

# The Northeast Ohio Recorder

January, February, March 2018

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXV, Issue 5

**"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."**

*A.A. Co-Founder, Bill W., February 1961, From: "The Shape of Things to Come", I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A., © A. A. Grapevine, Reprinted with permission*

## A Word From Our Delegate

Happy New Year to all in Area 54. I have learned and experienced many things my first year as your delegate, I truly look forward to another year of being your trusted servant. Over the years I have been asked many times to speak on Step Ten. I believe that I must continue to practice this step so that I truly understand it. These are some of the things I have learned and read about this step.



### Step Ten

"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it", then there is the line on page 90 of the 12 & 12. "It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us." We're hurt, in pain, suffering and emotional. This is the "wrong". It is not wrong as in "a mistake", but wrong as in "defective" and lacking serenity.

Notice that the Tenth Step says that when we were wrong we promptly ADMIT it. It doesn't say that when we were wrong we promptly JUSTIFY it. The first three Steps are designed to bring us to the point where we become WILLING to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power, Steps Four through Nine are HOW we turn our will and our lives over by removing what blocks us from actually doing so, and the last three Steps are how we KEEP our will and our lives turned over to God indefinitely. "If I am distressed by anything external, it is not the thing itself, but my estimate of it; and this I have the power to revoke at any moment."

I was not skillful in separating justified from unjustified anger. As I saw it, my anger was always justified.

When it comes to justifying my anger - : I have to ask myself- Am I angry or disturbed because things and or an individual didn't do what I expected or wanted them to do? When I am hurt, distressed, or feel slighted, I need to ask myself, what old belief IN ME am I replaying or clinging to—even unaware that I'm doing that. When I'm disturbed there is something in me contributing to that. At worst I am causing it, at best I am collaborating. And the power to change that is in me. Not easy but I can. And I can change my beliefs—also not easy at all. **But it can be done!** What I need is the willingness to see things just as they are. Acceptance of how things turned out.

Here are a few other spiritual axioms:

It is a spiritual axiom that recovery is simple, is it easy? No; a price has to be paid. That price is destruction of my own self-centeredness.

It is a spiritual axiom that without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all.

It is a spiritual axiom that acceptance is the answer to all my problems today.

It is a spiritual axiom that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. (for me that is General Service Work)

My goal is to live by these axioms to the best of my ability one day at a time.

### "Living Life by Axioms"

#### Inside this Issue:

Editorial.....	2
Alt Delegate's Report.....	3
Area Committee Reports.....	4
Green Initiative.....	5
Upcoming Events.....	7
Contact Information.....	8
On-line issue only:	
Forgotten Communicator.....	9
How it works for some of us.....	11
AA Declaration of Independence.....	15
Elrick B. Davis articles.....	18

Axiom 1 It is not the obstacle that counts but how you overcome it.

Axiom 2 Pursue your goals with all your heart, might, mind, and strength. You are doomed to failure if you pursue them in a vacillating manner.

Axiom 3 From a tiny spark can come a great conflagration.

Axiom 4 Our greatest strengths can become our greatest weaknesses.

Axiom 5 Failure is one of the greatest teachers we have, if we have the faith to learn from it.

Axiom 6 It is not how you start the race or where you are during the race—it is how you cross the finish line that is going to matter.

(Continued on page 3)

### GRATITUDE IN ACTION

In this issue of the *Northeast Ohio Recorder*, we focus on the spiritual actions necessary for our recovery through unity and service. Our delegate, Jamie B. shares her journey with Step Ten and spiritual axioms. Shyrl B., your alternate delegate, reviews a new book from the Grapevine about Women in AA.

**Action** is the key word in all of this. Page 14 of our Basic Text (*Alcoholics Anonymous*) reminds us,

*...for if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead.*

Gratitude in A.A. is a noun AND a verb. The oldtimers taught me "Don't just tell me about your gratitude, show me..." and "Your actions speak so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying."

All groups have a right to a say in how A.A. operates. You express that right with the election and participation of a General Service Representative (GSR). But without that voice and vote, your A.A. group surrenders this right to participate in A.A. as a whole; "Every A.A. member has a right to be involved with how A.A. is run through the well-informed group conscience." Do you want other groups deciding for you what happens in A.A.? **Our area conscience is best informed when YOU participate** in the structure of Northeast Ohio A.A. Before we know it, spring will be slowly pushing winter's icy blast back from our doors and it will be time for the 43rd Northeast Ohio Area Mini-Conference.

#### **WHY SHOULD I ATTEND THE NORTHEAST OHIO MINI-CONFERENCE?**

Here are just a few good reasons why everyone, whether you are involved in General Service work or not, is encouraged to attend the Northeast Ohio Mini-Conference.

**Exercise your voice and vote in AA-as-a-whole.** Don't let others make decisions for your group! Express your opinion on the items of business that will be discussed and voted on by your elected delegate at the General Service Conference in New York City at the end of April. The mini-conference provides a forum for understanding the issues concerning the future of A.A. that will be decided, on your behalf, whether you choose to participate in General Service or not.

#### **Learn about service beyond the church basement steps.**

Every service job in A.A. is important. Ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our

Third Legacy of Service. An A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer, whether sponsorship of a new member or sponsorship of A.A. in a new country just getting started.

**Why can't we just 'keep it simple'?** These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Concerning any given service, we ask one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A. The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that A.A. has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, A.A. World Services, Inc., The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and ... our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities.

**Meet your Regional Trustee and a staff member from your General Service Office in New York City** and your delegate will be there, too. She'd like to meet you and hear your views on the pressing issues and agenda items of the day. She will carry your ideas and the conscience of the whole area to the General Service Conference.

**Meet other A.A.'s who are interested in service beyond the group level.** Having trouble at your home group? Other General Service Representatives (GSR) and District Committee Members (DCM) have already faced those same difficulty and have great ideas to share with you.

**See how your generous contributions are being used to help carry the message.** New literature has been released in recent months, new public service announcements and DVDs, too. These will be shown or will be available for sale.

**Where else can you go for \$20 and get three days of sobriety, service and fellowship?** Come find out what you've been missing.

~Your editor,  
Jeff

**We welcome your service-related contributions, comments and questions. Send topic ideas or complaints to: [newsletter@area54.org](mailto:newsletter@area54.org)**



# AREA OFFICER REPORTS

(Continued from page 1)

Axiom 7 Borrowed from Brigham Young: "If you wish to get rich, save what you get. A fool can earn money; but it takes a wise man to save and dispose of it to his own advantage" (JD 11:301).

Axiom 8 You cannot learn the Lord's will without exercising your agency and becoming accountable for your decisions.

Axiom 9 A new interpretation of the old French proverb: The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Axiom 10 The temple of God is the greatest university.

*Jamie B.*

**Panel 67 Delegate, Area 54 – Northeast Ohio**

## ALTERNATE DELEGATE

Voices of Women in AA: Stories I needed to read

As 2017 is soon ending, I reflect on what topic to write about for the first article of the New Year Recorder. In the late summer of 2017, I purchased and downloaded the Voices of Women in AA, a compilation of stories and articles about women's experiences in AA from the Grapevine. To be honest, it sat on my Kindle, "collecting dust" and it became like many other recovery books I have purchased.

However, after having a conversation with some of my support sisters about "life issues" and an area committee liaison, I decided to open the book and just "pick a chapter." WOW!!! Why did I wait so long?

Chapter Six was my choice; "Forming True Partnerships". These AA women shared their experiences on repairing, renewing and rethinking their romantic relationships. The common theme that these six women talked about was the missteps they made in their romantic life even in sobriety. Some were married, happily divorced, and others after reflection, growth and loving on themselves are contentedly enjoying life being single. The following was the intro to the stories in the chapter: "In the Big Book, the alcoholic is compared to "a tornado" running through the lives of others, breaking hearts and ruining "sweet" relationships. As many alcoholics have discovered, this can continue into sobriety. Learning how to live in "peace and partnerships" with others is, as it says in our literature, a "moving and fascinating adventure." The sober women in this chapter recount their experience with relationships in sobriety."

I realize after reading chapter six, that their experiences are common with women in recovery. For me when I arrived in AA in the nineties, my second sponsor always told me "let us love you, until you learn how to love yourself." I had no clue what that meant. I searched for so long, thinking sharing my life meant giving "surface BS" and "proclamations". I always thought that "love" only related to the romantic kind. It appears that the women in chapter six have learned the lesson I had to experience, that it takes developing a relationship with yourself and your "Higher Power" or "greater power" first before ANYTHING ELSE will fall into place. I really enjoy reading this book and look forward to reading more of it.

Book Title: *Voices of Women in AA: Stories of experience, strength and hope* from A.A. Grapevine, Inc.

*Sheryl B.*

## AREA CHAIR

I would have to say 2017 was a great year. My opportunities for learning have exploded by being the Area Chairperson. From the assemblies to the conferences to the state convention, it all has been an awesome learning experience and I love to learn and will pray I always remain teachable. At the state convention I was on a panel speaking on sponsorship. The topic was The Concrete – What is Good Sponsorship. I shared on how the pamphlet *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship* is an awesome pamphlet to share with a newcomer so that they can make an informed decision before choosing a sponsor. I also shared on how I think this pamphlet can be used in treatment and correctional facilities if it is not already and handed out to them prior to leaving. It is stated that one of the greatest gifts we get in sponsoring is that our own sobriety is greatly strengthened when we give it away and by witnessing the growth or trials our sponsees may have to go through we may also learn something. But for the grace of god there go I.

Everyone has a different approach in choosing a sponsor some members look for someone with a similar background, interests and some choose sponsors unlike themselves. The sponsor I choose 12 years ago after a few issues is someone who had a very similar life as I did. It's important to demonstrate to the newcomer that there is at least one person who understands the situation they're in and cares about helping them go through it and adjust to a new way of life without alcohol. There are no specific rules to our program but using it in everyday life is important to our success, and that's where sponsorship can help us. The only important thing that the sponsor and sponsee have in common is alcoholism and recovery. Suggest that your sponsee keep an open mind about AA. Introduce sponsees to other members, a good way to do this is have them be a greeter at the door of their home group or at another meeting. Explain to them the importance of a support group, to make sure to have people with varying amounts of sobriety in their support group and to use it when things come up and you're not available. Tell them to get a home group ASAP and introduce literature to them. Go through the Big Book, work the Steps, explain the Traditions, the Concepts, and why we have them, and as soon as they're ready and have shown an interest introduce them to service work. I will end with this; if you don't know something say 'I don't know', there is nothing wrong with not having all the answers never give false hope or wrong answers, reach out to someone else to find the answer and get it to the sponsee asap.

*Tina C.*

## TREASURER

***Why Is Sending Money to the General Service Board 12 Step Work?***

The Ohio State Convention had a different meaning for me this year as a panel member. I felt a weight of responsibility to be prepared to inform. As I navigated BOX 459, the AAWS website, and the annual conference

(Continued on page 4)

# AREA OFFICER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

*(Continued from page 3)*

report, I realized that all the material I was reviewing served the same purpose as the first 164 pages of the Big Book. For general service, these resources serve as basic direction and a design for the wellbeing of AA. According to Bill W. "Every single service is designed to make more and better 12th step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office...or service headquarters"

From the beginning of A.A. to now, self-support has been an ongoing battle to ensure that the hand of A.A. is there for the newcomer and that the 7th tradition remains the compass to prevent diversion from our primary purpose which is to carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. 70% of GSB's funding comes from donations. So as the growth of A.A. as whole seems stagnant and every year becomes more challenging to become truly self-supporting, perhaps a greater effort can be made from general service members to help A.A. understand more of what the General Service Office does. GSO has 15 service departments, some impacting 12th step work on the frontline and others that are not as visible but vital to the foundation of GSO and its day to day functions and the livelihood of A.A.

On the frontline, GSO responds to letters from inmates, distributes conference approved literature to correctional facilities. GSO provides periodic mailings to H & I, Corrections and Bridging the Gap chairs. GSO also provides contacts for A.A. members traveling overseas and facilitates continuing translations of the Big Book so that suffering alcoholics all over world may receive the message of hope. GSO serves as a contact for international pilots, aviation industry professionals and physicians in A.A. GSO makes it possible for us to remain on the frontlines with an abundance of literature and resources to help us reach and impact the newcomer. If the 12 Steps is a design for good living, sending money to our General Service Board is a design for the securing the future of A.A.

*Dawn J.*

## RECORDING SECRETARY

Wow, service is quite an adventure. Service work saves my life, and it is an honor and privilege to serve. I am forever grateful to my sponsor for insisting that I get involved in service work. God had me volunteer for the position of Recording Secretary and this new part of my life has begun. During these years of service I am able to grasp a wider view of AA, and how our cooperation with each other is so important. Learning about all aspects of service ensures that I have growth and learn new skills like patience and tolerance. So I look forward to continued service work, and will continue to listen to a God of my understanding for guidance.

*Beverly F.*

## MAILING SECRETARY

As a continuation from an article I wrote earlier this year. I wanted to give an update on the outcome of our homegroup inventory. I wish I could tell you that it was a roaring success and we all learned about

our character defects, faced them and are taking steps to better ourselves as a group. What the truth is, the person's idea it was to take the inventory has vanished in light of facing such realities. A rift has appeared in the group and no one seems to know why or even acknowledge it. I've since tried passing out literature on the Group, "where it all begins". Trying to organize people to show up to a home group meeting is like herding cats. I've since given up on the idea.

I recall a time when my homegroup would squander their money on parties and even once donated all of it to a rehab to buy Big Books. Honorable as the intentions were, I objected as a good GSR should. After almost being burnt at the stake and buried in separate holes, they still did what they wanted anyways without my approval. I quickly got over my resentment and learned that I'm not the center of my homegroup and neither is anyone else. Next November when money was going out for the year someone said, maybe we shouldn't be giving money to other organizations, "Hey what were you saying last year"? I can only hope that maybe the idea of an inventory may slowly sink in as well....

*Dustin S.*

## REGISTRAR

This year has been very interesting for me. I am the new Registrar for Northeast Ohio. I have learned all the districts and the 7 intergroups that we have. I have called a lot of the groups and updated their records. I look forward to next year.

*Marilyn H.*

## CORRECTIONS

Although it appears at times as though service in general and General Service in particular are not priority items, our text states that we are to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and our fellow man. What can I do to be of service? I am glad you asked that question.

There is much to do in the area of Corrections. Carrying the message to alcoholics behind the walls is a great way to be of service. You can be the contact person who is responsible for the meeting. You can share your experience, strength and hope at a meeting. You can correspond with an alcoholic who is behind the walls. Sharing the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to those who are incarcerated is both rewarding and beneficial.

If you think that you might be interested in this type of service, please contact me. There are Corrections Committees in every county who need volunteers.

*Calvin L.*

## FINANCE

As the newly appointed Finance Chairperson of Area 54, it has been most rewarding to pass out the donation envelopes at meetings. Then I get to explain the purpose and process for donations. It is surprising to me how many people did not know about the birthday and anniversary envelope,

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Committee Reports and NAAAW Reports

and were eager to donate. I look forward to passing out more envelopes and explaining more about donations. Thank you for the privilege to serve.

*Mae R.*

### FLOOR MANAGER

As your area floor manager, this experience has definitely been a pleasure and for that I thank you. I have not had much to report this year because duct tape purchase is not exactly pressing or necessary to submit to you (haha). However, today what I do have is a request. Our area mini-conference will be upon us at the end of March. And while it is several months away and not necessarily urgent, if someone would assist me during this weekend it would be a great help to the floor manager, fellow alcoholics present at the conference, and you will learn something new. I know today for sure, service work has helped aid me in my sobriety and allow me to be here another day. Thank you.

*Brian J. C.*

### TREATMENT COMMITTEE

Hello, everyone. My name is Mike S., your area Treatment Committee chair. I have been busy by the grace of God I am so grateful to be part of a committee, especially the Treatment Committee. On Nov 6, 2017, I was invited to meet with Miss Billie J. Gilliam, the clinical director for the Hitchcock Center for Women. The meeting was great. We shared our views on recovery. She expressed a concern that her clients that had problems other than alcohol, were being kicked out of an AA meeting. I explained that wasn't true. I explained our primary purpose, also that in an AA meeting it is announced "If you are anything other than alcoholic, just state your name" Also to keep your comments as they relate to alcoholism. They want to talk about whatever they want and they are shut down. So I explained what the Bridging the Gap program was and how effective it is to get people successfully from the doors of treatment to the doors of a home group in AA. A lot of work is still needed and what that I am asking ladies to step up and step into the Bridging the Gap program as a temporary contact person. If you have any questions, please contact me, Mike S., or Vincent W. We will explain it and get you involved in this great service work. Thank you.

*Mike S. | Vincent W.*

I was recently blessed with the opportunity to be elected to fulfill the remainder of the most recent State Archivist's term upon him being elected to be our ECR trustee. Upon accepting this position I needed to do some research and I was also told I had the opportunity to attend the International Archivist Convention. I had little to no information regarding this duty besides the information in the State Guidelines and what was shared by the outgoing archivists and past archivists from the state and area. I reviewed the Guidelines to see what all I would need to do and felt comfortable that was soon to change in a sense.

### 2017 NATIONAL AA ARCHIVES WORKSHOP

I arrived in Winnipeg Manitoba (Canada) on Thursday morning around 11am their time. On my connecting flight I also had other attendees on it from Utah, New York and Akron. It was really funny listening to them talk about service work and no one really understanding what they were discussing and I did. I introduced myself and we all laughed and talked the rest of the flight.

The conference was packed full of information. One of the first things I heard is that we are all Archivists. Example is during a time of crisis or disaster items grabbed are, people pets, and papers and women are the ones who normally the ones who grab the papers. Another place we are collectors are our wallets. I learned that it's very important to get Oral Histories from our older AA members to document their personal stories and the story of their home group to show the group's history as well.

I learned of the difference between a Historian, an Archivist, and a Collector. Most of us are collectors because we collect stuff. A Historian is someone who writes of our history and an Archivist is one who is in charge of collecting and cataloging our documents.

I learned of the importance of the proper containers to be used to store our documents in. They suggest to use acid free boxes, acid free file folders and all documents need to be protected from outside forces. Those are everything from sunlight to water, heat, touch (oils from fingers) and physical forces always lay documents flat don't let them bend or get folded.

Everything we archive requires different equipment and supplies. Pictures are totally different than papers. Photos need total darkness and papers it is suggested to reduce the ultraviolet as much as possible and regular

*(Continued on page 6)*

### **Let's Go Green!**

Area 54 General Service is inviting you to Go Green! Get your Area flyers, information, and an EXPANDED web-only version of the Northeast Ohio Recorder. All the information that comes to your USPS mailbox now can come to your inbox.

The NEOH Recorder you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of this issue of NEOHR is 19 pages packed with experience, strength, and hope.

Let Dustin S., your Area 54 Mailing Secretary, know that you would like to save a tree or three (and save the area some \$Green\$) with a message at [mailingsecretary@area54.org](mailto:mailingsecretary@area54.org)

Please note: if you do nothing, you will still get your Area mail by USPS and by email (if we have your email address) as you always have.

**Expanded Content (19 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>**

# International Archives Workshop Reports

light is as much as possible. Even video audio recordings CD's and DVD's all have guidelines on how to store them within the collection. It was also shared that room temperature is also important.

It was suggested to store item in secure room and to never store items directly on the floor use shelving system and have everything elevated up off the floor away from water pipes and lines to help prevent water damage in case of a water line break. The other important items are the computer equipment used including the programs used all the way to the external hard drives and they suggest two of them with the same items on them and to store them in separate locations one location mentioned was a bank safety deposit box because it has the perfect conditions. They suggest holding an archives conference in your area or district to help recruit others who may be interested in becoming an Archivist. I would love to do one of these in our area but I would require the assistance of our past Archivists in our area to help put this on due to being brand new myself and still needing to learn myself.

This is but just a tidbit of the information I got from the conference. It was a great learning opportunity and I look forward to continuing this journey for however long I will have it.

*Tina C.,*

**Ohio State Archivist**

I attended the 21st National AA Archives Workshop (NAAAW) in Winnipeg, Manitoba this fall. While Canadians have attended NAAAWs from the beginning, this was the first time it was held in Canada. The host was Jo-Anne L. who lives in Winnipeg. Jo-Anne is a past Trustee-at-Large, Canada who served half of her four-year term together with Dorothy W, Trustee-at-Large, US and from our region (Indianapolis, IN).

Geographically, Manitoba is over five times as large as the state of Ohio but has a total population one-third less than Greater Cleveland. It's centrally located east-to-west but less than 100 miles from the US border. Direct flights to Winnipeg are few so airfare is generally expensive and Canadian rules about past DULs in their laws make entry to their country difficult or prohibitive for some of us. Because of this the NAAAW organizing committee had legitimate concerns about attendance. Indeed, US attendance was somewhat smaller than normal but was more than made up for by their local attendance and that of Canada as-a-whole. All 14 Canadian areas sent their archivist and often others. Registration was 226, a normal turnout for this.

I arrived Wednesday which was a day early (on my own nickel, of course) and this allowed me to buy a tour of Winnipeg arranged through the Workshop. Highlight of this was their Legislative Building heavily based on Greek Mythology. Before the trip I had stopped by Akron and loaded my car with the NAAAW display and collected histories. I stopped at Cleveland to get a display of their early literature and of our Central Bulletin which is celebrating its 75th anniversary—the oldest periodical in AA. These went Thursday into its archives room. The local highlight in that room was a telephone booth which handled many of their early 12th Step calls. Thursday concluded with Gail L, previously from Akron, relating the history of the NAAAW.

Friday had introduction to archives and local history plus the story of LaVigne the French-Canadian equivalent of the AA Grapevine. Don F, chair of NAAAW, talked of his trip to the home of Dr. Carl Jung whose work with Rowland H figured into AA's beginnings. Friday concluded with an address by Michelle Mirza, GSO Archivist, on their collection and activities.

Saturday began with bids for future Workshops. Next year's event will be in Chicago. Then I presented a 45-minute session on "Software for Archivists" followed later that morning with Theron B, previously from Akron, presenting "Digital Archives." Archives does IT! Afternoon had an oral history demonstration and another Gail presentation on the history of the Big Book. While this is an archives event some history is included. So, considering the background of the host and Canadian challenges, the World Service Meeting with delegates from AA around the World and the Remote Communities projects played into this. The Saturday banquet was followed by the history of the World Service Meeting.

Sunday morning had a Q&A session with archivists. It concluded with feedback and passing the gavel to Chicago. This is by no means a complete summary of session at this this comprehensive workshop.

I met with Gail and some others and we concluded that a list of inventory-producing questions for entities with AA archives could significantly help them. Our area forwarded this request to the Conference Coordinator for fleshing out by the Trustees Archives Committee with the likelihood that the Conference Committee would look at it.

I was passing Michelle Mirza talking to Tina C, our Area Chair and State Archivist/Historian when they stopped me and asked if the state had a Collection Scope document. I said no but, after thinking about it, printed a copy of the state guidelines which detail the job and could serve as the Scope. Michelle read it over and commented that there's nothing in the duties that require an historian. All these tasks are routinely part of an archivist's assignment. Learning this, the State Planning members changed the title to just "Archivist" In early November.

Gail started these Workshops in Akron in 1996. She encountered me (I was then the current area delegate) and invited me to the 1997 workshop also in Akron. She also exhorted me to help to get a Conference Archives Committee created to be part of the General Service Conference. We did. Gail was asked to do it again for a third year. When she balked at the work involved, Area 54 General Service agreed to help. I've attended about half the workshops held since and go now more to teach than to learn. Many of us feel responsible for the NAAAW and the Conference Archives Committee especially since we play a part in their formative years. Many years ago, before I was bit by the archives bug, an article appearing in the Akron Intergroup News titled "Is the Tail Wagging the Dog?" asked if we were spending too much time and effort on AA archives. I gave this considerable thought and concluded that the answer is "NO." For an intergroup other than Akron or any area not the birthplace area, that would be true. But we are and thus this is one committee on which I strongly feel that we should spend an inordinate interest.

*Bob McK.,*

**Cleveland District Office Archivist**

# UPCOMING DATES FOR THE AREA AND BEYOND

## NOTE THE DATE

January 21, 2018  
Area Assembly  
GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm

January 28 and February 25  
Mini Conference planning meetings  
Holiday Inn Strongsville  
2:00 pm

February 18  
GSR School Workshop  
2:00 pm

March 18  
Area Assembly  
2:00 pm

March 23-25  
43rd NEOH Mini-Conference  
Holiday Inn Strongsville  
GV Lit sales

April 15  
Area Assembly  
2:00 pm

May 20  
Unity Day—Delegate's Conf. Report  
Lit sales  
2:00 pm

June 8-10  
Founders' Day at University of Akron  
GV sales Saturday only

June 24  
Area Open House Picnic  
TBA

July 15  
Area Assembly  
GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm

August 20  
GSR/DCM Workshop  
2:00 pm

September 16  
Area Assembly  
2:00 pm

October 21  
Area Assembly (area elections)  
GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm

November 12  
Gratitude Sunday  
GV Lit sales  
TBA

## OUTSIDE OUR AREA

February 9-11 — Indianapolis, IN  
44th Conference of Delegates Past and Present

March 2-4 – Perrysburg OH  
Area 55 Mini-Conference

March 9-11 – Salt Fork State Park  
Area 53 Mini-Conference

March 16-18 – Dayton, OH  
Area 56 Mini-Conference

April -21-28 – New York, NY  
68<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

May 5 – Columbus, OH  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting  
11:00 am

July 27-29, Perrysburg OH  
62<sup>nd</sup> Ohio State Convention

August 24-26, Kalamazoo, MI  
East Central Regional Conference

November 3 – Columbus, OH  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting  
11:00 am



Unless otherwise noted, Area Assemblies & Workshops are held at The 12 Step Recovery Club, 1480 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH (on 42 about 1/4 mile south of route 303 Phone: (330) 273-7216



## RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our A.A. experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, expressed through our group conscience, is our sole authority. World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy. Our meetings are informative and educational. They are held so that the Committee Members, GSRs and all interested members may be better equipped to carry the message of World Service back to their home groups and individual members, thus giving a better understanding to our purpose, our hopes, and our work.

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# The Forgotten Fantastic Communicator

Many are familiar with the early beginnings of AA and the start of the little office in New York. Bill W. and Ruth Hock became the heart and soul of the AA Headquarters, which later became the General Service Office (GSO). During this pioneering time, there was a third significant contributor in that office. Bill W. twelve-stepped her on September 24, 1940. Soon afterward she joined the small staff on Vesey St. Her first name was Margaret, but everybody knew her as "Bobbie." She would later become the National Secretary after Ruth was married and resigned in April of 1942.

There is evidence that Bobbie B. may have been present at the HQ at the time the Jack Alexander *Saturday Evening Post* article was published in March 1941. Bobbie likely was one of the individuals, along with Lois W., that helped Ruth Hock and possibly others to answer the unprecedented number of requests for help that had followed. There is another account of where Bobbie was present around the time the Serenity Prayer was first read at the AA HQ office from a New York Herald Tribune obituary. One source has indicated that Bobbie may have helped circulate that prayer throughout the fellowship.

Upon becoming National Secretary, she immediately began to respond to a wide variety of correspondence written by the fellowship in what Bill W. has referred to as "AA's adolescent period." Keep in mind that according to multiple sources, Bill was in the office at most two days of the week when he wasn't traveling and in some periods he traveled extensively. Bobbie was left in charge of responding to the vast numbers of letters,

often without any supervision, though she knew some could only be answered by Bill.

During this period of the first half of the 1940's, of course, there were no AA Traditions. Quite a few angry and unhappy, and sometimes insulting, letters were written to Bill but replied to by Bobbie. Bill was to write later that it "was chiefly from this correspondence, and from our mounting public relations activity, that the basic ideas for the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous came." Bobbie practiced "restraint of tongue and pen" long before that phrase became part of the wisdom of AA. Some of these problems, according to Bill W., were "frightening beyond description." She may not have liked the anger, frustration, and accusations made by some of the correspondents, but she is not known ever to have responded to them in kind. She always wrote responses as if the yet-to-be-written Traditions were posted right in front of her typewriter. She knew her job was to reply to these requests by conveying the decisions already made by others. She knew she had no business in attempting to set AA policy on anything.

Did she ever respond! No one knows at the time how many letters she wrote. The number must be in the many thousands over roughly six years. Nobody knows how many letters she might have written in a day or how many days she worked in a row to answer the voluminous number of incoming requests. She once wrote about being two weeks behind in her responses and of the pressures of attempting to live up to the responsibilities placed on her. Despite the pressures and the long hours on the job, Bill W. wrote that Bobbie never ceased to provide written examples filled with "never-failing sympathy, tolerance and understanding."

(Continued on page 10)

# The Forgotten Fantastic Communicator

(Continued from page 9)

She was at the forefront of a wide variety of issues facing the emerging fellowship in a period described by Bill W. as being a time when the continued existence of the Alcoholics Anonymous was in jeopardy. Bobbie squarely addressed the issues of race and gender as a pioneer simply by responding with what she had learned through her correspondence with the fellowship and her acquired wisdom from the co-founders. She made the announcement that due to the requirements of the War Production Board that the size and weight of the Big Book were going to be reduced. She took on the role of sponsoring many men through the exchange of letters without ever having met them – Dave B. was one of them as appears on Page 196 of the American Fourth Edition. She helped keep nearly 300 soldiers serving in the Armed Forces connected to the fellowship and begged to learn the addresses of more of them. She got Big Books to Australia and New Zealand at a time when almost the only material reaching those countries from the United States was military-related. No wonder that when one reads the history of how AA arrived in those two countries, Bobbie became the one that was considered worthy to be honored for her efforts! Who knows how many other AA fellowships in other countries were assisted by her?

Bobbie wrote at the end of 1945 that “doctors took Bill away from active work about a year and a half ago and he seldom comes into the office.” While Bobbie wrote or called Bill on important matters, there was no question that most often she was the one responding to most of the correspondence and functioning, as Nell Wing observed, as a “fantastic communicator.” Bobbie had informed the fellowship in May of 1945 that “Bill hopes to be

with Bob [at the 10th-anniversary celebration of AA] if his health permits . . . The doctors have advised Bill not to do any traveling or group-visiting for some time to come.” Bobbie’s role was truly that of a trusted servant to represent Bill in such a way. No wonder Nell Wing wrote later that “I can’t tell you the number of people – all over the world who owe their sobriety to that woman.” If we might consider the sponsorship chains of all those people who Bobbie helped, her legacy may include tens of thousands of sober alcoholics that are in her debt today and probably don’t know it. Is it any wonder that the 1944 Christmas Greetings to the fellowship written by Bill was signed as being from the Trustees, Bill, Lois, and Bobbie?

In 1945 the budget for the AA Headquarters was around \$9,000 for a six month period and there were only six full-time employees. The budget of the HQ was to quadruple in just four short years as the workload rapidly grew. An assistant by the name of Charlotte L. was hired in 1946 to help with the enormous amount of correspondence. But by 1949, neither Bobbie nor Charlotte remained there.

How can it be that this devoted, hard-working contributor has been almost completely forgotten? Around May of 1948, her characteristic signature disappeared from secretarial communications. Though a likeness of her signature continued to appear, probably signed by somebody else, until May of 1949, her individual name was replaced sometimes by as many as four signatures or by the words “The Secretarial Staff.”

Both Bobbie and her assistant Charlotte experienced “alcoholic slips” according to Bob P.’s *Alcoholics Anonymous World History*. According to Nell Wing and Ann M., their relapses “were partly caused by the

(Continued on page 14)

## HOW IT WORKS FOR SOME OF US

I have been attending meetings for over 30 years and five years ago started a group that is now called Secular Sobriety in Columbus, OH. I paid close attention when someone said they had relapsed and were now back in AA. If they did not mention it, I asked them after the meeting what happened. Invariably they would say they had stopped going to meetings. This helps me to realize how fortunate I was to connect with someone at my first AA meeting and subsequently with others as I attended more meetings. I was an atheist for 20 years before my first AA meeting so choosing a door knob as a higher power as was suggested was not going to work for me. Yet I intuitively knew that connecting with others was the key to helping me feel better.

What is the message that Tradition Five directs us to carry? To answer this question, turn to page 151 in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. An old-timer tells his story to a prospect on the third floor of Towns hospital. He explains what a wonderful fellowship we have and how together we can do what we could not do separately. The drunk asks the old-timer what he got out of it. "Of course, my answer was 'My own sobriety and a mighty happy life.'"

The account continues, the drunk, still dubious, demanded, "Do you really mean the only reason you are here is to try and help me and to help yourself?" Then the old-timer ventured to talk about the spiritual side of the program and the drunk shut him down. The drunk had his own church and didn't want to hear about this new religion. The old-timer stopped trying to change the prospect's religious views: "Now concludes the old-timer, suppose I'd been obliged to

talk to this man on religious grounds? Where would we have wound up? No place, of course."

Based upon my experience and as I read this passage, the message isn't to pray, do the steps, read the Big Book, and call your sponsor like many profess. The message is to go to meetings and help others. As stated in the Preamble that is read before most AA meetings, "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

I visit a person who has been on death row for twenty years in Chillicothe, Ohio. He related to me that before prison he had been going to AA meetings for five years, was married, and had his own business. Then he believed he was cured, stopped going to meetings and got involved in a drug deal that went bad. He killed the other person. This tragic story illustrates why we want to place no unnecessary obstacles in front of people who need our fellowship. This includes any claims that religious belief is necessary to sobriety.

How do so many people in traditional AA meetings say that they could only stay sober after they prayed, found God and that it is God who keeps them sober? Is it a placebo effect? Is this how groupthink works? Maybe it works for them. However, I know there are many of us attending meetings who don't believe there is a God or a higher power and are staying sober.

How do we stay sober then if we don't subscribe to the party line? I firmly believe it is the fellowship, connections, friendships, and support we get from associating with people who also want to stay sober. We stopped going to bars and hanging out with friends or family members who drink. Some of us had to change jobs to get away from the drinkers and

*(Continued on page 12)*



## HOW IT WORKS...

*(Continued from page 11)*

partiers. That is how it works.

In addition to attending secular meetings, I do go to the religious meetings for the fellowship. But I do not recite the prayers that others do in the meetings. Also, if appropriate, I am not afraid to say that I do not believe in a higher power and tell them how I stay sober as described above.

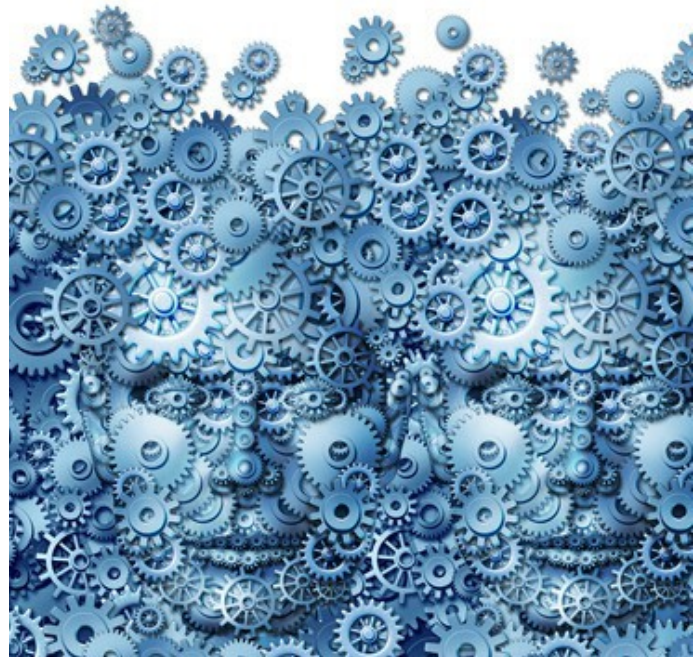
I have attended the two International Secular Conventions and plan to attend the next one in Toronto in August 24 – 26, 2018. It is great to be with these like-minded alcoholics in addition to the people I am with at our Columbus, Ohio secular meetings. I am active in my District as a GSR and am a committee chair in our Area 53. These are great opportunities for connection and fellowship. I am also active in non-religious groups such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association. These are not recovery groups but they are additional opportunities for connection and fellowship which I believe is the most important part of meetings.

I have been married to a wonderful woman whom I met in AA 24 years ago. We often attend meetings, Area meetings and conventions together, but also go to meetings separately.

When I initially attended AA meetings I did what everybody else did because I wanted to fit in. I said the Serenity Prayer at the beginning of meetings and the Our Father (Matthew 6: 9-15) at the end of meetings. I did most of the steps, but could not deal with Steps Two and Three and Six and Seven. I drafted my own steps leaving out the God stuff. Eventually I stopped praying with the group, although I did stand in the

circle silently.

I attended a meeting in Columbus called the Meditating Peacocks. This AA group opens with five minutes of meditation and closes with five minutes of meditation. Peacocks symbolize the transmitting of desire into the path of liberation.



At one meeting, a woman shared how she was in AA for 10 years and struggled with the God stuff, stopped going to meetings, and eventually started drinking again. She explained how she lost everything including her marriage, house, job, and children. I thought to myself, "This should not have to happen."

After that, I looked for people at AA meetings who did not recite the Our Father after meetings, thinking they might be atheists or agnostics. Also, I found two members of the Satur-

*(Continued on page 13)*



## HOW IT WORKS...

(Continued from page 12)

day Afternoon Live group and approached them after the meeting to see if they wanted to start a non-theistic group. We decided to meet the following week after the meeting to discuss a format for the meeting. At this time, I did not know there were other agnostic/atheist meetings in the country. There are now over 400 such meetings. I suggested reading the steps that I had developed years ago, but others thought this would be blasphemous, so we didn't. I am glad we decided not to use the altered steps, because I learned later that groups in Canada and Indiana were not listed in the meeting directories because they read alternate steps. We also discussed where we would meet and agreed that it would be best if it was not in a church.

There were several attempts to get us delisted. The first was someone who said we were affiliated with an outside group because we were listed in New York's AA Agnostic list of agnostic meetings around the country. (The New York group looked through directories for meetings with names that sound like they might be agnostic or atheist.). Next, someone said we couldn't possibly be following Tradition two because we didn't believe in God. I told them that our higher power was the Group. We were able to deflect these and other concerns by speaking with the Advisory Board Chair of Central Ohio Group Fellowship and our Intergroup central office (the body that prepares the directory of meetings). It also helped that I was on the audit committee, was also the Assistant Treasurer and friendly with members of the Board. In addition, we have a representative from our group attend intergroup meetings.

Based on the October 2016 action of AA General Service Office (GSO), I doubt that

intergroups will try to delist any secular meetings in the future. In May 2011 two agnostic AA groups were removed from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) meeting list. GTA argued in 2014 before the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal that AA is a religion and therefore GTA had the right to keep agnostic groups out of its listing. GSO states that AA is not a religion and told GTA that if they didn't list the agnostic meetings, they would cut off all ties with GTA. GTA made a complete about-face and acknowledges that a group can be recognized as a participating group "regardless of the specific beliefs or practices of the group members or the group as a whole."

In spite of what GSO states, five courts have ruled that AA is religiously oriented:

- *Griffin v. Coughlin* (1996)
- *Kerr v. Farrey* (1996)
- *Evans v. Tennessee Board of Paroles* (1997)
- *Warner v. Orange County Dept. of Probation* (1999)
- *Inouye v. Kemna* (2007)

Also, in February of 2007 an atheist whose parole was revoked due to his refusal to attend a 12-Step program was awarded \$2 million in damages for the violation of his First Amendment rights.

- *Hazle v. Crofort* (2014)

At our secular discussion meeting we do not start or end with a prayer. We read the preamble and close with the Responsibility Pledge. We, of course, don't read "How it Works," which contains all the steps and God talk. We do read part of "A Vision for You" and the

(Continued on page 14)

## HOW IT WORKS...

*(Continued from page 13)*

piece in Step Two, page 26 which states that "Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything. All of its Twelve Steps are but suggestions." Otherwise, our meeting is like any other AA meeting. The only difference is we don't pray. We're just staying sober by supporting each other and with unconditional love for each other.

### About the Author

Retired from a career in accounting, Ed now has the time to gain knowledge for the pure pleasure of it, attending classes such as "The Philosophy of Religion" and "The Philosophy of Evolutionary Biology." Although as a child he attended Catholic school for 12 years, he graduated from that hotbed of free thinking, The University of California at Berkeley.

*(Continued from page 10)*

enormous workload combined with the confusion of the early office . . . that poor woman (Bobbie) was just overwhelmed. The AA staff worked long hours all week and then sometimes went out to speak or to AA weekends, where they were 'Mrs. AA' and people showered them with affection and admiration. That ego inflation was hard to handle when they'd been sober just a few years . . . and they were exhausted too. Bobbie and Charlotte were apparently both on pills for some time before they returned to drinking." Her office was declared vacant in the July 25, 1949, Trustees meeting and she was provided with severance pay.

She then dropped out of sight. Very little is known about Bobbie until Bill W. wrote of her February 17, 1953, death from "a heart ailment." In Bill's brief me-

morial written in the March 1953 Grapevine, he wrote, ". . . Upon our traditions her devoted labor set a mark which will endure as long as God will have our society last. Her pioneering work has proved an inspiring precedent for every intergroup and Foundation secretary, and her departure creates in the heart of each of her friends a void which can only be filled by the memory of what she left us and the assurance that her destiny is happy and secure."

Bobbie may have had just an alcoholic slip. Others say "a complete physical and emotional collapse," or a "nervous breakdown" or worse. Regardless, the many valuable contributions Bobbie made for the good of Alcoholics Anonymous today appear all but forgotten by all but the most familiar with the enigmatic and often ignored AA history of the 1940's. Note how other slippers, such as Hank P. and Ebby T., have been remembered and honored by the fellowship for their undeniable contributions. Bobbie's picture deserves a place of honor across the AA world just as it is displayed today at Stepping Stones. Let us renew Bill W.'s pledge that her memory "will endure as long as God will have our society last." Let her full story be assembled as appropriate so that this huge, as of yet, almost entirely untold story can see the light of day and this forgotten fantastic communicator be remembered, as she should be, for her sacrifices so that others could live. I don't believe any one person or group can accomplish this full task without a group conscience convincing our Trustees that, once and for all, this heartfelt story must be told.

Gary N.  
Lilburn, Georgia  
Area 16 Archives Chair

# AA's DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**By Christopher M. Finan**

*Editor's Note: Bill Wilson and Bob Smith got sober in the Oxford Group, a Protestant evangelical movement. The Oxford Group accepted alcoholics as members, but the relationship between the drunks and other "groupers" soon became strained. In the following excerpt from the new book, *Drunks: An American History*, Christopher M. Finan describes the conflicts that led to the emergence of Alcoholics Anonymous as a group that welcomed people of all religions as well as agnostics and atheists.*

God was very much on their minds as Bob Smith and Bill Wilson began their pursuit of drunks in the summer of 1935. As soon as a man told them he wanted to stop drinking, they asked whether he believed in God. Clarence Snyder, an alcoholic from Cleveland, learned this when he found himself in Akron City Hospital in 1938. By then, there were more than a dozen alcoholics who had stopped drinking with the assistance of "Dr. Bob," and most of them had visited Snyder. After a week of listening to their stories, Snyder told Smith he was ready to quit.

"Young feller, do you believe in God? Not a God, but God!" Smith asked. Snyder was not ready to say that he did but was afraid Smith would walk out of the room if he admitted it. "Well, I guess I do," he replied. Smith stood up, pointing a finger at Snyder. "There's no guessing about it. Either you do or you don't!" he said. Snyder surrendered. "Yeah, I do believe in God," he said.

"That's fine. Now we can get someplace. . . . Get down out of that bed. . . . You're going to pray. . . . You can repeat it after me, and that will do for this time. . . . Jesus! This is Clarence Snyder. He's a drunk. Clarence! This is Jesus. Ask Him to come into your life. Ask Him to remove your drinking prob-

lem, and pray that He manage your life because you are unable to manage it yourself."

The two men rose from the concrete floor where they had been praying. "Young feller, you're gonna be all right," Smith promised.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Oxford Group believed that surrendering to God was essential for spiritual growth. Acknowledging that desires are often selfish and corrupt makes it possible to hear what God desires. It is not surprising that the alcoholic members of the Oxford Group were particularly insistent on the importance of surrender, for they knew only too well that they were in the grip of a force they could not control. They believed that the only path forward was to admit they were unable to control their drinking and that they required divine help to stay sober.

The surrender was considered so important that it became a prerequisite. "You couldn't just go to a meeting—you had to go through the program of surrender," recalled Bob E., a drunk who got sober in the Oxford Group in 1937. If a drunk wasn't ready to surrender, he was shown the door. One newcomer who failed to make the grade returned later to try again. "Jeez—when you guys say 'Take it or leave it,' you meant it," he said.<sup>[2]</sup>

The recovering drunks in Akron met in the home of T. Henry and Clarace Williams. Smith was deeply loyal to Henrietta Seiberling and the other members of the group who had helped him get sober, and the alcoholic men he had helped felt the same way toward him. They did not attempt to turn the meeting into something else. Most of the men and women who attended were not alcoholics, and the meetings continued to be conducted like other Oxford Group meetings. Much of the meeting time was devoted to silent reflection as the members sought the guidance of God. It remained a religious meeting.

*(Continued on page 16)*

# AA's DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

(Continued from page 15)

But the Oxford Group could never be the permanent home of a movement that was intent on saving drunks. Many of the alcoholics in the Oxford Group recognized that their goals were different from those of the nonalcoholic members of the group. Their priority was getting sober, and while they appreciated the hospitality of the Oxford Group, they had difficulty grasping its principles. Some of its practices drove them crazy. Newly sober, they found it difficult to sit still during the long periods of "quiet time" when others were listening to God and writing down their guidance. "The guidance thing the groupers had never went down well with the drunks," Ernie, an alcoholic, said. Newly sober drunks found it difficult to tolerate criticism of any kind, but criticism from non-alcoholics, even the constructive kind, was particularly hard to take.<sup>[iii]</sup>

The alcoholic members of the Oxford Group in New York were the first to leave. They began meeting on Tuesday evenings at the Brooklyn home of Bill and Lois Wilson and finally cut their ties in May 1937 following a dispute.

A different problem troubled the Oxford Group meeting in Akron. Smith had no idea what a dynamo Clarence Snyder would become. Snyder was a born salesman, and he proved it by quickly making himself the top man at one of the largest Ford and Mercury dealerships in Ohio.

No less impressive was his ability to sell drunks on sobriety. His first convert was a man he discovered in an abandoned house in a Polish section of Cleveland that was occupied by more than a dozen drunks. The man, Bill H., was lying paralyzed on the floor, but he told Snyder he wanted to get sober. A couple of drunks helped him get to Snyder's car, and he was driven to Akron City Hospital, where he recovered his health.

Snyder and his wife, Dorothy, drove down to Akron every Wednesday to attend the Oxford Group meet-

ings at T. Henry Williams's home. The car quickly filled with drunks he had recruited in Cleveland. Soon, thirteen people were cramming into two cars. They called themselves the "Cleveland Contingent," and they differed in important ways from the Akron alcoholics. There was a woman alcoholic among them—Sylvia K., who would become a founder of the first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting in Chicago. The Clevelanders also included the first Catholic members of the alcoholic squadron. A majority of them were Irish Americans.

Women alcoholics made the rest of the drunks nervous. The sad story of Lil, the first woman that Wilson and Smith had tried to help, convinced many that mixing the sexes was a threat to their sobriety.

But it was the Catholic alcoholics who posed an immediate problem. While the Oxford Group claimed to be an ecumenical movement, its members were overwhelmingly Protestant. Their meetings featured readings from the King James Version of the Bible, which was used only in Protestant churches. There were also periods of "sharing" during which members were encouraged to admit their sins, which in Catholic churches occurred only in the confessional.

These aspects of the Oxford Group were enough to convince some priests in Cleveland that their alcoholic parishioners were participating in Protestant rituals that threatened their immortal souls. Snyder attempted to intercede with the priests, arguing that membership in the Oxford Group was helping their people stay sober and actually making them better Catholics. "The Church didn't buy this line, not one bit," Snyder said.

When Snyder took the problem to Smith, Dr. Bob saw only two alternatives. "Remain with the Oxford Group and probably risk excommunication, or, very simply leave the Church," he said. If the Catholics wanted to stay sober, they had to be prepared to abandon their religion.<sup>[iv]</sup>....

The 1939 publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous: The*

(Continued on page 17)



# AA's DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

(Continued from page 16)

*Story of How More than 100 Men Have Recovered from Alcoholism* had immediate consequences for the Cleveland alcoholics in the Akron group. Snyder believed it offered a solution to his problem. He approached Smith again:

"What do you have in mind?" Smith asked.

"To start a group without all this rigmarole that's offensive to other people. We have a book now, the Steps, the absolutes. Anyone can live by that program. We can start our own meetings."

"We can't abandon these people," Doc replied. "We owe our lives to them."

"So what? Clarence replied. I owe my life to them, too. But what about all these others?"

"We can't do anything about them," Doc said.

"Oh, yes, we can. . . . You'll see."

Snyder had recently helped hospitalize a Cleveland patent attorney named Abby G. While Abby was still in the hospital, Snyder told Abby's wife that he was looking for a place to hold a meeting in Cleveland, and she had offered her own large home.

In early May, Snyder announced at the Akron meeting that the Clevelanders were leaving the Oxford Group and would begin their own meeting the following week. "Our policy will be mainly this," Snyder wrote a few weeks later. "Not too much stress on spiritual business at meetings."<sup>[i]</sup>

Some Oxford Group members were outraged at what they saw as a betrayal. They attempted to argue with Snyder after his announcement. When he made the mistake of revealing the location of Abby's home, some of them showed up at the first meeting to continue their protest. "They invaded the

house and tried to break up our meeting," Snyder said. "One fellow was going to whip me. All in the name of pure Christian love!"<sup>[vi]</sup>

Smith stayed home. He quickly reconciled himself to the break and began attending the meeting once or twice a month. While he was reluctant to anger his close friends, he understood the reasons for starting the group in Cleveland, which was soon describing itself as a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

By the end of the 1939, Smith was convinced that the Akron alcoholics, too, must find a new home. In December, as many as seventy people began cramming into the living room of the Smiths' small home on Wednesday nights. "Have definitely thrown off the shackles of the Oxford Group," he wrote Wilson on January 2, 1940.<sup>[vii]</sup>

Alcoholics Anonymous had declared its independence.

[i] Mitchell K., *The Story of Clarence H. Snyder and the Early Days of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio* (Washingtonville, NY: A.A. Big Book Study Group, 1999), 25.

[ii] Alcoholics Anonymous, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, 101; Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, MN: Hazelden Educational Services, 1979), 54.

[iii] Alcoholics Anonymous, "Pass It On," 130–31; Alcoholics Anonymous, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, 100–101. [iv] Mitchell K., *The Story of Clarence H. Snyder*, 34.

[v] Alcoholics Anonymous, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, 163, 167.

[vi] Ibid., 164.

[vii] Ibid., 218.

Excerpted from *Drunks: An American History* by Christopher M. Finan (Beacon Press, 2017). Reprinted with permission from Beacon Press. <http://www.beacon.org> as cited in <https://aabeyondbelief.org/2017/10/29/aas-declaration-of-independence> on 11/1/2017

## Elrick B. Davis series on A.A.

*These reprints are the fourth and fifth in a series of five feature articles published in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, resulting in the early growth of A.A. in this area. The first three articles were published in prior issues of the Northeast Ohio Recorder.*

October 25, 1939

In three previous articles, Mr. Davis has told of Alcoholics Anonymous, an organization of former drinkers banded to break the liquor habit and to save others from over drinking. This is the fourth of a series.

### Understanding

What gets the pathological drinker who finally has reached such state that he is willing to listen to a cured rummy member of Alcoholics Anonymous, is that the retrieved alcoholic not only understands what only another alcoholic can understand, but a great deal that the unreformed drunk thinks no one else could know because he has never told anyone, and his difficulties or escapades must be private to his own history.

Fact is the history of all alcoholics is the same; some have been addicts longer than others, and some have painted brighter red patches around the town — that is all. What they have heard in the “cure” hospitals they have frequented, or from the psychoanalysts they have consulted, or the physicians who have tapered them off one bender or another at home, has convinced them that alcoholism is a disease. But they are sure (a) that their version of the disease differs from everyone else’s and (b) that in them it hasn’t reached the incurable stage anyway.

Head of the “cure” told them: “If you ever take another drink, you’ll be back.” Psychoanalyst said “Psychologically, you have never been weaned. Your subconscious is still trying to get even with your mother for some forgotten slight.” Family or hotel physician said “If you don’t quite drinking, you’ll die.”

### Reproof

Lawyers, ministers, business partners and employers, parents and wives, also are professionally dedicated to listening to confidences and accepting confessions without undue complaint. But the clergyman may say: “Your drinking is a sin.” And partner or employer: “You’ll have to quit this monkey business or get out.” And wife or parent: “This drinking is breaking my heart.” And everyone: “Why don’t you exercise some will power and straighten up and be a man.”

“But,” the alcoholic whispers in his heart. “No one but I can know that I must drink to kill suffering too great to stand.”

He presents his excuses to the retrieved alcoholic who has come to talk. Can’t sleep without liquor. Worry. Business troubles. Debt. Alimentary pains. Overwork. Nerves too high strung. Grief. Disappointment. Deep dark phobic fears. Fatigue. Family difficulties. Loneliness.

The catalog has got no farther than that when the member of Alcoholics Anonymous begins rattling off an additional list.

“Hogwash,” he says. “Don’t try those alibis on me. I have used them all myself.”

### Understanding

And then he tells his own alcoholic history, certainly as bad, perhaps far worse than the uncured rummy’s. They match experiences. Before he knows it the prospect for cure has told his new friend things he had never admitted even to himself. A rough and ready psychiatry, that, but it works, as the cured members of the Cleveland Chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous all are restored to society to testify. And that is the reason for the fellowship’s weekly gatherings. They are testimonial meetings. The members meet to find new victims to cure, and to buck each other up. For years their social and emotional life has all been elbow-bending. Now they provide each other a richer society to replace the old. Hence, the fellowship’s family parties and picnics.

Never for a moment do they forget that a practicing alcoholic is a very sick person. Never for a moment can they forget that even medical men who know the nature of the disease are apt to feel that failure to recover is a proof of moral perversity in the patient. If a man is dying of cancer, no one says: “Why doesn’t he exercise some will power and kill that cancer off.” If he is coughing his lungs out with tuberculosis, no one says: “Buck up and quit coughing; be a man.” They may say to the first: “Submit to surgery before it is too late,” to the second: “Take a cure before you are dead.”

### Religion

Retrieved alcoholics talk in that fashion to their uncured fellows. They say: “You are a very sick man. Physically sick — you have an allergy to alcohol. We can put you in a hospital that will sweat that poison out. Mentally sick. We know how to cure that. And spiritually sick.

“To cure your spiritual illness you will have to admit God. Name your own God, or define Him to suit yourself. But if you are really willing to ‘do anything’ to get well, and if it is really true — and we know it is — that you drink when you don’t want to and that you don’t know why you get drunk, you’ll have to quit lying to yourself and adopt a spiritual way of life. Are you ready to accept help?”

And the miracle is that, for alcoholics brought to agreement by pure desperation, so simple a scheme works.

Cleveland alone has 50 alcoholics, all former notorious

*(Continued on page 19)*

## Elrick B. Davis series on A.A.

(Continued from page 18)

drunks, now members of Alcoholics Anonymous to prove it. None is a fanatic prohibitionist. None has a quarrel with liquor legitimately used by people physically, nervously, and spiritually equipped to use it. They simply know that alcoholics can't drink and live, and that their "incurable" disease has been conquered.

October 26, 1939

In previous installments, Mr. Davis has told of Alcoholics Anonymous, an informal society of drinking men who have joined together to beat the liquor habit. This is the last of five articles.

### No Graft

It is hard for the skeptical to believe that no one yet has found a way to muscle into Alcoholics Anonymous, the informal society of ex-drunks that exists only to cure each other, and make a money-making scheme of it. Or that someone will not. The complete informality of the society seems to be what has saved it from that. Members pay no dues. The society has no paid staff. Parties are "Dutch." Meetings are held at the homes of members who have houses large enough for such gatherings, or in homes of persons who may not be alcoholics but are sympathetic with the movement.

Usually a drunk needs hospitalization at the time that he is caught to cure. He is required to pay for that himself. Doubtless he hasn't the money. But probably his family has. Or his employer will advance the money to save him, against his future pay. Or cured members of the society will help him arrange credit, if he has a glimmer of credit left. Or old friends will help.

At the moment members of the Cleveland Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are searching the slum lodging houses to find a man, once eminent in the city's professional life. A medical friend of his better days called them in to find him. This friend will pay the hospital bill necessary to return this victim of an "incurable" craving for drink to physical health, if the society will take him on.

The society has published a book, called "Alcoholics Anonymous," which it sells at \$3.50. It may be ordered from an anonymous address, Works Publishing Co., Box 657, Church Street Annex Postoffice, New York City; or bought from the Cleveland Fellowship of the society. There is no money profit for anyone in that book.

It recites the history of the society and lays down its principles in its first half. Last half is case histories of representative cures out of the first hundred alcoholics cured by membership in the society. It was written

and compiled by the New York member who brought the society to Ohio. He raised the money on his personal credit to have the book published. He would like to see those creditors repaid. It is a 400-page book, for which any regular publisher would charge the same price. Copies bought from local Fellowships net the local chapters a dollar each.

The Rev. Dr. Dilworth Lupton, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Cleveland, found in a religious journal an enthusiastic review of the book by the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, and sent it to the president of the local Fellowship. It has been similarly noted in some medical journals.

### The Foundation

To handle the money that comes in for the book, and occasional gifts from persons interested in helping ex-drunks to cure other "incurable" drunks, the Alcoholics Foundation has been established, with a board of seven directors.

Three of these are members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Four are not alcoholics, but New Yorkers of standing interested in humane movements. Two of them happen also to be associated with the Rockefeller Foundation, but that does not associate the two foundations in any way.

First problem of the Cleveland Fellowship was to find a hospital willing to take a drunk in and give him the medical attention first necessary to any cure. Two reasons made that hard. Hospitals do not like to have alcoholics as patients; they are nuisances. And the society requires that as soon as a drunk has been medicated into such shape that he can see visitors, members of the society must be permitted to see him at any time. That has been arranged. The local society would like to have a kitty of \$100 to post with the hospital as evidence of good faith. But if it gets it, it will only be from voluntary contributions of members.

Meantime the members, having financed their own cures, spend enormous amounts of time and not a little money in helping new members. Psychiatrists say that if an alcoholic is to be cured, he needs a hobby. His old hobby had been only alcohol. Hobby of Alcoholics Anonymous is curing each other. Telephone calls, postage and stationery, gasoline bills, mount up for each individual. And hospitality to new members. A rule of the society is that each member's latch string is always out to any other member who needs talk or quiet, which may include a bed or a meal, at any time.

Source – By Elrick B. Davis, Cleveland Plain Dealer

- See more at: <http://www.aacleve.org/alcoholics-anonymous-graft-foundation/#sthash.N8grvql5.dpuf>

