



▲ True Greatness

Central Bulletin, November 1946, *By Editor*

Many people have expressed astonishment at the remarkable growth of the AA movement - how in twelve short years an idea grew into a philosophy which has, at the present estimate, attracted over 30,000 persons who adopted it as their way of life, when seemingly doomed to a senseless and hopeless existence. Twelve years ago all alcoholics didn't have a sucker's chance.

The early pioneers have earned our everlasting gratitude for the adherence to the high standards set by Bill and Doc. "Just think," one of our members said, "how long would this have lasted had Bill and Doc lowered their standards a little and permitted one binge a year in the program? A program like this certainly would still have

been better than either of their records had shown before!"

Fortunately for us, they set their standards high, and the entire philosophy has permeated into 30,000 families. Probably, affecting the lives of four to five times that many people. Just getting sober wasn't the answer.

All of us had gotten sober by ourselves many, many times - and got drunk again. It was the application and the absorption of each of the ever-important Twelve Steps that changed our decadent lives into purposeful ones.

What tremendous personality changes took

1st International Convention

July 28-30, 1950

The 1st International Convention of AA was held at Cleveland, Ohio. There, Dr. Bob made his last appearance and spoke in his final talk of the need to keep AA simple.



"If you and I are going to stay sober, we had better get busy."

- Dr. Bob

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place! Craven, abject, frustrated and beaten individuals were transformed into humble, firm, confident and happy persons filled with hope and faith.

Gratefully did they go out and happily do their Twelfth Step work. No sacrifice was too great of their time, money or effort. There was never a thought of reward - their reward was their happiness in finding themselves necessary to someone; there finally was a reason for their existence.

What kind of people were these early pioneers? Were they endowed with unusual intelligence, great leadership potential, great sagacity and philosophical or psychiatric knowledge? No, most of them had had just an ordinary education. Some had high-school and a few college educations.

How then did these once-nondescripts weather their sudden thrust into the limelight? Some fell by the wayside, but most of them very well, and a few spectacularly well. Those that had the constant success and who grew in stature were those who remained humbly grateful to their God, daily living their lives in serene acceptance of God's will.

Human nature asserted itself in many instances as the membership grew. Praise, public acclaim and suddenly acquired prestige in a community which had showed nothing but contempt for these pioneers, test the ego of ego-starved individuals. It was natural for some of these stalwarts to want to bask in the glare of the spotlight.

Some even weathered these temptations to exploit themselves. Some unfortunately did not. Some felt that their seniority in AA should accord them special privileges. They refused to grow with the movement and became moss-barks, and even became mountebanks, discrediting anyone's opinion if it dared to differ from their own.

Growing resentful at this lack of appreciation and respect several got drunk again.

As we add years to our "age in AA," let us be constantly concerned about the danger of becoming intolerant or pontifical. Seniority does not necessarily merit, and certainly should not demand nor command acceptance of our judgment or opinion.

The secret of the early success of AA - it's present greatness and its future greatness and growth, lies not in the glory of the individual. AA will remain great and individuals in it will become great only if they recognize that God alone is deserving of full credit for their success.

Praise and adoration is good, shunt it in the direction it should go.

▲ The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Step Study Meetings, *By Rick R.*

I consider myself to be one of the fortunate ones that came to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1969, at the age of 28, desperately looking for answers. The Rehabilitation programs had not gotten off the ground yet, and Drug Addicts did not begin to show up until the mid-1970s. A considerable number of the members of AA came there of their own free will, wanting to get sober. The elders of my first group suggest that, if you plan to attend so many meetings a week, one of them should be a Step Study Meeting, and I have been doing that ever since.

As we do that, we go through the steps 4 times a year as we split step 12 into two parts due to the number of pages it entails. As new members come into the group they bring with them, their own variety of alcoholic symptoms and it takes time to abandon the things that they feel threatens their own identity. It was not uncommon to see them in the parking lot after the meeting gossiping and bad-mouthing other members that they disagree with, and I was no different than them in my early days of recovery.

About 20 years ago a local group in our community was uprooted from their location and ended up in a new Alano Club at the time and they settled into the Monday through Friday 7 AM slots. The Thursday meeting became a Big Book Study, and the Friday meeting was a Step Study. I was happy to have them so convenient for me. I was much happier when, after we completed Step Twelve, we did not go back to Step One. We went straight into Tradition One and in a short time I noticed how the traditions shined a new light on what Alcoholics Anonymous was all about.

On the first page in Tradition One it states "We believe there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No AA can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our 12 steps to recovery are suggestions; the 12 traditions which guarantee AA's unity contain not a single Don't. They repeatedly say, "We ought..." but never "You must." WE don't normally hear these things in the everyday meetings.

Each of the Traditions have their own variety of suggestions that, in the interest of unity, add a mature understanding to those that study them and share them with those that have not studied the Traditions. When I share at a meeting I try to explain, in a way that does not reflect being in judgement about any individual. I may discuss Character Defects or Shortcomings and explain the idea that we all have them and for me to point out the faults of others is a short-

coming, itself. The person that gets off the beaten path is the person I care about the most. These are all symptoms of Alcoholism, and I am no better than anyone in the program. I may be farther down the path, but No Better. We may hear the term “Love and Tolerance” and try to explain how I include it in my approach to these two words.

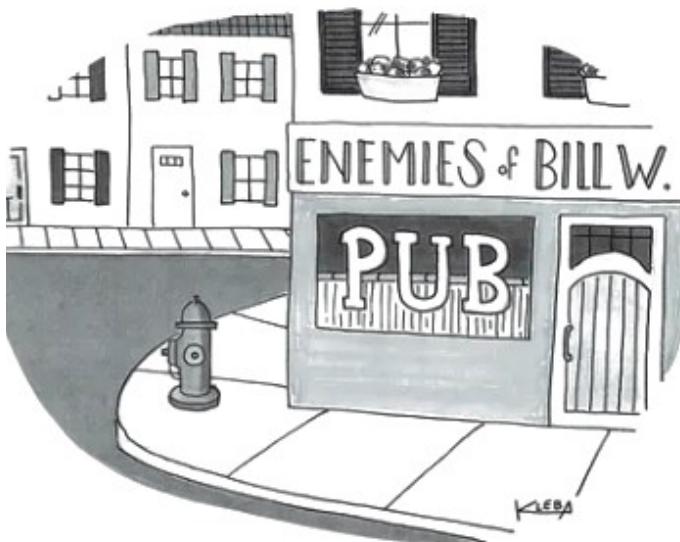
Scott Peck was influential in the spiritual approach in the program and in his book “The Road Less Traveled” he defines Love, as “Caring for and nurturing another person’s soul, and not the version we see up on the movie screen.” It is an action word, and I can Love everyone even if they do not love me back. As for the word “Tolerance,” I would change that word to “Acceptance,” as they suffer from the same disease that I once suffered from, and I am not superior to anyone in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

▲ Notes on Step Seven

There was true humility and deep surrender by asking God to “take all of me,” both the “good” and the “bad.” This was an admission that I could not trust myself to differentiate between the two. I almost drank after five months sobriety before going into the 12-step process with my sponsor.

He wisely pointed out the obvious fact that my mind lied to me—it was not to be trusted! I needed a higher power (God) to see the truth about myself. What an ego-shattering revelation! Yet, it was necessary to give up on myself and trust God to take over my recovery. Someone said: “Self cannot rid self of self with self.”

▲ Rule 62



I often hear long dissertations of what Bill W meant by “shortcomings” and “defects of character” in Step Seven. Though it may be impossible to overstate the importance of dictionaries, Bill W uses these words to mean the same thing. Let us look how he came about phrasing Steps Six and Seven: Page 59, Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our “shortcomings.”

Page 76, Step Seven: “I pray that you now remove from me every “defect of character” that stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.” Consequently, it is easy to see that Bill meant for us to absorb these two words as “twins.”

I wondered why the closing word “Amen” was not used in the many prayers of the steps leading up to Step Seven. It was explained to me that this word can be used as a summary of previous connected facts, e.g.:

In Step Three we asked to be relieved of the bondage of self, but we didn’t know what that was. Not complete. No Amen! In Step Four we only partially realize the nature of said bondage. Not complete. No amen! In Step Five our sponsor may provide deeper insights of the bondage. Not complete. No Amen! In Step Six we become willing to ask God to remove this bondage. Not complete. No Amen! In Step Seven, not that we have a much better insight of our bondage and are willing to be rid of our defects and shortcomings we are now ready to ask God for help. We have completed the necessary prerequisites. The summary has been completed—consequently Bill adds the word, Amen.

So be it.

By Bob S.

▲ A Quote

FROM BILL W.

“It must never be forgotten that the purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous is to sober up alcoholics. There is no religious or spiritual requirement for membership. No demands are made on anyone. An experience is offered which members may accept or reject. That is up to them.”

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For details or to add an event, call us at (216) 241-7387 or go online aacle.org/events. Deadline is the 15th of each month for next issue.