



Volume 3, Number 1, January 2004

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FEATURES:

- FYI
- SPOT LIGHT ON OUR GROUPS
- TRAVELING HIGHLIGHTS
- TEST YOUR AA-IQ
- LITTLE KNOWN FACTS OF AA
- MEMBERS MUSINGS
- BOOK CORNER
- CARRYING THE MESSAGE
- SANDHILLS INTERGROUP

GROUP or MEETING ?

Here is one members findings:

"When choosing a name for a gathering of alcoholics it does not seem to matter if the word "group" or "meeting" is used.

In the GSO pamphlet "The AA Group" it states, "any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided, that, as a group, they have no other affiliation". It also states that "you are a member if you say you are & keep coming back. No formal application is required".

What is a "home group"? It is where I accept responsibilities & try to sustain friendships, so states the pamphlet, which also says I attend on a regular basis and vote on group conscience matters.

Most "home groups" register with the General Service Organization of AA and elect General Service Representatives (GSRs) who attend quarterly District meetings.

I am beginning to see a simple fact. I have been looking for the "differences" between "Groups" and "Meetings" and instead I find a "connection" between them.

The Aberdeen Bldg is the best place to explore this idea. The Tues. 8 pm Aberdeen Group holds monthly steering comm. Meetings. The intake from the meetings throughout the week goes to the Treasurer and is used for the maintenance & supplies of the Aberdeen Building, as well as donations to the Intergroup, District 52, Area 51 and GSO.

Some of these meetings use the word "group" in their title. So, here we are back to Tradition Three. They are a group if they say they are, even though not independent of a main group. Typical of most AA situations, there are no absolutes.

As we know from experience, when we need a meeting we care not whether it is a "Group" or a "Meeting"...we gather because we have a mutual desire to stop drinking.

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR GROUPS



The West-Side group celebrated our 15th anniversary in August of 2003.

Each month we celebrate member's anniversaries on the last Wednesday of the month with a covered dish supper at 7:00 pm followed by a speaker meeting, presentation of medallions and a cake.

Pat Z celebrated 8 years in August. In September Cheryl S celebrated 14 years, Susan P, 11, James R, 2. October anniversaries include Ellen S, 22 years, Donnie M, 3, Anthony D, 1. In November Mitch S celebrated 14 years, Danny M, 9, Elizabeth C, 1.

The West Side Group celebrates Gratitude Month in November with a special voluntary collection by group members of a dollar for each year of sobriety with a \$3 donation for anyone with 1 - 3 year's sobriety. The total amount collected is divided up by a vote of group conscience and sent to local, regional and world agencies of AA.

We invite you to enjoy good meetings and fellowship at the West-Side Group of Alcoholics Anonymous. Meetings are at 8:00 pm every Wednesday at the Douglas Community Center on Pennsylvania Avenue in West Southern Pines.

By the time this article goes to print we will have celebrated a dinner on New Year's Eve and we hope you will join us for fellowship and good meetings in 2004.

Elizabeth C
West-Side Group

TRAVELER'S AID

If you plan a trip and want to stay connected with AA while traveling contact Karen P, Sec. of the Sandhills Intergroup.

Karen holds directories published by the General Service Office of AA. These directories list national and international contacts and can be a very useful tool when trying to include AA meetings with your travel plans.

In order to maintain anonymity the directories are for the exclusive use of AA members and are not available to the general public.

District 52 News

District 52 is comprised of five counties:

Richmond, Scotland, Hoke, Lee and Moore.

GSR's (General Service Representatives) from AA groups in these counties make up District 52.

The officers for 2004 are:

DCM: Constance B
Rockingham

Alt. DCM: Tripp W
Laurinburg

Secretary: Bob G
Vass Group

Treasurer: Jim M
Brownson Big Book

District 52 meeting schedule 2004:

March 6th
June 12th
Sept 11th
Dec 11th

All meetings 2-5 PM in the Wilder Building, Aberdeen. Speakers & program to be announced.

K.I.S.S.

Keep it simple, sweetheart !

TRAVELING HIGHLIGHTS



San Miguel deAllende,
Mexico

I've had the good fortune to travel to Mexico's beautiful town of San Miguel deAllende twice since I've been sober.

The first time I was just five months sober and my first sponsor informed me that she was going to live there for a few months. I panicked because I had become so attached to her. When she found out how I was feeling she invited me to go along ! And I did !

We flew into Mexico City and then by bus to San Miguel. It is a hill town with narrow streets, cobblestone sidewalks & roads. You walk everywhere and can feel the "oldness".

Our first stop was the English speaking AA group, where we were immediately welcomed by lots of sober "gringos", mostly expatriates from the US and Canada.

Artists & musicians gravitate to this small mountain town in central Mexico, drawn by the climate, inexpensive cost of living and the concentration on the arts. A University of the Arts was started in 1950 and has flourished.

A well known drummer was among the AA group and a party was given at his place to welcome us there. We met lots of people very involved with the community.

We went every night to a meeting. The only day one wasn't offered was Sunday so we joined the NA group up on the building's roof. They were the "Roof Dogs" group, so named because lots of local people have gardens on their flat roofs and keep their dogs up there.

I picked up my 6 month chip there and left filled with the beauty of San Miguel and the friendships of the AA group.

Seven years later, in Feb. '02, I returned to San Miguel with my current sponsor, Ginnie D. I had told her about it and when she said she'd like to go I was packed & ready.

The only hitch in the whole trip

was on our layover for five hours and 59 minutes on the tarmac at Dallas for de-icing. The Serenity Prayer was a life saver.

We stayed in a lovely B&B within walking distance to all the sights & to the local English speaking AA group. It was wonderful to see some of the same folks again.

Our first meeting was a womans group and we all went out to lunch afterwards & got to know each other.

At another meeting Ginnie & I spoke to a fellow who was there for his first AA meeting, he had been sober for about 2 weeks but decided he didn't want to do it alone anymore.

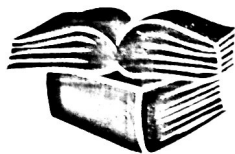
We would often "bump" into him around town and you could see his face light up when he saw us. He even kept in contact by email after we came home & has since married & started a new life.

Two couples (non alcoholics) that we met at the B&B became good friends and we would often do things together. They were often amazed at how many people we knew in town.!

There is so much to do in and around San Miguel & the AA community is "almost" as good as ours in the Sandhills!

Carol C.

BOOK REVIEW



Reflections on: "Dr Bob and the Good Old Timers"

Recently I started thinking a lot about our co-founder, Dr Bob Smith. I realized that I really know very little about him. The only Dr Bob quote I have heard in a meeting is, "remember, Bill let's not louse this thing up, let's keep it simple." Those were his last words to Bill and, I think, probably some of the most important ones.

Beginning in early sobriety I learned a lot about Bill Wilson from numerous books filled with his articles, letters and speeches. Perhaps if Dr Bob had lived longer he would have had an opportunity to write a book about the way he saw things.

Thinking about all of this I took the book, "Dr Bob & the Good Oldtimers" from the bookcase. I had leafed through it a few times over the years but had never taken the time to read it through.

After reading this biography filled with recollections of early AA in the mid-west I began to realize what I had missed and

decided to read it again at a slower pace. This time I gained a new insight into what Dr Bob was really like. I was awed by his selflessness and by sacrifices he so willingly made to help other suffering alcoholics.

It was said of his dear wife, Anne, that she really loved alcoholics. Surely that is true because the book tells of how she lovingly and directly helped with the many, many sick alcoholics as well as helping their families during those painful & frightening times. I'm sure that many of you have read this book and must feel the same awe and everlasting gratitude that I do.

According to friends and co-workers, Dr Bob spent so much time helping alcoholics that his medical practice suffered greatly. He never charged charity patients and sometimes he and Anne could afford only bread & milk for dinner. He gave not just of himself, he also shared his home & sometimes his last dime.

Many of the oldtimers said that not only would he go to any length to stay sober himself, but that he was more than willing to go to those same lengths to help another suffering alcoholic. He never wanted praise for anything he did. He was known to have said many times, "It's nothing I have done, I have merely been used".

I was amazed at how Dr Bob & Bill Wilson, seemingly oceans apart in personalities, were able to agree on and bring together their ideas that gave us our life-saving program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have no doubt that they were divinely led by "a power greater than ourselves".

All through the book are examples of the generosity of the families of the early AA members. I was surprised to find that the wives of the alcoholics were heavily involved in helping to get their spouses into the program. Other non-alcoholics, such as doctors, nurses and clergy were also dedicated to this great cause.

I had heard many of the "Oldtimers" of my acquaintance talk about the Oxford Group Movement and of the early AA involvement in the Oxford Group. But from this book I learned that some of the teachings, aims & requirements of the Oxford Group were unacceptable to our early AA members. It was not very easy for them to break away from the Oxford Group but I'm so grateful that they found the courage to do so. Our early members realized that they needed to have a group whose "primary purpose is to stay sober & help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

What I've described are only a few of the many facets of early

AA in the mid-west. Space precludes me telling all the fascinating stories in this short recollection. Perhaps you will find the time to pick up this book & read it for yourself.

I will be eternally grateful for both of our co-founders and all the people who came before me. For it is by their combined efforts that Alcoholics Anonymous is alive and well and that I, if I continue to try to live by the principles will continue to be "happy, joyous and free", one day at a time.

Penny L, Vass Group

AA History How We Got Our Name

No one knows for sure who first used the term "alcoholic's anonymous"; but, by October 1938 it was being used informally by some New York members.

After separating from the Oxford Groups in 1937 the New Yorkers often referred to themselves as a "nameless bunch of alcoholics" and this appears to be the derivation of the name.

In early 1939 four hundred draft copies of the just finished Big Book were circulated for evaluation and comment. Bill W had written the name Alcoholic's (sic) Anonymous on the cover

page and the title of the book thus became the subject of much discussion & debate.

Bill said that over 100 titles were considered. Among the membership the title "The Way Out" was slightly preferred over "Alcoholic's Anonymous" mainly because the Akron members strongly favored it.

Bill confessed that his big ego kicked in and he considered how he could add his own name to the title. One possibility was "The Way Out - The Bill W Movement". However, when he tried this idea out on others they soundly slammed it.

When Bill's friend Fritz was visiting his family farm in Maryland Bill asked him to go to the Library of Congress and check for the existence of some of the titles in question. By telegram came this reply:

"25 books The Way Out
12 The Way.....none
Alcoholics Anonymous".

That settled the issue !

Probably the first clear use of the term as a group name was by the Cleveland group. This group started with visitations to Akron, but on May 11, 1939 they started their own meeting. Borrowing the name they had seen on a draft of the Big Book they declared themselves a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Jim M.

Reference: "AA Comes Of Age", pgs 165-166
"Not God - A History of Alcoholics Anonymous" by E. Kurtz, pgs 74-75, 78

TEST YOUR AA IQ

True or False

1. Dr Bob founded AA on his own? _____
2. Moore County AA has daytime meetings every day of the week. _____
3. The "Big Book" is in it's 5th edition. _____
4. The only requirement for membership in AA is the desire to stop drinking _____
5. The 12 Steps tell us HOW it works. _____
6. The 12 Traditions tell us WHY it works. _____
7. Bill & Dr Bob both once lived in Vermont. _____
8. Moore County now has more than 30 meetings per week. _____
9. AA was founded in the year 1940. _____
10. Anne was Bill's Wife. _____

The Serenity Prayer & Reinhold Niebuhr

By Jack Q

One thing you can count on is that almost everyone in AA knows the Serenity Prayer. Too bad the same thing can't be said of the Twelve Steps. On the other hand, almost everyone in the program knows of Bill Wilson & Dr. Bob Smith. Too bad the same thing can't be said of Reinhold Niebuhr, the author of the Serenity Prayer.

Then again, Niebuhr might be taken aback by the Serenity Prayer as we know it. Here's the long version that's rarely seen yet encompasses a lot of the ideas of our program:

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change: courage to change the things I can: and wisdom to know the difference.

*Living one day at a time,
enjoying one moment at a time:
Accepting the hardships as the pathway to peace: taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it. Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will: That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.*

I became interested in Niebuhr shortly after I entered the program in west suburban Chicago and learned that neigh-

boring Elmhurst College was looking to dedicate a statue to the theologian. That's when I learned of the original wording and some of the history of the prayer.

A lot of myth surrounds the Serenity Prayer. Some claim it has been around for centuries, others dispute its 20th century origin. Niebuhr said, *"Of course, it may have been spooking around for years, even centuries, but I don't think so. I honestly believe I wrote it myself"*.

Many historians believe the Serenity Prayer, like President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, was a "back of the envelope" masterpiece. One AA website described the event this way:

One Sunday in 1934 he preached in a small church near his home in Heath, Mass., where he wrote his now-famous Serenity Prayer. A neighbor asked for a copy, which Niebuhr gave him after saying he had no further use of it. It was published as part of a pamphlet the following year and has since been adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous and numerous other organizations.

When you walk into the quadrangle at Elmhurst College and see the bronze statue of Niebuhr gesturing as if he were making a point while talking, you notice his original wording of the

prayer: *"God give us the serenity to accept what cannot be changed, Give us the courage to change what should be changed, Give us the wisdom to distinguish one from the other."*

Elisabeth Sifton, Niebuhr's daughter, in her recently published book on her father (*The Serenity Prayer: Faith and Politics in Times of War and Peace: W.W. Norton, Oct 2003*) has a slightly different version and attributes the prayer to a later time. A reviewer notes: *"Although the wording has been changed in modern usage, she believes the prayer is most powerful in its earliest form: "God give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, to change the things that should be changed and the wisdom to distinguish one from the other."*

How did Alcoholics Anonymous and the Serenity Prayer get together? One of the best explanations is on the website <www.aahistory.com/prayer.html>. The author details how a member reading the obituaries in a local NY City newspaper ran across the prayer. He showed it to Bill Wilson and the rest, as they say, is history. Several years later Wilson, in thanking an AA friend for the plaque upon which the prayer was inscribed, said "In creating AA, the Serenity Prayer has been a most valuable building block, indeed a cornerstone."

Regardless of which version of the prayer you prefer, the message is still the same.

The question now arises, who is the man who wrote it? Karl Paul Reinhold ("Reinie") Niebuhr was born on June 21, 1892, in Wright City, Mo. to Gustav Niebuhr, a minister in the Evangelical Synod, a Lutheran off-shoot of the Prussian Church Union, and Lydia Hosto.

The Niebuhr family moved to Lincoln, Il., a small downstate community just north of Springfield, from Webster Grove, Mo. in 1902 so Rev Gustav could be the minister of the St John church and administrator of the Evangelical Deaconess Hosp.

The Niebuhr children attended Central School & Lincoln High and all four continued with higher education and enjoyed distinguished professional careers. At Central Reinhold "received honors as a short story writer".

Reinhold graduated from Elmhurst College in 1910 & Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Grove, Mo. in 1913, both of which were schools for members of the Evangelical Synod. He postponed taking a parish by gaining permission to enter Yale Divinity School.

His father died before he entered Yale, causing family hardship. Despite this setback,

Niebuhr managed to complete his master's degree in theology in 1915, the same year in which he was ordained a minister in the Evangelical Synod.

Niebuhr has been called the 20th century theologian of sin, but he called himself a "Christian realist".

While working on a 4th Step my sponsor pointed out to me that I should focus on the seven deadly sins and be more concerned why I did the things rather than a litany of the events. His direction led me to the following passage I found on the Internet. (This is from a collection of sermon ideas for ministers and other members of the clergy.)

"Pride is the first of the seven deadly sins. One falls into pride when one lacks trust in God and his mercy and becomes arrogant, hypocritical and self-centered. Reinhold Niebuhr ... summed up humanity's basic sin --our unwillingness to acknowledge our creatureliness, our self-elevation--in one word PRIDE."

Besides gaining the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1964, Reinhold Niebuhr was on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1948 and in 1990 was named by *Life* magazine as one of its 100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century.

During his lifetime Niebuhr

wrote some twenty books and contributed more than 1,500 articles to journals and magazines.

In 1952 Niebuhr had a stroke that slowed him down but he continued to teach, write and speak out.

He retired in 1960 and moved to Stockbridge, Mass, where he carried on his efforts to teach and reform until his death in 1971.

In reading the various articles by and about this important person I was especially struck by this paragraph he penned:

"Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime: therefore we must be saved by hope.

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good make complete sense in any immediate context of history: therefore we must be saved by faith.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone: therefore we must be saved by love.

No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is our stand-point: therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness."

The final form of love - forgiveness. Something to think about.

Reinhold Niebuhr - someone you should know.

ANSWERS TO T/F QUIZ

1. False (Bill W & Dr. Bob were co-founders of AA.)
2. True
3. False (The Big Book is in it's 4th edition.)
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. True
8. True
9. False (AA was founded in 1935)
10. False (Anne was Dr. Bob's wife, Lois was Bill's wife).

THANK YOU, THANK YOU

64 AA members have signed up to be on the Answering Service List. It is wonderful to have so many members involved in 12th Step work like this.

Since we average about 20 calls a month we will regularly rotate names so that as many people will be called as possible. If any of you on the list have questions just contact anyone involved in the Sandhills Intergroup.

WHAT IS INTERGROUP?



We are a service committee formed for the purpose of supporting AA activities in the Moore Country area of NC.

Our goal is to improve communication and understanding among our AA groups in order to unite all efforts to better serve the alcoholic who seeks the help of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Sandhills Intergroup is comprised of interested volunteer members and representatives from the AA groups in Moore County.

The ideas and suggestions of the local AA members are welcome and all are encouraged to attend the monthly meetings at 9 AM on the first Sat. of each month at the AA bldg. in Aberdeen.

Sandhills Intergroup is financed by local AA groups. The treasurer presents an annual estimated budget and, with the continual support of the AA groups we anticipate continued success. These monies pay for printed material, a website and a 24 hour answering service.

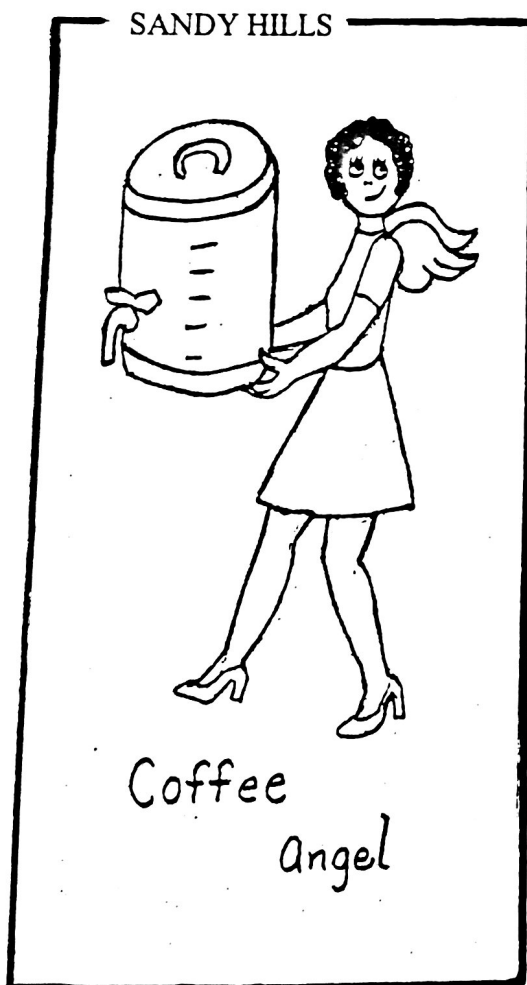
The Public Information Committee of Intergroup distributes meeting lists and literature to local hotels, motels, hospitals, commercial buildings, law enforcement, mental health and medical and professional agencies.

The volunteer members on the 12th Step Answering Service List return calls to suffering alcoholics, as well as answer their questions and provide assistance.

Published and distributed by

SANDHILLS INTERGROUP
PO Box 2513
Southern Pines, NC 28388

www.sandhillsaa.org
1-800-496-1742



Ideas for the Sandy Hills cartoon? See Myrna J.