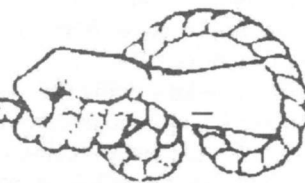


Lifeline



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Orange
County
Intergroup
Association

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GET INVOLVED!!! Every city or county has a Central Office, and we have two of the best ones around. The main office is in Santa Ana – just off the 55 Freeway at Dyer; the south county office is in Laguna Niguel. Every single meeting in Orange County should have an Intergroup Representative. If your meeting goes a whole month and you never hear an Intergroup report during the AA announcements part of your meeting, then it is time for you to step up to the plate. Become an Intergroup Rep. and come to our meeting every month. It is held the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 2025 Alton Parkway (Between Von Karmann and Red Hill) The meetings are brief, they are fun, and it is just another tool to put in your kit of "Sobriety Helpers". Show up at 7:00 P.M.

HOW THE BIG BOOK WAS PUT TOGETHER

By Bill W. – 1954

We have been telling the story of how the book came to be – as told by Bill W., our co-founder. You will see as you read this each month how the planets had to be aligned, the miracles were wafting through the air, and God was busy doing what God does best – making miracles. We last saw Bill and Smitty having just formed a board which included both alcoholics and non-alcoholics. How in the world would that work?

So we had this wonderful new foundation. These friends, unlike Mr. Rockefeller, were sold on the idea that we needed a lot of dough, and so our salesmen around New York started to solicit some money, again, from the very rich. We had a list of them and we had credentials from friends of Mr. John D. Rockefeller. "How could you miss, I ask you, salesmen?" The Foundation had been formed in the spring of 1938 and all summer we solicited the rich. Well, they were either in Florida or they preferred the Red Cross, or some of them thought that drunks were disgusting and we didn't get one damn cent in the whole summer of 1938, praise God!

Well, meantime, we began to hold trustee meetings and they were commiseration sessions on getting no dough. What with the mortgage and with me and Smitty eating away at it, the five grand had gone up with the flue, and we were all stone broke again. Smitty couldn't get his practice back either because he was a surgeon and nobody likes to be carved up by an alcoholic surgeon - even if he was three years sober. So things were tough all around, no fooling. Well, what would we do?

One day, probably in August 1938, I produced at a Foundation meeting, a couple of chapters of a proposed book along with some recommendations of a couple of doctors down at John Hopkins to try to put the bite on the rich. And we still had these two book chapters kicking around. Frank Amos said, "Well now, I know the religious editor down there at Harpers, an old friend of mine, Gene Exman." He said, "Why don't you take these two book chapters, your story and the introduction to the book, down there and show them to Gene and see what he thinks about them."

So I took the chapters down. To my great surprise, Gene who was to become a great friend of ours, looked at the chapters and said, "Why Mr. Wilson, could you write a whole book like this?" "Well, I said, "Sure, sure." There was more talk about it. I guess he went in and showed it to Mr. Canfield, the big boss, and another meeting was had. The upshot was that Harpers intimated that they would pay me

as the budding author, 15 hundred in advance royalties, bringing enough money in to enable me to finish the book. I felt awful good about that. It made me feel like I was an author or something. I felt real good about it but after awhile, not so good. Because I began to reason, and so did the other boys, if this guy Wilson eats up the 15 hundred bucks while he's doing this book, after the book gets out, it will take a long time to catch up. And if this thing gets him publicity, what are we going to do with the inquiries? And, after all, what's a lousy 10% royalty anyway? The 15 hundred still looked pretty big to me. Then we thought too, now here's a fine publisher like Harpers, but if this book if and when done, should prove to be the main textbook for A.A., why would we want our main means of propagation in the hands of somebody else? Shouldn't we control this thing? At this point, the book project really began.

I had a guy helping me on this thing who had red hair and ten times my energy and he was some promoter. He said, "Bill, this is something, come on with me." We walk into a stationary store, we buy a pad of blank stock certificates and we write across the top of them 'Works Publishing Company' - Par Value 25 Dollars. So we take the pad of these stock certificates, (of course we didn't bother to incorporate it, that didn't happen for several more years) we took this pad of stock certificates to the first A.A. meeting where you shouldn't mix money with spirituality. We said to the drunks "look, this thing is gonna be a cinch. Parker will take a third of this thing for services rendered. I, the author will take a third for services rendered, and you can have a third of these stock certificates par 25 if you'll just start paying up on your stock. If you only want one share, it's only five dollars a month, 5 months, see?" And the drunks all gave us this stony look that said, "What the hell, you mean to say you're only asking us to buy stock in a book that you ain't written yet?" "Why sure," we said. "If Harpers will put money in this thing why shouldn't you? Harpers said it's gonna be a good book." But the drunks still gave us this stony stare.

We had to think up some more arguments. "We've been looking at pricing costs of the books, boys. We get a book here, ya know, 400 or 450 pages, it ought to sell for about \$3.50." Now back in those days we found on inquiry from the printers that that \$3.50 book could be printed for 35 cents making a 1,000% profit, of course, we didn't mention the other expenses, just the printing costs. "So boys, just think on it, when these books move out by the carload we will be printing them for 35 cents and we'll be selling them direct mail for \$3.50. How can you lose?" The drunks still gave us this stony stare. No salt. Well, we figured we had to have a better argument than that. Harpers said it was a good book, you can print them for 35¢~ and sell them for \$3.50, but how are we going to convince the drunks that we could move carload lots of them? Millions of dollars.

So we get the idea we'll go up to the Readers Digest, and we got an appointment with Mr. Kenneth Paine, the managing editor there. Gee, I never forget the day we got off the train up at Pleasantville and were ushered into his office. We excitedly told him the story of this wonderful budding society. We dwelled upon the friendship of Mr. Rockefeller and Harry Emerson Fosdick. You know we were traveling in good company with Paine. The society, by

the way, was about to publish a textbook, then in the process of being written and we were wondering, Mr. Paine, if this wouldn't be a matter of tremendous interest to the Reader's Digest? Having in mind of course that the Reader's Digest has a circulation of 12 million readers and if we could only get a free ad of this coming book in the Digest we really would move something, ya see?

"Well," Mr. Paine said, "this sounds extremely interesting; I like this idea, why I think it'll be an absolutely ideal piece for the Digest. How soon do you think this new book will be out Mr. Wilson?" I said, "We've got a couple of chapters written, ahem, if we can get right at it, Mr. Paine, uh, you know, uh, probably uh, this being October, we ought to get this thing out by April or next May." "Why," Mr. Paine said, "I'm sure the Digest would like a thing like this. Mr. Wilson, I'll take it up with the editorial board, and when the time is right and you get all ready to shoot, come up and we'll put a special feature writer on this thing and we'll tell all about your society." And then my promoter friend said, "But Mr. Paine, will you mention the new book in the piece?" "Yes," said Mr. Paine, "we will mention the book."

Well, that was all we needed, we went back to the drunks and said, "Now look, boys, there are positively millions in this - how can you miss? Harpers says it's going to be a good book. We buy them for 35¢~ from the printer, we sell them for \$3.50 and the Reader's Digest is going to give us a free ad in its piece and boys, those books will move out by the carload. How can you miss? And after all, we only need 4 or 5 thousand bucks."

So we began to sell the shares of Works Publishing, not yet incorporated, par value \$25 and at \$5 per month to the poor people. Some people bought as little as one and one guy bought 10 shares. We sold a few shares to non-alcoholics and my promoter friend who was to get one-third interest was a very important man in this transaction because he went out and kept collecting the money from the drunks so that little Ruthie Hock and I could keep working on the book and Lois could have some groceries (even though she was still working in that department store).

Step 3: *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.*

Step 3 is about choice. Drunk or sober, then as now, each day I have the same decision to make: Will I accept spiritual help or will I handle life on my own? Will I surrender to God's will for me or will I slave to my own selfish desires?

I never had a choice regarding alcohol. The obsession rendered me powerless such that I had to drink on a daily basis. I refused to concede my lack of choice until the darkening end when thoughts of suicide and drinking competed for my attention. I sought escape in drinking and from drinking - many a night I would sit with a bottle in one hand and a gun in the other, just holding on. During those desperate times, I made numerous decisions to stop under the false belief that I could somehow regain control. No matter the willpower and desire brought to bear, however, I lacked the power to enforce those decisions -

obviously, since I did not stop. Lacking power and thus choice, I was unable to change the fact that I had to drink.

Drinking, however, was but an expression of an even deeper problem, my extreme selfishness. The world and all its characters revolved around me, and all my actions were geared towards the fulfillment of my own perceived needs. To hell with what anyone else needed. I was in control, always right, and more important than anyone else. Such was my attitude, albeit mostly unconscious. This extremity of selfishness, also known as a spiritual malady, shackled me to the bottle and to an eventually unbearable existence of isolation and loneliness. To solve my problem with alcohol meant finding a solution to my spiritual malady, though of course I did not realize this before getting sober. The solution to my problems was to transcend myself, which meant surrendering a lot of what I had believed in.

I admitted to myself that, on my own power, I could not stop drinking, and so my first real surrender was made to Alcoholics Anonymous. That was the end, marked by a newfound honesty born of suffering. I found myself in the rooms of AA, seeking outside help for my problems with alcohol. At my second meeting, a kind man in an act of selflessness appointed himself my sponsor, and out of a desperate willingness, I chose to accept his help. That was the first time in my life when I accepted help without attaching conditions.

We worked through the steps together. My sponsor helped me to find the truth in Step 1, then made it very clear that he was incapable of keeping me sober. In fact, no human power would be enough. Working through Step 2, my old prejudices regarding God were slowly eroded. I had always believed in God and recognized his power, yet scornfully held that he would not help me, for in my twisted mind He had given up on me long ago. I became convinced that God could and would help me, for all around me in the rooms of AA were these examples of hopeless drunks like myself who had been transformed by His power. Here was the answer, the solution to my shambles of a life at last.

My second and most significant surrender was to God himself. This was Step 3. I chose to accept His help, to rely on His power in order to stay sober. In return, I pledged my life and will to His service, placing them in His care and thus at His disposal. No longer was I to live by self-propulsion, concerned only with satisfying my own selfish desires. I decided that I would, to the best of my ability, do as God would have me do and be the man that He would have me be. It was no longer all about me.

My sponsor made it excruciatingly clear that resting on my laurels after making the 3rd Step commitment was a sure sign of dishonesty. Would I commend my will and life into God's care then refuse to take action to become the man He would have me be? Would I pay lip service alone to the Power that had saved my life and removed the obsession for me to drink? No. Though it was never easy, I worked through the rest of the steps with my sponsor's loving and stern guidance, thusly fitting myself to be of service to God and my fellows. The proof that I made the 3rd Step decision rests in the fact that I followed the course of action outlined in steps 4 – 12. In my experiences since then

in working with others, I have come to believe that words mean nothing until they are backed up with actions.

I have tried to be true to this commitment to God, as I understand God, and for the most part have succeeded. I have a choice each day whether to accept His help or not, to seek his guidance and power or go it alone. The 3rd Step decision is one that I have found must be renewed regularly. Admittedly, I have fallen short at times in being faithful to my commitment to God, for I still attempt to run things on my own and fail to be of loving service to others, as He would have me be. I sometimes choose to forego spiritual help and rather forge onwards under my own limited power. I am human, after all, and not a saint. Yet by God's grace, by virtue of His power, I am sober today, and shall stay sober provided I continue to choose to accept His help and take action to be worthy of it.

Submitted by Brad B.

THE THIRD TRADITION

"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking."

We've thrown away all membership rules and regulations that might keep you out. We want you to have the same chance for sobriety that we have had.

Isn't every organization entitled to have rules for membership? Why did A.A. decide to forgo this privilege, to be "inclusive . . . never exclusive"? That's easy. Early members tried it the other way, and it just didn't work. As the Fellowship was nearing its ten-year mark, the office that served as headquarters "asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in," Bill W. recalled. "If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once, it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined A.A. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!" So the rule books went out the window and were replaced by one uncomplicated sentence: Tradition Three.

But, somebody may ask, isn't this Tradition itself a rule? It does state *one* requirement for membership. Let's read it again, and ask another question: Who determines whether or not newcomers qualify, whether they do want to stop drinking? Obviously, nobody except the newcomers themselves; everybody else simply has to take their word for it. In fact, they don't even have to say it aloud. And that's fortunate for many of us who arrived at A.A. with only a halfhearted desire to stay sober. We are alive because the A.A. road stayed open to us.

The problem faced by this Tradition isn't just past A.A. history. It keeps coming up—for instance, when a group debates whether to exclude alcoholics who have problems other than alcohol or have differing lifestyles. The Tradition mentions no such additional requirements, no demand that prospective members must *not* have a history of drug abuse, a certain lifestyle, or an institutional background. All alcoholics are welcome.

What about the group that seems to impose extra requirements, beyond "a desire to stop drinking"? This might be a "special interest" group or collection of groups in which, for example, each member must be a physician—or a young person, a man, a woman, a priest, or a

