and free, no tie, no shirt, a skirt and me.
Frank J.D. Akron Intergroup.

ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?

If so, clip this coupon and mail to 940 Rockefeller Bldg., 614 Superior Ave., N.W., Cleveland, Ohio 44113, Immediately. It is urgently needed before the next issue of the Central Bulletin.

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



I was introduced to AA when I was in a state prison in 1967. I had drunk up two marriages and several jobs and had missed other opportunities because of my alcoholism. But I did not think I had a problem. It was always bad luck, people against me, etc.

They say that you can't be forced to go to AA, but the assistant warden made me an offer I couldn't refuse, so I agreed to honor the AA group with my presence. After a few months of attending the mandatory meetings in prison, I heard an "outside speaker" I knew as vice-president of a local bank, and he made an impression on me.

We had been told that all speakers who came into the prison were paid \$9.00 for speaking, and I believed that. But when my friend the banker came, I wondered why he would drive seventy miles in a snowstorm for \$9.00. So I asked him what the angle in this AA was, and he very wisely told me to read the Big Book, because it was all there.

I had heard of the Big Book but had never bothered to read it. I got the book, read it, and saw myself in it many times. From that day on, I have never doubted that I am an alcoholic. I wish I could tell you that I have been sober ever since, but I had to do more than admit that I am an alcoholic.

I got out of prison, went to AA meetings, and did as I **was** told-but I didn't believe that I needed AA or God to stay sober. The obvious thing happened: I got drunk, for one night. Then I went back to AA, deciding that I needed AA to stay sober, but still feeling that I didn't need God. Again, the obvious thing happened: I got drunk, and I stayed drunk for seven months. When I came back to AA this time, I was whipped, mentally, financially, spiritually, and physically. I believe I had to be in order to reach my bottom.

I came back to AA March 16, 1971, and everything has been improving steadily since that time. My first wife talks to me, and my three oldest children know me and aren't afraid to say they know me. My daughter is in her second year at a university. My second wife is friendly, and I can see my youngest daughter whenever I want to.

I am writing this in a hospital bed, because I have been having some physical problems lately. But now I have faith that God won't give me more than I can handle.

Since I've been sober, I have been able to start an alcohol treatment center with the help of many others, some of whom are **AA**s themselves. That was five and a half years ago. Four years ago, I was able to start a halfway house for alcoholic men and women, again with lots of help from others. The same judge who sentenced me to prison now releases people in my custody-even one who was charged with murder.

I realize that none of this is my own doing. It has been made possible by Alcoholics Anonymous and my Higher Power, whom I choose to call God. I think the greatest gift that I have received is that I am happy today.

D. McG., Wallingford, Vt.

CONTROL

I always thought I had control of my drinking. I planned my drinking. I planned my drunks. Or so I thought.

Early on, I only drank on **occassions** like partys and weddings. Then it was an every Friday night drunk-Thank God its Friday. I though I had good judgment. I could always quit for days at a time. Then in business I learned not to drink at lunch or at conventions as I knew I wouldn't stop drinking. Then my last year of drinking, it was just one big drunk. My control was gone.

I have been sober and in AA since 1978. I now realize that I am an alcoholic. I never really had any control of my drinking. Those periods of not drinking were of waiting and craving to drink booze. My judgment was always centered around: "Where is the alcohol?" "How soon can I drink?" My good judgment in business left me. I was *just* trying to hold myself together that last year.

I now have turned my control over to a Higher Power, a power greater than myself.

Ralph W.,
Humble Group

A GUIDE TO MAKING 12TH STEP CALLS

"Put yourself in the other person's shoes" is a good rule to follow whenever you receive a 12th Step Call.

Remember that only complete and utter despair and desperation drives a "candidate" to that final act of surrender-a call to the A.A. Central Office. It's a cry for help from a sick, frightened human being who has run out of hiding places. How quickly anyone of us responds to this cry could be a matter of life or death!

If this sounds over dramatized it's only to impress on each and every one of us the urgency of fulfilling our obligation and responsibility in carrying the message of sobriety and hope to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Remember that we are not doctors. No matter how well meaning we should never give any medication without authorization of a qualified physician. If a newcomer's general appearance and **actions seem to indicate that all** is not well physically we should make every attempt to get qualified medical help.

If **you want to prescribe something, we suggest that it** be liberal doses of the Big Book, meetings and A.A. fellowship.

Here's How

Maybe **he** was the soused husband **who went home and was met at the door by his wife, who said: "So! Drunk again!"** He replied: "Yeah-and thish time I had a **spešhial reason for gettin' drunk."**

She asked,, "Yeah? And what was the special reason?"

He answered: "**Whash the difference-as long as it served the purpose?"**

CENTRAL BULLETIN



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1892-1968

Vol. 43 July 1985 No. 10

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 1985—8:00 P.M.

OLD STONE CHURCH - PUBLIC SQUARE
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ALL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME
BE INFORMED

OHIO STATE CONFERENCE

AUGUST 23RD, 24TH, 25TH, 1985

UNIVERSITY HILTON
COLUMBUS, OHIO

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

C. EMMETT MALEY, active member of our fellowship for 22 years. Co-founder of Southwest Sunday Group.

A FOURTH STEP BECOMES A PRAYER

It was early in 1984, and I was an emotional catastrophe. I had been sober for almost four years, but things were not going the way I had thought they would.

So one day I asked myself where the trouble lay; and, because I had asked the question more or less during a period of meditation, I received an answer: I had not done a proper Fourth Step.

Yes, I had done a brief version, and I had done a throwaway Fifth Step. I had identified my main character defect as self-centeredness, and this had prepared me to get on with the rest of the Steps as best I could, hampered as I was by my inadequate preparation.

So, I returned to the Fourth Step, paper and pen in hand, and began, of course, with the First, Second and Third Steps as preparation. In a few days, I had taken a Fourth Step that contained a proper measure of anguish and joy, and which the man with whom I took the ensuing Fifth Step called very complete and honest.

I did this Fourth Step the way the Big Book recommended. Using the words in the Fourth Step there, I turned several questions into statements and then into a prayer, which I called My Assets, My Prayer.

Later, I happened to be leading a meeting on February 29th on Why Inventories, and it came to me that there is no page in the Twenty-four Hours A Daybook for that date. So I gave my prayer of the Fourth Step to my group that day. And today I give it to you.

Bob W.
Newspaper Group

"FELLOWSHIP"

One possible meaning of "Fellowship" as used in the program is the feeling of *comaraderie* and mutual support among its members. As in almost all cases where people are thrown together under traumatic circumstances, there develops a bonding among them which only the sharing of a common experience can bring.

Too often, however, I have seen the "Fellowship" restricted to a few select friends to the almost exclusion of other members. Further, who among us has not at one time or another been guilty of passing up the not so cleaned up and slightly boozy newcomer. The newer members may think "leave him to the old timers" and the old timers "let the newcomers have their turn." In either case, the message has not been carried and "Fellowship" was not extended.

In assessing the importance of "Fellowship" we must look to the universal lack of self-esteem among people coming into the program. Recovery of any feelings of self-esteem must begin with the externals. They need people outside themselves reinforcing their value so that they may eventually come to believe in themselves.

As we move from our isolation into a group it is equally important that a person has a real sense of belonging. This can only come through the extension of "Fellowship" from all group members.

Finally, the application of "Fellowship" in its broadest sense is seen in groups where even though special friendships are developed, the members, (i) relate to each other as a whole, (ii) where members are assigned to greet newcomers, and (iii) when a member is to speak at another meeting it is announced to the group and, having been so informed, a number of the members attend that meeting in support of the speaker.

Group sponsored birthday cakes, cookies, sobriety chips, medallions and other celebration type activities are another form of "Fellowship" in that it brings the group together in a fun mode, and fun is certainly in short supply. I am eternally grateful for the "Fellowship" experienced in the "after the meeting meeting" at a local coffee shop. I recall the theme of the 1984 Las Vegas Roundup, "Are you having any fun yet?" I am and I certainly hope you are too.

Fred K, Chicago

ACCEPTANCE

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing happens by mistake in God's world. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and my attitudes.

BIG BOOK--Page 449

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ALWAYS • CAREFUL • TO • INVESTIGATE • OTHERS • NEEDS

I DON'T LIKE THINGS TO CHANGE

The longer I am sober (it is about two years now) the more I realize what I like and what I don't like. And I realize how dependent I am on things other than alcohol. And I am very dependent on things staying the same. I couldn't admit that for a long time because it seemed so scary when I put it together with the fact that life is change — change — change — and nothing but change. As I look back at the last two years I see exactly how much I have changed and how much my life has changed because of the Program. And it's all great. My house is clean, my eight year old is happier than she has ever been before, I am working steadily at a decent job and paying all (well, most) of my bills. And, inside I feel so much better than I did when I was a helpless drunk. When I got drunk every single day and couldn't have any friends and couldn't pay my bills and lost jobs. And when my little girl was afraid to talk to me in the morning because I was so sick. Now, I have real friends who really care what happens to me. And I have close friends to talk to especially when I'm hurting. And I have a feeling that everything is going to be all right.

But, being the flawed human being that I am, I can't look back all of the time and see that all of the big, and sometimes painful, changes I went through to get this good, decent life were good for me. Even now, when something starts to change in a way that I can see I get scared and want to keep everything the same. It's like saying to God: "Hey, things are okay now. You did all of this great stuff for me and thanks, but don't do any more, because I like it just like this, okay?" It's telling God what to do, even though he's done pretty well without me telling him what-to-do so far. See, when things change the way I want them to change I say that things are "changing for the better." But when things start to change in a way that I didn't foresee, whether it's a job, or a relationship or even my feelings inside, I want to hold it back. That's when I've learned to pray and talk at meetings and turn it over about every ten

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minutes. When things change **and I** can't see where they are going yet I go to extra meetings. That's when the trust has to come in. The trust that says God didn't bring me this far to drop me now. I have to trust most when I'm in that scary gap where I might have known exactly what everything meant yesterday and I might very well know what the new things mean tomorrow. But that day in the middle is not my favorite day.

But, you know, that day in the middle is what gives the real sweetness to the day that comes when you know why something happened. When you learn exactly what terrific present God was giving you all that time that you were scared or anxious or sad. And because I'm sober I know that I'll be hanging around to see what happens.

You know, when I started writing this story it's because I was scared about something that's changing in my life right now. But I feel pretty good. As I reread this stuff I see just how much the program has given me. And God won't let me down now. Not if I don't take a drink and go to meetings. It was never that simple before. And I think, in the end, the simplicity is the best, part of this whole program for me. Thanks for listening.

Carol D.
 Here's How

JOURNEY TO THE BEST

A spiritual awakening, for me, is best seen today as a sum of many spiritual experiences, some more dramatic than others, but all equally important. The real beginning of my sobriety also had many elements.

I had been around AA for about four years without much success, frequently getting sober, but never staying sober. Each drinking bout was bringing with it more hopelessness. I was doing the usual things in the usual way: seeing clergymen, doctors, social workers,, psychologists; going into the hospital; always returning to the bottle. This was the way it was until the last drinking day.

This day was unusual, though the differences were not apparent until later. Returning home with a half pint and a six-pack, I began the morning ritual of drinking-enough to get well. I was unaware at the time how God was working in my life. The half pint and the six-pack were not finished! It was a first; never had I left a bottle unfinished. "just for today, I will not take that first drink and I will not get drunk." I had been restored to the world of the obvious but there was more.

I stopped drinking that day with the full knowledge that it would be only a matter of time before the drinking would start again. I called AA. For what? Not for help-I truly believed that help was beyond me. To the obvious was added a paradox: Give up, and you win. A move toward restoration was made.

It is a wonder to me today, knowing myself, that I attempted something I was convinced would not succeed. I accepted my powerlessness. I was overwhelmed with despair. And the desire to stop drinking was born on that day. On the day when the pain of drinking equaled the pain of not drinking, I yielded to the power then greater than myself-alcohol-and began the journey, not to something better, but to the best. It is the road I walk today, each day as well as I can, through God's grace and His gift-Alcoholics Anonymous.

W.P., Arlington Heights, Ill.
 Here's How

THE FIRST TRADITION

Our *common welfare* should come first; *personal recovery* depends upon A.A. unity.

Our individual sobriety depends on the group. The group depends on us. We soon learn that unless we curb our individual desires and ambitions, we can damage the group.

Our brother the noisy drunk affords the simplest illustration of this tradition if he insists on disrupting the meeting. we "invite" him to leave, and we bring him back when he's in better shape to hear the message. We are putting the "common welfare" first. But it is his welfare, too; if he's ever going to get sober, the group must go on functioning, ready for him.

Yet he is only one rare aspect of the problem. When we do get sober in AA, we shed a few small bits of the Big Ego: We admit, "I can't handle alcohol, and I can't stary away from it on my own" Fine so far! Then we find there is plenty of that Ego stil with us. It may lead us to take other members' inventories and to gossip about their supposed shortcomings. It may lure us into hoging the floor at every discussion meeting.

Oh well, it's a selfish program, isn't it? After all the miseries of active alcoholism, why shouldn't we indulge ourselves a little? We all know one good reason why we shouldn't: Self-indulgence of this kind is an immediate personal danger: it threatens the individual's own sobriety. More than that, it threatens the very basis of our **sobriety**—the unity of the AA group. For a self-righteous gossip can **damage the mutual trust that is vital co every group**. And a **compulsive talker can** ruin the effectiveness of a discussion meeting—"I've stopped going to that group. Nobody but Joe can get a word in edgewise."

When AA was very young, the first members clearly saw the preservation of its unity as a life-ordeath matter for themselves and for the alcoholics still unrecovered. The First Tradition states this aim, and it is the common aim of all Twelve Traditions. When AA reached the age of 35, the aim was restated in the theme of the 1970 International Convention:

Each of the other eleven Traditions explains one specific way to protect the unity of the Fellowship and the AA group. Those early members quickly recognized **power-drivers** as potential group-wreckers. And they're still around—the members who are always sure that they're always right—the members who are happily ready to assume all the burdens of leadership and grimly unwilling co share them, let alone give them up. But a group does need officers. How can we cope with this dilemma? Tradition Two provides the answer. . . .

**This we owe to AA's future:
To place our common welfare first;
To keep our fellowship united.
For on AA unity depend our lives,
And the lives of those to come.**

W.A.I.A. Reporter

Wife to Husband: "Well, you certainly made a fool of yourself. I only hope that no one at the party realized you were sober."

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I thank my Higher Power for bringing me to the fellowship of A.A. As most of you know, the first few days . . . weeks or months, whichever category fits you, are the hardest. But the open arms of the A.A. members of the groups you first attend, is the "key" to whether that Newcomer remains in the fellowship.

Some of you may say that it's the desire to stop drinking and the powerlessness over alcohol that should prevail . . . But, that's not altogether true. I know when I first walk- ed in to a clubhouse and looked around at various peo- ple; talking in groups or just reading and drinking a cup of coffee, I was petrified and thought I was in the wrong place. But, when a grey-haired gentleman walked up to me and squeezed my hand, and told me he was glad I was there, I knew I was in the right place.

My first few meetings I could not have gotten through without the help of three women in this fellowship who picked me up and carried me to each one, and introduc- ed me, so that I would know at least one person the next time I attended another meeting. I believe this. . . However, the reception you receive as you walk through that door, sets the stage. As I approached my fifth meeting, I was on my own. I was attending this meeting for the first time, and that old fear came back.

As I walked through the door, I realized that I didn't recognize one face, and I wondered what to do next. I came to the conclusion that if I just waited for someone to come and introduce themselves, I may just be waiting quite a while.

So I took the initiative and introduced myself to the first person that looked as though they didn't mmink if I intruded on their thoughts. Thus I began my journey into the fellowship of A.A.

Each meeting is different everywhere I go, as to how and who makes the first move to greet the 'newcomer'. In remembering my first experience, I try to at least go up to the new face prior to a meeting and introduce them to at least one other person in the program, and most of the time give them a phone number. I believe that I don't have to be a member of that particular group to extend the hand of fellowship.

I am a member of A.A. and I'm here for the same reason the newcomer is. . . to get sober.

Cheryl R., A.A. Voice, Atlanta, GA

ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?

If so, clip this coupon and mail to 940 Rockefeller Bldg., 614 Superior Ave., N.W., Cleveland, Ohio 44113. Immediately. It is urgently needed before the next issue of the Central Bulletin.

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



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Cleveland Central Committee of A.A.

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Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Vol. XLIII-No. 11

“NATURAL” STATE?

When someone has a “slip” in A.A. it is perhaps too easy to say, “That couldn’t happen to me!”

Yet, too often we hear slips excused with that old non-excuse “Oh, he (or she) is an alcoholic,” as if that explains everything.

A good A.A. friend recently excused someone blowing a dozen years of sobriety with that stale non-excuse, “She is an alcoholic; her natural state is being drunk.”

I thought, no way, not after 12 years in A.A. What I said was, “Don’t use that line of thinking to set up an excuse in case you start drinking again.”

As I see it, drinking was my “natural state” back in those pre-A.A. days when I felt it was my only choice. Then, A.A. taught me otherwise, that I did (and do) have another choice. . . sobriety.

Today, A.A. sobriety is my natural state, and it will be as long as I do what I’ve been taught — don’t drink, go to meetings, work with other alcoholics, et al. If I drink again, it will be because I choose to do so; I don’t believe any of us are “suddenly struck drunk.”

Many AAs say that for them to drink again would be for them to die. That would not be true for me, I fear; I’d only wish I were dead, because the things that matter most to me now would be dead — love and respect of family and friends, a feeling of self-worth, etc.

Whenever I hear someone say at an A.A. meeting, “God willing, I’ll stay sober,” I want to tell them, “He’s willing; it’s up to you!” Early on I learned that one of God’s gifts was a return of free will — and that meant I am responsible for my actions, including the choice between sobriety and drunkenness.

To drink again would be the most unnatural thing for me to do. Take a drink, get drunk. Take A.A., get sobriety. It’s really that simple -and each of us has that choice.

Merl M., Los Angeles.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion; Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail. Remember they are very ill.

Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends — this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.

Big Book, page 89

Reprinted with permission of 1.4. World Services

A PERIOD OF “GRACE”

There are many definitions for the word grace, but there is one particular definition that means very much to me. I heard this definition at a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous when a fellow alcoholic said, “Grace is a delay granted by the grace of God for payment due.” I feel that I have been given God’s grace for a second chance at life.

For many years I lived in my own world with alcohol as my friend. The emotional pain I lived with had become too much for me. How easy it was to escape with alcohol. Reality was something I could not cope with. Each and every day I lived with the merry-go-round called denial. Little did I know that denial was a symptom of the disease called alcoholism.

However, the day did come for me when I “hit my bottom.” I now had a choice: I could either choke on the pain or spit it out. It all happened on New Year’s Day of nineteen eighty-one. My son had to bail me out of trouble. As long as I live, I will never forget the love and compassion and understanding my beautiful twenty-one-year old son showed me. The self-hatred and shame I felt were horrible, and I knew I could no longer live this way anymore.

I called AA for help and started going to meetings. There I met many warm loving people who showed me how to live one day at a time without alcohol. They also told me about the spiritual part of the program. I knew the road ahead could not be traveled without a faith in God. I needed someone who could give me strength, courage and hope. I found my God again and realized it was I who had turned my back on Him.

In the three years I have been sober, my faith in God has seen me through many rough times. These included a painful separation from my husband of thirty years, my dad coming down with a serious illness and my house being put up for sale. I also went through a lot of horrible emotional pain and suffering.

In between all of this, I went back to high school and completed my education. I also started college at the age of fifty-two and still attend three or four AA meetings a week. I can never forget that AA is my classroom where I learn how to live with this new life I have been given.

The learning and growing experience has been the most fascinating event that has ever happened to me. Oh, how I want to learn and grow and become all that I was meant to be. I’ll never stop being grateful for God’s grace. I have a purpose in life now, and I want to share all that I have learned with the newcomers who walk through the doors of AA seeking help.

Do/ores-friendship Croup



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1692.1968

Vol. 43

August 1985

No. 11

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 1985 — 8:00 P.M.

OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE

CLEVELAND, OHIO

ALL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME
BE INFORMED

THIRD LEGACY MEETING

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1985 — 2:00 P.M.

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH

STATE RTE. 44 & PIONEER TRAIL

ONE MILE SOUTH OF 82

MANTUA, OHIO

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

LEO COMEZ, active member of the West Side Morning Group.

FRANK LESLIE, member of the Heights 12 Step Discussion Group.

CHARLES FOSNIGHT, member of the N. Canton Group.

BESSIE KEARNS, active member of several groups in the Euclid Area.

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER

A.A. members from all over the world are going around in a happy, pinkcloud condition -all due to their attendance at the 50th Anniversary Conference held in Montreal July 4th through 7th. the crowd far exceeded all that anyone had predicted. We are happy that the Cleveland Area had such a great representation and so many were able to share in what had to be a goose-bump occasion from day one!

To change the subject, especially now, with all this newborn excitement, can lead us into what we have been wanting to say for quite awhile — that is, why not more articles from our locals expressing their feelings about their own sobriety? We have so many members who can express and share their experiences so beautifully that it is a shame we have to look to other newsletters for articles for our Central Bulletin. Wouldn't it be just great to have one issue compiled entirely from our own membership? Please try to give yourself a chance and let's see if we can do it.

In this office alone, we are always getting suggestions and it's possible that a lot of this can be shared through

this bulletin — speaking the Language of the Heart.

In following through with support for our Central Bulletin, the oldest publication in A.A., we notice that many are not renewing their subscriptions allowing our subscriptions to go into a down-slide. Please pay attention to the expiration date that is shown on your label and try to renew. We do send out expiration notices every month and the response from these notices are not too rewarding. Please don't try to wait to win another subscription through a group raffle...let us know you appreciate that "meeting" that arrives in your mail once a month!

Remember — when all is said and done, we usually wish we had done more and said less — THINK ABOUT IT!

A REMINDER

OUR FUND DRIVE, 1985 — Fellow members, if you made a pledge to your District Office during this year's campaign and have since changed your address, there is no way that our reminders can reach you; therefore they are being returned to us marked "no forwarding address".

We realize that this must be an oversight but whenever we send out our reminders each one costs us 22 cents postage. After the return of so many, this runs into quite a piece of change that could be better put to use in our Fellowship. Besides losing the postage, we are also losing the amount you have pledged to help keep our doors open, making our total pledges fall a little more short.

We see on our pledge slips that some suggest we bill them at a certain time and we would like to remind you that we do not do this — we try to send out three reminders a year — in June, September and December. If you could understand the amount of book work that this takes you would also understand why we can't bill you on a given date...about the time that the last slip gets posted and acknowledged -- it is time to send out reminders again!

The growth of our Fellowship has increased the work load about threefold over what some of our former employees might remember but we are not complaining rather, we recognize that there is now more knowledge about alcoholism and people are coming to us sooner than they once were giving them a chance for a better way of life.

DR. BOB SAID

"It is, possible for us to grow or not to grow, as we elect. If we fight shy of entangling alliances, if we avoid getting messed up with controversial issues (religious or political or wet-dry) if we maintain unity through our central offices, if we preserve the simplicity of our program, if we remember that our job is to get sober and stay sober and to help our less fortunate brother do the same thing, then we shall continue to grow and thrive and prosper."

Dr. Bob S. (A.A. co-founder)

(Last major talk)

Detroit 1948

"It is not only what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable."

ALWAYS • CAREFUL • TO • INVESTIGATE • OTHERS • NEEDS

THE SECOND TRADITION

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority...a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants...they do not govern.

AA is both a democracy and, in Bill W.'s words, "a benign anarchy." A group elects its own officers-who have no power to order anybody to do anything. In most groups, most of the slate rotates out of office at the end of six months, and new officers are elected.

If a group wants to be a part of the whole AA service structure, it elects a GSR (general service representative, with a two-year term). GSR's elect area committee members and then join them in electing a delegate from their area to the annual General Service Conference.

The Conference is about the closest approximation of a government that AA has; it produces opinions on important matters of policy; it approves the choice of some trustee nominees for the General Service Board and directly elects others. But neither the Conference nor the board can give orders to any AA group or member.

Then who's in charge around here? AA is a spiritual movement, and so the ultimate authority is the spiritual concept of the group conscience. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a decision. The result rests on more than arithmetic, a yes and no count. Minority ideas get thoughtful attention. What about that annoying character who's always sure she's right? Better listen — maybe, just this once, she is right. If she's wrong, then she will if she remembers the First Tradition as well as the Second — go along with the decision of the group conscience.

Does this notion seem too cloudy? Let's think back to our first meetings. The presence we newcomers felt in those rooms was the same as the group conscience. And it was real — welcoming us in, setting up no barriers of rules....

"The Twelve Traditions Illustrated"
AA World Services, Inc.

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A CHANCE TO LAUGH AT

God gives me a word and then he helps me see the many ways it brings meaning into my life. of late, HUMOR has been my word. My life is like a series of O'Henry's short stories. Any seeming mistakes, disasters, or bad choices are changed into a chance to laugh at myself.

I call my sponsor with a problem.

"So what? How important is it? Is it any of your business?"

"Huh? Well, I thought it was."

"Did you write about it?"

"Not yet"

"Write about it and call me back."

To myself, my sponsor doesn't understand me. Neither does God. I don't want to be wrong again.

I start to write and discover I was wrong here, here, and here.

I call back, "I was wrong and am now willing to make amends, pray, and share."

"You don't have a problem anymore, you now have a solution." Puzzled, I thought, "I had a problem, but where did it go?" "That's okay Margaret, I'm sure you'll find another," she said. I always do.

My biggest spiritual joke is if I am disturbed, the problem comes from within. God, thank you for helping me laugh at myself.

St. Margaret of Norwood

Wife: "Did you know that I was a fool to marry you?"

He: "Yes, but I was so infatuated with you that I didn't even notice it."

ACCEPT 'MUSTS' TO FIND HAPPINESS

I look around in A.A. and find the happy people who are so willing to share. True, there are unhappy ones too. But it really is easy to find happiness in this program. The happy ones are those who have accepted the program just the way it is meant to work.

Other people see the word "must" and throw up a red flag. The happy, contented people in A.A. have accepted that they:

MUST admit they are powerless over alcohol.

MUST believe in a higher power greater than themselves.

MUST turn their will and their lives over to God.

MUST take a fearless inventory.

MUST admit to God, to themselves and to another human being the exact nature of their wrongs.

MUST make a list of those they ahve harmed.

MUST attend meetings.

Look around! Who are the happy ones? Those who are willing to learn and not question everything. They don't stand around feeling sorry for themselves because they can't drink; they are most grateful they don't have to.

Yes, there are a lot of things we MUST do to have contented sobriety — but contentment, happiness, self respect, good self image are just a few of the commodities we gain. To me, it is worth it.

JUST WHAT IS THIS THING CALLED SOBRIETY?

Sobriety is taking your face off each night, instead of every three days (give or take a day).

Sobriety is putting your face on, and not getting your false eyelashes glued to your nose.

Sobriety is brushing your teeth, and not throwing up. Sobriety is putting nail polish on, and not getting it on your elbow.

Sobriety is leaving the phone turned on.

Sobriety is not only knowing where you were the night before, but what you said.

Sobriety is having a blind date, and not getting blind.

Sobriety is waking up alone.

Sobriety is not watching daytime TV, even if you have a color set.

Sobriety is not burning yourself heating a TV dinner.

Sobriety is having an appointment, and keeping it (barring earthquake, tidal wave, or the New York City transit system).

Sobriety is having many friends who know, not only how you feel now, but how you felt then.

Sobriety is A.A.

Sobriety is meetings.

Sobriety is happiness. It's intoxicating!

L.H.
Manhattan, N.Y.

George: "Some people are sure funny."

Charlie: "You just found that out?"

What happened?"

George: "Well, I know a guy who hasn't kissed his wife in ten years. Then he goes out and shoots a guy who did!"

"HOW TO QUIT PLAYING GOD"

- (1). OFFER NO ADVICE UNLESS IT IS ASKED FOR.
- (2). LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE'S DREAMS AND HELP THEM IN THE WAY THEY WISH TO BE HELPED.
- (3). ENCOURAGE THEM TO FIND THEIR OWN STRENGTH.
- (4). RESERVE JUDGEMENT AT ALL TIMES.
- (5). ADMIT THAT YOU DON'T KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS.
- (6). BUILD CONFIDENCE IN THE OTHER PERSON UNTIL HIS JUDGEMENT BECOMES CLEAR.
- (7). DWELL ON THE RIGHT INSTEAD OF THE WRONG.
- (8). HAVE FAITH IN THE ALL OVER RIGHTNESS OF GOD'S PURPOSE IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT.
- (9). REALIZE THE CORE OF DIVINE BEING IN EACH PERSON, RESPECT IT.
- (10). NEVER DISCOUNT THE OTHER PERSON'S GOOD INTENTIONS.

INDISPENSABLE MAN -

Sometime *when* you're *feeling* important,
Sometime *when your ego's in bloom*,

Sometime *when* you cake it *for* granted
You're *the best* qualified *in the room*,

Sometime when you *feel* that your going
Would *leave an unfillable hole*.

Just following these simple instructions
and see *how* it humbles *your soul!*

Take a bucket and *fill* it *with* water;
Put your hand in it, up to your wrist;

Pull it out, and *the hole* that's remaining
Is a measure *of how you'll be missed*.

You *may* splash *all* you please *when* you enter;
You *may stir up the water galore*

But stop, and you'll find *in a minute*
That it *looks quite the same as before*.

The moral of this quaint example
Is to do just the best that you can

Be proud of yourself, but remember
There is no indispensable man!

OUR CHARACTER DEFECTS

ANGER-ANXIETY-ARROGANCE-DISHONESTY-
EGOTIST-FALSE PRIDE-FEAR-FRUSTRATION-HATRED-
JEALOUSY-INADEQUACY-IMPATIENCE-
INTOLERANCE-LAZINESS-PROFANITY-REMORSE-
RESENTMENT-REVENGE-SELFISHNESS-SELF PITY-SELF
SEEKING-WORRY-CONDEMNATION-OF-OTHERS.

ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?

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Old Address _____ Zip _____

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



APPLES ARE **NOT JUDGED** IN THE **SPRING**

When asked to write this little bit for Bristol Fashion my first reaction was "who wants to hear from an old museum piece like me?" Thinking further, I recalled that every one who reads this and who stays sober will one day find themselves being regarded as an ancient relic.

Anyone of my vintage is a living proof that A.A. works. It behooves us therefore to attend group meetings regularly, that we may be seen by the new members (but not necessarily heard.)

When we are tempted to criticize the younger members, we should always remind ourselves "APPLES ARE NOT JUDGED IN THE SPRING."

The newer members will make mistakes as we did and they will learn from their mistakes as we did but, like us, they will NEVER know it all. Always in A.A. there is room for improvement which perhaps accounts for the unceasing charm of the fellowship.

The tremendous **thing** about A.A. is simple-IT WORKS!

Have no fear, it will go on working a day at a time for you as long as you work at it.

Over the years I have enjoyed many friendships in our fellowship. Just to sit and recall these old friends and their sayings is a sure cure for the blues. Many of my friends have passed on but I still get a warm feeling around my heart when I think of their splendid example. If I made a list it would read like a Roll of Honor.

If we encourage one newcomer by our sincere welcome we shall not have lived in vain. Who knows, we may be trying to help a new Sackville or Doctor Bob or Bill W.

To all members old and new alike I send fraternal greetings and every good wish.

Tom T. Birmingham
Bristol Fashion

THE GIFT OF LAUGHTER

Have you ever thought of the tremendous significance of the fact that this is a world in which we can laugh? This world of frustration, of pain, of multiplied miseries. An all compelling reason for a belief in God would be this; that the world rings with laughter. On this speck of dust, called earth, there lives the creatures of a flickering moment-this less than nothing-known as man. He knows the shortness of the moment, how brief the day is and how long the night. Yet, he laughs. Whatever made man-made laughter too.

Whatever is the ultimate nature of reality, laughter came out of it; laughter laughs back and it, laughs with it, defies whatever stands against it. Laughter is the challenge of the living soul to whatever is not conquered, the promise of the spirits, supremacy the world's new morning, vanquished forever the receding dark.

Arizona Advocate

ALCOHOLISM ISN'T AN EXCUSE

Something that I have come to realize lately (I've been in the program for 2 years) is that even though I'm an alcoholic, this does not mean that I get to excuse my present behavior with "Oh, well, I did this or that because I'm an alcoholic."

For me, I'm a human being first, a woman, and an alcoholic. I hear around me people blaming their mood changes, their anger and their irritabilities on their being an alcoholic. Is it not that ALL humans can get angry, irritable or unreasonable? Some of us haven't yet learned the mechanics of controlling or coping with these **things**—because we've had an extra load to deal with due to life's circumstances. We are alcoholics **BECAUSE** of these things rather than, "I am an alcoholic therefore I'm angry, irritable etc., etc."

All behavior is changeable. All of us A.A. members prove that by stopping drinking, we bring ourselves to be acceptable to ourselves and we can change all the other bits and pieces about us that make us unhappy. Even to modify them a little means change; after all we have the help of our fellow members' experience and our Higher Power.

I hope that the rest of my life, spent working the A.A. program, will be aimed at working towards my ultimate peace of mind. I can see this come when I attempt to take stock of what I'm doing (Step 10); if I've been hurting anyone else, who is it? (Step 8); apologize (Step 9); **work**-ing on changing the things that hurt me **and** others (Step 7); accepting whatever happens **anyway** (Step 3); asking for **opportunities** to find out where I need to improve (Step 11); and sharing all this knowledge with others still suffering (Step 12).

This is why the program in theory is very simple; in practice, we realize it takes a bit of hard work.

I spent five years studying psychology before I came to A.A. (mind you I failed fourth and fifth year) presumably trying to work out what made myself and the rest of the world tick and I still could not put it all together and ended up completely confused and crazy. It's only since I joined A.A. and Al-Anon that I started to place all the bits and pieces of me, and me in relation to others, together.

Progress has happened quickly to me so far and I know it will continue as long as my efforts do.

Double winner, Sydney
The Pathfinder, Australia

OLD TIMER

Corney Vorhees, would like to hear from his old friends, or when in his area stop by and chat. 5144 N. High St., Apt. 202, Columbus, OH 43085. Phone 614-431-0259.



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1692.1968

Vol. 43 September 1985 No. 12

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1st, 1985—8:00 P.M.

OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE

CLEVELAND, OHIO

ALL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME
BE INFORMED

THIRD LEGACY MEETING

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20th, 1985 2:00 PM

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH

STATE RTE. 44 & PIONEER TRAIL

ONE MILE SOUTH OF 82

ELECTION MANTUA, OHIO

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

AVINE HAWKINS, 17 year member of the Calvary Group.

WM. KLOCZKO, active member of Nite & Day and Tri-County Groups.

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Some of us seemingly have an **Objection to thinking of** or calling ourselves alcoholics, preferring to call ourselves Problem Drinkers or some other milder term. Some of us have an equal objection to being told that there are **MUSTS** in A.A., things that have to be done by us if we are to recover and stay recovered...and prefer to swallow the thoughtless statement of a few who should know better that there are **NO MUSTS** in A.A. In one limited sense, this statement may be true. The act of joining A.A. implies no compulsion to recover against our will. But, if we want to recover, there are conditions to be satisfied. If we satisfy them, we usually recover; (c.f. Bill's 'Rarely have we **seen**' etc.). If we don't make any effort to satisfy them, we usually don't stay sober for long. There are Twelve of these Conditions...the Twelve Steps of our Program of Recovery and Living.

Is it really very important whether we call them Conditions or Musts? We could better use our time thinking over the words of Bill in 'A.A., Comes of **Age**'...words that have been so often, so sadly, proved right in our history.

"We must obey certain spiritual principles, or we die." That abhorrent word **MUST** again! But we would surely be very stupid not to keep that sentence in the forefront of our minds.

Road Back

ALWAYS • CAREFUL • TO • INVESTIGATE • OTHERS • NEEDS

THE THIRD TRADITION

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a *desire to stop drinking*.

When I attended my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, I was certain the membership committee would want to review my credentials before admitting me to the fellowship.

Conditioned by membership in fraternities and other exclusive organizations, I was sure A.A. would insist on a probationary period before offering full membership. Is this guy going to remember the Seventh Tradition? Is he going to get a sponsor and a home group?

I was shocked when someone at that first meeting told me that I was a member if I said I was a member. From that moment on.

"This isn't a fraternity," he said. "Every member is his or her own membership committee. And the only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. Not a sincere or strong desire, just a desire."

Amazing. Truly amazing.

This alcoholic was so accustomed to pleasing everyone in sight that he was vastly relieved to be accepted without question. Had there been a probationary period or a zealous membership committee to please, he just might have gone back out there to find his own cure. And that, of course, had never worked.

Since I've been sober, I've seen some assaults on this important tradition.

First, there is the tendency to groan and/or just not show up on "tradition nights." Everyone seems to agree that the steps are important, but traditions-how boring, especially when the last part of that mini-series is running tonight and there's that load of wash to do.

Likewise, there is often a reluctance to give a Tradition lead and then only with the greatest distaste and boredom. Steps are cool; Traditions are not.

Secondly, there is a disturbing tendency to equate A.A. membership with graduation from this or that hospital **treatment** program. I don't dispute the value of such programs, but they are not requirements for A.A. membership. They never have been, and I hope they never will be. Even in this enlightened age, there are still a few of us who come into the fellowship straight from our barstools.

Volunteering at the local **Alano** Club and attending their dances and playing on their softball teams are worthwhile benefits of A.A. membership, but they are not requirements for A.A. membership. If an A.A. member chooses not to help decorate the **Alano** Club Christmas tree, he is still an A.A. member if he says he has a desire to stop drinking. Not even the president of the **Alano** Club board can dispute that.

Here's How

OUT OF THIS WORLD

A newly arrived spaceman from Mars came a week after his teammate, whom he found staring at a mailbox and a fire alarm. "That dumpy green fellow with the big mouth doesn't say a word," said the teammate, "but I warn you not to fool with the tall, red character. He'll scream his head off!"

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

A.A.'s first quarter-century is now history. Our next twenty-five years lie in prospect before us. How, then, can we make the most of this new grant of time?

Perhaps our very first realization should be that we can't stand still. Now that our basic principles seem established, now that our functioning is fairly effective and widespread, it would be temptingly easy to settle down as merely one more useful agency on the world scene. We could conclude that A.A. is fine, just the way it is.

Yet how many of us, for example, would prefer to declare, "Well, I'm sober and I'm happy. What more can I want, or do? I'm fine the way I am." We know that the price of such self-satisfaction is an inevitable backslide, punctuated at some point by a very rude awakening. We have to grow or else deteriorate. For us, the "status quo" can only be for today, never for tomorrow. Change we must; we cannot stand still.

Just how, then, can A.A. go on changing for the better? Does this mean that we are to tinker with our basic principles? Should we try to amend our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions? Here the answer would seem to me, "no." Those twenty-four principles have first liberated us, have then held us in unity, and have enabled us to function and to grow as A.A. members, and as a whole. Of course perfect truth is surely something better understood by God than by any of us. Nevertheless we have to come to believe that A.A.'s recovery Steps and Traditions do represent the approximate truths which we need for our particular purpose. The more we practice them, the more we like them, so there is little doubt that A.A. principles continue to be advocated in the form they stand now.

So, then, if our basics are so firmly fixed as all this, what is there left to change or to improve? The answer will immediately occur to us. While we need not alter our truths, *we can surely improve their application to ourselves, to A.A. as a whole, and to our relation with the wordaround* us. We can constantly step up "the practice of these principles in all our affairs."

As we now enter upon the next great phase of A.A.'s life, let us therefore rededicate ourselves to an ever greater

responsibility for our general welfare. Let us continue to take our inventory as a fellowship, searching out our flaws and confessing them freely. Let us devote ourselves to the repair of our faulty relations that may exist, whether within or without.

And above all, let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communications with all these that they may find what we have found—a new life of freedom under God.

Bill W., March 24, 1961

As the 12 & 12 clearly states:

"This Tradition is packed with meaning, For A.A. is really saying to every serious drinker, 'You are an A.A. member if you say so. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out. No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out. We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had. So you're an A.A. member the minute you declare yourself.'"

Charles McK. Pilgrim II
Here's How

WE SHARE OUR SOBRIETY, NEW OR OLD

When I first came into A.A., I used to wonder about those A.A. speakers who would say, "You people helped me to get sober and taught me how to stay sober, one day at a time. And I'm grateful to all of you." And I'd think, what a bunch of malarkey! I never saw you before. You were sober five years before I came here.

In recent months, however, my mind has started to clear up a bit. Last week when I heard a speaker whom I had never seen before say that each of us held a share in his sobriety. I understood and I experienced a deep feeling of gratitude toward the thousands of men and women who have preceded me in A.A., toward those who are with me today at a meeting, toward those who are a thousand miles away, sharing their stories in different languages, and toward those who are just coming into the fellowship.

For if those ahead of me had not established, A.A. and kept it going and growing, where could I have turned when I hit bottom? If there were no meetings aside from those in my hometown, where would I go when I travel? And if there were no newcomers, how could I share with other alcoholics the precious gift of sobriety that others have so generously shared with me?

Thus, I have come to understand that whether or not I have met any of you when I walk into a new group for the first time, you still have been and will always be instrumental in my recovery.

And for that I am grateful to you, all of you.

So. Okanagan Intergroup

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"WE BELIEVE"

We believe that AA is an exact formula and should we alter it, water it down or include other ingredients, we would no longer have the AA program, merely A program. We believe the 12 Steps to be a perfect medicine for the sick alcoholic, compounded in exact proportions, assuring complete recovery if taken according to directions.

An adulterated version of the 12 steps might work for some, might keep them dry for a long time, might even alter their lives for the better and with this we have no quarrel. AA has never claimed to be the only panacea for the alcoholic's plight, but we still say this is not AA and should not be foisted off on the alcoholic as the AA program. No phase of AA permits of compromise with "principles" plainly stated, it merely permits the individual to seek his individual route to the single truth. Though our Big Book says "rarely have we seen a person fail" our own limited experience indicates that never have we "seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path."

Many of us who are presently striving to live the 12 Steps have in the past tried countless other programs for worthwhile living without drinking. We have belonged to all religions, sought help from many sources including science and medicine without success, and then suddenly the miracle happened. With all hope gone and helplessly resigned to the futility of drinking we found ourselves by some mysterious chance, involved in a tremendously inspiring fellowship with people who had suffered even as we, yet were now living ordered lives without the bottle. They, when all others couldn't, were somehow able to impart new hope and encouragement to try once again, and offered us a pattern for living that we could follow.

We discovered almost immediately, important changes in our sense of values and our total reaction to life that years of selfdiscipline couldn't bring about. We could recognize that selfknowledge was never enough to prevent our onward plunge into alcoholic oblivion, that we never had adequate inner power to reasonably guide our own destinies. Nor had we been able to develop ample faith in any power that could strengthen us sufficiently to accept responsibility and face reality. We, "came to believe" that a Power greater than ourselves could not only eliminate the bottle, but restore us to good and useful lives. Providing we were willing to go to any lengths. Half measures we were told availed us nothing. The choice was ours and, would we follow the instructions?

The alcoholic's recovery must include basic personality changes, changes that cannot be willed into being. Therefore it follows that a power of the magnitude needed for such change has to come from an outside source. The 12 Steps supply a definite program of action that not only helps us locate this outside source of power, but conditions us so that we can tap it and channel it into our lives.

The 12 Steps will lead us, if we but follow them to a single conclusion. Utilizing the three indispensable essentials for spiritual growth, "willingness, honesty, and open-mindedness" we inevitably discover that **GOD** is.

Many of us have turned from a dogmatic God that we wouldn't or couldn't accept for we sensed our own inner

inability to conceive **with** our finite minds, a relationship with an Infinite Being. We were too earthbound to be able to accept on blind faith what others told us we should, not if we died a thousand deaths in an alcoholic Hell. Yet, as a result of these Steps, having had a spiritual awakening, and seeking to improve our "conscious contact" with God, as we understand Him we someday know that God is a reality. This exact formula of the 12 Steps teaches us how to communicate with, and respond to, this awesome power that becomes our real source of strength and direction.

We believe that AA works for most of us because it is an exact formula, and because it is so peculiarly designed for the alcoholic, that most of us can accept it and apply it in daily living. It may take some of us longer than others to recover, for perhaps some of us are doomed **to** failure, unless we will it, for recovery is God's miracle that will be revealed to each one of us who strives to apply the exact formula of the Twelve Steps of AA.

From: RAILBEAMS

THY WILL BE DONE

If you were to chase each particular care, and each particular fret, and each particular sorrow, you would have business on hand for the rest of your life; but if you can rise into a higher state of mind, these cease to be annoyances and cares. Ninety nine parts in a hundred of the cares of life are cured by one single salve, and that is, "Thy will be done." The moment a man can say that, and let go, that moment more than ninety nine parts in a hundred of his troubles drop away.

Author Unknown

HUMILITY

We (the intellectual self-sufficients) found many in A.A. who once thought as we did. They helped us to get down to our right size. By their example they showed us that humility and intellect could be compatible, provided we placed humility first. When we began to do that, we received the gift of faith, a faith which works. This is a faith for you, too.

from "Steps and Traditions. "

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IT WILL HELP YOU AND IT WILL HELP US.



THE ONLY REQUIREMENT

No one could ever claim that A.A. is a stranger to controversy, but sometimes an issue arises that could do serious harm to A.A., if not eventually destroy our fellowship. Our Fourth Tradition states that each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups as a whole. But at that point does autonomy cease being desirable and start to affect other groups and A.A. overall?

Our Fifth Tradition states that each group has but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the alcoholics who still suffer. But notice that it says "alcoholic" rather than "drug addict" or "chemically dependent person." Many treatment centers and hospitals are now telling their patients that there is no difference between alcoholism and addiction to narcotics, barbiturates, tranquilizers and other addictive drugs.

Graduates of these institutions then continue to foster these misconceptions by "sponsoring" more recent graduates and encouraging narcotic and pill addicts who have no real alcohol problem at all, to call themselves A.A. members and to attend closed A.A. meetings. In many cases this is leading to the formation of so-called "A.A. groups," many of whose members are not alcoholic at all, but who use the group to try to recover from a narcotic or pill addiction.

This violates our Third - Fourth - Fifth and Sixth Traditions. We feel strongly at this point the autonomy of these "groups" and their members is affecting other groups and A.A. as a whole, and could even lead to the collapse of A.A. as a fellowship, unless these misconceptions are corrected. This whole controversial subject is more than adequately covered in the A.A. pamphlet entitled "Problems Other Than Alcohol" by A.A. cofounder Bill W., available from the General Service Office in New York.

We couldn't be more sympathetic with the non-alcoholic drug addict who sincerely wants to recover, and sees A.A.'s astounding record of success with alcoholics. We'll gladly lend you our Twelve Steps and other tools if they'll help you, but we must ask you not to attend our closed meetings under false pretenses, since that can only lead to misunderstanding and disappointment for you, and would divert us alcoholics from our primary purpose, which is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

We must also request that hospitals, treatment centers and counselors refrain from encouraging their non-alcoholic patients to attend closed meetings in A.A. under false pretenses. Honesty is one of the primary requirements for recovery, whether from alcoholism or any other addiction.

If you have a genuine alcoholic problem and in addition have become hooked on pills, as has happened to so many of us, you are of course welcome at any A.A. meeting, whether open or closed. We do ask, however, that at meetings you confine your remarks to your alcoholic problem. With recovery from **alcoholism**, the pill problem will usually take care of itself in due time.

Anonymous

THOSE (UN)POPULAR TRADITIONS

I was glad when I read in, "Here's How," that future issues were to feature the Twelve Traditions of A.A. Very early in my sobriety that portion of the Twelfth Tradition which tells us, "to place principles before personalities," proved vital to my ability to listen at my meetings, or to stay with them at all. I was at the point where my oversensitivity and insecurity had me taking everyone else's inventory with the result that as a speaker gave his message, I would think, "He's got a lot of nerve talking about humility-He's nothing but a bleeding deacon!" or, "Oh God, she's going to complain about her kids again!" Needless to say, for as long as this internal character assassination went on, I was too busy to listen to how my fellow alcoholics stayed sober on a daily **basis**—knowledge which, for me, was a matter of life or death. Thanks to my Home Group, though, I encountered the Twelve Traditions: It's a kitchen-table group and you should have heard the groans that greeted the chairman's announcement that we were going to be starting the Traditions! True to form, I decided that if the Traditions were that unpopular, they had to be right up my alley. I began really listening at those meetings in a spirit of competition-I'd show them I could master these difficult concepts and ended up listening in a spirit of humility and compassion to hear the messages I needed to hear, in each comment, for I finally realized that the message was originated by the Higher Power, using my fellow A.A.s as his spokesmen. And that it is my job not to try and impress and educate my fellow A.A.s at meetings but to become a clear channel for my Higher Power to speak through.

P.P.M.
Hereshod

HONESTY:

Freedom from selfdeception; trustworthiness in thought and action; sincerity in our desire to recover from alcoholism; willingness to admit a wrong; fairness in all our dealings with others; refusal to sneak that first drink.



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Harry D., Founder and Editor 1892.1988

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October 1985

No.1

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5th, 1985—8:00 P.M.

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IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the families & friends of below deceased members of our fellowship.

KEN NOVAK, Active member of C.A.H. Group. Passed away in South Carolina.

ROY SPRINGER, Lakewood Area

ACCEPTANCE

I certainly was no connoisseur of beverage alcohol. It was all the same to me whether it was vintage champagne or imported beer. I drank to feel better. That means I didn't feel good. I wanted to feel better. Either I was physically tired or mentally depressed. So I drank to feel good. I certainly didn't like the taste of the stuff. It could be four roses or one rose. I was uptight after work. So I drank booze to relax. Or so I thought. I was inhibited and the drink loosened me up.

The bourbon and beer worked for me for many years. Or I thought it did. Then I lost control. I was in a rehab hospital and then joined AA....now I accept. I accept myself. I accept the things I cannot change. I accept my moods. When I am tired, I rest. When I am uptight, I take a walk and often a walk to an AA meeting.

When I get depressed, I go and get involved with people. In this way I forget my problems. I realize now that the alcohol was making me uptight. I know now I got to be me. I can't be like somebody else. Some are naturally quiet. I am not. Some are gifted speakers. I am not. I must accept myself and just try to be a little bit better.

Ralph W...
Humble Group

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER

The autumn color show that nature puts on about this time every year is just now beginning to appear and they are beautiful!

This is put here for our many members who have left our area for a warmer climate and just think of us sympathetically when these colors are gone and the snow begins making problems during the evening rush hour.

How many of us appreciate this beauty now that we are sober?

In the August Bulletin this Corner sent out a plea for some good articles for the Bulletin—not controversial—mostly about what it's like living this new way of life for so many of us...needless to say, the mail did not pour in as you could tell by the September issue. Once again, please, put on your thinking caps and get some of your very own thoughts down on paper so that you can share through this paper and make it a real meeting.

More and more in our area new treatment centers are springing up and we are getting the usual complaints about all of them—even those that have been around for a long time—seems that all like to speak out in their advertisements that they follow the principles of A.A...some have even denoted 'affiliation' with A.A. in one of their promotion folders which really has the fellowship up in arms! (serenely, of course).

We know that early in A.A. our co-founders, et al gave permission to any self-help group to use our Twelve Steps of Recovery in their programs to guide their patients into a plan to revamp their lives and give them the courage to take their place in society with the ability to cope with problems that come up in their lives without falling into their old patterns that were detrimental.

It's a situation that many do not understand—together with the fact that we do recognize the dually addicted (alcohol and drugs) as members of Alcoholics Anonymous...but there are certain things we are and are not and certain things we can do and certain other things we can't. Treatment Centers would like to insist that we accept the "drugs only" as being one and the same thing and though there are many similarities there are also many differences—many times so far removed that the proper place for these patients is the program of N.A. Meetings of N.A. are being held in our area and are growing which is good. At the N.A. meetings the addict can have a 'one to one' contact that has been the **only** way we can learn to believe that **we are not that different**, that there are others like us who want total abstinence from drugs.

A.A. members are trying to keep the two separate but are meeting with resistance—it is difficult—not only in our area but the world over. These are problems that are constantly being dealt with in the annual General Service meetings in New York in April and also the General Service Board and its allied committees.

MEANTIME—The A.A. program itself will never change if the dedicated members try to live within the Traditions of A.A. and the Twelve Steps in our personal programs.—we cannot fail. THINK ABOUT IT!

THE TRAVELLERS AND THE PLANE TREE

Two men were walking along one summer day, discussing the generalities of the day. It soon became too hot for them to continue on, and seeing a large plane tree nearby, they threw themselves on the ground to rest in the shade.

Gazing up into the branches one man said to the other, "what a useless tree this is. It does not bear fruit or nuts that one can eat and we cannot even use its wood for anything."

"Do not be so ungrateful," rustled the tree in reply. "I am being extremely useful to you at this very moment, shielding you from the hot sun. And you call me a good-for-nothing."

MORAL: EVERYTHING HAS ITS USE. *By Aesop*

Certainly there is some good in all of us and all things have a purpose and can prove useful.

This is often determined by how it is looked upon and how its usefulness or uselessness is weighed at a specific moment or instance.

Often in man's narrowmindedness, another's usefulness and true worth is not recognized or accepted and to then ridicule is out of place and nonsensical.

To make and prove the point, one so skeptical should best review one's own good qualities versus one's shortcomings and might thus find to be lacking in many ways.

The plane tree cannot be faulted, it is only an earthen plant. Man possessing intellect and a soul, should be made of wiser stuff.

*Fault not what may seem lacking,
Be it in nature or in man.
For all things have a purpose,
And are included in God's plan.*

*frank J.D
Akron Inter Group*

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SEEKING GUIDANCE

"Man is supposed to think, and act. He wasn't made in God's image to be an automaton.

"My own formula along this line runs as follows: First, think through every situation pro and con, praying meanwhile that I be not influenced by ego considerations. Affirm that I would like to do God's will.

"Then, having turned the problem over in this fashion and getting no conclusive or compelling answer, I wait for further guidance, which may come into the mind directly or through other people or through circumstances.

"If I feel I can't wait, and still get no definite indication, I repeat the first measure several times, try to pick out the best course, and then proceed to act. I know if I am wrong, the heavens won't fall. A lesson will be learned, in any case."

Letter, 1950 Via "As Bill Sees It" permission A.A. World Services, Inc., N.Y.

TWISTED TRUTHS

The Slogans and sayings we hear around AA are catchy reminders of some important truths. But like all true statements, they can be interpreted in ways quite contrary to the original spirit. I have been guilty of a few misinterpretations myself and have heard others. Here are some of the ways we can twist them around.

First things First: Don't bug me about getting a job—after all, I've stayed **sober** for five years, haven't I?

Live and Let Live: Let me alone-I'll do it my way.

But for the Grace of God: Maybe my luck will hold out one more time.

Easy Does It: The Steps will take care of themselves if I don't bother with them.

One day at a time: Planning for the future is a waste of energy.

Let go and let Cod: It's hardly worth making any effort.

Spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection: I'll grow up when I darn well please.

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change: I'll always be a little squirrely, so why worry?

This is a selfish program: Twelfth-stepping is fine for other people, but my sobriety comes first.

Keep it simple: I have never read the Big Book-I don't want to get confused.

*Grapevine
June 1981*

LISTENING

A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he knows something.

Wilson Mizner

On his return from leading an A.A. meeting, Harry's wife asked, "How was your talk this evening?" "Which one?" retorted Harry. "The one I was going to give, the one I did give, or the one I delivered so brilliantly to myself on the way home?"

ACCEPTANCE

The other day John McCormick, a pioneer in news broadcasting, the Washington newsman from N.B.C. news for many years, was on the air plugging his book on alcoholism. Mr. McCormick stated that there are 10 million alcoholics in the U.S., but only about 2 million are recovered or recovering because the people that they turn to for help still know so little about alcohol — doctors, mental health personnel and the clergy. He stated that even A.A. was doing a good job, but that many people could not accept the fact that they are alcoholics and inferred that in his book there was a solution for some.

We in A.A. know the big problem is to get a person to admit he is an alcoholic. Looking back on our own experiences we try to relate these feelings to those who still suffer.

In my own life I prided myself in the fact that basically I was an honest person and my word was my bond, always trying to portray this image of integrity, which I felt was so important in myself, as well as what I expected from other people. It was not until this image was cracked that I had any success with sober living. I could begin to see how I had been lying to myself as well as other people, and in talking to others who still suffer, if I can relate to them my own experiences and maybe draw some parallels in their lives on a one for one basis, possibly I may be fortunate enough to get a point across which may lead to their acceptance of the fact that they are alcoholics. Then, and only then, can our program help.

My first reaction to McCormick and his comments was that he was violating our traditions, and I guess that's not for me to decide, but I feel that at times many people try to use our problem and recovery from this malady as a means to profit and achieve personal gain.

We know our program works, and it is a selfish program, so for me, and those I know who are sober in our fellowship, I am forever grateful, and I cannot be too critical of others who seem to be successful with other programs if it means that they can achieve contented sobriety. But I don't want someone to say something that may discourage a person to seek help in our time-tried and successful program. Our program offers help, not only for the alcoholic, but has something for the illness of the entire family. The family must grow emotionally or there may be serious problems ahead for all. Not all programs offer this wide a spectrum of help.

Ken C.
Silver Dollar

BY DOING GOD'S WILL

*My past was painful
My present secure
My future unsure
But, by doing God's will
I know I'll grow, and mature*

J.H.K.
Eaton Group
Cleveland, Ohio

DON'T HANG UP — HANG IN.

The story has been that Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. That he did. But the system was already in.

Since eternity there has been a telephone and you'd better believe it. It's been a line that you could call at any hour of the day — didn't need a Watts line, you have no operator saying I'm sorry, the circuits are busy, or the dog-gone thing is out of order.

It's been a communication line that you, or I, or anyone else could dial at any time of the day or night and look upstairs and there would be somebody on the switchboard that would listen to us and be glad to hear our story.

Now the voice from the other end of that switchboard might say, you're calling a little too often, and perhaps some of the responsibility should be yours, and that's probably right.

But at least the line is always open.

So, it really wasn't Alexander Graham Bell that invented the communication system, because the system has always been there. It is just a question of whether you and I use it.

I certainly don't know what the score is all about, but I do know one thing — and this is, a man named Abraham Lincoln, at the age of 19 said it all: "I never behold the stars that I do not feel that I am looking in the face of God. I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how he could look up in the heavens and say there is no God.

C.O.G.F.

THE TWO MONKS

Two monks were about to cross a stream accompanied by a girl. The young lady didn't want to get her clothes wet, so one monk carried her across. Thanking him kindly, she went on her way.

After a few miles, the other monk could stand it no longer and said, "How could you do that? How could you take a woman in your arms? You know the rules." And he went on for quite a while in this manner.

The other monk finally said, "You must be very tired having carried that girl so far — I put her down on the other side of the water."

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Vol. XLIV-No. 2

Dear Central Bulletin,

First of all, I'd like to express how very much I enjoy reading the Central Bulletin every month. In your October issue, you make a second plea for articles contributed by members. I had contemplated writing something after your first request and after reading page one of the October issue, I was fired up to write an article entirely different from the one I have actually submitted. Fortunately I went on to read page two before zipping to my typewriter. I have followed your suggestion and squelched the desire to respond to the "drug addicts are destroying AA issue." Instead, I have submitted what you have asked for and what is most important to share anyway---what my new life is like. Thank God that AA has taught me the importance of following directions---sometimes.

Sincerely,
Natalie S. Newburgh

WHAT IT'S LIKE

I came to Alcoholics Anonymous Because I was ashamed of the "me" I had become. Sobriety has been the process of Becoming REAL. Real in the sense that honesty with myself has become a priority; one that is not possible without sobriety. It has given me pieces of myself that I used to WISH for, but never thought I could have, as well as pieces that I never THOUGHT I had, and wish I didn't. But, through AA and with honesty, I have the choice to grow and get well. I believe that there is a difference between getting sober and getting well and the second does not automatically follow the first.

Early in my sobriety I was given a book by a special woman God had placed in my path. "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams, a childrens book, had a profound effect on this adult. It illustrated the process of becoming REAL in a way that was FELT more deeply by me than I had experienced in a long time. I still experience that feeling whenever I read that book. It was that feeling of desire to be REAL that made the choice of getting well the only honest one I could make. Making the choice to get well has meant looking honestly at the person that was me and assuming responsibility for myself. The growth process is a painful and slow one, but the benefits already received make it more than worth the effort.

You see..... the greatest gift that sobriety has given me.....is me!! I'm not ashamed of me anymore! I can look anyone in the eye and not be ashamed of who I am or what I do. Most importantly, I can look myself in the eye and not be ashamed of what I see---inside or out. In no way am I saying that I am perfect or have it totally together. But the one thing I DO have, thanks to the God given fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, is a FIRM belief that if I don't drink, go to meetings and keep honesty as a priority---I'll be OK.

N.S. Newburgh

"PLATFORM MANNER"

A voice from the past with a familiar ring today

The evolution of the AA speaker is an interesting phenomenon to watch, and perhaps it offers a warning that has to do with one of the most dangerous bogs encountered along the road to recovery.

Most alcoholics have an aversion to platform speaking—that is, when sober-though they may do plenty of talking at the bar, with or without introduction, when drinking. By the time they're ready for AA, they have little confidence, they're skittish and nervous, and they prefer the background to the spotlight. So it is probably true that in the beginning most AAs dislike giving talks at meetings and do so only because they know it may help a newcomer get started or another member keep going.

Aversion to giving talks remains with some members, probably forever. But not so with others. Some gradually recover from their fright and actually get so they enjoy standing up in front and telling others how it is done. These are the ones who become perennial speakers. Theirs is the evolution that is fascinating, but disturbing to watch. These are the speakers who begin to appear more frequently on the platform, at this meeting or that, here and there, several times a month. Soon they're on the circuit.

Usually, these people are good speakers, do a good job, and consequently are in demand. No doubt, they help many with their talks-for a time. But for how long? And what does it do to them?

The danger, of course, is that any human being is likely to become spellbound by the sound of his own voice, and to begin to rate himself, subconsciously at least, as something of an oracle. Up sprouts the big "I" again, inwardly, even though outwardly the individual may appear to be oh, so modest. What goes on inside is more important to him, and it may not be good.

If anyone finds himself developing a platform manner, stretching his story to make a point, and waiting for the applause, he'd better get off the stage fast, both for his own good and the good of the listeners, who soon will detect the inevitable affectations.

N.M., New Orleans, La.
From the May 1948 Grapevine

MY ASSETS, MY PRAYER

I am sorry for what I have done.

I have the honest desire to let God take me to better things.

And I do not want my conduct to continue to harm others.

I pray for sanity, guidance and strength to do the right thing.

IN OUR 44th YEAR OF PUBLICATION



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Harry D.. Founder and Editor 1692-1966

Vol. 44 November 1985 No. 2

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3rd. 1985-8:00 p.m.

OLD STONE CHURCH-PUBLIC SQUARE
CLEVELAND, OHIO

ALL GROUP REPRESENTATIVES WELCOME
BE INFORMED

IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of below deceased member of our fellowship

CLYDE BROYLES, Member of W. 25th. St. Group, Passed away.

DISTRICT OFFICE CORNER

November already! The month of gratitude and I'm sure all of us fortunate enough to be in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous really know today the full meaning of gratitude. so we wish all of you a very Happy Thanksgiving and continued sobriety.

We in Cleveland feel that we are going through our monsoon season! We have had rain all but two days in this month of November so far and, at times, we have thought about building an ark! This too shall pass- if this were snow, we would all be snowbound at this time.

The Smoking vs. Non-smoking situation at many of our A.A. meetings is a matter of great concern. We know we cannot all stop smoking but many have and we do receive many suggestions from time to time on ways to deal with the matter without making a group into a "non-smoking" group. The last one we had, if you can get the consideration at your meeting place, is a ventilating system. A lot of groups have designated "non-smoking tables" in one section of the meeting room, other groups burn candles and then ask that there be no smoking during the meeting while the speaker is sharing his experience, strength and hope. All of these do cut down on the discomfort of those who need to stay away from the smoke. and those who still smoke are not too inconvenienced. It is a serious health problem and even if we still smoke, we should try to consider those who have "kicked the habit" for one reason or another.

The August request and the reminder in the October issue of the Bulletin for articles from members hit a responsive chord in a few of the members-so we continue to ask.

We do not want articles that would place anyone in an uncomfortable position-meaning controversial articles or touching on some matters that many of our new members have not learned to deal with in their newborn sobriety-just something to give encouragement to all-in a "live and let live" vein as long as it does not interfere with the overall welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. There are always things we might come up against that we cannot fully accept but just remember-we are reminded in our meetings to take anything that can help us and put the other matters aside-we all follow the A.A. program Steps, Traditions, etc. but we all do it a little differently. We are capable of changing ourselves not the whole fellowship so please use this line of thinking when you submit an article. If we keep plugging away-we will soon have a lot of articles coming in.

In any event-something we read might sum up what we have just been trying to put across and that is "It is a curious fact that of all the illusions that beset mankind, none is quite so curious as that tendency to suppose that we are mentally and morally superior to those who differ from us in opinion". **THINK ABOUT IT! ! !**

PERFECTIONISM

In A.A. we say; "We don't try to be perfect. We just try to be better."

Perfectionism only leads to dissatisfaction and unhappiness. Setting goals I can never reach and expecting my friends and loved ones to live up to standards they had no desire to achieve. Expectations greater than reality. Nothing lived up to my imaginings, Nobody and nothing was good enough. Criticism and put-downs. I was boss and father of five so that I thought I had the right to demand perfectionism.

But I was not that critical of myself. I was a free spirit who thought I could do as I pleased. I stayed late at the bar almost every night. Didn't I deserve some recreation? I was a perfectionist in reaching sales quotas. It was always more, more, more.

I now am sober in A.A. I was told alcoholics who constantly seek perfection in themselves and others will drink again. They will **CRASH!** I just try to improve a little bit today.

Ralph W. Humble

★★★★★

We cannot wholly rely on friends to solve all our difficulties. A good advisor will never do all our thinking for us. He/she knows that each final choice must be ours. He/she will therefore help to eliminate fear expediency and self-deception, so enabling us to make choices which are loving, wise and honest

★★★★★

MAN

We are the miracle of miracles, the great inscrutable mystery of God!

Carlyle

PATIENCE

We have need of patience with ourselves and with others; with those below, and above us, and with our own equals; with those who love us and those who love us not; for the greatest things and for the least, against sudden inroads of troubles, and under our daily burdens; disappointments, as to the weather, or the breaking of the heart; in the weariness of the body, or the wearing of the soul; in our own failure of duty, or other's failure toward us; in every-day wants, or in the aching sickness or the decay of age; in disappointments, bereavements, losses, injuries, reproaches; in heaviness of the heart; or its sickness amid delayed hopes. In all these things, from childhood's little troubles to the martyr's sufferings, patience is the grace of God, whereby we endure evil for the love of God.

Edward B.P.

AS YET

I remember my encounter with King Alcohol for 12 years whereby I started as a social drinker and then slowly but surely I turned into an alcoholic. During these years I did a lot of stupid things like boozing till late nights at nooks and corners of Bombay, sometimes not returning home. There was absolutely no peace and happiness at my home because of my drinking. ONCE on a long binge of 10 days, I even went to the extent of breaking my own mother's hand because she did not part with any money for me to have a drink. I also remember going to Bandra every year for the feast of September only to get drunk at my sister's house after visiting various places where alcohol was available.

I had even lost faith in God and neglected my church obligations.

Two good Samaritans from Byculla and Santa Cruz A.A. Groups passed me the A.A. message in 1975. I started attending meetings with them and after about 90 meetings, trying to be honest with myself, by keeping an open mind and willing to do something good for myself, the GRACE OF GOD shone upon me in 18.8.1976. I got onto the A.A. program never to leave this wonderful fellowship for the rest of my life. I remember having heard one speaker share his experience with the Gloria Group when he said that if you have not lost anything in life due to alcohol then please add these two words, AS YET. Yes, my friends, I did exactly the same thing and today I am enjoying this wonderful life of PEACE, SERENITY and CONTENTMENT

Romulus D.

The Twelfth Step, India

COMMENTS

Originally an A.A. meeting was a small group of ex drunks who sat around to tell their stories and comments or advice was given.

Today the A.A. groups are large because the message has spread and the young are brought into A.A. before reaching the last stage of alcoholism. In Cleveland, a procedure has developed over the years. The AA still tells his story or "LEAD." But the comment is rarely critical (unless the lead talks for an hour and a half.) "You said a lot!" The comment is now most often related to something said in the lead. You do not compare but often you can identify with the true story of the lead, and comment, if you wish.

After the meeting you can congratulate the lead. But you never criticize somebody's comment even if you disagree. This is the type of therapy, no speech making, teaching or preaching. If the AA is totally out of line, you can talk to his sponsor.

Ralph W.

COURAGE

He who loses wealth loses much; he who loses a friend loses more; losing your courage, you lose all.

ANGELS EGG

Intelligence without goodness is worse than high explosives in the hands of a baboon. For humans, its a cheap commodity, not too hard to develop, hellishly easy to use for unconsidered ends. Goodness is not to be achieved without unending effort of the hardest kind, within the self.

It is clear even to me that the conquest of evil is only one step, not the most important. For goodness is an altogether positive quality. The part of living nature that swarms with such monstrosities as cruelty, meanness, bitterness, greed, is not to be filled by a vacuum when these horrors are eliminated. When you clear away a poisonous gas, you try to fill the room with clean air. Kindness, for only one example. One who can define kindness only as an absence of cruelty has surely not begun to understand the nature of either. Do not aim at perfection, only at the attainable.

When the development of a wholly rational being could begin, one is ready to start growing up, through self-searching, self-discipline, seeking to derive the simple from the complex, discovering how to use knowledge and not be used by it.

Edgar P., The Twelfth Step

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SPOT CHECK

Why do so many members lose interest and enthusiasm for A.A. after they have gained sobriety and their rightful place in society?

Is there a lack of good sponsorship that causes many of the A.A. members to leave our society?

Do they leave because they were not properly informed by their sponsors?

By not going to A.A. meetings can an A.A. member take an active part any other way in order to shoulder the responsibilities that go with A.A. membership?

Is it a fact that most members who leave A.A. do so because of people and not the program?

If an A.A. member is properly informed and follows the Twelve steps and the Twelve Traditions to the best of his or her individual ability, can there ever come a time when he or she can become inactive and no longer need attend meetings! If not, why not?

Is it a fact that the majority of people in A.A. who have been continuously sober ten years or longer never had a drink since their first A.A. meeting?

Do we hear too much about drinking experiences and not enough about A.A. from our AA speakers?

Should more people do a better job of preparing their talks at A.A. meetings in order to do the most good?

Why don't more of the A.A. members get better acquainted with the Second and Third Legacies?

Do you belong to the school of thought that says that now that you have learned about A.A. you can stay sober as long as you want to?

SOBRIETY, A NECESSARY CONDITION

So often at meetings we hear members talking about family problems, "relationship" problems, job problems, financial problems, and so forth. These discussions lead to a common observation that all problems are not solved simply because we stop drinking and that living "sober" means much more than staying away from alcohol.

True, but while not drinking will not in itself guarantee a happy serene life. We do stress strongly that not drinking is a necessary condition to our happiness and serenity. There is no way that we can, while drinking, deal responsibly with our daily living problems. Thus the choice that presents itself is between having a chance (but not a guarantee) of happiness or having no chance at all.

I am grateful to God for granting me release from the compulsion to drink and, thereby, granting me a chance to live responsibly, to learn from my mistakes, and to try again, knowing that there is still a chance, providing I don't drink.

Pick Me Up

★★★★★

The topic at an A.A. meeting was honesty, so an old, old timer told about an experience when he was newly sober.

"I was walking along a street and happened to spy a cart full of watermelons. I was fond of watermelons, so I sneaked quietly up to the cart and snatched one. Then I ran into a nearby alley and sank my teeth into the melon. No sooner had I done so, however, than a strange feeling came over me. Without a moment's hesitation, I made my deci-

sion. I walked back to the cart, replaced the melon and took a ripe one."

Not feeling well, Riley called on his family doctor who looked him over. The doctor prescribed pills to be taken at bedtime and a small glass of whiskey, after each meal for his stomach's sake. Four days later, Riley again called on his doctor, stating that he felt no better. "Have you taken the medicine exactly as I instructed?" the doctor asked.

"Well, doctor," replied Riley, "I may be a bit behind with the pills, but I'm six weeks ahead with the whiskey."

★★★★★

"HOW TO QUIT PLAYING GOD"

1. Offer no advice unless it is asked for.
2. Listen to other people's dreams and help them in the way they wish to be helped.
3. Encourage them to find their own strength.
4. Reserve judgement at all times.
5. Admit that you don't know all the answers.
6. Build confidence in the other person until his judgement becomes clear.
7. Dwell on the right instead of the wrong.
8. Have faith in the all over rightness of God's purpose in this world and the next.
9. Realize the core of divine being in each person, respect it.
10. Never discount the other person's good intentions.

PARABLE

There is a story of an A.A. member, who, while on vacation was caught in a sudden downpour. To escape the drenching, he crawled into a hollow log. There safe from the rain and lulled by the sound, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, he found that the rain had swelled the wood and he was held fast. Try as he might, he could not get out, and realized he might die there.

His life began to pass before his eyes. As he thought of the A.A. program and all his good intentions and how much he had taken from the program and how little he had given back; his thoughts made him feel so small, he was able to crawl out of the log with ease.

Pick Me Up

ARE YOU PLANNING TO MOVE?

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