(Frank was the man who founded the Oxford Group, which later became Moral Re-Armament. The Oxford Group is where AA got most of their Steps and spiritual principles from.)

"Frank Buchman - Man of the Year"

By Frank Whelan in McCall Magazine.

The Rev. Frank Buchman founded the Moral Re-Armament Movement, a global group espousing peace.

It was 1915, and a young American missionary named Frank N.D. Buchman was setting British India afire for Christ. He so impressed his British colleagues that one of them asked if the N.D. in his name stood for "Never Despair."

Buchman was starting on the road to an international and controversial career. By the 1920s and '30s, his Oxford Group and four-point doctrine of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love were household words.

In the late 1930's, he founded another movement called Moral Re-Armament, based on his belief in the need for moral regeneration during World War II and then the Cold War. And in the late 1940s and the '50s, such was Buchman's moral authority that he brought together former enemies Germany and France and helped found the Common Market.

Throughout his long life, some hated him, others loved him, but no one could deny Buchman's ability to inspire others.

Franklin Nathaniel Daniel Buchman was born in Pennsburg on June 4, 1878, the son of a wholesale liquor dealer and restaurant owner and a pious Lutheran mother.

About 1894 the family moved to 117 N. 11th St. in Allentown. Even when he was known around the world, he would return to the house he regarded as his home. Today the building is a house museum run by the Lehigh County Historical Society.

After graduation from Muhlenberg College, Buchman became a Lutheran minister. While attending a worship service in England, he became convinced that God was calling him for something more. He returned to America, became the YMCA secretary at Pennsylvania State University and started converting campus hell-raisers left and right.

After his time in India, Buchman had a particular affection for Britain and the British Empire. He made London his headquarters in the early '20s. In the skeptical but confused Europe between the wars, he offered hope of a middle Christian way between communism and fascism. By the 1930s the Oxford Group, named for the many graduates of the British university who were its members, held what were called "house parties" for several thousand people at country homes of the gentry.

To those who felt it was the duty of preachers of the Gospel "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," Buchman's attempt to make "spiritual live wires" out of the titled upper class seemed like a watering down of Christ's message. But he made no apology for trying to lead nations to God by converting their leaders.

The low point for the Oxford Group came in 1936 when Buchman made some favorable comments about Adolf Hitler, suggesting the German dictator had done a service by stopping communism and that a man with absolute power, if he became a Christian, could solve the world's problems. Buchman's words were picked up by newspapers around the world, making him sound as if he wanted Germans to goosestep to God. In fact, Buchman probably had little understanding of Hitler or Nazism.

Suffering a stroke in 1942, Buchman returned to Allentown, where he stayed until the end of the war. Later he established Moral Re-Armament's headquarters in Switzerland.

Many, particularly those on the left, distrusted Buchman, accusing him of being an agent for British Intelligence or the CIA. Others who were attracted to Buchman's view of world unity were turned off by his rigid views on sexual matters.

On Aug. 7, 1961, Buchman died at a Swiss country hotel. His body was returned to Allentown, where he was buried surrounded by followers from around the world.