



Quinte West Messenger

September 2009 Newsletter



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"Self-appraisal"

"I used to be a champ at unrealistic self-appraisal. I wanted to look only at the part of my life which seemed good. Then I would greatly exaggerate whatever virtues I supposed I had attained.

Next I would congratulate myself on the grand job I was doing. So my unconscious self-deception never failed to turn my few good assets into serious liabilities.

This astonishing process was always a pleasant one. . . I was falling straight back into the pattern of my drinking days. . . I shall forever regret the damage I did to people around me.

Indeed, I still tremble when I realize what I might have done to AA and to its future."

Bill W., June 1961

1988AAGrapevine, The Language of the Heart, pp. 256-7

WORDS OF WISDOM....

**It's not making a mistake that will kill me.
It's defending it that does the damage.**



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August 22, 2009

A Word from District 30 District Committee Member.



Most of us in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous are familiar with the Twelve Steps. In fact, almost all of us have experienced the rewards that come from putting at least some, if not all, of these essential tools of our program into use in our lives.

Many of us are also aware of the Twelve Traditions which were created by our founders to “save Alcoholics Anonymous from the alcoholics themselves.” Our founders hoped that the traditions would prevent us from losing sight of the principle aim of AA which is to help the still suffering alcoholic.

Most of us are familiar, too, with the circle within the triangle which is widely believed to be an AA approved symbol. Yet, when the GSO attempted to copyright this symbol, they found that it was already owned by an individual who was unwilling to relinquish ownership of it. The use of the symbol goes against the traditions and policies of Alcoholics Anonymous. But if you check the chips and medallions that your group passes out to commemorate milestones in sobriety, you will observe that, though these are not AA approved symbols, they are utilized because what they represent is held near and dear to the hearts of AA members.

The three sides of the triangle represent Recovery, Unity, and Service. The Recovery side of the triangle represents the Twelve Steps which are the principles for personal Recovery. The Unity side of the triangle represents the Twelve Traditions which help to ensure harmony within the fellowship of AA. And, finally, the Service side of the triangle represents the Twelve Concepts which are the principles that ensure that the service structure of AA remains “responsive and responsible to those they serve.”

To summarize briefly, the Twelve Steps lead to sobriety. The Twelve Traditions ensure that members can practice the AA program, wherever their journey leads them. But it is the Twelve Concepts that protect AA from damage within. To function most effectively within the service structure of AA, familiarity with the Twelve Concepts is essential. Today I would like to give a brief overview of Concept V.

Concept V (in short form) tells us that, “Throughout our structure, a traditional ‘Right of Appeal’ ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.” In the AA Service Manual's discussion of Concept V, a number of interesting points are raised about the right of the minority.

Concept V asks, “When the group conscience cannot or should not act directly, *who does act for it?*” The Concept then identifies “trusted servants” as having this responsibility. The concept points out that such trusted servants are bound to use their own information and judgment, sometimes to the point of disagreeing with uninformed or biased group opinion.

In the mid 1800's Alex De Tocqueville asserted that the greatest danger to democracy would always be the “tyranny” of apathetic, self-seeking, uninformed or angry majorities.

By ensuring the right of the minority to be heard and accepted, AA can and will survive and flourish.

Tom JC,

District Committee Member District 30.





September AA History

Sept 1930 – Bill wrote 4th (last) promise in family Bible to quit drinking.

Sept 1939 – Group started by Earl T in Chicago.

Sept 1940 – AA group started in Toledo by Duke P & others.

Sept 1940 – Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases gives Big Book unfavorable review.

Sept 1946 – Bill & Dr. Bob both publicly endorsed National Committee Education Alcoholism founded by Marty M.

Sept 1946 – 1st A.A. group in Mexico.

Sept 1948 – Bob writes article for Grapevine on AA “Fundamentals – In Retrospect”.

Sept 1949 – 1st issue of Grapevine published in “pocketbook” size.

Sept 1, 1939 – 1st AA group founded in Chicago.

Sept 11, 2001 – 30 Vesey St, New York. Location of AA’s first office is destroyed during the World Trade Center attack.

Sept 12, 1942 – U.S. Assist. Surgeon General Kolb speaks at dinner for Bill and Dr Bob.

Sept 13, 1937 – Florence R, 1st female in AA in NY.

Sept 13, 1941 – WHJP in Jacksonville, FL airs Spotlight on AA.

Sept 17, 1954 – Bill D, AA #3 dies.

Sept 18, 1947 – Dallas Central Office opens its doors.

Sept 19, 1965 – The Saturday Evening Post publishes article “Alcoholics Can Be Cured – Despite AA”

Sept 19, 1975 – Jack Alexander, author of original Saturday Evening Post article, dies.

Sept 21, 1938 – Bill W & Hank P form Works Publishing Co.

Sept 24, 1940 – Bill 12th steps Bobbie V, who later replaced Ruth Hock as his secretary in NY.

Sept 30, 1939 – article in Liberty magazine, “Alcoholics and God” by Morris Markey.

Editorial on Tradition Nine by Bill W.

The least possible organization, that's our universal ideal. No fees, no dues, no rules imposed on anybody, one alcoholic bringing recovery to the next; that's the substance of what we most desire, isn't it?

But how shall this simple ideal best be realized? Often a question, that. We have, for example, the kind of A.A. who is for simplicity. Terrified of anything organized, he tells us that A.A. is getting too complicated. He thinks money only makes trouble, committees only make dissension, elections only make politics, paid workers only make professionals and that clubs only coddle slipees. Says he, let's get back to coffee and cakes by cozy firesides. If any alcoholics stray our way, let's look after them. But that's enough. Simplicity is our answer. Quite opposed to such halcyon simplicity is the A.A. promoter. Left to himself he would "bang the cannon and twang the lyre" at every crossroad of the world. Millions for drunks, great A.A. hospitals, batteries of paid organizers and publicity experts wielding all the latest paraphernalia of sound and script; such would be our promoters dream. "Yes sir," he would bark "My two year plan calls for one million A.A. members by 1950!"

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Editorial on Tradition Nine by Bill W. - cont'd

For one, I'm glad we have both conservatives and enthusiasts. They teach us much. The conservative will surely see to it that the A.A. movement never gets over organized. But the promoter will continue to remind us of our terrific obligation to the newcomer and to those hundreds of thousands of alcoholics still waiting all over the world to hear of A.A. We shall, naturally, take the firm and safe middle course.

A.A. has always violently resisted the idea of any general organization. Yet, paradoxically, we have ever stoutly insisted upon organizing certain special services; mostly those absolutely necessary to effective and plentiful 12th Step work. If, for instance, an A.A. group elects a secretary or rotating committee, if an area forms an intergroup committee, if we set up a Foundation, a General Office or a Grapevine, then we are organized for service. The A.A. book and pamphlets, our meeting places and clubs, our dinners and regional assemblies--these are services too. Nor can we secure good hospital connections, properly sponsor new prospects and obtain good public relations just by chance. People have to be appointed to look after these things, sometimes paid people. Special services are performed. But by none of these special services, has our spiritual or social activity, the great current of A.A. ever been really organized or professionalized. Yet our recovery program has been enormously aided. While important, these service activities, are very small by contrast with our main effort. As such facts and distinctions become clear, we shall easily lay aside our fears of blighting organization or hazardous wealth. As a movement, we shall remain comfortably poor; for our service expenses are trifling.

With such assurances, we shall without doubt, continue to improve and extend our vital lifelines of special service; to better carry out our A.A. message to others; to make for ourselves a finer greater society, and, God willing, to assure Alcoholics Anonymous a long life and perfect unity.

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Editorial Note:

The following letter is a follow-up to an article published in last month's issue of the Messenger in response to some controversy and misinformation raised at the district table. It addresses an issue within our district at meetings specifically noted as "low scent" meetings in our meeting list and has also been noted by GSO as an issue to be dealt with at our local level. It is meant to help educate our district members to a problem within our district as seen by one of our members.

The following is a personal opinion and the newsletter editor feels strongly that if personal opinion is taken away from us, we have lost everything and vigorously supports minority opinion as it pertains to Concept Five. Replies to any article in the newsletter are welcomed providing they are not detrimental to our district, AA as a whole, or any specific member or group. Articles on other subjects pertaining to AA in our district are also welcomed.



August 20, 2009

Dear District Table Members:

One in five people today have health problems that are aggravated by fragrance chemicals. While this may seem like a statistic on a piece of paper to some, it is a painful reality for others like myself. My husband and I were posted to Trenton 2 years ago. My sensitivity to synthetic fragrance chemicals became much worse after living here for a while, perhaps as a result of the smog.

I got a home group, sponsor, started chairing, sponsoring and serving at the District level. I sought to raise community awareness by writing a newspaper article. As some of you are aware, I resigned from my service position because of problems with scent. I started just attending meetings in buildings with low scent policies but some of the members wore scent anyway and I was ill from it. I approached the administration of the buildings where those meetings were held, requesting they put signs up in the meeting rooms. One of the signs was torn down.

I tried turning on fans and opening windows but sometimes members objected to this. I tried mentioning the low scent policy during the announcements and asking that people please refrain from wearing it. I wore a mask in meetings but felt alienated from others. I tried attending meetings outside of Trenton but every meeting I went to was the same.

Fear started taking root in me that I was losing my ability to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous; to attend meetings, to serve and to attend AA social functions. Would I lose everything precious to me that has come about through the practise of the AA program?

I became angry and resentful. I talked to members about it; some too much. I had the phone slammed down in my ear by a number of members. I was ridiculed. A few laughed at me when I wore my mask. Some deliberately wore scent in my car, my home and at meetings, knowing that it made me ill. I was shunned. I lost friends.

A member phoned me, apparently on behalf of some other members saying that I was not to talk about it at meetings. The stressors in my personal life mounted as I faced the reality of my husband serving in Afghanistan and the risks involved. My chronic pain levels that I have dealt with one day at a time for many years escalated. I felt alone, cut off from the fellowship of AA, cut off from community, cut off from the support networks I had known in the past.

I did not seriously consider drinking. I know from my years in AA that to drink, for me, is certain death. But that death would likely only come after much shame, humiliation and the loss of everything important to me. I am not proud to admit that I contemplated stepping off a bridge not that long ago. I could not fathom how I could take life on life's terms with the doors of AA closed to me. Fortunately, I was loved and supported, in particular, by some AA members who are also sickened by fragrance chemicals. I relied heavily on AA friends

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from other places I have lived in my recovery and I sought outside help.

In desperation, I turned increasingly to AA online. I did service work online, chairing and 12 Stepping. I learned (again) that I am not alone, that other members are struggling with the inability to be active in Alcoholics Anonymous because of fragrance issues, too, and that many of them, like me have been subject to hostility and have been told to not talk about it. Some were beside themselves at the loss, as I was.

I began to wonder what it would be like for newcomers with health problems aggravated by synthetic fragrance coming in. What were their chances of making it? How many would be so self-sacrificing as to attend meetings for years, becoming sick for up to two days afterwards, without saying anything, as I knew one member had done. How would they cope with the hostility if they did speak out about it? Would they continue coming long enough to experience the miracle of sobriety if they kept getting ill at meetings? I thought it unlikely.

A newcomer with MCS was brought to my attention by our DCM. Her sensitivity to fragrance is much greater than mine. She needed someone to come do a 12 Step call at her home. I contacted a Longtimer to go with me but she refused, stating that she couldn't possibly dream of refraining from wearing her scented hair products to go with me. I found another Longtimer, also sensitive to fragrances, to accompany me. Since that time, a few of us AA women here who are in the same boat have met with her and maintain contact with her.

I encouraged the newcomer to attend meetings in buildings that have low scent policies in place. She faced other issues, in addition to her alcoholism, and it took great courage for her to walk into AA meetings. She was well at her first meeting, but, unfortunately, at the next three meetings she went to – all in buildings with low scent policies – she became very ill afterwards from fragrance and came close to relapse. At that point I realized I could not continue to encourage her to come to AA meetings. How do you work with a newcomer that cannot attend AA meetings? Well, I pointed her in the direction of AA online & telephone meetings and AA literature but I feel that this is far from ideal.

I felt a growing awareness of the importance of this issue. I was praying and doing the steps with my online sponsor. I started to dream that I could make a difference by using my voice to help create change so that members like me could be part of AA, too. I wrote the Grapevine. I received a form rejection letter. I understand that a number of letters about this issue have been written to the Grapevine but, to the best of my knowledge, none have been published.

I thought perhaps I could make a difference at the community level by writing the District Newsletter. I sought to write as objectively as possible, leaving out the details of my personal anguish. I am not all that surprised to learn that those very resistant to this important change that needs to occur in AA – that is, a move back to the inclusion of every alcoholic who reaches out to AA – got up in arms and succeeded in having my article, *Not An Outside Issue*, removed from the District website. I believe that the more that AA members understand about the fragrance issue, the more effectively we can carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to everyone who seeks our help. A contact in the GSO has notified me that the GSO cannot address this issue – it is up to the “individual AA group conscience.”

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It is my firm belief that the majority of AA members are caring individuals who will make decisions to stop wearing hairsprays and perfumes, for example, at meetings in locations with low scent policies if they understand the issues and that the lives of AA members are at risk if they cannot be part of AA, too. I request that District Table Members please reconsider the decision that was made at the last meeting. As a member of a minority group in AA, I ask that my voice be heard in the hopes that it will be easier for others to be part of AA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Carol L

Thoughts to consider...

-the road to recovery is always under construction....
-losers make promises; winners make commitments...
-newcomers are the lifeblood of the program, but our old timers are the arteries...
- ... God can't hand you anything new until you let go of what you're holding...
- ...Yesterday is so far in the past I can't see it; tomorrow is too distant in the future to be seen. So I'll take a good look at what I can see – today...
- ... Every AA meeting is a payment on your sobriety...



The *Messenger* is published monthly by District 30 to provide members with information about events and happenings in our area. Member submissions are encouraged and may be submitted to:

district30@quintewestaa.org.

Current and past issues are available online at our website:

www.quintewestaa.org