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The Next Frontier—Emotional Sobriety by Bill

Below you will find the substance of a revealing letter which Bill wrote several years ago to a close friend who also had troublesome depressions. Bill asks us to note that this letter should occasion no concern as both Bill and his friend are today “in the clear.”—Ed.

I think that many oldsters who have put our A.A. “booze cure” to severe but successful tests still find they often lack emotional sobriety. Perhaps they will be the spearhead for the next major development in A.A.—the development of much more real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows, and with God.

Those adolescent urges that so many of us have for top approval, perfect security, and perfect romance—urges quite appropriate to age seventeen—prove to be an impossible way of life when we are at age forty-seven or fifty-seven.

Since A.A. began, I’ve taken immense wallops in all these areas because of my failure to grow up, emotionally and spiritually. My God, how painful it is to keep demanding the impossible, and how very painful to discover finally, that all along we have had the cart before the horse! Then comes the final agony of seeing how awfully wrong we have been, but still finding ourselves unable to get off the emotional merry-go-round.

How to translate a right mental conviction into a right emotional result, and so into easy, happy and good living—well, that’s not only the neurotic’s problem, it’s the problem of life itself for all of us who have got to the point of real willingness to hew to right principles in all our affairs.

Even then, as we hew away, peace and joy may still elude us. That’s the place so

many of us A.A. oldsters have come to. And it’s a hell of a spot, literally. How shall our unconscious—from which so many of our fears, compulsions and phony aspirations still stream—be brought into line with what we actually believe, know and want! How to convince our dumb, raging and hidden “Mr. Hyde” becomes our main task.

I’ve recently come to believe that this can be achieved. I believe so because I begin to see many benighted ones—folks like you and me—commencing to get results. Last autumn [several years back—*ed.*] depression, having no really rational cause at all, almost took me to the cleaners. I began to be scared that I was in for another long chronic spell. Considering the grief I’ve had with depressions, it wasn’t a bright prospect.

I kept asking myself, “Why can’t the Twelve Steps work to release depression?” By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer . . . “It’s better to comfort than to be comforted.” Here was the formula, all right. But why didn’t it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence—almost absolute dependence—on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.

There wasn’t a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away.

Because I had over the years undergone a little spiritual development, the *absolute*

quality of these frightful dependencies had never before been so starkly revealed. Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon A.A., indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever.

Then only could I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life.

Plainly, I could not avail myself of God’s love until I was able to offer it back to Him by loving others as He would have me. And I couldn’t possibly do that so long as I was victimized by false dependencies.

For my dependency meant demand—a demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.

While those words “absolute dependency” may look like a gimmick, they were the ones that helped to trigger my release into my present degree of stability and quietness of mind, qualities which I am now trying to consolidate by offering love to others regardless of the return to me.

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God’s creation and His people, by means of which we avail ourselves of His love for us. It is most clear that the real current can’t flow until our paralyzing dependencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

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Spiritual calculus, you say? Not a bit of it. Watch any A.A. of six months working with a new Twelfth Step case. If the case says "To the devil with you," the Twelfth Stepper only smiles and turns to another case. He doesn't feel frustrated or rejected. If his next case responds, and in turn starts to give love and attention to other alcoholics, yet gives none back to him, the sponsor is happy about it anyway. He still doesn't feel rejected; instead he rejoices that his one-time prospect is sober and happy. And if his next following case turns out in later time to be his best friend (or romance) then the sponsor is most joyful. But he well knows that his happiness is a by-product—the extra dividend of giving without any demand for a return.

The really stabilizing thing for him was having and offering love to that strange drunk on his doorstep. That was Francis at work, powerful and practical, minus dependency and minus demand.

In the first six months of my own sobriety, I worked hard with many alcoholics. Not a one responded. Yet this work kept me sober. It wasn't a question of those alcoholics giving me anything. My stability came out of trying to give, not out of demanding that I receive.

Thus I think it can work out with emotional sobriety. If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.

O course I haven't offered you a really new idea—only a gimmick that has started to unhook several of my own "hexes" at depth. Nowadays my brain no longer races compulsively in either elation, grandiosity or depression. I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine.

Via, *The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.*, January 1958

Submitted by,

John B., Apple Valley, CA

Intergroup Minutes December 17, 2011

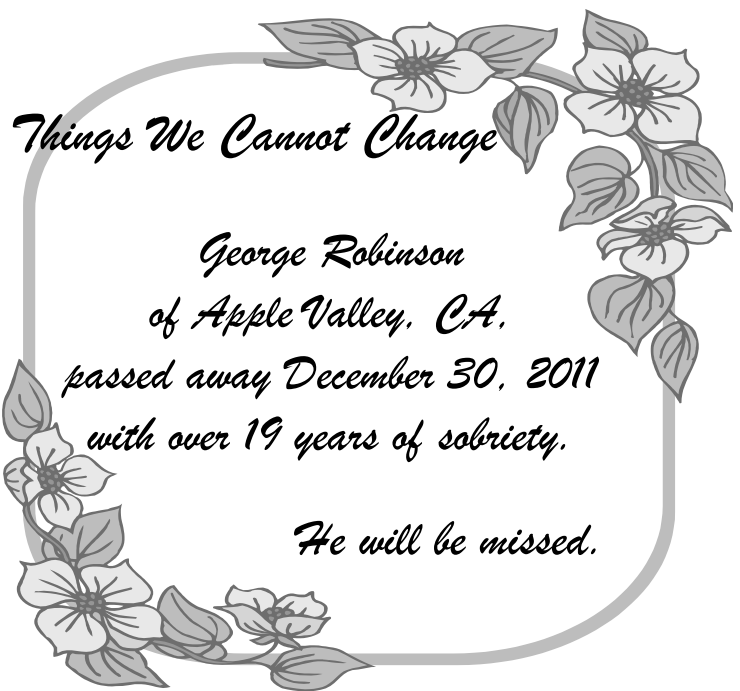
Sam D. opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. Doug H. read the Twelve Traditions.

The reading of the minutes was tabled until next meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Betty B. gave the report for November. Wayne U. motioned to accept the report, Sam D. 2nd. See the newsletter for full report.

Office Manager's Report: There were 78 visitors to Central Office with 177 information calls, resulting in one 12 Step call. Call forwarding received 141 calls with two 12 Step calls. Craig thanked Mary Ellen S. and Kathy G. [and the fellowship] for the

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In Memory of:

Pete P. by:

Pete Peterson Memorial Meeting 250.00

Back to Basics — Hesperia 70.00

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*Bill F. by:*

*Lois F. 100.00*

*A Special Thank You  
to Mary Ellen S. and Kathy G. for all the hard  
work and planning for Pete P.'s Memorial  
Meeting. The Fellowship truly appreciates it.*

## A "BIG" Whoops!

In all the bustle of the holidays, I forgot to include in my "Thanks" a person who does call forwarding on Sundays. So to you, Ruby C., my deepest gratitude for all you have done for Central Office. Please accept my apologies.

Craig B., Office Manager

## Anonymity

There are a number of things that can change A.A. so much that its demise can be predicted. An ignorance of the purpose of anonymity is one of them. In our beginnings, it was to protect the alcoholic from a terrible stigma. We weren't called "alcoholics" in those days; it was drunkards, sots and worse. My personal favorite (that I heard more than once) was "lush."

As A. gained in recognition in "treating" alcoholism, even the social climbers wanted in. Some, like Lillian Roth in the 50s, were going to put us on the map. Help us gain membership. How many who desperately needed sobriety were turned off when she became very publicly drunk? "That A.A. thing doesn't work."

Many well-knowns in entertainment, government and business know the value of our anonymity and voluntarily adhere to our Traditions. But some of them are so desperate to inflate their resume, they flaunt their membership! In my own personal, non-famous case, it's simply a matter of keeping my considerable ego in check. In A.A., I'm "Kathy, alcoholic" – no more, no less. It is humbling and good.

We have a singleness of purpose: "to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers." Period. It is *NOT* A.A.'s purpose to eradicate the disease of alcoholism any more than it is to cure cancer or feed the starving children of Africa – worthy causes though they are. Leave that to science. A singleness of purpose. That's why – [for] over 75 years – A.A. has grown from two men at a kitchen table to many millions worldwide. That's why it has fostered many other self-help programs, with Alanon the first.

I'm sure in this modern era it may be quaint to rely on a set of spiritual principles and finding a Higher Power to escape the ravages of alcoholism. Which brings me to another threat to our little fellowship; [that is] slowly changing our reliance on spiritual principles and that Higher Power to "group therapy." I have heard some suggest, "You cannot get well if you don't share." A far cry from my introduction: "Take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth. If we think you've learned something worthy of sharing, we'll call on you." That's why you often find old-timers reluctant to volunteer in meetings.

When my beloved George died July of '09, below his full mane and birth and death dates, I had engraved, "Sobriety Date: 1/20/66," and the one inscription he requested: "He was good A.A." So, with his sobriety date and date-of-death there, he gets to carry the message from the grave. To any passerby in that cemetery [they say], "Wow, that guy was sober more than 43 years. I guess that A.A. thing must work!"

A.A. did not exist 76 years ago and could disappear, like the Washingtonians and the Oxford movement. For the good of millions of alcoholics to come, we must protect its future with the Twelve Traditions. Only the stupid will place sinister, secret connotations on the concept of anonymity.

Kathy G., Hesperia, CA

## A.A.'s Worth

Exactly what is A.A. worth to you? Have you ever figured that out? Make a written list sometime of the benefits you have derived from your sobriety. Try hard to make an honest evaluation of what it would be worth to you in dollars and cents. How much have you benefited mentally, spiritually, physically, financially, socially?

Then make another list – how much has A.A. benefited by your membership? Are you trying to give as much as you have received? If not, you are getting something for nothing *and that isn't honest*. You can never square the debt but you can probably give it a little better try than you have been doing.

Via, *The Eye Opener*

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## And Finally . . .

### Free to Good Home

Our house was broken into last night by two robbers who locked me in the bathroom and proceeded to steal all they could carry. Our watch dog, "Killer," did not alert us at all. And for this reason we are giving him away.

We no longer want this dog. We've decided on installing an electric fence and detection devices with alarms. They're cheaper to maintain and definitely more reliable. For those interested in adopting the dog, please send an e-mail immediately. "Killer" is fun to hang out with, but otherwise he's pretty useless.

**Turn to page 4 to see a recent photograph of "Killer."**

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donation collected at Pete Peterson's memorial. Also, men and women from Apple Valley are needed for our 12 Step call list. **Ways and Means:** Wayne U. is to reserve Pebble Beach Park at the beginning of the year for the Founder's Day Picnic. We will appoint a chair at next Intergroup meeting. Ride for Recovery is on schedule.

**Old Business:** Newsletter [may]/will be published every other month. Betty is trying to locate another printing company. [She] needs articles for the newsletter as well. Chad F. was appointed as Treasurer by Sam D.

**Birthdays:** Bob. C. of Barstow celebrated 50 years. Congratulations! **The next meeting will be February 18, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at Central office.**

Betty B. motioned to adjourn, Wayne U. seconded. Wayne U. prayed us out at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Wayne U., Secretary

**Attendees:** Betty B. – Newsletter, Craig B. – Office Manager, Helen M. – Public Relations, Chad F. – Treasurer, Doug H. – Co-chairman/HUG, Wayne U. – Secretary, Sam D. – Chairman.

Life is too short for negative drama and  
petty things. So laugh  
insanely, love truly and forgive quickly!  
And, don't drink no  
matter what!

*Via the Internet*

### Central Office Activities

|                        | <u>DECEMBER</u> | <u>Y.T.D.</u> |
|------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Visitors               | 66              | 1,122         |
| Info. Calls            | 184             | 2,687         |
| 12 Step Calls          | 1               | 22            |
| <u>Call Forwarding</u> |                 |               |
| Info. Calls            | 158             | 2,180         |
| 12 Step Calls          | 1               | 43            |
| <u>TOTALS</u>          |                 |               |
| Info. Calls            | 342             | 4,867         |
| 12 Step Calls          | 2               | 64            |

## Upcoming Events

**February 18, 2012**

**Intergroup meeting, 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.  
760-242-9292**

**March 24, 2012**

**Ride for Recovery – For information and flyers visit  
Central Office or [www.victorvallevaa.org](http://www.victorvallevaa.org).**

**March 9—11, 2012**

**28<sup>th</sup> Annual A.A. Convention, Ambassador Hotel in  
Victorville, CA. For information and to register  
visit [www.highdesertconvention.com](http://www.highdesertconvention.com), or call Jeff L.  
at 760-596-8846 or Glen P. at 760-697-1567. For  
Alanon information call Kathryn B. at 760-524-2804.**

## New Address

**As of January 7, 2012, the  
Hesperia Umbrella Group (H.U.G.)  
has a new address. It is:  
16005 Main St., Suite A.  
It is east of 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. There is plenty of  
parking in the rear.**

## KILLER

