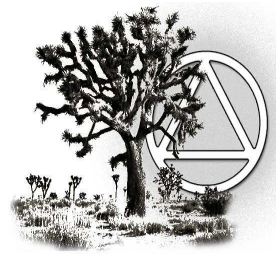


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I Am Responsible

When anyone, anywhere,
Reaches out for help, I want
The hand of A.A. to always be there.
And for that: I am responsible.

For Those Interested in the Future of Our Fellowship

What happened? That question is being asked by a lot of alcoholics lately. What happened to our high success rate? Thirty and 40 years ago we were keeping 75% or more of the alcoholics who came to us for help. Today, we aren't keeping even 5%. What happened?

What happened to that wonderful A.A. Group that was around for 20, 30 or 40 years? There used to be 50, 75, 100 or more at every meeting. It is now a matter of history, gone! We hear a lot of ideas, opinions and excuses as to what happened but things are not improving. They continue to get worse. What is happening?

Bill W. wrote, "In the years ahead A.A. will, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, providing that we always remain willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. Our growth as individuals has depended upon this healthy process of trial and error. So will our growth as a fellowship. Let us always remember that any society of men and women that cannot freely correct its own faults must surely fall into decay if not into collapse. Such is the universal penalty for the failure to go on growing. Just as each A.A. must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole Society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well" (A.A. Comes of Age, pg. 231). With so very few finding lasting sobriety and the continued demise of A.A. groups, it is obvious that we have not remained willing to admit our faults and to correct them promptly. Seems to me

that the Delegate of the Northeast Ohio Area, Bob B., identified our mistakes and our faults when he talked to a group of A.A.s in 1976. He said, in essence, we are no longer showing the newcomer that we have a solution for alcoholism. We are not telling them about the Big Book and how very important that book is to our long-term sobriety. We are not telling them about our Traditions and how very important they are to the individual groups and to Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Rather, we are using our meeting time for drunkalogs, a discussion of our problems, ideas and opinions of "my day" or "my way."

Having been around for a few years, and reflecting on what Bob B. had to say, it would appear that we have permitted newcomers to convince the oldtimers that they have a better idea. They had just spent 30 or more days in a treatment facility where they had been impressed with the need to talk about their problems in group therapy sessions. They had been told that it didn't make any difference what their real problem was; A.A. had the "best program." They were told that they should to an A.A. meeting every day for the first 90 days out of treatment. They were told that they shouldn't make any major decisions for the first year of their sobriety. And what they were told goes on and on, most of which are contrary to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Apparently, what they were told sounded pretty good to the A.A. members who were here when the TC clients started showing up at our meetings. And a lot of the A.A. members liked the idea of treatment centers be-

cause the centers provided a place where they could drop off a serious drinker, if he/she had insurance. That eliminated some of the inconveniences we had been plagued with before: having to pour orange juice and honey or a shot of booze down a vibrating alky to help them "detox." When A.A. was very successful, the folks who did the talking in meetings were recovered alcoholics. The suffering and untreated alcoholics listened. After hearing what it takes to recover, the newcomer was faced with a decision: "Are you going to take the Steps and recover, or are you going to get back out there and finish the job?" If they said they "were willing to go to any length," they were given a sponsor, a Big Book and began the process of recovery by taking the Steps and experiencing the Promises that result from that course of action. This process kept the newcomer involved in working with others and continued the growth of our Fellowship. Our growth rate was approximately 7%, and the number of sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous doubled every 10 years. With the advent of the rapid growth of the treatment industry, the acceptance of our success with alcoholics by the judicial system and endorsement of physicians, psychiatrists, etc., all kinds of people were pouring into A.A. at a rate greater than we ever dreamed possible. Almost without realizing what was happening, our meetings began changing from ones that focused on recovery from alcoholism to "discussion or participation" types of meetings that invited everyone to talk about whatever was on their mind. The meetings evolved from a program of spiri-

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tual development to the group therapy type of meeting where we heard more and more about "our problems" and less and less about the Program of Recovery by the Big Book and the preservation of our Fellowship by adhering to our Traditions.

What has been the result of all this? Well, never have [we] had so many coming to us for help. But never have we had such a slow growth rate which has now started to decline. For the first time in our history, Alcoholics Anonymous is losing members faster than they are coming in and our success rate is unbelievably low. (Statistics from Intergroup offices of some major cities indicate less than 5% of those expressing a desire to stop drinking is successful for more than 5 years; a far cry from the 75% reported by Bill W. in the Forward to the Second Edition.) The change in the content of our meetings is proving to be misery-traps for the newcomer and in turn, miser-traps for the groups that depend on the "discussion or participation" type meeting.

Why is this? The answer is very simple. When meetings were opened so that untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics were given the opportunity to express their ideas, their opinions, air their problems and tell how they were told to do it where they came from, the confused newcomer became more confused with the diversity of information that was being presented. More and more they were encouraged to "just go to meetings and don't drink" or worse yet, "got to 90 meetings in 90 days." The newcomer no longer was told to take the Steps or get back out there and finish the job. In fact, they are often told, "Don't rush into taking the Steps. Take your time." The alcoholics who participated in the writing of the Big Book didn't wait. They took the Steps in the first few days following their last drink. Thank God, there are those in the Fellowship, like Joe and Charlie, Wally, etc., who have recognized the problem and have started doing something about it. They are placing the focus back on the Big Book.

There have always been a few groups that would not yield to the group therapy tend. They stayed firm to the commitment to try to carry a single message to the suffering alcoholic. That is to tell the newcomer "we have had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps and if you want to recover, we will see that you have a sponsor who has recovered and will lead you along the path the first 100 laid down for us."

Recovered alcoholics have begun founding groups that have a single purpose and inform the newcomer that until they have taken the Steps and recovered, they will not be permitted to say anything in meetings. They will listen to recovered alcoholics, they will take the Steps, they will recover and then they will try to pass their experience and knowledge on to the ones who are seeking the kind of help we provide in Alcoholics Anonymous. As this movement spreads, as it is beginning to, A.A. will again be very successful in doing the one thing God intended for us to do, and that is to help the suffering alcoholic recover, if he has decided he wants what we have and is willing to go to any length to recover, to take and apply our 12 Steps to our lives and protect our Fellowship by honoring our 12 Traditions.

There is a tendency to want to place the blame for our predicament on the treatment industry and professionals. They do what they do and it has nothing to do with what we in Alcoholics Anonymous do. That is their business. That is not where to place the blame

SEE PAGE 3 FOR AN IMPORTANT CORRECTION!

and also in violation of our 10th Tradition.

The real problem is that the members of A.A. who were here when the "clients" began coming to our Fellowship, did not help the "clients" understand that our program had been firmly established since April 1939, and that the guidelines for the preservation and growth of our Fellowship were adopted in 1950. That they must get rid of their new "old ideas" and start practicing the 12-Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous as it was given to us. That until they had taken the Steps and recovered, they had nothing to say that needed to be heard except by their sponsor. But that didn't happen. To the contrary, the oldtimers failed in their responsibility to the newcomer to remind them of a vital truth, "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program." We have permitted untreated alcoholics and non-alcoholics to sit in our meetings and lay out their problems, ideas and opinions. We have gone from, "Rarely have we seen a person fail" to "Seldom do we see a person recover."

So, there we are. We have had 30 years of unbelievable success by following the directions in the Big Book. We have had 30 years of disappointing failure by wanting to hear from everyone. We now have something to compare. We now know what the problem is and we know what the solution is. Unfortunately, we have not been prompt to correct the faults and mistakes, which have been created by what would appear to be large doses of apathy and complacency. The problem we are trying to live with is needlessly killing alcoholics. The solution? The Power, greater than ourselves, that we find through our 12 Steps promises recovery for those who are willing to follow the clear-cut directions in the Big Book.

Do you want to be a part of the problem or a part of the solution? Simple, but not easy; a price has to be paid.

From Lloyd N., Hemet, CA

Via, Inland Empire Newsletter, Oct. 2007

Submitted by, Tom H., Newberry Springs, CA

Intergroup Meeting Minutes-15 Dec. 12

The meeting was opened at 9:33 a.m. by Sam D. who led us in the Serenity Prayer. Chris K. read the Twelve Traditions.

Ted B. read the minutes of the previous meeting. After a minor correction, the minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Chad F. gave the report. As of December 15, 2012, there was a balance of \$1,049.19 with \$601.76 in cash, and \$2,092.95 in the CD. Central Office's cost for November, 2012 were \$1,937.37. Donations were \$1,493.73. This was a net loss of approximately \$433.00. due to literature and medallion sales there was a net profit of \$338.46 in November. Net year-to-date 2012 income, however, is a Negative \$3,737. Helen M. motioned to approve the Treasurer's report. Doug H. seconded the motion and it was approved.

Office Manager's Report: Craig B. reported that with the \$2,600.00 that

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was transferred from the CD in October to pay for literature and taxes, there is only two months of prudent reserves (approx. \$2,000.00) to keep the doors open (that money does exclude additional literature being purchased, nor does it include the Office Manager's salary). Therefore, if there is not an increase in donations, the Victor Valley Central Office will have to permanently close its doors. In November there were 70 office visits, 181 information calls, and one 12-Step call. There were also 144 call-forwarding information calls and five 12-Step calls. Thus, the totals for November were 325 information calls and six 12-Step calls. Central Office is having a Sale to generate income. All literature and "fancy" chips are 10% off (excluding pamphlets and plastic/bronze chips) and jewelry is 20% off. The sale will continue until January 4, 2013. The book *Living Sober* is still on sale for \$2.60 each, \$1.60 if you buy 5 and \$1.10 if you buy 10. Craig asked for approval to submit the Central Office books to the bookkeeper before the end of the year. This would eliminate potential errors that were found when the year-end taxes were paid last year. Lucky M. motioned for a vote for spending money for the bookkeeper. The vote was unanimous. There is a vacant shift at Central Office on [Fridays] from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please announce at your meetings. If someone is interested they should call Craig at Central Office. Also, men and women are needed for the 12-Step list at Central Office. If interested the person should call Central Office.

Old Business: Craig B. has not completely resolved the phone issue with Verizon. He is still working on it.

New Business: Richard B. will be working with Lucky M. on fundraiser for Central Office. They are looking to organize a potential fundraiser for around Valentine's Day. It was suggested that either postcards or E-mails be sent out to High Desert Groups to elect Intergroup Representatives. This would facilitate greater group interactions at Intergroup meetings. It was also suggested that the newsletter should only be mailed to those people who subscribe to [it]. The newsletter, because of postage costs, may go to an E-mail format in the next year. There will be a December and January Newsletter.

Upcoming Events are: The H.U.G. will have a meeting marathon on Dec. 24-Dec. 25, with meetings ending at 10 p.m. each night. The Tumbleweed will also have a marathon on Dec. 24-Dec. 25, with meetings going on for a 24 hour period. There are two New Year's Events. One is at the Little House with a speaker at 7:30 and a dance afterward. The Alano Club is having a speaker and a dance. This event is a fundraiser, so it will cost to attend. There is a new meeting at the Tumbleweed. It is a Longtimers meeting (15 years or more). It is every Tuesday at 10 a.m. beginning Dec. 18.

The next Intergroup meeting will be Feb. 16, 2013 at 9:30 a.m. at Central Office.

The meeting adjourned at 10:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

CORRECTION

G.S.O. has informed us that A.A. members may donate \$3,000 a year! Also, an A.A. member may put in their will a \$5,000 donation at the time of their death.

Please see the following letter from G.S.O.

Hi Craig,

Greetings from the General Service Office! My name is Jim and I am currently serving as the liaison to local intergroups and central offices here at G.S.O. I'm happy to have this chance to be in touch.

Craig, the General Service Conference voted last year to raise the limit on one-time bequests for deceased A.A. members to \$5,000.

The annual limit for living A.A. members to contribute to G.S.O. remains at \$3,000 per year.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Thank you for taking the time to write. All of us here send our gratitude and good wishes.

In Fellowship,

Jim Malone
Group Services

Some January A.A. History

January 1

1946: The A.A. Grapevine increased the cost of a year's subscription to \$2.50.

1948: The "Columbus Dispatch" reported the 1st anniversary of Central Ohio A.A. Group.

1948: The 1st A.A. meeting was held in Japan. It was an English speaking meeting.

January 2

1989: Bridget Della Mary Gavin (Sister Ignatia) was born in Ireland.

January 3

1941: Jack Alexander told Bill W. the Oxford Group would be in his *Saturday Evening Post* article on A.A.

January 4

1941: Bill and Lois W. drove to Bedford Hills, NY to see Stepping Stones and broke in through an unlocked window.

January 5

1939: Dr. Bob told Ruth Hock in a letter that A.A. had "to get away from the Oxford Group atmosphere.

Bill W. told Jack Alexander that he was "The Toast of A.A.—with Coca Cola of course."

January 7

1984: "Pass it On" was published.

January 8

1938: New York A.A. split from the Oxford Group.

January 13

2003: Dr. Earle Marsh, author of "Physician Heal Thyself," sober 49 years, died.

January 15

1937: Fitz M. brings A.A. meetings to Washington, D.C.

1941: A.A. Bulletin No. 2 reported St. Louis group had 10 members.

1948: Polk Health Center started operating the "Alcoholic Clinic for Negroes," with 14 willing subjects. A Washington Black Group of A.A. cooperated with the clinic.

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Central Office Activities

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>DECEMBER</u>	<u>Y.T.D.</u>
Visitors	91	1,202
Info. Calls	194	2,280
12 Step Calls	0	17
<u>Call Forwarding</u>		
Info. Calls	180	2,002
12 Step Calls	8	46
<u>Totals</u>		
Info Calls	374	4,282
12 Step Calls	8	63

Do NOT Miss Out!

ALL A.A. JEWELRY IS NOW ON SALE WITH A 20% DISCOUNT! AND, PLAIN BOOK COVERS ARE 20% OFF! WHAT A DEAL—YOU WILL NEVER FIND LOWER PRICES ANYWHERE!

(Continued from page 3)

January 17

1943: A Canadian newspaper reported eight men met at "Little Denmark," a Toronto restaurant, to discuss forming Canada's first A.A. group.

January 20

1954: Hank Parkhurst, who helped Bill W. start the New York office and author of "The Unbeliever" in the first edition of the Big Book, died in Pennington, N.J.

January 21

1951: The "A.A. Grapevine" published a memorial issue on Dr. Bob.

January 23

1961: Bill W. sent an appreciation letter, which he considered long-overdue, to Dr. Carl Jung for his contribution to A.A.

January 24

1918: Bill Wilson and Lois Burnham were married just days before he was sent to Europe in WWI.

1945: The first Black group of A.A. was formed in St. Louis, MO.

1971: Bill W. died in Miami, FL only weeks after sending a postcard to Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa, saying he wanted to live long enough to see Hughes become President.

January 25

1915: Dr. Bob Smith married Anne Ripley.

January 26

1971: "The New York Times" published Bill W.'s obituary on page one.

January 27

1971: "The Washington Post" published an obituary of Bill W., written by Donald Graham, son of the owner of "The Post."

Bill C.

Submitted by Ron M., Victorville, CA

Upcoming Events

February 16, 2013

Victor Valley Intergroup Meeting, 9:30 a.m. at Central Office. Call 760-242-9290 for more information. Please plan to attend.

March 8—10, 2013

29th Annual Sunshine of the Spirit A.A. Convention. More information to follow.

April 5—6, 2013

7th Annual Ride for Recovery Death Valley Poker Run. For information contact Jerry B. at 760-985-0014 or Ron M. at 760-559-1070. flyers are also available at Central Office or by visiting www.victorvallyaa.org

And Finally . . .



Via, the Internet