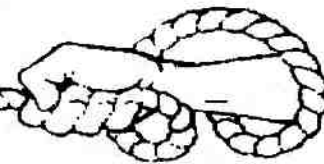


Lifeline



SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

APRIL, 2006

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Orange
County
Intergroup
Association

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From San Clemente, Dana Point, Laguna Beach and
Capistrano Valley Area-27635 Forbes Road, Suite D

Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
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The Intergroup meeting on April 12 will be at:

Irvine City Center
One Civic Center Plaza
Irvine CA 92623-9575

From then on, we have a **permanent new home**,
starting May 10th, which is also Mother's Day, at

Jamboree Worship Center
2777 McGaw Avenue
Irvine 92614

EDITORIAL ON THE 4TH STEP

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

Since I cannot speak for anyone else, I'll have to make my experience with the 4th step autobiographical. Before A.A., I tried almost daily to stop drinking. I hated myself constantly. I could not understand why such a wonderful person as I was would do the things I did. I was in a constant state of mental turmoil and misery, and I knew that I could not handle liquor.

On coming into A.A., I had already taken the 1st step, but the 2nd and 3rd steps were discouraging, as I had no faith in a Higher Power. I tried to believe, and would have gladly forced myself to do so, were that possible, because I really wanted to succeed with the A.A. program. However, I skipped over these for the moment, as I was advised to do, and went on to the 4th step. . . .

I tried to make a "searching and fearless moral inventory," and discovered that it was difficult to push my pride and egotism aside sufficiently to get a better view of myself. My first attempt was neither searching nor fearless, but it was a very important start, and I developed and revised it over many months. During this time, I began to see myself as a person who was riddled with resentments, selfishly expecting life to treat me well; a super-sensitive person always inclined to feel hurt about everything that was not to my liking, and intolerant of any opinion differing from my own. I began to see that my thinking was based on fear and vague worries. I saw more. I realized that this very special person I had imagined myself to be could do nothing directly against the power of alcohol. But I began to see how the person I was beginning to understand could outflank old John and attack the *cause* of the drinking.

For years, I had wanted desperately to do something *about my drinking*. This, I knew, was impossible. But the 4th step taught me that I could do something about the *cause* of my drinking. By trying to do something about myself, I found that I did not need to drink. The 4th step showed me what was needed to be done. Without this knowledge, I doubt if sobriety would have been possible for me. The 4th step is just that important.

Richard S.

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FURTHER COMMENT ON THE 4TH STEP

Self appraisal which attains any real accuracy is unquestionably a difficult process. We all find it so easy and pleasant to view ourselves through a rosy hue of complimentary half-truths and so hard and unpleasant to take a look in the uncompromising and glaring light of the unvarnished truth

The 4th Step is, indeed, a real challenge to honesty with oneself. In this way, it is both preparation and a complement to the 5th Step. To make the "searching and fearless moral inventory" called for in the 4th Step, one must first of all be searchingly and fearlessly honest about himself. The degree of honesty one can achieve will determine the accuracy and therefore the usefulness of the moral inventory.....

T.D. Manhattan, NY

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UNITY KEEPS SAVING A.A.

"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole. -- Tradition 4, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our Traditions didn't see the light of day until they were first published in the Grapevine in 1946.

Later ratified by the first Alcoholics Anonymous convention (at the time they called it a conference), the Traditions were not exactly welcomed with open arms by many of the estimated 3,500 persons gathered in Cleveland, Ohio, for the 1960 event. Many of the members felt that A.A. was doing just great with only the Twelve Steps to guide them. Now, 46 years later, we can all be grateful that the group conscience prevailed.

A few years ago an article in the Grapevine told us that a political science professor had attributed the great success of the Constitution of the United States to its flexibility and the success of Alcoholics Anonymous could be traced to its Traditions, particularly Tradition Four.

Because we use trial and error (not too many errors, we trust) in Alcoholics Anonymous as a sort of a litmus test to resolve most of our issues, we have learned some important truths about Alcoholics Anonymous and about ourselves.

We often hear in meetings that Tradition Four is also known as "the right to be wrong" Tradition. In our Twelve and Twelve we read about a group that decided to go its own way until some hard realities intervened. The realities concerned ignoring many of the other eleven Traditions.

We have learned that we must always put Tradition One first because our common welfare is -- for the most part -- all that stands between us and the bottle. And that translates as an advisory to not use autonomy to get our own way. For the same reasons, we realize that we must work together or die alone.

Therein lies the logic behind the old-timer axiom: "God gave us the Steps to keep alcoholics from killing themselves. And He gave us the Traditions to keep alcoholics from killing each other."

George L., Westminster.

CONCEPT 4. Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation," taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

Second-Class AA Members?

"Hey, how come I can't vote at (or even go to) the General Service Conference in New York? I'm a member of AA! How come I can't vote at the Area Assembly?? How come I can't vote at the Intergroup Board meeting?? There aren't any second-class AA members! Everyone ought to be able to participate if he or she wants to; it says so in the Concepts. Waaaaaaa!"

One day, as the Little Red Hen was scratching in a field, she found a grain of wheat. "This wheat should be planted," she said. "Who will plant this grain of wheat?"

"Not I," said the Duck.

"Not I," said the Cat.

"Not I," said the Dog.

"Then I will," said the Little Red Hen. And she did. And she went on to harvest, thresh, grind, and bake the wheat until she had a succulent, aromatic loaf of warm bread.

"How come I can't have some bread?" said the Duck.

"I live in the barnyard, too!" said the Cat.

"There aren't any second-class animals in the barnyard," said the Dog.

"Waaaaaaa!!!"

The right of participation "maintains at all responsible levels."

Although this Concept is primarily and specifically devoted to the Right of Participation of the Trustees, Directors, GSO and Grapevine Office Staff to vote at the General Service Conference (along with the Area Delegates who represent the AA Groups), the essence of the Concept touches on our ongoing struggle to reach for and actually practice spiritual principles of true democracy, a sense of belonging, and an awareness of responsibility.

Participation in the Conference

Looking first at the conference, Bill W. makes it clear in his essay on Concept IV that he believes it is *essential* that the right of participation by the Trustees, Directors, and executive office staffs at GSO and Grapevine office should *never* be changed. He describes in detail, to emphasize his conviction, the AA experience and evolution that has him so thoroughly convinced. It is a compelling argument, and one that is somewhat unique in Bill's writings. Bill was an open-minded thinker and innovator; he invited and encouraged us to be open to new and better ways of approaching structure, organization, policy and plans. "We know only a little."

However, on this matter of inclusion he was eloquent: "AA groups, who have the ultimate responsibility for our world services, realizing that they cannot exercise that authority directly, have delegated that responsibility to AA's General Service Conference. In turn, the Conference understands that with approximately 135 members meeting once a year, it must delegate essential administrative authority for world services to the General Service Board. Decisions respecting important matters of world service policy and finance are made by the Conference. The Board's job is to implement these decisions and deal with issues of management and policy that may arise during the year.

"There is another very practical reason for not giving the Conference Delegates absolute voting authority over Trustees, service Directors, and staff members. It should be borne in mind that our Delegates can never be like a Congress in constant session, having its own working committees, elected leaders, etc.

"Our delegates cannot possibly function in this manner for the simple reason that they meet for a few days only, once a year. Hence they cannot have an extensive firsthand acquaintance with many of the problems on which they are expected to vote. This is all the more reason for allowing the sometimes better-informed minority of Trustees, and Headquarters people the balloting privilege."

In other words, "To take away the votes of Trustees and service workers would obviously be unwise. Why should our Conference be deprived of the votes of such knowledgeable people as these?"

Participation in Recovery and Service

And then, turning to the Right of Participation at all levels of the fellowship, Bill noted at the conclusion of his essay, "There is another good reason for 'participation,' and this one has to do with our spiritual needs. All of us deeply desire to *belong*. We want an AA relation of brotherly partnership. It is our shining ideal that the 'spiritual corporation' of AA should never include any members who are regarded as 'second class.'

"Deep down, I think this is what we have been struggling to achieve in our world service structure; here is perhaps the principal reason why we should continue to ensure 'participation' at every important level." "IMPORTANT"? Important implies, in fact demands, an effort on the part of the participant: me. If I want to have the "right" of participation, I must take the "responsibility" of participating.

At every level of recovery and service, I have to "do what they did to get what they got."

Linda C.
District 18
MSCA Area 09

The People of Hospitals & Institutions

Number 4 in a continuing series on A.A. Service

On Saturday, February 18th, 2006, approximately 150 people got together to eat spaghetti and hear 5 A.A. members who had been given the truth in the form of the A.A. message while incarcerated. It was a fund-raising event to sponsor those people who can't afford to attend the 25th Annual Southern California Hospitals & Institutions Conference. This article will talk about the three types of people who attended the event.

First were the curious – a free spaghetti dinner, five compelling stories of redemption and a chance to meet other curious people. These people are the antithesis of the people mentioned in Herbert Spencer's quote in Appendix 2 of the Big Book. They were not held captive to "contempt prior to investigation". These are the people who believe, as Bill W. did, when he wrote in his essay on the 4th Tradition in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book, that all growth and progress for A.A. as a society has come only through trial and error. Some of them showed up early to help set up and some stayed late to help clean up. Among the curious was one man who less than 6 days previous had been locked up in Kern Valley State Prison. He was able to say thanks to the five A.A. members who took the very first A.A. meeting into that facility in October 2005 – all five being members of the Orange County Hospitals & Institutions Committee. I love these people - Alcoholics Anonymous cannot fulfill its promise to the suffering alcoholic without the curious member.

Second were the A.A. members who do H & I work – the "soldiers". These are the men and women who never travel too far from the "firing line". The selfless few who give of their time, effort and money to carry the A.A. message into those places where alcoholics cannot get out to attend an A.A. meeting of their choice. They never hesitate to go to the most sordid places on earth in this effort. They make a 3 hour drive to take a 1 hour meeting into a maximum security state prison. They show up to take a meeting into a hospital detox unit, when more often than not, they are turned away because the patients "are sleeping". When they cannot get enough literature from the H & I Committee to give out to the alcoholics in the facilities they visit, they spend their own money to supplement the literature supply. They show up mid-week and wait 2 – 3 hours to pick up a man paroling from prison in the hopes that the first slippery place will be avoided. They drive 1 - 2 hours out the 91-freeway during rush hour, only to be turned away at the gate because of an incident inside. They submit to, and pay for, tuberculosis testing in order to get a clearance, sometimes a costly chest x-ray. And they seldom hear the A.A. member in a meeting who says, "I remember

when I was locked up, this old guy named "Lew" showed up every month, without fail, to bring an A.A. meeting into the jail. I didn't understand a thing he said, but I understood he was consistent at it". Maybe "Lew" heard the guy say it Saturday night.

Third, and last, were the A.A. members who had the idea to put on such an event, worked hard to organize it and put it on, and lived in abject fear that the thing would fall flat on its face.

How could you tell those people – those were the ones who were still hanging around outside the church meeting hall 2 hours after the event had ended – afraid to go home because they might not be able to hang onto the magic of the evening. These are the "trusted servants" who labor in anonymity and would have it no other way. I try to hang out with these people as much as I can.

So, why did I title this piece, The People of Hospitals and Institutions? Aren't we supposed to concentrate on principles, not people? Sure, but where do we find these principles? Like everything else that matters in life, not just A.A., it is the people with whom we live and serve who make the difference in our lives.

For those in Group 1, I hope your curiosity brings you to the monthly H & I Committee meeting on the 2nd Sunday of the month at the Garden Grove Club. For those in Group 2, you guys continue to inspire me. For those in Group 3 – Thank you!

A member of A.A. in Orange County

FROM THE



HOW WE HAVE GROWN!

In April of 1975, there were 77 meetings listed in the Orange County Meeting Directory. By 1980, the number had grown to 443, an increase of 475%. Here we are 26 years later with a meeting directory of 1267 meetings – an increase of 186% over 1980.

Compared to county demographics:
Orange County, CA, Population Growth

1975 (Est.)	1,677,000	
1980	1,933,000	+15%
2005	3,057,000	+58%

*

The message continues to be carried in so many ways - we used to give the newcomer a dime, telling him (her) "Pick up the phone, instead of a drink" ...

From the March, 1979, Lifeline:

TELEPHONITIS

"You can be sure I won't call you unless it is absolutely necessary. I know how busy you are." In such a manner did the newcomer respond to being given my phone number and the assurance that he could call me "anytime, day or night." Less than a month earlier this same man had been annoying his relatives and friends with his telephonitis. Now he has suddenly become ultra-concerned about annoying people.

Why does sobriety do this to us? We don't have the slightest hesitation about making that call when we are drinking. Last week, for example, a gal said in her pitch that she had "called the President of the United States." "He wasn't in," she informed us. And then the moment we get sober and our new found friends urge us to use the telephone at every opportunity we become very coy and think of a million reasons why we "shouldn't bother" the callee. "Maybe he's busy". "Maybe he's eating, or sleeping, or out, or whatever." "Maybe he'll think that's a dumb reason to call." etc.etc.etc.etc.

The telephone plays a tremendously important role in my sobriety and I've developed effective reasons for calling AA people. For example, to call on old-timer I say, "I've heard a rumor that you're still sober and I'm calling to see if it's true." To call any member of AA I can always say, "I'm running a sobriety check. How are you?" Of course one of the nicest reasons is, "I just wanted you to know I was thinking of you and that I care about you," or more simply, to just say, "Don't have a reason - just thought I'd call."

I like to keep in mind that ordinarily we are paying the person a compliment and doing them a favor when we call. This can sometimes be dramatically obvious. Three weeks ago a young lady called to talk about "fear" because I had mentioned it in a pitch a month earlier. Last week, for no particular reason, I phoned her during the evening in another town. Her husband answered the phone. After we talked for a few moments, he admitted that they had been in the middle of a big fight, and "when the phone rang, I thought it was the police telling us to quiet down." He was so impressed by the timing of my call and the fact that I did not know them, and had no reason to call, that he hasn't raised his voice since. Sometimes I wonder if AA would be around if it weren't for the telephone. Certainly I wouldn't be sober without AA and certainly AA wouldn't be what it is if it weren't for Alexander Graham Bell's invention. Don't think about the call. Just pick up the phone and start dialing.

Paul O., Anaheim.

