

Volume 16, Number 1, January 2017

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

FEATURES:

- FYI
- Spotlight on Our Groups
- Traveling Highlights
- Little known Facts of AA
- District 52
- Member's Musings
- Carrying the Message

"The GRAPEVINE"

Info on back issues

Have you ever wanted to re-read an article from an old "Grapevine" and had no idea how to find it?

Do you enjoy the magazine and want to start from the beginning? The first issue was published in June, 1944, by the way.

The AA Grapevine digital archive provides access to everything ever published in the "Grapevine", except for issues of the current year.

You can find answers to questions about recovery, AA history, spirituality or get information on any number of topics concerning the fellowship.

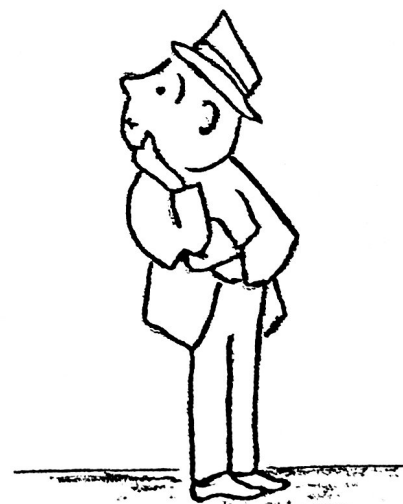
You can search by topic, magazine department, by date or by keyword to find what you are looking for.

Questions such as:

"Were Bill W. & Carl Jung Pen Pals? ...Jan., '63

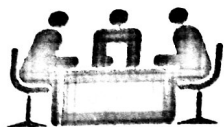
"How did the Grapevine get it's name?..June '89

"Who wrote the AA Preamble?" ...May, '92



www.aagrapevine.org

HISTORICAL FACTS OF AA



AA History & Heritage

Were there originally just six steps ... not twelve?

Over the years I have heard said many times that the Twelve Steps come from the Oxford Group and that originally there were only six steps. As with much of what might be called "meeting lore" there are elements of truth to this assertion, but, yet, it's not entirely accurate.

There is certainly a good argument that our Steps reflect many practices of the Oxford Group but, there did not seem to be anything called **steps** in use until the Big Book introduced them with the statement: *"Here are the **Steps** we took which are suggested as a program of Recovery"*.

In the AA History, Not God author Ernie Kurtz generally describes the process of writing the Big Book and Steps - following is my summary of this:

Bill would rough out the chapters and read them at his weekly meetings at his house. Copies were also sent to Akron for their comments. The ensuing

discussions apparently were often heated and it was in this contentious atmosphere that Bill began to describe the "heart" of the program in Chapter 5.

His associates had agreed at an earlier meeting on a six-item procedure that summed up what they had learned from the Oxford Group. (This was not their list, not the Oxford Group's list.)

- "1. We admitted that we were licked, that we were powerless over alcohol.*
- 2. We made an inventory of our defects or sins.*
- 3. We confessed or shared our shortcomings with another person in confidence.*
- 4. We made restitution to all those we had harmed by our drinking.*
- 5. We tried to help other alcoholics with no thought of reward in money or prestige.*
- 6: We prayed to whatever God we thought there was for power to practice these precepts.*

Bill decided to break these into smaller pieces that were more comprehensive and easier for outsiders to understand. Out of this process came a list very close to what we use today. He had not set out to make it 12 items but was pleased that it turned out to be 12.

The discussion of Chapter 5 continued to be contentious

however, especially regarding theology, religion and the use of the word "God". Finally Bill got agreement just to let him be the final decision maker on wording.

The working manuscript for the Big Book shows that numerous changes were made to Bill's original composition of the Steps. Most notably:

- * The terms "as we understood him" (i.e. God), and "conscious" (contact), were added to Step 11.
- * The term "on our knees" was deleted from Step 7.

When the book was finally published, we got our Steps just as they are today except that Step 12 read "spiritual experience" rather than "spiritual awakening".

Personally I think – intended or not – the introductory sentence for the Twelve Steps is one of the most meaningful in all our literature...

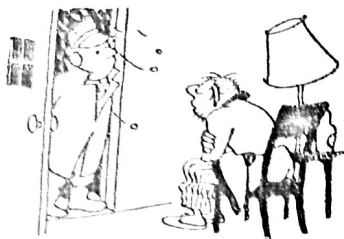
The word "steps" implies a series of actions rather than concepts.

The term "we took" implies this is simply our shared experience – our primary way of communicating the AA message.

The word "suggested" reminds us that nobody has all the correct answers and that we can accept variation and change in how things are done.

Written by AA member
Jim M.

CARRYING THE MESSAGE



I am an alcoholic. I am also one of those fortunate alcoholics who came into AA and stopped drinking and have not had anything to drink since. It has been more than thirty-five years since that first meeting. I, like many people on my arrival, was in pretty bad shape physically, mentally and spiritually.

I had been badly beaten up during my last drunk/black out. I had just been tried for my second DWI, I was supporting myself by walking the roads and dumpster diving for aluminum cans to recycle. I would have been homeless but there was a run down house at the back of the family property that I was allowed to stay in. The least of my problems was that I was an atheist.

In any case in those early days I did not entertain the idea that I would find sobriety. I was simply too sick to keep drinking and thought at some point it was inevitable that I would resume drinking. I was going to eight or ten meetings a week and was open to suggestions. I became aware that people I admired were people that talked about working the steps of the program. In my own

faltering way I decided to do that. On arrival at AA (and for some time prior) I knew I was powerless over alcohol and my life was unmanageable. When I was exactly six months sober I was sitting in a meeting when the steps were being read and I had an epiphany that a power greater than myself (the members and program of AA) could restore me to sanity (if I narrowly defined it as stopping drinking, as my brain was still mush).

I started trying to get a sponsor. I had several failures at this, only one of which was over a religious issue. I did find a wonderful sponsor who guided me through Steps four, five, six and seven. Unfortunately he died shortly after that.

So why did I decide to write this? Nineteen years in my career as a psychiatric nurse was spent doing mental health/substance abuse evaluations, primarily in the emergency room setting.

Hundreds of times I interviewed people who would clearly benefit from attendance at Alcoholics Anonymous, but when I suggested it they would respond that they could not go to AA because they did not believe in God and/or were atheist or agnostic. I believe AA could have helped these people as it helped me. Hopefully some of them eventually found their way to AA.

Secondly I rarely hear anyone in a meeting talking about sobriety as an atheist, agnostic or free thinker. How many atheist, agnostic or

free thinkers do we lose because they don't hear anyone talking about the things they believe?

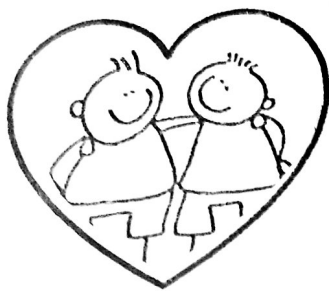
I would note there have been modest improvements in the literature available. When I came in the Appendix 11, "Spiritual Experience" was the only part of the Big Book that remotely reflected what I believed spiritually, and I found it by accident. Everything else Bill W. wrote about atheists and agnostics is (to me) patronizing and a "turn off".

I am not an evangelical atheist. I am not out to convert you from your beliefs. I just want the newcomer with similar beliefs to mine to have the same chance for sobriety that I found here. I will continue to talk about being sober and an atheist. If you are of a like mind please consider joining in.

Wayne M.

A ... a
L... life
C... centered
O... on
H... helping
O... others
L... live
I... in
C... comfort

The Heart of AA



Sometimes in the halls of AA the adage "Meetings, Meetings, Meetings" can be heard quite clearly. No doubt meetings are important. My peace of mind almost always seems to improve after attending a meeting.

More importantly, virtually all of those members who are close to me were first met at meetings. Most important, perhaps, other than the meetings is the application of the principals learned when attending an AA meeting.

Thus, the true heart of AA comes alive when we are not able to attend our Home Group meetings. I spent much of this year unable to attend meetings. The diagnosis of having reached Stage IV of Congestive Heart Failure being the cause.

My wonderful cardiologist Joe Rogers of Duke said to me, "We all knew this day of reckoning was going to come." He prescribed a hospitalization to get a picture of my capability to either get a heart transplant or become a "battery operated" alcoholic as

the only two choices to continue my life.

The first hospitalization was in May. It lasted for almost two weeks. The time spent during that first trip marked the longest time between meetings since the beginning of my AA journey.

I did not suffer for long as some of my closest AA friends regularly brought the meetings to Duke Hospital. One Sunday afternoon Howard R., Bob D. and Ned M. came and graced me at Duke. I was a resident on the Cardiac Unit. Thus it began. The humor and the one liners were flying around the room.

For some reason a gentleman in the room felt compelled to share his life story with us. His recounting of his days led me to inquire if he was "a friend of Bill W". His blank stare and continuance of his story answered that question. Twenty minutes later he left us with a smile on his face and laughter in his heart. I sometimes wonder if our reason for being joined together as AA's in this hospital room was to bring some joy to this man's life.

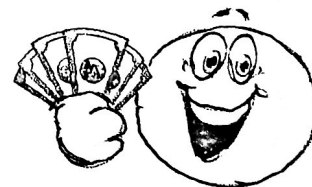
During the May stay at Duke my fate became clearer. I was doomed...a candidate for either a transplant or the aforementioned LVAD (left ventricular assistance device). My next appointment was scheduled for mid-July. The date was pushed up as my condition worsened. It was determined that a transplant was out as my death would likely

precede getting a heart.

The staff explained that implanting the LVAD was a "destination surgery". This means that I will last for so long as the device does. Mercifully there are no more incursions into my heart as the cardiologists at Duke all concurred that I would not withstand another major heart surgery.

I got so ill in late July that admittance for the surgery was pushed up. My twin brother Bruce and sister Mary flew down from New England to join my wife Ellen at my side. They stayed through the surgery and after. This was another gift of AA as family relationships were not good at the conclusion of my drinking career.

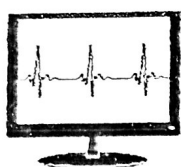
For all of the next month and a half my wife Ellen was a stalwart. She stayed at Duke for virtually all of that time. A chunk of that hotel invoice was underwritten anonymously by AA members.



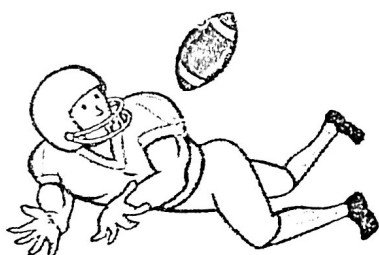
I was to spend thirty some odd days in Cardiac Intensive Care. Throughout all of those difficult times the heart of AA was in the rooms with me. I woke to find my sponsor Bob D. putting his hand on my shoulder and assuring me that things would be OK. The amazing thing about that was that the assurance came at 7:30 AM & Bob lives in Seven Lakes.

Howard R. was in the Florida Keys but called every day to remind me of what and who I really was. Don L. and Steve B. from Sanford brought the best wishes of the Central Carolina Group.

Dan C., Jeff C. and Jimmy B. from Raleigh came over on an early Saturday morning to watch the Boston College-Georgia Tech football game televised from Dublin, Ireland. They said they watched the heart monitor ...



... while I watched the ballgame !!



Perhaps my favorite visit came when the M & M boys (Fred & Ned) came calling on a Sunday afternoon. I was busy telling them a tale about an "exotic" dancer who frequents the Wilder building. After some detection work they deduced that I was referring to a yoga instructor. Apparently the definition of the term "exotic" changes as one gets older.

The support of AA members in

thoughts, prayers and action was crucial in surviving this ordeal. I can readily attest that the heart of AA is the action which backs up the words spoken in our meetings.



I appreciate the love afforded me by my fellow AA's greatly. If not struck by a bus, or something, at some point my heart will just give out.

Yet all the visits to Duke in the world will not treat my alcoholism. The sole remedy for my alcoholism is embodied in being a contributing member of the fellowship.

Written by: Brent G.

God grant me
the Serenity
to accept the things
I cannot change
Courage to
change the things I can
and the Wisdom
to know the difference

THE LONG VERSION

The SERENITY PRAYER is a staple of the AA program, but many members do not know that it is part of this longer version:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the 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"

The American theologian Dr. Reinhold Niebur (1892-1971) is generally credited with being the author of those words; but, that has been disputed by historians for years.

However... the thing that is not in dispute is the effect that the prayer has had on AA ... and the world as a whole !

Facts of AA



Jack Alexander's article entitled "Alcoholics Anonymous" in the March, 1941 issue of "The Saturday Evening Post" greatly influenced the growth of AA. At that time the "Post" was one of the country's most popular publications.

Alexander was not an instant believer and it wasn't until he "could feel AA in the very marrow of his bones" that he could write the story that would rock drunks and their families all over the world.

In 1950, just shy of 15 years after the founding of AA, the "Post" published a follow-up article by Alexander entitled "The Drunkard's Best Friend".

Both of these articles can be found on the Internet and will give the reader a crash course on AA's early days.

MEMBERS MUSINGS

Family Vacation

As Death has shrunk my Family of Origin from small to smaller, my brother has taken on the mantle of Family Leader. I am grateful for his efforts to create opportunities for togetherness among those of us who remain on earth, though at times I question his sanity. We have yet to convene when calamity of some nature has not come to pass. It is just the way we are. It is just the way we behave. It is just the way we relate.

I was well aware of these realities when my brother suggested a gathering of the extended family on the island called Martha's Vineyard at the end of this past summer. He would rent the sprawling waterfront home of absentee owners. All the rest of us had to do was to make our way there. For those of you familiar, getting to the island is not always a straight shot.

Some family members declined the invitation. Old Grievances prevailed. But my older sister and her spouse were driving up from New Jersey, and I made the decision to meet them there and drive along. I had misgivings from the gitgo. Though The Spouse had been sober for 15 years, he is frail and suffers from dementia. My sister, over the years and especially recently, has exhibited behavior that surely

looked like alcoholic intoxication but the drinking she was doing was in secret and I questioned my perception. Not so much, though, that I did not have The Feeling that badness would emerge as we embarked on this vacation. Turns out My Feeling was spot on.

Once we were ferried to the island Sister departed on foot to retrieve the rental car. Walking distances are short. She was gone for an inordinately long time and on the drive home she seemed a bit off. I learned later that the liquor store was right next door to the rental agency, which was only 2 short blocks from the Ferry Terminal where we waited.

But not to worry. We made it to the Beach House and enjoyed an exceptional chef-prepared meal in honor of my brother's 60th birthday. It was also the second AA anniversary of my sobriety, but I elected not to share this. The spotlight was for my brother. The evening was full of Joy. We were all having a grand time. Really!

But then Day 2 rolls around. I am upstairs reading, having opted out of a game the others are playing. My Brother's stepson is explaining to My Sister the rules of the game. She is not able to comprehend and, to my ear, is slurring her words and becoming belligerent. Crisis erupts as the stepson and My Sister begin to shout in full voice and fury at one another. One is stupid, the other is a jerk... Far worse language was actually spoken. Each threatens to pack up and leave the island. My sister

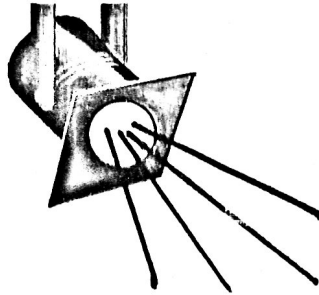
arrives upstairs in incoherent rage. She is going to gather her husband and her things and drive to the Ferry NOW.

Suddenly all eyes are on me. My sister cannot be allowed to drive. I am expected to take action. With God at my side and the 12 Step Program in my head, I said to my sister "you are not Yourself. You must lie down now and rest. You must not leave. You must not drive." I felt afraid but calm. I had the courage, with the gift of recovery, to face a challenging situation and do the right thing.

My sister's alcoholism colored the remainder of the vacation and, as I have told her since, I saw her as a Flash Point. She was either going to get help or she was going to die. Only days after that vacation's end my sister made a decision to enter an Alcohol Detoxification Facility. Since then she has dived into Alcoholics Anonymous with a vengeance. We talk regularly and often about the Joys of Recovery. She is just getting started, but already I am able to relate to her in ways that have never been positive before.

I am glad that belief in my recovery allowed me to take a trip I suspected would be treacherous. I believe today that the events of that trip were pivotal to directing my sister onto the sober path. It gave her a place to reach bottom. Now we can both look up. Together. Pretty Neat.

Merilyn G.



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR GROUPS

"Keep It Sober Group"

The Aberdeen "Keep It Sober" group was formed in August of 2004.

That was when some of the members that regularly attended the Tuesday and Saturday night Wilder building meeting decided to become a Home Group.

The main purpose of the Group is to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic and to provide a structured group as outlined by the GSO.

The Group also wanted to show that getting and staying sober can be fun. At one of the early organization meetings a member was heard to say "Let's just keep it sober" and hence the Group got it's name.

The Group meets every Tuesday at 8 pm for a Closed Discussion and on Saturdays at 8 pm for an open Speaker Meeting.

In the beginning some of the members had to hold more than one service position, but over the years the Group has grown into one of the largest in Moore County.

The "KISG" is active in many areas of AA service including District 52, Area 51, Sandhills Intergroup, CP.CPI, Treatment and CFC work.

They also sponsor many fun AA activities such as the annual Halloween costume and dance party, golf and picnic outings and our annual Anniversary cookout.

The "Keeping It Sober Group" holds their monthly business meetings the last Tuesday of each month and all AA's are welcome to attend.

The "Keep It Sober" members also hold many positions needed to keep the Aberdeen building running smoothly, such as literature and chip purchases. They also have painting and cleaning day get-togethers by the members.

AA in Moore County is lucky to have so many groups to choose from and the "Keep It Sober Group" may be just what you are looking for.

"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. ...frequent contact with each other is the bright spot of our lives"

(Big Book, Page 89)
