



## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

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Our co-founder Dr. Bob Smith's last address to the Fellowship of AA was over 60 years ago. He said:

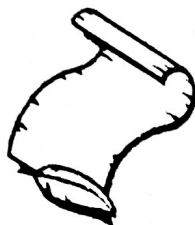
"Let's stick to the simplicity of the Program & not louse it up with Freudian complexities and things that are interesting to the scientific mind but have little to do with our actual AA work.

Our 12 steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words *love & service*. We understand what love is and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind.

Let us also remember to guard that erring member ... the tongue, & if we must use it, let's use it with kindness, consideration and tolerance. None of us would be here today if someone hadn't taken time to take us to a meeting & done numerous little kind and thoughtful acts.

So let's never get the degree of smug complacency so that we're not willing to extend that help which has been so beneficial to us, to our less fortunate Brothers."

## MEMBER'S MUSINGS



### PATIENCE

Patience is *not* one of my strongest qualities. I work on it all the time. I've prayed and asked to be taught more patience and of course... He sends me countless things to practice on.

I have heard that cleanliness is next to Godliness. Personally, I think patience is pretty Godly; I can stay clean without much effort, but patience comes by way of many life lessons that only work when applied.

The following story is a good illustration of patience. A child from the city was spending his vacation on a farm. He was shown a hen sitting on a nest of eggs and told that some day a little chicken would come out of each egg.

The child was delighted and every morning he went around expecting to see the miracle. Days passed and nothing changed and the child began to believe he had been tricked.

It wasn't long though, much to his surprise he saw a flock of little chickens running about. Of course, there was nothing on the outside to suggest the wonderful things that had been happening all the time inside the shells.

The child had lost his patience. Good thing the mother hen didn't lose her patience; there would have been no chickens!!

Sometimes it is difficult to exercise patience. For many of us it is instant gratification or nothing.

When I have the most to do, in the shortest time, I will invariably get be-hind the slowest driver or the longest checkout line. That is when I have to remind myself that there is plenty of time to get my errands done and if some of them go over into tomorrow, it is no big deal.

I was told once that there are no big deals. The only big deal is what I create in my head. I don't know about you, but that has proven to be true for me.

Being patient does not mean I go through the sometimes unpleasant process of life without having feelings. No!

Many events...& people ...can be frustrating. It's ok to feel the frustration. Feel the impatience and even get angry. Patience is a gift that closely follows acceptance. Patience is a virtue

that has to be developed through daily practice.

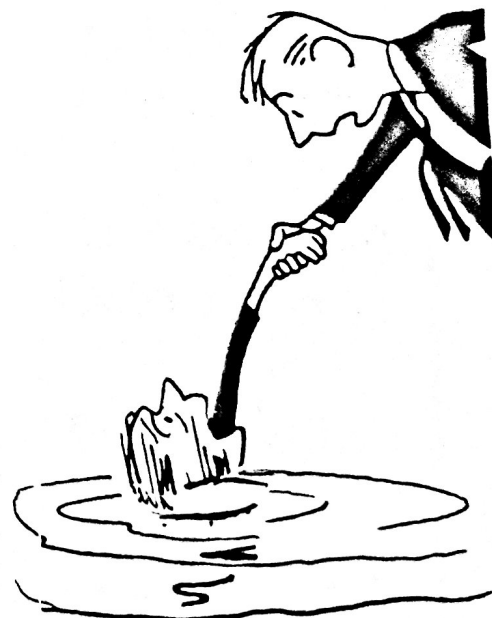
When there are delays in what I want in life, I have learned that those delays are opportunities for me to grow in faith and understanding. I believe that patience is the ultimate test in powerlessness.

In closing I will leave you with this reminder; we are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.

Be patient - God isn't finished with me yet! I am a work in progress. How about you?

Written by AA member: Sally S

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THE HAND OF AA  
REACHES TO ANY DEPTH

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## TRAVELING HIGHLIGHTS



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### AA in Thailand

Over the years I have attended AA meetings in far-away places. To me, the spirit of AA remains the same everywhere; but, there are some unusual variations in members and meetings.

A two year job assignment in Thailand brought me in contact with some of the most unusual.

The first task was to find the meeting place. I had the address from the AA directory but, in the fairly remote town where my job took me, that turned out to be just a starting point.

Finally I found the meeting on foot, down a dark back alley far too small for cars to navigate. It was in a

primitive back room, behind a factory where sad looking women were sewing clothes ... probably for export to the United States.

Back to the meetings ... there were two each week attended by 6 to 10 men. No women, no Thai natives, just us foreigners.

I was usually the only American and I think I may have been the only one with a steady job.

The majority who attended the meetings were drifters from Scotland, England, Australia or just passing through. Some had organized their life to their own likings there in Pattaya City.

One man came to all the meetings but looked straight ahead and never spoke a word. I think he perhaps spoke no English and came solely for the spirit.

Another got his spending money by selling cakes that his girl friend made.

Good cakes !

Another man, a tough looking ex-military guy, hired himself out as a bodyguard to travelers or anyone needing his services.

What we had in common was a desire to stop drinking. It was enough to make us brothers.

The meetings helped to keep me sober for my time in Thailand and for that I am grateful. Very grateful.

Thanks AA !!

Written in 2003 by AA member ...Robert M.

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KEEP IT SIMPLE

## HISTORICAL FACTS of AA



One of our AA members here in the Sandhills did her medical training at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio in 1996.

The significance of this will become clear as you read this article that she has written ...

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Sister Ignatia Gavin was a no-nonsense Catholic sister who was in charge of admissions at St. Thomas Hospital. In 1935, with the help of Dr. Bob Smith, they admitted the first alcoholic patient under the diagnosis of acute gastritis... thus

making St. Thomas the 1st hospital in the world to treat alcoholism as a medical condition.

The patient's were placed in the hospital's flower room where they could be cared for without anyone knowing; but, Sister Ignatia believed that they should be brought in by the front door like other patients and not sneaked into the hospital.

Due to her belief she was able to convince the hospital of the same and a ward within the hospital was opened dedicated to treating alcoholics.

Sister Ignatia was the first person to use medallions in AA. After a five day detox she would give the leaving patient a Sacred Heart Medallion. She told them that it was a commitment to God, to AA and to recovery and if they decided to drink again they were to return the medallion before they took a drink.

Today the medallion is still used at St. Thomas Hospital and is given to

alcoholics and addicts alike upon discharge. I have one myself !

Sister Mary Ignatia Gavin, CSA, was a messenger of hope for alcoholics and their families. She founded both Ignatia Hall at St. Thomas and Rosary Hall Solarium at St. Vincent in Cleveland.

Her courageous stand for medical treatment for alcoholics and her care and devotion to the victims of alcoholism helped Dr. Bob Smith and Bill Wilson and millions who have come after them.

Sister Ignatia never accepted any recognition for her work with alcoholics. Even in 1961, when she was recognized for her work by then President Kennedy, she accepted the award only in the name of her religious community and profession.

She retired in 1965 and died less than a year later on April 1, 1966

30 years later I had the privilege of doing medical

training at St. Thomas. I worked many a long night admitting alcoholics and addicts from the ER and caring for them on Ignatia Hall.

I had no idea that I would be affected some years later by the very disease that plagued the patients that I cared for...nor that I would be a patient on Ignatia Hall.

I worked with some of the nurses who had worked with Sister Ignatia. They told me stories of how kind and considerate she could be, but that she was also firm in her beliefs and could even be intimidating.

She was a true advocate for the alcoholic and would go to any lengths to make certain they were receiving proper care.

In the beginning she would sneak alcoholics into the hospital and would call Dr. Bob to let him know they were there. Then he and Bill W. would come and talk to them and share their experience, strength and hope.

Sister Ignatia was a driving force in the beginning of AA. Without her I have to wonder if AA would have had the early success that it developed.

Where else could such a large number of alcoholics be found who wanted to stop drinking and who wanted help? They seemed to know that Sister Ignatia was there waiting on them.

All they had to do was show up...sound familiar?

Written by AA member:  
Paula A.

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## CARRYING THE MESSAGE



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## WHY IT KEEPS ON WORKING

Thirty-seven years ago, with less than a month's sobriety, I attended a retreat for women whose lives have been affected by alcohol. What drew me to

the idea of attending a retreat was a woman from our group attending and coming back to speak at a meeting. She announced that she'd had a spiritual experience at this retreat and she literally glowed with a kind of peace.

I was not looking for a God of mine or anybody's understanding. Some AA members, seeing my rather long face, had suggested to me during the 1 & 1/2 years spent in Al-Anon attempting and failing to stay sober and after I picked up a white chip in March, that I might want to also think about going to a church of my choice.

Their suggestions fell on angry and fearful ears and I suggested that THEY might want to work their own program and leave me to work mine.

So it wasn't God I was looking for, it was that elusive Peace and Serenity that everyone was always talking about which both annoyed me and filled me with a great longing.

I saw people happy in this program & really living a serene way of life. I just couldn't imagine how I was going to pull that off. But looking at Mary B., at the real change in her demeanor, determined my next step which was to line up some women to accompany me to the next retreat. There were to be 150 women at this retreat both members of AA and Al-anon.



The sheer number of women frightened me to death. I wanted my friends along as protection. Also, I am a known procrastinator and I even managed to surprise myself by signing us all up for this trip to Nags Head, NC.

I was graced to have a really good sponsor right at the beginning of my sobriety, a warm and loving but direct and honest woman named Marge. She thought this might be good for me but had no desire to go herself.

So, off we went, four of us from Havelock, NC to the Outer Banks where, unbeknownst to these other women, I had spent a lot of time drinking and being in places where I had no business being.

I was filled with trepidation and with a rather sick feeling re the memories of some of the places we drove past which brought up my past. Of course, with only one month of sobriety under my belt, I never let on to the other women what my state of mind actually was.

We just all went up there like it would be a weekend lark. But on the inside I found myself praying to a God of my misunderstanding. I asked that if He couldn't come into my life to stay, I didn't want Him to show up at all. I knew I had no more room for rejection in my life.

Immediately upon our arrival, we were greeted like long lost cousins as happens in many AA meetings. I felt that I had come home. And oddly enough, I, who am always in a hurry, felt that I had plenty of time to find this peace that I sought.

The women were more than wonderful, ... the conferences eye opening and the spiritual experience that happened to me was when I could see how my past behavior had affected other human beings by listening to a woman who had suffered my type of behavior.

And when I went to my room I finally turned to a Higher Power and told Him, "I am so sick of me. Empty me of me and fill me up with You". And He did.

An indescribable love filled me. It truly changed my life and put me on a path of sobriety and even sometimes peace and serenity !

Through thick and thin these twelve simple steps have kept me grounded with God, myself and others. For a person like myself who is easily distracted I needed a path and I needed one that I felt was inclusive... not exclusive.

Now, thirty-seven years later, I am honored to return to this same retreat as the director. I've been there many times and watched us all grow and some of us move on. One of the

women who first accompanied me died this year and her son brought her ashes up to this retreat at her request to be scattered on the beach. We had a very moving ceremony with good memories.

All of those sickening memories I initially brought back with me to the Outer Banks have been replaced with beautiful ones. After I was settled in my room on Friday night, there was a knock at my door and I opened it to none other than Mary B. the woman whose experience first influenced me to attend.

She herself can no longer attend due to severe allergies, but she made the effort to come to the hotel to give me a hug and wish me well.

We haven't seen each other in years and she didn't really know that she was the reason I'd gone searching in the first place. But we began talking about the beautiful ripple effect of this twelve step program. How we help one another after we have received so much help and how that continues to spread and spread and spread through all the years.

I wouldn't have missed a minute of it.

Would you?

Written by: Bonnie C.  
Vass Group of AA

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## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR GROUPS



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### "BIG BOOK GROUP"

Here's some good news for anyone with a handicap or who finds it hard to navigate stairs.

The "Big Book Group" of AA in Southern Pines, which met for many years in a 2<sup>nd</sup> floor room, now gathers in a downstairs room of the Brownson Memorial Church. It is easily accessible if you park in the back parking lot and just walk up the ramp and through the double doors.

If you are looking for a Home Group that is friendly, fairly small, and very enthusiastic and if you want to learn more about the Big Book ... then this may just be the place for you.

The "Big Book Group" was started in 1982 by those who felt there was a need for a group which concentrated on reading and studying the Big Book.

They meet Tuesday nights at 8 and the format is to separate into two sections ... one is a Closed Discussion of the Big Book and the other is an Open Meeting directed to newcomers. AA topics are taken from AA literature and led by Home Group members.

The last Tuesday of each month is an Open Speaker's Meeting and a celebration of the members picking up their yearly chips.

It has become tradition for the member who is picking up his or her chip for the longest length of sobriety to choose the speaker for the evening. It is a festive event with a celebratory cake and ice cream being served.

The "Big Book Group" also sponsors an AA meeting at the Hoke

Correctional all-male minimum custody prison. Two of the group members carry the message every Wednesday evening.

If you are new to the area or have never attended the "Big Book Group" you will find the Brownson Memorial Church on the corner of May and Indiana Streets in Southern Pines. All meetings are non-smoking.

